

# Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

by JO THWAITES

ON JANUARY 26 Lord Denning ordered the ISTC to stop its strike call for private steelworks, to lift the block on imported steel, and not to organise any pickets or blacking outside BSC.

On the 28th the Yorkshire miners' executive responded by deciding to black all steel products at Yorkshire collieries.

Yorkshire NUM president Arthur Scargill explained: "Lord Denning has given a judgment which is in line with Tory party philosophy and trade union members involved in this dispute should recognise that.

"They have a simple choice to make. They either accept the decision of three men in wigs sitting in a remote part of London or accept the advice and instruction of their trade union.

"I hope they... come out on strike, continue to picket, and win their dispute".

And on Sunday 27th 42 out of 44 private steel firms struck, despite Denning's ruling.

As *Socialist Organiser* goes to press, the ISTC executive has cancelled its private steel strike call, but hopes to get Denning's ruling reversed by the House of Lords. However that goes, a first big fight is underway on the Tories' plans to cripple picketing, summed up in the 'Employment Bill'.

ISTC leader Bill Sirs, cancelling the strike call, said the law must be obeyed on pain of 'anarchy'. The idea is that the law stands above class interest, and embodies longstanding concepts of justice. But Denning showed how foolish that idea is, suddenly bending the law one hundred and eighty degree to suit the interests of the bosses.

Even the *Guardian* said that Denning's Court was "more guilty of playing politics than the union".

British law says industrial action is lawful "in furtherance of a trade dispute". In a judgment just before Christmas, the Law Lords ruled that this phrase means that action is lawful if the union *intends* it to further a trade dispute.

Denning brushed that

## Bosses' law, bosses' courts

# DEFY THEM!

## Support the picket lines

aside, saying, "This is one of these cases where the effects on the country of such a strike would be so disastrous that it seems to be that it is only right that this court should grant the injunctions requested". Never mind the law: the strike threatened the ruling class, and so it must be stopped!

Denning's ruling, arbitrarily decreeing ahead of time those same restrictions on trade union action which the Tories intend to legislate in the Employment Bill, was a class response to the steel strike: an injury to the Tory hard-faced policy over steel, he declared in effect, would

be an injury to the whole capitalist order.

Arthur Scargill asserted the principle, "An injury to one is an injury to all", from the side of the working class. The defence of the steelworkers' right to strike and picket is the defence of the right of every worker to organise effectively for his or her demands and interests.

Every section of the labour movement should follow Scargill's response. Support the steelworkers. Black all steel: step up the solidarity so much that no number of injunctions can stop it. And step up the campaign to stop the Employment Bill.

## Help the steel strikers

- Black all steel. Report any movement of steel to the nearest strike committee headquarters or Trades Council.

- Don't cross the picket lines. National TGWU policy is not to touch any steel.

- Defend pickets against police attacks. Give support on the picket line.

- Take collections. The steel workers get no strike pay. In steel communities where whole families are on strike, money is very short.

- Local Labour Parties should organise public meetings in support of the steel workers in every area and hand over their facilities [rooms, telephones, duplicators] to the strikers.

- Labour-controlled local authorities, to show their solidarity with the steel workers in their fight against the Tories, should make council facilities available to the strikers, as some councils did for the miners in 1972.

# NO RETURN TO THE BACKSTREETS ABORTION ON DEMAND FIGHT THE CORRIE BILL

by MANDY WILLIAMS

ON THURSDAY February 5th thousands of women and supporters of women's rights will lobby Parliament against the Corrie Bill.

A rally in Central Hall will be chaired by Jo Richardson, one of the MPs who opposed the Bill in Committee.

A contingent of women will be marching to the lobby to defend the Mile End clinic where Professor Peter Huntingford has, over the last 2½ years, provided abortion virtually on demand for over 2,500 women.

NUS members, whose union has called for one day strikes to support the lobby, will be marching from Malet St, WC1 at noon.

Opposition to the Bill in Committee was doomed to failure: the composition of the committee was 12 anti-abortionists (including John Corrie, William Benyon, Jill Knight and Bernard Braine) and five pro-choice MPs. The supporters of the Bill used their majority to bulldoze it

through with as little consideration of the evidence as possible. The same is all too likely to happen in the Commons on the Third Reading.

But there has been a tremendous fightback outside Parliament, from the 50,000 strong TUC organised demonstration in October last year, to the hard grind in CLPs to commit MPs to vote according to party policy of abortion on request, and the petitioning by supporters of the National Abortion Campaign and the Campaign against Corrie in workplaces, shopping streets and elsewhere.

That fightback has to continue after (and if) the Bill is passed, defending doctors who continue to refer women for abortion according to their needs, defending hospital facilities threatened with closure, and continuing to win support in unions, CLPs, campaigns and women's groups.

Campaign against Corrie has called a meeting for 23rd February on the campaign after the Parliamentary vote.

**RALLY & LOBBY OF MPs on 5th February from 2.00pm onwards at Central Hall, Westminster**

**ASSEMBLY OF WOMEN on 8th February at 2.00pm in**

## IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE

STOP THE CUTS NOW!

Lothian Labour votes for a fight; London health workers seize their hospital

p.4-5

NO BANS, NO PROSCRIPTIONS  
Why Underhill should stay shelved;  
Labour Right and the CIA; Labour's Inquiry into Party Organisation

p.6-7

THE TORIES' COLD WAR DRIVE  
and how Parliamentary Labour leaders have backed it up; imperialist hypocrisy over Afghanistan

p.8-9



## Why Zimbabwe still needs Solidarity

**SIMON HEBDITCH**  
of the Zimbabwe  
Emergency Coord-  
inating Committee  
explains why ZECC  
is calling a picket  
of the Foreign Of-  
fice for Saturday  
23 February.

The Lancaster House agreement has many faults in it and there is therefore a thin dividing line as to whether it will work or not. ZANU and ZAPU have decided to accept its conditions. They have taken a big risk in working inside it, but the response at Nkomo's and Mugabe's election rallies confirms their calculation that they will win the elections.

Britain is biased towards the interests of Bishop Muzorewa. Lord Soames has allowed the Rhodesian security services to continue operating and more particularly has permitted the auxiliary forces to operate although this is clearly against the Lancaster House agreement.

Other breaches of the agreement have been the continued detention of prisoners and the maintenance of the 'protected villages'.

I think it's very important to counteract the isolation of the liberation movement in the media, and the first call on the solidarity movement is to give direct political support to the liberation movement. We should also concentrate on the role of the British troops in Zimbabwe. These are the two sides to the campaign.

In the election, if one or

the other of the Patriotic Front parties wins, that will be a major move forward for the people of Zimbabwe. But at the same time they would be under pressure from South Africa.

It is important to keep an eye on South Africa. Clearly South Africa is calling the tune, and British officials react to the extent they want to react. It is going to be a continuing responsibility to see that there is no interference from outside. Given that one of the Patriotic Front parties comes out on top, South Africa might move in.

I don't think Britain would want to get into a Vietnam, but rather they would pull out quickly. It is particularly important to continue ZECC in the immediate two to three months after the elections, as this period will be crucial.



2,000 marched in Birmingham on January 27, commemorating the 8th anniversary of Bloody Sunday, when British troops fired on a peaceful demonstration Derry and killed

14 people. They also demanded political status for the Republican prisoners in the 'H-Blocks' and withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

### DOT LEWIS reports on the crisis wracking the fascist National Front.

"I am convinced that the National Front can survive, but only with me leading it", said John Tyndall, on resigning the chair after losing a vote of no confidence at the meeting of the National Directorate on 11th January.

But the 'Document' of the rebel 'Constitutional Movement' within the NF, led by Norfolk landowner Andrew Fountaine, had declared on 16th November, "As long as they [Tyndall, Martin Webster, and Richard Verrall] are with us, we shall all go backwards".

Their disastrous results in the general elections, when the Front lost all its deposits, brought the leadership struggle to the fore, and it is not over yet.

The Document, in 18 vitriolic pages, catalogues the "shabby tricks and sleights of hand perpetrated" by the "triumvirate"... mismanagement of party funds, elections and meetings. And a party needs a good image — but the Anti Nazi League was able to "brand us all as some kinds of fascist-cum-neo-nazi party", thanks to past involvements with "a clique of cranky costumed clowns".

Alongside the issues of efficiency, party styles, and leadership, the Front faces difficulties over their headquarters. In the October 1978 National Front News Martin Webster celebrated the acquisition of 73 Great Eastern Street, South Shoreditch, as the new headquarters to replace the Teddington base which fell foul of planning controls in 1977.

In May 1979, Hackney Council served enforcement notices to the owners and occupiers of the premises on the grounds that they were in breach of planning controls. South Shoreditch is zoned for industrial development, and the Council's case is two-pronged. The notices allege that no.73 is being used for offices, and specifically as a HQ for the NF: (The NF say that they use the premises only as a publications distribution centre).

The enquiry which followed the appeals against the

## NF is in crisis, but so is Hackney

enforcement notices closed on January 11th. We have yet to hear the decision from the Department of the Environment — but the evidence produced at the hearing gave solid support to Hackney's case. Meanwhile, the disarray in the NF is making it difficult for them to put the building to full use anyway.

And, on top of that, they are waiting for the bailiffs.

Who exactly is "they"? The distress warrant issued by the magistrates court just after the hearing was for the recovery of £5000 rates. It was made against 'Leachouse Ltd'. 'Leachouse' occupies part of no.73 as a totally owned subsidiary of NF Properties Ltd, which owns the property.

If we are to believe its Director, Michael Stubbs, Leachouse is a 'commercial venture'. However, 98% of its business is to arrange publication of Front literature. We wonder if a well-lit benefactor will bail out this 'commercial venture'...

And how on earth does Michael Stubbs carry on his business? He is a signatory to the manifesto of the 'Constitutional Movement'. And Tyndall is owner of the NF rag *Spearhead*, Verrall editor; Webster is owner and editor of *NF News*.... During the Christmas recess, Paul Kavanagh, as Director of NF Properties, served eviction notices on the 'publications department' of the Front — the same trio.

Perhaps he hoped that would persuade Environment Minister Heseltine that NF Properties is also a 'commercial venture' quite independent of the Party. 'NF' in the title is pure coincidence. Kavanagh told the Inquiry.

Only Kavanagh also signed the Constitutional Movement manifesto, which pro

tests that the company's shareholders "supplied the funds because of their interest in British Nationalism, not to give Mr Tyndall, Mr Webster and Mr Verrall an asset to lord it over the membership with".

The Tyndall faction are retaliating by serving writs against the trustees of the Front's bloc of shares (Fountaine, Broadley — another manifesto signatory — and Stubbs) to hand over their trusteeships.

Meanwhile Tyndall has to find £250 for a fine plus £4,000 costs for breaking a High Court injunction served last August on Kavanagh's initiative to restrain the Chairman from preventing access to the club on the third floor of no.73...

### BUT, she argues, the social conditions that enabled the NF to grow are still there — and getting worse.

THE social base on which racism breeds festers regardless of Party HQ or faction fights within a party.

Ashton Gibson, giving evidence at the Inquiry for West Indian Concern, pointed out that "There is no doubt that the indigenous white population has suffered from the failure of both local and central government to deal with the lack of opportunities in the area".

Derek Day, a security guard at Excalibur House (no.73) and North London organiser for the NF, expressed it his own way. "What have they ever done for us — Liberals, Conservatives, Labour, they're all alike". Interviewed in the coffee breaks at the Inquiry, he said, "They pulled down the terraced houses and put us in estates. They destroyed

the community spirit. Beautiful it was. They destroyed it on purpose".

The past takes on a fony tinge if something is wrong with the present. But those high density blocks do seem purpose built to create tensions.

The solution according to Day [speaking in an interview], is "Spread the immigrants round their areas" [indicating the barristers representing the groups opposing the NF's appeal]. "Why do they send them all to us?"

Anthony Reed-Herbert, the solicitor representing the Front, suggested in his summing up that if it was true that the Front spread racist tensions, it made no difference whether their HQ is in Hackney or not. The problem would persist "as long as there is breath in the body of Derek Day and people like him".

"Look", Day asked me, "if you have to choose between doing something for the disabled, the sick, the old people, the kiddies, and the ethnic minorities, which would you choose?"

Heseltine is barging ahead with spending less on everyone who is most in need. To the whites on the receiving end of inner city decay, it's only too easy to hit out at a nearby scapegoat, rather than organise together against the system which is responsible for the decay.

Hackney will be a bit better off if Heseltine upholds the enforcement notices. It will remove a 'focal point' for the spread of racist assaults. But it will hardly solve the problem.

There was an impressive line-up and united voice opposing the Front at the hearing: Hackney CRE, Community Link-up, the Jewish Board of Deputies, the Liberal Party, Tower Hamlets and Hackney Traders Councils, the Bishop of Stepney, the Communist Party, Shoreditch Traders' Action Group, and the Hackney and District Chamber of Commerce.

But where do we go from here? The prospects for the inner city are appalling, unless the labour movement can convince the people that there is a real hope of changing the conditions which breed racism.

## Penguin workers say: we'll save these jobs

by JONATHAN HAMMOND

THE MANAGEMENT of Penguin Books, still the foremost paperback publisher in Britain and part of the Pearson Longman conglomerate, announced on Monday January 28, its detailed plans for closing down 90 jobs across the company (out of a total workforce of 520).

It told representatives of the three unions at Penguin — the NUJ, SOGAT, and ASTMS — that it wanted to leave 54 current vacancies unfilled and make 36 redundancies. Union representatives were shocked further by management's declaration of its intention effectively to tear up agreements on job security and staffing levels by 'looking critically' at any vacancy as and when it arose and not necessarily filling it, and refusing to go through recognised procedures when it wanted to close down a job.

