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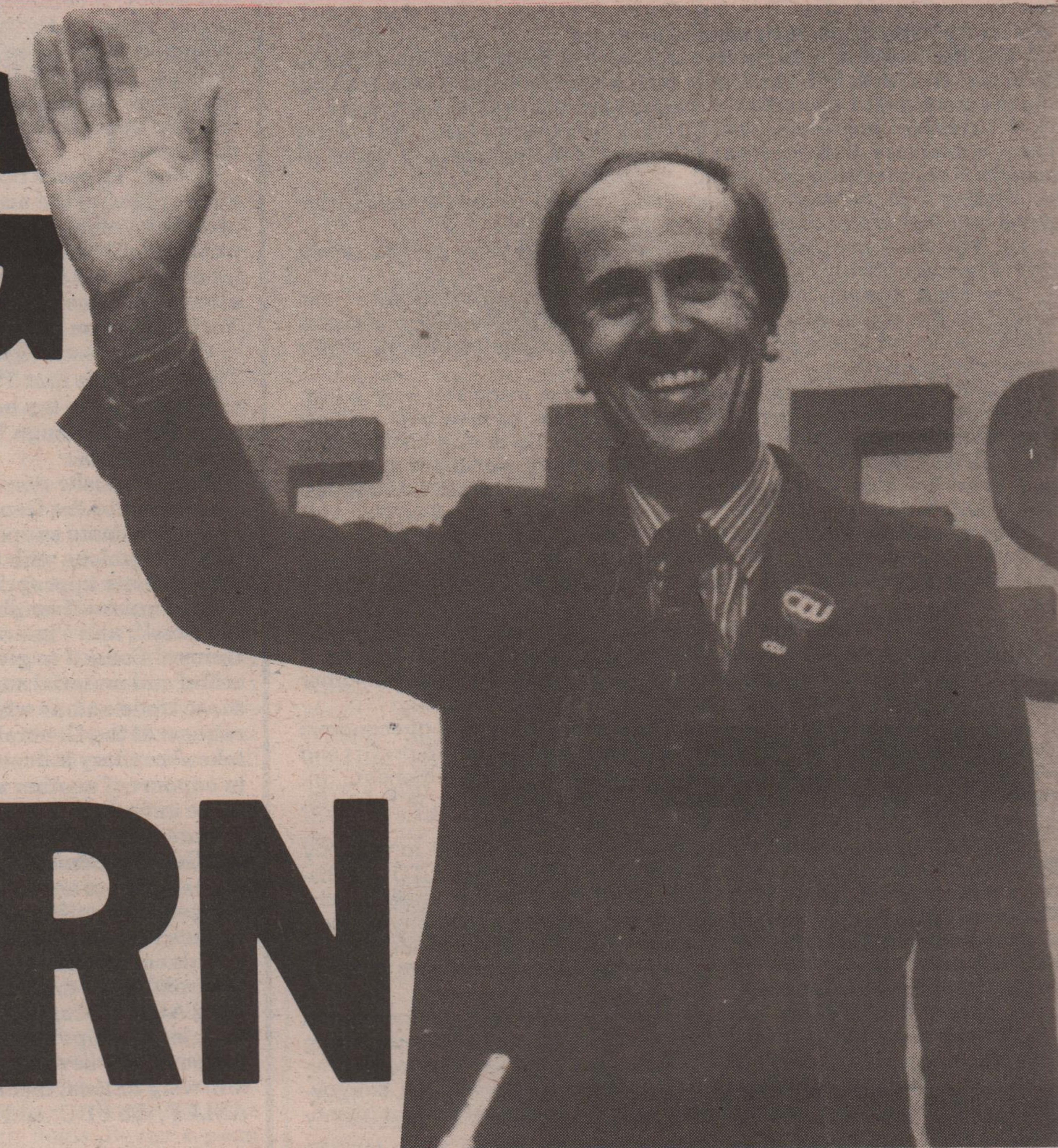
Socialist ORGANISER

Break
links
with
Tories

Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.144 September 1 1983 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

CRISIS TUC

FIDDLING WHILE JOBS BURN



THE LEADERS of the TUC have stood idly by for four years and let the Tories batter the labour movement and try to turn Britain into the worst hell-hole of the advanced capitalist world — into the Hong Kong of Western Europe.

The slump and Thatcherism — which follows the slump like plague following famine — have already destroyed much that the labour movement achieved over many years.

We have mass unemployment. Whole communities laid waste. Cities like Liverpool devastated. Working class youth are being driven into 19th century conditions under YTS schemes (see report on p.4-5).

Social services have been savagely cut. Two rounds of vicious anti-union legislation have been brought in, and a third is being prepared.

The welfare state — the greatest achievement of the reforming labour movement — is now targeted for the bulldozers by demolition-squad Toryism.

The election of June 9 gave the Tories a full five years to continue the job they started in 1979. The hidden manifesto they didn't dare put to the electorate then is now being unveiled a piece at a time.

The offensive is being stepped up. The dole is to be cut below subsistence level. Thatcher now talks of a continuous round of anti-union legislation, with new laws about every two years in the period ahead.

And what do legless Len and the rest of the time-servers who lead our unions propose to do about it? Crawl to the Tories!

They are not even stading idly by any more. They have fallen down on their bended knees before Tebbit and Thatcher. Last week Tebbit kicked

By John
O'Mahony

Murray away as if he were a fawning dog whose spittle was spoiling the shine on his bover boots.

While Murray eagerly insisted that the TUC leaders' talks with Tebbit had been "constructive and quite fruitful", Tebbit told the press "that if the TUC wanted talks with the government its leaders would have to take the initiative in asking for them..."

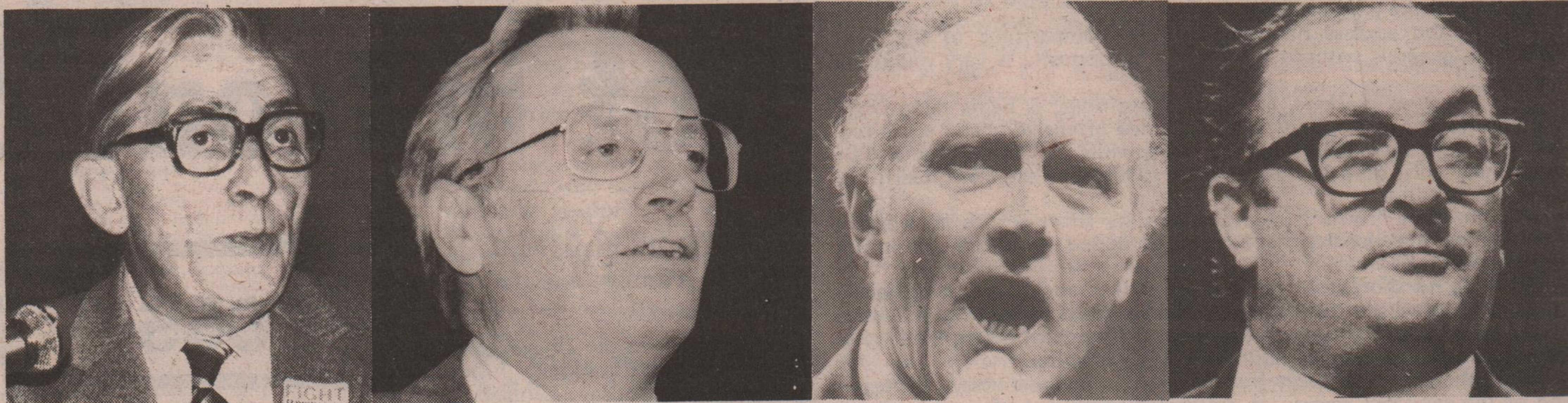
"He had in no way changed his attitude towards relations with the unions", reported the Morning Star (August 19).

The TUC Congress next week is expected formally to overturn the no-talks-with-Tebbit policy, already reversed in practice.

Arthur Scargill rightly says that talking to the Tories is like having a friendly chat with the hangman about the sort of rope he should buy to string you up with. What do the would-be quislings and collaborators like Murray say about that?

INSIDE

- * Four page TUC special supplement;
- * How the Tory cheap labour schemes kill;
- * Interview with Sandinista leader.



Legless Len and friends want to crawl to Tebbit...

Hands off Nicaragua!

A personal on-the-spot report from Jeremy Corbyn MP, who is on a tour of Nicaragua

IN JUNE 1979 the people of Nicaragua achieved what many had considered to be the impossible dream. Over forty years of US backed dictatorship was brought to an end by the Sandinista victory.

Since then the efforts at de-stabilisation have been enormous. In its latest "show of force" the US government has put 6,000 ground troops on military manoeuvres in neighbouring Honduras. The US Fleet is now stationed on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts of this small country. Effectively, trade is

blocked by a private enterprise refusal to trade with the Revolutionary Government. The shortages pile up and the tension grows.

American financed and backed 'Contra' forces are active on both the Costa Rican and Honduran frontiers and news has just come in of the deaths of fifteen "Campesinos" in the north following an attack on their transport.

The demands of defence of the revolution obviously have to take priority in the allocation of resources by the government. But the achievements are impressive in every field — in health, education and in popular involvement in running the country.

Since the 1979 triumph popular involvement in the revolution has continuously grown. The Junta lead the government but consult and work with the Council of State on all matters. The Council of State has 51 members drawn from



Reagan

popular organisations, trade unions, women's organisations, churches, private industry.

Before delegates are able to vote or express an opinion on the Council of State they must have been through debate within their own body.

The revolutionary changes in many aspects of society are enormous. In the Somozist

past, health care was a luxury and public health care of scant importance beside the need to fill the coffers of the Somoza family. Now each Barrio (neighbourhood) has a series of local committees who deal with the collective needs of defence, public health, education and housing.

In one very poor Barrio we were able to visit, 472 families had divided themselves into 25 committees and are working together to transform ten acres of former Somoza land into a decent place to live. Their current problems are to get running water put in each house, and to ensure that the school has sufficient chairs for the children to sit on.

Problems like this did not exist in 1979 when the Somoza forces were keeping millions in abject poverty and fighting to preserve their power and wealth.

Continued page 6

EDITORIAL

Cardowan collapse

IT was always wearily predictable that this year's TUC Congress would be a funereal and timid affair, dominated by the attempts of right wing union leaders to come to terms with another five years of Toryism.

But what was not so predictable was that the Blackpool Congress would be so closely preceded by a virtual collapse of even token opposition to the Tory offensive by the left wing of the union bureaucracy — the leadership of the NUM.

Yet last week's miserable events in Cardowan revealed the fact that the Scottish area leadership — formerly amongst the most demagogic exponents of militant policies — has in effect thrown in the towel and surrendered to the Coal Board's closure programme, and thus strengthened the hand of the right wing everywhere.

The Cardowan miners went to a secret ballot on whether or not to take action against the closure of their pit accompanied by a tacit reminder from their leaders that if they fought, they would fight alone.

Pit delegate Alec Hogg restated the limp decision from the union's Perth conference that they would receive 'full financial and moral (!) support from the NUM nationally'.

And as if to underline the fact that it would be the Cardowan men alone who would be out on strike he emphasised that

'It will be a big commitment to keep a workforce of 750 going, and we are confident it will be forthcoming'.

Yet Hogg knew — every miner knows — that with 6 months' coal stocks no single pit, least of all one being closed by the NCB as a classic 'uneconomic' pit, could hope through strike action to reverse the NCB's closure programme.

Previous NUM struggles against closure have made this very point: and there have been attempts to extend strikes to area and national level, even if ballots have been unsuccessful. Cardowan for the first time saw no similar attempt to extend the struggle, no talk of a national ballot, no pretence that the workforce 'was going to receive practical supporting action'.

Not surprisingly the miners voted 3-2 against a fight under such conditions — raising the question as to whether the NUM is now in a position to fight closure in any of the Coal Boards 65 target 'uneconomic' pits.

Yet the NUM leadership had previously stood out from most of the TUC officialdom as the only one prepared to wage a fight in defence of jobs. The Cardowan climbdown will have a major impact on other workers facing a renewed Tory onslaught on the public sector.

Even as statistics are wheeled out suggesting some kind of economic 'recovery', it is plain that the recovery is largely restricted to profits and production and will have little impact on soaring unemployment. Instead, Tory policies mean more sackings — on the railways, in the NHS, in the shipyards, mines and in the engineering industry.

Unemployment coupled with the unions' abject failure to lead any fight against redundancies and closures has already reduced TUC affiliated membership to below 10 million. And the refusal to challenge the Tories or conflict with anti-union laws has demoralised union members and held back unionisation of new workplaces, with the result that for the first time in nearly 10 years there has been a decline in the proportion of workers in unions.

But instead of seeking ways to mount a fight back, union leaders — exemplified by Len Murray — have simply discarded objectives which bring them into conflict with the Tories. Last week saw Murray publicly throw aside even the rudimentary aspiration towards full employment, and embark upon new utopian and reactionary cant about 'planning for leisure'.

There is no evidence that, in expressing this view, Murray represents the feelings of the working class.

Despite the endless hackneyed media comparisons of the TUC leaders to 'generals without an army', the opposite is very much the case.

The 'army' of workers, in exposed positions, is being relentlessly pounded by enemy artillery in a sustained offensive — and some forward outposts have been overrun. Meanwhile the TUC 'generals' sit biting their nails, deep in their bunker, miles from the front, fearful to give a call to action.

But on some fronts heroic struggles by small groups of workers show the fighting capacity that remains untapped — and can even inflict setbacks on the enemy.

There is no shortage of small-scale strikes and battles erupting — from the Nigg oil platform workers' mass pickets through spontaneous strikes in the ship yards and Vauxhalls, to long-term determined fights against closure in Greenings and Thorp View hospital.

Amid the stench of decay frenzied witch-hunts and noisy disintegration of the capitalist society of the 'boom years' it is these struggles — and the fight to link, extend and develop them politically that point the way forward for the workers' movement.

NEWHAM 8

NATIONAL NEWHAM 8 MARCH AGAINST RACIALISM AND RACIAL ATTACKS.
Saturday 24 September at 1.00 p.m. Assemble at Plashet Park, East Ham, E12. Nearest Tube. East Ham.
Called by Newham 8 Defence Campaign and National Campaign Against the Police Bill.
The trial of the Newham 8 is due to be held at Snaresbrook Crown Court, starting October 24.



Send invitations for speakers, or resolutions of support, to Newham 8 Defence Campaign, c/o PO Box 273, London E7 9JN.

Will Thatcher get the TUC message?

SWEET reason and pious pleading with the Tories, rather than industrial mobilisation, is already de facto TUC policy on Tebbit's new anti-union proposals.

But at the TUC Congress next week there will be moves to give an official stamp of approval to this policy. A composite to be moved by Terry Duffy's AUEW (Engineering Section) and Clive Jenkins' ASTMS "determines that the Government proposals are best opposed by reasoned discussion".

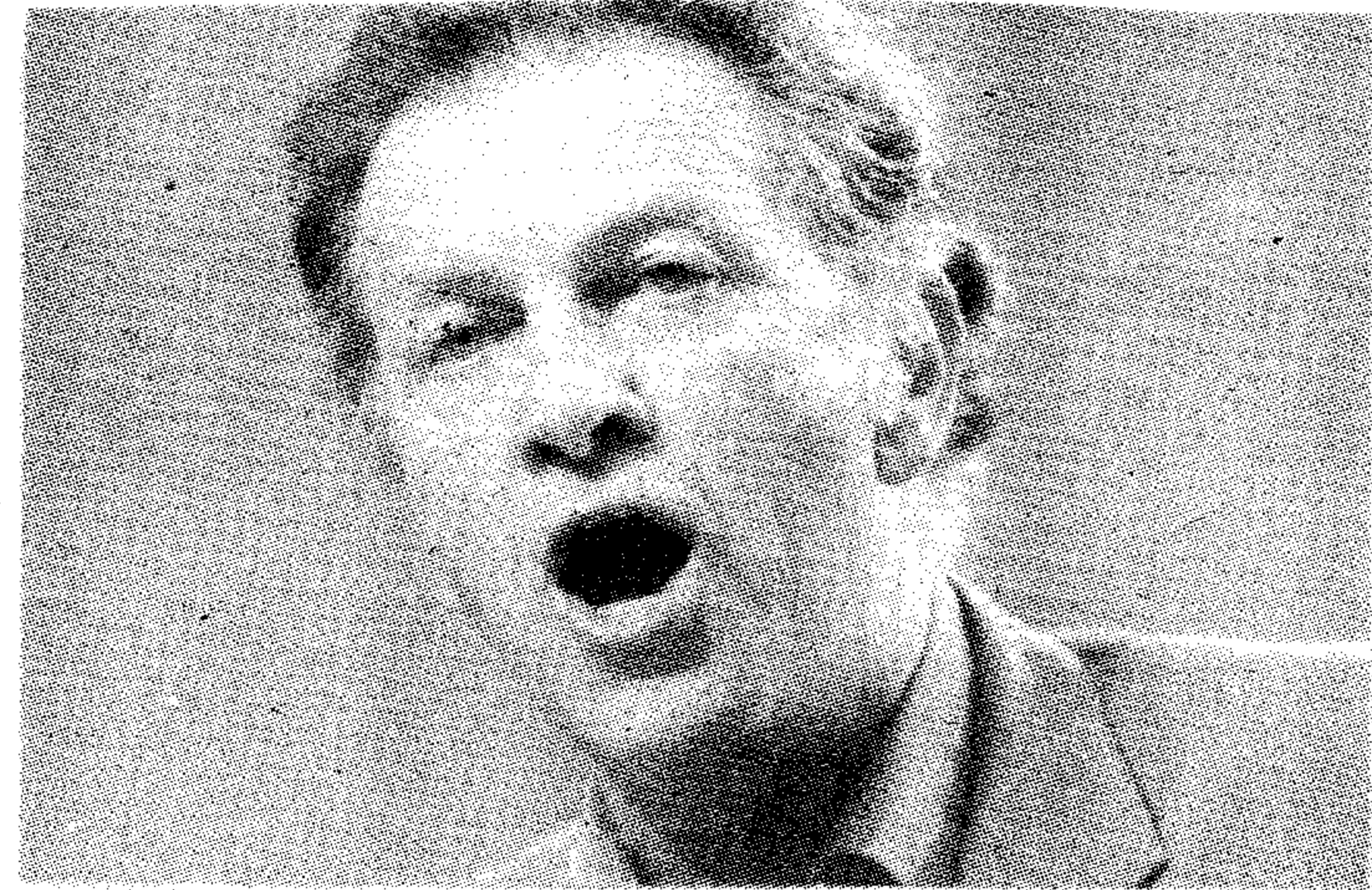
It also "stresses the importance of raising the awareness of members, employers (!), the public, Parliament, and Government (!!) about the adverse effects on industrial relations of Tory anti-union laws.

Class interests? Not a bit of it! The problem is that Thatcher's Cabinet and the top bosses just haven't read enough TUC educational leaflets.

The composite does mention "the need for the General Council to coordinate support from affiliated unions with industrial action where appropriate to defend unions if employers use the Acts", and "instructs the General Council to give both moral and material support to those trade unions which at the request of the General Council take secondary industrial action in support of another affiliated trade union".

Note that "at the request of the General Council". The references to direct action are all hedged with sufficient qualifications to make them safe.

This composite is to be expected from the notoriously right-wing AUEW (Engineering Section) leadership. But it is also supported by several supposedly left-wing unions, including ASLEF, the FBU, and NUPE.



TASS General Secretary Ken Gill

Amendments come from AUEW (TASS), to ban talks with the Tories on anti-union laws; from the National Union of Mineworkers, for a general policy of non-cooperation with the Tories and non-compliance with their laws; and from the Sheet Metal Workers, to remove the clause "at the request of the General Council" from the reference to secondary industrial action.

Only the NUM amendment even begins to map out the policy we need to fight Tebbit. The Tories are quite "aware" of the "effect on industrial relations" that they want. For the TUC to act very, very humble and very, very reasonable will not persuade Thatcher and Tebbit. It will only weaken the labour movement.

POVERTY is growing fast in Tory Britain.

A recent survey, conducted by the opinion poll firm MORI for London Weekend Television, shows that over seven million people regularly go without food because they simply can't afford to eat.

Three million households can't afford to heat the living areas in their homes.

Nearly 3 1/2 million households don't have enough money for carpets, a washing machine, or a fridge.

About six million people go without necessary clothing or footwear. Three million can't afford to celebrate Christmas, or to buy presents once a year for their family or friends. And 1 1/2 million children don't have toys because their parents can't afford them.

Not in front of foreigners!

FIRST THE good news. The Royal Family is safe with Neil Kinnock.

I read it in the Telegraph in a two-paragraph piece headed, 'Queen Secure, says Kinnock'. A report of his TV-AM interview said: "Although the Labour party is committed to a number of radical policies such as abolishing the House of Lords, he made it clear that a future Government under his leadership would safeguard the role of the Royal Family".

You know, this Kinnock might not turn out to be such a bad thing after all. Bloody Bolshie, of course, but maybe deep down he holds to the same things as we do.

Of course we've all got our differences. Some of us are all in favour of free enterprise. Others prefer socialism. But so long as two people have got their country in common, they can agree to differ about these other things.

Patriotism. It's an old-fashioned word, of course. Some people might be tempted to laugh at it. But deep down underneath it is what really counts.

Trouble-makers

That is what makes these two trouble-makers Livingstone and Scargill so unacceptable. It is not their left-wing views — god knows, some of my best friends are a bit pink round the edges — it is their lack of patriotism. They would sell their grandmothers to the Russians.



By Patrick Spilling

You have got to agree with the Daily Express on Monday. Page One Opinion. The Enemy Within. Quite my feelings exactly.

Then there's these two little pictures of them. You can see their lips all twisted. And underneath it says, Hate: Scargill, and Hate: Red Ken. We don't need telling twice. We do hate them.

Then it says, "Arthur Scargill and Ken Livingstone have exhausted their credit at the bank of tolerance. They have deliberately set out to wound their own country".

It says that their hysterical speeches, "show them to be totally unfit to hold responsible jobs here. Or to be regarded as loyal British citizens".

First Red Ken goes to Ireland and tells them that the British have treated the Irish worse than Hitler treated the Jews.

What a stupid thing to say. I mean, Hitler killed millions of Jews. Everybody knows that.

What happened in Ireland? Well, that's just history, isn't it? Of course people get killed in history. They always have done. That's not the same thing at all.

Anyway, the British didn't go there to kill the Irish. We took the

them civilisation. You can't compare the Irish to the Jews. The Jews are a cultivated people. At least the ones living in Israel are. They've got swimming pools and democracy. The Irish always have been a load of bog-trotters. Probably killed each other long before we came along.

Then Scargill pops up in Moscow. Probably collecting his wages. He starts going on about how Reagan and Thatcher want to start a world war. Makes jokes about Plutonium Blonde and Ray Gun. Of course the Ruskies didn't get the joke. No sense of humour anyway.

Emigrate

I know he's said it before. But that was different: that was over here. Going over to Moscow — well, I agree with that Tory MP who wants him tried for treason.

That's what makes the Express questions so pertinent: "If Scargill and Livingstone find Britain so repulsive, why do they stay? Why don't they emigrate to a Communist state?"

"We know why, of course. There would be no platform

Unions and "unions"

"A BLOW against one is a blow against all". That is the basic idea of trade unionism.

It applies to workers outside Britain as well as those within. The TUC supports, on paper at least, the rights of workers and trade unionists from Chile to South Africa.

But what about the workers in the 'socialist' states like the USSR and Eastern Europe? There are no free trade unions in any of these countries — with the exception of Solidarnosc in Poland, and that is outlawed.

The official 'unions' in the Stalinist states are not unions in any real sense, but state police agencies for controlling the workers and preventing the development of free trade unions.

