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WHY WE WALKED OUT

ERIC HEFFER MP

The Party leadership are going down a road which they think will lead them to victory at the next election, but as far as I'm concerned is more likely to have the opposite effect.

People around the country are becoming increasingly confused. The leadership is handing the Tories and the Alliance a present on a plate which they will continue to use to have a go at Labour. Obviously they will be saying, well you've dealt with 12, but what about the other 5,000 Militant claim to have? What about the Militant MPs? What about supporters of other left-wing papers? It will so confuse people that it can only have a disastrous effect on the Labour Party.

Subversives

I reckon that as it goes on it will go from bad to worse with Tony Benn, Dennis Skinner and myself becoming possible targets for expulsion as subversives and "saboteurs", the word used of us by the leader.

What's behind all this? It's as clear as daylight as far as I'm concerned. It's the view that struggles like Liverpool, Lambeth and the miners, with left-wing leaderships, will lose

us the election. I believe the NEC has been conned into believing that we've got to eliminate, beginning with Militant, the identified hard left that the press call us.

So they begin with Militant who are particularly identified with Liverpool. But it won't stop there.

SDP

It might win back a few people who are intending to vote for the SDP, but in the process it's going to totally disorientate the Party and the membership. Party activists are becoming increasingly disillusioned both by this episode and the way in which Labour Party policies are being renounced one by one.

I think the Party membership is so desperate to win the next election that there is a feeling that whether we like it or not we have to keep our heads down in order to get Thatcher out. What they don't realise is that if we end up with SDP policies, those voters who are now disillusioned with Thatcher won't vote for us, but for the SDP.

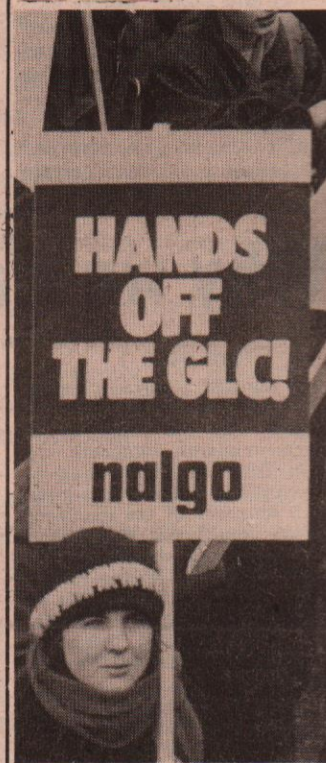
Continued on page 2



Eric Heffer. Photo: Ian Swindale.

INSIDE

The left and anti-semitism p.8-9



Balance sheet of the GLC p.6-7

National Union of Students conference p.11

Print p.2-3

Sri Lanka p.5

Stop the witch hunt

Not much of a charge sheet

The Labour Party has now circulated all members with summaries of the majority and minority reports of the inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party.

The covering letter from general secretary Larry Whitty says "There can be no doubt that there was widespread abuse of the Party's Constitution". But the majority report is hardly convincing.

Its allegations are:
*The District Labour Party took decisions on matters normally the province of Constituency parties and Labour Groups.

*In late 1985 "due in part to understandable pressure of events" the DLP operated through aggregate meetings rather than normal delegate meetings.

*"There is a widespread impression . . . that certain

jobs have been allocated on the basis of faction . . ." But the report states that "the Investigation Team are not in a position to judge the accuracy" of this impression.

That's all. Not much of a charge sheet! One item in it, the District Labour Party deciding municipal policy rather than the council Labour Group, is positively to the credit of Liverpool.

Many right-wing Labour Groups have systematically defied local Labour Party policy, and even expelled councillors for supporting Labour policy and yet they get no NEC 'inquiries'.

The minority report from the inquiry, signed by Audrey Wise and Margaret Beckett, criticises the running of the DLP and makes proposals for improvements; but rejects any talk of expulsions.

TELEGRAPH KILL

MANAGEMENT at the Telegraph have gone in for the kill.

They are demanding 'substantial' redundancies, but won't say exactly how many from the workforce of 3300.

Andrew Knight, chief executive of the Telegraph group, has described the attack as "a survival plan and a viability plan". Central

to this is a proposed move of printing operations to a new docklands plant at West Ferry Rd on the Isle of Dogs.

Management

If Telegraph management are to be resisted successfully, then the battle to save jobs at the

paper needs to be linked to the all-round fight to save jobs across Fleet Street.

The possibility exists to do this as Telegraph SOGAT chapels have been among the best at mobilising their members for the Wapping pickets.

KICK OUT MAXWELL!

Robert Maxwell has followed Rupert Murdoch and stuck up barbed wire round his Anderston Quay printworks.

Only a few weeks ago Maxwell was denouncing Murdoch as "un-British" and comparing Fortress Wapping to a concentration camp.

Maxwell should be thrown out of the Labour Party! And out of his union ASTMS!



Why we walked out

From page 1

At the NEC I moved a resolution which asked for the full statement by the Judge - his judgement and his comments - to be in front of us to look at and consider. All we were given was a summary of the statement and we argued that that wasn't good enough. We should have the whole statement. Having looked at it we should decide whether we could proceed and how to proceed to ensure that there was proper natural justice. We lost that vote by 20-9.

Tony Benn moved another resolution that the charges should be withdrawn until they had been properly written out. We lost that 20-9 and Felicity Dowling was brought in.

She had a sheet, already written out, there's no argument about that. But you'd have to be a genius to understand what it meant.

Then the chair tried to take her through the charges. Felicity said she would need time to read through them before she could comment on any of them and the chair said she could have a few minutes.

Eric Clarke then said "Well, I've had enough of this, we've already had enough of this nonsense before" and he got up and we all walked out.

The 12 had all received a letter which listed charges A, B, C and so on with brief written comments by the side. But none of them had a specific charge sheet saying that this charge has been made by someone else against you. It was very unclear. We took the view that what was happening could have been interpreted as contempt of court.

We were told that for the prosecution the general secretary

would, on each occasion give the evidence and then withdraw.

After the court judgement the 12 had to be allowed to bring in witnesses. Previously they'd been told no witnesses, only a friend. How could we have dealt with a situation where the defendants wanted to produce witnesses to give evidence who were still in Liverpool? It was ridiculous.

The next NEC meeting is on April 18. We are told that on the agenda will appear the Standing Orders of the NEC. They want to change the quorum. It's basically an attempt to move the goal posts. If they can't win by the rules as they are, they'll change the rules.

I've never accepted the idea of democratic centralism because what happens is that it ends up all centralism and not very much democracy. The Labour Party has ostensibly been against democratic centralism. But in practice what is happening is increasing centralism.

I've had no complaints from local Party members about our walk-out.

One of the inquiry's decisions was to set up a coordinating committee on a temporary basis until the Party was restored. That committee was to be made up of delegates from constituency parties, socialist societies, and trade unions where the union general secretaries were to arrange for representatives to be sent.

The first meeting of this committee was held on Thursday night (27th) and with the Liverpool 12 not having been expelled, as no doubt some people had expected, they re-elected Mulhearn as chair and passed a resolution congratulating and supporting the seven NEC members who walked out.

Maxwell does a Murdoch

On April Fool's Day, press magnate Robert Maxwell set up two new companies - one for publishing the Scottish Daily Record and the Sunday Mail, and one for printing these titles.

But such a shoddy manoeuvre will fool no-one: it has clearly been Robert Maxwell's intention all along to follow in Rupert Murdoch's footsteps.

By setting up two new and separate companies, solidarity action between journalists and printworkers, once employed, but now sacked, by the Record and Mail becomes illegal. So, too, does any action by victimised employees of Maxwell against his new companies.

Both SOGAT and NUJ have consistently fallen over backwards to try to open up negotiations with Maxwell to try to find a 'compromise' which could end the present dispute in which neither the Record nor the Mail have been published since the weekend of 8-9 March.