At this point, union representatives walked out of the meeting in protest against the management's cynical disregard and violation of existing agreements.

This development was the culmination of several weeks of rumour about the company's financial position, arising out of the management's refusal to meet the unions to discuss its intentions on staffing, with particular reference to unfilled vacancies.

Early in the new year, management acknowledged the seriousness of the company's financial crisis. It had lost £478,000 in the first six months of 1979, and claimed that the rise in inflation and in Minimum Lending Rate and the strength of the pound against other currencies had blown its corporate plan off course.

The NUJ chapel condemned the management for sheltering behind this excuse of the general economic situation, the main outline of which was predictable at

least from the moment when the Conservatives, with their declared monetarist economic policies, were elected in May 1979.

The basic fault lay in the company's high-spending policies — including an expensive relocation to new offices in World's End, Fulham, costing far more than the company had budgeted for, and extravagant purchases of down-market 'best-sellers' like the romantic novel *The Far Pavilions*, which proved in fact to be a dubious commercial success.

Chapel representatives warned management of the likely consequences of this policy as long ago as last spring, without being heeded. The thinness of the company's case was conclusively proved by its invocation of government spending cuts on education as an excuse for 'making economies' — a process which has been carried out by successive governments since 1973 at regular intervals, and which other book publishing managements have budgeted for and adjusted to, without making savage cuts in staffing.

The Penguin management — like others of its ilk — is trying to make its staff pay for management errors and mistakes. The NUJ chapel is taking a very principled line of opposition to all job loss, whether by redundancies or natural wastage.

It started blacking certain randomly-selected books in production early in the new year as a counter to unfilled vacancies and, in response to the management's announcement of redundancies, is stepping up that blacking to include all the company's important titles.

It has also resolved to persuade the SOGAT chapel and the ASTMS group to join in its blacking and 'no cover for unfilled jobs' campaigns, as a prelude to more drastic action, if necessary, to get the management to withdraw its threat of redundancies and unfilled vacancies.

# All round attack on woman's right to choose

THE CORRIE BILL is only one aspect of current attacks on women's ability to control their own fertility.

Health Minister Gerard Vaughan is threatening doctors who provide contraception to women under 16 with prosecution. Access to contraception and abortion is being further limited by cuts in Family Planning Clinics and hospitals. And nursery provisions, schools, and services for the handicapped, sick and elderly are being cut.

All but the most wealthy will face greater suffering. Women forced back into the home face greater isolation, as do their children. With more unwanted children, more family break-ups, more child and wife battering, are inevitable.

In the same week in which the Corrie Bill is expected to have its final reading in the Commons, the DHSS is due to issue a new set of guidelines for doctors, concerning confidentiality of patients under 16. The BMA's recently revised code of ethics sanctions the already common practice of doctors not telling parents when women under 16 have abortions.

Vaughan has pronounced himself "appalled" — though the BMA is concerned that if young women have reason to mistrust their doctors, they will more readily go straight to the backstreets for abortion, or attempt suicide in panic.

Under the DHSS's 1974 guidelines to doctors, contraception for someone under 16 is not unlawful, though doctors are advised to tell parents wherever possible. Now Vaughan has stated that since "sexual relations with a girl under 16 are illegal", "to supply her with contraceptives is condoning an illegal action". The DHSS is expected to follow this by reversing the 1974 policy.

At the same time, the use of the injectable contraceptive Depo-Provera is spreading in Britain, despite calls for a ban. It is banned in the USA because of its severe and extremely unpleasant side-effects, which last for the three months for which the dose is effective, and for which there is no antidote. It is frequently used without the woman being warned of the possible bleeding, headaches and other symptoms she may

suffer.

Depo Provera is used particularly on poor and immigrant women, often without their knowledge, on the basis of the doctor's estimation that the woman is unsuitable to become pregnant again, or to use other methods of contraception.

In Glasgow, the decision is made by using a points system which operates according to overcrowding, housing conditions etc.

Another dangerous contraceptive, an intra-uterine device called the Dalkon Shield, has been found to be responsible for the deaths of 17 women in the USA and at least two women here; many more have suffered pelvic infections which leave them sterile. Although the Dalkon Shield was withdrawn from the market in 1975, up to 10,000 women are still fitted with it and may be unaware of the dangers. The Dalkon Shield Association is campaigning to find and warn these women, and to sue the drug company, D.H. Robbins on behalf of those who have suffered damage to their health.

MANDY WILLIAMS



The town hall workers' union NALGO has called on members to protest against Corrie on February 5th.

## What the Corrie Bill would do

THE CORRIE Bill could cut out at least two-thirds of abortions legal at present.

Tory Health Minister, Gerard Vaughan, who was invited to the Standing Committee on the Bill to give evidence, had considerable problems juggling with the views of the Department of Health and Social Security, which is at present responsible for inspecting abortion clinics and is unhappy about the clause which will allow unchecked proliferation of private profiteers in this area; of the BMA, opposed to the entire Bill; and of the Tory government, which supports

the Bill.

After a few sittings, he retired in poor health, leaving his junior, Timothy Rathbone, to continue the contradictory stand. But the Tories are still backing the Bill, promising it extra Parliamentary time if it needs it.

The main changes made to the Bill in the Standing Committee are in the grounds for abortion and in the clause on charities.

For abortion to be legal, the Bill now demands that the continuation of pregnancy



## Labour movement Fightback for Women's Rights

by RACHEL LEVER

Support is growing daily for the conference in March for women's rights. Its focus on the most pressing areas to organise in against the Tory attacks, its involvement of a wide range of pressure groups, self-help organisations and local activists' campaigns, and the arrangement of the agenda for a real working dialogue, have gained a wide appeal among women looking for an energetic response.

A number of the participating organisations strongly welcome the opportunity of discussing their campaigns in the context of other, related struggles, and of reaching a wide audience of militant women.

Everyone I have talked to was attracted by the possibility of building stronger links between the women's movement and women more active in the labour movement.

We have now included as an area for discussion the TUC charter for women in the unions. This carries a number of points that women have been demanding for years in trade unions: meetings in work time with no loss of pay; child care facilities for either parent at all union meetings and conferences; positive discrimination to bring women into leading bodies of unions and onto trade union training courses; and a 'non-sexist' presentation of union journals.

But even in sympathetic unions, this charter will remain just a piece of paper unless women organise to win these things. In those unions that are hostile, it will take a hard fight to win any of the charter's demands.

But the fact that the TUC has adopted these demands should give a big impetus to women who want to fight for its demands, and be an important weapon in that fight. It may also persuade more women that the trade union movement isn't a lost cause, that we can organise to get it changed.

A major event before the Women's Fightback conference will need a big mobilisation of women: the TUC's big demonstration against the Employment Bill should bring out massive contingents of women. We want to defeat the clauses that slash maternity leave job security just as much as the clauses on picketing.

The broadsheet introducing the issues and the partic-

The conference will focus on five main areas:

- Abortion rights, and what to do after Corrie to win abortion on demand & free, safe contraception.

- Cuts hit women: fighting for nursery and other under-five provision; health cuts; funds for women's self-help projects.

- Maternity leave and benefits, paternity leave; women and the fight to stop the Employment Bill.

- Legal rights: what's happening to the equality legislation; women as claimants; women & nationality.

- Strengthening the position of women and the priority of women's rights in the labour movement; organising around the TUC charter for women in the unions; bringing the fight against violence and sexism into the labour movement.

★★★

### PARTICIPATING:

Labour Abortion Rights Campaign; Campaign Against Depo Provera; Manchester NAC; Peter Huntingford; Fightback against Health Service Cuts; Gingerbread; London Nursery Campaign; NUS Nursery Campaign; National Campaign for Nursery Education; National Council for One Parent Families; Child Poverty Action Group; members of National Women's Aid Federation; National Maternity Grant Campaign; Action Group on Immigration & Nationality and JCWI; Rights of Women; members of Claimants Union; Equal Rights for Disabled Women; Equal Rights in Clubs Campaign for Action. Other campaigns are considering invitations to participate.

Participants in the conference will be out in the first week of February. To do a proper job, going into the issues rather than just having a superficial blurb that tells no-one anything they don't already know, the broadsheet has grown to a 16-page A4 format, priced 10p for individual copies but much less for bulk orders (20 for £1 plus 40p postage).

This broadsheet should be especially useful for women who want to get their Labour or trade union branch to send a delegate.

In some areas *Socialist Organiser* supporters are working for a local meeting to prepare for the conference and discuss the issues it will be raising. If you want a speaker, let us know in good time. Speakers' notes will also be available shortly.

Finally, please register early. The women involved in organising this conference have spent a small fortune on stamps, printing and the deposit on the hall. It will really help to have some of the registrations in early (not to mention donations, very welcome) and help us to estimate the numbers we might expect on the day.

- Saturday 22 March. Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights conference. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. 11am. Inquiries: c/o 41 Ellington St, N7.

services and clinics be completely independent of one another, financially and in personnel. It is this which will force the closure of the charities.

In addition, the DHSS would be obliged to close any clinic where a member of staff, within six months of leaving, is in any way involved in the care of pregnant women. This involvement need not relate to abortion counselling at all; it could be routine general practice work, or classes in preparation for childbirth.

The conscience clause remains unchanged, allowing a doctor to refuse a woman an abortion without revealing the reasons for his refusal, so that even a decision based on personal prejudice alone could appear as medical advice, and the doctor would not be obliged to refer the woman to anyone else.

The time limit for legal abortion is reduced to 20 weeks, with a provision for it to be reduced further by the Secretary of State, through a procedure which permits only 90 minutes of Parliamentary debate, usually late on a Friday evening.

AVON TEACHERS STRIKE

30 AVON comprehensive schools started official strike action this week in protest at staff cuts.

Last September, the Avon education authority sacked four teachers, and this year so far around 300 teachers' jobs have been axed by not replacing staff who leave or retire.

These cuts, due 'officially' to falling pupil numbers, imposed massive timetable changes in January - almost halfway through the school year.

As a result, small reading groups have disappeared, and maths classes are allocated to several different teachers... causing severe disruption.

NUT members in three schools, the hardest hit (Hartcliffe, Lawrence Weston and Hengrove), have been refusing to teach revised

timetables since they were introduced at the start of the term. Hartcliffe NUT members have set up emergency provision in church halls for exam pupils.

Now 27 other schools are coming out in sympathy, and also in protest at changes in their own timetables. They will be brought out on a rotating basis; each week one third of the schools will strike from Tuesday to Thursday. The action has official NUT backing.

Avon's Tory council chairman, Sir Gervas Walker, has put the action down to a few extremists, causing (he says) great anger amongst traditionally moderate teachers.

The three leading schools are to be congratulated on taking a firm line, and thereby helping other schools to gain the courage to stand up to this Tory authority.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

S. Yorkshire: All out Feb. 18th!

"THE START of a revolution" was how Bill Sims described the one-day general strike and demonstration in Wales on Monday January 28th. And "Socialist Republic of South Yorkshire" is the slogan for the one-day general strike and demonstration against the cuts, to come in Sheffield and the surrounding area on February 18th.

The Sheffield AUEW District Committee is leaf-letting factories and strong support has also come from the Yorkshire NUM.

Activists hope the strike may spread outside South Yorkshire, as the November 28th demonstration against cuts escalated from a South Yorkshire initiative to a national event backed by the Labour Party NEC.

Coventry cuts fight still divided

ON SATURDAY January 26th, 60 delegates from labour movement bodies met for a conference entitled "Coventry in crisis", called by Coventry Trades Council.

The anti-cuts movement in Coventry has up until now been weak and divided - with separate anti-cuts committees from the District Labour Party and Trades Council, each with little clout.

The public service unions, with the partial exception of NUPE and NALGO, have done little to combat the cuts; whilst on the Labour council there is only one councillor with any left-wing principles left - John Hughes.

The immediate issue in Coventry is the forging of a united fightback.

The task of the conference should have been to build a united cuts committee from Labour Parties, trade unions, and tenants' and community organisations. Instead the longest part of the meeting was take up with "sharing experiences" with speakers on the cuts affecting health, women, housing, social services, education and the civil service in turn.

All well and good, but the discussion period following was long enough to take just

three speeches from the floor!

Two of the speakers - Richard Paine, a Socialist Organiser supporter, and Pete McLaren, Vice-Chair of Coventry N.E. CLP and convenor of the district party's cuts committee, made similar points on the need for a joint cuts committee.

There seemed to be little disagreement amongst delegates over this; the problem was that a meeting of the Trades Council's Public Service Liaison Committee the previous week had decided to oppose such a move.

Abruptly drawing the meeting to a conclusion, Trades Council President, Colin Lindsay, pointed to the "advantages" of members of both committees attending each other's meetings.

The split partly stems from trade union distrust of the Labour Party, but in fact ends up in political abstention and impotence.

The task facing militants in Coventry over the next few weeks is to make a reality of a united committee and a campaign capable of drawing in more than various individuals from either the Trades Council or the Labour Party.

Health workers seize their hospital

by GERRY BYRNE

ON THURS 24th January, workers at St. George's Hospital, Hyde Park Corner, occupied against its closure. The response from passers-by has been almost entirely sympathetic. By Sunday 5,000 signatures had been collected for a petition against the closure.

And thousands more have been collected in the local area. The Mayfair Residents' Association even donated £100 to the occupation fund!

Local post office workers, firemen, and workers from other hospitals have been down on the picket line and on Sunday, ITC flying pickets from Rotherham came down to offer support.

St. George's is world famous for its heart and chest surgery; they pioneered the use of the pacemaker. The closure of the hospital and its transfer to Tooting 18 months ahead of schedule would have meant the splitting up of the Cardiac Dept. and the loss of over half the beds in the heart department.

