

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West



Fight the Tories! Rebuild the Left!

BACK

BENN

AND

HEFFER!



Photo: Ian Swindale

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Eric Heffer on
the campaign

Missing: a Labour Party

"Our time has come", Jesse Jackson declared at the end of his speech to the 1984 Democratic Convention. Although he had won the massive following of the black population and had many delegates he left the convention with no real gains. He made a brilliant tear-jerking speech but in the end tamedly pledged support to Walter Mondale for President.

Four years later the base of Jackson's support is still the black community. The "super Tuesday" election is one that involves a third of the United States population in 20 states — most of them in the south. Indeed it was devised by the Democratic leadership to increase the influence of the conservative south on the party nomination.

However, 10% of the white Democrats voted for Jackson. Together with 96% black support Jesse Jackson managed to win five 'Dixie' states outright.

Unlike some of the other candidates who suggest foreigners are to blame for unemployment Jesse Jackson attacks the policies of American companies. He characterises it as a campaign of 'small fish against barracudas'.

The rest of the Democratic and

By Dion D'Silva

Republican candidates seem very bland. George Bush is a born-again Reaganite, Dukakis is a slick city boss and Albert Gore is a bore. Rev Pat Robertson claims a direct link to God (and maybe James Anderson). His efforts have passed through more like a slight breeze than a hurricane.

On the fundamental issues all the candidates are in broad agreement. Both the Democratic and Republican parties are pro-capitalist parties. The Democratic party does enjoy more support in the working class and liberal sections of the population but this has not always been the case. It was the Republican Party under Abraham Lincoln who as the more progressive capitalists defeated the slave owning Democrats.

The Democratic party became the party of government by diverting and absorbing struggles. Roosevelt did this using the New Deal Program to control rank and file trade union militancy in the thirties. Presidents Kennedy and Johnson managed to consolidate black support to the Democratic Party.

Nowadays over 80% of black Americans vote Democrat. In response the Republicans have created a coalition of conservative



white Southerners and its traditional big business support in the South and West. These are the areas where the working class are least organised.

In 1984 many black democratic politicians didn't support Jackson. Jackson was rocking the boat. He was dangerously radical. Their view

is that black votes are a lever on the party and nothing more. This is simply pressure group politics.

This time round Jackson has distanced himself from the notorious black anti-semitic leader Louis Farrakhan. He has gained the support of many white union activists, farmers and left-organisations. So is Jesse Jackson building a black or working class movement? Is he an unconscious socialist?

To answer that we must try to understand the history of the Civil Rights movement, its relation to the Democratic Party and Jackson's role in it.

The black movement of the fifties and sixties was an heroic struggle for justice. It had a profound influence throughout the world, from Ireland to the student movement in Europe to South Africa today. It instilled confidence and restored pride and dignity to the black community.

But some 20 years on the gains fought for have only benefitted a small section of the black community. In 1968 the unemployment amongst blacks was twice that of whites and the annual income of a black family 58% that of a white. In 1988 the figures are exactly the same.

However there are an increasing number of black officials. There are black mayors in Philadelphia, Gary and Chicago and many other cities. They are clearly part of the party machine.

The leadership are on friendlier terms with Jackson this time. Interestingly Andrew Young, the black mayor of Atlanta who served in the Carter administration now backs Jackson.

Jesse Jackson often reminds people of his role in the Civil Rights movement. Soon after Martin Luther King's death Jackson set up his organisation Operation PUSH. He gained widespread publicity (something he is very good at) and negotiated deals with General Motors and Burger King to employ more blacks in better positions.

Yet his idea of "economic justice" is one under capitalism. "The long-term interests of American business and the American people are mutual and inseparable." Jackson does not deny his 'conservative tendencies', warning youth "against drugs and making babies, violence and suicide".

Still there is no doubting the charisma and appeal of Jackson. No other candidate can count on such a level of support and commitment. His speeches are rousing and spiritual. One phrase he uses is that the "hand that once picked cotton, can now help pick Presidents".

This has real meaning especially to people who have been battered and bruised by years of fighting for basic democratic rights. It also hides some of the problems in the campaign.

Rev. Jesse Jackson has built a movement to elect Rev. Jesse Jackson and just that, albeit skilfully. What is needed is politics and an organisation that actively links struggles not just for an election.

Contrary to popular belief the history of the United States is the history of rank and file militancy. Whether it be the courageous activists of the Wobblies (International Workers of the World) in the early part of this century; to the massive strikes of the thirties; to the Civil Rights movement; to the Anti War, Women's, Lesbian and Gay movements. The response of the ruling class has always been the same. It is the response of the truncheon, the water cannon and the dogs.

In this supposedly most democratic of all countries most people are so disillusioned that they don't even bother to vote. Yet the Jackson campaign illustrates the potential there is to mobilise people who are prepared to fightback. The best way forward is not to rely on the pro-boss parties but to build an independent Labour Party.

At this year's Democratic Convention, more than likely no candidate will have a majority of delegates, resulting in all sorts of wheeler dealing. The party big-wigs are confident that a deal can be struck with Jackson. He may be offered a major role in the campaign and a black may be appointed to a future cabinet. Jackson has shown nothing to suggest that he won't find this acceptable.

If so, it would be another missed opportunity. The campaign has had the unswerving support of the black community and sections of the organised working class. Jackson will be in a very strong position. He owes it to his supporters to demand policies and actions that bring real advances to all black people and the working class.

Protests in Ukraine

The Western Ukrainian City of Lviv has recently been the scene of one of the most active groups to emerge into the new Ukrainian opposition movement. In September 1987 news reached the west of a demonstration for peace and democracy east and west in the Ukraine. The demonstration had been organised by a newly established Lviv Trust Group.

The membership of the Lviv Trust Group consists of young workers, students, hippies and unofficial artists and musicians. Amongst the chief founders of the group are Oleh Olysevich, the author of the manifesto of "Ideology of Soviet Hippies", and folk-rock musician Dmitry Tyshenko, whose music is based on Ukrainian national traditions, suppressed by the official cultural authorities.

In September 1987 the group called for a demonstration through the streets of Lviv for Peace and Democracy. Many of the expected 200 participants were prevented from attending due to threats and warnings by the Militia. Despite the threats about 30 activists of the Lviv Trust Group marched with placards calling for: Peace and Freedom — USSR, Nuclear Disarmament — USA, Glasnost — USSR, Real Perestroika.

As the demonstrators made their way through the city they were blocked by a cordon of Militia. As they approached the Militia line a plain clothes man attempted to wrench a placard from Oleh Olysevich with the inscription Glasnost — USSR. Other Militia men attempted to provoke fights and remove placards.

By Patrick Kane

Having managed to break through, the demonstration reached a second barrier of Militia and plain clothes men. Despite attempts to break up the protest a second time the protest continued for another three hours. Instead of attempting to continue the march, the participants sat down and sang anti-war songs.

The Militia continued to threaten members of the Trust Group, and according to the report Oleh Olysevich was threatened that he would put him in a "psychiatric hospital".

A further protest took place in Lviv on 24 October, the United Nations Day of Peace. It called for the removal of Soviet Troops from Afghanistan and the right to conscientious objection. Although the Militia attempted to break up the demonstration, it nevertheless managed to take place for several hours. The head of the Militia in charge was reported to have warned members of the Lviv Trust Group: "Tell your friends in Moscow and Leningrad that here in Lviv you will not get away with this kind of activity."

Despite Gorbachev's Glasnost, and the much publicised "new freedoms" that supposedly exist in the USSR, the Lviv Trust Group have been subjected to continued violations of their rights. The very next day after the protests in Lviv, the authorities subjected group members to a series of repressive measures.

Bohdan Rudy from Sokal and Andrei Taremenko from Khmelnytsky were both expelled from the technical institutes where they were students for "participating in an

anti-government demonstration."

Ruslan Pupynik was arrested and beaten up by the Militia while in custody.

Edward Polunina was brutally arrested, beaten in custody and released after two hours.

Alexander Rubchenkoa, a peace activist from Moscow, was arrested, photographed and beaten by the Militia whilst in custody.

A significant number of other participants of the initial actions of the Lviv Trust Group were summoned to MVD (Ministry of Internal Affairs) offices, and beaten up or threatened with expulsion from work.

Despite the repression, threats and violence, the Lviv Trust Group has continued its activity.

On 26 December 1987 the group staged a third protest in the city. They called once again for an end to the war in Afghanistan and for the right to conscientious objection. Once again the authorities used repressive measures to prevent the protest.

The aftermath of the protests in Lviv has seen a flowering of independent youth activity in the city. This activity continues, however, to be subjected to persecution and needs support.

The Lviv Trust Group and other groups have links with groups in the USSR and Poland. They would like very much to establish links with like minded people in other countries. The Ukrainian Peace Committee appeals to peace groups who visit the independent organisations in Moscow and Leningrad also to visit the Lviv Trust Group when they visit the USSR.

The Ukrainian Peace Committee is willing to supply addresses and the necessary information. We can be contacted at: 168/10 King Street, London W6 0QU. tel: 01-221 0533.

Back Benn and Heffer!

EDITORIAL

THE decision of the Campaign Group of MPs to stand Tony Benn for Leader of the Labour Party and Eric Heffer for Deputy is the best news for the Left in years.

Labour's hypocritical rights and the soft ex-left — those who have lost both their bottle and their socialist convictions — are already saying that the contest is a distraction, that it will give weapons to the hostile media, and that Labour should concentrate on fighting the Tories under the leadership of Neil Kinnock and Roy Hattersley.

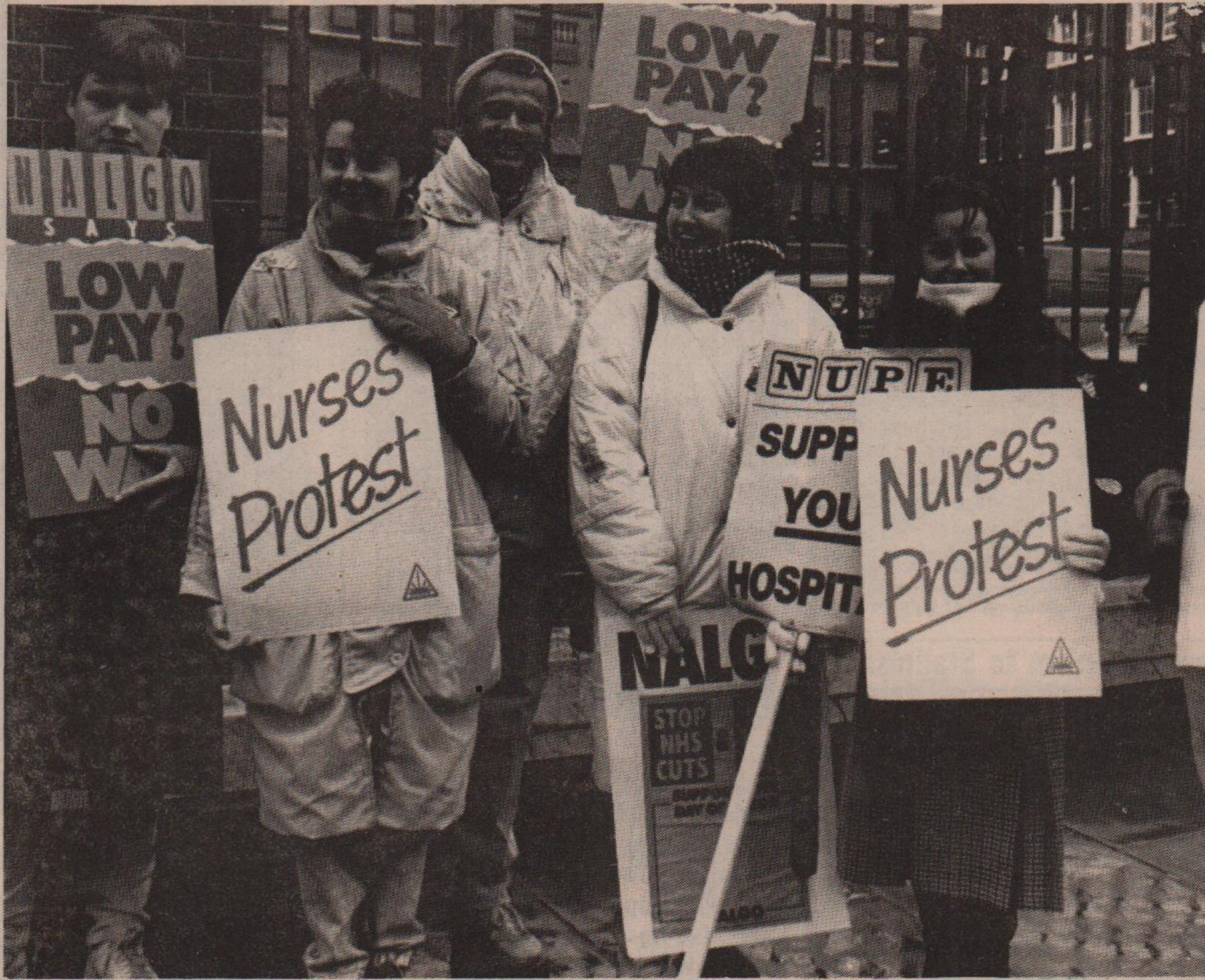
Yes, Labour should fight the Tories — but under Kinnock and Hattersley Labour isn't fighting the Tories! Kinnock spends much of his time running behind them, picking up bits of Tory policy and weaving them into Labour's multicoloured cloak. Under Kinnock Labour hasn't got policies to counterpose to the Tories — and the Labour leadership shelves policies adopted by Party conference — and it hasn't even got the will to fight.