At the beginning of last week SOGAT agreed to talks on "negotiable and voluntary redundancies" and also gave a commitment not to attempt to "influence the editorial content of the papers" in the mistaken belief that this would lead to an opening of negotiations and the dropping of legal action against SOGAT by Maxwell.

Similarly, the NUJ has also placed great stress on its concern for the resumption of negotiations, even going so far as to appeal to Neil Kinnock to act as a mediator in the dispute, whilst at the same time maintaining the strike action and picketing by its members at Maxwell's Anderston Quay plant in Glasgow.

But Maxwell has responded to such calls for negotiations with repeated kicks in the teeth.

The legal proceedings against SOGAT have not been dropped. On the contrary, last Wednesday (26 March) Maxwell won a further injunction in the High Court on the basis of SOGAT members respecting NUJ picket lines at Anderston Quay. And a new con-

By Stan Crooke

tempt action against SOGAT will be initiated by Maxwell on April 8, the start of the new law term.

Maxwell's response to the NUJ's appeal for negotiations has been a stream of abuse. The union has been described by Maxwell as "Lions led by donkeys" and NUJ officials have been accused of "misleading their members, vilifying their publisher, and carrying on a campaign of lies and insults".

Even before the establishment of the two new companies, all 230 journalists at Anderston Quay had been sacked and invited to re-apply for employment through a private PO Box number. The NUJ called for a boycott of this ploy by Maxwell, who pledged that any journalist expelled from the NUJ would nevertheless be re-employed by himself.

At the close of last week, Anderston Quay management offered the NUJ talks on the basis of a series of non-negotiable pre-conditions and a return to work formula which included scrapping of the journalists' four day week.

When the NUJ put forward alternative proposals, management rejected them and declared that the talks had "irretrievably broken down".

Maxwell followed this up by threatening the indefinite suspension of the publication of the Record and Mail and the transfer of the bulk of the printing operations from Glasgow to Manchester. A day later all Anderston Quay employees were sent yet another redundancy note in the post and 'invited' to re-apply for a job at Maxwell's new companies.

Maxwell is engaged in a classic union-busting operation. He has declared his readiness to employ

non-NUJ members as journalists, as well as having stated that he is "giving urgent consideration to ending the closed shop agreement with SOGAT". And Maxwell's latest letter to employees states that the new companies will only employ staff whose unions have "no quarrel" with the company, or those who reapply for their old jobs in breach of union instructions.

This provides an opportunity for victimisation of trade union militants and for using the Tory anti-union laws against trade union opposition.

The latest turn of events at Anderston Quay underlines once more the need to link up the disputes against Maxwell and Murdoch. Failure to do so will mean defeat not just for the thousands of print union members in London and Glasgow but also a defeat for the trade union movement as a whole.

Step up the action at Kinning Park

The News International facsimile plant at Kinning Park (Glasgow), where the Scottish and North of England editions of the Sun are printed remains the scene of round-the-clock picketing, but only on a token basis.

Ten weeks of such picketing has made no impact on the scabs. The response to the pickets has largely been one of indifference though some EETPU members 'justify' working in the plant by claiming it was a "green field site", while NUJ members have sought to put the blame for the situation on SOGAT's failure to respect NUJ picket lines in Fleet

Street two years ago.

Demonstrations outside the Kinning Park plant are organised by SOGAT once a week. Held at teatime on a Thursday to coincide with the start of a shift at the plant, such demonstrations have unfortunately attracted decreasing numbers.

The first, nearly a month ago, attracted a thousand trade unionists. Last week, only 200 turned up.

SOGAT's main gambit in the dispute is to push ahead with the boycott of News International publications and to appeal, as an

alternative, for consumers to purchase Scottish newspapers, such as the currently non-existent Daily Record.

Whilst the boycott campaign has had some impact, and also helped get across the issues in this dispute, in itself it is insufficient to defeat Murdoch.

The narrow streets around Kinning Park plant make it, like Wapping, a prime site for picketing. Mass picketing timed to coincide with the transportation of the papers out of the plant needs, to be organised if the dispute is not to stagnate.

RALLY

Sunday 6 April

National march and rally in support of the sacked printers

Trafalgar Square, 3pm. March to Wapping.

Called by SOGAT, NGA, AUEW, NUJ.

WE NEED A RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT!

IN JUST a couple of months, a series of major blows have been struck against trade unionism in the print.

* Rupert Murdoch has sacked 6000 trade unionists and set up scab operations behind barbed wire at Fortress Wapping.

* Robert Maxwell has sacked the workforce on the Daily Record and Sunday Mail three times, and is now setting up two new companies to run operations behind barbed wire at Anderston Quay, Glasgow. 230 journalists remain sacked.

* At the Daily Mirror Maxwell has succeeded in cutting the workforce by 2000 through 'voluntary' redundancies without a fight.

* And as we go to press it looks like the print unions will join the NUJ in accepting job cuts of one-third and major changes in working practices at the Express.

How has this happened?

The print bosses have certainly chosen their time well. These attacks come in the wake of the defeat of the miners' strike, at a time when the militancy and willingness to fight of workers is not at its highest.

This has been magnified by the effects of slump and the fear of unemployment, creating a climate in which workers are prepared to sell their jobs rather than risk everything in battles they fear they may be able to win.

This demoralisation is obviously a very real factor but its effects could have been limited if the leaders of the print unions had properly prepared for the attacks that they could see coming.

The strategy of the print union leaders is the product of the 'new realism'.

Throughout last year Dean and Dubbins stuck their heads in the sand, refusing to recognise what was happening around them, even going along with the fiction that Rupert Murdoch really wanted to produce a new paper, The London Post, at Wapping.

On the eve of Murdoch's mass sackings they were pleading with him to negotiate, and offering a deal which Dubbins described as "the best deal offered to any Fleet Street employer ever". It included flexibility of labour, binding arbitration and a promise to outlaw unofficial action.

The special January issue of



Angry print workers at Wapping. Photo: Andrew Moore.

SOGAT Journal led with Brenda Dean's 'message for Murdoch': "We'll fight - or negotiate"....

The print unions had no strategy to deal with the introduction of new technology. For SOGAT, the need to 'adapt' was coupled with an attempt to use the issue to poach NGA members.

Voluntary

They had no will to oppose voluntary redundancies, always looking to postpone a confrontation, and thereby weakening themselves for the time when confrontation proved unavoidable.

And they have desperately tried to stop the dispute spreading. The clearest example is the refusal to link the disputes against Murdoch and Maxwell in Scotland. But that is only an example. As the News International dispute was beginning, SOGAT refused to fight the sacking, as a result of a fight to defend union organisation, of the deputy FoC in the Mirror machine chapel.

And so they have avoided calling for print-industry-wide action, never mind more general solidarity. Instead they have modelled themselves on the Times dispute of 1978, which was on after a war of attrition, with the strikers

sustained by print union levies and 'casual' jobs on other papers.

Rank and file pressure has shifted Dean's and Dubbins's emphasis a bit. But the essential strategy is no different. They are still reluctant to organise effective mass pickets at Wapping. Protest marches are held in completely different parts of London.

And Brenda Dean has written to Jack Taylor of the Yorkshire miners, urging them to ignore requests to build mass pickets at Wapping.

Conflicts

Neil Kinnock, of course, has supported the 'softly, softly' approach, urging printworkers to avoid any action - i.e. mass picketing with its necessary conflicts with the police - that might bring adverse publicity.

All of this is based upon supposed lessons of the miners' defeat. A policy of confrontation, and all that it entails, are judged to have been proven not to work. Mass pickets, open defiance of the anti-union laws, appeals for solidarity - especially over the heads of the leaders of other unions - are all considered to be dangerous tactics. 'Public opinion' is the prime target.

The miners, so they argue, did not carry 'public opinion' with them: they were seen to

be 'extremists', and so they were defeated.