The present 60-70 beds at St. George's were due to be replaced by 15-20 at Tooting and 5-6 at Brompton Hospital in Fulham Road. The Senior Consultant, Mr. Parker reckons that less than 50% of his waiting list would be seen to.

These are patients awaiting heart surgery who could easily die if they have to wait 18 months till St. George's Tooting is completely ready.

The decision to bring forward the transfer from late 1981 to June 1980 is part of the Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth AHA's plan to slash £6 million from their £88.8 million budget. Five other hospitals are also due for the axe under this plan.

This is part of a general rundown of hospital services, under the guise of building up big new district hospitals.



3,000 beds have been lost in Central London in the last couple of years. NUPE Branch Secretary Alan Ellis explained the consequences to Socialist Organiser: "Two weeks ago we had an emergency in the S.W. Thames Region and there was not a hospital bed to be found between here and Guildford."

"We had to act. Talking never achieved anything. Direct action is the only hope we've got of defeating these cuts."

The closure of St. George's is not just a case of penny-pinching cuts. Some people stand to do very well out of it.

The hospital has leased the site from the Duke of Westminster's Grosvenor Estate at a nominal cost since 1723. When it ceases to

be used as a hospital, the lease reverts to the Estate.

When it is sold, the NHS will receive a paltry £23,000. And someone with an eye for a bargain will be able to buy an already equipped hospital on a prime site in Central London.

The occupation is officially supported by NUPE, who want to see the hospital kept open indefinitely. They also want the Casualty Department, which was closed in 1976, reopened, since the Casualty Departments at the two other hospitals in the area, St. Stephen's and Westminster, are already overloaded.

All the medical staff are behind the action, though many are only concerned to keep St. George's open until the facilities at Tooting are

adequate to replace those at Hyde Park Corner.

The Occupation Committee, who hold the keys and control all the entrances, want to stop the transfer of all equipment and services to Tooting. At night, when only the Casualty entrance is open, the porters' lodge can call on emergency pickets in case of any attempt to move the equipment.

Help on the picket line is still urgently needed (especially from 8-10am, 12-2pm, 4-6pm). There are seven entrances to cover.

"We can't win it on our own. We hope to get it across to the public just what these cuts mean," said Alan Ellis. "We hope our action will spark a similar response from other threatened hospitals."

Hackney: Council buckles, Left organises

by MIKE DAVIS

HACKNEY'S ALMOST 100% Labour Council now seems set to present a package of measures which hardly go any way towards resisting the Tories' offensive on local government spending.

There are plans in the pipeline - though they have not been approved by the Labour Group as yet - for an up to 5% reduction in every committee's budget and a 40% or more rate rise.

A 25% rent increase for the borough's council tenants has already been decided by the Labour Group and the Council. On top of this officers of the Housing Management Committee presented councillors with plans for a 40% increase in heating charges, a doubling of rent for homeless families in bed and breakfast accommodation, cuts in mobile patrols and the scrapping of the pilot scheme for reintroducing resident caretakers.

But it's not only council tenants who are being singled out for this treatment. The

many thousands of Under-Fives in the borough are being told to wait patiently for nursery space until the Tories go away. Even three brand new nurseries recently completed are to remain boarded-up because Council leaders claim they can't afford the staff to run them.

Cllr. Dinah Morley, who attended a lobby of a Leader's panel on policy by the Hackney Under Fives Campaign on Monday 28th said that failure to open the nurseries would "condemn the next generation of children to a third rate infancy... The 700 children on priority waiting lists will remain uncatered for."

She added, "Instead of fighting the Tories' cuts, the Council leadership seem to be acquiescing and going under"

Many of the Broad Left of the Labour Group share this hostility to the council leadership's backsliding in the face of 13% cash limits and Heseltine's cuts in the Rate Support Grant.

should show we're prepared to fight to get it implemented," is the message both from many Broad Left councillors and the rank and file of the three CLPs.

The Manifesto included pledges not to raise rents during a period of wage restraint and falling living standards, expansion of provision for Under-Fives, more women's refuges, community law centres, recognition of squatters' groups and no evictions and a thorough democratisation of local government with the development of trade union, tenants' and community control over services.

It is to defend these pledges and existing services and conditions that a special meeting of Hackney Broad Left is being held on Sunday 3rd February, open to all Hackney CLP members who want to join the fightback.

The left has been divided on the tactics of battle - some favouring a "no cuts, no rate rises", go bankrupt now stand; others favouring resignation and new elections, while other favour a rate rise to cover the cost of maintain-

ing services and jobs to prepare the movement for more effective action later. In the meantime however the Council leadership's position of a "package deal" should provide the basis for uniting the left.

In the absence of any lead from the Council and its almost complete failure to organise - bar one public consultation meeting which was more an exercise in dispelling hot air than the start of an organised fightback - the Broad Left councillors and party rank and file see the need to set the wheels in motion alongside the local labour movement.

The task now is for councillors and CLPs to link up with the Trades Council anti-cuts campaign, with tenants, with local authority trade unions, the Hackney Health Campaign (Fighting to reverse hospital closures and health cuts), and the campaign against school closures to form a united body capable of reversing the council leadership's plans and joining up with other campaigns and movements to turn back the Tories.

# Lothian Labour says no cuts, no rate rises

by MIKE BROWN

OPPOSITION TO rate rises has been gaining ground in Lothian, following the Labour-controlled Council's stand against cuts in services and staff. In the last couple of months, the Trades Council and several Labour Party branches and CLPs have passed motions against both cuts and rate rises.

On Sunday 20th January Lothian Regional Labour Party held an aggregate meeting open to all members to enable the Party as a whole, to decide policy on rate increases.

- This meeting did four things:
- It backed the Labour Councillors' no cuts policy;
  - Endorsed their growth budget plans for £8m-worth of extra expenditure;
  - Threw out the Councillors' proposed 46-47% rate increase;
  - Called for a policy of no cuts and no rate or rent rises.

These policies were confirmed by a Regional Party meeting which followed the aggregate.

The councillors see the growth budget as a major contribution to the fightback against the Tory cuts. "We were given a mandate for growth, and we're not going to be deflected from this by the Tory government", said Councillor Bill Taylor, speaking for the Labour Group.

The budget plan agreed is:

- Planned savings of nearly £1 million would be reinvested in Council departments. (Half of these "savings" would come from "natural wastage" of primary school teachers due to falling school rolls!)

- In addition to £10m extra spending to meet existing policy commitments, an extra £8m would be available for education (£1.3m), social work (£1m), public transport subsidies (£2m) and other services.

- Money has been set aside in the budget for an average of 18% wage and salary increases for council staff in 1980-1.

However the Councillors want massive rate rises to finance these plans and to bridge the Tories' cuts in the Rate Support Grant.

"The Labour group is not in business to increase rates", said Councillor Taylor, but rate rises are the "inescapable consequences" of the no cuts policy and a growth budget.

An increase of 38% will be needed just to stand still and 46-47% to cover the extra growth.

The meeting supported the No Cuts policy and growth plans, but threw out the rates proposal. "Are we working out tactics for a fightback or merely carrying out a book-balancing exercise?", asked Jimmy Burnet. "If the region raised the rates, the Secretary of State, "would come in as a hero on a white charger to rescue the rate payers."

Alex Wood, regional Labour Party Secretary, argued that sooner or later there would have to be a confrontation with the government. With a no

cuts, no rate rises policy "The working class in Lothian will support us because we are supporting them."

Tom Fenton pointed out that rate rises just transfer the Tory cuts onto the rate-payers. Despite rate rebates, rates are still highly regressive as a form of taxation: the lower your income, the higher the proportion of it you pay out in rates. And rate increases mean higher rents for council tenants. Rate rises are "a substitute for a political campaign against the cuts."

North Edinburgh CLP delegates, Alex Wood and Jimmy Burnet, moved the motion which was finally passed by both the aggregate and the regional Labour Party meeting which followed.

"This Labour Party is opposed to cuts in the public services and to increases in rent and rates. We call on the regional Labour Party to stand firm against cuts in services. We further call on the regional LP to consider how best to stand firm against the cuts and avoid affecting working class living standards by raising rents and/or rates."

The task now is to debate the implications of this policy

in the labour movement and to ensure that Labour councillors carry it out. This will not be easy.

At the beginning of the aggregate meeting, John Crichton, convenor of the Labour group of the council, tried to forestall the party's decision by announcing that councillors could not be mandated on the rates.

Later he tried to deflect opposition to rate increases by a motion that the issue be left to a Labour Group/Regional LP working party, to report back in two months — that is, after the Council has made its decision. The motion was supported by Robin Cook MP and thrown out by the meeting.

This year rate increases appear to be an alternative for councils opposing cuts. Next year, this may not be true. The Local Government Bill, due to go through Parliament soon, will change the Rate Support Grant system in England and Wales to a block grant system, and enable the government to penalise councillors who spent more than government targets. However, the Bill does not apply to Scotland.

On the 25th January representatives from Lothian Ratepayers' Association, Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce and Tory councillors met Scottish Office Ministers to press for a 25% limitation on Lothian's rate increases and for the government to refuse to sanction the loan for the council's capital projects. They were told that the Secretary of State cannot set a limit on the rates and is waiting to see what councils do before introducing any legislation for Scotland.

The council can thus probably get away with its 47% rate increase this year — but next year this option will be closed to them.

However by the time they are forced to make a stand, working class support for the Council will have been undermined by this rate increase.

Once rate increases are ruled out, the Council must either cut or take a stand. Cuts are not acceptable. The council must take a stand now or it will do so on much weaker ground next year.

Taking this stand means that councillors must be prepared for the possibility of going to jail. For it is illegal under the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 for Councils to refuse to cover their revenue expenditure by rates or other income.

Jimmy Milne, General Secretary of the Scottish TUC, recently called for "a joint approach" between local authorities and the trade union movement to the government on public expenditure cuts. He may have meant simply joint delegations to the Scottish Office Ministers. However the Wales TUC has shown the way. What is needed is a general strike against all cuts, whether in steel, coal, engineering or health and local authority services.

Direct action is the only way to defend workers' jobs, conditions and services.

## TRADES COUNCIL OUT TO STOP TORIES

EDINBURGH Trades Council anti-cuts committee is calling a lobby of Tory controlled Edinburgh District Council when it meets on Thursday morning, 21st February.

This meeting will decide the district's budget for 1980-81, and the ruling Tory group has already indicated that large cuts are on the way.

They intend to slash £1.2 million off council rehabilitation and repair work and to raise rents, probably by £2 a week. No more council housing is likely to be built, although there are 12,000 on the waiting list and 7,600 on the transfer list.

The Tories are also proposing to close Gorgie swimming baths, and the adult fiction and children's sections at Edinburgh Central Library. Council staff are to be cut by 600.

The Tories are expected to keep their rate increase down to 18% hoping that this reaction to Labour-controlled Lothian Regional Council's expected 46% rate increase, due to be announced on 19th February, will allow them to ride out the May district elections.

It is important that the anti-cuts committee lobby is given maximum support, and that local trade union branches call a one-day strike as the first step to reverse these cuts.

The cuts must be given full publicity, particularly in housing estates, and tenants' associations must be involved in the fightback. Labour candidates in the May elections should campaign on a no cuts, no rate/rent rises policy.

MIKE BROWN



Saturday 26th January saw the largest local demonstration in Islington for years, as more than 500 marchers demanded that Islington's Labour Council drop its plans for 5.3% cuts in services, 15% rent rises, and 41% rate rises. Present on the demonstration were contingents from the Trades Council, NALGO, TGWU ACTSS, local Labour Parties, and other political organisations, tenants', pensioners', women's, and voluntary organisations. There were also anti-cuts Labour councillors and a detachment of nurses from the threatened casualty unit of the Royal Northern hospital

## 'Defy Tories' appeal wins support

MORE SIGNATURES are coming in for the appeal for support to Labour Councils who defy the Tories and go for no cuts and no rent and rate rises. The list so far is:

Jimmy Burnett, John Mulvey, Neil Lindsay [Lothian Regional Council], Ron Brown [MP for Leith], Des Loughney [secretary, Edinburgh Trades Council], Alex Wood [Labour Party Scottish Executive], Eleanor McLoughlin [Edinburgh District Council], Patrick Kodikara, John Sweeney [Hackney Council], Jenny Morris [Islington Council], James Ryan [Convenor, Islington Campaign against the Cuts], Derek Robinson [Convenor, BL Longbridge], Jack Gould [Sec, Coventry Trades Council], Allen Torrance, Bob Davies, Carolyn Taylor, Paul Snell, Sandra Tully [Stewards, Coventry NALGO], Pete McLaren [Vice Chairman, Coventry NE CLP], Dave Nellist [Chairman, Coventry SE CLP and APEX B59 branch secretary], Ann Coffey [Chairwoman, TGWU [Club one] Branch, Coventry], Richard Paine [APEX Rep, GEC Telecomms Weekly Branch], Rob McGonigle [ASTIS Rep, GEC Telecomms and Sec, Coventry NE CLP], Eddie McCluskey [Senior Shop Steward, TGWU, Talbot, Stoke] Roger Kline [Vice-President, Coventry Trades Council], Mohammed Iqbal [Sec, Coventry SE CLP], Malcolm Marshall [Basingstoke Borough Council], Alistair Jamieson [Secretary, Basingstoke Trades Council], Margaret Gleeson [Secretary, Basingstoke LPYS], Stephen Corbishley [CPSA NEC]. [All in personal capacity].

IN February local authorities will have to prepare a budget for the coming year. They will draw up their budgets under the threat of the Tory axe.