Real trade unionists in the USSR — like the miner Vladimir Klebanov, who tried to organise an independent trade union — are locked up in jails, camps, and 'mental hospitals'.

One of the worst scandals in the British labour movement is our attitude to the Stalinist state 'unions' and to men and women who are victimised for trying to start real unions. The TUC maintains links with the police-state unions.

Poland's Solidarnosc was created in mass strikes in the summer of 1980. Throughout those strikes the British TUC maintained links with the official Polish state unions, whose leaders were among the worst strikebreakers.

The NUM has accepted the official USSR explanation about the imprisonment of Vladimir Klebanov. The representatives of Solidarnosc in Britain were expelled from the Scottish TUC conference when they tried to set up an information stall there (see letter, p.13).

It's time that this scandalous strikebreakers' attitude to unions in the Stalinist states was rooted out of the labour movement. Get your trade union and Labour Party branch to pass resolutions of protest.

behind the Iron Curtain for them to spout whatever vapid blatherings came into what passes for their brains."

The Express suggests we boycott events Livingstone appears at. The Tories have already acted on this advice. They have banned a GLC stall from their party conference to show they won't stand for political censorship.

I don't want you to think from all this that I am a fan of Mrs Thatcher. No indeed. I'm a Labour MP and a good one.

Gratifying

The most gratifying reaction has been from the trade union movement, who are preparing a nasty welcome for Scargill. As one unnamed official put it to the Daily Telegraph, "I don't think he realises the damage he has done. Mrs Thatcher is not popular with any of us, but to level an attack of this nature against us before a foreign audience in a foreign country is disgraceful".

That's it exactly. Whatever differences we have with Mrs Thatcher, or bankers, or generals, or whatever, we always have to remember that they are British and in the last resort we stand side by side with them against foreigners.

It's reassuring to know from the leadership candidates that whoever wins the election there will be no fundamental change in this position under Labour, that patriotism will always be put before socialism.

After all, we wouldn't want anything that would embarrass the Queen. Would we?

Heffer slams McCarthyism

A VERY dangerous situation is developing in Britain which I believe all genuine democrats must concern themselves with.

Clearly, the 'blacklisting' of workers for their political opinions and who are engaged in trade union activity is on the increase, and the high levels of unemployment are being deliberately used to try to weaken and ultimately destroy trade union shop floor organisation.

The campaign in certain organs of the press, based on the action of the BL management, supported by some engineering and other employers' organisations, against the so-called "left wing moles" in industry, is clearly not only concerned with whether some people filled in their application forms correctly, but is designed to frighten off workers from being shop stewards and trade union representatives at their place of work. The question has to be asked where will it end?

Over the years we have seen the Communist Derek Robinson dismissed from his job. We have

After the Cowley 13 witch-hunt, Eric Heffer MP, the Left's candidate for leader of the Labour Party, warns the labour movement against creeping McCarthyism in Britain

also seen other shop stewards (not members of the Communist Party or of any other left wing group) but because they were active trade unionists, dismissed from employment.

The dangerous atmosphere is being created in Britain, in all honesty not yet as advanced as in the USA in the 1950's, of the need for a witch-hunt against so-called "Reds" similar to that which took place in the USA after the Second World War, developed and supported by Richard Nixon and Senator McCarthy where scapegoats were required, and which I

believe was the reason for the judicial murder of the Rosenbergs.

Certainly we in Britain have not got to that stage yet, but the danger signs are there and this is the time for all true democrats to say enough is enough before it is too late and the atmosphere develops into one of hysteria.

The latest episode is of course the further attempts by some newspapers to undermine the Labour Party by such stories as 1,000 moles within the Party. These no doubt in addition to the supporters of the paper, Militant.

I note that some of the most right-wing reactionary newspapers have editorials concerning themselves with the health of the Party, the same newspapers, incidentally, which at no time ever supported Labour when Clem Attlee, Hugh Gaitskill, Harold Wilson or Jim Callaghan were leaders. They have always been anti-Labour in their policies and they will continue to be so.

As a socialist all my adult life, over the years I have read in certain newspapers that the Labour Party was being infiltrated, that the CLPs were Communist-dominated, or Trotskyist influenced, and that a take-over was about to take place.



"Nye Bevan too was accused of organising a party within a party..."

Sometimes a few Labour and trade union leaders have given credence to the statements, usually ones who later left Labour's ranks after having used the Party for their personal advancement. I warn party members that the statements being made today about moles, etc., are designed to damage the party and stop us from winning power at the next election. They are designed to frighten the people by painting a picture that bears no relation to the real situation.

There are differences within the Labour Party, there are those on the left and those on the right, there always have been, and as long as we are a democratic Labour Party, there always will be.

It should be remembered that during the days of Nye Bevan, the Bevanites were attacked as a Party within a Party, and that Tribune was the mouthpiece of the Bevanites. Nowadays, the Left which holds Bevan's point of view, is sometimes referred to as the legitimate left, when in the past it was argued they should have been expelled.

It is worth recalling that when the Parliamentary revolution took place, there was an upsurge of groups adhering to Parliament and the revolution, who sold their pamphlets in stalls in Westminster hall. It is a long tradition in Britain that groups within the wider movement

Meacher does a swerve on policy

YOU WOULD have thought that the June 9 election result was sufficient proof of the usefulness of the spirit of fudge and mudge. But for some on the Left, it seems, no lesson is dramatic enough.

Michael Meacher, the left wing candidate for deputy leader of the Labour Party, is busy trying to present himself as a suitable partner for Neil (The Royal Family is safe with me) but the guillotine for Militant Kinnock.

• He has gone out of his way to stress his 'broad agreement' with Kinnock. Such little matters as Kinnock's enthusiastic support for the witch-hunt, and his opposition to restoring Tories, need cause no trouble between friends.

Distanced

• Meacher has distanced himself from the campaign to restate the five Militant editors on the board members expelled from Labour's National Executive Committee, saying that he thinks the expulsion was wrong but it would be unnecessary and disruptive to push for reinstatement now.

It is not clear where this will leave the local Labour parties in Islington South and Hammer Smith — now under threat of NEC disciplinary action for refusing to implement the expulsions for the Militant EB members in their areas.

Swerve

• Meacher has also done a swerve on the issue of unilateral nuclear disarmament. He said this week that he would be against a future Labour government implementing this policy without first calling a referendum.

Meacher still has to be supported in the ballot. Better weak-kneed left-winger than hard-faced right-winger. But his latest moves underline the need to organise the most vigorous campaign possible for Eric Heffer, as the only candidate for the leader/deputy-leader election offering any sort of clean break from the Foot-Callaghan-Wilson lineage.

Labour movement CONFERENCE

September 17

September 17, 10.30am-5pm
University of London Union
Malet Street, WC1

Called by
Socialist ORGANISER

How to fight the Tories



*So the Tories are back. The bland phrases in their Manifesto are already turning into renewed attacks on jobs, on union rights, new cuts and the privatisation of vital services.

*Already even as Tebbit prepares new ANTI-UNION LAWS the TUC right wing have run up the white flag. But Arthur Scargill and Ken Livingstone have correctly pointed to the need for mass, direct action by the labour movement on the streets and picket lines. Our conference will focus on the problems, policies, and tactics for achieving this kind of fight.

*Against previous CUTS, many union leaders wrongly argued we wait for a returned Labour government while Labour councils blamed lack of union action for implementing Tory policies. A new 5-year mandate for Thatcher makes this a plainly useless policy: instead we need occupations, supporting strikes, the extension of struggles on a national level — and we must learn lessons from such struggles in the past.

*PRIVATISATION in British Telecom, the NHS and other services threatens jobs, working conditions and union organisation. But the action

against privatisation so far has been either localised and isolated or largely focussed upon protest. We need a plan of action NOW, before the whole public sector is carved up by the bankers.

*The SHOP STEWARDS' MOVEMENT has come under fire in the engineering industry — but has developed in the NHS in the course of last year's pay fight. What policies and politics are needed to rebuild and extend the stewards' movement and defend its independence of full-time union officials and management propaganda?

*New, more radical BROAD LEFTS have been emerging in many unions: but under fire from employers and the right wing, some — like the CPSA Broad Left — can crumble. How can we link Broad Left activity at national level to day-to-day struggles in the workplaces and develop a consistent, principled leadership?

*Many on the left of the LABOUR PARTY who had fought for left policies and accountability fell silent during the election — despite the right wing sabotage. How can we develop an organised, and politically confident left in the Labour Party capable of standing ground under pressure? What kind of perspective should be put forward by the left to go beyond the limited "Alternative Economic Strategy" which so plainly failed to convince a sceptical electorate?

*With five more years to work on restoring "Victorian values", Thatcher's blows will again fall hardest on WOMEN. Why won't the Labour Party and unions develop the special strengths and fighting capacity shown by women workers, and take their special problems seriously?

*BLACK WORKERS too are beginning to organise against tacit and open racism from the bosses, the state, the police and — most scandalous of all, from the labour movement. How can we help develop that struggle?

*Thousands of YOUTH are now faced with another 5 years — seemingly a lifetime — on the dole. Millions of adults are on the same scrapheap. How can we act at rank and file level to remedy the criminal failure of TUC and Labour Party leaders to organise and mobilise the unemployed? How should the unions respond to the new threats posed by Tebbit's so-called "Youth Training Scheme"?

*OUR CONFERENCE "How to Fight the Tories" will attempt to promote discussion and give some answers to these and other questions facing the labour movement.

Open to delegates and observers from all labour movement bodies.

Credentials (including discussion papers) £2.50 (employed), £1.50 (unemployed).

Please send me details/credentials for the September 17 conference. I enclose £...

Name

Address

Send to
Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane,
London N8. (Please mark the envelope
"September 17 Conference".)

Platform and workshop speakers include:
Jeremy Corbyn MP; Reg Race, Joy Hurcombe (Labour CND)*; Val Dunn (Manchester Labour councillor)*; Andrea Campbell (COHSE Group 81)*; Colin Talbot (POEU Broad Left)*.

Workshop discussions, coupled with the showing of videos, will cover a wide range of topics and current struggles, and enable everyone present to contribute in debate on policies for the way forward.

CRÈCHE FACILITIES WILL BE AVAILABLE ALL DAY

Co-op raid

A WORKER, Evan Bailey, was assaulted and need hospital treatment for an eye injury last Friday afternoon, August 26, when receivers and security guards invaded the Third Sector cooperative in Brent.

They had been sent by the Labour Greater London Council, and the Labour Brent borough council.

Third Sector was set up about a year ago with money from the Greater London Enterprise Board and Brent council. Run by worker directors, it replaced a GEC subsidiary.

The receivers were sent in after the co-op failed to get a bank loan last week.

Since February or March this year there have been allegations of financial irregularities. But the directors say they have orders for the next six months, and plan to add to the existing workforce of 70.

Workers turning up for work on Tuesday 30th found themselves locked out. Meetings are planned. The first concern of the Brent labour movement must be to defend the 70 jobs.

SOCIALIST STUDENT

First issue out
September

Articles by Tony Benn; Karen Talbot, NUS Executive on 'The year ahead'; Tony Dale, NOLS NC and lots more.

New paper of Socialist Students in NOLS. Available from Andy Bennet, DSU, Dunelm House, New Elvet, Durham. Copies 10p each. Take a bulk order to sell!

Court case puts minister in the dock The horror story of

Father tells of single-handed fight to expose lack of MSC inspection

Derek Cain was killed by a work accident at Plumb's, a small Sheffield factory where he was working on a Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP) scheme. Now his father, Richard Cain, is suing Tory employment minister Norman Tebbit — whom he holds responsible for the lack of proper health and safety inspection.

Dave Ayrtton talked to Richard Cain

Can you say how your son Derek's accident happened?

After the accident the things that came out about the conditions in that factory were absolutely appalling.

No first aid; no accident book; people being paid in the hand. No safety equipment.

Derek had to take his own gloves to work, to handle wire, because he was getting all his fingers cut.

No heating. The manager of the company — which also bundled rags as well as paper — was that well off that he was picking himself suits of clothes out of the rags.

It's unbelievable that the MSC can allow someone to be in charge of young people when he seemed to be as badly off as they were on the £25 a week.

What were the actual circumstances of Derek's accident?

He was sent there by the Careers Office in Sheffield to work specifically on a forklift

truck because he has passed his driving test for a forklift.

He hardly went near the forklift; they put him on that machine.

According to somebody who worked there not that long before Derek's accident, the MSC went down to that company to tell them what they wanted those lads to do.

But as soon as the MSC went, they just put them on anything they wanted.

The most important job at that company was operating the machine. The company turnover was £500,000 last year. They

A REALISTIC RATE FOR THE JOB

only employ 14 workers at both their factories. Yet a trainee is getting £25 a week, £1,250 a year, and is working the number one job! Each worker is contributing something like £29,000.

Was Derek being supervised when he had the accident?

The manager was outside — doing Derek's job of driving the forklift.

Now you are taking Norman Tebbit to court, wouldn't you be better taking the company to court?

I'll give you a good answer to

that. The company were a company of very ignorant people of very low educational level. To put it bluntly, they were a bit thick.

The people with brains are the MSC. It wasn't just the fault of the firm, it was the fault of the MSC, not checking that firm out.

Norman Tebbit is the boss of the factory inspectors and the MSC. He should be getting factory inspectors to check firms out. They don't do that anywhere in the country — and they certainly don't do it in this city from what the factory inspectors have told me.

So the real problem is that they have the brains, manpower and money. This firm got away with murder because it wasn't registered.

It won't do me or anyone else any good to take that company to court. All it does is put one firm out of business as regards taking on young people; but what about all the other businesses?

Firms like this one are dotted all over; if Tebbit is made to pull his socks up he'll have to ensure that all the places are safer than that firm was, which is my main concern.

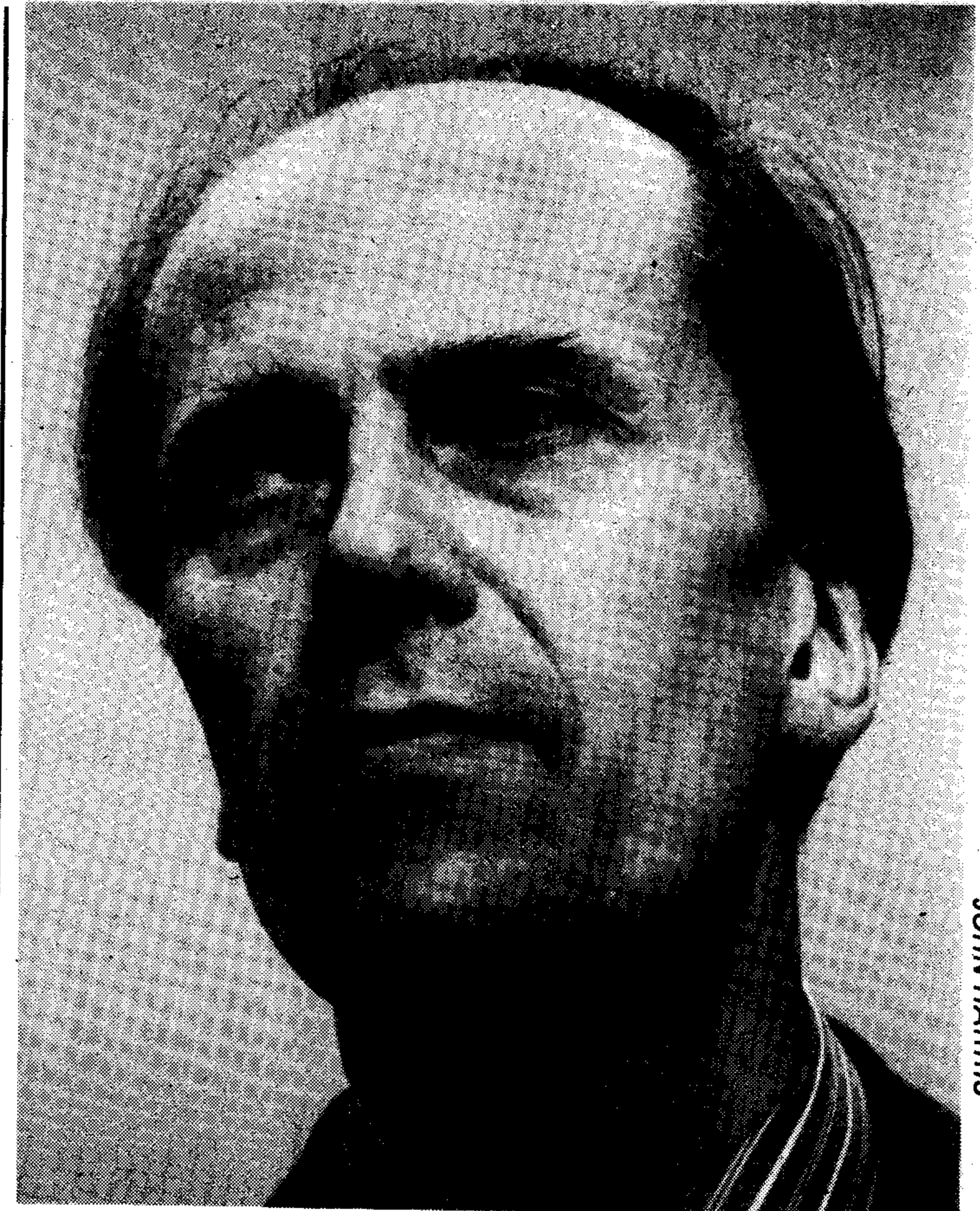
There has to be a start somewhere.

The MSC sent a link officer to Plumb's, the firm where Derek worked; he did his checking from the doorway, he didn't go in to the factory!

This fact was brought out at the inquest and the coroner criticised them for this saying that the link officer hadn't done his job.

The factory inspector told me that in her opinion that firm wasn't safe to work in because there wasn't enough work for a young person to do without eventually ending up on that machine.

The machine took up three-fifths of the area in the factory.



"Norman Tebbit is the boss... He should be getting factory inspectors to check firms out..."

How is the campaign around the court case going?

It's been very good. I've had support from trade unions, and Youth Aid in London; all Sheffield's five Labour MPs, particularly Martin Flannery and Joan Maynard; and two or three MPs down in London who want me to go and see them.

Various MPs are bringing up questions weekly in the House of Commons over these abuses. The local TUC safety council and something like five different safety papers have covered the case.

As well as that I have done four different TV programmes — Nationwide, Ear to the Ground (on Channel 4), TV Eye and Calendar, the Yorkshire TV News.

I did a radio programme for World at One on Radio 4 in January, a few pieces on Radio Hallam, two for Radio Sheffield, one of which was live and very good.

I mentioned on that programme that parents should take no notice of what they are told their son's or daughter's job will be because when they are at the job, the employers will do as they like.

Rolling mill

I broadcast that live, and three weeks later, a Mrs Lewis from Wales rang me; her son had been flattened in a rolling machine which was made to flatten insulation material.

She told me when her son got the job she had told him she didn't want him working on the shop floor.

Her son had replied that he was only working in the office and the Lab. So she rang the firm's manager and was told that her son wouldn't go anywhere near the shop floor.

Three weeks after this they put him on the shop floor — fifteen minutes before the end of the shift.

You can imagine how much supervision he had with a quarter of an hour left.

He was picking up hundred-weight bags of insulation material, putting them on the conveyor belt on which they went up to two giant rollers which flattened them to four

inches thick.

As he put one on the belt the conveyor belt caught him on a spike where it was joined.

The spike dug into his boiler suit, taking him up the belt and flattening him, fracturing his skull and taking him through the machine.

The button to stop the machine was fourteen feet away on the wall; there were no cut out switches on the machine.

This instance shows that the companies put young people wherever they want.

What difference will the new Youth Training Scheme make to all this? Will it be an improvement?

I don't think it will be an improvement on YOPs at all because there are different pieces in the press which say that most of the checking will be done by phone.

They have pulled the wool over people's eyes. People think that the system will be changed but they'll never change it until they increase staff. It is so big for them to handle that they are having to hire outside bodies, called Managing Agents, to help them.

For each place the managing agent finds, they'll be paid £100: if they find 250 places the managing agents will get £25,000, paid three months in advance.

If the MSC had things under control they wouldn't need to get outside help. They are doing this because they have too much load and if they are overloaded it is obvious that some will not be checked.

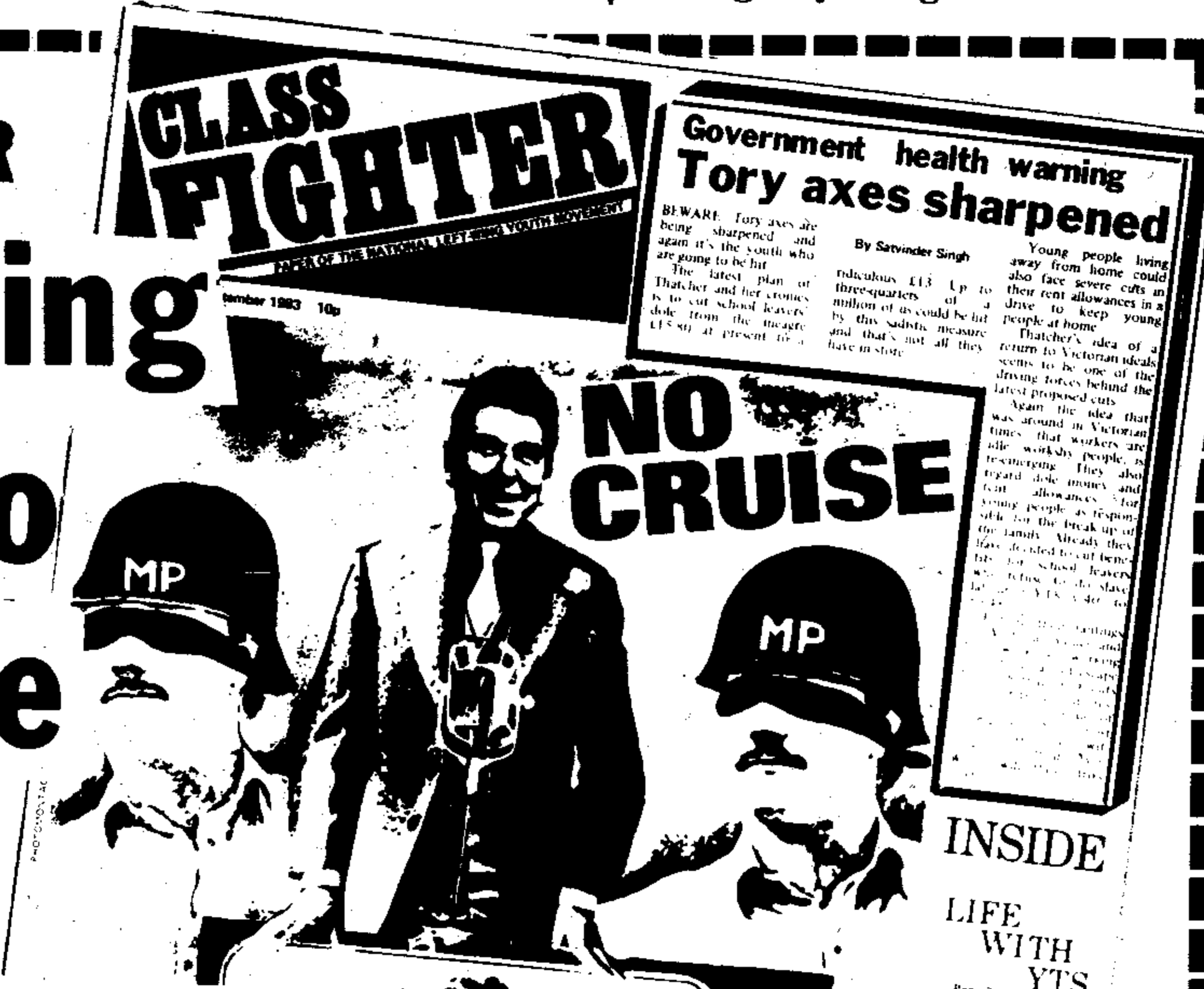
Were many YOPs schemes unchecked?