Take the poll tax. It is vastly unpopular, even with non-Labour voters. What has Kinnock done to mobilise against it? Very little. At the recent Scottish Labour Party conference he helped to narrowly defeat moves to commit the Party to organise a refusal to pay.

Kinnock has drunk the poison of Tory populism. He believes that Labour's job is understudying the Tories. He does not even propose to scrap the legislation with which the Tories have bound the trade unions more tightly than in any other bourgeois democracy in Europe!

The job is to fight the Tories — but under Kinnock and Hattersley Labour isn't doing it seriously enough, nor is it advocating working-class alternatives to Thatcherism.

The General Election campaign's three-week flash of crusading vigour on behalf of the poor and oppressed and against dog-eat-dog Toryism opened no new approach by the Labour leaders. No sooner was the election over than the



Labour needs leaders who will support workers in struggle like these health workers picketing on 3 February. Photo: Ian Swindale.

gutless Left and the 'politics-is-market-research' right wing started to edge and push Labour into the slipstream of Toryism.

The labour movement has had no rallying point. The Labour leaders have been mealy-mouthed even about defending the health workers and their campaign to save the NHS.

Now Heffer and Benn have raised the banner of revolt against Kinnockite drift and Hattersleyite smugness. They probably can't win the leadership of the Labour Party — but they can win back the soul of the Party.

They can reorganise — and maybe unite — the Left. They can rebuild ramparts and bulwarks from which further advance can be attempted — win or lose — after

the contest.

It would be good to be able to concentrate exclusively on fighting the Tories — but we need now to create an instrument to fight the Tories. Right now we do not have such an instrument. If we had had one, Thatcher's counter-revolution could never have got so far.

Local campaign committees, uniting the different groups of the Labour and trade union left, should be set up immediately. Trade union caucuses for Benn and Heffer should be organised as open ad hoc campaigns, free from the narrow factionalism of some established trade union left groups like BLOC. 'Students for Benn and Heffer' have already pointed the way to the creation of special groups to campaign for a left victory.

We must organise for the contest — and in the process rebuild and unite the Left.

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Stop Clause 28!

'The Two of Us' is a play, shown late last Friday night, originally intended as a sex education programme for schools. It concerns a sexual relationship between two teenage boys.

Under Clause 28 of the Local Government Bill, due to become law in June, the play would no doubt 'promote' homosexuality. Even before the Clause is law, such plays are relegated to the late-night spot.

But it just told the truth. Young homosexuals can be happy, or not. They are often persecuted and sneered at. Life is not always easy.

The Clause undermines the democracy of local councils and the civil liberties of lesbians and gay men.

We need more films like 'The Two of Us' — to make society a freer, safer place. They should be shown in school to aid discussion and education.

Clause 28 is a foul piece of bigotry that the labour movement must defy.

Anti-racist day

On 23 April anti-racist and anti-fascist groups from Denmark, West Germany, Sweden, France, Norway and Britain will be holding co-ordinated activities across Europe against racism and fascism. In Britain, activities on this European Day of Action Against Racism and Fascism are being organised by Anti-Fascist Action.

The initiative to hold a European Day of Action was taken at a conference held in Stockholm and

organised by "Stoppa Rasismen". From 5-7 February delegates from European organisations agreed "to organise initiatives appropriate to the situation in their respective countries within the framework of a European Day of Action on 23 April".

In a statement drawn up at the anti-racist conference, delegates declared that: "We see these actions as only the first step towards a united mass movement against racism and fascism in Western Europe and for a Europe which can be a safe haven for refugees."

PRESS GANG

The Sun's heroes

By Jim Denham

"The car swerved up on the pavement. I thought it was trying to ram the hearse."

"The car drove along the pavement towards it (the cortege) at about 30 mph with its lights on and horn blaring. Onlookers jumped clear."

"The pair refused to identify themselves and roared off — straight into the funeral procession. Women and children screamed in fear as the car ploughed into the panic-stricken mourners."

The three quotes above were eyewitness reports from British journalists, published the day after the killings of the two Signals Corps corporals, in — respectively — the Sunday Mirror, the Sunday Times and the News of the World.

All the initial newspaper coverage of the incident (not to mention the TV film) strongly suggested that the two soldiers were guilty of either incredible stupidity or gross provocation. None of which, of course, detracts from the horror of their killings.

But since then Derek Wood and David Howes have become "heroes".

The Sun has announced an appeal for a "Lasting Tribute to Army Heroes". What exactly this fund will be used for is not entirely clear; "The Sun is putting up £25,000 to ensure that the courage of two soldiers murdered by a Belfast lynch-mob is never forgotten...the money will be used to build a memorial...we are also launching a special fund to raise more cash to honour the valour and restraint of the young servicemen..."

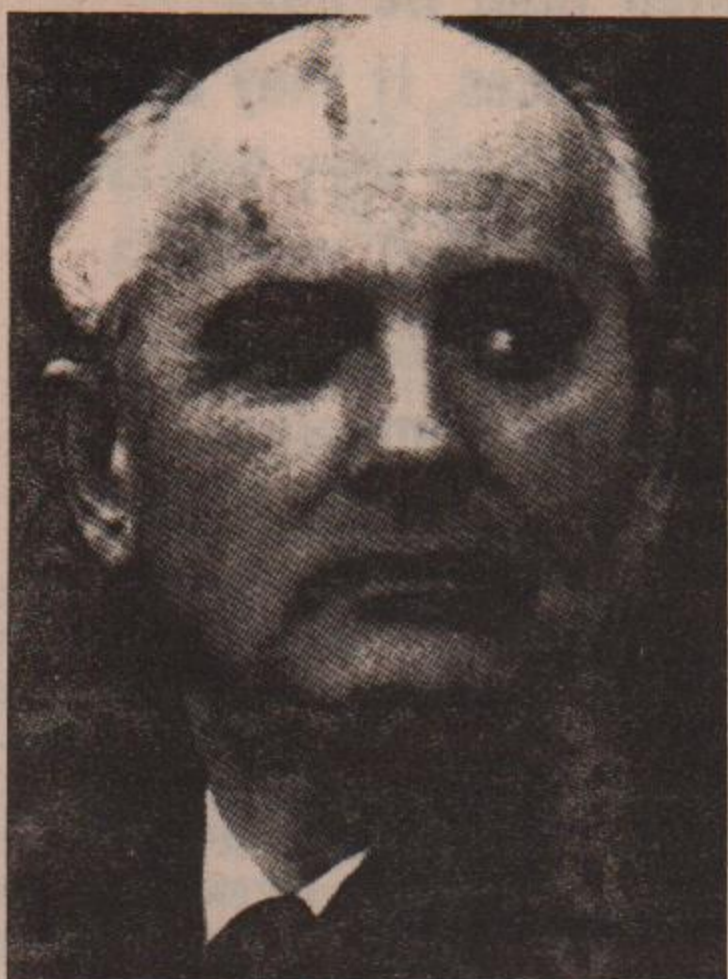
Will the Sun's memorial fund help bring about peace and reconciliation in the six-county bearpit? Is it intended to remind us of all the young men and women who have died under tragic circumstances in Northern Ireland since 1969? No. The most you can say for the Sun's appeal is that it might bring some small comfort to the friends and relatives of Derek Wood and David Howes.

The Sun did, at least, take the opportunity to initiate a "discussion" amongst its readers on "the big question over Ulster: should British troops be pulled out?" Readers could vote by phoning one of two numbers. Given that the editorial that day was entitled "Here we are and here we stay", and concluded with the words "our soldiers must stay in Ulster for just as long as they are needed", the outcome of the vote might have seemed a foregone conclusion.

Not so. The next day's paper reported that "a massive 41,812 Sun readers yesterday voted in favour of pulling British troops out of Ulster. Only 9,573 in the phone poll wanted them to stay." This item was not given very much prominence.

It may seem strange that the virulently pro-Army, anti-Republican Sun has a majority of readers who favour troops out. But in reality both points of view reflect the same British chauvinism and total lack of concern for Ireland and its people. It's just that the Sun's leader writers still believe 'our boys' can win, while the readers don't believe it any more, so the next best alternative is to get the hell out and let the Irish get on with it. Neither view, of course, offers any way forward for socialists.

Can Gorbachev bring freedom?



A conference to discuss solidarity with workers in the Soviet Union. Discussions include: Gorbachev's reform programme; The oppressed nationalities; Free Trade Unions and the jailed activist Vladimir Klebanov.

The Octagon Centre, Sheffield University

Saturday 7 May

12.00 — 5.00

Creche provided

Organised by the Campaign for Solidarity with Workers in the Eastern Bloc. (CSWEB), 54a Peckham Rye, London SE15.

Advance tickets £5 per delegate or waged individual;

£1 unwaged individual; £2 students.

CAMPAIGN FOR SOLIDARITY WITH WORKERS IN THE EASTERN BLOC

GRAFFITI

Tories say: no cash for AIDS

The government has shown the extent of its commitment to combatting AIDS by cutting off funding to syringe exchange projects in Edinburgh and Glasgow. Health Minister Tony Newton has decided to ignore the recommendations of a group of specialists contained in a report commissioned by Newton himself.

Individual health authorities are being given no extra funds for projects to combat the spread of AIDS among drug-users — Newton reckons that "tough law enforcement" is the

best way to deal with drug abuse. He is also against the distribution of free condoms to men in prison on the grounds that it may encourage homosexuality!

Ruth Runciman, one of the

specialists who worked on the report said of Newton's response: "I see the government slightly like drug addicts. We will seek to get them to change their behaviour to protect the rest of us."



In 1956 Russian tanks crushed the Hungarian workers (above). Now people flee to Hungary from Rumania and East Germany.

OK for Bukharin

Glavlit — the Soviet body responsible for ensuring that no-one reads anything the bureaucrats deem 'unsuitable' or anti-soviet has decided that Soviet citizens should have free access to the works of Nikolai Bukharin. Bukharin was shot by a Stalinist firing squad in 1938 and was "legally rehabilitated" a month ago.

Glavlit came into being last year to go through 6,000 works hidden away in a special store. Previously only a select few had access to these.

The intention, apparently, is that ultimately the public should have access to all books published in the Soviet Union. But what about the works of Soviet writers published abroad? Ah, well, they will have to be scrutinised for 'anti-soviet ideas' first.

Alton's prayer

One of the tactics being used by David Alton's motley band of anti-abortionists is a campaign of prayer. Alton, who has refused to debate publicly with representatives of the pro-choice groups clearly thinks that lobbying God is safer than attempting to convince people of his reactionary anti-woman rubbish!

Fleeing from Stalinism to Stalinism

Refugees from the police states of Romania and the GDR are being granted political asylum in, of all places, Hungary. Moreover, the Hungarian government has just allocated £3.2 million to help resettle them.

Official figures put the number of refugees from other eastern bloc countries in Hungary at around 10,000, but other estimates say the real figure is nearer 20,000. Many are not known to the authorities because they are hiding with relatives.

Many of the refugees are Hungarians from Transylvania, which is now part of Romania. Hungarians in Romania suffer discrimination in housing, education and employment.

For some, Hungary is the first stage in a journey to the West. But for many, living under

Stalinism in Hungary is preferable to the additional national oppression they suffer in Romania.

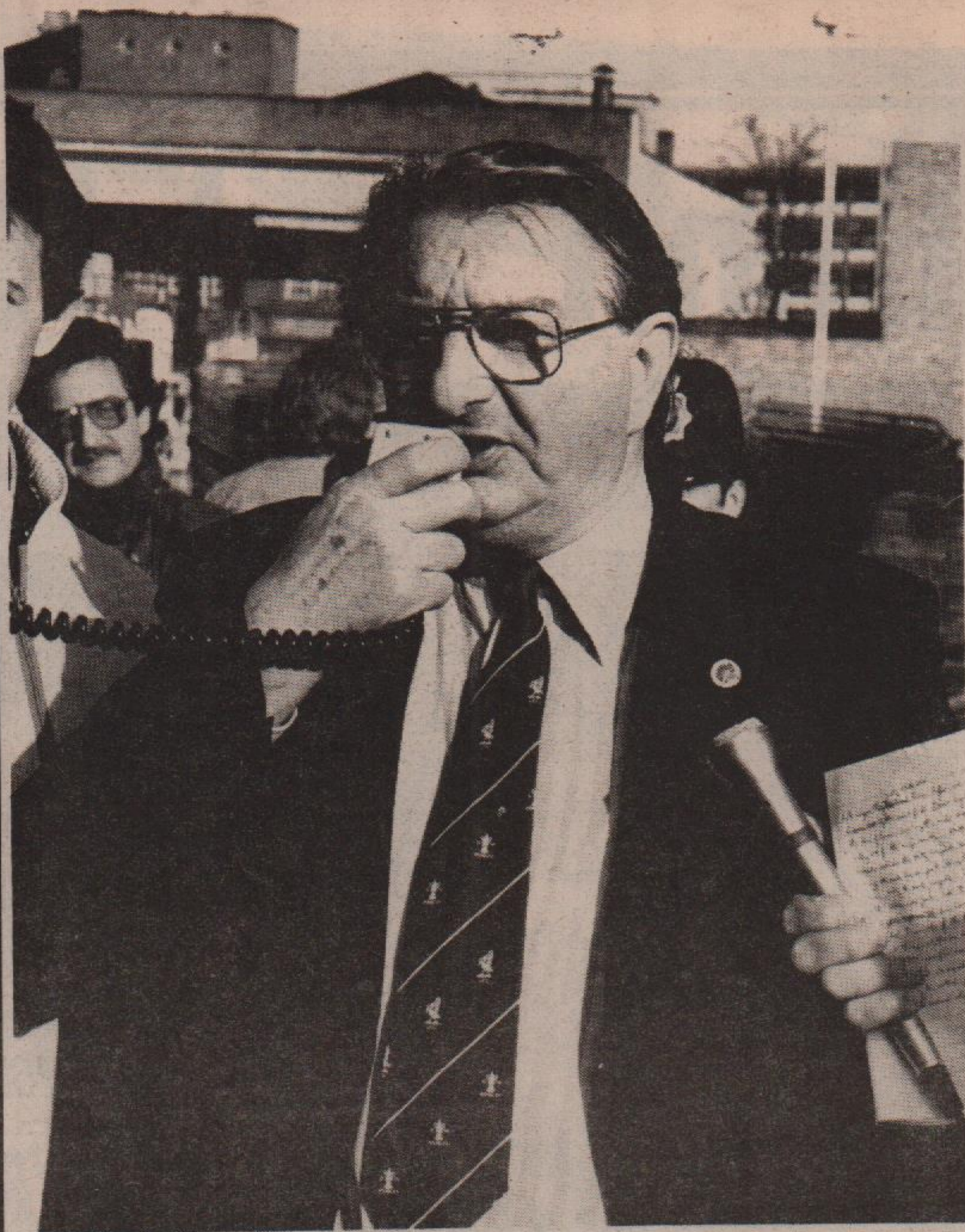
Football racism

Leeds United Football Club is producing 20,000 leaflets, to be distributed at the next home game, against the use of racist chants by fans.