The Tories are trying to force the councils to implement the cuts. They are pushing a bill through Parliament which will mean that councils that put up rates in order to offset the cuts will be punished by deductions from the Rate Support Grant.

Rate rises are not a way round the cuts. They hit workers in council housing with the same effect as an increase in rents. They hit workers and middle class people with their own homes, who are already hit by the massive increase in the cost of mortgages.

And to offset the cuts, rate rises would have to be impossibly large. So it is not a question of rate rises or cuts, but rate rises and cuts.

And a fight with the Tories over the right of councils to put up the rates would be a fight on territory not of our own choosing. It is difficult to mobilise people to support your right to cut their living standards!

We believe Labour councils should stand up now to the Tory attacks. They should refuse to implement the cuts, and they should refuse to put up the rates.

That means a fight against the Tories. It means not thinking that Labour councils can dodge round the Tory attacks, but mobilising the organised labour movement to stop the Tories in their tracks. We need to build support in the trade unions for councils who take a stand against the cuts, and pledges of action in the event of the Tories moving against them.

We ask you to put the following resolution to your trade union/Labour Party branch to be sent to Labour regional and District parties: "We call on Labour councillors to refuse to implement the Tory cuts, and to refuse to put up rates to offset the effect of the cuts. We pledge our support to the council in taking this stand, and pledge our full support in the event of the Tories trying to take punitive action against councillors."

## BIRMINGHAM LET'S WIN IN MAY - AND GET NO CUTS

SOCIALISTS IN Birmingham are planning a campaign to force Labour councillors to fight the cuts. Although Birmingham council is at present controlled by the Tories, their majority is slim and most people expect Labour to take control after the May elections.

But there is no guarantee that this will lead to more than cosmetic changes in the council's policy. The Labour group is run by a tightly-knit clique of right-wingers and the leader, Clive Wilkinson, is also National Chairman of the Campaign for Labour Victory.

The Labour group has so far failed to make any real plans for fighting the cuts, apart from verbal attacks on the Tories. We felt something very different was needed and a meeting was organised in December which set up "Birmingham Labour against the cuts". A meeting in January established the campaign on the basis of opposition to all cuts in public services and the nationalised industries.

We aim to force the Labour group into defying the government. A number of left-wing councillors and council candidates are active in the committee. At present we are pressing for a special meeting of the District Labour Party to formulate a policy to fight the cuts.

We have also produced two issues of a monthly duplicated bulletin "Cuts Fightback" and are planning to hold a public meeting with a Lambeth councillor speaking early in March.

SIMON TEMPLE

## CLP says: no witch hunt

TOTTENHAM Constituency Labour Party, in North London, passed this resolution against the witch hunt on January 23. Socialist Organiser urges all Labour Party members and trade unionists to take it as a model to push for in their organisations.

Tottenham CLP, noting the present orchestrated campaign by the media, Tories and some right wing sections of the Labour Party to start a witch hunt against the 'Militant' tendency, strongly condemns this campaign as an attempt, by enemies of the labour movement, to cause disruption in the Party and begin a counter-attack against the democratic gains of the Brighton conference, affirms our opposition to any bans or proscriptions, and our support for the right of political tendencies to argue for their ideas in the Labour Party, which is the broad party of the British labour movement, congratulates the NEC for its decision not to give way to this campaign and reopen the 'Underhill Report' case, and urges it to issue a clear statement along the lines of the points above.

by ANDREW HORNUNG

THE SUGGESTION to set up an Inquiry into the Labour Party's structure and functioning came first from the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory campaign. That is, it came from the right wing of the Labour Party.

Its aim was to deflect the last Party Conference from improving democracy in the Labour Party; perhaps TULV hoped that if Conference accepted an Inquiry and delayed on democracy until the Inquiry had reported, then the pressures for Party unity would quash any future attempts at reform.

Clearly this plan didn't work. And the result has been that the right wing are apprehensive about the Inquiry: they haven't been able to control its composition and might not be able to tame its findings.

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory Steering Committee/Socialist Organiser Editorial Board decided to draw up some proposals to put to the Inquiry not only because it thinks that the issues raised are important within the labour movement as a whole, but because if the Inquiry is swamped with proposals from the Right only it is more likely to be used against any further democratic progress.

What needs to be done? A working party of the SCLV has taken a first look at the problem and come up with this check list of issues. There are no answers here, just pointers, and we invite all readers to send in suggestions.

One of the central issues — certainly the most vital one now — is that of accountability. There can, of course, be no democratic accounta-

bility if the power in the organisation does not lie with the ordinary members.

This points to the central authority of the Party Conference. Its policies must determine what the Party does between its annual conferences, and its organs — the NEC above all — must see to it that this is what happens.

If this is right, then the NEC must draw up the Party Manifesto. So far most of the left would agree. Some, however, do not think that the Party leader should be elected by Conference — they prefer an electoral college system. And not all would go along with saying that the entire Cabinet should be elected by Conference, or the Parliament-

ary Committee when Labour is not in office.

These questions in turn open up further questions. To whom should the leader/Prime Minister of the Parliamentary Committee/Cabinet be accountable and how? and what should the terms of reference of the office of Party Leader be?

The most obvious answer to the first of these questions is 'the NEC'. That would make the NEC a vastly more powerful body than it is — on paper, at least, the most powerful political body in the country when Labour is in power. Does this necessitate changing the way the NEC is elected, its composition, or the structure of its committees and policy-making groups? Presumably

it does.

Of course, we should not confuse the changes that would be necessary in the event of the NEC having this increased power, in the context of a general drive for democracy in the Labour Party, with the right wing's proposals to rejig the NEC.

## Exist

What, in any case, should be the relationship of the NEC to the Parliamentary Labour Party? Indeed, should the PLP exist at all? Surely, so long as the PLP exists as anything more than a parliamentary fraction working under the supervision of the NEC — like a Labour Group on a council

Socialist Organiser, together with other left wingers supporting Ted Heslin, lobbied the

NEC's January 23rd meeting, calling for a firm stand against red-baiting



by BARBARA ADAMS

AS Denis Healey mounts his campaign for the Labour succession, the private face behind the public pronouncements is beginning to emerge.

Healey has always believed in strong leadership — initially from the left. Graduating in 1938 from Oxford, where he was Chairman of the Labour Club, he was a member of the Communist Party for the next two years. He returned from war service in 1945 still with left wing views, but these gave way to extreme anti-communism with his appointment as head of the International Department at Transport House during 1945-51.

During this period he worked with the Foreign Office in a campaign funded by the Secret Vote (money voted by Parliament for the Secret Service) to combat not only the communists but also the Left in the Labour Party, and to support the US in prosecuting the Cold War.

With Rita Hinden, Editor of *Socialist Commentary*, he set up a Colonial Section at Transport House to fight the menace of 'communist' — i.e. nationalist — propaganda among African and other overseas students. He helped to rebuild the Socialist International in a form acceptable to the West and was commended by the US State Department for his role in splitting the Italian Socialist Party in 1948 because of Nenni's refusal to fight the Cold War.

Despite strong opposition

Is the Labour right's leader an 'infiltrator'?

## Dennis Healey and the CIA

as his assistant.

For ten years Healey was London correspondent of the CIA-funded American Cold War journal the *New Leader*, and was a leading spokesman at conferences, and contributor to journals run by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, which was also funded by the CIA.

Former CIA officers have recently revealed that Healey was a regular participant in 'working dinners' organised by the CIA for their British contacts at a London hotel during the 1950s. At these gatherings the guests — who were well aware that their hosts were CIA officers

within the Party he led the campaign to establish NATO

In 1951 he was elected to Parliament, where he supported the Korean War, the consolidation of NATO and German rearmament in opposition to his constituency party. In 1953, he joined Gaitskell and Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands in approaching General Bedell Smith, head of the American CIA, in support of the secret Bilderberg Group of top NATO politicians and generals.

As a result the Group was funded from US sources, and Healey became European convener with Dick Taverne



Are Healey and his right wing front-bench allies [below] a 'party within a party'?

— were encouraged to discuss in detail the inner workings of British politics, particularly the Labour Party and trade unions, and their colleagues in these organisations. As one CIA man said later, they were 'helping us pick suitable people'.

In 1958 Healey was instrumental in setting up the Institute for Strategic Studies with American money, through a Bilderberg contact Shepherd Stone.

Stone, formerly with the US Military Government in Berlin, had helped launch both the European Movement and the Congress for Cultural Freedom. He also

had connections with Radio Free Europe and helped David Rockefeller run the American end of Bilderberg.

In 1960, Healey opposed his constituency's motion for nuclear disarmament at Conference and supported the Campaign for Democratic Socialism, Gaitskell's defiance of Conference decisions, and the Gaitskell/Crosland attempt to drop Clause Four.

From 1964 to 1970, he was Defence Minister in the Labour Government, in which position he joined the NATO Nuclear Planning Group under Robert McNamara, then US Defence Secretary,

and built up the British Polaris fleet in defiance of Conference.

He secured the omission of CS gas from the Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical and biological weapons, and rejected the Transport & General Workers' requests to be allowed to recruit soldiers into the Union.

During this period, British military spending rose to a record £2,500 million per annum. This included some £450 million spent overseas, which more than accounted for the balance of payments deficit which blew the Labour Government 'off course' and supposedly prevented it from carrying out its social commitments.

While Healey was fully aware that the Americans which whom he held confidential discussions from time to time were CIA officers, there is no evidence that he was fully aware that many of the American organisations with which he worked were funded by the Agency rather than from other sources. However, there was no doubt, even at this time, that these organisations existed primarily to further US interests.

Healey is proud that he has 'always been an Atlantic man', and his record shows how hard he has worked to this end. Those who believe that Labour policy should be made at the Party Conference and not in Washington will think twice before electing him Leader of the party.

from 'Voice of the Unions', Feb. 1980.



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# LABOUR'S INQUIRY

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## Roy Harrison: MPs divide off

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An issue not often thought of as being connected with democracy is MPs' pay. But if we consider that the pay of MPs (like trade union officials) is part of what makes them bureaucratic and distant from working class experience and interests, should we not seek to limit their pay to the average wage of skilled workers (and see to it that the additional costs, for travel, secretarial assistance, etc. are met separately).

The mandatory reselection debate has not only thrown up questions immediately related to selection — the procedure and timing of selection, for instance — but questions of the representativity of GMCs. This is in turn linked to a broad range of issues of local organisation.

### Aim

The one being most discussed now is factory or workplace branches of the Labour Party. The aim is not only to draw in more members, in particular more working class members, but to make sure that the Labour Party organises at the point of production.

But how could these branches work, what status would they have, how would they fit into the structure and how would the trade unions respond to them?

We could also consider whether tenants' associations and similar groups should be able to affiliate to the Labour Party.

And the idea has been raised for the restructuring of the Trades Councils on the lines of the old Trades and Labour Councils.

Since the authority of Party Conference is so central, we are bound to consider ideas for Conference to be run better. We have recently seen the end of the three year rule. Should we now press for the Parliamentary report to be submitted some time beforehand, and to be drawn up by a committee answerable to the NEC? What other changes could be made Conference more democratic?

Conference democracy is closely linked to the arguments around the trade union block vote. What should the proportion of trade union votes be to the constituency votes, and how should unions cast their votes? Should the block votes be split up to allow direct representation of more rank and file organisations?

Very few unions are even moderately democratic in

the way in which they decide Conference delegates, and which way those delegates should vote. What should our response to that problem be?

The Party does not allow trade unions to elect their delegations freely. Only individual members of the Labour Party can be delegates. Is this right?

That leads us to the whole question of bans and proscriptions. Should the 'socialist societies' section be reopened, allowing groups to operate as separate organisations and still be part of the Labour Party, as

the Independent Labour Party used to? Should the rules on who is entitled to be a Labour Party member be changed to permit, for instance, the Communist Party to be part of the Labour Party?

Can't the rules on expulsion be reformed, too?

And what about the Party programme and its rules and statutes — don't they need revising?

Bristol West Constituency Labour Party is discussing a number of documents which the Inquiry prodded into existence. These are on political edu-

ation, structure and organisation of the party, and women in the Labour Party, among others.

The terms of reference of the Commission of Inquiry suggest finance, election organisation, and the full-time workers of the Party for the agenda.

In some constituencies, there are special problems of involving ethnic minorities. In others there are problems of the non-existence or poor functioning of the youth section — a scandalously tiny body for a party with such mass influence. All these areas need to be looked at.

The SCLV working party will be working on a document with proposals, but it hopes to draw on the suggestions, concerns and ideas of our readers. Letters with suggestions must be sent quickly — c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16 — if we are to be able to meet the Inquiry deadline.

## Michael Meacher: it's the Right we should worry about

**MICHAEL MEACHER M.P.** has spoken out against the witch hunt on *Militant* as being

an attack on all the left. Talking to Socialist Organiser, he gave his views on the Inquiry

If the Right feel that the Inquiry is not running their way, they will try to discredit it or at least play it down.

They will probably try to flood the commission with evidence coming from right wing sources.

For instance, I expect the GMWU will be working overtime to produce proposals. They and other right wing unions will try to operate through the Trade Unions for a Labour Victory.

Then there is the question of the chairmanship. One thing they will quite likely try is to slow the whole thing down in the hope that this time next year Thatcher will be on the ropes and appeals to Party unity will be able to win the day for the Right.

As to the Underhill document itself, it is an old report and things have moved on since then. In any case there are more bodies to worry about on the Right.