There was a backlog of 36,000 — they had to scrap the checks because it was too much work for them.

Won't the trade unions be able to monitor these schemes? I have heard they have to be approved by the trade unions.

They are trying to bring that in. It's supposed to be going through in Sheffield because the Trades Council voted unanimously to make sure that the young people are only placed in unionised firms so there is some sort of establishment where they

CLASS FIGHTER Organising youth to fight the Tories



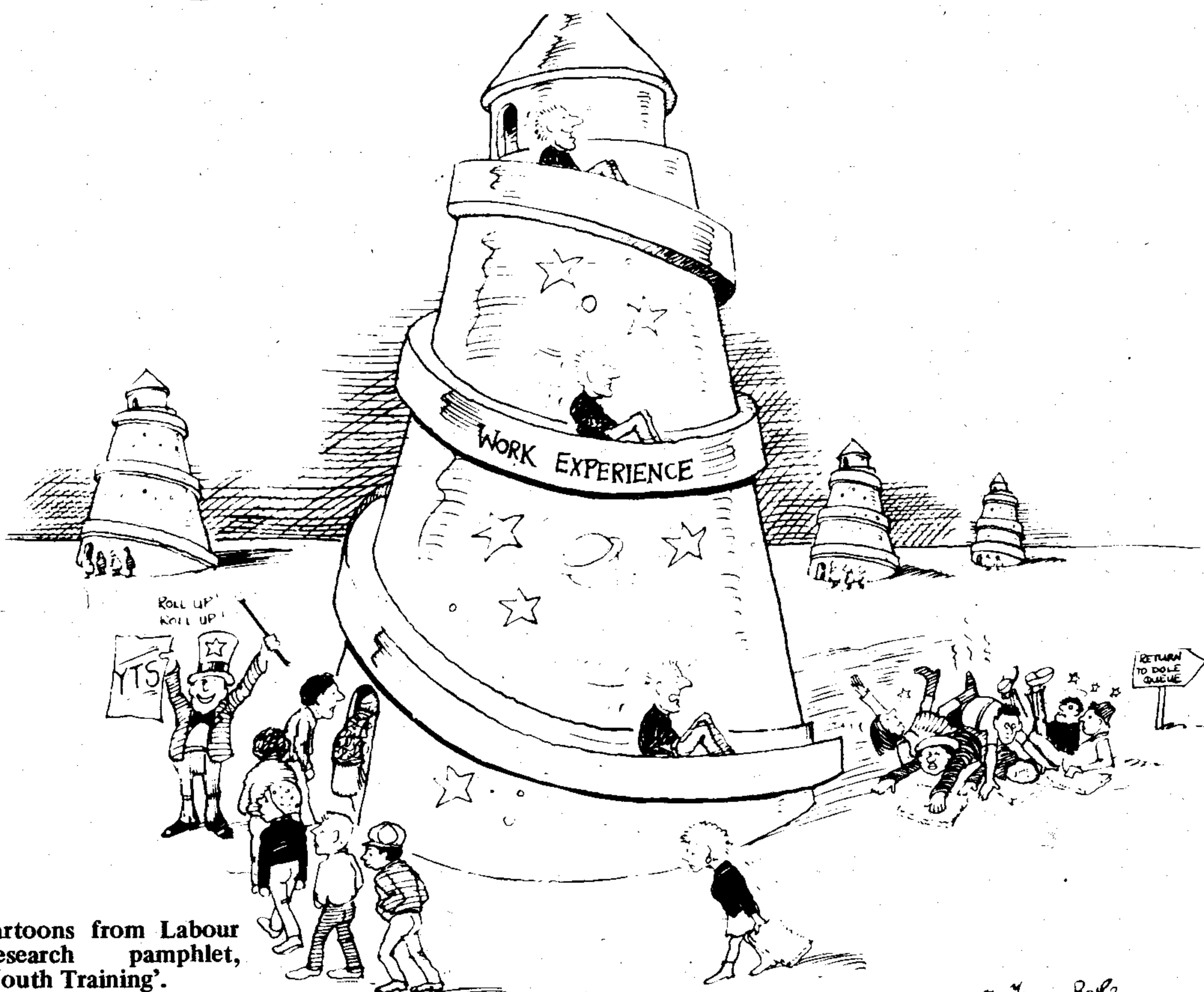
OUT NOW — Class Fighter no.13. Articles on FE students, Brixton Sounds, Kent's gagging of Youth CND. Also featuring Saul's Moles.

Last week Class Fighter steering committee asked Socialist Organiser, which we sponsor, to give us a regular space. CF can't produce a weekly, but the pace of youth politics demands more than 8 pages once a month. The steering committee felt that a regular slot would help us organise our work — especially at the moment, with YTS getting under way and YCND being carved up.

From Monday school-leavers will be signing on. Dole queues are likely to be very long, with the rush to get at some cash. UBOs and DHSS offices should be good places to give out YS leaflets and sell Class Fighter.

The same goes for registration queues at tech/FE colleges, starting in a couple of weeks (see local press for details). Courses will be filling up, as LEAs are expecting a record number of applicants. Make sure you're there.

YOP conditions



Cartoons from Labour Research pamphlet, 'Youth Training'.

can complain to besides the MSC.

As well as that, most companies where there are trade unions are registered, because it's one of the first things a union will check on when a firm is unionised.

This means the factory at least has to be up to a certain standard. Small companies with only four or five are not always registered under the Factories Act, and are basically just cowboy firms such as the one my son Derek worked at.

How would you stop abuses on this scheme?

I wouldn't have any working in companies with less than eight people, because with eight people you have got to have a safety certificate.

That would be one safeguard.

Another would be to ensure it is a trade union firm, which more than likely would be registered under the Factories Act. As well as this, trade unions in factories often organise safety committees where the workers meet the management once a month to discuss any dangerous equipment or other hazards.

There are no safety committees in non-unionised firms. So unionisation is important.

However, as regards keeping an eye on the trainees, a lot of shop stewards at present don't know anything about the schemes.

There should be training by the union to put them in the picture of what the YTS is, because it isn't a proper job, they don't get proper pay, so they can't be expected to do piecework or take risks for which they are not insured.

If there are any accidents or fatalities the parents will have to see to everything themselves.

Do you think the schemes are proper training?

No, I don't think so, because the employers won't give proper training to someone who is only at their company for twelve months.

They are just shifting unemployment of the 16-18 year old group into the 18 plus group.

They are just using 16-18 year olds as cheap labour.

Will the scheme be compulsory?

Well, first of all I am hostile to them being compulsory because 16 year olds are still under the jurisdiction of their parents, and a lot will have to do with what the parents tell them.

There is a high accident rate on these schemes. Between February 1982 and February 1983, there were 3,211 injuries, 43 amputations and 17 deaths.

Until I started this work I had no idea of these figures.

A man in Scotland who got in touch with me thought that his son was the first one to die on a scheme.

Now that things have been publicised parents are thinking more, and TV Eye told me that 60,000 had been taken off the schemes. But if parents refuse to send their kids onto a scheme, the kids will be penalised.

I've read in the press and heard on the Trades Council youth committee that it will be compulsory. It said that out of £15.50 dole money, they will have £6.70 knocked off, leaving them with around £9, which is atrocious.

A one-parent family, when their allowance goes up will get £10.50 for one child. So they'll be getting over a pound more for a kiddie say 12 months old than a young person 16 or 17 years old.

This is absolute blackmail to get them on a scheme. Many parents — particularly the unemployed — cannot afford to keep their kids with 40% of their dole money stopped and will be forced to send their son or daughter onto a scheme even if they are against them on safety grounds.

What are the wider effects of YTS?

Well, I have mentioned that these schemes are creating unemployment in the 18 plus bracket and providing 16 to 18 year olds for cheap labour.

I know of this first hand. One of my sons is 21 and he's never had a job: the schemes were't going when he first left school and I think it's doing the over-18 age group out of proper paid work.

The workforce in the next

ten or twelve years will all be labourers. The schemes will serve the function of doing away with apprenticeships. There were 23 proper training establishments throughout the country providing five-year courses on industrial training boards, there are now only six left.

Don't you think it's a pity the trade unions are not protecting apprenticeships for themselves?

Yes, but I think they're having a rough time with unemployment and anti-union laws. And I think Tebbit and company are trying to get the same control of the unions as they've got of YTS.

What would you like to see trade unions do?

I've been told that the TUC is supporting these schemes. It's the first time I've known of trade unions giving support to cheap labour.

Although I've not been heavily involved in trade unions I have been a trade unionist for 25 years. These schemes are designed to bring wages down.

Do you think Labour councils should become Managing Agents?

No, because if they become Managing Agents as they are doing in Sheffield, if there is any bother they are going to have to carry the can because it is like giving approval to the scheme.

They'd argue that it is better to have Labour councils as Managing Agent rather than unscrupulous employers.

Well, they shouldn't have the schemes so big. In 1979-80 there were 182,000 people on MSC schemes of some sort. In 1982 there were 461,000 and up to February 1983 550,000.

They're getting to big to handle and the MSC is jumping at offers from local councils to be Managing Agents.

3,211 injuries, 43 amputations, 17 deaths; all in 12 months

They are allowing the MSC to pass the responsibilities to local authorities.

The factory inspectors to Plumb's, where Derek worked, said that Plumb's wasn't the employer, the MSC was. The MSC said that they were not the employer — only the sponsor.

Whoever insures them is the employer — which is why the MSC won't insure them, since it would make them responsible for safety.

Will your case against Tebbit be a test case?

It can be called that because it's the first time it's ever been done in this country. Two million YOPs have been employed since the scheme started.

There have been 17 deaths. And I'm sure there have been hundreds of serious accidents where those kids will never walk or throw a ball again.

No other parents have had a go at the MSC, it's the first try. Whatever the outcome, I think it will follow the example.

They must be told at the top that they must alter things and I'm serving these writs to show that they cannot put people at risk and expect to get away with it.

I want to see the youngsters registered as proper employees. They should be insured like any other worker, giving them sickness benefit, legal representation and finally the MSC will have to carry the can if they are killed or injured, because MSC will be the employer, which is the main thing.

They pay out £1850 for each placement: the employer gets £500 and the youth gets £1300. Surely if they can afford £500 for the employer (which is supposed to be for paper work) then something could be used to insure the kids properly?

What compensation have you received?

I've had nothing apart from a death grant — which I had to fight for. I sent a letter off with the death certificate. I was led to believe that the grant was £30. I received no reply because I'd been busy with this work, I didn't bother pursuing it.

I rang them sometime after and they said that they had replied saying I wasn't entitled to anything.

Immediately I got on to the local press and radio.

It was in the paper next morning and a journalist phoned me later to say I would get the money but it would be £22.50 because Derek was under 19.

Social Security were paying because they said he had just been on he job scheme long enough to claim, which makes no difference, he'd still paid no stamp.

Social Security then phoned and said they were paying from my stamp, classing Derek as a child this shows that legally you have no right to death grants on these schemes.

Since you've started this work what conclusions have you come to about society?

I think the schemes are a mess. They want to keep youth unemployment figures down.

I think unemployment will get worse. Some 18 year olds might never have a job. Kids get 11 years education and then they are put on the dole. It says something for this government.

My attitude has changed a lot towards government departments. I'm absolutely appalled at some things I've found out.

I always thought these departments could run things properly, but all they think of is money.

Hospital work-in When the manager dropped in

STAFF occupying the Thornton View hospital, Bradford, against threatened closure have called a demonstration through the town for Saturday, September 10.

A strong platform of local and national speakers — including NUPE and CoHSE General Secretaries Bickerstaffe and Williams — will speak to the concluding rally.

Meanwhile morale within the occupation itself has continued to strengthen — boosted if anything by two somewhat bizarre moves by management.

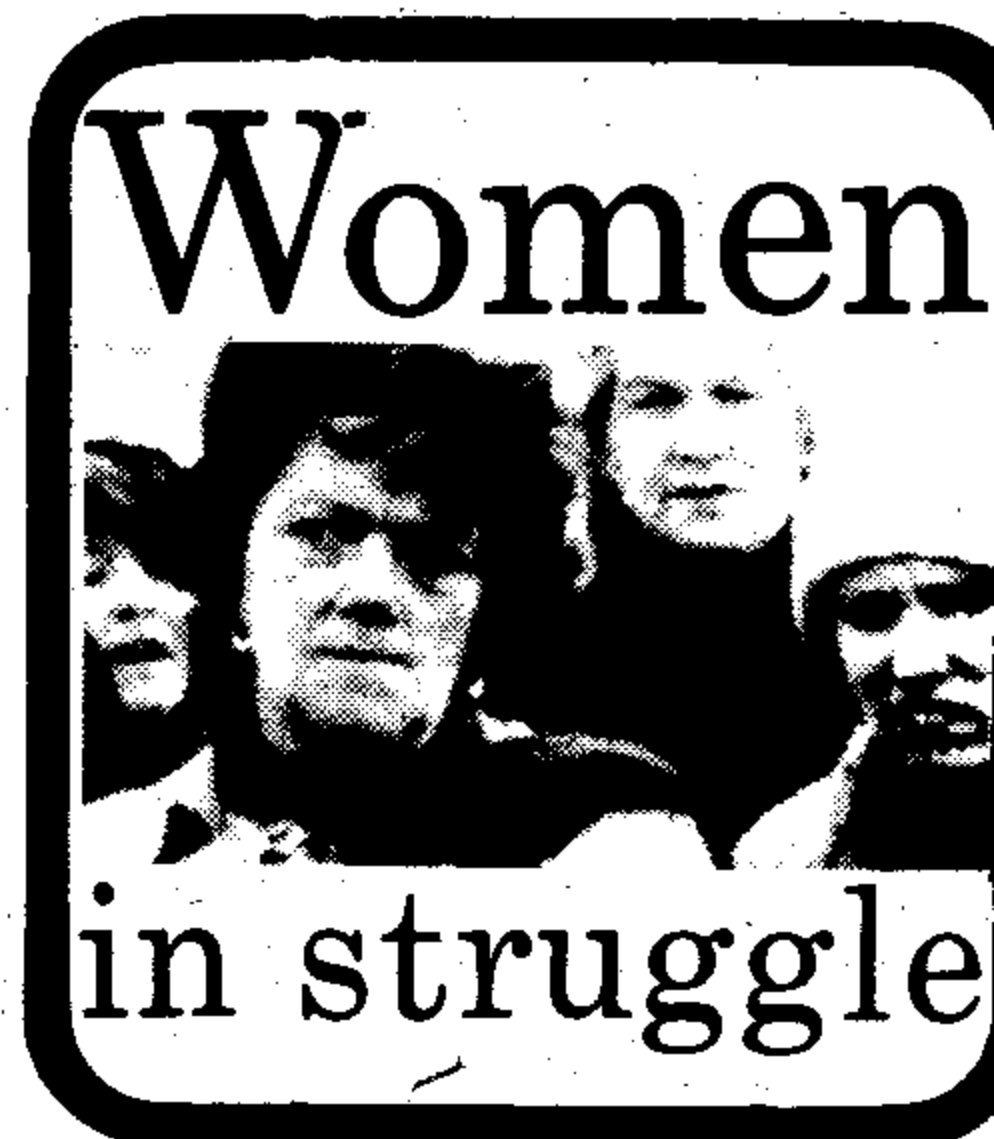
One was the flying leap through an open window of the hospital taken by an unusually athletic District Nursing Administrator, clad in a somewhat inappropriate suit and tie.

But though his exertion tipped off the occupiers on flaws in their security system, he was forced to admit to television interviewers as he left the hospital that medical care is perfectly satisfactory for the 82 geriatric patients, whose relatives are part of the strong body of support for the work-in.

The second ungainly move by management was in issuing a letter to staff and to prominent supporters of the work-in — including Labour councillor Barry Turner — informing them that their presence on the premises was not wanted, and hinting darkly that management 'may' take action.

The letter was — apparently inadvertently — sent to staff members who live on the hospital premises. Yet it warned them that they should only be on the premises during their working hours!

The upshot — after CoHSE and NUPE full-timers had been called in — is that the letters have been ignored by



all concerned, with the Lord Mayor announcing publicly that he will 'defy' any attempt to keep him off the premises.

As an occupation spokesman told us, 'Morale is very high — and we are prepared for a long stay'.

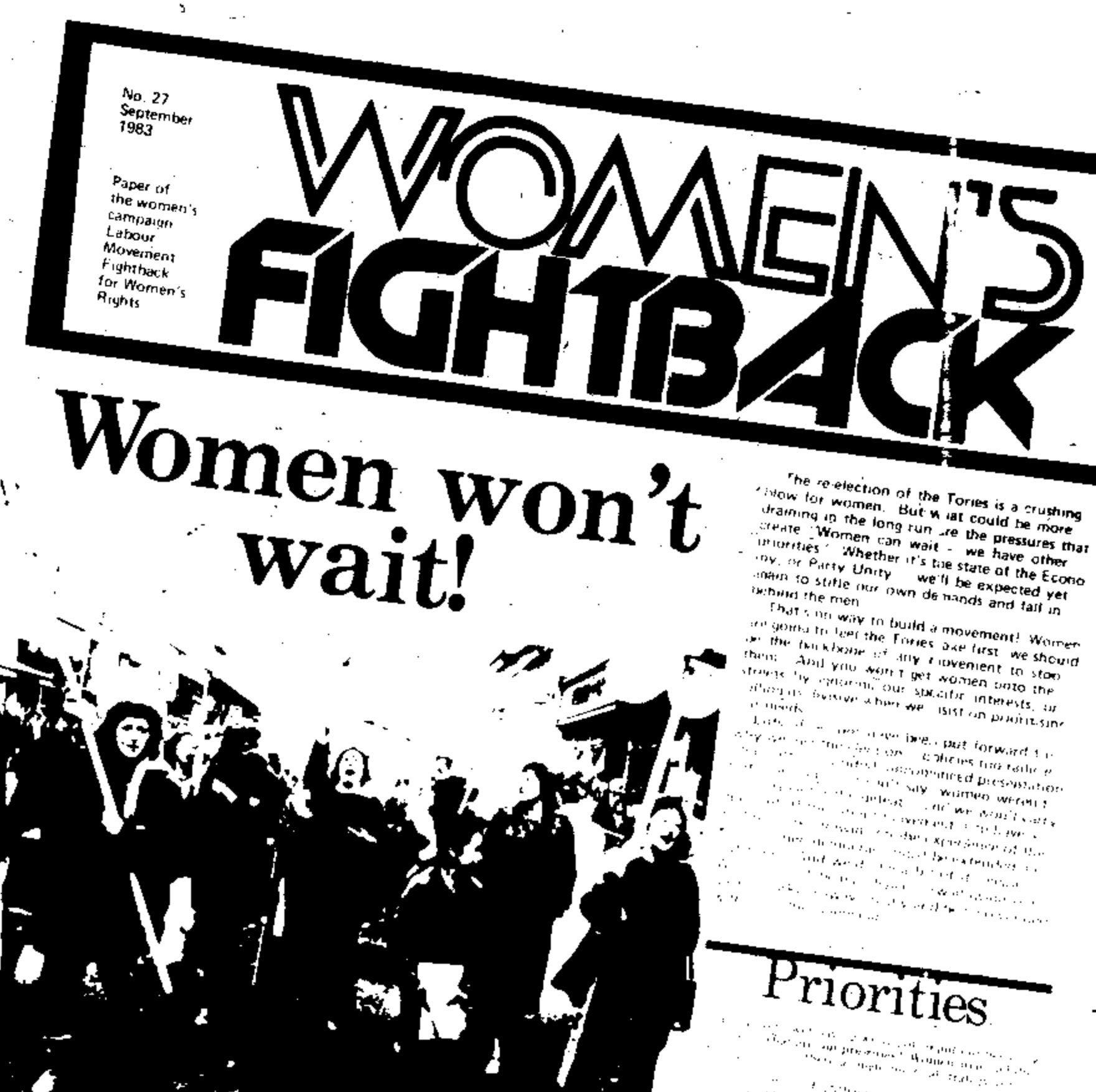
The Bradford occupation offers a lead to every section of health workers battling against cuts and closures.

The Work-in Committee make clear their opposition to a cuts and closures. They don't want their hospital saved at the expense of another somewhere else.

They demand adequate government funding and a statement from the Health Authority that no non-medical personnel be involved in the removal of patients, and no interference in patient referrals.

Also, the work-in committee demand full supporting strike action if the occupation is threatened in any way.

Maximum support from trade unions and Labour Parties is needed for the September 10 demonstration, which will be held in Infirmary Field (Bottom of Lumb Lane), at 1.30pm, and will march at 2pm to the Tyrils for a mass rally.



This 'Women's Fightback' is largely given over to debates on where we go next. Single issue campaigns or broad offensive on all fronts? Do we emphasise women's contribution as part of a wider labour movement, or focus solely on what affects us as women? Do we have a unity of interest as women — or should our priority be to examine our divisions, as a way of overcoming them? And what forms of action should we take — those pioneered by women — like Greenham Common — or do we learn from the experiences and ways of organising of other movements?

The debate on these issues will be continued in future editions of 'Women's Fightback', and we invite contributions from our readers.

New issue out now! Order from: 10b Landseer Road, London N19.

International news

Interview with Sandinista leader

"We have become a ray of hope"

Where does the war on your northern frontier go from here?

Until now, the Contras have had to rely mainly on former members of Somoza's National Guard. They cannot find any significant numbers of ordinary citizens. They have about 7,500-8,000 people that they have managed to train and arm. Having made little headway by mid-June, they returned to Honduras to regroup and re-arm.

They are still making raids into Nicaragua, and we are not able to go over the frontier in hot pursuit — that would be to fall into the trap that has been set by the United States.

There is already an increase in the level of activity again, and we now expect the Honduran armed forces to be involved in the next offensive — probably in September.

They will be rebuffed, but the Honduran airforce could do quite a lot of damage.

We have virtually no airforce. Honduras happens to have the best in Central America. But it takes more than that to win a war. When it comes to the morale of armies, there is really no comparison.

There is no bone of contention between our two countries. The whole war is stupid. The aggressor who is fermenting the war will be at a disadvantage. If the Hondurans invade, the Nicaraguan people will have no difficulty in understanding why they have to repel them.

The head of the Honduran army has said that they cannot stand up for more than a round of fighting. Therefore why foment it? Maybe the United States continues to make an erroneous analysis. When the Hondurans are repelled, they may have to send in the American troops. Even with that, they cannot obtain their goal.

Why do you think the Americans have become so obsessed with influencing events in Nicaragua?

From the logic of empire you can understand why they should be insisting on squashing Nicaragua's revolution. It was generally accepted in the area that there could be no successful revolution, at least in this century. We disproved that.

Moreover, in spite of the enormous foreign debt that we have accepted responsibility for, whether we were morally obliged to or not, we have given answers to some of the profound aspirations of our people. We

Father Miguel D'Escoto, Foreign Minister of Nicaragua, talked to Brian Wilson

are giving better answers than those of richer countries which have not suffered in the way Nicaragua has suffered.

We have become a ray of hope for many people in Latin America who would like to make similar progress and achieve similar independence. Latin America is now on its threshold. There was always this fear that it was an impossible dream. Nicaragua has shown that it is feasible. Therefore, from the logic of empire, we must not be allowed to continue. It's not that we are exporting revolution — it's that the example of patriotism tends to be contagious.

Can Western Europe have any influence over the United States in these matters?

Europe should help the United States to deal with this phenomenon. Most European countries that did have colonies were able to come to grips with the idea that there would come a time when those colonies would demand independence and autonomy, and that this should not be interpreted as hostility but as an inevitable progression of history.