This follows a report "Terror on our Terraces" produced for Leeds United by Anti-Fascist Action and Leeds Trades Council.

For years NF paper sellers have been outside Elland Road football ground, and the club has been the centre of NF recruitment activity in the area.

Leeds City Council has responded by announcing it will ban any Leeds fans convicted of racist crimes at the ground from any council premises.



Eric Heffer. Photo: Ian Swindale

Since 1983 the Party has been moving increasingly to the right. There is a greater concentration of power in the hands of the leadership and the National Executive has, to a large extent, been down-graded.

Now they plan to change the character of the Party Conference, step by step, so that the Party at grassroots level will not be determining policy.

And there has been retreat after retreat. The most blatant retreat is on the Common Market. Whatever you might think about this new policy, it has never been redefined and discussed by Party Conference — the Labour Party has just been slid and manoeuvred into a total change. Changes are also being made in the Party's attitude to public ownership, the nuclear bomb and a whole series of other issues.

It is time that this was changed. The drift away from basic socialist policies must be reversed.

It's all very well saying we want a nice friendly discussion in the Party. Certainly, we want a friendly discussion. But the Campaign Group felt that the best way to do it was to concretise it, to spotlight the political issues by a contest for the Leader and the Deputy Leader.

Now the so-called 'soft left' and the centre have got to make their minds up. Are they really left wing? Do they want the Labour Party to be a socialist party which goes out and fights for working class politics? Or have they now abandoned all socialist ideas?

We are standing on a programme defined by the Campaign Group. It contains a number of important points. We want:

- *an extension of public ownership.
- *the restoration and development of the rights of the trade unions.
- *All out opposition to racism.
- *Greater democracy; the abolition of the House of Lords.
- *A restoration of local democracy and an extension of local authority rights.
- *Women to have genuine equality.
- *The labour movement has got to support all those who are underdogs in one way or another, or who, like lesbians and gays, are being persecuted.
- *A different international policy — one of 'realignment' and getting out of NATO.
- *The abolition of all nuclear weapons.
- *A move away from nuclear power so that nuclear weapons cannot be restarted again.
- *We think Labour must have a much more realistic attitude towards Eastern Europe. At the

same time, of course, we defend the democratic rights of all the people in Eastern Europe. We oppose dictatorship in Chile and in other parts of the world. We fight on behalf of those who are fighting for their liberation.

These are the issues we believe we have got to go out and fight for in the course of this campaign.

Why a contest now? Much of what I have been describing is not new. They have been going on for a long time and some comrades and I myself have spoken out against them.

As with everything else, you have to take tactical considerations into account.

The campaign can help organise the left, all different sections of the left, throughout the Party, into a more cohesive political grouping, which recognises that we have more in common with each other than we have differences. If they believe in socialism they will work together. That will be a really important spin-off from the campaign.

If we had stood before the general election, and the election had then been lost, they would have said Labour lost because the left-wing Campaign Group put up candidates. We didn't. It was not because of us that the election was lost. In fact, most Campaign Group members increased their votes.

The election was in June. If we had put up a candidate immediately afterwards there would not have been time for proper consideration and organisation of a campaign before last year's October conference.

This year is the right time. There are three, perhaps four years before the next election, so there is not much mileage in accusations of rocking the boat — although of course they will still accuse us of it. But people know that there have been elections in the past. Wilson challenged Gaitskell. Nye Bevan challenged different people at different times. In fact, if you look at the record you find a challenge to the leadership on average about once every three or four years.

Rebu

Eric Heffer are contest

I cannot understand why the present leadership has reacted so heatedly to the fact of this election.

This is the year when it is important to begin. Maybe next year there will be another campaign, and maybe there will be different left candidates. This year we begin to break the logjam. It is raising the whole question of the leadership

You should be mobilising throughout the entire labour movement — in your union branches and Labour Party wards and GMCs. Organise now to make sure we get the biggest possible vote for the socialist policies we are putting forward.

and the fact of a contest is making all sorts of people face up to defining their attitudes to what is going on in the Labour Party.

Many predict that we are unlikely to get more than 25% of the vote. Obviously we are out to win, but we are concerned with other things as well.

The campaign can help organise the left, all different sections of the left, throughout the Party, into a more cohesive political grouping, which recognises that we have more in common with each other than we have differences. If they believe in socialism they will work together. That will be a really important spin-off from the campaign.

The campaign will also help to mobilise and hearten many people who have voted Labour in the past — good socialists who are getting a bit disillusioned. Nye Bevan's campaign in the 1950s helped to keep millions of workers in the Labour Party at the very moment when they were getting pretty fed up with things. They felt that here were the basic, compassionate views of the Labour Party coming up again, expressed again, and that serious people were organising again to fight for them. That will happen this time, too.

I went to Bristol to do a housing meeting on Friday evening. Going down in the train people — strangers — were coming up to me saying they thought it was quite right to stand. Then at the meeting itself, although I never raised the question because I was there to speak about housing, people came up and said the decision was good. Then, coming back again on the less crowded train, people were still coming up to me — not all Labour Party members — saying that it was absolutely the right thing to do, that it was about time it was done. Those who say that we do not represent anything are in for a big surprise.

Win or lose, it will not stop the arguments, the discussions, socialist ideas. There has always been constant discussion within the Party — that is the essence of socialist politics, socialist democracy.

NHS conference

By Mark Nevill

The NHS shop stewards' conference in Sheffield on 26 March called on the TUC to organise a one-day general strike, called for an indefinite NHS strike with emergency cover, for support for all health workers taking action, and decided to organise a further conference.

But unfortunately, the chance to give a lead to serious rank and file organisation in the NHS was lost, due to the sectarianism of the two largest left-wing groups involved, the Militant and the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP).

Indeed, the conference was beset with problems before it took place. The original call for a national shop stewards' conference was put both to the London-wide health workers' action committee and to the Broad Left Organising Committee.

Militant wanted only a conference they could control; the SWP didn't really want a conference at all. Militant have no understanding of rank-and-file organisation, while the SWP have a theory that nothing can be done independently of the union officials.

On the sub-committee set up to organise the conference, Militant argued for a Sheffield, rather than a London venue, and claimed that a hall was already booked by a Sheffield "strike committee" and leaflets produced.

In fact no hall in Sheffield had been booked, and no one beyond

Militant had access to any leaflets. So Militant had secured the control they wanted.

Thus the conference itself ended up designed to be more of a rally than a democratic, organising meeting. Even the London Health Emergency speaker was from Militant.

But the SWP was the largest tendency present, and their ultra-pessimism dominated the event. Their resolution argued that nothing was possible until the rank and file had an understanding of the Labour and trade union leadership — which if it means anything means until they have joined the SWP. And this deeply sectarian approach was counterposed, effectively, to any discussion on such questions as an overtime ban.

Yet no single group had an overall majority, so one by one the resolutions fell — except for one moved by Socialist Organiser supporters spelling out the necessary next steps for action and calling for a recall conference.

Despite the confusion at the end of the meeting, a committee was set up to organise the next conference, which will be in May.

That conference must not repeat the mistakes of this one. We need a genuinely open conference that discusses how to go forward at a rank and file level.

Rank and file organisation is counterposed neither to calling on the official leaderships to take action, nor to a fight within the unions. On the contrary, a national shop stewards' network in the health service can help put pressure on the union leadership.

Build the left!

MP explains why he and Tony Benn are contesting the Labour Party leadership

But the very concept of socialism, of workers' struggle, cannot just be swept aside. As long as capitalism is there the working class will be there and so will socialism.

Now the Campaign Group should set about organising the campaign, both nationally and locally. What should we do?

We are going to have to produce publications explaining our aims and objectives, and get them to all the CLPs. I think there should be a series of rallies in the main centres throughout the country. At these rallies we should involve the local parties and the local supporting groups. Those who come to the rallies can then be our supporters in their own localities.

I think we will have the time to cover most of the urban centres, and then people can come in from outside to hear what we have to say.

I hope this will give a boost to the book I wrote. Tony Benn goes on about it being our bible in this situation because he says the book says it all. That can be well used. We will also have to think in terms of a pamphlet. And the Campaign News will have to be effectively used.

In the 1981 Deputy Leadership campaign there were a lot of big rallies. In places they were comparable to the rallies witnessed in the 1945 general election. But there was a problem with the trade unions and the unions were decisive.

What we should aim at is to try to get proper discussions in every trade union so that the issues are fully debated. What are the issues in the unions?

*The attitude that the Party must have to trade union legislation.

*Where the Labour Party stands on the struggles of workers in industry, in the National Health Service, the miners, the seafarers.

*What the Party should say to the — disgraceful — attempt to get a low-paid agreement by one union from Ford management.

All these matters can be properly debated. We will develop the campaign in the constituencies and then alongside it, and as part of it, we will campaign in the trade unions.

It seems likely that a number of trade unions, and also CLPs, will have an individual membership ballot to determine their attitude in the election.

I have never been against individual membership ballots. But if they are going to be held then our views have to be properly circulated as well as other people's views. An equal number of words in a union journal, or views circulated to all their members. I think that would be a good thing. Representatives of both sides should speak at union conferences.

I stood in the leadership election in 1983 as the left candidate, when many on the left had big illusions in Neil Kinnock. The situation is different but there are some lessons to be learned.

We had a rather ramshackle campaign. A lot of people — like Socialist Organiser — rallied and did what they could. But there was no real financial backing. I think financial backing should come from the party itself. It should not be left to the candidates to finance the

campaign, because people without money have as much right to stand as people with a machine behind them. I raised this myself after the 1983 campaign but it got 'lost'. So we are still in the same situation today.

What ought to be done this time is we should have more than a national group meeting and working on the campaign. We need people in each main urban area working together as a team, forming a support group. That is one of the main lessons I would learn.

We need support groups in different unions as well, although union members will be connected with what is happening in each area. Perhaps the Broad Lefts in each union can play a role. I hope

This year we begin to break the logjam. The contest is making people face up to defining their attitudes to what is going on in the Labour Party.

they will be supporting us, and I am sure that in most cases they will.

The initial reaction to the announcement that Tony and I would be standing was surprising. I do not think people should react in that way. We have the rules; we are entitled to contest. If you are the leader, you should simply say: they are entitled to do so and it will be a choice between their views and ours. Unfortunately it did not come over like that. Now they are talking about the ideological debate, and that, of course, is right.

This is the point at which the left begins to reorganise itself and starts to rally. I made the point at the time of the Chesterfield Conference that the left needs to do more than just sit around talking about things. I floated the idea of going back to the old Socialist League type-organisation which had existed during the 1930s.

Out of this should emerge something of that kind. Because even if we are defeated in this election, they will not defeat socialism. You cannot wipe it away. Even in countries where the right wing have got firm control of the party — in Germany, Italy and so on — they have not got rid of socialism. Maybe for a period it is in retreat. But the very concept of socialism, of workers' struggle, cannot just be swept aside. As long as capitalism is there the working class will be there and so will socialism.

That is my reply to the kind of statement now being put out by Kinnock and Hattersley, that a victory by them will put the Party's seal of approval on their kind of politics for a very long time, and finally decide which direction the Party is going to take.

Certainly, this is a very serious debate about the future of the Party, and the direction in which it is going.

If they do win, then I trust they will not talk in terms of people having to 'toe the line'. If it comes to that you are no longer a democratic socialist party. We are not going to accept that. Win or lose, it will not stop the arguments, the discussions, socialist ideas. There has always been constant discussion within the Party — that is the essence of socialist politics, socialist democracy.

I was chucked out of the Communist Party over 40 odd years ago for not agreeing to that sort of thing. I have always thought that one of the great things about the Labour Party, for all its faults, has been that in general there has been open and frank and free discussion.

Finally, this is my message to comrades inside the Party who are heartened by the Campaign Group's decision to contest the leadership and deputy-leadership.

You should be mobilising throughout the entire labour movement — in your union branches and Labour Party wards and GMCs. Organise now to make sure we get the biggest possible vote for the socialist policies we are putting forward.



A working class women's movement can be built on the lines of 'Women Against Pit Closures'.

What Leasowe showed

Labour Party women's sections are in the doldrums. Often they are no more than talking shops. Or they are dominated by the frenzied anti-feminists of the Militant Tendency, who keep them as empty shells, used to pass Militant's sterile resolutions. Women are constantly under attack. Cuts in the health service, in local authorities, in social services all affect women the worst.