# Why Underhill should stay on the shelf

by **BRUCE ROBINSON**

THE January meeting of the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Labour Party decided by 14 votes to 12 not to publish the 'Underhill report' or to make further investigations into the activity within the Labour Party of left-wingers who support the weekly paper *Militant*. The vote was a considerable snub to the right-wing Parliament leaders, such as Callaghan and Foot, who had been strongly arguing for publication since a concerted press campaign on the issue, with headlines like 'Stop the Trot Rot', began on 10th January.

Left-wing MP Neil Kinnock argued at the NEC that a decision to publish would only give extra ammunition to the press, who would in any case continue attacking the Labour Party.

The NEC also decided not to confirm the expulsion of Ted Heslin from Oxford Labour Party. Heslin, a TGWU trade union delegate to the Oxford Labour Party, who supports the paper *Socialist Press*, denied allegations that he is a member of the Workers' Socialist League, and no evidence was produced to confirm the allegation. Despite a tirade from Callaghan, the expulsion was referred back to the Organisation Sub-committee after Kinnock and Tony Benn had argued against guilt by

association.

The witch hunt is by no means over yet, however, despite the complacent assertions appearing in *Militant* itself. Former Labour national agent Lord Underhill has sent a 70-page letter including alleged documents by *Militant* supporters to the Party's general secretary, Ron Hayward. When Hayward tried to get this document discussed by the NEC, it refused.

Underhill is putting pressure on Hayward by saying that whether or not he himself gives the documents to the press depends on Hayward's reply. Also, James Callaghan has stated that he is in possession of new documents which show *Militant* to be "unconstitutional".

The press shows no sign of giving up the witch hunt because of the NEC decision. If Underhill goes ahead and makes his documents public, there will be renewed pressure on the NEC to take action against *Militant*. The majority is not large enough to rule out a reversal of last week's decision. We must continue to campaign against any reintroduction of bans and proscriptions in the Labour Party.

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The press and the right wing have chosen to make publication of the Underhill report the centrepiece of their witch hunting campaign. They have done this because

the future about publication of the report blurs the real issue: namely, whether the right wing should have a monopoly of the right to fight for their politics in an organised way. Unfortunately, many people on the left of the Party, whether out of confusion or as a result of right-wing and press pressure, have accepted the argument that Underhill's documents should be published for the sake of "open government" and "having nothing to hide".

■ ■

What are the arguments?

Underhill's report on *Militant* was originally presented to the NEC in 1976. It was based on documents from even earlier, which were alleged (but not proven) to be internal circulars of the *Militant* faction proving it is 'a party within a party'... thus infringing on the privileges of the Campaign for a Labour Victory, the Manifesto group, the Social Democratic Alliance, the Campaign for Democratic Socialism of the early 1960s, and other right-wing 'parties within the party'. A NEC sub-committee decided at that time that nothing was proven against *Militant* and no action should be taken.

Time and again since then the press and the right wing have resurrected Underhill's report (each time boosting it as a shocking new scandal): Large sections of the documents have been leaked to the press, most recently to the *Guardian* and the *Daily Mirror*. (You may well ask what disciplinary action will be taken against those responsible for breaking party rules by leaking internal documents to the press).

So now one of the major arguments put forward by those who argue that publication will do no harm is that much of the original report has already been made public, and Underhill will go ahead and publish the rest whether the Party does or not. It is, they argue, better for the Party to be seen to be open.

However, publication would give an official stamp of approval (even if Underhill's conclusions are not supported) to a bunch of unsubstantiated allegations, and give local Parties dominated by the right wing the go-ahead to expel supporters of *Militant*.

It would set up a public 'trial' of *Militant* — a trial in which there would be no right of cross-examination of evidence, no right of reply, and no precise charges stated beforehand. It would mean making the Tory press the arbiter of the internal affairs of the labour movement. It would be a 'trial' with a disregard for elementary rules of justice that would shame even Lord Denning!

Furthermore, giving in to Underhill's blackmail will allow the Right to use the same trick whenever they want to push the left onto the defensive.

If Underhill publishes the documents himself, he will have put himself in the wrong in the eyes of the vast majority of party members; if the NEC were to publish the report, it would give it

added legitimacy.

Another argument for publishing has been that if the Labour Party supports open government, it should apply the same principles within the Party. This view has been argued by Frank Field MP and, in his speech to the NEC, by Michael Foot.

These apostles of 'open government' are very selective about what they preach. They single out the Underhill Report for this purpose, although the papers of all internal Labour Party committees (with the exception of the Home Policy Committee) are kept secret for 15 years!

Foot's arguments were especially grotesque. He argued against the Party publishing and distributing Underhill's report, but in favour of it being made available to journalists. His "modest form of open government" would mean the report was not available to party members, but was available to the witch hunting anti-Labour press, who would use it to step up the pressure for the reintroduction of bans and proscriptions.



Ted Grant (left) and Peter Taaffe of *Militant*: bogeymen for the Tory press.



# A new imperialist war

by  
**MARTIN THOMAS**

THE British and American governments are making all the propaganda mileage they can with their efforts to get the Moscow Olympic Games cancelled, boycotted or transferred. And under cover of the Olympic ballyhoo they are going ahead with the military build-up which is the real content of their response to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

## Mexico

Think back to the 1968 Olympic Games, held in Mexico City. During the summer of 1968 Mexican students, inspired by the example of the May events in France, organised strikes and demonstrations against the highly militarised, effectively one-party regime.

The regime got worried. The Games were due to start on October 12th and the main Olympic Stadium was in the University grounds. Although the

students made it clear they did not want to disrupt the Olympics, visible protest at a time when the eyes of the world were on Mexico could damage the government's position.

On September 18th troops seized the National University. Six days later they stormed the National Polytechnic Institute. There was a series of

clashes. By the time the Army withdrew from the University, on September 30th, at least 35 people had been killed and over 1000 arrested.

The students celebrated the Army's withdrawal as a triumph. In fact the government had decided not to back down, but to smash the student movement once and for all before the

Games started.

On October 2nd there was a student rally. 'As the rally was about to end peacefully', the students reported, 'flares were fired, and police agents, dressed in civilian clothes, seized the student leaders addressing the meeting and began firing on the public. Then, in a synchronised move, the Army moved in,

firing indiscriminately.'

At least 200 students were killed, and about 1600 arrested. The 'cleaning up operation' a Government spokesman commented, would 'guarantee an end to the disturbances'.

## Bishops

The Rector of the National University and the bish-

ops of Mexico both criticised the Government. What about the American government, and the British (Labour) Government?

They just went ahead with the Olympics.

It was a similar story with the 1978 football World Cup. The military dictatorship in Argentina was then two years old. In those two years, about 10,000 people had been killed, 7,000 had been imprisoned, 22,000 had disappeared, unaccounted for, and 300,000 had fled into exile. The US and British authorities (a Labour government here, again) did not let it interfere with their sport.

Their objection to the Moscow Olympics now has got nothing to do with the brutal repression which certainly faces the people of Afghanistan. The American and British bosses expect the Kremlin bureaucrats to concede their right to use brutal repression when they see fit in their 'sphere of influence', and in return they recognise the Kremlin's right to use what repression it wants in its own sphere ... with some



The press whoops it up for the cold war [right], and the US ships arms to Pakistan's military dictatorship.

'We had to go into Afghanistan to protect our southern border. Now, to protect Afghanistan's borders ...'



# Why Russia invaded

by  
**JOHN O'MAHONY**

Afghanistan is an extremely underdeveloped country of about 16 million people. About two million of these are nomads. Over 85 per cent of the people live in the countryside; more than 90% are illiterate; 99% are (mainly Sunni) Moslems.

There are over 20 ethnic groups, the biggest no more than half the total population. The borders of the state were defined not by the development, integration and self definition of an Afghan nation but by the pressure of the expanding British and Russian Tsarist empires.

The central government has been traditionally weak, and local tribal and semi-feudal loyalties have always been paramount. Afghanistan was bound together only by the institutions of the state, mainly the army.

Poverty was intense. Eighty two percent of the peasants owned only 35% of the land. The biggest landlords, constituting 5% of the population, owned 45% of the land.

## Usury

Native Afghan capital tended to be employed in usury. Industry has scarcely developed at all, despite big injections of foreign aid. The state was heavily involved in what industry there was. This meant that neither a modern bourgeoisie nor a modern proletariat developed in Afghanistan.

In the 1920s an attempt by the King, Amanullah, who held a complete monopoly of power, to copy the work of modernisation and reform from above which Kemal Attaturk had done in Turkey, brought tribal revolts and the powerful opposition of the priests. Defeated, he fled to exile in 1929.

In this society women were chattels, denied education, sold as brides, completely repressed.

From the mid-1950s on, Afghanistan became more and more a client state of the USSR, getting two thirds of all foreign aid from its northern neighbour. The entire officer corps of the armed forces was trained in the USSR and armed by it.

The armed forces were the main force holding the state together, and were the major group to have solid links with the modern world. Groups developed in the army with commitments to developing and modernising the country, and initially many of them looked to the USSR as a model to copy, considering their own future role in a transformed Afghanistan to be like that of the privileged bureaucratic caste which rules in the USSR.

In 1973 the monarchy was overthrown by a military coup, and former prime minister and member of the royal family Mohammed Daoud was installed in power.

But despite promises to modernise the country Daoud achieved little because he had strong ties to the ruling class and its vested interests. He broke with the organisers of the coup and downgraded them.

The result was a second coup in April 1978, which toppled Daoud. In fact it was led by those who had made the 1973 coup, working in collaboration with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), a sort of 'Communist Party' (though inside Afghanistan it always denied it was a CP) allied to Moscow. Many of the leading officers were members of the PDP, and it assumed the leadership of the new regime.

To understand what followed it is essential to grasp two things. This was a coup of the army, with little support other than the army.

And, through the PDP's underground work in the army (allied to the influence of the Soviet Union on the officers) the Army itself had become the main base of support for the PDP. It had no other big base of support in Afghan society.

The PDP itself had been split for years into two components, named after their publications *Parcham* (Flag) and *Khalq* (Masses).

*Parcham* was more a direct tool of the USSR. It joined the Daoud government from 1973 to 1975, and in

the officer corps, and then escalated as the bloody faction fight between *Khalq* and *Parcham* erupted) progressively disrupted the base that the regime did have, demoralising the army.

The *Khalq*/army regime proclaimed drastic land reform designed to help millions of peasants and the estimated 700,000 landless people. It abolished debts to usurers. It began to create educational possibilities for women, and attacked practices such as the bridal price system.

should have led them to support the regime, by raising the cry "Defence of Islam". Though, the *Khalq*/Army regime declared itself to be Islamic (and its enemies to be "unIslamic"), it could not compete with the social influence of the masses of priests.

## Priests

This outcome flowed from the fact that the regime lacked a sufficient base of social

aries and priests led masses of peasants under the banner of 'Church and King' against the Jacobin revolutionaries and the town population.

One other consequence of the character of the base the regime did have was that it responded as a military power to the very first Muslim tribal revolts. Right from the beginning, and before the revolt became threatening, it strafed and bombed and napalmed villages from the air — which is not how a revolutionary regime goes about winning the people. By the end of 1979 the vicious war of attrition had driven about 400,000 refugees across the border into Pakistan — most of them non-combatants.

From the summer of 1978 the Muslim revolt spread, and by mid-1979 it had a firm grip in a big part of Afghanistan. The rebels got outside help from the beginning, with money and arms from the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia. They were allowed to arm and train and maintain bases in Pakistan. The Chinese, alarmed at the pro-Russian regime in Afghanistan, sent guns and soldiers to train the Muslim rebels. No doubt the CIA was also involved, though not to the degree the Russians claimed.

Russia had long been involved in Afghanistan, as we have seen. Russian 'advisers', military and civilian, became more numerous throughout 1978-9. A treaty tying the USSR and Afghanistan was signed in December 1978.

Dozens of Russians were slaughtered, some in the fighting, but also civilians. As the regime tore itself apart with factionalism and fratricidal slaughter, and suffered in the war of attrition with the rebels, the Russians became more and more involved, substituting themselves more and more for the flagging and tottering PDP/Army regime. The take



that capacity persecuted *Khalq*, which was less subservient to the USSR. Unwillingly reunited before the April 1978 coup, the two factions fell apart within three months, and *Parcham* leaders were jailed or exiled.

The consequence of these facts was that the regime had a terribly narrow base for its reforming efforts, and that the purging of the Army and the PDP (which began in April 1978, with a purge against non-PDP supporters in

Instead of these decrees rallying the people to the regime, they allowed an alliance of Muslim priests, landlords and royalists to rally much of the population against the regime.

The reforms themselves threatened the interests of all the traditional ruling groups, specially the landlords. Many of the priests are landlords, too. These reactionaries were able to win the support of masses of people whose interests

support to compete with the vast network of priests, and could only act through decrees and through the army. Before it had time to win sufficient support for the reforms, civil war developed on a serious scale, and the polarisation of the country went more and more against the 'infidel' government.

Similar things happened during the bourgeois revolutions in France and Belgium (and, in a more complicated situation, in Spain): reaction-



# build-up

demagogy and bluster, of course, expected and discounted on both sides.

Thus, last October, several dissidents in Czechoslovakia, members of the Charter 77 group, were given long jail sentences — for campaigning for rights supposed to be guaranteed in the constitution of their country. Without doubt the Kremlin had a hand in it. Like the Mexican regime in 1968, they were 'cleaning up' in preparation for the Olympics. No talk of boycotting the Olympics then...

## Sphere

The reason why the US and British governments have stepped up cold war in earnest is that Russia, in invading Afghanistan, has gone (if only marginally) beyond its agreed sphere. It is not because Russia will despoil Afghanistan — but because they see it as a threat to their own right to despoil the world as they see fit.