Keeping within the law is viewed as particularly crucial. And the NGA's bitter experience of the 1983 Stockport Messenger defeat gives extra force to this view within the print unions.

Lessons

So the union leaders have tried to skirt around the issue and avoid unlawful action as far as they can (although the whole dispute is technically unlawful), by not pushing for mass pickets and so on.

But this strategy is based upon drawing the wrong lessons from the miners' defeat - and from the Stockport Messenger. It contradicts what Dean and Dubbins themselves say about the significance and implications of the print dispute. And it will not ensure victory.

Fundamental

The fundamental cause of the miners' defeat was the failure of the trade union leaders to mobilise their members in solidarity. A clear lead from the trade union - and Labour Party - leaders could have made a huge difference, giving confidence to layers of the trade union movement whose support for the miners was

never more than passive.

And the clear lesson of this is that we need to build a rank and file movement in the trade unions. Such a movement would not be able to mobilise the millions of trade unionists simply regardless of the actions of trade union leaders; but it would be able to act as a militant force and pole of attraction having an effect on the actions of the leaders, as well as the confidence of wide sections of workers.

Certainly, a rank and file movement across the trade unions would be able to develop solidarity action independently, up to a point, of trade union leaders. And such a militant, active movement would form a springboard towards transforming the union structures themselves.

And the building of such a movement will depend upon rank-and-file initiatives, including in the current print dispute.

Appeals by Dean and Dubbins for direct solidarity would help to develop such solidarity. If, as they say, the print dispute is crucial for the future of trade unionism, they ought to be making such calls.

But control over the dispute itself needs to be put into the hands of the rank and file. There have been independent rank-and-file initiatives: the SOGAT London District Council organised picket of Wapping was a big step forward, for example. These need to be expanded.

And the rank and file needs to work out the tactics and policies that will win the current strike and prepare for future battles.

This means that action must be spread across the print industry. All national newspapers must be pulled out in solidarity. A rank and file committee of FoCs and MoCs from all the newspapers should run the strike.

Pressure must be stepped up for boycotts by SOGAT members, and activists should visit all SOGAT members to get the arguments across.

Rank and file organisation now needs to be linked to the development of workers' control over the media industry. Newspapers and other media should be taken out of the hands of press barons like Murdoch and Maxwell, and put under democratic control.



Born again

They say it's easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter heaven. But Rupert Murdoch, owner of the Sun and the News of the World, both staunch upholders of

stolid Christian values, is determined to try. Murdoch has been having audiences with none other than Billy Graham and it's said that this Easter he is born again...

OUR DAILY BATTLE

Much slower buses

One major effect of the abolition of the metropolitan authorities will be a further blow to public transport in its losing battle against the private car.

Between 1971 and 1981 the proportion of workers travelling to their jobs by car rose from 36% to just over half. Numbers going by bus dropped drastically, and numbers walking to work also decreased. Trains, tubes and cycles held their own.

More cars means more pollution, more crowded streets, and of course slower busses.

Women

One not-quite-obvious side-effect of the shift to cars is a disadvantage for women. Everywhere a much bigger percentage of men use cars to get to work than of women. In Manchester and Salford, for example, 56% of men go by car and 26% of women; in Sheffield 53% of men and 23% of women.

The shift to cars means fewer, dearer and slower busses for women who go by bus, and more polluted streets for those who walk.



Fares Fair demonstration, 1982

Glubb Pasha

The name Glubb Pasha seems to belong to a vastly different epoch. But General John Bagot Glubb died only just recently.

His epoch was the period when the Suez Canal was the lynch-pin of a world-wide British Empire and when Britain ruled directly or indirectly in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Palestine. All these were seized in the late 19th or early 20th century from the decaying Turkish empire.

The job of ruling over millions of Arabs produced a group of British military people and administrators who identified with the Arabs, and Glubb was one of the foremost among them. He was the commander of the Arab Legion, the backbone of the armed forces of Jordan.

His first major operations were against the Arab uprising in Palestine in 1936, protesting against British rule and Zionist colonisation. The second were in 1948.

Britain had provided the framework for Zionist colonisation in Palestine, but its commitment to the Zionists was always equivocal. It balanced between the Zionists and the Arabs.

After 1945 Britain had a Labour government nominally committed to Zionism, and the drive for a Jewish state had greater emotional and numerical force

than ever before. But this was also the beginning of the great Middle East oil boom. Britain still tried to balance, and when it failed the British government just gave up, deciding to withdraw from Palestine and leaving a solution to the United Nations.

Contrary to simplistic theories of 'Israel, creature of imperialism', the Zionists' main source of arms in this period was the USSR, via Czechoslovakia. (Stalin thought he saw a good chance to disrupt the British Empire). But they had arms. And as Palestine spiralled into chaos, it was clear that they would establish their Jewish state in a large part of Palestine.

At this point the Arab armies invaded Palestine. The Arab Legion - under the British officer Glubb - was by far the strongest of the Arab forces.

What was their aim? Each of the Arab monarchies wanted to grab as much as it could of the carcass of Palestine. And Britain wanted to limit the scope of the Jewish state.

Glubb remained the lynchpin of Jordan's military machine until the mid '50s, when rising Arab nationalism forced the king to sack him and install an Arab commander instead.



Orange paramilitaries

Ourselves

Oh to see ourselves as others see us no. 1. Tourism is more important to Spain than to any other major economy. So the Spanish authorities take great care about advertising their country to tourists, with differently-angled campaigns for different countries.

Italians are told about Spain's cultural riches; so are the Japanese. Americans are thought to want to get to know about as much as possible in a short time so they are told (implausibly, but there you go) that 'Spain is all Europe in a single country'.

And Britain? The Spaniards have given up trying to interest British tourists in Spain's cultural riches, or its unique heritage resulting from the mixture of Christian/European and Muslim/Arab traditions. No: we just get told that it's sunny.

To see ourselves... no. 2. Northern Ireland Protestants watching BBC2 must have felt frustrated on the evening of their 24-hour general strike on 3 March.

Telegenesis showed Spanish TV News's version of events. Belfast airport, the newsreader said, had been hit by the strike, and so "Northern Ireland was cut off from the United Kingdom."

Not only Spanish newsreaders find it difficult to unravel the complexities of a situation where the Protestants rebel against the 'United Kingdom' in order to assert their wish to be part of it, and defy the Westminster Parliament so as to enforce their wish to be ruled by it.

But a final twist was provided by the map behind the newsreader, which showed Ireland with the northern state picked out in... green.

A new praxis

Members of the Communist Party have made yet another decisive break with the 'workerist' and 'economistic' political practice that has for so long held back the British working class.

Instead of consoling themselves with the irrelevant and outdated 'corporatist' fetish of not crossing picket lines, two valiant Euros have decided to take the battle of ideas right into the heart of the bourgeoisie.

Whilst standing in the cold outside Wapping, you can feel secure in the knowledge that two CPers are inside working on the

Sunday Times and attempting to articulate an alternative problematic to that of Murdoch.

Unfortunately this brilliant tactical offensive, geared to hegemonising decisive sections of the bourgeoisie has received only tacit support from the party leadership who have 'advised' their members not to 'scab'.

This only goes to show that the Party leadership, far from making the decisive epistemological break they claim, in fact remain trapped within a class reductionist discourse.

By Al Tossier

Your article on the vicious witch-hunt of Kath Crosby by right wing Labour Party members and councillors gives a full account of the scandalous, anti-working class and anti-socialist political war waged against her selection as parliamentary candidate for Stockport.

Tories were nowhere to be seen! The whole exercise was fuelled and carried out by Labour Party members, some of whom were not even members of the constituency.

Hourly

Women in the Labour Party, particularly working class women, have daily, hourly battles to fight even to get to meetings. The biggest sin is to become an MP. Don't believe all the verbal diarrhoea from the so-called socialist, white, middle-class men in the party.

They only pay lip-service to equality. At the end of the day women in the party have got to fight together to get some of the 'jobs for the boys'.