Here Liz Williams gives an account of the setting up of a different sort of women's section, in the Leasowe estate on Merseyside, and provides a model of a real campaigning women's section, with real roots in the local community.

Early in 1987 there was a strike in a small general shop in the centre of a large Wallasey council housing estate called 'The Leasowe'.

The strike was over the employment of bully boy security men who began to sexually harass the staff who worked at Dillons Newsmarket. All the staff were women, and 90% of them were TGWU members.

As soon as the strike was called, women Labour Party activists and supporters from Wallasey women's section were regularly on the picket line.

Discussions always got round to politics, and why it was important for women to be active in the Labour Party. The strike was shortly followed by the general election. Wallasey had one of the most democratic, outgoing socialist campaigns many women had ever been involved in.

Flushed with our success at reducing a Tory majority of 6,708 to 279, women on the Leasowe estate got together and formed the Leasowe women's section.

The difference between the Leasowe women's section and most other women's sections is that it has been organised by working class women who live on a council estate and who want a real say in how their lives are directly affected by crushing and evil Tory legislation.

When the section was set up Trisha Curtis said: "We organised the women's section to get ordinary women from the estate involved. By activities here on the estate we will draw attention to the Labour Party among women."

WOMAN'S EYE

Trish Maguire said "It is about time women showed that they don't sit at home and wait for the men, but they can also fight for what they believe in."

The section is not just another talking shop but a campaigning section based on the needs of working class women in the area. One of the section's first efforts was the mammogram campaign.

A machine was lying idle in a local hospital, and in order to save the NHS a few pounds women were not receiving screening for breast cancer.

This campaign involved mass petitioning, a picket, media coverage on both TV and Radio, and finally a showdown with the Area Health Authority.

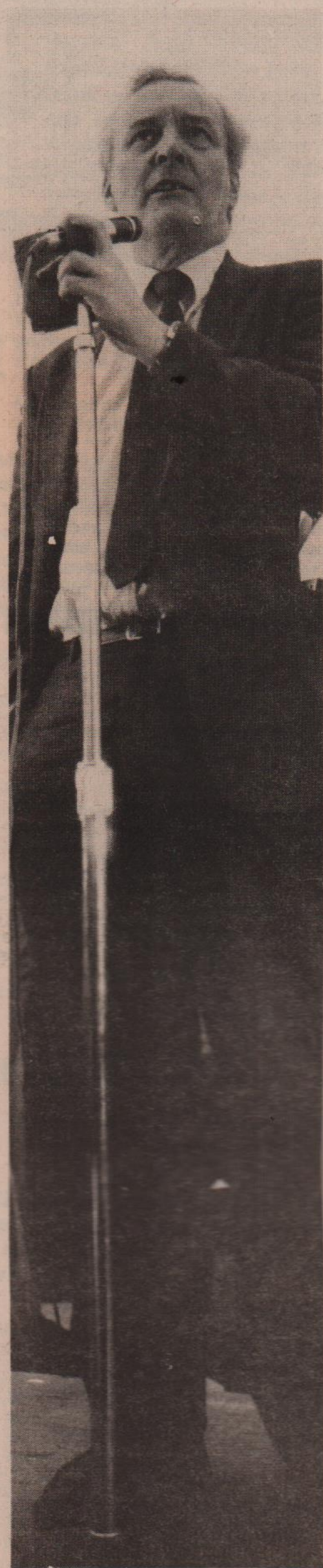
The AHA backed down and agreed that within two years there will be two machines in operation full time, and a mobile unit to go around factories, estates and other places. There will be breast screening for all women over 45 with automatic recall and self-referral for others.

But this is just the start. The section is already pressing ahead with their next campaign — to open up and use a closed-down children's home on the estate and to turn it into a nursery and well women's centre, so that women can have a decent childcare centre on the estate as a right, not a luxury!

At a recent North West Women's Forum organised on Merseyside by women from the North West Regional Women's Committee to look at campaigns and activities amongst women's organisations on Merseyside, we caused a stir among other sections, and acute discomfort and embarrassment to our Militant sisters, by the amount of educational and campaigning work we have undertaken.

But this work will continue. Women's sections and councils should turn outwards. They should be recruiting working class women and drawing women into the labour movement to challenge the organisational feminists in WAC and the rigid myths of Militant.

Leasowe is not different from hundreds of other estates! Building a working class women's movement can be done. Our women's section on 'The Leasowe' proves this!



White death

Diabetes is a paradoxical disease. Amongst an abundance of food, it produces the symptoms of starvation. Due to a lack of the hormone insulin, the body is unable to extract glucose from the blood. The tissues are chronically starved of energy.

In the normal body, carbohydrates in the food are converted mainly into glucose in the intestines, to be absorbed by the blood. The raised level of glucose in the blood signals the pancreas to make insulin. This directs the cells of the body to take up the glucose and use it for energy or store it as starch or fat.

This restores blood glucose to its normal level. If it falls further, glucose is released from storage to restore it. This keeps the brain going as it cannot store glucose but must take it continuously from the blood.

The diabetic cannot make insulin so blood glucose stays high until the extra glucose has been lost in the urine (hence the sweet urine typical of diabetes). Blood glucose levels keep falling though, as there is none stored to be released. It is then that diabetics start to lose consciousness as the brain is starved of energy. Without more glucose, they may go into a coma and die.

Diabetes can be controlled by injections of insulin but there are still greater fluctuations in blood glucose than normal. This seems linked to the fact that diabetics suffer more from arterio-sclerosis (hardening of the arteries), cataracts and premature ageing and recent research is starting to show how this works.

Glucose is quite an active chemical and in particular joins to proteins spontaneously. This starts a chain reaction resulting several weeks later in the formation of links between different protein fibres. This makes them less flexible and disrupts their ordered structures.

Many proteins are replaced frequently so that this damage is soon removed but, in the long-lived proteins of the flesh, bones, nerves, blood vessels and eye-lens, it builds up over the life time. One protein, collagen, a strong flexible substance abundant throughout the body, becomes stiffer due to cross-linking. There is evidence that it is stiffer in diabetics, explaining not only the more aged appearance of the skin but also possibly loss of protein in the urine from less efficient kidneys and perhaps the hardness of the arteries. In the eye-lens, cross-links disrupt the ordered crystalline structure essential for clear sight. Cross-linking in nerve proteins may result in damage as the immune system attacks apparently "foreign" proteins.

Therefore, it is crucial that diabetics keep blood glucose as low as possible. One way is to eat food low in refined sugar and high in starch. This would cause a slower release of glucose. Coupled with automatic insulin pumps, perhaps controlled by blood glucose sensors, this would iron out the wilder swings.

But do non-diabetics have anything to worry about? After a sugary meal, blood glucose will be as high as in a diabetic's blood. Before the insulin does its work, some of these cross-linking chain reactions can start. One theory is that glucose-induced cross-linking is part of normal ageing. If true, cutting down on refined sugars in the diet should help keep you younger. This may be difficult, though. Food manufacturers seize every opportunity to sneak sugar into their products as the easiest way of adding a pleasant taste.

Baby brainwash

Belinda Weaver reviews
'Baby Boom'.

'Baby Boom' is a comedy/fantasy of wish fulfillment. In the movie, Diane Keaton gets to 'have it all' — business success, a dishy man, a baby (without all the fuss of pregnancy and childbirth) and revenge on the mean guys who did her down.

Keaton is meant to represent what all women want to be — someone juggling career, baby and husband successfully and easily.

But the film is utterly reactionary. Of course, it's a comedy, so we can just laugh at it and dismiss it as a joke. But can we?

The film is actually sending up 'career women' and saying that all they really want is a man and kids; that the career stuff just fills in time till Mr Right and the tinies come along.

Having Keaton in the star role is the giveaway. At the beginning, Keaton is meant to be just as competitive and intent on climbing the corporate ladder as any of her male colleagues. In fact, she has to work harder, to really prove she's one of the boys. The men don't have to be interrogated about whether their biological clocks are ticking away. Keaton does.

Of course she hotly denies that marriage or kids hold any interest for her; that's part of being one of the boys.

But Keaton as a corporate dynamo doesn't really work. And it was never meant to. She's in the role precisely because she's a clown. Keaton can't help but louse it up — that's what her film success is based on.

The film's running joke is her incompetence. Keaton with a nappy, Keaton awkwardly holding her baby, Keaton buying a beautiful farmhouse that turns out a white elephant — it's all part of her loveable nincompoop image.

Once Keaton inherits her baby, she discovers a baby was what she wanted all along! The men in the firm all believe it. They know that's what all women really want, deep



down.

Of course, her boss tries to soften it for her. *He* has built up a successful company, but he doesn't know how many grandchildren he's got — no one can have it all, he says. But, of course, he can; he has a wife at home bearing and raising his kids, tending his home. That's a lot easier than Keaton's role as single mother and sole provider.

Meeting baby Elizabeth scrambles Keaton's brain. She wants to do it right. She'll sweep

baby off to the country where she'll be able to concentrate wholly on motherhood. Of course, something goes wrong. Motherhood isn't enough!

So the film makers bring in the missing ingredient...a man! Love! A daddy for baby!

I hoped we had seen the end of scenes where the manly hero grabs the woman in a masterful clinch and we see her struggle and resist and then go all weak and adoring. Sadly, we haven't. That scene had whiskers in the 1940s. It's just em-

barrassing in 'Baby Boom'.

Of course Keaton gets to create a successful business as well, but that all seems to happen off screen. One minute she's broke, then she's Businesswoman of the Year.

If creating a successful business was this easy, we'd all be millionaires. Unfortunately, it isn't. It takes time, effort and the hiring (and exploitation) of lots of workers. But Keaton manages it all with the help of a few grannies with wooden spoons, and the baby is on her hip all the time.

And then the film really goes into overdrive, trying to prove women aren't really serious about business at all. Keaton gets the chance to really cash in, and...she turns it down! Somehow money and success just aren't that important! There's the bingo at the local village hall in Vermont, and the nice vet she's seeing, not to mention the baby.

Yuk!

The film is aimed at the post-war baby boomers who are all raising kids. It's telling them that a woman hell bent on career alone is no woman; that real women really only want a husband and kids. These baby boomers are a big market, so Hollywood wants to reassure them that they've made the right choices, the only possible choices, that careers don't mean a thing beside home and hearth.

It's a cynical film because it's selling images that are meaningless to most women. Keaton gets to have it all because she makes a vast fortune. Not many single mothers get to buy enormous farmhouses, indulge their every whim, splash out on expensive toys and nanny hire; they're lucky to pay the rent.

Real babies cry, make messes and thrown tantrums; they don't just look angelic and say 'Mama' winsomely. Motherhood is no picnic; it's not something that might be just a bit of fun, more fun than a boring old career. Most women don't have careers; they have jobs which they desperately need to pay for necessities, not luxuries.

'Baby Boom' is a con. Because we laugh at it, we think it's harmless. It may be enjoyable, but it's certainly not good for you.

A purist of jazz

By Jim Denham

Ken Colyer, who died recently just short of his 60th birthday, was the embodiment of all that is best and some of what is worst about British traditional jazz.

He was utterly dedicated, honest and completely indifferent (if not downright hostile) to commercial success. On the other hand he was opinionated and puritanical about his jazz to the point of musical bigotry.

For Ken, jazz began in turn of the century New Orleans with Buddy Bolden, and ended in the early '20s when Louis Armstrong began disrupting the trumpet/clarinet/trombone ensemble by taking flashy solos. I honestly don't know if he was aware of Duke Ellington or Count Basie (let alone Charlie Parker) but if he was, he certainly didn't consider them to be jazz musicians.

Ken was the doyen and guru of the postwar British "revivalist" jazz movement and his protégés included many, like Chris Barber and Monty Sunshine, who went on to make a killing out of the "trad boom" of the late 1950s — something Ken heartily disapproved of.

He also, more or less inadvertently, played a big part in instigating

the "skiffle" fad (by giving the idea to Lonnie Donegan) and the British Rhythm 'n' Blues movement (via another protégé, Alexis Korner). But Ken himself eschewed "commercialism" in all its manifestations and regarded the progress of his more wayward disciples with a jaundiced eye.

If Ken was the "Guvnor" to a whole generation of British jazz musicians, he himself had his heroes, principally the black New Orleans trumpeter Willie "Bunk" Johnson, who belonged to the generation before Louis Armstrong, but who'd never left his home town and was not recorded until the 1940s, by which time he was an old man with no teeth. Bunk's records were eagerly seized upon by jazz fans on both sides of the Atlantic, who had had enough of the big swing bands and were repelled by the complexities (or pretentiousness, depending on your point of view) of be-bop. No-one embraced Bunk's approach more enthusiastically than Colyer, but to some observers there was something almost perverse about a young English trumpet player slavishly following the style of an elderly New Orleansian, past the peak of his powers and brought suddenly out of retirement after over twenty

years.

Nevertheless, Bunk's playing did have a certain power and dignity to it, and Ken at his best came very close to reproducing it. In the early '50s, Colyer joined the Merchant Navy with the sole intention of jumping ship at New Orleans and playing alongside his heroes. He was soon arrested, jailed and deported, but not before achieving his objectives, though he was too late to catch Bunk.

This escapade established Colyer as a legend amongst British revivalists, and he returned to a hero's welcome and a band specially formed for him by Chris Barber and Monty Sunshine.

Characteristically, Colyer promptly sacked his band as "too commercial", and they went on to achieve popular success under Barber's leadership, while "The Guvnor" soldiered on in relative obscurity.