The British government currently has troops in

Ireland and in Zimbabwe, propping up oppressive regimes. The US gave up its efforts to bomb Indochina into submission only in 1975. Their pious fury over the invasion of Afghanistan is a sick joke.

While proclaiming the right of nations to self-determination, Carter has said he will go to war to stop any threat to US interests in the Gulf. To show his concern for human rights, he will give military aid to the Islamic military dictatorship in Pakistan. To prove his opposition to great-power bullying, he will establish new US bases in Kenya, Somalia, and/or Oman. To demonstrate his hatred of war, he is talking of bringing back the draft.

The Tories have backed Carter all the way — much more so than any other West European government. And the Labour leadership in Parliament has backed Thatcher all the way.

On January 24th, Tory Defence Secretary Francis Pym told Parliament that the last Labour Government had already spent

£1,000 million on updating Polaris, and said that plans would be laid to spend £4,000 to £5,000 million on replacing Polaris. Only 51 Labour MPs voted against the Tories.

There has been no sign of opposition from the official Labour leadership to the Tories' plan to have NATO Cruise missiles installed in Britain, either.

Behind the smokescreen of hypocrisy, what is at stake in the cold war outcry over Afghanistan is preparations for hot war — preparations to restore imperialism to a state of military readiness where it can fight another Vietnam war without facing an immediate domestic anti-war revolt.

## Account

These preparations put all our lives ever more under threat — and the Labour leadership is going along with them hook, line and sinker. It is time the rank and file of the labour movement called them to account.

# Afghanistan

over of 27th December 1979 was the logical finale.

The Russians successfully exerted pressure on some of the leaders of the PDP regime to slow down or abandon its reforms and to try to broaden the base of the regime. In September 1979 those PDP leaders, including President Taraki, lost out in a conflict (which was settled by a gunfight in the presidential palace) with intransigents led by prime minister Hafizullah Amin.

Amin became president and continued the war, without any prospect of victory. The Russians increased their forces over Christmas, and took over completely on 27th December, installing the Parcham faction of the PDP (and a few Khalq people) in power.

It was the end of the PDP/Army regime, and the beginning of a new chapter, with the Russian Army as the essential power.

The Russian bureaucracy sent its army in because defeat for the PDP/Army regime would have placed in power on its borders a viciously hostile militant Muslim regime; because defeat for its client would have damaged its authority in places like Ethiopia; above all, probably, it went in because the disarray of US imperialism after its defeat in Indochina and the recent collapse of the Shah's regime in Iran and of Iran as a military power allowed it to expand the area of its control with impunity.

It is not a possibility that the Russians acted to further the Afghan revolution. For decades the Russian bureaucracy has conducted its foreign policy for nationalist and reactionary goals, and for none other. The Russians are capable — given their power, resources, and control of Afghanistan — if they want to, of pushing through the PDP's reforms to completion. But that will be

an incidental part of their drive to increase the area of the USSR and the advantages of the bureaucracy; and in addition they will install a reactionary totalitarian regime over the subjugated Afghan masses, modelled on that of the USSR. The regime, like that of the USSR itself, will hit especially at those elements of a labour movement that exist and will come into existence in Afghanistan.

## Rebels

Socialists who oppose the reactionary Muslim rebels have no reason to support the USSR's invasion, or to look to the USSR, whose policies are determined by a self-serving nationalist bureaucracy, to carry out the revolution in Afghanistan. If what the USSR has done in invading Afghanistan is revolutionary and to be supported for that reason, then logically those (like the Socialist Workers' Party of the USA) who hail that invasion should demand its extension to Pakistan and other countries. The logic is to demand that the anti-working class and anti-revolutionary Russian bureaucracy should start a Third World War to expand 'the revolution'. No socialist should support such a crazy logic... or the Russian takeover of Afghanistan.

But even less can we support or line up with imperialism against the USSR. The central objection of the USA, the Thatcher government and their allies, is that Russia took Afghanistan without prior agreement.

When Russian tanks put down the uprising of the Hungarian working class in 1956, or suppressed Czechoslovakia in 1968, they were careful to state their recognition that these were in 'Russia's sphere'.

America and Britain [which attacked Afghani-

stan as recently as 1919] can have no rights in Afghanistan. Their allies in the region tell us exactly who they are and what they stand for — Zia, Islamic reactionary dictator of backward Pakistan, where the masses are bitterly oppressed; the reactionary forces in Afghanistan; the Chinese Stalinist bureaucracy, still allied with the Pol Pot forces in Cambodia; the Sultans of the Gulf States; and so on.

No, these are not progressive alternatives in Afghanistan: and socialists have no basis for supporting attempts by any or all of them to drive the Russians out of Afghanistan. We can in no sense support the idea that the forces of imperialism and its allies are any sort of progressive alternative to the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia itself, either: the Russian and world working class will settle with them, and maybe the reckoning will be sooner than they think.

For these reasons we must oppose the revival of the cold war, which is now at freezing point again. We must oppose recruitment drives and any attempt to introduce conscription. We must expose the imperialist considerations that motivate the US and British governments' outcry against the Russian occupation of Afghanistan — including their new preparations for war on the USSR itself.

## Outcry

While favouring the withdrawal of Russian troops we must refuse to join in the outcry of the imperialists even on this question.

The USSR's Stalinist bureaucracy is a bitter enemy of socialism and of the interests of the world's working class. But Thatcher and her government are the enemy we face immediately, and the main enemy is at home.

# Don't take the A train

by RACHEL LEVER

Sooner or later, the nuclear energy programme will be brought to a full stop. Not by arguments about costs or waste disposal or alternative fuels or ways to live without fuel, but by the occurrence of a major disaster.

Whether it's a core meltdown at a reactor near Bristol, or the crack-up of a reactor in an earthquake zone in California or Iran, or the collision of a waste train with an inter-city passenger train or one loaded with inflammable chemicals at London's Willesden Junction, no-one yet knows.

In response to this probability the attitude of the nuclear industry is to get as far as it can as fast as it can — and make the biggest profits it can — before it is stopped. Secrecy is all-important here. At all costs, dangers, defects, incidents and accidents, cracks and leaks and panics must be kept secret from the people living in the shadow of the reactors or in the path of the nuclear waste transport, or from workers on the sites.

The haste and the secrecy will themselves only hasten the first major disaster. At Harrisburg the control room staff did not know what French engineers had discovered about pressurised water level indicators and valves. As a result, Harrisburg came within thirty minutes or an hour of a core meltdown, according to the latest NRC report on the accident.

Shoja Etemad, formerly a senior engineer in the French nuclear industry, has written at length for *The Guardian* bitterly questioning the scientific integrity of the whole operation in these conditions of both public and

truth are mocked and degraded. The critic finds that he is faced not with debate but with total silence.

'Faults, like the multiple cracking which affects PWRs everywhere they have been built, have not simply been kept secret from other nuclear users and from the public living around the affected PWRs, but have been kept secret from the reactor operators — the men in the control room. This is an absurdly dangerous situation for it means that they could make entirely wrong decisions in an emergency.'

He also points out that had the Harrisburg incident occurred a year or two later, a disaster would not have been preventable with current knowledge: 'If the fuel had been more highly irradiated — say after the third partial re-fuelling — the decay heat of the reactor throughout the emergency sequence would have been about doubled ... and a major catastrophe could not have been avoided.'

Another aspect of the secrecy and defensiveness is that real evacuation plans are impossible. A campaign to tell people about radiation contingency plans comparable to the London flood warning plans would cut right across all the soothing bromides about million-to-one chances of an accident: it would be political dynamite, leading to an explosion of questions and inquiries.

For instance, a recent meeting held by the CEBG (in secret of course) for London MPs and councillors to reassure them that the transport of 150 tonnes of deadly nuclear waste across the heart of London was perfectly safe backfired, leaving its audience more worried after it than before it.



commercial secrecy. In the latest *Guardian* article (Nov. 17th) he described trying to obtain equipment needed to test cracking which had been discovered throughout the French pressurised water reactors.

His own company Framatome had no such equipment; no such equipment existed at all in Britain; and he was forbidden to approach the official French Nuclear Energy Commission, even under a pretext, because of commercial security.

He writes: 'It may seem extraordinary to the man in the street, but we are now talking about cracks in the primary structure whose propagation could lead to catastrophic failure. ... In such circumstances so-called objectivity and scientific

from many meetings I've attended with the CEBG that they have no intention of introducing proper emergency procedures for the accident we all know will happen. It seems we have been written off.'

Tony Benn has complained that while he was Energy Minister, he was about the last person to be told about things going wrong in nuclear power stations, such as the chronic and irreparable leak of irradiated cooling water from Windscale. Little wonder then that local authorities are kept in the dark.

They are not told about the movement of waste through their areas. British Rail claims to inform local fire stations, but there has been no drill or even verbal preparation for what to do if a nuclear train crashes, and FBU members say they certainly have never been informed about waste movement.

An article in *New Society* last year commented that while the outright opposition to nuclear power had not got very far, movements in affected areas had mobilised thousands of people, and won the support of dozens or hundreds of local organisations, against the siting of nuclear stations near them, or the movement of fuel through their areas.

This is certainly happening in London now. The nuclear waste flasks — which travel past thousands of back gardens east to west and south to north through London — are tested (or rather, small scale models are tested) to withstand only a 30mph impact and half an hour's intense fire. They're known to contain faulty welding, and the actual flasks are not tested to see whether each does comply with the set standards, such as they are.

The flasks carry a certain amount of radioactive contamination on the outsides, as they are immersed in contaminated water for loading. Nor are they built to withstand corrosive chemicals, although ICI has a depot at Willesden Junction and nuclear flasks often pass within yards of dangerous chemicals. (At Willesden, the nuclear flasks sometimes wait for several hours before being hitched to a train for Windscale in the north west.)

These revelations have led to a sizeable anti-nuclear movement now in London, though there are apparently some who would prefer to see a more altruistic appeal. Newham, Lambeth and Brent councils are looking into what they can do to stop the trains. And on January 26th two demonstrations marched along parts of the routs of the North London Line, which forms one of the waste routes.

Our first objective must be to end the secrecy. If there is any way at all for nuclear energy to be made safe (and that seems very doubtful, especially under capitalism) it certainly won't be through secrecy. And if there's no way it can be safe, the sooner we stop the nuclear speculators the better — before they are stopped by a major disaster at the cost of thousands of lives.

## A programme for struggle now, or for the next government?

NOW IS certainly the time for any alternative economic strategy to prove its worth.

The Tories' economic strategy is one which tells each firm "Make profits or die", and sets out to squeeze workers' living standards to make bigger profits possible. Its sharp end is felt in steel and in British Leyland.

In those sectors, central to British industry, to the British trade union movement, and to dozens of working class communities, huge job cuts and reductions in real wages are threatened. Yet the sharper the struggle becomes, the more the Alternative Economic Strategy shows its irrelevance.

For a start, it is unworkable. In both steel and the car industry, there is an international crisis. French, German, American steel and car workers face the

same sorts of problems. Both industries (like most modern industries) depend heavily on international trade. Import control barriers would only make the crisis worse — as well as dividing the workers of different countries, who should be uniting in a common cause.

Set against the huge scale of the crisis, the inadequacy of schemes to boost investment, consumption and production by state expenditure is clear. A real revival will come only through profitability being restored by a big rise in the rate of exploitation — or through the restructuring and reorganisation of the economy under workers' control.

The Alternative Economic Strategy is unworkable because it aims to have the capitalist state act as if it were above class interests, and set up some sort of half-

Because of pressure of time at the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory conference last November, two important and controversial resolutions — on the EEC and on the Alternative Economic Strategy — were remitted for further discussion.

An extended meeting of the SCLV Steering Committee/Editorial Board will be held in April, with delegates from local SO groups, to debate these resolutions. In the meantime, we will be opening a discussion in the columns of Socialist Organiser.

In this issue, comrades from the East London and Birmingham SO groups, who proposed the respective resolutions for the November conference, explain briefly the arguments behind them.

For the next issue, we welcome comments and contributions both for and against the resolutions.

capitalist, half-socialist economy. For the same reason, it gives no guidance for working class action now.

At best, the Alternative Economic Strategy is a programme for a Labour Government elected in 4½ years' time, assuming that Labour does win the next election and that by then the Labour leadership is willing to attempt the Alternative Strategy. It's about what that future government should do, not about what workers should do now. But we need to fight back now; and in reality the chances of imposing left wing policies of any sort on a future Labour Government will be slight indeed if we do not fight back now, and if the Tories are able to get away with five years' cutting and slashing.

This irrelevance of the Alternative Economic Strategy is among the reasons why left wing Labour leaders who broadly support that Strategy, like Tony Benn, while vocal enough on other issues, have not been heard campaigning vigorously in support of the steelworkers (or the engineering workers, last year). Those on the left in the Labour Party, who see support for such struggles at the point of production as central to the fight for socialism, need a different programme, from the Alternative Economic Strategy.

SIMON TEMPLE

LAST YEAR French steelworkers organised a series of militant protests against job cuts in their industry — which included seizing railway wagons full of German and Swedish steel and emptying them over the tracks.

Most activists on the left in the British labour movement can see how that sort of nationalist protest is diversionary, and what is wrong with the French Communist Party's slogan "No to a German Europe". And most would also disagree with the Welsh Nationalist speaker at a rally to save Shotton steelworks a few years ago who spoke out against any investment in steel in England!

But seeing through others' nationalism is easier than seeing through your own. Is the anti-EEC line of large sections of the British left really any less nationalist?

The anti-EEC policy is usually rationalised with the argument that the EEC is capitalist, or designed to strengthen capitalism, and it must be opposed as we oppose every capitalist institution. This is sleight of hand.