Women who have experienced the sexist, interrogations carried out at selection interviews tell time and time again of the phrases like 'what other work have you done besides women's work?'

Women going forward even for councillors' jobs are asked 'what will you husband's attitude be when you have to go to meetings?'

Obviously this kind of harassment is now put into the shade by the vitriolic war waged against Kath Crosby who is the ultimate of what the right wing hate: an extremely capable, left-wing working class fighter for socialism - of the real kind.

The people who carried out the attack are still in the Labour Party. There are hundreds more like them in different constituencies. It is about time the offensive was taken against these wreckers.

The chair of Stockport Constituency and supporters of Kath Crosby were completely overwhelmed by the determination of her opponents undemocratically to oust her - as gangsters would. They did not know how to react.

Although Kath Crosby had support from MPs and the Women's Action Committee, she needed help at the point of the attack.

Her record as an outstanding organiser of campaigns like the Manchester Cuts Campaign was not laid out for the public to see. Manchester Evening News reporter Peter Sharples was allowed to reinforce the Tory attitudes of

many working class people to rent arrears.

With his side-kick David Greaves, the District Party's Press Officer, Peter Sharples gave information out to the Tory Stockport Advertiser and the Stockport Trades Council was 'conned' into feeling they were 'unable to give their whole-hearted support for Kath. The local Coop was also pushed to demand a 'proper review of the situation'.

These apparently working class organisations are not what they seem. Attention needs to be paid to the tactics that Sharples and Greaves used. They were skilled at manipulating public opinion using 'shop-front' working class organisations as pawns in their game.

These tactics will be repeated by others. They were successful. The left had better get its act together.

It's no use praying to God for the aggro to disappear when a working class candidate attracts the right-wing flak. In Stockport, Kath Crosby told the constituency that she had rent arrears. From past experience in Manchester she knew what to expect. A support committee should have been immediately set up.

Retaliation then could have followed the attacks in the press by using Kath's excellent record and also using the occasion to put the argument for choosing a working class candidate.

She is a socialist fighter because of her background.

Peter Sharples should have been and still should be taken to task by his union.

The only reason Kath Crosby resigned in the end was that threats were made to attack her family and children.

Defeated

But she is by no means defeated. Even though she knows what absolute crows exist in the Labour Party, she is determined to fight on. People can vote for her to be elected for the Shadow NEC.

She wants the left to realise they are not defenceless against the underhand tactics of the right wing. We must continue to select working class socialist fighters to represent the working class. This means we must prepare support groups and set up our intelligence networks to attack and counter theirs.

We can use political arguments to fight our opponents. We do not have to smear or expel.

LINDA YOUD

Eccles Labour Party member

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Beaten, starved and terrorised

By Belinda Weaver

Sri Lankan Tamil refugees in Britain are caught in an agonising position — seeking asylum in a country which is supplying military aid to the very government which has forced them to flee their homes. Britain is giving arms and military support to the Jayawardene government in Sri Lanka.

In recent weeks, helicopter gunships, similar to those used in the invasion of Grenada, have been used to terrorise the Tamil population by shooting into homes and at people in the streets. Villages have been bombed — some 400 razed to the ground. SAS-trained pilots have been used on these raids. Thousands of Tamils have been killed.

The Northern and Eastern areas where most of Sri Lanka's Tamil minority lives, have been effectively sealed off — so that news of atrocities does not get out.

Tamil speakers, mostly Hindu, are one-quarter of Sri Lanka's population. The majority on the island are Sinhalese-speaking and Buddhist. Under British colonial rule middle-class Tamils were favoured and got a large share of the top jobs.

After independence in 1948 Sri Lankan nationalism became more and more Sinhalese-chauvinist. Sinhalese was made the only official language; demands for Tamil autonomy were rejected. The Tamils became an



Tamil houses burned out

oppressed minority. Now it is practically civil war between the right-wing Sinhalese-dominated government and Tamil guerillas; and among the Sinhalese only the revolutionary left defends the Tamils' right to self-determination.

The Tamil Women's League held a conference in London on Saturday, 22 March, to publicise the plight of Tamil refugees in Britain and to inform people of the appalling situation of Tamils in Sri Lanka today.

Mrs Subramaniam, a refugee, spoke of her own experiences in Jaffna, the main Tamil city of northern Sri Lanka. There shops, schools, houses and libraries were

bombed or burned down. Indiscriminate killings on the streets became common. Out of fear, Tamils began to stay indoors and to keep their children home from school.

The military then began to raid their homes, to loot them for jewellery and cash. During raids, teenage children, especially boys, were forcibly removed and taken to camps.

There they were beaten, starved and terrorised. Tortures to extract information about Tamil "terrorists" included hanging upside down, chilli burns, and the pulling out of fingernails.

These "camps" were often the end of the road. Many of those seized ended up dead and dumped along the roadsides.

Tamils whose homes have been destroyed are often afraid to flee. Travel is risky because of arbitrary arrests which often end in murder. Raids have often left them without family or money. Any attempt to complain is ignored and many excesses against Tamils are blamed on Tamil "terrorists".

Hardship

Those who do manage to get to Britain face hardship and extreme racist discrimination. Treated as criminals on arrival, many, even those with very young children, are detained for days on end at airports, prisons or remand centres. Those who are granted temporary stays have no real security. Tamils can be deported on 24 hours notice, the only group to face such a condition in Britain.

British provision for refugees is inadequate. Accommodation, particularly short term housing, is scarce. Language difficulties make dealings with bureaucracies a nightmare, and also affects the obtaining of health care, schooling and employment.

The GLC has attempted to help refugees directly rather than through agencies, and

has given 100 units of housing. Other boroughs such as Camden, Lewisham, Islington and Hackney, have tried to reverse the new 24 hour deportation provisions. But much more is needed.

Many refugees have lost everything — homes, money, community, jobs. Most have lost some or all of their families. Many face long separations from family members forced to flee elsewhere, and suffer anxiety about those left behind.

Fled

11% of the Tamil population have fled Sri Lanka. 100,000 are facing extreme hardship in India, where food and shelter is totally inadequate. A further 172,000 refugees are currently outside the sub-continent. Official figures report 4,000 Tamils dead, with 4,000 more detained, perhaps indefinitely. 390,000 people are homeless in Sri Lanka.

Those who have come to Britain will find it hard to stay on — refugee status is almost impossible to get. Only 1% may eventually qualify. There are some 2,300 Tamil refugees in London.

The Tamil Women's League want British aid to the Jayawardene regime halted, political prisoners released, an end to the genocide, and freedom for Tamils in Sri Lanka. They are also calling for the extension of all temporary stay visas so that people cannot be forcibly deported at a moment's notice.

Lobbying MPs is one way of raising the issue at the Parliamentary level.

The issue should also be publicised in the Labour Party and in building links with other refugee organisations. The Tamil Women's League are short on resources but would welcome the chance to address meetings.

Contact: 3 Canonbury St., London N1. Tel: 01-226 2367 or 01-348 7616.

The far left and the elections

By Colin Foster

The French general election of 16 March went badly not only for the left but also for the far left.

Since the presidential election of 1974 the revolutionary left in France has won an electoral following of, at good times, about 700,000, or 2.5% of the voters. This time all the far-left lists combined got only 420,000 votes, or 1.5%.

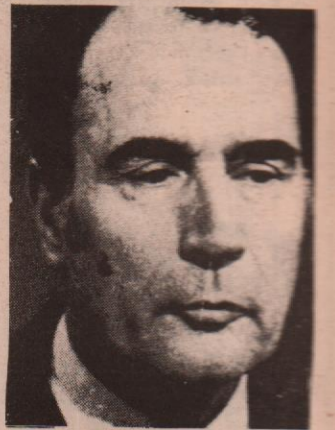
Four far-left lists were presented. Splinters of the PSU (originally a left-wing split-off from the Socialist Party, now in decay) came together with some ecologists and regionalists to promote alternative candidates.