When Louis Armstrong came to Britain with his slick and commercial "All Stars" in the mid '50s, someone noticed Colyer skulking about at the back of the audience and asked him what he thought of the great Satchmo: Colyer paused for a while and finally replied, "He'll do, I suppose". It was the nearest he ever came to admitting that anything other than pure New Orleans jazz was worth listening to.

No alternative but more strikes

By Ian Nichol

"The NHS is safe in our hands" said the Tory election machine in the run up to the last General Election. Since then it has become blatantly obvious — and not only to those who work in the NHS — that this far from the truth. Never before has the country been so misled.

But a strong current of disbelief is now running through the country and it includes 70% of Tory voters. They know that the NHS is being dismantled by a government that cares only about the material wealth of a few and not about the health of the people as a whole. This has created a wave of protest throughout the country.

It began with the 13 November half-day strike by Riverside's health workers against the proposal of Riverside's District Health Authority to close four hospitals after the North West Thames Region had made a £33 million cut in the district's budget.

This action was followed by a one day strike of Manchester nurses, who struck to bring to the public's attention the fact that people die as a result of the government's acute underfunding of the health service.

On 5 March 100,000 people attended the national march and rally organised by the TUC. Many believed that the TUC was finally going to fight to defend the NHS. But in reality the TUC was just trying to defuse the growing militancy of the health workers.

The TUC made sure no health workers addressed the rally because they didn't want to give a platform to the widely popular call at that time for a one day general strike on or immediately prior to Budget Day.

Despite the TUC's attempt to gag health workers, a one day national strike was called by rank and file members on 14 March. In response, the leaders of the two main unions, COHSE and NUPE, attempted to split us up by calling actions on different days. Despite that, and despite our limited resources, the strike on 14 March was very successful.

It was well supported by other trade unionists, as well as by health workers, in an action of solidarity that has not been seen in this country for many years.

Many health workers, mainly from the RCN, have argued against the recent days of strike action in favour of two-hour, lunch-time protests or more mass rallies. They say that striking should be a last resort as it affects patient care and further action would lose public support.

Scots health workers ballot on 'prolonged' strike against privatisation

Members of the Lothian Health Service Joint Trade Union Committee (JTUC) have suffered a double setback in the last fortnight: prevented from entering into negotiations with the Lothian Health Board over 'specifications', then defeated in their efforts to resume a programme of selective 24-hour



Photo: Ian Swindale

resort as it affects patient care and further action would lose public support.

But for years the TUC has called for limited action in defence of the public sector, but has failed to make any impact on Tory policy. Action in the NHS has not lost public support; on the contrary, we have gained overwhelming support.

The government is causing the deaths of patients with the cuts they are imposing on the NHS. No patient has died due to any action taken by health workers.

Instead of increasing funding for the NHS, the government in the recent Budget handed over £1750 million in tax cuts to the top five per cent of earners.

We are left with no alternative but to increase our strike action, to force this government to listen. But health workers must not stand alone. The lessons learned from the miners' strike and the strike at Wapping were that no single group of workers can defeat a government hell bent on creating a country of the haves and have-nots.

So we must build on the solidarity that was shown on 14 March and if necessary picket key workplaces

If we all act together the law could not be used against unions taking 'secondary action'; the government would be hard pushed to take us all to court. If necessary we should form one single health workers' union to prevent our leaders from attempting to split us again. The struggle for the defence of the NHS concerns us all and we must act in unity. The labour movement must defend the NHS.

strike action.

The Lothian JTUC (consisting partly of full-time union officials and partly of lay members) called off all industrial action in mid-March in order to prepare the ground for meeting the Health Board to discuss hospital closures, redundancies, and 'specifications' (roughly job descriptions).

On Tuesday of last week, (22 March) members of the JTUC then suffered a further setback when no-one at all at a mass meeting of NUPE members at the

Edinburgh Royal Infirmary voted in favour of their proposal for a 24-hour strike at the hospital to be held the following Monday.

Rejected

Having rejected the proposal from the JTUC speakers the meeting then voted in favour of immediate strike action in support of a dispute at the Edinburgh City Hospital over the appointment of a new incinerator operator. Porters there had gone out on

strike over management's breach of the grievances procedure and been backed by solidarity action from other workers at the City Hospital, especially in the sterilising unit.

The dispute ended in a victory for the porters at the close of last week, after the newly appointed incinerator operator was taken off the job by management.

Ballots are now due to be held in the hospitals in the Lothians on the question of "prolonged" strike action

Rover

Sell-out or draw?

By Jim Denham

After over five weeks on strike, the 6,000 hourly paid Land Rover workers have voted to return to work. The recommendation came from the full-time officials and was backed by the Solihull Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.

A mass meeting on Wednesday 23rd was expected to endorse the deal, but in fact broke up in confusion with some workers accusing the stewards of selling out. However, a ballot held over the weekend resulted in an overwhelming vote to accept.

Was the deal a sell-out? Some, like the SWP, have no hesitation in describing it as such. And some Land Rover workers consider that their five weeks of sacrifice have been a wasted effort.

Certainly the final deal, involving the phased consolidation of a £3.05 attendance allowance into the basic rate, is only a very marginal improvement on the original offer, and involves no "new money".

But the Land Rover shop stewards

were of the unanimous opinion that the deal was the best that could be achieved, short of a protracted dispute lasting at least another month — and they judged that the membership could not hold out that long, without the trickle of scabs crossing the picket lines turning into a flood. Under those circumstances, management would quite possibly have withdrawn even their existing offer and union organisation at Solihull would have been devastated.

The stewards are probably right in their assessment of the situation that faced them by the fifth week, and many of those who now shout "sell-out" do not seem to appreciate the serious difficulties and dangers that faced the Solihull stewards. The fact is that the strike was deadlocked, and there was a very real risk of a large number of workers crossing picket lines.

But this situation need not have arisen. Mass picketing of the gates could have been organised (over 1,000 turned out on the first day of the strike) and regular mass meetings could have kept the strikers united and actively involved in the progress of the dispute. Instead, the shop stewards allowed the officials to limit picketing to six per gate (additional pickets were described as



"demonstrators" in "support" of the pickets) and to give an undertaking that scabs would not be "intimidated".

And because no mass meetings were held in the first couple of weeks of the strike, the stewards allowed the situation to arise where any meeting that was called would have been seen as a climb-down in the face of management pressure.

Meanwhile, little was done to win solidarity in the docks and at other Rover Group factories. The idea of asking other Rover workers to bring forward their own claims, and come out alongside the Solihull strikers, was not a realistic proposition (given the massive differences in the review dates that now exist within the Rover Group), but much more could have been done to raise money for the hardship fund, and the idea of a one-day strike throughout Rover (in response to the proposed takeover by British Aerospace) could have been raised. This would have meant sending out delegations to the docks and to other Rover factories. It wasn't done, and the strike remained isolated and deadlocked at Solihull.

None of the above should detract from the tremendous solidarity of the vast majority of Land Rover strikers and their shop stewards. The workers return united and with their union organisation not only intact, but strengthened. The workforce, who were traditionally considered amongst the most docile and "management-loyal" in the motor industry, have shown that they are willing to stand up and fight — and that augers well for the future.

The British Aerospace takeover will certainly mean more attacks on jobs, wages and conditions throughout the Rover Group. This strike has ended with (in the words of one shop steward) an "honourable draw". Next time it should be a clear-cut victory — if the lessons are learned.

Seafarers

Dover strike

The strike of 2,300 seafarers in Dover is holding out solidly. The support committee is raising money throughout the community, and many striking seafarers are travelling the country to build support for the strike and for a yes vote in the National Union of Seafarers' ballot.

Andrew Bradford, a striking seafarer, commented that: "There will be a vote for a national strike despite the vague wording of the ballot paper."

Asked about the national union's role in the Dover strike, he said: "The national union's actions have obviously been confusing to many people, with the call for a national strike over the Heysham sackings of 169 seafarers being solid, but being called off after only a few days. McCluskie going back on his word confused many people, especially when it coincided with our strike in Dover."

"In Dover the seafarers are not impressed by the national leadership, as they should have taken a much better lead instead of leaving it as a local dispute for 6-7 weeks. The national leadership should have been involved from day one."

"P&O have consistently escalated attacks on the strikers. The letter containing proposals to change working conditions, which started the strike has been followed up by workers being presented with new contracts or the sack."

"They are going all-out for a fight. They want to break the national union and bring in non-unionised foreign crews. P&O have done this sort of thing so often before."

"As P&O want to bring in cheap non-union crews, the links with continental crews is vital. Our links with French and Dutch unions are very good. They have totally refused to crew ships that should have been crewed by NUS members, even refusing to load P&O ships. The people over there are generally much more active and non-union crews could not be brought in."

"Now the owner of Sealink is saying that if P&O win this he will immediately

bring in the same conditions on his ships. The shipowners have worked it out in advance. This time they are all-out to break the national union. I think Sealink's crews will be out in a week. This attack on conditions and safety will affect all seafarers, and I hope all seafarers will see that.

"Support from other unions has been good. We have had nurses from the local St. George's Hospital joining the picket for a day. It is hoped that a mass picket will be mounted with all other union members involved in the near future. Every union we have approached has supported us financially and with action. Not from executive level but from the rank and file. It has given me the cause to fight on and not to let these people down."

McCluskie cowers

The leadership of the National Union of Seamen has called off the ballot for a national strike. Sam McCluskie issued a statement on Monday saying that the ballot papers will be kept uncounted, by the union's bank.

Last Friday, P&O won an injunction in the High Court against the ballot, and gained an order for the sequestration of union funds should the NUS call a national strike.

McCluskie is determined that the union should stay within the law, and has publicly said he will discipline a union official who said that the ballot result would still be announced.

With French sailors at Calais on indefinite strike, and in the face of Sealink's threatened attacks on wages and conditions, now is the time to defy the law. An all-out strike over the Easter break would really hit P&O where it hurts — in their profits.

At present, all that McCluskie is prepared to do is give a nod and a wink to unofficial action. That is not enough to protect ferry-workers' already inadequate pay and conditions.

CPSA

DE strike ballot lost

By Trudy Saunders, CPSA (in a personal capacity)

Last week an all-out strike ballot amongst CPSA members in London Department of Employment (DE) offices, was narrowly lost.

The strike ballot followed three months of industrial action by 30 London offices.

The dispute began on 21 December at Camden A Unemployment Benefit Office after management proposed the compulsory transfer of six staff to Camden Jobcentre. Soon after, St. Marylebone A and B Unemployment Benefit Offices walked out, in anticipation of compulsory transfer of staff.

The strike escalated to a number of other offices including seven DHSS offices where members were threatened with suspension for refusing to deal

with work from striking UBOs.

The six staff at Camden AUBO were threatened with compulsory transfer after management claimed a drop in the unemployment register (casuals at the office were also sacked). Staffing in the UBOs is at an all-time low. Casuals are used in place of permanent workers.

So why did the strike ballot go down? The DE Section Executive Committee (SEC) undoubtedly played a role. The DE SEC is controlled by the "new realists" of Broad Left '84, who can always be counted upon to put the dampener on any industrial action by rank and file workers.

However, despite the narrow defeat in the ballot, the mood amongst workers in DE is good. The strike vote, although lost, was an encouraging one.

There is a feeling that the will to strike is definitely there. This needs to be built on and organised by the DE SEC and the NEC because the dispute will not stop here.

Workers are now negotiating a united return to work on Thursday.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Choice for students

Next week's NUS conference will see the student movement at a crossroads.

On the one hand students are facing Tory attacks like the Education Reform Bill, the Social Security Bill, Poll Tax, student loans and the threat of voluntary membership.

On the other it has come through six years of a Democratic Left

leadership which has consistently walked away from organising a concerted fightback and failed dismally to build a student movement which can defend its membership or its own right to organise politically.

Conference will face decisions on NUS's own methods of organising, on Clause 28, on the development of its work in the Further Education sector, on the attacks on student financial support and on the NHS.

More importantly, it will have to decide who is to be its new leadership — more important because for years the fate of conference policy has rested on the unwillingness of the leadership to implement them.

Obviously, voting on policies which are never going to be implemented is pointless. Equally obvious is the need to change the leadership if students are going to change anything.

This is the context in which Socialist Students in NOLS are challenging the Democratic Left leadership of NUS. After years of winning policies which have been spiked by the National Executive, students face a choice — more of the same or a new leadership with a record of good ideas and commitment to leading a student fightback.

Unfortunately the response of the rest of the left has been shameful. From the SWP to the Militant tendency, the left appears quite happy to support the Kinnockite Democratic Left (DL) rather than upset the status quo. The rationalisations range from SSIN's supposed 'deals' with Zionists, to the idea that the DL are the official Labour candidates. (So why did the Militant back the non-NOLS candidate in NUS Scottish elections?)

These reasons are simply factual. It suits these sectarians to have a corrupt and right wing leadership which they can score points off.

If, in the meantime, the DL leads the movement into defeat and decline? Then, tough. They'll continue to denounce it without ever seriously taking up opportunities to change the situation.

This is a decisive conference for NUS. Rank and file students must choose to take the movement forward.

Students for Benn and Heffer

We should use the weeks of next term to turn out student support for Benn and Heffer in the Labour Party leadership contest.

Labour Students have traditionally been part of the left of the Party. The leadership battle gives us the chance to reassert our commitment to socialism as well as show that the youth of the party are for taking on the Tories.

*In colleges which have Labour Clubs we must win them over to supporting Benn and Heffer. Club delegates to General Management Committees must be mandated to vote the right way.

*Call meetings to elect broad-based steering committees to run the campaign from your college and liaise with local and national campaign groups. etc.

*Use the campaign to involve Party members who may not have been active in the past. It is also a good opportunity to get new people to join and be active in the Party, even though they may not be eligible to vote this time.