No socialist will disagree that we should oppose the EEC in the sense of fighting for its replacement by a Socialist Europe. But in the 'Great Debate' in Britain on the EEC, that has never

# Stripping the left gloss off nationalism

been the issue. The issue has been: a capitalist Britain in the capitalist EEC, or a capitalist Britain outside the EEC (and therefore forming other capitalist links, with the Commonwealth, with the USA, and so on).

Neither alternative — in or out of the EEC — has any advantages from an anti-capitalist point of view. 'Out of the EEC' does have the advantages from a nationalist point of view — from a point of view which makes "foreigners" or "Brussels bureaucrats" scapegoats for capitalism's crisis. The would-be anti-capitalist argument against the EEC is only putting a left gloss on that nationalist point of view.

A genuine socialist-nationalist attitude was

put forward in France in the Euro-elections last June, by revolutionary socialists who got 600,000 votes for a slate under the banner, "For the Socialist United States of Europe". They explained: "We are neither for nor against the Common Market, for we believe that it makes no sense for the workers to take a stand for or against the agreements and commercial contracts which capitalists make between them... [And] to take a stand against lowering barriers between countries when the bourgeoisie itself is forced to move towards lowering them is willy-nilly to take a nationalist line".

It is time that point of view got more support on the British left.

MIKE FOLEY

*The SCLV rejects the idea of a campaign for British withdrawal from the Common Market. For the working class of Britain the main enemy is at home: it is our own capitalist class. To label the EEC as the main enemy can only confuse the issue, divert from the class struggle and give credence to the class collaborationist idea of 'The National Interest'.*

*None of the problems of the working class would be solved by Britain leaving the Common Market.*

*To oppose the EEC on the grounds that it is capitalist makes no sense unless we are to argue that Britain is in some way less capitalist than the rest of Western Europe.*

*The EEC represents a feeble attempt by the capitalists to overcome the obstacles placed by national frontiers on the development of modern productive forces. Socialists have no interest in supporting the old national frontiers against that attempt. We denounce both Little Englandism and the feeble cosmopolitanism of the EEC, fighting instead for a Socialist United States of all Europe (East and West).*

*We argue for Europe-wide coordination of workers' struggles for common battles on issues like the 35 hour week or the international crisis in the steel industry; for international combine committees; for united workers' struggles as our answer to the capitalists' attempts to establish a European unity for their class.*

*Conference resolves that the SCLV must take up a debate with the supporters of the Alternative Economic Strategy ('Tribune', the Communist Party, etc.).*

*A socialist policy should take up and develop demands which advance the unity, political independence and class consciousness of workers in struggle; the Alternative Economic Strategy does not do that. Rather it is a series of schemes based on utopian bourgeois economics.*

*The demand for import controls would throw workers in different countries into competitive, nationalistic attempts to export unemployment. The proposals for price controls and planning agreements are impossible to implement under capitalism short of conditions like a war economy, and then only on a short-term basis. In modern capitalist Britain the result is shown in sham policies designed only to deceive. The programme of 'reflation' would only lead to faster price inflation.*

*Against these utopian schemes for reforming capitalism, the SCLV proposes demands to mobilise the working class, such as: work-sharing without loss of pay, workers' control of production, automatic wage increases in line with the cost of living, and nationalisation without compensation.*

*At the same time we recognise that many militant workers see the Alternative Strategy as representing a drive for immediate measures of social change. We should aim for a fighting unity with these workers in struggles over wages, redundancies, against the cuts, etc., and demand that the parliamentary and trade union leaders who back the Alternative Strategy support these struggles. The more broadly the struggle develops, the better we will be able to convince workers that the Alternative Strategy is a con, and to show them a real fighting alternative.*

# 'WE NEED TO ISOLATE BRITAIN'

**MICHAEL MEACHER M.P.** gives his views on the way forward for Labour's left.



We asked Michael Meacher why the organised strength of the Labour Coordinating Committee — in which he is a leading member — has grown much more slowly than the wide influence of its ideas in the labour movement.

You say that our ideas have a big resonance within the working class, but I don't think that's true. I'm not sure we have such resonance within the trade unions, for example.

The LCC is composed mainly of left-wing intellectuals, mainly young ones. There are, of course, some trade union members involved like Bernard Dix and

Tony Banks, but there is an identification gap.

We'd like to have some full-time trade unionists on it. If a Divisional Organiser of the West Midlands car industry had stood for the committee, he would have been voted on like a shot.

We're not getting people in who are officials, stewards

or just ordinary working people.

We are hoping this will change when we start campaigning against the cuts and for the Alternative Economic Strategy some time early this year. I agree, we could do more, but organisationally we need to have people to plan campaigns.

## Steel

*Isn't it vital for the LCC to relate to issues like the steel strike or the moves for a general strike in Wales?*

It's very difficult to see what we can do directly, practically. None of the LCC MPs has a base in South Wales, for instance.

I think the most important thing for us to be doing is arguing for our Alternative Industrial Strategy. After all, people are told that there is overproduction, that the

goods can't be sold and so there have to be cuts in the workforce, and that makes sense — if that's the only framework you've got. What we have to do is present an alternative plan.

Such a plan would be incompatible with free trade in steel. We need to use this issue to bring home to people the need for an Alternative Industrial Strategy based on import controls. This would not mean reducing imports but preventing them from expanding. The point is to be able to expand the domestic economy without the benefit from this expansion going to imports.

Another thing is that people need to understand the magnitude of de-industrialisation, particularly in heavy industry. We have to show that the holes in our industrial fabric that will be made will be irreparable.

After such a slump we will not be able to regain our present position. So far, we

haven't got this across. Of course, we're not just talking about one industry.

Left MPs have to get these ideas across. Till now we have tended to compromise our position, saying there should be cutbacks but they should be done in an organised way and more slowly.

We have to say clearly what we want. We are not in favour of complete state control: we've still got to sell internationally and buy raw materials. We need to isolate Britain for a sufficient time from the capitalist free trade market if there is to be a full-scale recovery.

## Export

This can't be an indefinite isolation. And it wouldn't damage others or export unemployment as is claimed because we are not cutting imports but only restricting them to their present level.

Naturally, the Alternative Economic Strategy is not just

import controls: it calls for major-scale investment and for planning agreements.

The trouble with Keynes is that there is nothing wrong with increased demand, but it creates inflation if companies don't expand supply. Through planning agreements between industry and government we can not only plan investment better but see to it that there is an increase in supply. This doesn't depend on increasing exports so long as we have a system that stops imports rising.

*Isn't this just a national viewpoint?*

I think that is right. We are responsible for what happens in Britain. We have a responsibility to British workers.

If we had world government, it would be different, but we haven't. Until then, I think the responsibility of British socialists is to protect and extend the livelihoods of British people.

Dear Comrades,

As a supporter of the SCLV and of Socialist Feminism, I would like to take issue sharply with the views expressed in the article 'Out of the Feminist Archipelago' by Rachel Lever in the December 1979 SO. Right from its outlandish title onwards (a reference to Solzhenitsyn's 'Gulag Archipelago' of prison camps?), this piece, which I take it represents the majority line of the SCLV these days, presents the existing women's movement to the left as an awkward adversary and competitor.

The central indictment of the benighted feminists is that they have failed, indeed have not even attempted, to organise 'Working class' (i.e. Blue-collar) women. This is at best a half-truth: the attempts of various national and local groups to carry out mass agitation towards housing estates and factories on such issues as Nursery campaigns, abortion rights, organising night cleaners and battered wives are well known. No doubt these efforts have only met with moderate success: cde. Lever could well have noted that the Labour Party itself, with 80 years in the game and its tremendous nominal influence, has scarcely ever organised any significant numbers of manual working-class women. Like most other left-wing organisations, it is overwhelmingly dominated by middle class white males

**PSYCHES**

The implication is that the majority of feminists are a bunch of self-indulgent 'Beautiful People' with nothing better to do with their time than contemplate the ramifications of their personal psyches.

Very likely, the language, accents, life-styles and pre-occupations of the existing graduate-dominated Women's Liberation Movement are a barrier to more active involvement of women from more 'proletarian' backgrounds (and ditto for the rest of the left). It is clearly the case that many socialist/feminists do have a pretty clear perception of the real world out there — they are not starry-eyed enough to imagine that there are any instant short-cuts to influence by the immersion in the trade union movement that Rachel presents as a sort of

Martin Cook accuses

**The bread and butter issues fetish does exist**

panacea for the (genuine enough) difficulties of the Women's Liberation Movement.

No-one would be more delighted than me if the entire women's movement got active in their respective trade unions tomorrow morning. But when she says, 'there really isn't any way to organise working class women without doing serious work in the trade union movement', it really is a bit much.

How many blue-collar women ever go to a union meeting? Even in my own white-collar union, NALGO, which is 50% female, activists and elected officials are overwhelmingly male. Even among male trade unionists, turnout is usually pretty poor outside of times of industrial action.

One has to face the reality of a situation where a mass tradition of working class political activism is almost wholly absent in most areas.

While meetings in working hours, creche facilities, and the challenging of patronising attitudes in the labour movement are all important, problems run much deeper. They relate to the whole position of women in this society,

the way people relate to work and to trade unionism (in a passive way), to relations in the family, and so on.

In these circumstances, it is not surprising if many Socialists and feminists see possibilities in struggles and campaigns centred elsewhere than the 'point of production': for example, tenants' organisations, health campaigns...

More fundamentally, where comrade Lever seems to take issue with feminism is its contention that areas outside purely economic oppression should be central areas for political activity and intervention (e.g. the family, sexist images and attitudes, health care, violence against women, 'coming out' for gays). Linked to this is the stress on 'prefigurative' ways to organise (i.e., crudely put, the attempt to avoid reproducing the authoritarian, competitive and aggressive features of 'patriarchal' capitalism within the movements against oppression).

**PAPER**

When Rachel Lever regrets that feminists see a 'working-class' orientation as a fetish of bread-and-butter issues, she might realise that this is precisely what the Left (notably the Trotskyist left) has in fact meant in the past, as with the late Working Women's Charter Campaign. The demands of the WWCC and similar traditional left campaigns, laudable in themselves, can be and have been adopted without dissent in the labour movement — on paper!

It's all very well to criticise so-called 'middle class' women (unlike the heavily horny-handed Labour Parties and far left) for seeking a prefigurative ghetto of life-style politics as a utopian attempt to live out islands of socialism in a sea of capitalism.

True, many working class women do lack the education, leisure, money and general 'space' to emulate radical life-styles at present: but it is precisely their current situation in the home and family that prevents many of them from getting stuck into the labour movement in the first place.

It's all very well for comrade Lever to tell us the answer to the problems of working women is smashing capitalism and working class

power. Thanks a bunch. The point is, until we actually have a broad social/cultural personal movement that can practically challenge traditional life-styles in the here and now, that can provide in struggle the emergence of an alternative, the chances of creating a serious movement to overthrow capitalism are slim, in fact non-existent.

I write all this more in sorrow than in anger, recognising that there are many points in Rachel Lever's analysis with some truth in them. Her position is by no means a philistine rejection of the entire Women's Liberation Movement and its works as being reactionary.

Many in that movement accept the need to broaden out beyond consciousness-raising, local activities, and 'issue' campaigns (all good in themselves), to reach a wider audience, and forge more durable links with the labour movement.

But these developments will inevitably have to proceed organically from the present-day debates, tensions, and campaigns among feminists: not by artificially proclaiming some

so-called 'Working Class Women's Movement' in circumstances when precious few blue-collar women are involved in any kind of left/radical politics.

If the latter is the case, which appears to be the proposed perspective for the 'Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights', then all we will get is what the WWCC degenerated into: a bear-garden for the squabbling Trotskyist sects. As for the 'hundreds of thousands of women' allegedly organising, marching and striking (tens of thousands would be more realistic), they are not too likely to be corralled into such a campaign any more than to the Working Women's Charter Campaign.

The first priority for such groups as *Fightback for Women's Rights*, along with the rest of the left, should be to recognise that for now socialists have a lot more to learn from feminists than vice versa. More modest perspectives (e.g. the development of existing Trades Council women's committees and Labour Party women's sections) might gain more credibility too, come to that.

Rachel Lever replies:

**Let's build on the energy of the strikes and marches**

1. The word archipelago does not mean prison camps. It is a geographical term for a formation of countless tiny islands. Solzhenitsyn used it aptly to convey the countless prisons and camps leading a sealed-off existence in Stalinist society. It also seemed an apt image for the element in the Women's Liberation Movement who believe in hiving off to build utopian islands of liberated living within a repressive and sexist capitalist society. Its use as the headline for my article was perhaps mistaken, as it tended to over-emphasise that strand in the women's movement; I wouldn't want to suggest that that's all there is to it. So while it was a one-sided emphasis, I don't think it was 'outlandish'.

2. Working class doesn't just mean blue collar. I simply want to see a greater involvement of women's movement activists in the mainstream of the labour movement, which both blue collar and white collar working women do relate to in far greater numbers than they do to the women's movement. While everything Martin Cook says about the reasons women aren't very active in their unions is true, the fact is that they have massively more authority, and can claim the loyalty and allegiance of millions more women than can the women's movement. Such an involvement in the labour movement has, I believe, a good chance of affecting and changing the labour movement to make it more responsive to feminist ideas and aims and more meaningful for its women members.

It's not that feminists are 'benighted' in failing to reach and involve working class women in any numbers; many feminists themselves feel that this is a shortcoming and that the way the movement is constituted doesn't help in overcoming this problem. I wouldn't quarrel in the least with Martin Cook's 'modest perspectives' and do think that the *Fightback* Campaign can do useful work in developing ongoing, combative women's alliances under the auspices of, so

trades council women's sub-committees, reaching women in the Trade Unions and Labour Party as well as those in women's groups, tenant's campaigns, cuts committees, and 'single-issue' campaigns.