Instead of meeting us head-on, the US should be helping us to deal with our problems — more rationally, intelligently, calmly.

They should understand that, where maybe they won't be able to control our country as they did up to now, that needn't be the end of the world for them.

Incidentally, it's being said today that the US sees this as part of an East-West conflict. Maybe that allows them to get a bit of sympathy from their people at home. But we know that things never change. They invaded us in 1912, before the Russian Revolution had

occurred.

They invaded us in 1928 — Nicaragua was the first victim of dive-bombing, you know — and at that time we were supposed to be in the process of becoming a second Mexico. We are always on the verge of becoming a second something else.

The only way they have been able to get along with Nicaragua was when Somoza was in power — one of the most despotic rulers in the history of the Americas, yet they got on famously.

Roosevelt was asked once by a distinguished journalist how they could have anything to do with that Son of a Bitch Somoza.

He replied — "But he's our Son of a Bitch!" That has been their attitude.

Cuba

What are your relations with Cuba and in particular how many military advisors do they have here?

Our relations with Cuba are excellent, just as they are with many other countries on the basis that they don't compromise our autonomy. We would like to have excellent relations with the US but that means our autonomy being recognised.

We don't have any military pact with any country. That is why we can't have any illusions that in the event of an American invasion anyone is going to come to our side. Just as in the past we had to rely on ourselves to get rid of Somoza, so in the future we will have to rely on ourselves to defend the revolution.

But it's understandable that we should have advisors. Ours is a new army. Somoza's army, which was an American created army, was totally dispersed. We have got to look for advisors who will not repeat the immoral and criminal outfit that was created for Somoza.

The National Guard burned its own cities, killed its own people — we will never have that again in Nicaragua.

What do you think of the Thatcher government's attitude to Central America?

The British government is very, very alone in its attitude towards the Reagan administration. I don't think there is another Western government that has supported the naval manoeuvres, for example. I suppose this is their way of repaying America for support over the Falklands, but it is something that should concern the British people.

More and more, Reagan's actions against Nicaragua are being repudiated throughout the whole world. It looks so awful for Britain to be the sole western supporter along with, I suppose, Israel and Pinochet's Chile and Guatemala. It's awful company for Britain to be keeping.

When Lord Carrington was Foreign Secretary he told me he was worried about Nicaragua's democracy. I told him that I was worried about Britain's loss of autonomy over foreign policy and how it had been reduced to being a surrogate for the United States. I told him "I am concerned for the future of your own sovereignty."



Victorious Sandinistas in 1979

Policies to benefit the poorest from front page

The contrasts of attitude in Nicaragua with Britain are enormous. Here, a very poor country, under threat from all sides, is actually creating employment, undertaking major rail and heat and power projects, building houses and schools, and improving health care: planning national spending for need not private profit. In Britain, incalculably wealthy by Central American standards, our government claims not to be able to afford to build houses and health centres or even to be able to maintain the existing number of hospitals.

The overriding impression is one of determination; every public building is festooned with posters proclaiming the fourth anniversary of the Sandinista victory and "Todas las armas al pueblo" (all arms to the people) as the way to defend the gains made. This spirit is proclaimed on every street and every workplace where press cuttings and information about the military situation are posted. In the street, in taxis, and in shops and markets people are delighted to talk about the gains and the problems.

There is a refreshing candour about the many difficulties. The Atlantic coast of the country, cut off from Managua and the main cities by high mountains covers half the country's land area but has only four per cent of the population. Many of them are Miskito Indians who speak a different language. 25,000 Miskitos moved to Honduras after the revolution and are now being exploited by the Contras to attack Nicaragua.

The Sandinista led government has embarked on an ambi-

itious programme of development in both the cultural and the physical sense. For the first time a book has been produced in Miskito and efforts are under way to redress the neglect of the area, which has never received the attention it deserves from the national government: the main beneficiaries of the Atlantic Coast in the past have been the lumber and gold mining companies of New York and Chicago.

People continually ask why they are now being lectured by the United States about the need for free elections when the Somoza family's dictatorship spent nearly fifty years denying the people basic freedoms and certainly never allowed a free choice of government.

The obsession of the US administration with military and economic encirclement to smash the Nicaraguan revolution has united most of the population in determination to keep the undeniable gains and a government that is actually working for them, despite all the shortages and tribulations.

There are ten political parties, of whom four make up the Popular Front in Defence of the Revolution (Socialists, Social Christians, Liberals and FSLN (Sandinistas)). All four proclaim a current programme of political pluralism, non-alignment and a mixed economy within national planning objectives.

The opposition parties are organised too. The equivalent of the Conservative party have a number of expensive hoardings around the country, but no tangible signs of mass support. The Council of State has

passed a number of laws on the political parties, on mass mobilisation of the population and on the media. A whole range of social legislation has gone through and is being enacted. Elections are planned to be held by 1985 and the Parties are discussing programmes and alliances.

The US administration are clearly determined to crush the Nicaraguan revolution. The never-ending stream of American journalists and Congressional delegations must realise that they are participating in the birth of another Vietnam with the US using Honduras and Costa Rica to mount the first attacks.

Slavish

Thus far the British government has given slavish support to the US. It is the only European government to do so. The British declaration that Nicaragua, which is honouring all its debts, is not really credit worthy means that Britain is participating in an economic blockade.

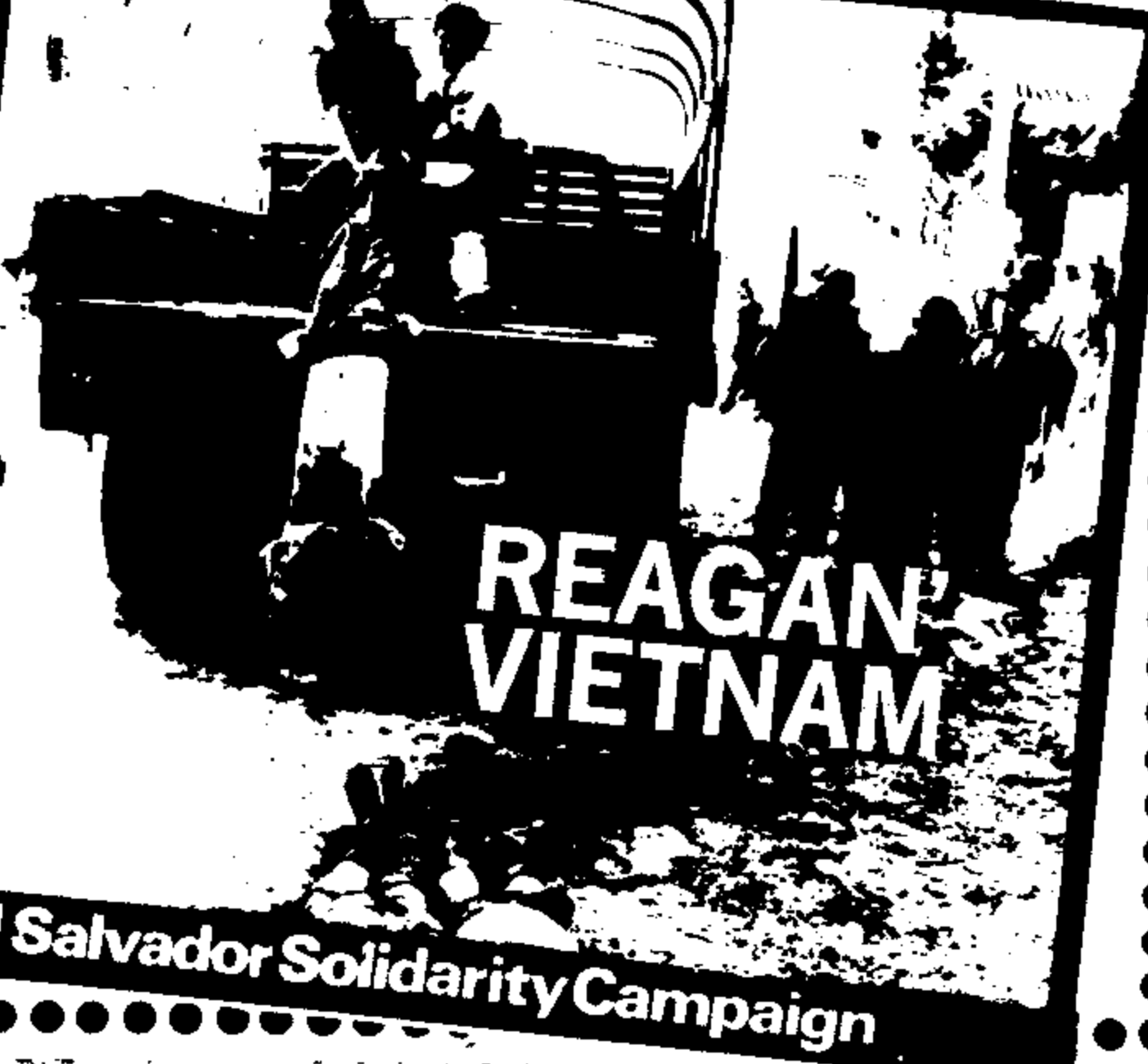
Britain has 1,500 troops stationed in Belize, which borders Honduras and Guatemala. There have been strenuous denials of British interest in the region. Yet the government recently feted ex-President Duarte of El Salvador and one of the Prime Minister's advisers is on a fact-finding mission to Honduras.

Help is needed. We must be aware that doing nothing will help the US to try and destroy the hopes of the brave people of this country who so recently rid themselves of the foul Somoza dictatorship.

El Salvador Solidarity Campaign: affiliation £5 for individuals and £10 for organisations, from 29 Islington Park St., London N1. (01-359 2270)

EL SALVADOR

News Bulletin No 20 May-June 1983



El Salvador Solidarity Campaign

Socialist ORGANISER

Industrial Special

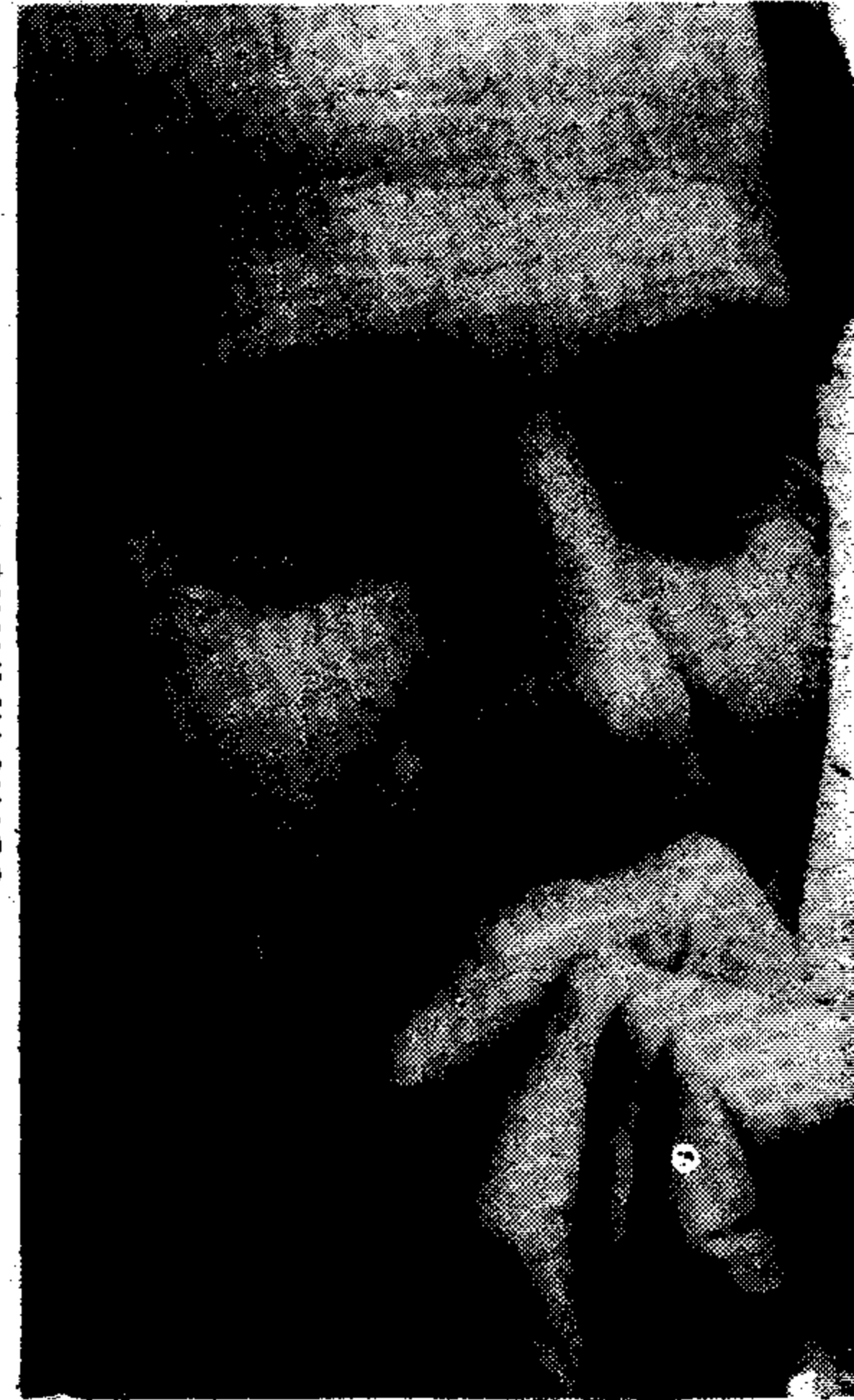


JOHN HARRIS

Firth Derihon: they fought and they won!

New Tory threat to union rights

DON'T JUST MAKE SPEECHES! ORGANISE TO FIGHT BACK!



JOHN HARRIS

Norman Tebbit

Labour movement CONFERENCE

Called by Socialist ORGANISER

September 17

September 17, 10.30am-5pm
University of London Union
Malet Street, WC1

How to fight the Tories



Platform and workshop speakers include: Jeremy Corbyn MP; Reg Race, Joy Hurcombe (Labour CND)*; Val Dunn (Manchester Labour councillor)*; Andrea Campbell (COHSE Group 81)*; Colin Talbot (POEU Broad Left)*.

Workshop discussions, coupled with the showing of videos, will cover a wide range of topics and current struggles, and enable everyone present to contribute in debate on policies for the way forward.

CRECHE FACILITIES WILL BE AVAILABLE ALL DAY

Workshop topics include: the Shop Stewards' movement; Privatisation, Fighting the Cuts; Women in the labour movement; YTS, and Black workers.

Open to delegates and observers from all labour movement bodies.

Credentials (including discussion papers) £2.50 (employed), £1.50 (unemployed).

Please send me details/credentials for the September 17 conference. I enclose £...

Name
Address

Send to Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8. (Please mark the envelope 'September 17 Conference').

"ONCE YOU have coughed up the Danegeld (tribute exacted by force by Viking raiders) you'll never get rid of the Dane".

The trade union leaders might well ruminate on this old saying as Tebbit comes smoking from his corner for a third round of anti-union legislation involving bankrupting the Labour Party, compulsory strike ballots, and drastic interference in union elections.

Not only because their inept performance in the first two rounds makes Tebbit ten foot tall and a fourth and even a fifth round almost inevitable.

But because their own reinforcement of many of the ideas contained in the Chingford skinhead's latest blackmail demand have sapped the ability of militants to get the answers and alternatives across and organise a real contest.

It's a struggle to argue against fetters on strike action when our leaders themselves have spent the last decade drumming into us that strikes are an essentially evil phenomenon, that workers should cross picket lines (Jim Callaghan) or that strikers are 'animals' (Frank Chapple).

It's difficult to argue that we need more and more successful strikes when we see the General Secretary of the TUC with the full support of the General Council making no bones about an attempt to break an official stoppage with 100% support and get NGA workers to return to work with £17 less than they eventually pocketed through ignoring him.



JOHN HARRIS

Chapple

It's difficult to convince members against strike ballots when as recently as 1979 the TUC Concordat with the Labour Party championed strike ballots.

It is difficult to rouse opposition to secret postal ballots when in the late '70's nearly 100 Labour MPs including Prime Minister Harold Wilson were urging them.

It's tough, isn't it, arguing for the necessity of continued union links with the Labour Party and a strong political levy when you look at the way the last three Labour governments tried to weaken the unions through legislation, incomes policy and unemployment.

Tougher still when you see Kinnock calling for more witch-hunts, and Hattersley for the reversal of Labour's recent democratic changes. And the Labour Coordinating Committee bad mouthing Benn, Scargill, Livingstone and anybody else who is trying to give an honest lead.

And, by God, it's an uphill task defending unions' internal democracy when you think of some of the stitch-ups. Worst of all is arguing for resistance to the Tory laws when the members point out what happened to those who took their chances and the support they got from the top brass.

Examples

ASLEF, Geraghty and the NGA are only the most obvious examples

And when you see secret meetings organised to stitch up the Labour Party leadership by those who had just voted to suspend our brothers and sisters in the NGA from membership of the movement without consultation with their members and who were soon to vote for talks with Tebbit, the man they told us was beyond the pale, again without consultation, it makes

any honest trade unionist want to throw up — and give up.

But we have to keep struggling and keep on arguing. There is no alternative. The Tebbit laws combined with the remorseless upward drift in unemployment, the gathering privatisation and decentralisation of bargaining band wagon and the employer offensive in the workplace will cripple our unions and us back a century unless a fight back is launched and soon.

It would be wrong to minimise the immense difficulties we face in organising such a struggle. The tide is running against the unions. The Socialist Organiser 'Fight the Tories' conference September 17 will however provide an opportunity to discuss the problems and possibilities. But it is fairly clear that we have to argue along three main lines.

Stop Len Murray. The Labour Party must boycott all talks with the Tories and pull their unions out of bodies like the NEDC and the MSC.

Don't talk, organise. A growing number of unions such as the TGWU, NUPE, NUM and the NGA, whilst breaking from the right on the disengagement issue, could organise to support any union or individual threatened by the laws.

Break with the past. Any opposition to Tebbit has to be answered not by defence of what exists now but by argument as to what we need. The present structure of the unions (as well as Tebbit's barrier to the working class) is a barrier to the working class. We need new democracy, new policies and new leaders.

Stop TUC talks with Tories! Boycott the YTS, MSC and NEDC!



Health workers, water workers: Tories had no complaint when their struggles were braked decisively or called off without any vote. Len Murray puts it like this: "Tebbit must know that any union tries everything within its power to



JOHN HARRIS

TORY HANDS OFF OUR

What is the present position on Tebbit's most recent proposals for anti-union legislation?

On July 12 Tebbit published a paper outlining proposals which will be laid before Parliament as a Bill in the autumn. These proposals, covering trade union elections, strikes and union political activities, are the product of the Tories' consideration of comments on the original Green Paper, 'Democracy in Trade Unions' (published earlier this year) sent in by employers, employers' organisations and trade unions.

Trade unions...? I thought the TUC had taken a collective decision to boycott all talks with Tebbit about that Green Paper.

Three TUC-affiliated unions, the British Airline Pilots Association (Tebbit's old outfit), the Engineers and Managers Association and the British Association of Colliery Management all sent the Department of Employment their comments despite the TUC decision. These unions stated that they thought the TUC was wrong not to discuss the Green Paper with Tebbit and claimed that whilst they did not speak for the General Council, they "think that many unions in the TUC will be in broad agreement with the views we express."

Postal ballots

Amongst those views was an acceptance of secret postal ballots imposed by the state before strikes and the comment "we wish it to be clearly understood that we do not object to a government seeking to change the arrangement for financing political parties."

AS NORMAN TEBBIT sharpens his knife in preparation to take yet another prime chunk of trade union rights, JOHN McILROY answers the obvious questions about the implications of the latest Tory proposals, and explains how the phony 'democracy' proclaimed by Tebbit must be exposed.

That doesn't augur very well for the decision at the coming Congress on whether or not to talk to Tebbit.

No. Certain unions have already taken the decision to go to Downing Street whatever happens at Blackpool. Indeed informal contacts have already been established between Murray and Tebbit.

Cosmetic

Tebbit's new paper expressly calls for further consultation on its proposals. The cosmetic nature of that consultation can be seen by Tebbit's simultaneous statement that legislation will be introduced in October.

Despite this clear commitment, Len Murray wants to extend the talks to cover such matters as the Youth Training Scheme and the political levy.

What do the latest proposals say about the political levy?

At the moment unions have to hold a ballot before they can establish a political fund. If they get a majority they are all clear. The new Bill will require the continued operation of a political fund to be submitted to a ballot every ten years. Unions would be given 12 months grace in

which to conduct the first ballot of all members including those who already contract out of paying the political levy.

But isn't that fair? Shouldn't the membership have a right to vote periodically on this kind of issue?

There are several points. First of all this issue, like all the others which Tebbit wishes to legislate on should be determined by union members themselves through their collective organisations, not by the state which is hostile to any real trade unionism.

The Tories are not interested in giving democratic rights to trade unionists. They are interested in bankrupting the Labour Party and in pressing further the depoliticisation of trade unionists.

There are, for example, no proposals here to give shareholders rights in deciding whether or not they wish their companies to finance the Tory Party or the Alliance or nothing. There are certainly no proposals here to give employees a right to decide whether or not their employers should use the fruits of their labours in massive donations to a Party pledged to reducing their living standards, turning them out of a job and undermining their protective organisations any more than you will find here any proposals to democratise the judiciary or the civil service.

Employees or shareholders have no right whatsoever to be consulted still less to be exempted because the proposal is not to weaken the rights of capital but to weaken the rights of labour.

There are no barriers in law to companies doing exactly what they like in the field of politics and in 1979-80 around 80% of Conservative Party central income came from that source.

The only — very minor — restraint that does exist, section 19 of the Companies Act 1967, requires companies to simply disclose in the annual report donations of more than £200. This was strenuously opposed by Tory MPs at the time. Conservative support was

notably lacking for an unsuccessful Bill introduced in 1978 by Labour MPs with very limited objectives.

These provided that companies should not be permitted to finance political parties unless they had received an affirmative vote in a ballot of shareholders.

The employer would then have to establish a special political fund, financed only by dividends payable to shareholders who had voted for its establishment.

It is essential that proposals by the enemies of trade unionism should be resisted. If pressures for such regular ballots arise within the unions then we should oppose them because they are antagonistic to the basic principles of trade unionism.

We are not in favour of regular ballots on whether trade unions should continue in existence, on whether particular groups of workers should remain in membership, on whether the union should continue to be recognised by the employer or whether we should or should not have shop stewards.