*A lot of students are members of the Party where they live rather than where they are at college. Chase these people up and make sure they are active in their ward parties over the summer vacation.

Socialist Students in NOLS will be producing badges, leaflets, etc., for next term.

There will be a Benn for Leader, Heffer for Deputy fringe meeting at NUS conference. Time and speakers to be confirmed.



Palestine: two nations, two states!

The uprising by Palestinians living in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, which began in December, has pushed the Palestinian question once more to the forefront of world politics.

Over 100 Palestinians have been killed, and many more injured. In an attempt to repress the revolt, the Israeli military authorities have detained hundreds of Palestinians; some have been deported.

The origins of the conflict lie in the uprooting of most of the original Arab-speaking population of Palestine when Israel was set up in 1948. The refugees live in camps — like the one in Gaza that Tory MP David Mellor described as an "affront to civilised values."

In the Israeli-Arab war of 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza — creating more refugees and imposing military rule on more than one million Arabs.

What is the answer? Israel should

get out of the West Bank and Gaza and allow the Palestinians living there the right to self-determination — that is, the right to form an independent state side by side with Israel.

In any negotiations, the Palestinians should have the right to choose their own representatives — rather than have others (the Jordanian regime or Israeli nominees, for example) speak for them.

And the clear representative of the vast majority of Palestinians is the Palestine Liberation Organisation, the PLO. Shimon Peres, Israel's Foreign Minister, recently admitted that if elections were held now in the occupied territories, the PLO would win nearly all of them.

Beyond that, what? A hard-line Palestinian nationalist demand is the restoration of all of pre-1948 Palestine to the Palestinians. The problem is that over three million Jews live in that area now, and most of them were born there.

From a democratic — never mind a socialist — point of view, those

Israeli Jews have every right to stay there.

Unless the Jews are driven out, a 'Palestinian', that is, an Arab state, is not possible in all of Palestine: if a single state were to be created incorporating all of pre-1948 Palestine (what is now the occupied territories and Israel itself), it would have to be a joint Israeli-Jewish/Palestinian-Arab state.

But is such a state possible? The long-term aim of the PLO, supported by many on the left, is for a 'democratic, secular state' in all of Palestine. But unfortunately, this is unobtainable.

Where two distinct peoples or nations exist, with more-or-less distinct territory, it is very difficult simply to merge them into one. More precisely, two peoples won't simply merge unless they no longer see themselves as distinct nations. Socialists certainly want people to put national identity aside — but we recognise that the best way to overcome feelings of nationality is not just to denounce them or insist that people forget about them.

The 'secular democratic state' is, in effect, a programme for the merger of two nations. So what does it mean?

Either it depends upon convincing the Israeli Jewish nation that it shouldn't want to be a separate nation — in which case it will take a very long time to achieve and is no answer to the existing plight of the Palestinians.

Or it does *not* depend on convincing the Jews at all. They should be forced into a single state. But even if that were possible, its result would not be a state where everyone lived together happily: it would be imposed by war. Socialists don't always oppose wars, but we do oppose wars to subjugate nations.

A lot of socialists argue that the Israelis have no national rights — that is, no right to a state — because they are the oppressors. Only oppressed nations, like the Palestinians, they say, have the right to self-determination.

Our fighting fund

With only one day to go on our fund drive for £10,000, the tally stands at £9244.84.

Our thanks to everyone who has contributed. But there is only time for a short rest before fund-raising has to start again: we'll need another £10,000 by 30 June!

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

Is Clause 4 a liability?

WHETTON'S WEEK

I was fortunate enough this weekend to be one of the NUM delegates to the East Midlands Regional Labour Party Conference.

Comrade Hattersley addressed us from the platform. There was also a fringe meeting with Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and Audrey Wise. There was a remarkable comparison between the different addresses.

Tony Benn talked about the principle of an on-going campaign to raise the issue of socialism and put it back on the agenda; Hattersley, by contrast, spent most of his time having a dig at somebody. A dig at the miners, a dig at Arthur Scargill, more than a dig at Benn. Between the two, one was obviously looking forward on behalf of the working class; the other was looking inward, to protect himself and his own position.

I think the one thing that will rescue Kinnock and Hattersley are the union general secretaries with their big block votes. Talking to a whole range of CLP delegates and rank and file trade unionists, I think there is a lot of support for, firstly, the idea that there should be regular elections for the leadership and, secondly, for Benn and Heffer.

One of the main points that Tony Benn made was that this should not be seen as a one-off. Even if they are

defeated this year, that should not affect the main idea — regular elections and an on-going campaign of getting socialism put back into the British political scene.

It is too early to say yet how the campaign will be run in the NUM. Last time round, when Benn stood against Healey for the deputy leadership, it was certainly raised at branches. I can also remember marching through Mansfield with an NUM banner saying, in large letters, 'The only good deputy — Tony Benn'. There was a lot of rank and file feeling then. He came within a hair's breadth of winning then.

Even Hattersley is saying that it is about the future direction of the Labour Party. Look at the way the present leadership have been behaving. At the 'Labour Listens' event I raised the question of Clause 3, which defines Party membership, and the question of those who are still holding Party cards although they campaigned against us at the last election — the likes of Lynk and Prendergast. UDM members are in breach of Clause 3, which requires membership of a bona fide trade union recognised by the TUC. Kinnock's reply to me then was that Clause 3 a "mere technicality".

So Clause 3 is a "mere technicality"; Clause 7 is a "distraction". How long before Clause 4 is seen as a "liability"?

There have been attempts to take Clause 4 off the agenda in the past. At the last NEC meeting Kinnock and Hattersley presented their new document on Party aims and objectives. Benn and Skinner tried to get Clause 4 inserted in that but were defeated by something like 22-4.

Paul Whetton is a member of Bevercotes NUM, Notts.

TEACHERS' ORGANISER

SOCIALIST ORGANISER NUT CONFERENCE BROADSHEET 10p

FRINGE MEETING

Tuesday 5 April, 1.00 p.m.

ONE FIGHT, TWO FRONTS — THE UNIONS AND THE LABOUR PARTY

Speakers: Andy Dixon (EC member, Greater Manchester), Tony Brockman (Haringey), Liam Conway (Central Notts). (All in a personal capacity)

The Stage Door pub. 4A Aberdeen Walk.
Food and drink available. All welcome



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni

No blackmail in London!

During the last month, leading up to Easter conference, the Inner London Education Authority has set its £100 million cuts budget, TAANed 1500 teachers and seen the Commons vote down any delay on its abolition.

NUT members have a triple fight on our hands — against education cuts, against attacks on trade unionism and working conditions, and against the Tory government's planned break up of the ILEA.

Last year, the ILEA took advantage of the suspension of the officers of ILTA (NUT's Inner London Division). It imposed the Teachers Above Authorised Numbers (TAAN) scheme which led to 'voluntary' and compulsory transfers of hundreds of teachers. It carried out a whole series of attacks on working conditions and trade union rights, aimed at further weakening the NUT in London, even before the General Election.

After the Election, the ILEA changed gear and adopted punitive measures against NUT members refusing to cover for absences — measures which went way beyond the mere fining of teachers by the odd hour's pay in 'hardline' Tory boroughs like Croydon.

Eventually, after a period of strong resistance which took the ILEA by surprise, they finally resorted to the ultimate weapon —

NUT members refusing to cover were threatened with disciplinary procedures of gross misconduct (previously only ever used for sexual offences against children or massive financial fraud) leading to dismissal. The cost of their 'victory' is that this Labour Authority has lost the last ounce of its already diminished political credence, and has forever embittered its most powerful ally, its teachers, in the fight against abolition.

The suspension of the ILTA officers has undoubtedly been a central factor in what has happened in the past year. This is why the massive attempt by the national officers to persist with this sectarian and divisive course of action, and their venomous utterances even after the ILTA 8 have been fully reinstated, is so criminally irresponsible.

The National Officers had been angered by the ILTA's successful call on London members to take strike action last 13 January, against Baker's denial of teachers' negotiating rights. It had exposed the naked impotence of the national union's publicity campaign aimed

at the House of Lords.

They had long felt their power in the union threatened by a haemorrhage of membership all over the country, which contrasted starkly with the sustained and vibrant membership level in Inner London, despite falling rolls. The Broad Left grouping which had gained dominance of the National Executive in the past decade had seen their power in London, based on a cosy relationship with the mandarins in County Hall, wither away over the same period, and a growing strength of the serious left at NUT conference.

If local associations and divisions are seeking some explanation for the extraordinary lengths and expense taken by the national officers in overturning the decision of the national disciplinary panel last year, it is not the defence of the union rules, it is sheer factionalism. There is no other way to describe the actions of those who consciously chose to jeopardise the interests of the strongest division of the union, and therefore of the union itself.

The removal of ILTA's leadership has broken up the coalition of forces which had until then succeed-

ed in pushing forward the interests of London members. The checks and balances which existed on the ILTA leadership prior to suspension had been a healthy forum for debate and ILTA was closely in tune with its membership. The suspensions led to a polarisation between those increasingly affected by the 'new realism' of Kinnock, and others who have had a chronic history of ultra-leftism based on an overestimation of the potency of unofficial action.

Although at different times, different groups of delegates adopted positions fully opposite to their previous stances, the main problem was the inability of the caretaker ILTA Council leadership to be politically consistent and accountable to the same degree as before. Although the members' action at school level remained very strong to the bitter end, it was a weakened ILTA, disorientated towards the end by a major U-turn which enabled the ILEA to ram through its anti-working class policy of cuts, redeployment and of coming redundancies.

It would be dishonest not to say that some active NUT members in London are now feeling very demoralised. Some who have fought compulsory transfer over the years have volunteered to be TAANed this year. Nevertheless, the fight must go on, simply

because the Tories' and employers' offensive will continue.

The key decision members must take is not to be blackmailed into accepting cuts for the sake of 'unity' in fighting the ILEA's abolition. While there is little doubt that the Tories, with their massive parliamentary majority, have the political will to abolish the ILEA, the extent of cuts which will take place, and the quality of education offered to inner London's students, will be determined by the day-to-day rearguard actions taken by trade unionists and parents in fighting against the cuts in every shape and form. In this battle over London's education, the NUT nationally must give full support to members, schools, local associations and ILTA itself in fighting against increases in class sizes, cuts in capitation and staffing, attacks on the curriculum, on the positive provision for black, female and working class pupils, erosion of trade union rights and privatisation/asset-stripping of ILEA's resources.

One major task ahead to ensure that this happens is for London members to elect STA supporters to both inner London NEC positions, and for local associations throughout the country to put pressure on their newly elected NEC members to call the old gang of national officers to account.

The left alternative

After last year's NUT conference a group of us got together from different Manchester Associations, initially to organise support for the victimised ILTA members.

Our starting point was the platform we should be putting forward, and we agreed the priorities — defending members' pay and conditions, reviving the issue of negotiating rights, integrating the NUT into the broader labour movement, etc. It was after that we discussed possible candidates.

It was an open, democratic campaign. Teachers from a number of different Associations were involved, and also from different political tendencies. It also brought in new activists who perhaps traditionally had not seen themselves on the left but who got galvanised by the campaign.

We did not just send out leaflets. I visited quite a number of the larger schools and Association meetings, including hustings meetings where we debated with the other candidates.

One spin-off of the campaign was that we started left-wing activity, including Socialist Teachers' Alliance groups, in areas where there had not been any before.

Nationally, the Executive elections produced a shift to the left. Although the two Inner London seats are being re-run, they should go to the left. That should make eleven people from the left on the new Executive, whereas before there were six.

One of the things this left will have to do is inform the members of what is going on. One of the criticisms of the present NUT leadership is that they do things behind the backs of the NUT membership.

Also, of course, we must provide some leadership — an alternative strategy for the union which can ap-

By Andy Dixon, newly-elected NUT EC member for Greater Manchester

peal to members.

At the moment the present leadership seem to be going for almost an AMMA-type union — dropping any idea of ever taking action, or campaigning to involve the membership to defend state education.

The role of the left on the Executive will obviously be to criticise in Executive meetings but, more importantly and outside the Executive, to involve the members in that sort of campaigning activity. There is a potential for that because the Executive members are regionally elected, which gives them a wide scope for doing work in their areas.

But even here, local STA groups will be very important, not least in those Associations still controlled by the right-wing where it will be more difficult for the left EC members to get through to the membership. Also important will be meetings with local NUT reps.

There is a lot of demoralisation at the moment amongst teachers with the defeats we have suffered over the last two years — but there is also a lot of resentment over the role the present union leadership has played. It is a bit directionless, people don't really know what to do about it, and they are not particularly rushing out to take unofficial action.

In those areas in the election where the members have been presented with a clear alternative they have responded. In Greater Manchester we campaigned as widely as possible. We leafleted every meeting we heard of where we thought teachers would be. We took the argument to the members.

We found that although they were disillusioned and dispirited, they were looking for some kind of alternative.

Take the issue of the fight against the GERBill, which goes to the heart of the different perspectives in the union. The present leadership's perspective is to write to bishops, lobby the House of Lords, and have pop stars along to rallies. That is how they see campaigning. It is not trying to involve the membership or take on the government. The left have been arguing that, instead, we need a practicable campaign that can frustrate the Bill if it becomes law — in other words some degree of non-compliance, local committees that will fight against opting out, lining up with other trade unionists like NUPE and NALGO who are also affected by the Bill.

I am sure this argument about different perspectives will spill over at next week's conference into other issues, like Clause 28. The Executive will be putting forward apparently very good statements against it, but will not be putting forward policies to actively fight it.

Obviously the left still faces major problems in the union. To defend teachers against the attacks being made at present and also the education service, localised, sporadic unofficial action is simply not up to the task — leaving aside the question of opening members up to victimisation.