The LCR, French co-thinkers of 'Socialist Action' and 'International', were much excited by these alternative lists and devoted energy to trying to make them the focus for a broad electoral alliance of all those to the left of the Socialist and Communist Parties. With little success: there were not very many 'alternative' lists, and anyway a number of them would have nothing to do with the LCR. The LCR thus ended up mostly standing candidates on its own.

The PCI — probably numerically the biggest far-left group in France, though its co-thinkers in Britain, the Socialist Labour Group, are very weak — had another 'broad alliance' scheme. Picking up disillusioned ex-members of the Communist Party and (more often) the Socialist Party, it has set up a new 'Movement for a Workers' Party'.

The Movement for a Workers' Party has little real existence autonomous from the PCI: the PCI's paper, *Information Ouvriere*, became the paper of the Movement for a Workers' Party without much change of editorial staff, let alone of content. But it does seem to have got some support from the bureaucracy of Force Ouvriere — France's most right-wing trade union federation, but one in which the PCI has long had some influence.

The political profile of the Movement for a Workers' Party was 'broad' indeed. Its election material said nothing



Francois Mitterrand

about socialism, demanding instead 'democracy'. Its basic political statement says: "The Movement for a Workers' Party dedicates itself to regrouping all those who feel the need to build a real workers' Party (regardless of their past or present allegiance) with no other condition than agreement on the four following points:

1. Recognition of the class struggle . . .
2. Freedom from the Church for education and the State.
3. Liquidation of the anti-democratic institutions of the 5th Republic (the constitution introduced by De Gaulle after his coup in 1958) and establishment of a true democracy whose form and content will be defined by the people themselves.
4. Reciprocal independence of political parties and trade union organisations."

Finally, the other big far-left group in France, *Lutte Ouvriere*, argued that all these 'broad' alliances were castles in the air, and simply stood its own candidates on the basis of its own revolutionary socialist politics.

The results supported LO's argument. LO's 33 lists got a median vote of 1.30%. The 12 'alternative' lists had a median score of 0.83% (the five from which the LCR was excluded did a bit better the seven in which it took part). The LCR's 20 lists got 0.24% as their median vote; and the Movement for a Workers' Party's 43 did little better, at 0.52%.

The search for political 'broadness' can so dilute the far left's message as to narrow its capacity to mobilise.

An oppressed minority

Hundreds of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria have been imprisoned or forcibly re-settled during an official campaign to assimilate them.

From December 1984 to March 1985 the estimated 900,000 citizens of Turkish ethnic origin — 10% of the population — had their Turkish names officially changed, sometimes at gunpoint, to Bulgarian ones.

In a new report, Amnesty International says it has the names of more than 250 people arrested and imprisoned for opposing the name-changing campaign. And it knows of at least 100 people reported to have been killed by the security forces, some during armed clashes, but others on peaceful demonstrations.

Some dissenters have been forcibly re-settled in other

regions. And anyone caught speaking Turkish risks a five leva (\$5) summary fine. Letters from abroad to ethnic Turks with Islamic names have been returned to the senders with "unknown" stamped on them. Telephone calls have been intercepted and the speakers ordered not to use Turkish.

The traditional Muslim practice of male circumcision has met with official disapproval and can be punished by a 1,000 leva (\$1000) fine, or up to three years in prison.

Bulgaria, like the rest of the Balkans, was part of the Turkish empire for some 500 years until the late 19th century, and the Turks there were originally colonial settlers. Now, however, they have become an oppressed minority.

The fruit of Dunnes

The Irish government is to ban all imports of South African fruit and vegetables. It will not do so immediately: the ban is to be phased in gradually from the beginning of October, and it will be fully operational only by the beginning of 1987. Nevertheless the decision to impose the ban is an important step towards hastening the downfall of apartheid.

The ban is the direct result of the year long campaign by the Dunnes strikers in Dublin. Their strike against the sale of South African goods in Dunnes' store won international support and publicity. The strike ended at the end of last year when the government said that it was considering a ban.

Irish government representatives have admitted that their action is a direct consequence of the Dunnes strike.

It shows what determined action can achieve. It also shows that if sanctions are to be imposed by governments, direct

action by workers will be necessary.

But important as the Irish government's decision is, it also highlights the weaknesses of government sanctions. The ban is to be imposed gradually and in the future so as to do as little damage as possible to Irish businesses involved in trade with apartheid.

The bosses and their governments have good reason to be wary of serious action against the South African bosses and their government. They will take action only reluctantly and half-heartedly, because they put their own interests — their profits — first.

And workers have little or no control over the way in which the ban is to be implemented. It is vital that trade unions, locally, nationally and internationally take action themselves to boycott South African trade, and do not either leave it up to governments, or see convincing governments to do it for them as the major priority.

A TASTE OF P

Two GLC's

There were two GLCs. One went forward, the other retreated and collapsed.

The forward-moving GLC is better-known. It used the council's vast resources to assert and advance the rights of women, of lesbians and gays, of disabled people and other hard-pressed groups.

Money given to voluntary groups of all sorts increased from £1 million in 1981-2 to £9 million in 1985-6. Well-researched reports and regular bulletins monitored the police and argued the case for public accountability.

Worker cooperatives were assisted. 'Technology networks' made know-how more widely available and developed projects like bus entrances suitable for wheelchairs.

For about the first time, a public body seriously tried to give the disabled a chance to lead an equal life. The GLC financed dial-a-ride and taxicard services for the disabled, improved disabled access to buildings, and made documents available on tape or in Braille.

Benefits

A GLC campaign of information and assistance enabled London people to get £10 million in previously-unclaimed state welfare benefits.

County Hall was opened up in the evenings and at weekends for meetings. GLC economists produced substantial but readable reports on the decline of jobs in London and on 'popular planning' alternatives; they helped local people in the Royal Docks area to produce a 'People's Plan' in opposition to capitalist schemes for redeveloping the district.

GLC spending on the arts rose from £2.5 million to £10.5 million; the traditional arts centres got more money, but so did a wider range of ventures.

That was one GLC: and many people came to see it spearheading a new model of radical politics. These politics would 'empower the powerless'; they would use the 'local state' to open facilities and access to power to those previously excluded from power — women, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, lesbians and gays.

It's a shock to look back to the manifestos of 1981 and realise that the GLC's original political programme was quite different.

The GLC women's committee was Britain's first ever. It has set a pattern; by the end of 1985 30 local authorities had these committees.

But the GLC women's committee was no part of London Labour's 1981 manifesto. It was not set up until May 1982.

The GLC's work on lesbian and gay rights also started late. The GLC's economic policy was partly foreshadowed in its manifesto, but much more worked out as it went along.

So there was another Labour GLC: the one that got elected in 1981 on a manifesto lengthily and laboriously discussed by the London Labour Party.

That GLC had a different focus. Its manifesto stated: "A Labour GLC and ILEA (Inner London Education Authority) will resist any cuts and demand that the Tory government provides the necessary finance to

Six metropolitan authorities covering the areas round England's major cities, and the Greater London Council, were abolished on 1 April.

Their various functions — fire services, waste disposal, transport, and so on — have been transferred to lower-level district or borough councils, to special joint boards, to central government or to quangos.

The Tory government's stated reason for abolishing these authorities is economy. In fact the ramshackle new arrangements will be more costly even though jobs and services are being cut in the process of abolition.

The true reason for abolition was twofold. It helps the Tory programme of cutting jobs and services. And all seven abolished authorities were Labour-controlled. With their wide base of rate income, they were annoying centres of resistance to the Thatcher regime.

The GLC has financed police monitoring projects, lesbian and gay groups, benefit-claiming campaigns, and much else that the Tories find ugly. Some of the other metropolitan authorities have vexed the Tories equally if not more: South Yorkshire with its cheap bus fares, Merseyside with its big network of unem-

ployed centres, Merseyside and Manchester with their repeated clashes with their local police chiefs.