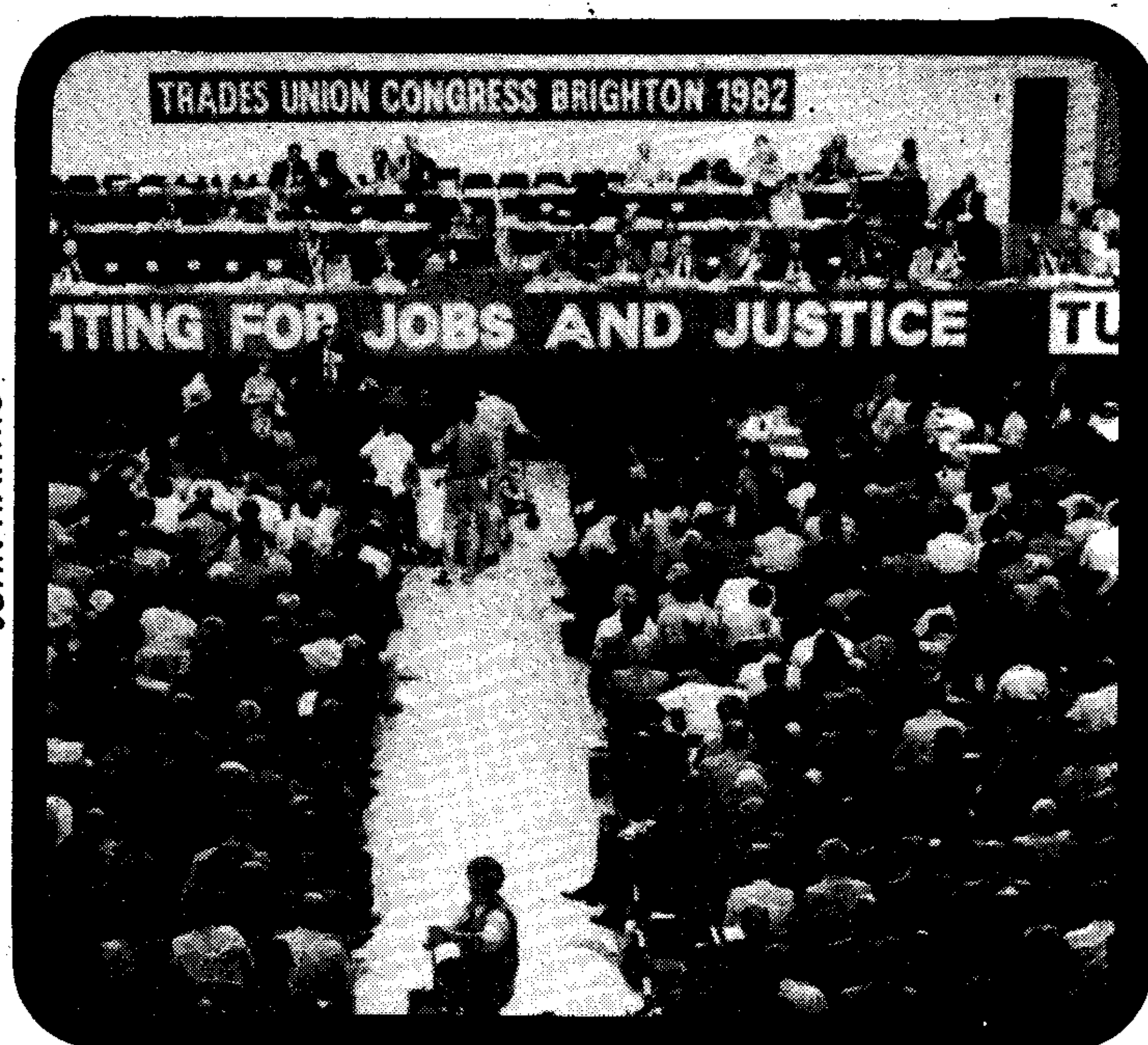
We are no more in favour of regular ballots on these matters than capitalists are in favour of regular ballots on whether they should remain in ownership and control of their illgotten assets or the Tories are in favour of a referendum every ten years on the continued existence of the monarchy or the House of Lords.

Just as the capitalists regard their continued domination as something non-negotiable through ballots so we regard all these matters as an intrinsic part of trade unionism. Something without which it could not flourish, an indivisible part of the very purposes of collective organisation.

Ballots on such matters — particularly secret postal ballots — simply provide the enemies of those purposes, those who are threatened by collective organisation, with a golden opportunity to undermine it.

And this is the point: trade unionism is as essentially and inevitably about politics as it is about negotiating with the employers as it is about organising industrial action. We need MPs just as much as we need shop stewards.

If we are to achieve our aims we need our industrial methods. We also require absolutely a political section. Those who seek to argue that unions should be "non-political" may as well argue that they shouldn't exist or should exist as gelded cyphers. They fail to understand what trade unionism is



JOHN HARRIS

Fine words on the posters...

and lend themselves to the undermining of its purposes. Those who refuse to pay the political levy and argue for ballots on its continued existence are just as much our enemies as those who refuse to join the union whilst receiving its fruits. Those who refuse to pay for political activities are just as much deserters as those who refuse to pay union contributions for industrial purposes.

There is a more specific argument put by those who concede the necessity for political involvement by the unions but criticise the Labour Party link. In certain specific circumstances there may be room for argument as to which party trade unions should support. In the specific circumstances of Britain today there can be no such argument: the policies to weaken trade unions of the Tories and the Alliance, combine with the control the unions possess over the Labour Party to ensure that.

But isn't it true that thousands of trade unionists do oppose the Labour Party link... didn't a majority of trade unionists vote in June for other Parties... won't these ballots lead to unions breaking away from Labour?

Yes, it would be ridiculous to ignore the demoralisation and political crisis at all levels of the unions or to ignore its manifestation on June 9.

One small aspect of this has been the way trade union leaders have relied on some of the institutions of trade unionism, the closed shop, the check-off, full-time stewards and the political levy arrangements as a

substitute for, rather than as a way to make more effective a crusading approach involving the members. As well as the limitations of formal democracy in many unions this structure has, in tandem with the policies of our leaders, acted to disinvolve the members and present an image of an institutionalised compulsory trade unionism as a recruiting sergeant for the apathy which can all too easily breed reaction.

At the moment some of our most powerful unions industrially such as the NGA and SOGAT have a majority of their members contracting out of the political levy. So does ASTMS. Others such as TASS and UCATT have a high proportion opting out. All these and many other unions would therefore be likely to lose a ballot such as Tebbit will introduce if it was held today. The publicity and the media advice surrounding the introduction of a new law could lead to a mass exodus from Labour Party affiliation and indeed any political expenditure by the unions. And the unions provide over 80% of the party's income.

This is Mrs Thatcher's heart's desire. As she told the Observer:

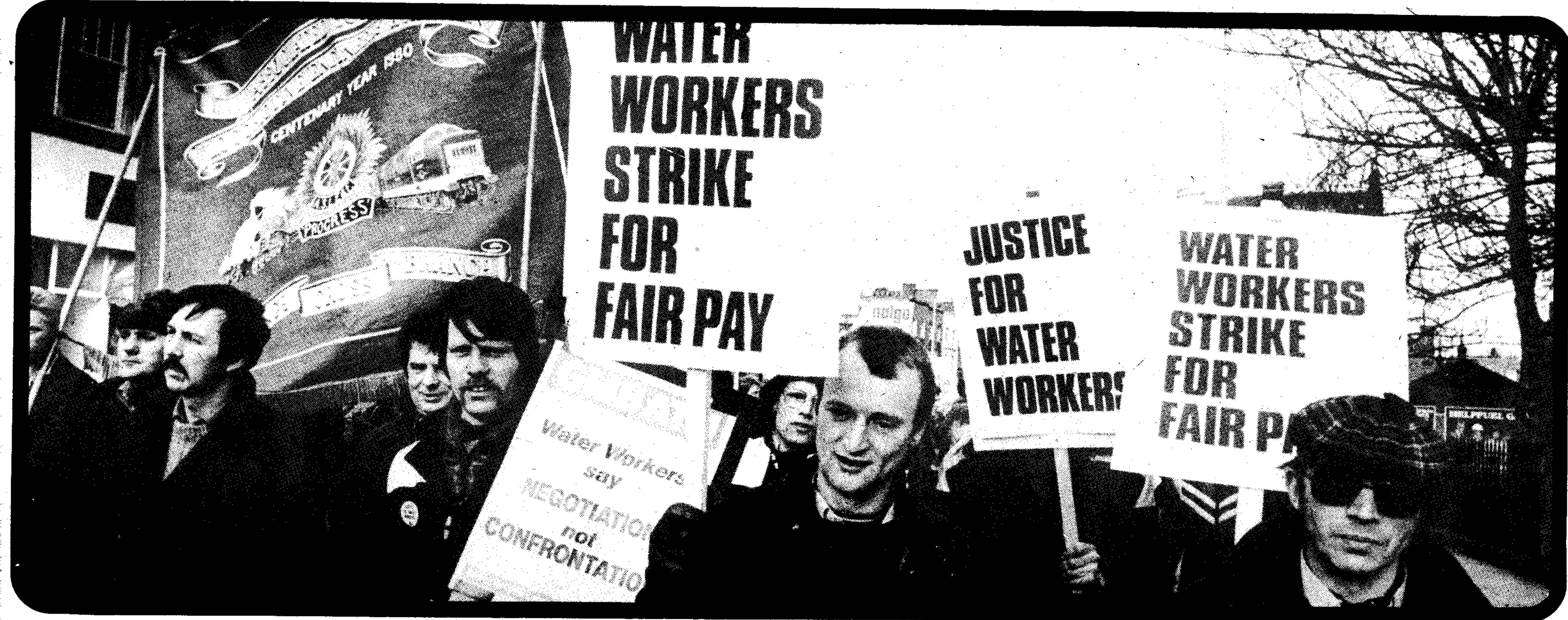
"What would please me immensely would be if the TUC was not and the trade unions were not a part of the Labour Party or the Labour Party a part of the trade union movement. That connection I must say I think it's wrong."

It is no good burying our heads in the sand. It could happen. What we need now is a crusade to bring home the



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R UNION RULEBOOKS!

importance of the Labour Party and trade unions' political activity at every level of the unions. We have to get in there to argue and argue and argue to the members.

But such an educational campaign which could be best pursued in the context of fighting to establish workplace democracy through our Party branches, will be successful unless it is interested in a change of course by the unions and Labour Party leaders.

The lesson of the TUC's national campaign on Tory support up to now is that its impact is limited when the members do not see the fine words on the posters, in the pamphlets and in the classroom mean nothing unless it comes to ASLEF or Geraghty or the NGA.

Political levy

The new law replace contracting out by contracting in?

Tebbit has decided not to immediately implement this proposal contained in the Green Paper. This follows his strategy of resistance up to now of testing the resistance or lack of it of the TUC.

And you, if the ballot works, you won't be able to have a political fund anyway, so the question of contracting in or out does not even arise!

At the contracting in proposal has not been laid out, Tebbit comments that the consultations on the Green Paper have confirmed there is a widespread disapproval about the way in which the levy of individual members not only the political levy operates but practice through the system of contracting out.

The Secretary of State for Employment is therefore therefore inviting the TUC to discuss the proposal and the trade unions themselves can take to ensure that members are freely and actively able to decide for themselves whether or not they accept the political levy.

This proposal may not be needed if the ballot does its work. It is a useful sprat to catch a hare. It has already been decided in its purpose as the decision of the General Council to accept Tebbit's invitation illustrates. Note the wording of the invitation. Unions are being asked to decide how they can help those who don't want to pay the political levy. And after all the anger and fury of the last four years of rhetoric against Tory policy they are willing to do so.

Why should Tebbit go to the trouble of passing a law if the General Council are willing to

act as bag-men?

The whole bent of Thatcher's policy has been to re-establish a new relationship with the TUC, not to leave them permanently out in the cold. Now, after June 9, the possibility of a new understanding is there.

What do the new proposals say about elections within the unions?

They stick closely to those contained in the Green Paper with one important change. The legislation will require elections to the executives of all unions and elections for the post of General Secretary and President where these officials have a vote or a casting vote on the executive to follow certain laid down criteria.

But these criteria will only apply where these officials are already elected.

The Tory desire for greater union democracy stop well short of a desire to interfere with the position of appointed general secretaries.

The criteria which must be followed cover a number of basic principles.

*Voting must be secret.

*Voting must be by the marking of a ballot paper.

*Every trade union member must have an equal and unrestricted opportunity to vote.

*Every trade union member must be able to vote directly for members of the executive and for the top jobs.

Voting for the positions covered must take place according to these criteria every five years.

So you can see that while voting by a show of hands is absolutely out there is no specific requirement for postal ballots.

So what would these proposals mean if they become law?

The key point is that they would give the courts control over the conduct of union elections.

These requirements will again take effect twelve months after the legislation receives the Royal Assent. If, then, any union member objects to a union election on the grounds that it has not been conducted according to these basic principles (perhaps fleshed out as is the fashion, by a more detailed and restrictive Code of Practice), he or she will be empowered to apply to the High Court for a declaration that the union has failed to carry out its statutory duty.

If the democratically elected High Court judge grants such a declaration, then the union will

be given six months in which to declare the election invalid and organise a re-run. If at the end of that period it has not done this the members who have received the declaration could seek enforcement of the order.

Continued defiance would mean that the union was in contempt of court and the judge could impose any penalty he thought fit.

The proposals do not rule out the imposition of postal balloting by the judge, a more subtle means for its extension than direct government fiat.

Take an example: workers in a large workplace vote for their Executive members at a branch meeting in the evening. Some have to travel five miles, others ten, some 15. Some have domestic commitments, others don't.

The judge finds that they don't all have "an equal and unrestricted opportunity to vote".

What about a meeting in working hours? The 1980 Employment Act places an obligation on employers to comply so far as is practicable with a request to allow his premises to be used for a ballot.

It says nothing about a meeting or time off for a meeting. The judge outlaws voting at the branch after discussion and says it must take place at work without it.

The objective of the postal ballot — atomisation, lack of educational debate — are achieved.

Or suppose a workforce operates in scattered small units. The judge says that as there is not equal and unrestricted access to a central ballot box a postal ballot should be used.

We are not in reality talking about members in one workplace or branch. We are talking about the case of most unions of hundreds of thousands of members in very different workplace situations, all having "an equal and unrestricted opportunity".

If some have better opportunities to vote than others the whole ballot can be declared invalid.

This provides open house for the disgruntled and the Freedom Association style fishers in troubled waters.

Judges would be behaving quite reasonably in saying the great equaliser is the postal ballot.

How would a law along these lines affect different unions?

Obviously in different ways according to their existing constitutions. Arthur Scargill has a casting vote on the NUM Executive. So if he were taken to

court by the right wing, he would have to stand for election again this decade instead of staying until 2003, unless the rules are changed to eliminate his casting vote. Moss Evans, who has no such vote, will not be affected.

The new law will, however, affect the TGWU because it "will not permit the election of governing bodies by the membership of any intermediate body, e.g. delegates to a national conference or member of, for instance, a regional committee."

The representatives of the national trade group committees who now sit on the TGWU GEC would presumably in future have to be elected directly by trade group members' individual votes.

The GMWU too would have to restructure itself. At the moment its executive council consists automatically of ten regional secretaries and two regional council members elected by the regional council, not the regional membership. The latter is also the procedure in COHSE.

Elections for the executive and leading officials could no longer take place on the basis of branch block votes. Each individual vote would have to be counted. So unions such as USDAW and NUPE would have to have a rethink here as would the UCW which elects its executive via branch block votes at conference.

So in all sorts of ways the pending legislation would represent a shake-up in the existing structure of trade unionism . . . and again it only represents the beginning.

And then there are requirements for ballots before strikes.

That's right. As you know in 99 cases out of a hundred, where trade unions initiate strike action they are open to legal action under the common law — the law developed directly by the judges.

They could be sued for inducing members to break their contracts, intimidation, conspiracy and numerous other civil wrongs and torts.

Over the years, Parliament has intervened to allow unions certain immunities without which they would not be able to operate at all. These immunities have been severely cut back via the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts.

What Tebbit is now saying is that where a strike is "authorised or endorsed" by a union, then the union must hold a secret ballot before the action begins.

If they don't, they will lose all their remaining immunities and be open to actions for injunctions and damages by the employers i.e. all strikes without ballots will be outlawed if the union supports them.

Three points: all industrial action (work-to-rule, overtime ban, etc) is covered. But action the union is not "authorising or endorsing" isn't. And a ballot will only ensure immunity if all those who are being asked to take industrial action have had an equal and unrestricted right to vote in a secret ballot.

The proposals say nothing about voting on employers' offers. They say nothing about ballots before ending a strike. You probably remember Tebbit making a song and dance about whether the GMWU had met rulebook requirements before calling its members in the water industry out and the surprising silence from both him and David Bassett when the water workers were told to return without being given any chance to vote.

These proposals would again lead to a tremendous shakeup in what unions do now. They would completely outlaw the show of hands at a mass meeting. A majority of Britain's unions leave responsibility for calling strikes to the executive with a variety of discretionary means of ascertaining opinions.

As we have said about the formula for ballots in elections, the push is towards the postal ballot.

So how are strike ballots likely to work?

Their purpose is clear, a strike is by definition a collective action. Its lifeblood is solidarity — the sinking of the individual's special situation, concerns and fears in those of the group.

The workplace mass meeting focuses the minds of all participants on those collective concerns, on the nature of their existence at work, on the need to act together. It provides a forum in which difficulties, worries, disagreements, can be brought out, developed, discussed. All the arguments are placed in contention and struggle for supremacy.

In contrast, the individual secret ballot, particularly the postal ballot, brings before the member a faded phantom of the collectivity.

Its object is not the group but the isolated individual, the social manifestation in which workers are at their weakest, easy prey for the employers and their media whose whole purpose is to encourage this identity.

That is why we support the free, open vote after discussion at a meeting.

The miners are quoted as an exception, but most groups of workers lack the traditions of collective solidarity that still influence NUM members.

In this context there are many possible dangers in these proposals.

As Len Murray commented, "Tebbit must know that any union tries everything within its power to control a strike."

That is often why a union makes a strike official. In future, faced with the problems of forcing a secret ballot on the membership or putting its fund at risk by supporting a strike without one, the union leaders may simply opt for inaction.

It is vital to ensure that uncertainty does not breed dithering and inaction. We have to fight for industrial action free of all state restraints and for all-out union support for strikers with no strings.



Our policies for democracy

IT would be counterproductive to deny that the Tory offensive has reaped great successes, that we are in a period of retreat, and that many militants are demoralised and others isolated.

The June Election and the inability of militants to resist the misleadership from the top shows the degree to which the economic situation, the legal restraints and the Tories' arguments have struck home.

If we are to organise the sections that are prepared to fight we have to be aware of the political crisis not only at the top but within the ranks.

We have to use the discussion over Tebbit's latest proposals in the light of this understanding to argue for our own ideas about union democracy, strikes and the relationship of unions to the Labour Party.

These proposals will produce a shake-up within our organisations, a shake-up which is needed although not for the purposes Tebbit pursues.

Seizing the opportunity and all the time attempting to deepen opposition against the earlier legislation and preparing for its use against trade unionists we should argue for:

***Total opposition to all ballots on political expenditure or Labour Party links.**

Strengthen the links between unions and the Labour Party by a serious extension of workplace branches. This will help to increase the individual membership of the Party to avoid correct criticism of a passive membership used by union

leaders in the Labour Party. We should fight to ensure that every union branch sends delegates to GMCs and that there are regular report backs.

***No collaboration with state imposed strike ballots.**

Unions should automatically make all industrial action official and should continue to maintain and extend the methods of ascertaining opinion which the members themselves have decided upon.

***Hands off union elections!**

The union members, not Tebbit, must decide on the method used.

***For a Basic Extension of Union Democracy.**

Tebbit is right on one thing: unions are not democratic enough. Shop stewards in every union should produce plans and proposals for union democracy related to the specific situation, traditions and balance of forces in their unions, organically developing from the present positions. But we believe that the Organising Committee of the Broad Lefts and the Campaign Group of MPs should jointly campaign for a basic code of union democracy. Central principles would be:

—Election — for short terms of office — and right of recall over all full-time officials. What's good enough for shop stewards is good enough for full-time officials.

If MPs like Terry Fields and Dave Nellist are prepared to take workers' wages, so should union officials.

—Opposition to the postal ballot.

Left wing candidates can still win even using it, but the

postal ballot limits the participation of the membership and the leaves the rank and file divided and weakened.

—Move the branch to the workplace.

The basic unit of union decision making should be open workplace meetings with open discussion guaranteeing the rights of all electoral candidates to circulate material and address such meetings.

—Bring in the black workers! Bring in the women workers! Open our organisations to the unemployed!

The whole structure of union arrangements militates against these groups. Not only are they the most oppressed, but precisely because of that they can bring new blood, vitality and militancy to the unions.

We must campaign against proscriptions on recruiting jobless workers and for special arrangements in each organisation to bring these groups into the mainstream.

All these basic points have to be argued for in terms of:

***Breaking off talks with Tebbit and disengaging from tripartite bodies such as the MSC and the NEDC where trade unionists achieve nothing but legitimise Thatcher's purposes. Turn away from the Tories. Turn to the members.**

***Rebuilding workplace organisation in the offices, factories and hospitals.**

Without strength at the base we are going nowhere. But strength at the base means rebuilding on a class-wide perspective.

On their knees to Tebbit

NORMAN Tebbit's arrival at the Department of Employment in 1981 represented the complete conquest of the Conservative Party by Thatcherism.

could proceed unimpeded and the essential rhetoric of 'public suffering', 'realistic expectation' and 'government intransigence' could proceed unimpeded.

Absolutely central to Thatcherism is the decisive weakening of the unions which as cartels distort the free workings of the market whilst interfering with the political liberties of the subject a free market guarantees.

From now on government withdrawal from the economy, attempts to restore the self-regulation of the market, public spending cuts and control of the money supply

But Thatcherism, which developed in the Tory party as a reaction to the Heath U turn away from his similar policies of 1970-72, owes as much to Heath as it does to the apostles of monetarism and political freedom, Professors Friedman and Hayek.

As Tebbit's predecessor, Jim Prior, wrote: "We have to recognise that at the end of the day the new legal framework set out in the Industrial Relations Act of 1971 was unable to command the general acceptance necessary to make it work."

Piecemeal

This time legislation to control trade unionism would follow a piecemeal, step-by-step approach allowing both an exploration of the response and a synchronisation with the pace at which other aspects of policy debilitated the working class movement.

First up was the 1980 Employment Act which severely limited picketing and blacking, abolished union recognition provisions and cut back on a whole series of individual rights such as unfair dismissal and maternity protections. It also, by requiring rigged ballots with impossible majorities for new closed shops, attempted to curb the spread of trade unionism.

If the Tories had learned the correct lessons of the four years in the '70s which led to Heath being blasted into oblivion by the miners, the TUC had not. They failed to understand that it was the self assertion of the rank and file in a much more favour-

able situation that was the determinant factor in doing for the Broadstairs piano player. They failed to grasp that the new deteriorating economic situation and the demoralising impact four years of Labour government had had on a rank and file inadequately prepared politically meant that if the legislation which they wanted removed because it hit their institutional interests was to go, then leadership from the top was essential.

The 1974 Labour government was elected because of the self-assertion of 1968-74 which the TUC was able to mould and control for its own purposes.

Missing this point they proceeded to do everything they could to limit action on the ground, this time believing their own decorous conduct and diplomacy would achieve the return of a Labour government which would repeal the legislation.

They subordinated everything to this goal. But even within their own framework, they used the wrong tactics to achieve it.

Media

Instead of a one day strike against the 1980 Act we had a Day of Action which they did all they could, in the fact of an intense media campaign, to limit.

Despite the fact that nearly a million workers came out, Murray was soon stating, "The General Council recently consulted affiliated unions and I must tell you that there is little or no support for a repeat of the Day of Action in the near future."

So Tebbit was soon back pressing home his advantage.

The 1982 Employment Act was the trade union leaders' nightmare. It made unions as organisations and hence their funds responsible in legal actions rather than individual members.

Congress

And its proposals for ballots in all closed shop situations, if successful, would break 100% trade unionism.

A special Congress was summoned to Wembley in April 1982 which agreed on boycotting closed shop ballots, withdrawing union representatives from tribunal cases heard under the legislation and gave the TUC powers to support unions attacked by Tebbit — powers which stopped far short of automatic support.

Nonetheless, the retreat continued despite the lessons of the 1981 miners action — faced with determined industrial action the Tories could be made to withdraw.

The summer of 1982 saw the Day of Action replaced by Hours of Action, the spirit of the NHS workers dispersed in an orgy of every conceivable form of industrial action known to humanity except the all-out strike, and the Sean Geraghty affair.