Our priority is to get the union nationally to coordinate a campaign in defence of members' interests and in defence of education. The question for us on the Executive now is how, as a minority, can we achieve that?

The only perspective we can have is organisation within the Associations where the left has been traditionally strong, and in areas which are moving to the left; linking up those areas; hopefully pressurising members of the Executive who are not completely demoralised into accepting the perspective of the union nationally doing things again.

Local

I am not saying that if there are local issues you should not fight on them. You can win on some issues locally, but they tend to be small ones. For example, in Greater Manchester the Rochdale Association fought on the issue of the 'Baker Days' and won, because they have not yet worked any of the extra days. But on the more fundamental issues it is going to require the union nationally to fight.

Part of that is getting the union to see itself much more as part of the labour movement. Teachers have tended to see themselves as apart from other workers. We need to link up teachers' issues with other issues affecting the movement.

Was ILTA right to go to court?

By Joanna Cain,
Harrow NUT

Trade unionists should celebrate the reinstatement of the expelled and suspended members of the Inner London Teachers' Association (ILTA).

While NUT leaders are cutting back on staff and on union democracy in the interests of economy, no expense was spared in the courts to attack individual militants.

For once the courts worked against the right wing and forced the union leaders to make a u-turn. Does this mean that using the courts in labour movement disputes is justified? We think not.

In the vast majority of cases the courts will work against the left. Otherwise they would not be bourgeois courts. Also there is a heavy price for going to court, win or lose.

In this particular instance the first result of Mike Loseley's injunction last year was to stop debate on the conference floor about the undemocratic trickery of the Executive. We could do no more than hold fringe meetings and distribute leaflets outside the conference hall.

More generally, to focus on the courts for a decision is to limit campaigning in the wider labour movement. We can end up waiting for a court decision instead of directing all our campaigning energies within the movement.

Could a campaign within the movement have won in this case? We do not know. But we do know that campaigning in the movement is the way the left will win in the NUT — not by trusting on the biased lottery of judges' decisions.

The wider principle is that we should not bring the bourgeois courts into the affairs of the labour movement. Unions and the Labour Party should settle internal disputes independently of the state.

Union leaders are often working for the bourgeoisie, but it is up to union members to settle scores with them, not the agents of the ruling class.

The reinstatement of the ILTA 8 has passed unnoticed by many members of the union. They were not reinstated as the result of popular opinion inside the NUT.

Finally, the incident must be put into the context of the struggle inside the NUT generally. The reinstatement is a victory because the attempt by the right wing/Broad Left to carve out leading London left wingers has, in this case, been stopped.

But that grouping still has a tight grip on the Executive, despite the gains made by the left in the recent elections. They might be scared of the left's challenge, but they are still much stronger — strong enough to feel confident to mount a direct attack on union democracy and hold off demands for real action against the government.

Court victories should not divert us from the basic task of changing the relation of forces within the union.

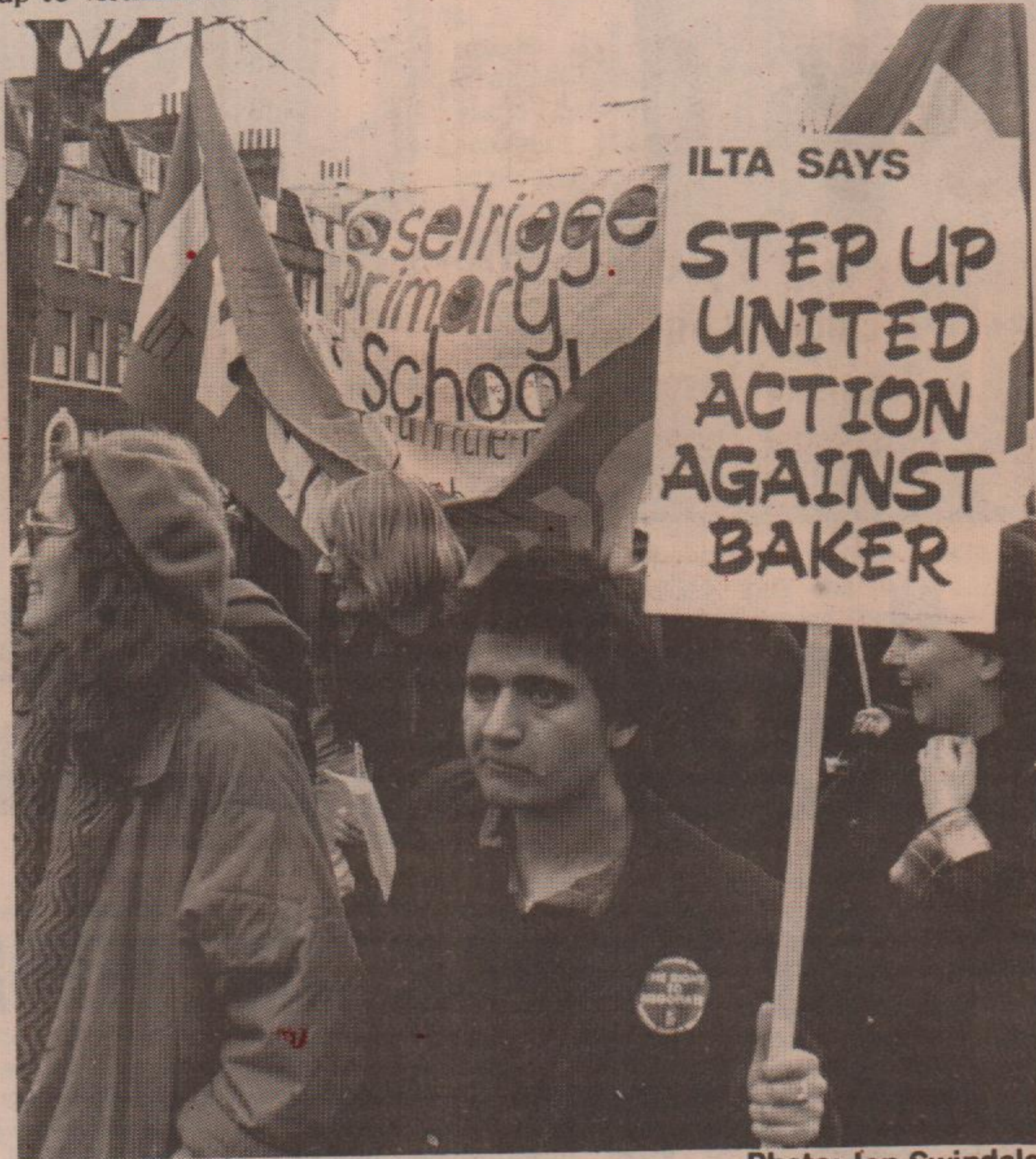


Photo: Ian Swindale

Gay teacher's victory

By Lesley Smallwood

Austin Allen, the teacher sacked by Bradford Local Education Authority for admitting to pupils that he was gay, is likely to be reinstated following swift action by the NUT and the District Labour Party.

Dr. Allen was suspended in December after he said yes when pupils asked whether he was gay.

At a meeting arranged by the NUT the authority accepted that answering a question was not 'promoting homosexuality', and therefore not in breach of the anti-gay clause of the Tories' Local Government Bill. But the press began a malicious campaign against Allen. Bradford Local Education Authority's response was to sack him.

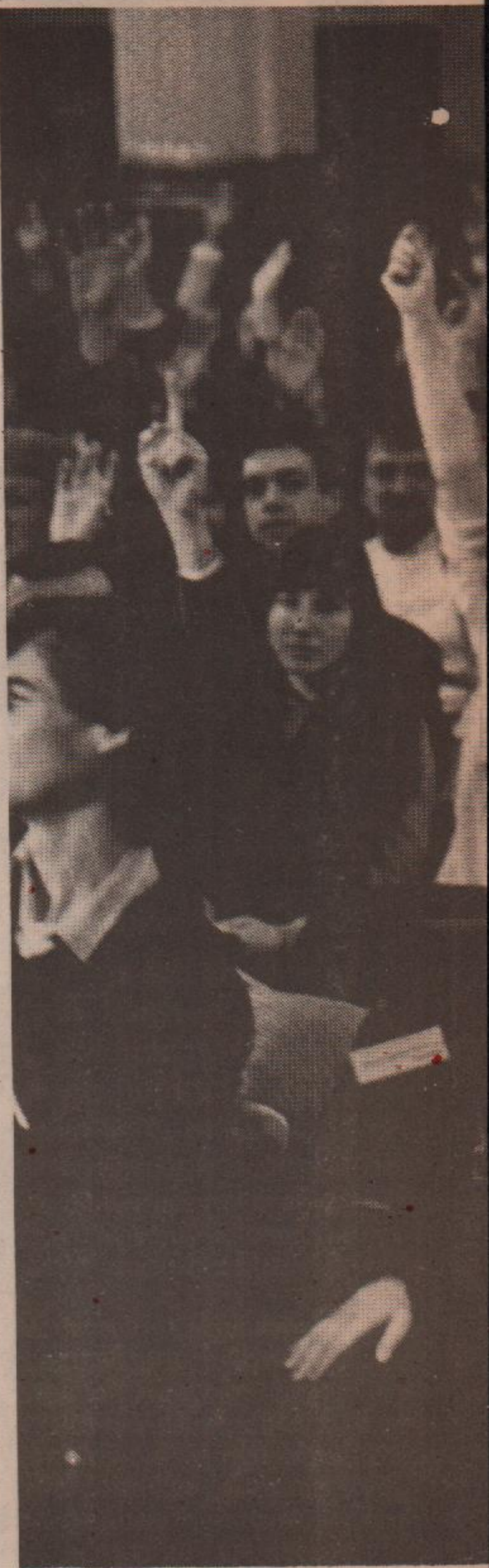
On Tuesday 15 March, a general meeting of Bradford NUT voted to take industrial action in support of Allen. On the same evening the District Labour Party voted nem con that Dr. Allen should be reemployed and that there should be no discrimination against teachers on grounds of sexual orientation.

After a meeting with the local NUT the Council Leader and Education Chair agreed to the following:

*An enquiry into NUT concerns that Dr. Allen had been discriminated against because of his homosexuality.

*A letter to Dr. Allen saying that he would not be discriminated against in future on grounds of his sexual orientation and views.

*A statement that no-one would be discriminated against in employment on grounds of their sexual orientation.



How

The agreement which finished the strike leads to some degree of protection, particularly of conditions. It was an improvement on the situation we originally faced.

The number of jobs saved was very small, and that was one of the reasons many of us were reluctant to recommend acceptance. There have only been small shifts in the council's budget. But it has put constraints on headteachers to ensure that staffing cuts do not drive coach and horses through our conditions of service, class sizes etc. There will be much less scope for teachers covering up for the cuts.

We got a class size limit of 30 for primary, 27 for reception, 27 for secondary. They are improvements on our previous situation in Harrogate but we still wanted better figures, and better protection.

I do not think the membership was defeated. It was a bit better than a draw. We certainly would have liked a lot of things in the agreement to be a lot better.

The main point about the strike is that it brought people together and they started campaigning in a way they do not normally do. For example, school groups of NUT members went to the Constituency Labour Party and addressed it. People thought, perhaps for the first time, about the various different points of pressure that could be applied to the Council — from governing bodies, the Labour Party, PTAs and so on.

There are two gains. members realise that those are things they can do themselves without waiting for somebody to tell them. Also, a whole range of contacts has been set up. The Haringey Education Defence Organisation was set up during the strike action, bringing together teachers, parents and Labour Party activists, and is continuing to campaign now.

The strike lasted five weeks this year and one and a half last year. It was covered in 'The Teacher' every week. If it was isolated the perhaps that is more a criticism of us — that we did not shout enough.



Photo: John Harris

New logo for a tame new NUT?

By Tim Peacock

To most NUT members in schools, the only hint of the changes being planned for the union was a glossy booklet promoting the 'relaunch' arriving in their pigeon-holes.

But the new logo is just a symptom of, and a cover for, fundamental changes in the nature of the NUT.

The Executive was quite clearly shaken by the radicalisation of the membership in the 2½ years of the pay dispute. Although they have succeeded in damping this down in most parts of the country — by a series of sell-outs and the failure to mount a serious campaign against Baker and Gerbill — they are still worried both by the 'militant' image of the Union, and the possibility of a left fightback.

The plan, therefore, is this:—

*A new, softer, image for the NUT, with an emphasis on services to members.

*No more real fights against the Tory attacks on education and teachers.

*Curtailing democracy in the union.

So in comes an advertising agency with a new logo, glossy brochures and a designer image. When the union is cutting its staff to save money, to spend money on this exercise is quite sick.

The Executive is presenting a Priority Motion to Conference. It declares that "the prime priority of the union should be recruitment and retention of members" and proposes changes to the department structure at Hamilton House. The Equal Opportunities Department is to be effectively closed down by merging it with the very busy Education Department.

The most important change has already taken place, without Conference approval — setting up the "Inner Cabinet" of the Executive, the Policy and Resources Committee, made up of a handful of the ruling faction, the so-called 'Broad Left'. The full Executive is now cut out of the important policy-making of the Union, and has become a rubber-stamping body. NUT leaders are obviously worried by the prospect of increasing dissent on the Executive.

There is to be a new regional structure — supposedly to enable more efficient services to members, but in reality taking powers away from local associations and making the 'centre' more remote from ordinary members.

The original proposal to move to a smaller conference held only every two years has been withdrawn. This is not really a climbdown. The Executive now wants a working party set up, with a guaranteed majority for the Broad Left, to report back to next year's conference on changing the size and frequency.