Now Sheffield's fares will go up 250% and thousands of busworkers will lose their jobs. Some 2000 transport jobs may go in Merseyside, too. The fire service Joint Board in London plans to cut fire-fighting jobs by 10%.

Thanks to big efforts by Labour district and borough councils, fewer of the workers directly employed by the metropolitan authorities will become jobless than was first thought. Only some hundreds in each area joined the dole queue directly on 1 April.

But others have only temporary jobs with the Residuary Bodies set up to finish the authorities' business. Many have taken voluntary redundancy or early retirement. Since Labour councils have been filling vacancies preferentially with ex-met. staff, the total number of job losses is much bigger than the number of sackings.

Still unclear today is the full impact of abolition on the big number of voluntary groups financed by the metropolitan authorities, especially in London and Merseyside.



Ken Livingstone opening Brixton recreation centre. (Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, IFL)

maintain and improve all council services. Understanding that the Tory government does not listen to pleas but only responds to pressure, a Labour GLC and ILEA will appeal to the Labour and trade union movement to take action including industrial action to support this stand."

Expanded

Its leader, Ken Livingstone, expanded on this. "Wherever there is an industrial dispute in London we shall go down and support it . . . We'll use the whole structure of the GLC to support trade unionists in struggle throughout London . . . and work with the trade unions to try to bring this government down ahead of its time . . .

"There will be no U-turns". Alongside this commitment to class struggle, the major manifesto plank was a relatively traditional Labour reform: cheap fares. Labour also campaigned for an elected police authority in London, which has been a continuing theme.

What happened to this first GLC? As the 'new' GLC waxed, it waned.

A 15% pay demand by Lon-

don Transport underground crews began to cause trouble less than a month after the GLC election. The NUR's right wing general secretary, Sid Weighell, undoubtedly used the issue to do as much damage as possible to the left wing GLC. But the basic fact was that the newly-elected council went against the very direct interests of London workers by not awarding the pay rise. (15% was not a wild or ridiculous demand; inflation was then around 12%, and the GLC offered 8%).

The GLC looked at the issue as administrators, not from a class standpoint. To meet the NUR pay claim, said Livingstone, "would require a supplementary rate and lead to some grant losses".

Meanwhile ILEA was reneging on the Labour promise to cut school meal prices. Because of the fear of surcharge the Labour group split, providing a majority for the status quo.

The next big test marked the end of a whole period. Lord Denning ruled the GLC's cheap fares illegal, and the Law Lords backed him up.

There could not have been a clearer issue on which to take on

the Tories.

But on January 12 the GLC voted to obey the courts and raise the fares again.

Some of the ill-effect was later undone by good administration, when the GLC introduced travel-cards and a revised fare structure before the government took control of London Transport from it. But the Labour GLC's ambition to play a role in class struggle was gone for good.

Different

By June 1983 Ken Livingstone was giving a very different account of the GLC.

"The GLC has a very limited range of responsibilities and powers, and nothing that the Labour GLC does challenges the structure. It raises issues, it promotes campaigns, it makes small shifts in wealth — they're all things that a Thatcher government could live with if the truth were told . . .

"Local government is not going to bring down central government. It never has been a possibility . . . We're not in a position of being able to initiate, because we aren't in a position to mobilise the sort of forces required . . .

without the trade unions mobilised behind the Labour Party locally or nationally, there's a very limited amount you can do . . ." (Socialist Organiser, 16.6.83).

Unions

In fact the Labour GLC never did anything much to mobilise the unions. Its campaign against abolition, after 1983, was geared to public opinion and dissident Tories, rather than working class action.

The County Hall unions had long been weak, and the best Labour GLC would have had problems. But when some stewards' organisation did emerge, in 1984, the GLC quickly knocked it on the head by withdrawing secondment facilities for stewards in response to a writ from Westminster's Tory council. As the GLC dies this year, many of its workers are still low-paid by official standards, and thousands of jobs are going without any trade union resistance. Ken Livingstone pushed the Labour Party into co-operating with the Tories' schemes for abolition at a time when NALGO was still trying to organise for non-cooperation and defiance.

Ken Livingstone after singing 'We'

The of t

Behind the election of a left Labour GLC in 1981 was the rise of a new left in the Labour Party. That new left, streaked with Marxism, did as we've seen aspire to put some sort of class-struggle politics in place of the old Labour politics of the parliamentarian and the town hall administrator.

Least

It was too diffuse, too vague, ideologically and politically, to create that class-struggle politics. So it retreated and sought instead a path of least resistance — a path of radical action without such obstacles and trials.

So a 'second' GLC took shape from 1982, finding radical things it could do and then after the event theorising them as part of a new strategy to change the world.

It was special compared to other left Labour councils probably because London is special.

In Merseyside and South Yorkshire left-wing metropolitan authorities found their path of least resistance along more traditional lines: an impressive net-

POWER



meet again' at the GLC farewell party. (Photo: Jez Coulson, IFL).

rise and fall the new left

work of unemployed centres in Merseyside, the best and cheapest bus service in Britain in South Yorkshire. But London's labour movement is weaker and more diffuse than Merseyside's or South Yorkshire's. The city is a centre not of big industry but of services, administration, communications, culture (and small industry). And it is the capital. So London's left embraces a vast range of campaigns and special interest groups unparalleled elsewhere.

It is no small thing to have a public body of the size of the GLC publicly campaigning for lesbian and gay rights, for example. The 'second' GLC did achieve something.

But the balance sheet must be seen as a whole. The 'second' GLC emerged only because of the abdication of the 'first'. And as part of the process thousands of left activists educated themselves, or were educated, to scale down their vision of socialism.

Those who could see more

clearly what was happening, or had more scruples about it, fell by the wayside. The front ranks were taken by those who took more readily to the concepts of machine politics, of 'getting something done', of what Ken Livingstone himself called 'the cynical soft-sell'.

Co-opt

That is why the 'soft left' and some witch-hunters have been able to co-opt the ideology of the 'second' GLC as a weapon against the Marxist left — and why the erstwhile Red Ken is now finding (as the Financial Times reported on 25 March) his "final acceptance into Labour's establishment, as Mr Healey shook hands with him on the platform" (in Fulham).

The original Tammany Hall, in 19th century New York, was an organisation of the disadvantaged — the Irish Catholics who made up the lower classes of the city's population — to get access to the public purse hitherto monopolised by an old-establish-

ed aristocracy. It was a radical movement of sorts, radical enough to swallow up New York's Workingmen's Party (the first party ever in the world to call itself by such a name).

The ideology of the second GLC is a sort of multiple Tammany-Hall-ism. It sees administrators doling out bits of power and patronage to disadvantaged groups who were previously excluded. The overall socialist goal is either forgotten about or just defined as the sum total of all these hand-outs.

Much of what the second GLC did positively deserves to be defended. But its ideology was (despite much talk) profoundly elitist and manipulative — and it was an alternative to working class socialism.

Not once

In the 80-page book published by the GLC to sum up its major achievements since 1981, the term 'working class' (or any equivalent) appears, so far as I can find, not once.

LABOUR YOUTH CONFERENCE



LPYS members applauding South African trade unionist Moses Mayekiso. (Photo: Ian Swindale).

A lifeless mood

By Mark Osborn

There was rapturous applause when John Hurd, 'Militant' chair of the Labour Party Young Socialists, opened our 25th National Conference, in Bournemouth last Saturday.

But to be frank, this was a poor conference. The delegated entitled to vote in the elections numbered 256, from a claimed national total of 559 LPYS branches.

The event was smaller in last year, which in turn was smaller than 1984.

Lifeless

The mood was lifeless, and the content of the conference was vacant. Of course the LPYS has suffered from the demoralisation in the movement following the defeat of the miners' strike.

However, underlying all this is the inability of the LPYS's 'Militant' leadership to seize opportunities when they occur.