When Fleet Street trade unionists proposed a one-day stoppage in support of the health workers, the employers got an injunction under the 1980 Act. Despite the fine words of Wembley, the NGA and SOGAT instructed their FoCs to withdraw plans for action after a request to do so by Albert Spanswick, chair of the TUC

NHS Committee. Only the electricians, disowned by their union, stood out.

The issue was defused when an anonymous donor settled Geraghty's £350 fine. But the silence from the General Council combined with their action on behalf of the Tories in undermining ASLEF's defence of basic union conditions to con firm to thousands of militants that nothing could be expected from the union.

The Tories were ready to go a third time. The Green Paper of early 1983, now to be embodied in autumn legislation, had a clear purpose. Having legislated to weaken union organisation, finances and membership, over the closed shop, and the means they used to defend their members through the prohibitions on blacking and picketing, the time was ripe to attack the ability to strike at all — through strike ballots — and to mobilise the demoralised rank and file against their leaders through breaking the links with the Labour Party and through the new proposals for union elections.

Logical

The response of the General Council to reverse existing policy and talk to the Tories on their terms can only further disorientate trade unionists.

It is the beginning of a submission to the Tories that is logical in relation to their stance since 1979 after the bitter fruits of that stance were reaped on June 9. It is clearer than ever that a response to Tebbit will have to come from below.

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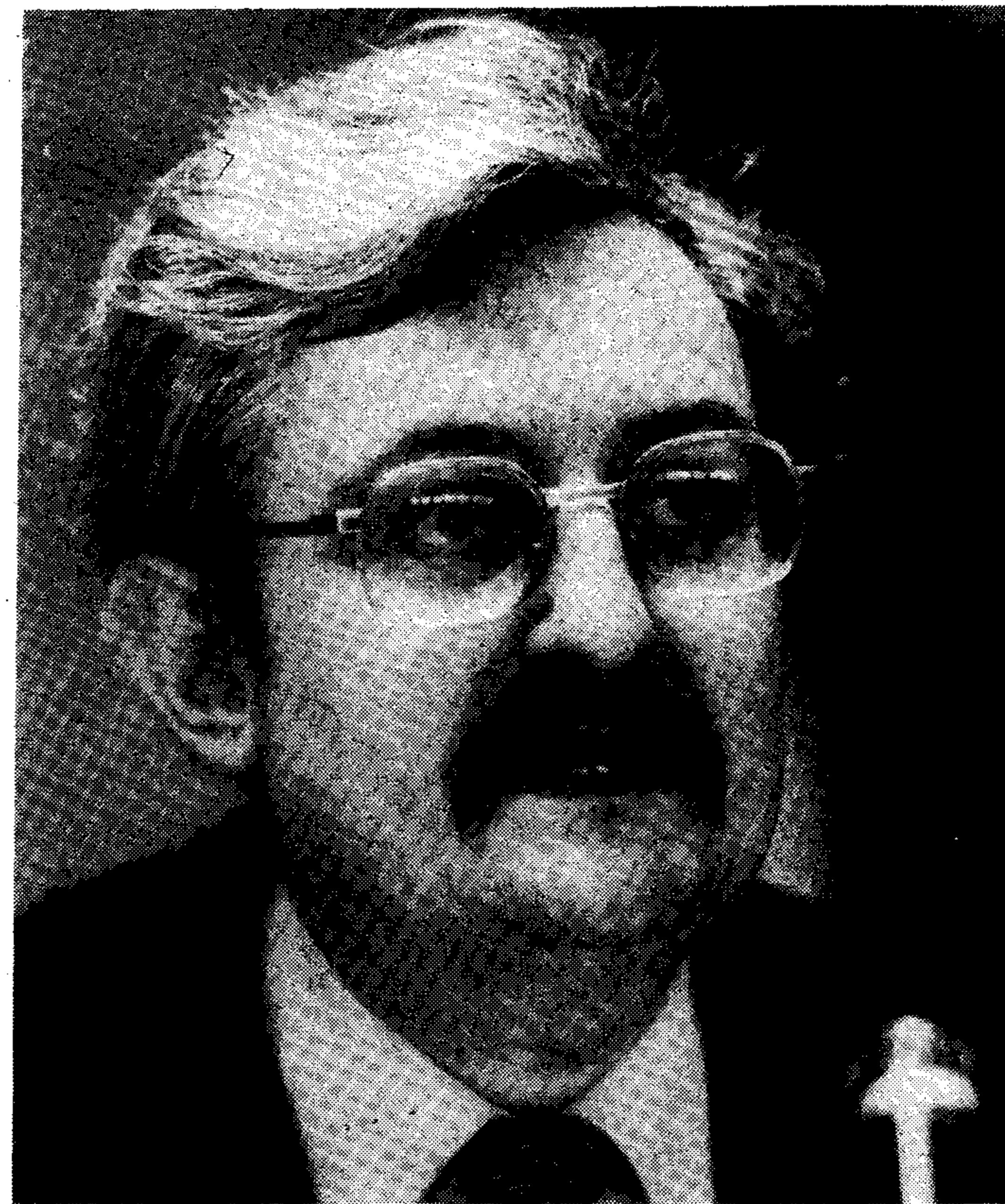
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REMEMBERING JONATHAN HAMMOND

*Peter
McIntyre*

National Union of Journalists
Provincial Newspapers
Industrial Council member



Jonathan Hammond

JONATHAN Hammond, last year's president of the National Union of Journalists, and chair of the Socialist Organiser Alliance, died on August 17 at the age of 41.

Although his health had not been good and he had suffered from a number of asthmatic attacks, his death was unexpected and sudden. He had gone home early from work the day before he died and called the ambulance himself after a bad night. By the time he arrived at hospital he was in a coma and he died without regaining consciousness.

A memorial rally has been called by a number of organisations including his own NUJ branch on September 28 at Bishop Creighton House, Lillie Road, London SW6. The meeting will start at 8pm and will be supported by Socialist Organiser.

Jonathan was a political activist up to his dying day. On the Monday before he died he had been on the picket line of the Latin America Newsletter to support strikers. Despite his illness he attended the Fulham CND meeting the night before he died.

He was associated with a long list of political and union causes, most notably the fight in the labour movement for troops out of Ireland and against media censorship of the Irish war. He was about to attend this year's Trade Union Congress as a member of the NUJ delegation.

Jonathan began his working life as an actor associated with a number of fringe theatres in the 1960s when radical theatre companies were springing up in profusion.

In the early 70s he gave up acting and went into book publishing where he helped pioneer the recruiting drive by the National Union of Journalists.

In 1971 he was victimised and sacked after forming an NUJ chapel at Calder and Boyers but he remained an active campaigner for the union. In 1974 he moved to

Penguin Books where he stayed until he died.

The book sector which had a few hundred members when he first joined the NUJ went from strength to strength until it became one of the larger sectors of the union.

Members there however were treated as second class citizens by more elitist sectors of the union, since they were accused of not being 'real journalists'.

Jonathan led the campaign for the London book membership to have its own branch, a task made easier when he was elected to the National Executive by the former Magazine and Book branch.

In 1976 the Book branch was formed and emerged as one of the most consistently left wing branches in the union, famous for submitting motions several hundred words long to the annual conference and infamous amongst the right wing of the union for getting some of them passed.

Jonathan was elected as National Executive member from the branch, a position he held until his presidential year, and then again until his death.

Affiliation

One of his main campaigns was for the affiliation of the NUJ to the Labour Party — a cause he advocated in his presidential speech.

He was a long standing member of Fulham Labour Party and a former GMC delegate. He was a delegate to Hammersmith and Fulham Trades Council and a former executive member.

In addition, Jonathan was active in CND, Amnesty International, The Campaign for Press Freedom, The Turkish Solidarity Campaign, and the Troops Out Movement.

Jonathan was elected President of the NUJ on a left ticket but his year in office showed up many of the problems left wingers face when they win such positions.

Jonathan's first step was a principled stand in support of Solidarity. He gave up space in his union office for the Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group in exile to have an office and telephone. He took part in a number of demonstrations and pickets in support of Solidarity.

His action caused him to become unpopular with the Stalinist element amongst the NUJ officialdom — but since it had the enthusiastic backing of the vast majority of the membership they were forced to suffer it in silence.

Jonathan was however worried about the divisions within the union. He — wrongly in my view — saw his role as a bridge between the left and the right, because of the figurehead role of the presidency. He was also aware that his election was evidence that the Book section of the union was finally fully recognised and didn't want that upset by controversy.

He had started his year of office with some senior lay officials resigning because they had been overturned by the annual conference. In trying to mend bridges with them, Jonathan put himself at odds with rank and file militants for the first time in his political life.

It was not cowardice on Jonathan's part or a selling out of his beliefs, but rather a wrong strategic assessment of the role of a left winger elected to an influential position in the union. It meant that opportunities for the left were missed.

After his year finished in April Jonathan himself seemed to realise this. He wrote recently in Socialist Organiser that the time had come for more active propagation of Trotskyism inside the Labour movement. He intended standing down from the National Executive next year so that he could spend more time supporting

activists at branch and chapel level. His death came for that reason at a particularly tragic time.

Jonathan's cremation last week was attended by right wing eminences within the union as well as by Labour Party and union militants. It is clear however that Jonathan was one of ours not one of theirs.

We salute him as a fallen comrade.

John Bloxam, S.O. Secretariat

MANY PROMINENT labour movement figures — union presidents and the like — will give their 'names' to this or that campaign.

It's much more unusual for people in such positions to identify unequivocally with a Marxist organisation and to take their share of its day-to-day work. Yet that is what Jonathan Hammond did.

When Socialist Organiser was started in 1978, a lot of prominent Labour Party and trade union people associated themselves with us. As political issues developed, and as we became more organised, setting up the structure of the Socialist Organiser Alliance and its local groups, they moved away or remained on its fringes — all except one of them, and that one was Jonathan.

He was conscientious about taking his ten copies of SO to sell each week and paying for them.

If there was a delay in delivering them, he would be on the phone to ask why.

He attended SO Secretariat meetings regularly, and travelled across the country to chair SO delegate meetings. Whenever he could help with the practical work, he did. He worked with the rest of us as a comrade, not as an 'important person' coming to visit.

In one of his books, the US Trotskyist James P Cannon recalled that in the socialist movement before World War 1, the main leaders were 'celebrities' with professional occupations outside the movement.

"They decided things. They laid down the law. They were the speakers on ceremonial occasions; they posed for their photographs and gave inter-

views to the newspapers. Between them and the proletarian Jimmy Higginses in the ranks, there was an enormous gulf.

"As for the party functionaries, the people who devoted all their time to the daily work and routine of the party, they were simply regarded as flunkies to be loaded with all the disagreeable tasks, poorly paid and blamed if anything went wrong...

"When we organised the Communist Party... in 1919... we put a stop to all this nonsense..."

"All this nonsense" is still rife in the British labour movement today. For someone in the upper ranks of that movement to reject it is rare indeed. It is the measure of Jonathan's commitment as a socialist that he did.

THE COMING period, after Labour's biggest election defeat since the war, paradoxically gives us in the Socialist Organiser Alliance the best opportunity we have ever had to win converts in the trade union and labour movement to our interpretation of Marxism and Trotskyism as the surest way forward to socialism.

One of our main strengths, arising out of our commitment to maximum left unity in action wherever possible, is our openness and lack of sectarianism. We have a great deal of credibility in areas of the trade unions and of constituency Labour Parties where we are strong because of our hard work and willingness to work with others on the left while retaining our distinctive approach.

We should, first of all, take the lead and strive to create Labour Party workplace branches as means of combining trade union and Labour Party work and reinvigorating the basis of the Labour Party. We should seek to build new SO groups and develop the ones we already have, and, within this organisational priority, determine how many people we can put forward in each area as prospective councillors and parliamentary candidates.

Within this developing organisational framework, we should fight for our policies and to call to account those MPs, councillors and union leaders who collaborate with the Tories...

Jonathan Hammond,
Socialist Organiser June 30 1983

Britain bolsters junta

THREE LABOUR politicians, just returned from a visit to Turkey, have reported that British embassy officials in Ankara are enthusiastic apolog-

ists for the military dictatorship there.

'We were all shocked by the very complacent attitude shown

by the British embassy in Ankara,' said Chris Smith, MP for Islington South. 'The officials we met at the British embassy acted as apologists for the current Turkish regime. They might as well have been officials of the regime itself'.

The other members of the delegation were Clare Short, MP for Birmingham Ladywood, and ex-MP Alex Lyon.

DISK trial

They had visited the trial where 78 members of the DISK trade union confederation are charged with 'seeking to overthrow the constitution of the Republic by force'. For 52 of them, the military prosecutor has demanded the death penalty.

The indictment has been published as a thick book. 'The whole of this book,' said Alex Lyon, 'does not specify any-

where one single act of violence. The defendants are simply being indicted on the basis of their speeches, articles and papers.

'Men are likely to be condemned to death because they have done what any trade unionist in this country would consider it his right to do'.

Hunger strike

The delegation was also able to give some information on the recent mass hunger strike in Turkish jails, despite a blackout on it in the Turkish press. In Istanbul, where it started, the hunger strike has been broken and worse conditions imposed in the jails as retaliation. Pockets of resistance may still continue outside Istanbul.

The three politicians will be compiling a report on their visit, and raising the issues both in Parliament and within the Labour Party.

Turkey - a nation behind bars

Saturday September 10, 2.30pm, Stoke Newington Town Hall, London N16. Speakers include Jeremy Corbyn MP, Anthony Kendall (leader, Hackney Council), Turkish trade unionists, and a speaker from the Kurdistan Solidarity Campaign.

New TURKEY
from TSC
INFORMATION BULLETIN
May Solidarity Campaign 7, Ayrton Rd

30p plus
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FATSA:
A TOWN ON TRIAL

Socialist ORGANISER

Where we stand

*Organise the left to beat back the Tories' attacks! No to attacks on union rights; defend the picket line; no state interference in our unions! No to any wage curbs. Labour must support all struggles for better living standards and conditions.

*Wage rises should at the very least keep up with price increases. For a price index calculated by working class organisations, as the basis for clauses in all wage agreements to provide automatic monthly rises in line with the true cost of living for the working class. The same inflation-proofing should apply to state benefits, grants and pensions.

*Fight for improvements in the social services, and against cuts. Protection for those services against inflation by automatic inflation-proofing of expenditure. For occupations and supporting strike action to defend jobs and services.

*End unemployment. Cut hours, not jobs. Fight for a 35 hour week and an end to overtime. Demand work-sharing without loss of pay. Organise the unemployed - campaign for a programme of useful public works to create new jobs for the unemployed.

*Defend all jobs! Open the books of those firms that threaten closure or redundancies, along with those of their suppliers and bankers, to elected trade union committees. For occupation and blacking action to halt the closures. For nationalisation without compensation under workers' management.

*Make the bosses pay, not the working class. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'! Nationalise the banks and financial institutions, without compensation. End the interest burden on council housing and other public services.

*Freeze rent and rates.

*Scrap all immigration controls. Race is not a problem: racism is. The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets. Purge racists from positions in the labour movement. Organise full support for black self-defence. Build workers' defence squads.

*The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as a bosses' striking force: dissolution of special squads (SPG, Special Branch, MI5, etc), public accountability, etc.

*Free abortion on demand. Women's equal right to work and full equality for women. Defend and extend free state nursery and childcare provision.

*Against attacks on gays by the state: abolish all laws which discriminate against lesbians and gay men; for the right of the gay community to organise and affirm their stand publicly.

*The Irish people - as a whole - should have the right to determine their own future. Get the British troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners as a matter of urgency.

*The black working people of South Africa should get full support from the British labour movement for their strikes, struggles and armed combat against the white supremacist regime. South African goods and services should be blacked.

*It is essential to achieve the fullest democracy in the labour movement. Automatic reselection of MPs during each Parliament and the election by annual conference of party leaders. Annual election of all trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

*The chaos, waste, human suffering and misery of capitalism now - in Britain and throughout the world - show the urgent need to establish rational, democratic, human control over the economy, to make the decisive sectors of industry social property, under workers' control. The strength of the labour movement lies in the rank and file. Our perspective must be working class action to raze the capitalist system down to its foundations, and to put a working class socialist alternative in its place - rather than having our representatives run the system and waiting for crumbs from the tables of the bankers and bosses.

Agenda

LEGGIN' it for peace. East London Youth CND march, September 17-18, from Kelvedon Hatch Civil Defence HQ to London Fields, Hackney. For details contact E.London YCND, 39 Albion Road, London E17.

POLISH Solidarity Committee (Glasgow): working conference in Glasgow, September 17-18. Proposed sessions include: Czechoslovakia 1968 and Poland 1980-1; peace movements in Eastern Europe; solidarity work. Contact Gordon

Morgan, 59 Durward Ave, Glasgow G41 (041-649 8958).

OXFORD Claimants' Defence Committee one-day conference: Saturday September 3, at East Oxford Community Centre. Fee £1.50, less for unwaged. Contact CDC c/o 44b Princess St, Oxford.

BANGLADESHI Divided Families Campaign demonstration against racist and sexist immigration laws. Saturday September 3, 2pm from Mancunian Way, Oxford Road, Manchester.

VOLUNTEERS wanted! Wirral Trades Council have acquired a building at Central Station, Birkenhead, for use as a trade union, unemployed, and Labour Party resource centre, and need help to get it into a decent state to move in. If you can help out in any way, contact Paul Davies, Transport House, Berner St, Birkenhead.

LONDON Labour Campaign for Gay Rights now meets regularly every 4 weeks at Marchmont Community Centre, Marchmont St, WC1, at 6pm. Next meeting September 11. Gay Young Socialists meet at Gay's The Word at 6pm: next meeting September 18, on the Police Bill. Contact: London LCGR, Mike Haran-659 2938 or Chris Beer, 785 9515. GYS:

Socialist ORGANISER

LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE MEETING

Socialist Organiser's Labour Party conference meeting this year will be on building Labour Party workplace branches and the fight against the Tories. Speakers will include activists who have had direct experience of building workplace branches.

TUESDAY OCTOBER 4, 5.30PM
KING'S HOTEL, BRIGHTON

Martin Goodsell, 13 Buxton Road, London N19. National LCGR: Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Nottingham NG7 2DS.

Unique attempt to construct a Marxist analysis against Stalinism for the backward countries. Normally £15. Now available, hardback, £5 employed, £4 low paid/unemployed. 90p postage. Cheques and orders to Mr James, c/o 123 Kingsthorpe Close, St Ann's, Nottingham. Hurry as limited number only.

BOOK OFFER: 'Chinese Revolutionary' by Wang Fan-hsi. Only account by leading Trotskyist participant in the events in China between 1919 and 1949.

Where to find Socialist Organiser

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday September 3, 11 to 4.30, at the Labour Club, Bristol St, Birmingham.

Socialist Organiser Annual General Meeting: Sunday October 30, 10.30-5, County Hall, London SE1.

National Socialist Organiser dayschool, Saturday October 29, in London.

SCOTLAND

Glasgow. Next meeting Thursday September 8, 7.30 at Club Room, Block 40, Stirlingfauld Place, opposite Citizens Theatre (nearest Underground, Bridge St). 'A Strategy for Fighting the Cuts'. Speaker: Ian McCalm (Glasgow district Labour Party, nominee for Glasgow district Labour panel, in personal capacity).

Contact: Stan Crooke, 34 Garturk St, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at West End bookshop, Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime), Coatbridge shopping arcade (Saturday lunchtime), and Maryhill dole (Tuesday morning).

Hamilton. Meeting Thursday September 1, 7.30 at the Committee Room, Hamilton Town Hall, Auchingramont Rd. 'Workers' movements in Eastern Europe'. Speaker: Gordon Morgan (Glasgow Polish Solidarity Campaign).

Edinburgh. Contact Dave, 229 4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Saturday 10.30-12) and at the First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

NORTH-WEST

Rochdale. Next meeting Monday Sept. 12, 8pm at the Castle Inn, Manchester Rd.

Manchester. Contact Tony, 273 5691. SO is sold at Grass Roots Books, Newton St, Piccadilly.

Stockport. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: contact 40 Fox St, Edgley, Stockport. SO is sold at Stockport market every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Wirral. Next meeting Thursday September 8, at Wallasey Labour Club, Church Rd, Seacombe. 7.30 business, 8pm discussion on 'The issues at TUC and Labour Party conferences'. Speakers Col Johnston (Wallasey delegate to Labour Party conference) and Dave Curtis (Wirral branch NUJ).

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 395753.

Read all about us!



36p including postage from Socialist Organiser, 28, Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Stoke. Next meeting: 'The Labour Movement after the Election'. Date to be fixed. Contact: Paul Barnett, 151 Broadway, Meir (328198).

YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Huddersfield. Contact Alan Brooke, 59 Magdale, Honley, Huddersfield HD7 2LX.

Harrogate. Meets every other Sunday evening: next meeting September 4. Contact Mark Osborn, 522542. SO is sold outside the market, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday lunchtimes.

York. Contact 414118 (98 Hull St). SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the Community Bookshop,

outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

Sheffield. SO is sold outside Boots in Fargate (Saturday 12 to 1) and at the Independent Bookshop, Glossop Rd. Contact Rob, 589307.

Durham. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet. Contact Andy, 64088.

Leeds. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane. Contact Garth, 623322.

Hull. Meets every Wednesday 8pm. Details from SO sellers. Childcare available.

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Hebden Bridge Books.

WALES AND WEST

Cardiff. Next meeting Thursday September 1: 'How to fight the Tories'. For details phone 492988.

Bristol. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

Taunton. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

MIDLANDS

Birmingham. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High St. Contact Godfrey Webster, 169 Barclay Road, Smethwick.

Coventry. SO is sold at the Wedge Co-op, High Street. Contact Keith White, 75623.

Leicester. SO is sold at Blackthorne Books, High St. Contact Phil, 857908.

Northampton. Contact Ross, 713606.

Nottingham. Meets every Thursday evening, 7.30 at the International Community Centre. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St. Contact Pete Radcliff, 585640.

SOUTH

Oxford. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11 to 1) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd, Friday 5 to 7. Also at EOA Books, Cowley Rd.

Basingstoke. Next meeting Thursday September 8: 'The Struggle in Central America'. 7.30, Chute House. SO is sold at 'Good News' in London St.

LONDON

North-West London. Next meeting Sunday September 4, 7.30, the Rising Sun, Harlesden Road, London NW10. 'Marxism or Consensus Politics'. Speaker Chris Hickey. Contact: Mick, 624 1931.

Hackney. Contact Andrew Hornung, 76 Carysfort Rd, London N16.

Haringey. Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941.

Tower Hamlets. Next meeting Monday September 12. Business 7.30, discussion 8.30 on 'Where next for the unions after TUC '83'. Speaker: a TUC delegate. For venue, contact Susan on 377 1328.

Richmond. SO is sold at Richmond Quadrant every Saturday, 11.30-1.30. Further details, contact Nick De Marco, 876 6715.

Hounslow. SO is sold outside All Saints Church, Hounslow High St., Saturdays 10.30 to 12. Contact Chris, 898 6961.

Islington. Next meeting Sunday September 11, 7.30 at Caxton House, St John's Way, London N19. Contact: Nik, 278 1341.

Southwark/Lambeth. Meets every other Wednesday at Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5. Business 7.30, discussion 8.30. Next meeting September 7.

South East London. Contact Siu Ming, 691 1141.

Orpington. Contact c/o South East London.

Putney. Contact Gerry, 789 7587.

Harlow. Contact c/o 28 Middle Lane.

LONDON CUTS conference organised by the Southwark Campaign Working Party: Sunday November 6, at County Hall, London SE1. Contact: Southwark Campaign Working Party, Town Hall, Peckham Rd, SE5.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Collets, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Bookmarks, Bookplace (Peckham Rd, SE15), Kilburn Books, and Reading Matters (Wood Green Shopping Centre).