They may have decided not to go for everything at once, but they are still determined to attack members' democratic rights.

Conference must throw out the Priority motion and, by passing resolutions to take up a fight, send a clear message that the NUT is not about to change into a nice, safe, 'professional' union.

Haringey drew the line

By Tony Brockman, secretary Haringey Teachers' Association (personal capacity)

sure that one of the problems was that some STA members dismissed the strike.

At the beginning of the strike we were criticised for calling off ex-

isting unofficial no cover action in the Borough, but even with the hindsight of the agreement, I am sure that we had no alternative between the strategy of official strike action and the strategy of unofficial no-cover on its own. It was a mutually exclusive choice for us.

Nobody

Obviously nobody wants to do cover and the action was important. But I think some people got blinkered by it. I still cannot see how that action could have stopped redundancies. You might have won on no cover, but what would that have done on class size?

Obviously once you go for official action with strike pay, then the national union controls the budget. The only problem we had with that was the size of the budget. In effect we had total control over how the budget was used locally — nobody tried to lay down conditions on that, except for one or two occasions.

Just before meetings with the Council they told us to hold off action on the previous day as a sign of good faith. We expressed our criticism of that to headquarters.

The total strike budget was not enough to go on indefinitely. We hoped that we would be able to move to an all-out strike if we had to, but even on the days of maximum action we were still 200 member-days short of that. They

would not give us it.

With the final agreement there was a choice, the national union could go on funding Haringey's action or it could accept the agreement. We argued, right up until the deal, that there should be further strike action, to achieve significant improvements in the way the budget was distributed and so on.

For the national union they must have looked at what was on offer on paper, saw it compared favourably to offers elsewhere, and went for it.

There is a feeling in Haringey that we were, to some extent, forced back. Members recognise that it was due to the national union not being able to back us further that we went back, and not because we achieved everything we wanted to. But they also recognise that we have got a better deal than any other union group with Haringey Council. We are the only union there that has been able to draw a line and hold it. Others are simply reeling around all over the place.

Haringey has shown that a defence can be conducted, that union resources should be spent on it and that something is achievable. That is the positive side. On the negative side it is also true that any authority that offered something similar to the Haringey settlement will probably be able to avoid official strike action, because that is the line the national union has now indicated.

about it to the rest of the union membership. Our priority was doing things in Haringey but I think we did not spend enough time trying to develop that national focus.

It is also true that the Socialist Teacher's Alliance (STA) nationally failed to do anything about it. They have a national network, but for example we got hardly any messages of support from other areas. I know the practical difficulties, but I am



Photo: Report

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BLUE IN THE FACE SOFT IN THE HEAD



The way to beat GERBill

By Nick Doran

Much of the discussion on Baker's GERBill has focused on the educational implications. It is important, however, to remind ourselves of the implications for teachers' pay, working conditions and local democracy.

The GCSE, with its emphasis on coursework and continuous assessment as well as formal testing, has already greatly increased the workload on individual teachers.

Baker's proposals for assessment throughout the school year is going to increase this workload much further. And the Tories and LEAs are not proposing to pay us any more for this additional work than they do at present.

Open enrolment also threatens conditions of service. It means that schools will be forced to take up to the maximum number as decided by the LEA or the secretary of state using one of his magical new 170 odd powers.

This means that we will be forced to teach class sizes of at least 30 to go by present indications. The effect on unpopular schools will be to reduce their rolls to a level where they are no longer "viable"

Proposals for opting out are the icing on the cake. If a school decides to opt out, the LEA will make the whole workforce redundant and they will then be re-employed under new contracts with the governors and management of the school. It will be a god-given opportunity to get rid of all the union "troublemakers" and demoralise the remaining staff who will have no option but to accept lower pay and worse conditions.

The national union's response so far to the Baker Bill has been nothing short of pathetic. They have produced glossy pamphlets about the educational implications and how bad it will be for the kids, but nothing about the effects on teachers.

They have publicly condemned strike action as a tactic because it "makes teachers unpopular" and is "not supported by parents and the public" instead of supporting it and mounting a campaign to convince people that it is necessary and justified.

Teachers who take unofficial action have been victimised by the national union as well as by their employers.

This is not right. At this conference we should commit the union to mounting a campaign of action now against the GERBill. This should include: strike action; non-cooperation with new directives that Baker and the management dream up; serious campaigning to raise the issues with the general public and gain support for our demands and linking up with other unions such as the health workers to widen the base of support.

We must also reject proposals at this conference to introduce regional pay bargaining. This only plays into the hands of those in favour of the GERBill by weakening our ability to fight back as a national union.

There could hardly be a worse time to try to recruit a teacher to the Labour Party if they weren't previously convinced.

At a time when comprehensive education is facing its worst crisis in the guise of Kenneth Baker, Labour Party leaders seem to have abandoned any attempt at opposition. In the face of a hard ideological onslaught we have the 'prevailing wind' ideology of opinion polls and the 'Labour Listens' campaign.

On all the issues in GERBill Labour could make a stand — opting out, devolution of financial control, assessment, open enrolment, national curriculum. All of these proposals should be thrown out and replaced by an indepen-

By Ivan Wels

dent, campaigning programme. The Tories have their "think tanks" to work out not only the general aim but the particular policies towards that aim. They are for a more segregated, selective education system and GERBill is a move in that direction.

What are the Labour leaders doing? It puts on those Tory clothes that it believes are so popular — national testing (for diagnostic purposes), national curriculum (for a democratic society), parental and governors' control of schools (with no control for the actual participants — teachers and kids!) — and calls them its own!

Further than this we have Neil

Fletcher, leader of ILEA, and Jack Straw, Shadow Spokesperson on Education, actually saying that the Tories have stolen many of their policies from Labour. How strong an opposition can you get?

The closest they have got to any campaign is to rely upon the House of Lords, Tory backbenchers and possible rifts there might be between Baker and Thatcher.

Where is the support for workers (in this case teachers) in struggle? Where is the ideological thrust of the concept of an egalitarian education system free to all from the earliest moments to the day we die? Where is the curriculum responsive to race, gender and class?

It is not coming from the leadership of either the Labour Party or the trade unions. But that does not

mean we should stand aside and give those bureaucrats a free run. They must be challenged if we are to get the labour movement fightback that we need to beat the Tories.

The Labour Party is the existing political wing of our labour movement. We need to be part of the debate about policies inside it and the campaign to get them put into practice, often against the Labour leaders. We should join in with this, especially now that the campaign for the Labour leadership by Benn and Heffer is going to heighten all those policies to mobilise a real fight against Thatcher. We must ensure that education is high on that agenda.

Join the Labour Party and fight!

'New Realism' is not working

By Liam Conway

The Tories are achieving something the labour movement has consistently failed to do — a redistribution of wealth in favour of their class.

As trade unionists and the poor suffer from health cuts, education cuts, social welfare cuts, housing benefit cuts, unemployment, low wages and wage restraint, the greedy rich are receiving hundreds of pounds a week each in tax cuts alone. As money spins around in billions on the Stock Exchange for no useful purpose, the Tories play Russian Roulette with the services of the poor.

Saddest of all, Kinnock and the trade union leaders say only argument can beat the Tories. Where have they been for the last nine years?

Women workers face part-time slave labour jobs; retired workers face death from hypothermia; young workers are threatened into YTS; hundreds of workers die because of health cuts and Kinnock has not noticed that the Tories are beating us into the ground.

And as Kinnock and the NUT leaders continue to talk, cushioned by the luxury of a fat salary, workers in schools are also expected



Photo: Ian Swindale

to take their medicine quietly. In inner London, Haringey and other local authorities, rate-capping has produced outright capitulation in the Labour councils.

Instead of fighting the government and encouraging trade unionists to fight with them, the councils are doing the Tories' dirty work. In inner London alone Labour is administering 6,000 staff cuts in education. NALGO, NUT and NUPE will bear the brunt of the cuts. And for those that are left

at work, like cleaners and caterers, there will be more work and less pay.

But London is not alone. All over the country trade union leaders are allowing their members to be sacked, re-deployed, over-worked and underpaid. There is so little opposition that some cuts pass almost unnoticed, like poor children being denied a free school meal at lunch.

Union bureaucrats have instilled such apathy that many workers are accepting cuts as a matter of routine. But it doesn't have to be like that. Given determined leadership the vast majority of workers in the education service would be prepared to fight. Many know that the defeatism of the "new realism" is not working.

They know that Thatcher's axe will keep coming after the current cuts have gone. They know that poll tax will give even more money back to the rich and leave slum schools for the poor run by underpaid workers threatened with the sack for discussing issues like gay rights.

They also know that when the Great Education Reform Bill (GERBill) becomes law, local authority control of education will be gone. The Tories will be running the show on a shoe-string budget direct from London.

Working class children will be fed a narrow curriculum in badly maintained schools with large classes

taught by demoralised teachers. Tragically, only last week Labour's Jack Straw was telling head teachers that the GERBill was generally a welcome development for education.

So what can be done to break out of our bureaucratic straitjacket and defeat the Tories? In Haringey and ILEA, workers in education have already given a taste of what is necessary. But this must be extended both inside and outside London. In schools and colleges everywhere there is a great deal of unrest. The left must organise this opposition against local union leaders in NUPE, NALGO and the NUT, who are prepared to accept the cuts.

It is quite possible that a dispute in one sector of education could galvanise action in another. Teachers facing re-deployment and larger classes may well be unwilling to cross the picket lines of cleaners facing privatisation. It may even be possible for unofficial action to trigger a large scale dispute.

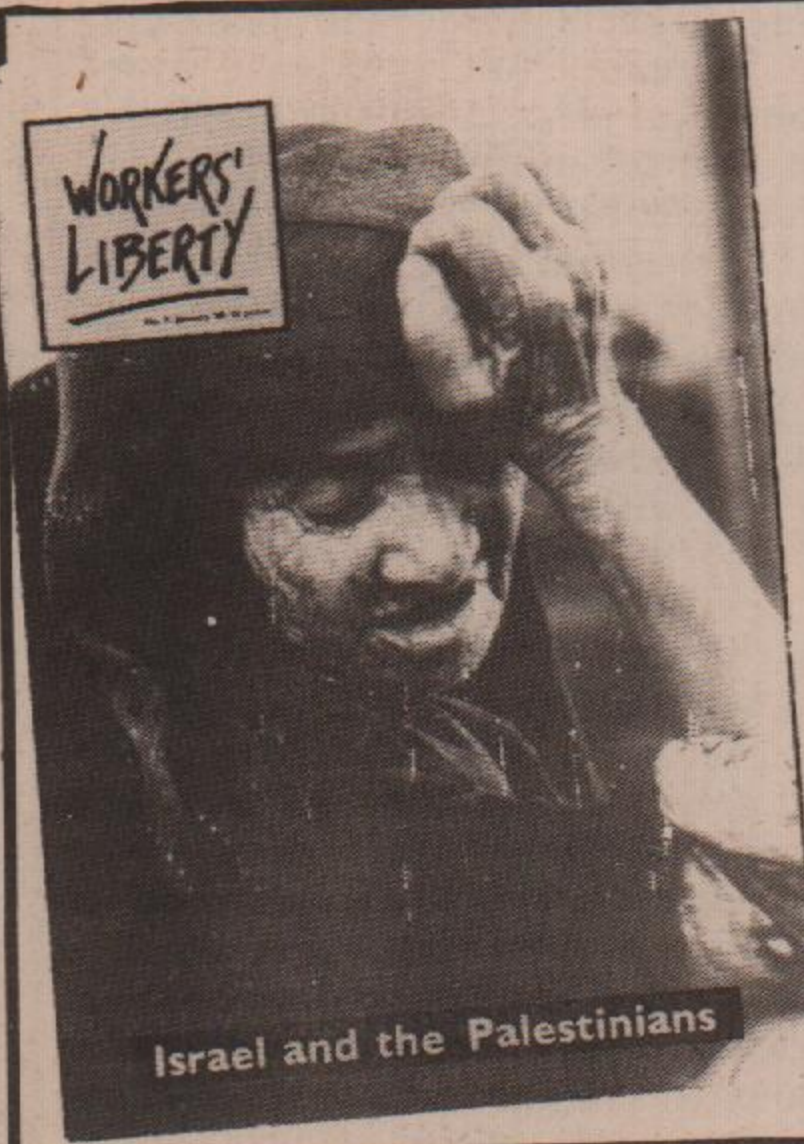
However, it is important not to play into the hands of the bureaucracy with maverick action based on limited support. The first task is to win over demoralised workers to the view that action, not talk, is the only way to beat the Tories.

At conference this means delegates must overturn the anti-strike mentality of the Executive. But even if this fails, the real discontent below could still be turned against the leadership. We must encourage such discontent in an organised way — help it grow across trade unionists in education and into a public sector alliance in action against the government.

Palestine; two nations, two states!

The new issue of 'Workers' Liberty', out now, discusses the conflict in the West Bank and Gaza, and carries, for the first time in English, two articles by Trotsky on the socialist approach to disputes between nations.

Also in this issue: a feature on the Crash, Kowalewski on Poland, and debate on Ireland, Scottish nationalism, South Africa and the movies. 90p plus 30p postage from SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.



Alton Bill cop-out

By Pat Murphy

Commitment to the most basic women's rights still seems to be a problem for men in the NUT — even those on the left.

At this year's AGM of the Bradford Association, members were keen to discuss the implications of the Alton Bill. The branch officers refused.

When pressed by angry members, leading left-winger Ian Murch insisted that the branch could not be allowed to discuss the abortion issue in case it lost Catholic members. Apparently a lot of Catholics left Bradford NUT the last time the issue was discussed, in 1979.

If only such consideration was given to women members of the NUT!