The 'Marxists' won control from the Right at the 1970 LPYS conference. In the sixteen intervening years which have seen the disputes of the early 1970s, the Anti-Nazi League and Youth CND — with massive mobilisations of youth — the LPYS has grown into a rump.

'Militant' has been sectarian towards many of the struggles of youth; and the whole LPYS suffers as a result.

Normal criticisms of Militant/YS conferences held good too: it was more of a rally than a conference. Militant combined with the Labour bureaucracy to rule out Socialist Organiser/Youth Fight-back positions on South Africa, Ireland, Miners amnesty, and

racism, together with emergency motions on the print and the witch-hunt.

Most outrageous of all: Lynn Ferguson, three minutes late for a composing meeting because she was changing her baby's nappy, lost the right to put her motion.

The LPYS chair thought that his own comments on the print strike was sufficient debate on the issue. We would have liked to argue that expulsion of the EETPU from the TUC is tactically mistaken; that mass pickets at Wapping must be built to stop Murdoch's plant, with the LPYS playing a full role in doing this. It was not to be.

In the debates on Ireland, racism and South Africa, 'Militant' had a good reason to carve out our positions: it left only Socialist Action as the opposition. With 'Sinn Fein are good' as the alternative, 'Militant' could come across as being relatively intellectually creative.

High point

The real high point of the conference was the appearance of Moses Mayekiso from the South African Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) which Socialist Organiser supporters had helped to arrange. Moses spoke of the struggles of black workers in South Africa, and stressed that the workers' struggle is central to the struggle against apartheid.

The conference chair, obviously dozing (the effect of previous debates?) could only be pushed into taking a collection for the

important BTR dispute in South Africa at the suggestion of one of our comrades.

In fact, most 'Militant' supporters seemed to be half-asleep or approaching brain death.

On the first day we undertook a rather subtle attempt to debate with the Militant rank and file over the disgraceful way that their leadership had brought the courts in to solve their problems in the labour movement. No effect. By Sunday we had thrown caution to the wind and led in our bulletin with: "No workers in wigs intervening in the Labour Party!"

Even this sensitive combination, ripping into their stupid position on "workers in uniform" and their stupid position on the witch-hunt yielded little attention. We were doing our best, but experienced Militant supporters were loathe to argue.

There is something strange happening to Militant: there is a gap between a few hardened hacks and a newer layer of supporters, ill educated and kept together with bombast.

Of course, Militant won the election for the delegate to Labour Party's National Executive Committee. Socialist Organiser's Lynn Ferguson got ten votes. Kingsley Abrams, Black Sections candidate, backed by virtually all other non-Militant delegates polled 37 votes, fewer than expected. This included perhaps 10-15 hardened Kinnocks votes. In other words, the 20-odd per cent the left has polled in recent years has not only shrunk numerically, together with the size of the conference, but decreased in relation to Militant's vote.

Fringe events included a well-attended "Socialist Organiser — Where We Stand" meeting which raised £47.90 for the Building Fund. Socialist Organiser supporter Pat Murphy spoke at the Labour Committee on Ireland meeting on the Anglo-Irish Deal.

The Black Sections and Labour Left Coordination both had Kingsley Abrams on their platform. The Black Sections meeting in particular was well attended with a large number of Militant supporters present.

Rooftop

Socialist Action's Youth Action fringe meeting was probably the worst: two hours of seapakers; virtually no discussion.

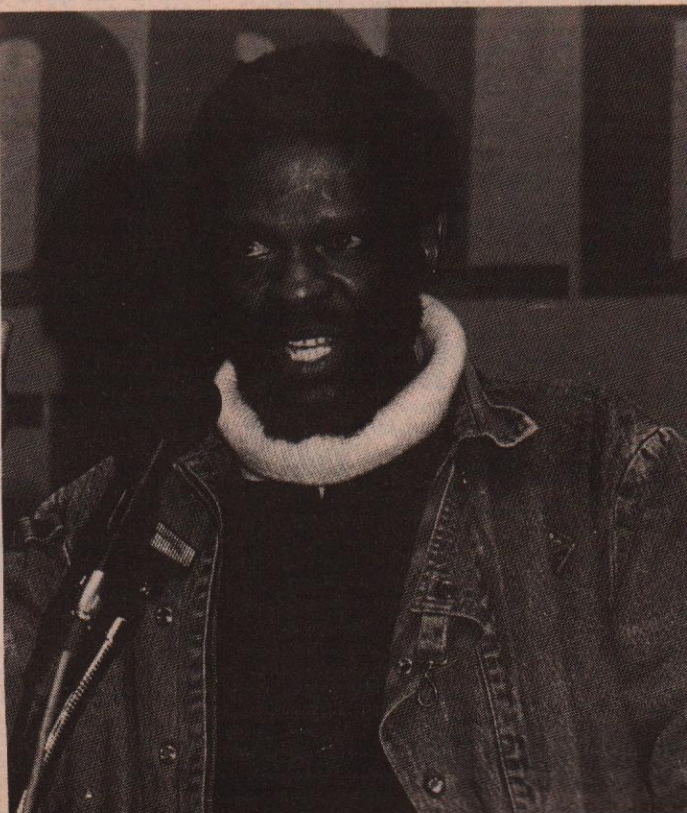
George Johannes, seapaker from the ANC, likened the independent trade unions in South Africa and their supporters to people like Thatcher who support "independent trade unions" such as the scab UDM. His point was that these unions should be aligned to the ANC.

Socialist Action supporters gave him a standing ovation.

A conversation I had with leading British Socialist Action supporter sums it up:

Me: Is it true that you shouted 'God is Great' in the streets of Tehran in 1979?

Brian Grogan: Not quite, I was on a rooftop.



Moses Mayekiso.

THE LEFT AND A

The case of Healy's WRP

John O'Mahony discusses the scandalous case of Healy's WRP, and the light it sheds on wider sections of the left. (Part 2 next week).

THE WRP split wide open last October, and now there are two organisations calling themselves the WRP.

One, led — perhaps nominally — by Gerry Healy, the dictator of the old organisation for 3½ decades, resumed publishing a daily paper, 'The Newsline', at the beginning of February. The second WRP, which seems to contain all the other prominent leaders of the old organisation — the Banda brothers, Cliff Slaughter, Tom Kemp, Bill Hunter, etc. — now published a weekly, the Workers' Press.

The Newsline group is indistinguishable from the WRP of the previous decade except that one more conspirator and enemy is now added to the long list of its devils — 'the Banda-Slaughter clique'. For the Newsline group all the old lunatic certainties — like the dogma that the miners did not suffer defeat in 1985 — remain fixed and the 'dialectical' prophet Healy is still in his place in the firmament.

The Workers Press group is the interesting WRP. For many weeks now they have given over a large proportion of the paper to a free discussion of some of the issues thrown up by their break with Healy. They have a long way to go yet before they will have worked themselves clear of Healyism, and it is not at all obvious that they will arrive at coherent or stable revolutionary socialist politics as a result of their political reappraisals.

The pressure on them, and the temptation, must be to sink into a lowest-common-denominator of 'kitsch-Trotskyism' — that is, 'Trotskyist' forms filled with the current, often populist, fashions and enthusiasms of the broader left.

Those who were prominent leading members of Gerry Healy's WRP still maintain the transparent fiction that 'they didn't know' about Healy's misdeeds. On the other hand, it must take a great deal of courage for those of them who spent decades inside Gerry Healy's 'machine for maiming militants' even partially to confront their own past

and set about radically reassessing it.

That they are trying to do that testifies to a continuing devotion to the socialist goals they must have thought they were serving during all their years of moral, intellectual, political and physical thralldom under the unfettered rule of the brutal and sadistic bully Gerry Healy. Old-timers like Bill Hunter, politically eclipsed and silenced for a quarter of a century, now seem to be playing a prominent role.