Socialist Organiser

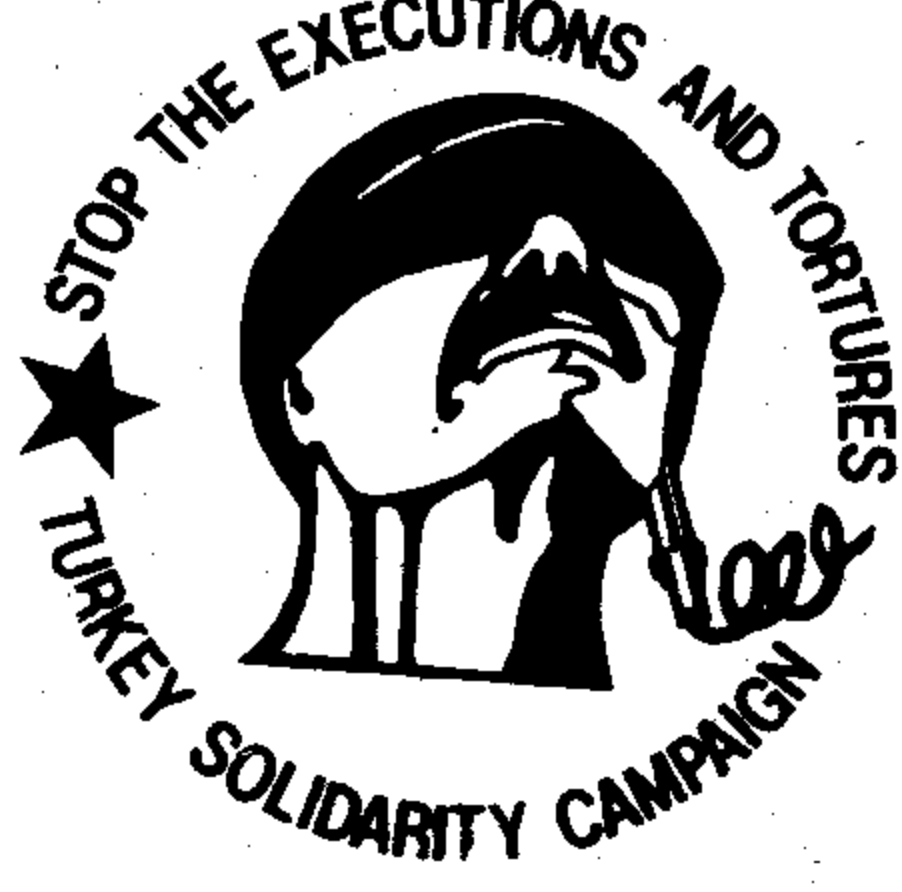
Alliance

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Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance - groups are established in most large towns. It costs £1.50 a month (20p unwaged) to be a supporter.



Rates: £5 for three months, £8.75 for six months, and £16 for a year.

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Address

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To: Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

Subscribe

City blues

Dear Editor,
In the next 20 years or so we are likely to witness a technological revolution within capitalism that will not only drastically increase a permanent army of unemployed (6 to 7 million), but also generate a shift in the length of the working week.

In this context, socialists need a policy for the development of, and democratic accountability of, the 'leisure industry'. Under capitalism, Britain's major sports are left to the laws of the market place. Take football for example. I am a member of Manchester City Supporters Club. Over the last four years, working men who support this once great club have stood in stupefied amazement at the goings on in the Club.

First, Malcolm Allison wasted £4 million on mediocre players. Then John Bond was appointed on £50,000 a year plus perks. He then bought his son for £400,000 (£40,000 of which went into Kevin's pocket). Bond Snr. transformed the team into a group of zombies. He then resigned, picking up £50,000 golden handshake, leaving the club in a chaotic state.

I would propose the following measures:

a) for an electoral college to elect the Manager and coach of football clubs, made up one third of the fans, one third of the players and one third of the club staff.

b) For players and staff to receive the average industrial wage, as Peter Tatchell proposed to do during the Bermondsey campaign.

c) For the instant recallability of personell who refuse to carry out the policy of the majority.

By relating to issues which have a mass resonance within the working class, Socialist Organiser can creatively apply Trotsky's transitional method, and provide answers to working people's problems.

Yours,
Tommy Hart (TGWU)
Rochdale.

Troops out now!

AS MEMBERS of the Troops Out delegation to Belfast on August 5-7 we should like to support the appeal, reported this week, by the Labour MP for Birmingham Ladywood, Clare Short, for British troops to be withdrawn from the six counties

of the North of Ireland.

It is 14 years now since the British army was sent to N. Ireland and Clare Short is only echoing what many on the left of the Labour Party have been saying for most of that time. In fighting for their self-determination, the Irish people are only demanding, after all, what has already been won in India and, more recently, Zimbabwe.

We were able to see at first hand the reality of colonial armed rule only an hour's journey from Britain, with soldiers prowling around suburban streets with loaded rifles, convoys of armoured cars, barricaded forts and armed city centre checkpoints.

All this shows that Britain's propping up of the six county sectarian state will only lead to more bloodshed and strife. The only solution is for the troops to be pulled out now and the Irish people to be allowed to determine their own future.

We hope that many more labour movement delegates will accompany the Trades Council banner for the second time on next year's TOM delegation, and see for themselves the contrast between what is reported in the press in Britain and the reality of the situation in Ireland.

PETE LEYDEN, MICK RICE,
STUART RICHARDSON
TINA ROW, CHERRY SEWELL
GEORGE WRIGHT

Memories of Mary

READERS WILL know from the appreciation in the last issue of Socialist Organiser (no. 143) of the death of Mary Archer. Mary and her husband John lived in Leeds from 1937, after graduating from the LSE, until after they were expelled from the Labour Party, along with many other left-wingers in 1959.

Comrades who remember their arrival on the staid, right-wing Labour Party scene in Leeds describe their stimulating and controversial intervention as a "fire-work party". Leeds had become a stronghold of the right wing with Gaitskell, Alice Bacon, and later on, Denis Healey.

Mary's talents operated on both the practical and theoretical levels. She worked tirelessly to build the youth movement and acted as election agent when Harehills, a working class area in Leeds hitherto held by the Tories, was won for Labour for the first time. She also challenged major figures such as John Lawrence and Tony Cliff in public debate.

A meeting to honour Mary's memory is to be held on Sunday 4 September at 7.30 p.m. at Leeds Trades Council Club, Savile Mount, Leeds, to which all are welcome. It is also hoped to establish a Mary Archer Memorial Fund to reprint socialist works that have fallen out of print, details of which will be passed on when known.

WENDY AND GARTH
FRANKLAND

Welcome change

I was pleased to see the two pieces on the current situation in the north of Ireland by comrades Murphy and Johnstone (SO 143). What a welcome change.

SO's recent coverage of Ireland has been confined almost entirely to condemning the politics of 'sectarian terrorism' (apparently equally applicable to loyalist and republican actions) mixed with rhetorical calls for working class unity, and to a long and laboured theoretical debate about the need for Protestant rights of autonomy in a reunified Ireland.

For what it's worth, Gerry Adams told us on the Troops Out delegation that proposals for such autonomy were often made in order to avoid the need to state clearly that a united Irish state would be both democratic and entirely secular.

Hopefully SO will continue this improvement and contribute to the building of an effective labour movement solidarity campaign which, as comrade Murphy says, and in spite of the success of the TOM delegation, remains at present so pathetically inadequate.

P. ALLEN

Victory in Sevenoaks

SEVENOAKS BRANCH Labour Party has just scored an impressive victory against the Tory controlled Town Council. It is impressive because Sevenoaks is one of the richest areas in the country and is jammed full of Tories.

The dispute was over where a new swimming pool should be built in the town. Tory councillors had decided to build the pool at the local public school!

Practical objections were raised by the people of Sevenoaks: the school would restrict the use of the pool, the site was away from the 'natural population centre' of the town, and many people in that area had their own swimming pools anyway. The Labour Party pointed out that public money was being used to provide a private school with facilities.

Certain members of the Party decided to call a public meeting where people could voice their opinions. The meeting was packed. A referendum was demanded by the Labour Party and the required ten electors

forced the council to concede.

The campaign was led totally by the Labour Party. Leaflets were produced and distributed around Sevenoaks.

The result of the poll taken on Thursday 17 August was about 2,000 against the council's proposal and only about 200 for.

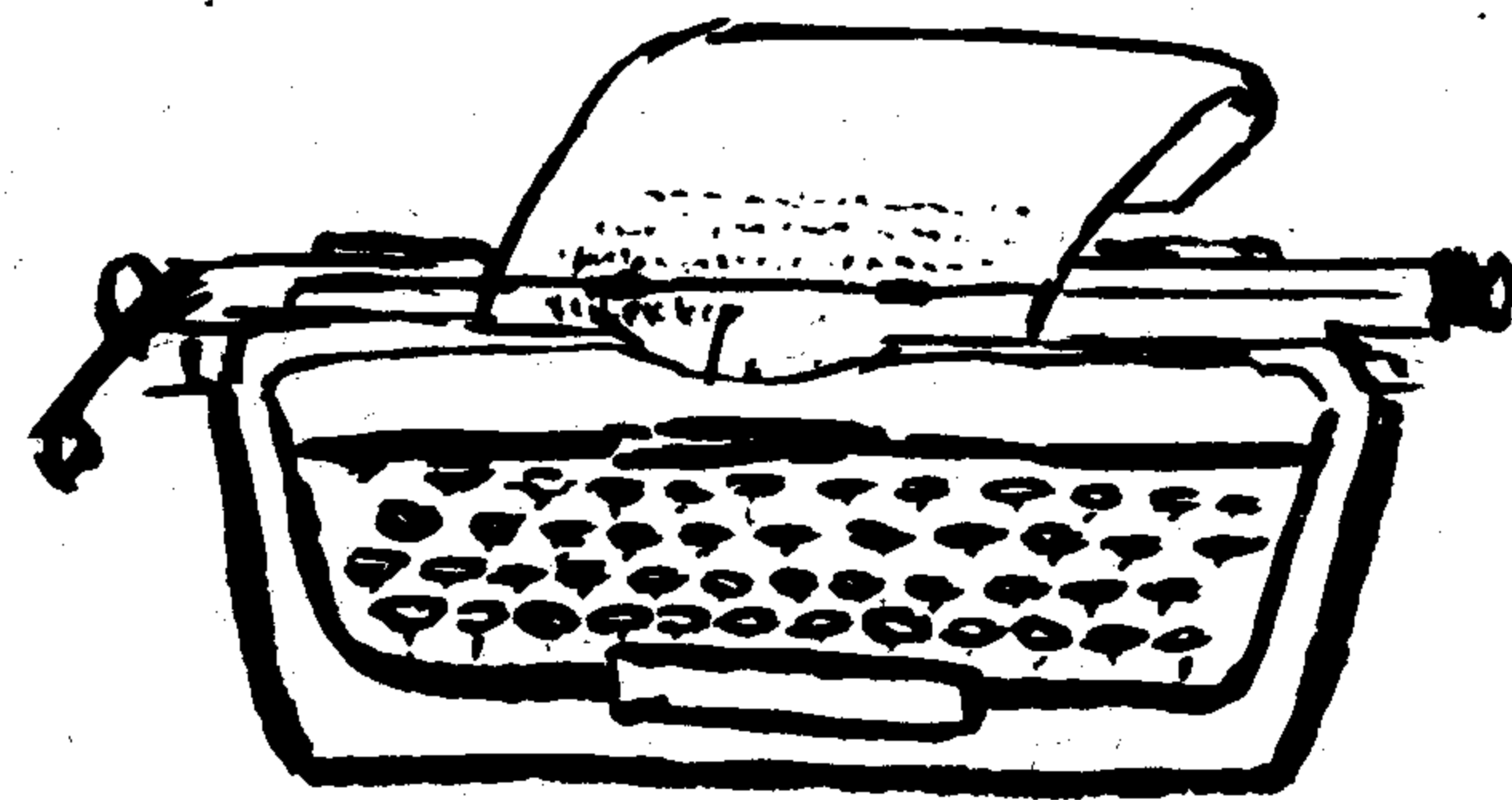
It is good that a few people realise that just getting out of an armchair at election time is not enough to achieve socialism, and that the fight against the Tories must be waged now. It was an 'easy issue' to oppose the Tories on, and has been described as basically non-political (most people did not regard the siting of the swimming pool as a class issue).

Some sections of the party are still reticent about being actively involved in trade union disputes, etc.

Let's hope that the momentum gained in this fight is not lost and that the Party involves itself with equal vigour in more political struggles.

JOHN MOORE
Sevenoaks YS.

Writeback



Send letters to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. No longer than 400 words please: longer letters are liable to be cut.

Solidarity?

THIS IS the text of a reply we received to an appeal for the release of our union's imprisoned leaders and activists.

1 August 1983

Dear Colleague,
Your letter (undated) seeking signatures for the appeal to be presented to the Polish Ambassador in London 'in the first week of August' arrived at our office today.

No doubt you will appreciate that, due to the time factor, it is not possible for us to comply with your request on this occasion.

Yours sincerely,
JOHN HENRY
Deputy General Secretary,
Scottish TUC

It comes just four months after a "Solidarnosc" spokesman - invited in writing to the STUC annual conference - was refused the right to set up an information stand and threatened with eviction from the conference by the Standing Orders Committee.

Yours in solidarity,
MAREK GARZTECKI

The unfolding pesticide disaster

SCIENCE

By Les Hearn



Chlordane is banned in the EEC and USA. The accompanying leaflet shows it as being safer than several other pesticides, but those chosen are all highly toxic and are also banned in the West. When mixing chlordane, protective clothing including a respirator should be worn.

THE development of 20th century agriculture has been bound up with the growth of pesticides use so that nowadays, some 2,000 million kilograms of pesticide are used each year.

These are mainly used in the richer countries and have provided a very effective way of reducing the competition with insects, etc., for our crops.

Roughly 100g of pesticide per person is being used every year in the 'Third World' and use is increasing fast.

This leads to a problem, for, as David Bull points out in this book*, pesticides are a classic example of an inappropriate technology.

For the Third World poor, pesticides as promoted and used at present are an unfolding disaster. Bull shows why this is the case, as well as pointing out some possible solutions.

Insect

There are at least 1 million species of insect, of which only about 1% are pests. But in addition there are about 10% who compete with us for our crops but whose effects are too insignificant for us to notice.

These are potential pests. The other 90% are either harmless or beneficial, by helping plants to grow or by eating pests.

If insecticides are used in

the wrong way, it's possible to actually increase the number of pests. Bull gives the example of cotton production in Central America.

To start with there were 3 main pests which were controlled by traditional methods. After 1945, insecticides were increasingly used, starting with 8 applications per season.

Spraying

By the mid-1950s, 2 pests had declined but 3 new types had appeared! The number of sprayings per season increased.

By the early-70s, there were 8 important pests, while up to 40 sprayings per season were needed.

This is just one example of the 'pesticides treadmill'. The more you use, the more you need to use.

The next problem is resistance. Suppose a mutant insect is immune to an insecticide attack. Most of its fellows die, so it and its offspring have abundant food supplies.

Soon its descendants predominate and the species is resistant to that insecticide. Its natural enemies will also have been killed by the insecticide attack.

A resistant enemy would starve before it had a chance to breed. This explains why there are about 500 resistant pests but only about 10 resistant predators. The treadmill accelerates.

If a pest is resistant to all the available pesticides, the business fails.

The treadmill is not the only problem. The health and nutrition of the poor can suffer as food becomes polluted or fish die, depriving many of an important source of protein.

Disease-bearing insects may become resistant due to careless use of pesticides. Bees and earthworms also suffer, harming soil quality and plant fertilisation.

The health of farm labourers and families also suffers. Safe use and storage of pesticides requires precautions and protection frequently not available in the Third World.

Instructions and warnings are often not available in the right language, or are inadequate, misleading or useless.

Illiterate

In any case the users are likely to be illiterate. Worse, chemicals banned in the West may be freely exported to the Third World.

The result is that some 10,000 deaths occur in the Third World from pesticide poisoning. In Sri Lanka alone, 5 times as many die as in the USA, though the USA uses twice as much pesticide as the entire Third World.

Where health risks are monitored, this may not be to the advantage of the workers. This quote comes from a letter to a pesticide worker in Sri Lanka:

'Unless we notice a remarkable improvement in your blood cholinesterase activity [a measure of pesticide damage] * the company will terminate your services.'

Bull deals with pesticide advertising at length before looking at the solution to the problem.

This lies in the intelligent use of pesticides as part of a programme of Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

This involves use of agricultural practices that discourage pest growth, non-chemical means of pest control, spraying pesticides only when pest levels get too high, and carefully selecting the best pesticide for the job. Better equipment and protective gear is also suggested.

The book is weakest in suggesting how to introduce IPM. David Bull sees this as a class problem, to do with the bargaining power of the agricultural labouring poor.

He sees that the economic interests and power of the big chemical companies are threatened by IPM.

In the end, though, moral persuasion is recommended.

Nevertheless, this book is informative, readable, useful and good value.

*A growing problem - Pesticides and the Third World Poor' by David Bull. Oxfam, £4.95. 274, Banbury Rd., Oxford OX2 7DZ.

Unexpected ally helps halt frenzied hunt for "moles"

THE MOST surprising development in the course of the singling out and victimisation of the 13 socialists from BL's Cowley plant was the attitude of David Buckle, the right-wing Oxford District Secretary of the TGWU.

His main claim to fame is many years of determined witch-hunting against the far left in the union.

On this occasion, however, he played a very different role. It was his powerful defence of the 13 and condemnation of the witch-hunt which defused the situation to some extent at a time when it was becoming very dangerous for the labour movement.

He countered the 'infiltration' slander by quoting Thatcher at the Tory trade unionists' conference urging them to 'infiltrate' the unions and win support for the Tory party. He asked how many of such people had been sacked.

Appalled

He strongly attacked the media: "There has been no natural justice for these people, who have been tried and found guilty by the media. As a magistrate I am appalled at the media's conduct". In response to question from the press, he said he could "smell fascism around in this country".

Such comments from someone like David Buckle show how deep were the dangers for the workers' movement that had developed at that time. Thatcher and Tebbit were sitting waiting to see what they could utilise for their own anti trade union ends.

Organisations like the Economic League — which had not been prominent for many years — were crawling out of the woodwork to advertise their dirty trade of more systematically and effectively operating the blacklist.

BL had a more fundamental objective. In their opinion they have a serious problem in Cowley, having decided to make it their major area of investment.

IN THE aftermath to the massive witch-hunt of socialists in BL's Cowley Assembly Plant, and the campaign built upon it by the press, ALAN THORNETT, himself politically victimised and sacked by BL, gives his reactions and his view of the wider implications.

They have to deal with the militant tradition of the Assembly Plant.

A decision to pump investment into Cowley (which has an ideal combination of Body and Assembly facilities side by side) was also a decision to launch a vicious and protracted war against the trade unions.

For various reasons, not least the Tory offensive and the dramatic sell-outs in BL since 1979 by the trade union leaders, mostly at national level, this achieved a high degree of success. Shop stewards and workers were harassed and intimidated. Militants were victimised, and the shop stewards' committee reduced to a third of its previous size.

By the end of last year BL considered (with some justification) that the exercise had been largely completed.

The remaining stewards had their backs to the wall; massive speed-up had been introduced; and the remaining key agreements, like seniority, had been largely smashed.

However, they were wrong, seriously wrong.

In April the workforce struck over the six and nine minutes hand-washing time. The strength and solidarity of the strike demonstrated that trade unionism and the militant history of the plant were far from dead, and not so easy to kill.

BL's initial response came through the joint inquiry agreed as part of the sell-out of the strike.

This report again identified the shop stewards' movement as the problem. It was, they said, the "political opinions" of "certain shop stewards" which were the problem, and a reorganisation of the shop stewards' movement was required.

This response, however, although serious, was never adequate to BL's requirements. They wanted (and still want) a clear-out of those militants who represent and can express the militant history of the plant.

That requirement, more than anything else, determined their response to the 'discovery', by whatever means, that a number of socialists and trade union activists had taken jobs in the plant — mostly at the time of the Maestro recruitment.

Many of them had been forced to falsify their application forms to get round BL's discriminatory recruitment procedures.

BL decided, along with the media and the government (who followed the events very closely) that this was the basis for a massive witch-hunt against socialists in industry.

Whilst lyingly saying that they were sacking 13 workers for falsifying their application forms (when they had already identified political ideas as the problem in their report), they deliberately fuelled the political witch-hunt.

Each day for several days the gutter press 'revealed' information (such as details of educational qualifications entered on the application forms) which logically could only have come from management sources.

The press witch-hunt was designed not just to get the 13 sacked — although management did see that as important in itself — but to discredit and weaken the trade union movement and to create the conditions to sack more people. Since the witch-hunt started, the pressure has increased considerably on militants in BL.

They hoped to discredit socialist ideas ideologically through lies and smears, thereby isolating

shop stewards from their members — making them look like outsiders or 'moles' working subversively for political ends.

They did the same to me in 1974, and to Derek Robinson in 1979.

Such a witch-hunt says to socialists: If you want to get a job, or keep the one you have got, keep your political ideas to yourself — or, more precisely, don't have any political ideas at all. (The Sun announced that one way to spot a 'mole' is to find anyone who reads the Guardian rather than the Sun!)

It says to other less committed workers: Don't listen to or get involved in politics, and don't become an activist in your union.

Battering ram

Thus it was the witch-hunt which was most damaging. Every day that it occupied the front pages, this ideological battering ram was in operation.

For this reason it was a mistake for Stephanie Grant to hold a press conference when she did. Her arguments were entirely valid, explaining that as an activist she could not have got a job in any other way. But she gave the press three more days of front pages, which would otherwise have been difficult to sustain. This far outweighed the effect of the points she was able to get across.

After Buckle's speech the headlines faded, but one dimension of the situation was brought into sharper focus — the Labour Party angle, with the Tory editors' eyes on the upcoming Labour Party conference.

This had been a factor from the outset. Right-wingers like John Golding had been quick to equate so-called 'infiltration' into BL with so-called 'infiltration' into the Labour Party. In other words, people with socialist ideas should be outlawed.

The Sun used its editorial three days running to challenge Neil Kinnock to say where he stood on 'infiltration' into BL.



This was too much even for Buckle

The Telegraph and the Express carried front-page articles claiming that there were "1000 SL members" "infiltrated" into the Labour Party, and quoted a Labour Party spokesperson saying that "we have got to deal with them".

Although most of the left press (leaving aside the scurrilous role of Newsline) have roundly condemned the witch-hunt — including the Morning Star — there has been some reluctance by prominent labour movement figures in coming forward to denounce it.

Ken Livingstone has done so, and so has Eric Heffer, who warned in a letter to Labour Party workers (see page 3) of the dangers of creating an atmosphere in which a McCarthyite witch-hunt could flourish.

Eric Heffer is right. The dangers are there. Those concerned for democracy in the Labour Party and the trade unions should make it their duty to stamp out this witch-hunt before any more damage is done.

GKN stay out

SUPPORT from within the town and the district is growing for the dispute at GKN Pistons, Northampton, as it becomes clear that the strikers are solidly determined to win.

65 AUEW members came out on July 13 after management had responded to their demands for a wage rise with a proposal to cut their pay. The workers have had no increase for 2½ years.

An important initiative in support was a meeting for all trade unionists called by the AUEW No.3 branch to organise widespread rank and file support.

Around 50 people attended, including Trades Council officers, Labour Party activists, etc. We agreed to do a leaflet for distribution in as many workplaces as possible; to do weekly collections, social events, and visits to the picket line by different unions on different days, possibly leading up to a mass picket.