3. Whether feminists can learn more from socialists or vice versa is a matter of opinion. The important thing is to overcome prejudices on both sides and develop a two-way traffic of ideas. I hope the *Fightback* campaign can help in this, and this is one reason why the conference organisers have put some effort into involving a very wide range of campaigns and organisations. It's pointless to go on about whether it's organic or not: the question is, does it tackle the right issues and does it try to involve the right people in the right way. Some of these questions will be answered by the *Fightback* conference itself, and by what the campaign does afterwards. But to dismiss the initiative in advance is just destructive and won't achieve anything useful.

4. I would stick by the figure of hundreds of thousands of women organising, marching and striking etc. — or does Martin Cook discount the women involved in the engineering strike in the Autumn, or the women in Corby, or those involved in last winter's low pay actions or this year's hospital occupations simply because they are 'blue collar'? But this reminder that so many women are getting involved in militant action of one sort or another is not intended to be an assertion that it is easy for them. It is to say that the potential is there, the militancy is there and that if we can make the links between their activity and the ideas and initiatives of the women's movement and of socialists, that will be a tremendous advance for all concerned.

Isn't this a more hopeful and positive political perspective than Martin Cook's, which dismisses and belittles all this activity and pictures the mass of working women as passive and/or housebound whose only hope is, by and by, to 'emulate radical lifestyles' that their middle class sisters have pioneered.

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**SCLV meets**

Meeting in January for the first time since the SCLV's November conference, the SCLV Steering Committee/Socialist Organiser Editorial Board took important decisions for future activity.

The SC unanimously agreed to launch a 'Stop the Tories' campaign, with meetings round the country and agitational material.

The SC passed a resolution against the witch hunt in the Labour Party and agreed to campaign for labour movement bodies to pass similar resolutions.

Also unanimously agreed was a proposal for the SCLV to prepare a draft statement for the Labour Party Inquiry. A working party was appointed.

There were reports on the SCLV's other activities. Women's *Fightback* secretary Rachel Lever reported on the wide backing for the March 22 conference. Lambeth councillor Bill Bowring reported on the progress of the cuts fight. The SC agreed to back the call of Lambeth Trades Council for a national support conference for Lambeth; to offer assistance in building it; and to mobilise support for the London-based conference likely to be called by Lambeth Council's Labour group.

Gordon Brewer from Lothian SO group asked the SC to back the 'Appeal to the Labour Movement' on the cuts (see p.4-5). The committee agreed this by 18 votes to 2 (with 2 abstentions).

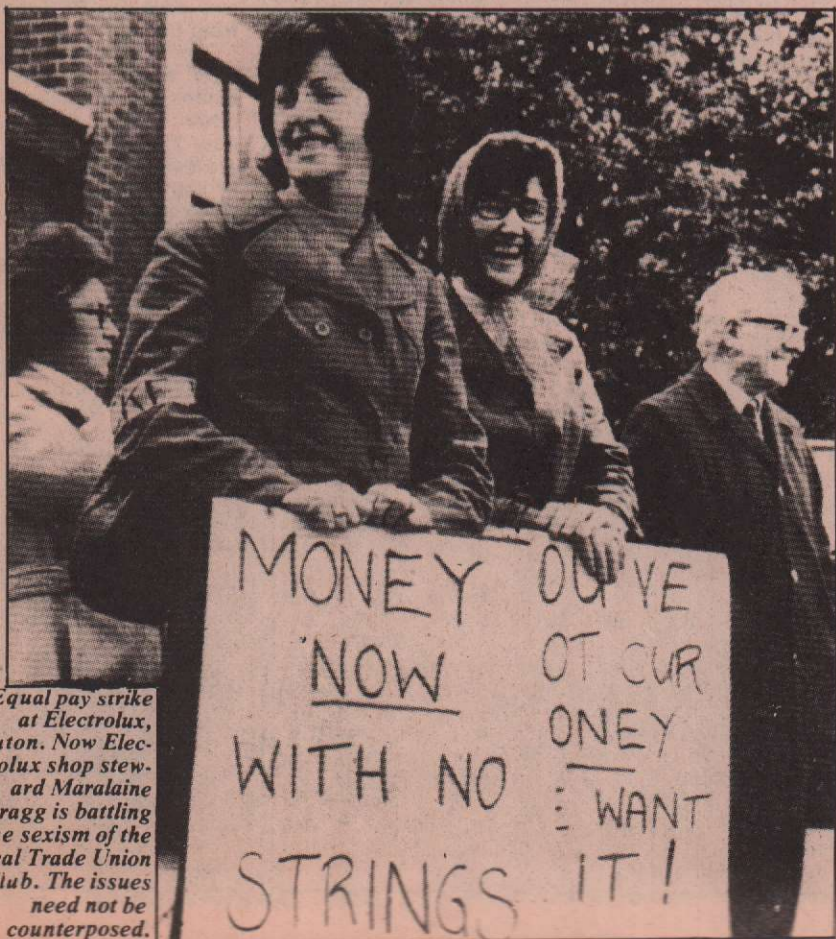
The committee had the job of electing a Secretariat to run the campaign on a day to day basis. Four comrades were nominated who felt they couldn't take on the job because of their duties as local councillors.

Two other nominees, Mike Davis and Keith Veness, who had circulated a document on the committee criticising the decisions of the SCLV's November conference, refused to stand: they didn't want to be responsible for having to carry out decisions with which they disagreed.

So the meeting unanimously appointed Jonathan Hammond as chairman of the Secretariat, John Bloxam as SCLV Secretary, and John O'Mahony as SCLV Treasurer.

**Socialist Organiser**

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Equal pay strike at Electrolux, Luton. Now Electrolux shop steward Maralaine Scragg is battling the sexism of the local Trade Union Club. The issues need not be counterposed.

# Socialist Organiser

## STOPPING THE TORIES, BACKING THE STRIKE:

### 1/4 million out in Wales

by JO THWAITES

ON JANUARY 28, 15,000 workers marched in Cardiff against Tory threats to jobs in steel and coal, while 250,000 struck or took other action in Wales.

Many marchers shouted "Maggie Out", and called for the indefinite Wales General Strike planned for March 10th to be brought forward.

10,000 crammed into the hall for the rally, and another 5,000 had to stand outside to listen to the speeches relayed out.

Steel union leader Bill Sirs declared it was "the start of a revolution", and got a standing ovation. If the ISTC Executive decided that way, Sirs continued, he would go to jail rather than obey Denning's ruling.

And then: "The last thing we as responsible people want is a General Strike, but if the fight comes to that, we will have one".

Welsh miners' leader Emyln Williams also got a standing ovation after he announced that the NUM had donated £20,000 to the ISTC and he called for the General Strike to be brought forward.

George Wright, secretary of the Wales TUC, got booed, with shouts of "Two year

plan sellout" (Wright has called only for the steel cutbacks to be postponed two years), and "What happened to January 21st?". After scheduling an indefinite general strike against the cutbacks for January 21st, Wright put it back to March 10th under TUC pressure.

Michael Foot MP got a stormy response too, with cries of "what happened to Ebbw Vale?"

• If the steelworkers lose, then every worker loses: on jobs, on union rights, on wages.

• Plans for a general strike to stop the Tories should not be left as distant rhetorical threats used by trade union leaders to try to frighten the Tories, but linked to workers' struggles here and now, like the steel strike.

• The militant strikers have no faith in trade union and Labour leaders who make resounding speeches and then sell out.

January 28th has shown the way forward. Now shop stewards' committees, combine committees, union branches, and all the labour movement, must begin discussing the perspective of a general strike, strengthening their links, calling local conferences, explaining the issues and mobilising their membership.



## Violence on picket lines: the truth

Last November DAVID HORROCKS, a heating engineer in Manchester direct works, was nearly killed on a picket line. If he had been injured as a result of pickets' efforts to stop scabs or police strikebreakers, his name would have been in all the papers. But, like most people injured on picket lines, he was hit by a scab lorry — so the press wasn't interested, and neither were the police.

David Horrocks was picketing Bessemer Street depot in a strike against lay-offs which were threatened when the engineers blacked work not covered by their bonus scheme.

He told Mick Woods how it happened:

"We were standing on the gate and we stopped a truck. The driver got out and went to the lodge to make a phone call. He rang someone in the stores, we don't know who, probably a manager, who told him that if he could get in past the pickets he'd be unloaded.

He went back to his lorry, and instead of reversing back to the main road as we expected he stuck his wellie down.

I was standing about a yard in front of the cab with my back to him. He must have seen me. He hit me and pushed me down the gradient — I was skidding along on the soles of my Doc Martins. He shifted from 1st gear to 2nd and then 3rd and got up to about 20 miles an hour. I was pushed along for 68

yards (the lads measured it out).

At the bottom of the gradient is a ramp about 4'-6" high to stop drivers bombing around the corner into the yard. When my boots hit that I was immediately thrown down onto my elbows and knees, and started spinning to my right.

I passed between the front wheels but got hit by the double wheels at the back as he turned left. I could see them coming but couldn't move since my legs and arms were numb from the shock of hitting the road.

The papers said it was a 5-ton truck — I thought it was bigger. The driver stopped a few yards down the road, opened his door and looked back at me lying on the ground, then drove into the yard and locked himself in his cab.

Some of the other pickets ran to First Aid but by the time they got back the ambulance was there.

The truck had run over my hips, smashing the pelvis and bursting my ureter. I was conscious all the time until they anaesthetised me before the first operation.

On the first day they gave me 18 pints of blood and there was blood coming out of my arse from internal bleeding. I've been in hospital for ten weeks now and I've only just started walking on crutches.

My left leg will be an inch shorter than my right. I'll be limping for about two years until my hips adjust

to that, and I'll be off work for at least another twelve months.

At first the police didn't want to know, claiming that it had happened on private property. Because of the uproar they reopened the case but the DPP booted it into touch last Friday (18th).

My union (NUSMCH&DE) are launching an automatic appeal. As far as I know we are going for both a criminal and civil action. Unfortunately neither Walter Wainwright (the Direct Works convenor), nor my district official Bill Lawrenson, has come to discuss it with me yet.

Bill Lawrenson told Socialist Organiser that the firm involved was R.P. Allison Ltd., Tubular Steel Products, Huddersfield Road, Saddleworth. He said that he had received no adequate reply from the police to a letter he wrote on November 14th, asking for the name and address of the driver (which is necessary for a civil action) and the name of the inspector who decided in the first place that no prosecution would be made by the police.

All this is now in the hands of the union's lawyers.

The lessons of this are pretty clear. If you're standing on a picket line you're a potential victim for every scab on the road. We need to defend our picket lines so that we can frighten the scabs off with our numbers and militancy.

## Sirs: rebel on Monday, sell-out on Tuesday

BILL Sirs has turned out to be some revolutionary!

On Monday January 28, in Cardiff, he declared, "This is the beginning of a revolution... I'm not going to sell out the working class... I will go to prison if I have to... if we have to have a general strike, we'll have one".

On Tuesday 29th, after the ISTC Executive meeting, he was saying to the private steel workers: go back to work, we can't break the law; Denning's ruling is the law. We'll appeal against it, but in the meantime go back to work.

If Sirs had said that on Monday 28th in front of the audience that gave him a standing ovation, he'd have been lynched. [He was 'visibly moved' in Cardiff, and perhaps had an attack of conscience: if he did, then he got over it pretty quickly!]

If Sirs and the ISTC leadership were expressly looking for a way of demoralising their membership, they could not have done better. To tell the private sector workers to go back to work after they have come out on strike, many of them by all account reluctant, is cynical and pernicious. As the pickets have been saying from the beginning of the strike, on January 2nd, the private sector membership should have been pulled out with the BSC workers from the start.

The solidarity of the private sector workers, the extension of picketing to other sectors of industry, and blacking of all steel are essential to the victory of the steelworkers. Posturers like Sirs must not be allowed to get in the way. Steelworkers should ignore the Denning ruling, and the ISTC executive's buckling under to the bosses' laws.



Bill Sirs

## Gearing up for socialism

by COLIN FOSTER

THE steelworkers don't want a cut in real wages — which is all they have been offered by the Tories and the British Steel Corporation. They don't want more cuts in the workforce — and BSC threatens to axe a third of the present workforce.

Those are the central issues of the steel strike. The Tories' answer is simple: to survive in this (capitalist) world, British industry must compete with others.

Although the leaders of the steel unions are fighting the Government (at last), they actually accept much of this argument. Their long-term vision coincides with Thatcher's: to gear BSC up to competing successfully.

Instead of insisting on the protection of the livelihoods of the steelworkers — demanding work-sharing without loss of pay — the steel unions have demanded import controls. Instead of fighting Enemy no.1, the British capitalists, they turn their fire on other countries' steel industries.

The steel unions have always accepted the nonsense

that it is the unions' job to help nationalised industries make a profit. This attitude has led them to agree to productivity deals, to massive sackings, to wage freezes. The steelworkers' strike marks a practical departure from that tradition of servility, as it also marks a sharp break with the past of purely local struggles.

A break from the basic idea of gearing up to international capitalist competition is also needed: a will to fight for a society where production is regulated by democratic planning for human need, not by whether it turns in the right rate of profit to individual capitalists or the capitalist state.

The first steps must be:

- Complete nationalisation of the whole steel industry without compensation (private steel still accounts for one quarter of British production).

- Lift the burden of interest payments to the financiers: nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation.

- Fight for workers' control throughout the industry.
- No to import controls: for a united fight by steelworkers of all countries.