The meeting also expressed the view that blacking action is vital, especially at the Kings Lynn plant which takes most of the production from Northampton. Already a visit to Vauxhalls at Luton has brought the hope that workers there will try to organise blacking of all GKN products.

£1,000 has been collected so far for the strike fund, and morale is high. On August 19 the strikers voted unanimously to stay out indefinitely.

The GKN workers will inspire the whole local labour movement if they win. Only the danger of regional union officials recommending a return to work for minimal concessions can turn a potential victory into a shabby compromise.

Messages and donations to: Bro. D.Langford, GKN Strike Committee, 109 Stanley Road, St James, Northampton.

Hitting back at Longbridge

The victimisation of 13 socialists from the BL Cowley plant has undoubtedly shocked and worried militants throughout industry.

Without wishing to belittle the seriousness of the Cowley events, I thought it might be a good idea to tell your readers about a victory at the BL Longbridge plant achieved in the same week as the 13 sackings.

by a TGWU member, Longbridge

A worker who suffered from dermatitis (contracted on the job) was sacked for 'stealing' two tubs of barrier cream. In fact, the company had issued him with the cream for his personal use, and he

was taking it home in order to maintain the treatment over the weekend.

When the sacking was confirmed on the Monday morning there was an immediate meeting of the section — no.4 paint shop.

Management, surprised by the strength of rank and file reaction, pressed the local stewards for a return to work pending an appeal. This was also the initial reaction of the convenor and works committee, who advocated following 'procedure'. This could well have meant involving outside officials and led to a delay of many days or even weeks, thus allowing the issue to cool and making further action very unlikely.

But at the meeting the works committee dropped their opposition to the action, and a motion from a rank and file steward for immediate strike action was carried.

The next day the strikers met in the stewards' hut at 8am to discuss their next move. The convenor, Jack Adams, informed us that the company were refusing to hear an appeal while the strike continued. We replied that we had no objection to an appeal, but we would not go back while the brother stayed sacked.

Eventually we agreed on a good compromise. We would return to work to allow the appeal to proceed, but we would let it be known that we would walk out again for certain if the sacked man was not reinstated by midday — whether or not the appeal had been concluded by then.

Just before dinner, we were informed that the brother had been reinstated.

Not a historic victory, perhaps, but it does go to show that even in BL victories can still be won when the workers stand firm, even on just a sectional basis.

Pritchards win

THE STRIKE by gardeners in the Tory-ruled London borough of Wandsworth has scored a victory.

The workers were given no contract of employment, no washing-up facilities, no towels or toilet paper. Despite promises, Pritchards granted no paid holidays, no sick pay, no pension. The gross pay is £102 to £117 a week, about £30 less than council wages. Workers were subject to instant dismissal.

There was worse to come. Pritchards quickly ran up a long list of penalties under their contract with the council. And to try to make good the loss, they abolished guaranteed weekly mini-

mum pay for the workers, and replaced it by a piece-rate — which would mean some workers, some weeks, getting less than £10!

The 38 NUPE members walked out and stayed solid. They got excellent support from the local Trades Council, from the council unions, and from public employees in other parts of London, especially council workers and bus drivers.

Pritchards have now conceded the workers' main demands. They have agreed to pay the old wage rates as a guaranteed minimum (calculated on a daily basis) to underpin the new piece rates.

Trotsky on Stalinism

The classic Marxist analysis of Stalinism is Leon Trotsky's 'Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and Where Is It Going?' Available via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8: £2.50 plus 50p postage.



PICKET CAROUSEL!

TWO pickets were knocked down last week by a car driven by Alessandro Saccomando, owner of the Carousel Wafers factory in Glasgow where nine members of the TGWU have been on strike since the end of July for union recognition and reinstatement.

The incident took place on August 16, when over 50 trade unionists and Labour Party members turned up to support a mass picket called by the strikers.

Some of the scabs taken on to replace the sacked workers turned back when confronted by the picket. And delivery drivers who, in previous weeks, had crossed the picket lines also turned back in the face of the mass picket, the first of a series which the strikers will be calling.

But very few members of the strikers' own union, the TGWU, turned up for the picket. Whilst the union has declared the dispute official, is organising raising donations, and is paying strike-pay, it still seems to be dragging its feet over implementing conference policy to defy Tebbit's anti-picketing laws.

Saccomando is clearly coming under increasing pressure as the dispute continues. The dispute is now gaining widespread publicity, particularly the atrocious working conditions in the factory, and the factory's output has clearly fallen.

Saccomando has also backedtracked on his previous refusal to talk to the Arbitration & Conciliation Advisory Service (ACAS). Talks were held with ACAS last Thursday (August 18) though nothing came of them: wearing old clothes and leaving off his gold rings and bracelets, Saccomando pleaded poverty and claimed that he only took home £40 a week himself!

The only offer he made was to hold a ballot in the factory to see if the workforce wanted a union. But since he has declared sacked all workers who wanted to be in a union, the offer cannot be described as generous, even by Saccomando's standards.

Support for the strikers continues to grow. They now speak at about ten trade union/Labour Party meetings a week. Thousands of leaflets have been distributed locally appealing to people to help out in the picketing. And there is growing support for the mass pickets.

The reaction of the police varies. 'Some of them are okay, some of them are bastards,' said one of the pickets. But the police are clearly hostile to mass-picketing and have been threatening arrests under Tebbit's laws if there are more than six on the picket line.

There are a number of steps which can be taken to help the strikers win:

- *invite speakers to Labour Party/trade union branch meetings and raise donations (contact: TGWU, 216, West Regent St., Glasgow G2),

- *support blacking of the firm's supplies, the flour, sugar and bicarbonate of soda come from large firms (Hovis, Carr's, Tate and Lyle, ICI) which are unionised and where blacking can be organised.

- *support the picketing, particularly on the days of the mass pickets, and move motions to the Glasgow TGWU District Committee and Glasgow Trades Council demanding that they mobilise for mass pickets,

- *demand that the TGWU and the STUC as a whole actively implement their policy commitments to defy the Tories' anti-union legislation.

Shipyard showdown



Swan Hunter: explosive anger

THE workforce at Cammell Lairds shipyard, Birkenhead, are facing a British Leyland-style management offensive on their working conditions, living standards and jobs.

The management, under British Shipbuilders and government instructions, have issued their 23 point 'survival plan' for the yard.

The plan includes:

- *The introduction of common trades;

- *Management's right to engage sub-contractors when and where they feel like it;

- *Management's right to allocate an individual work outside their normal trade;

- *Management's right to direct labour to any area they feel necessary;

- *Craftsmen to work with or without mates as required by management;

- *Introduction of new procedures, techniques, machinery and equipment where manage-

ment is required; and change their ideas on working practices. At these meetings the blame for the state of Lairds and the industry was put fairly and squarely at management's door by a number of speakers from the floor — to the applause of their workmates.

The meetings had been called without involving the shop stewards committee in an attempt to use the workforce to put pressure on the stewards to accept the changes proposed by management.

On 18 August the 23 point survival plan was presented to the Confed shop stewards negotiating committee. A couple of days later, management issued the survival plan to

1300 BOILERMAKERS at Cammell Lairds shipyard, Birkenhead, returned to work on August 26 after an eight-day strike. The strike started when 40 boilermakers were taken off pay for refusing to work on deck-housing sections of ships. Such work had been blacked by the boilermakers because management had breached an agreement and failed to consult with the shop stewards before putting it out to sub-contractors.

A mass meeting instructed the stewards to insist on an agreement with financial penalties if management sub-contracted without consultation. But in negotiations during the strike management would not budge. They refused to agree to a penalty clause, and refused to say that agreement must be reached with the 'oilermakers' stew-

ards before any sub-contracting. Despite this, and despite protests from some stewards, the stewards' committee refused to give a lead to the mass meeting on Thursday August 25. They decided to make no recommendation.

Speakers from the floor of the mass meeting demanded to know what the stewards felt, but they were fobbed off by the full-time official. In the end the mass meeting decided, with a sizeable minority against, to return to work on a document which is worse than the agreement they had before they went on strike.

There is no doubt that the mood of the mass meeting was one where the membership were prepared to fight if they were given a lead. The shop stewards' committee failed to give that lead.

period of two years;

- *Manning levels to be decided by management for all work.

The first move came after the summer holidays when the managing director, Mr. A.D. Lambie, summoned the workforce to meetings in the works canteen on Monday and Tuesday 8 and 9 August, to inform them of the loss of £12½ million achieved by Lairds in the 1982-3 financial year and to impress upon them the need to become more competitive and change

those employed on coded welding, and 10p per hour for those who had passed the coded test, but who were not actually doing coded welding. Although the welders won this dispute, there are more problems to come for Cammell Laird workers who face 1,800 redundancies in October.

If the fight against redundancies is carried out in the same way that the welders fought this battle, then the Tory plans to dismantle and sell off the British Shipbuilding industry can be defeated.

Mercury blacking

By Ricky Houston

POEU engineers in London have escalated the fight against the privately owned Project Mercury by commencing blacking action against the main offices of Project Mercury's financial backers, BP, Cable and Wireless and Barclays Bank.

This is a dramatic step for the POEU, a union which has very little history of industrial

struggle.

It shows the determination of POEU members (particularly in the London area which has one-third of the total POEU membership) to keep BT part of the public sector and to fight in defence of jobs.

The new Broad Left-dominated NEC officially called the industrial action in consultation with the branches involved.

It is thought that the action against Mercury's backers will spread outside of London in the near future.

POEU members at Covent Garden telephone exchange are still on strike following BT's management's interconnection of some Mercury lines with the BT network. The strike was called in retaliation against BT management's scabbing.

The industrial action levy has been suspended by the NEC after ten weeks and will almost certainly remain so until the POEU special conference on privatisation in September.

One drawback in the fight is that no industrial action has been called since the June Annual Conference, aimed against the Privatisation Bill itself.

The June Conference called for an immediate campaign of industrial action if the Tories were re-elected pledged to privatise BT, but it is highly unlikely that any industrial action specifically against the Bill will now be called until after the Special Conference.

Because of this the size and scope of the blacking action against Mercury's backers by the time of the special conference will be crucial to the outcome of the conference. Also important is the result of the POEU's proposition to the TUC conference calling for the formation of a public sector alliance.

Oil rig battle

HIGHLY successful mass picketing, of a type rarely seen since the introduction of Tory anti-union laws, has grabbed the headlines for a strike in the far north of Scotland.

Up to 1,000 pickets at a time have twice already outnumbered and outwitted police and would-be scabs, and given a boost to an already powerful struggle.

The strike began on 11 August when workers (members of the AUEW, GMBATU and EETPU) returned from their holidays to find a management-imposed deterioration in their working conditions: shelters to protect welders from excessive heat had been withdrawn, shower facilities were restricted, and the free fruit juice had also been axed.

Only shortly before this, the number of office staff had been cut by 20% (250 men and women), severance pay had been cut by 50% and travel allowances for the workers had also been axed, leading to a £20 a week cut in wages.

Such attacks represented an obvious attempt to make the workforce pay the price for Highland Fabricators' flagging fortunes — last year alone they lost £10 millions.

But the attacks were sharpen-

ed due to the ruthlessness of Kevin Barry, head of management at the yard. Prior to his arrival in August, the workers were being praised for their performance.

But, no sooner had he arrived than management's line changed drastically. The workers were suddenly accused of low productivity, inefficiency and absenteeism, which provided the 'justification' for the latest deterioration in working conditions.

The workforce responded to management's attacks with immediate strike action. Just a week later they were all sacked. Management then sent letters to 'selected individuals' inviting them to re-apply for a job.

About 1,600 of the strikers received such letters. Such a manoeuvre allowed management to root out all militants and potential militants, as well as to reduce the workforce by 400 without paying out any redundancy payments.

The 'selected individuals' were invited to turn up to job centres or specially hired halls to hear the conditions upon which they were being offered their jobs back. Such conditions turned out to involve both a deterioration in working conditions and a cut in wages in real terms.

Picketing of the job centres and halls as far south as

Middlesbrough was organised by the strikers, but only a fraction of the 1,600 bothered to turn up to such interviews and even fewer were prepared to accept management's conditions.

The conflict at Nigg has strong overtones of the strike at Hunterston oil rig yard three years ago, when management got away with sacking several hundred workers who had gone on unofficial strike over management-imposed deterioration in working conditions.

A similar outcome at Highland Fabricators should be avoided at all costs. The strike must be declared official and all possible support given to the strikers to defeat management's savage attacks on their jobs and working conditions.

To join or affiliate, write to Chris Richardson, 21 Devonshire Promenade, Lenton, Nottingham NG7 2DS. £5 for individuals, or for affiliated organisations, per 1000 members; £2 low-waged individuals, £1 unwaged.

Labour Campaign for Gay Rights



SOLIDARNOŚĆ

WITH EDMUND BALUKA

LET'S GET HIM OUT OF GAOL

Edmund Baluka was recently jailed for five years by the Polish Stalinist regime. They have offered to release him if he is prepared to leave the country, which he will not do. Get your union to send a protest to the Polish Embassy in London, demanding his release.

Socialist ORGANISER

CRISIS TUC

Conference gives a lead for fight back

(from front page)

They want to be statesmanlike and 'realistic'. By their collaboration they hope to minimise the damage the Tories do to the labour movement.

Treachorous hope. Demoralised objective. Crippling outlook. This is the Warsaw ghetto syndrome.

The British labour movement in 1983 should remember the Warsaw ghetto. When, during World War 2, the Nazis in Poland turned part of Warsaw into a walled-off Jewish ghetto, they bullied the leaders of the Jewish community there into helping them administer it. They persuaded them that things would be better for them if they policed themselves.

They increased the pressure so that they even persuaded

some of the leaders to select people for removal and extermination. Always the argument prevailed: it will be worse if we don't concede, and by doing it ourselves we can perhaps make things less bad. Thus the official leaders gave away more and more until some of them were hardly distinguishable from the enemy.

Finally, depleted, weakened, and half-starved, the ghetto rose in a heroic rebellion, and was annihilated.

They would have done better to fight at the beginning — before the short-sighted leaders had doled out the lifeblood of

their own community in a mis-conceived attempt to satisfy those who could only be satisfied with their extermination.

The Tories are not Nazis, and they don't want to exterminate the working class. What they want to do is mercilessly to exploit us. They want to break down our defences, socially and politically demoralise workers, and cripple the labour movement so that they can slash our living standards to the bone and push up their profits.

There is a fundamental antagonism between them and us — and they are on the offensive. Their goals cannot be achieved

other than at our expense.

We have no alternative but to surrender — or to fight back. The Tories cannot be bought off with concessions in the spirit of the misguided and tragic leaders of the Warsaw ghetto.

The basic fault of the trade union leaders is that they believe in running capitalism. They don't believe in the only adequate working class answer to the situation we are now in: a full-scale offensive to replace capitalism with socialism — production for need, not profit, and workers' democracy.

By their nature, they couldn't have responded as revolutionary socialists when the bottom fell out of capitalist prosperity.

But they might reasonably have been expected to respond as decent trade unionists. If they had, they could have limited the damage inflicted by the slump, mobilised the movement to resist the Tories, built on the limited industrial battles to keep the spirit of the '60s and '70s alive.

They haven't even managed that. Why not? They have been too long in the 'corridors of power'.

A quarter of a century ago the then General Secretary of the TUC, George Woodcock, made a famous speech celebrating the TUC's move 'off the streets and into the corridors of power'.

Now, like tame beasts with blunted instincts and dulled reflexes suddenly turned loose in the jungle where life is still rough, the TUC leaders simply can't cope with the red-in-tooth-and-claw breed of Tories newly in power again.

Instead they bleat plaintively and forlornly, and lick Thatcher's boots. They want the whole labour movement to do the same. But as Mrs Thatcher said recently: she knows how to carve a joint. So does Tebbit.

And they will — if we let them.

Instead of standing and fighting on the principle that the labour movement will never recognise the right of the government to meddle in its affairs; instead of saying that the movement will refuse to comply with Tory anti-union laws and will fight them; instead of giving a lead in militancy, they propose to surrender the right on which everything else the labour movement has ever achieved or can

ever hope to achieve depends — the right to independence from the bosses' state, the right to control its own affairs.

All the signs are that the election of June 9 did the seeming impossible. Like the beer that reaches parts other beers can't reach, and some don't believe exist, it got to the last flicker of feeble spirit left at the top of the TUC and doused it stone dead.

The labour movement needs to renew itself from top to bottom. We need to insist that there can be no compromise with the anti-union drive of the Tories — no talks, no collaboration, nothing.

We need to disgrace and remove those so-called leaders who want to collaborate with the Tories and to respond to the crisis by steering sharp right. We need to organise a drive for democracy in the unions.

We need to rebuild the shop stewards' movement.

We need to prepare the fight-back. Victories like that of Michelin's workers in Stoke show that there is a great deal of fight left in the labour movement.

If the leaders won't lead, or fight, or even stand their ground — then the rank and file must take matters into their own hands. That's why Socialist Organiser is sponsoring the 'How to Fight the Tories' conference on September 17.

It will bring militants from different industries and from the Labour Party into contact and dialogue with each other. It will link the trade union and Labour Party struggles.

It will not be a national alternative to the TUC. But it will be an important step in preparing the fightback.

Book now for the conference. Organise for it. Send for extra copies of the supplement in this Socialist Organiser, for leaflets, and for tickets.

'How to Fight the Tories' Conference: September 17, University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1.

Tickets £2.50 waged, £1.50 unwaged, from SO [Sep. 17 conference, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.



FUND: Warming up?

Group	August
Glasgow	15.50
Edinburgh	26
Wirral	10
Sheffield	51.10
Halifax	10
York	10
Birmingham	65
Coventry	161.10
Northampton	10
Nottingham	28.90
Oxford	73.49
Cardiff	30.47
N/W London	10.60
Haringey	50
Hounslow	11
Islington	5
S/E London	30
E London	15
Southwark	20
Others	126.09

IT must be the sun! This is the only reason the sedentary writer of this column can think of for the turn SO supporters have recently made — to fund-raising in the open air!

The Bank Holiday saw Islington SO supporters Nik Barstow, Linda Mouldsdales and Martin Thomas complete a sponsored bike-ride from Islington to Ware — with Martin's bicycle winning the 'veteran machine' award, we understand!

Also over the holiday, Cardiff supporters, led by able-seaperson and chef-in-chief Geoff Williams, raised money from a portable barbeque stall.

The next event to look forward to will be Labour Party Conference. Not for the elections, resolutions, fringe meetings, and usual run-of-the-mill stuff; this year's star attraction will be SO supporter Pete Firmin!

Pete is planning to stun the crowds in Brighton with a 3-mile sponsored swim!

Many helpful suggestions have been made for this event (mostly to do with whether the swim is one-way or return) but the vital one to note is: sponsor forms are available from SO (address below) — and money raised by your group will be split half and half between N/W London and your group's target!

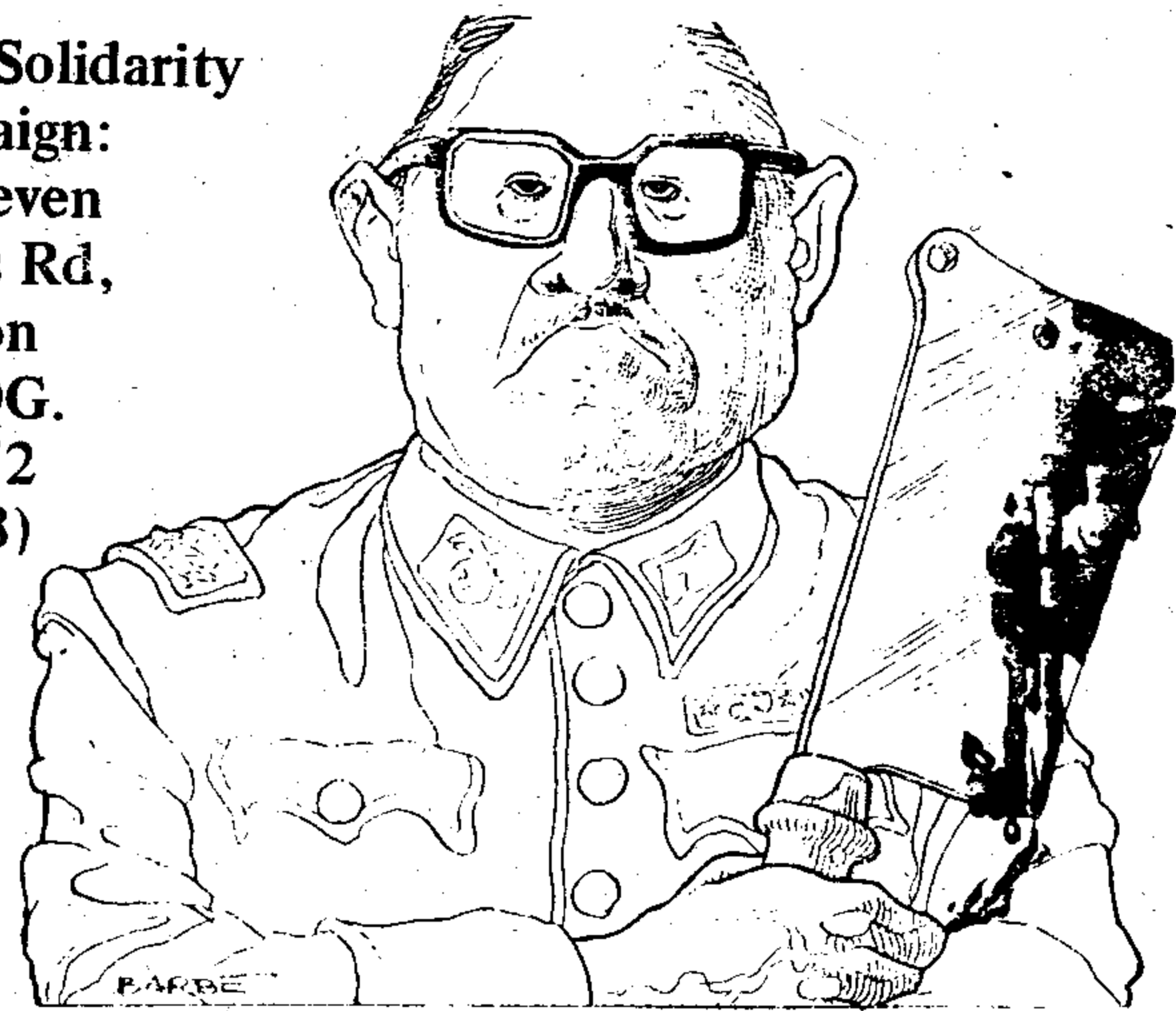
The second half of August brought £613.66; bringing our August total to £729.25. So now we start the drive for September: indoor fund-raising events welcome too!

Send donations to: 214, Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Thanks this week to: Brian Prince, £5; John MacDonald, £21, Mick Sidaway, £30; Simon Temple, £50; Rob Dawber, £10; Oxford SO supporter, £43; Linda Mouldsdales, £5; Richard Bayley, £10; Rob Johnston, £10; Pete Cashman, £10; Cheung Siu Ming, £30; Gerry Byrne, £10; Jim Denham, £10; Ivan Wels, £10; Terry Connolly, £2; Amanda Barnes, £20; Ross Catlin, £10; Brent supporters, £5.60; Coventry supporters, £161.10; Dave Amos, £17; Dave Ayrton, £3; Cardiff supporters, from a barbeque, £30.47; Nottingham supporters, from selling posters, £1.40.

DEMO SEPT 11

Chile Solidarity Campaign:
129 Seven Sisters Rd,
London
N7 7QG.
(01-272 4298)



DEMONSTRATION: Tenth anniversary of the Chile coup. Sunday 11 September. Assemble 1.00 p.m. at Clerkenwell Green for a march to Trafalgar Square.