In a curious way what is happening to them resembles what happened to thinking members of the British Communist Party in 1956-7 after Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the so-called '20th Congress of the CPSU' in February 1956 and thereby blew the lid off the Stalinist parties, putting everything up for reassessment. And as a matter of fact some of them went through that experience as CPers in 1956-7 before making their way to a sort of Trotskyism.

The discussion pieces published by Workers' Press have included a letter by SO's editor John O'Mahony which asked for clarification on the Workers' Press group's attitude to such things as the libel case the Healyites brought against SO. The Workers Press group itself is now facing a barrage of legal actions by the Healyites — actions designed to drive them out of business.

Issue

One very important issue raised in response to John O'Mahony's letter is the question of the anti-semitism of Healy's WRP. In 1983 SO published an article by John O'Mahony accusing the WRP of blatant anti-semitism, and now Charlie Pottins, a Workers Press supporter and also a prominent member of the Jewish Socialist Group, has re-raised this question in Workers Press.

He accuses O'Mahony of "smearing the Party as 'anti-semites' and even 'pogromists'" (Workers Press, 8.3.86). Such "vicious slanders and incitements" are not "honest polemics", he insists.

In fact in 1983 it was Charlie Pottins who wrote the three-page Newsline reply to O'Mahony's SO article, lending his name as a prominent Jewish Socialist Group member to cover for the Healyites' anti-semitism.

Now this is a very important question. It can be easily demonstrated that the Healyite WRP was and is indeed blatantly anti-semitic. But if that were all there was to it, then it might not be worth returning to the subject now.

The fact is, however, that the explicit anti-semitic ravings of Healy's WRP are no more than an extreme and open expression, in (as we shall see) language and forms close to those of traditional anti-semitism, of ideas which are implicit in the fervent 'anti-Zionism', the strident insistence that 'Israel must be destroyed', common to much of the left.

To go over the edge into more or less explicit anti-semitism the Healyites needed only to add to the common left anti-Zionist demonology their own characteristic paranoia and a mercenary desire to get into step with the most extreme anti-Israeli Arab chauvinism.

While it would be libellous to identify the 'anti-Zionist' left with the anti-semitism of the Healyites, it nevertheless seems to us that what the Healyites made of the anti-Zionist demonology which they share with much of the left (and until not so long ago with SO too) holds an accurate mirror up to that ideology.

The Newsline editorial reproduced on this page was not just something that can be shrugged off as a peculiarity of Healy's crackpot WRP. On the same day that the editorial appeared, and side by side with it on the same page, Newsline carried an interview with 'Red Ken' Livingstone, then leader of the Greater London Council. In that interview Livingstone — who now considers himself a candidate to become leader of the Labour Party — chattily agreed with the interviewer that, of course, the item in a recent BBC 'Money Programme' exposing the distribution of Libyan money to political groups in Britain, and in the first place the WRP, had been inspired by 'the Zionists' to discredit the WRP.

Livingstone was then a joint editor of Labour Herald — a publication set up by Healy's WRP for Ken Livingstone and Ted Knight and 'technically' edited by Steven Miller, a member (according to Workers Press) of the Central Committee of Healy's WRP.

Livingstone did not demur at the anti-semitism of the Newsline editorial. SO publicly asked him to say where he stood on it: "What does he think of the editorial? Does he think we should just shrug and accept anti-semitism as a feature of the far left?" (SO 14.4.83).

Livingstone never answered explicitly — but he continued to collaborate with the WRP and appear on its platforms at public meetings for two years longer. In its own way that was a pretty clear answer.

Such tolerance of Healy's anti-semitic ravings tells its own story.

It would be wrong and unfair to hold the Workers Press group responsible for the Healyite editorial (though one still finds some echoes of its ideas in WP — see below). Reflex self-defence, such as Charlie Pottins', is humanly understandable and may prove to have no political significance — even for Pottins himself. The Workers Press group may well choose to cleanse itself of this most filthy part of Healy's legacy too.

I take it up here not to try to brand the Workers Press group with the Healyite editorial but because of the general importance of the issue re-raised by Charlie Pottins.

Though Healy has now gone yet deeper into the isolation of his own political sewer, the question of our attitude to the Jewish state and our political programme for the Middle East — which Healy 'solved' by merging pseudo anti-imperialism with vicarious Arab chauvinism into something close to Hitlerite anti-semitism — remains a major one for the left.

The first part of this article deals with Healy's WRP. The second, next week, will deal with the serious left and Israel.

Workers Press legal defence fund: WRP, 21b Old Town, London SW4 0JT.



Charlie Pottins says it is just a smear to accuse Healy's WRP of anti-semitism.

What are the facts? Healy's WRP did publish undisguised and unmistakable anti-semitic material, as I'll now prove. As well as the particular record of the WRP, I think much that an entire broad spectrum of the revolutionary, 'Trotskyist', left says about Israel and 'Zionism' is implicitly anti-semitic. I'll separate the two issues out.

On Saturday 9 April 1983 Newsline's editorial ('This Morning') appeared with a small strapline in the top left hand corner "From 'Socialist Organiser' to Reagan and Thatcher" followed by the main headline, across the column: "The Zionist Connection".

Strapline

The strapline summed up the editorial's thesis: there is an international Zionist conspiracy stretching from Ronald Reagan's cabinet, through Mrs Thatcher's Downing St, all the way to Socialist Organiser!

The editorial began: "A powerful Zionist connection runs from the so-called left of the Labour Party right into the centre of this government in Downing St. There is no difficulty whatever in proving this". Evidence? "Mr Stuart Young, a director of the Jewish Chronicle" has been appointed as "youngest ever chairman of the BBC". "He is the brother of Mr David Young, another Thatcher appointee, who is chairman of the Manpower Services Commission... This is the key organisation the Tories are transforming into a 'corporatist front' [Newsline's quotes] to mobilise jobless youth from 14 years upwards into a slave labour body to break trade union wages, safety procedures and working conditions". The TUC and Labour chiefs have accepted "these appointments" of the Zionist Young brothers "without a murmur of protest".

Yes, but what is special about the Young brothers as distinct from any other Tory pigs? Why is it essential to give the job of organising slave labourers to David Young as opposed, say, to Norman Tebbit?

Following immediately after the last quote comes Newsline's answer.

"The Tories know they can rely totally upon Zionist imperialism [sic] to produce the most hated reactionaries" for use in such filthy work. But the Tories have other goals too. They can turn to their own use the reasonable hatred people will feel against these "Zionist imperialists", "in order to transform the situation at a later date into a pro-fascist anti-semitic pogrom against all the Jews in general".

There follows a paragraph in bold type intended to illustrate the last point but which is sheer gobbledegook. Zionism and Hitler agreed to let rich Jews leave Germany on condition that they become Zionists. Today the Tories "know they have a powerful anti-Semitic trump card up their sleeves, to replay..." Dastardly Zionist imperialists like the Youngs — i.e. politically prominent Jews — are helping them prepare it.

Brothers

In what way do the Young brothers especially represent "Zionist imperialism"?

That's not clear, but in the context the answer can only be that they are Jews and that any Jew in any similar position is necessarily a link in the chain through which 'Zionist imperialism' interlaces itself with the other imperialisms — which the editorial will later strongly suggest, it guides and may even control.

Newsline continues: "From the support and advance publicity which the 'Jewish Chronicle' gave the BBC's 'Money Programme' the reactionary Zionist link was clear for all to see [sic]. But it also stretches through Downing St channels right into the White House and President Reagan".

Naturally any Jewish Chronicle interest in an organisation it knows to be funded by Libya is proof positive that the WRP, Libya etc. are victims of an international Zionist conspiracy.

Now the editorial goes off on another tack.

US provocation against Libya "raises in its sharpest form the central political

PAGE 8 The News Line Saturday April 9, 1983

From 'Socialist Organiser' to Thatcher & Reagan

SAURDAY April 9, 1983 This morning ...

The Zionist connection

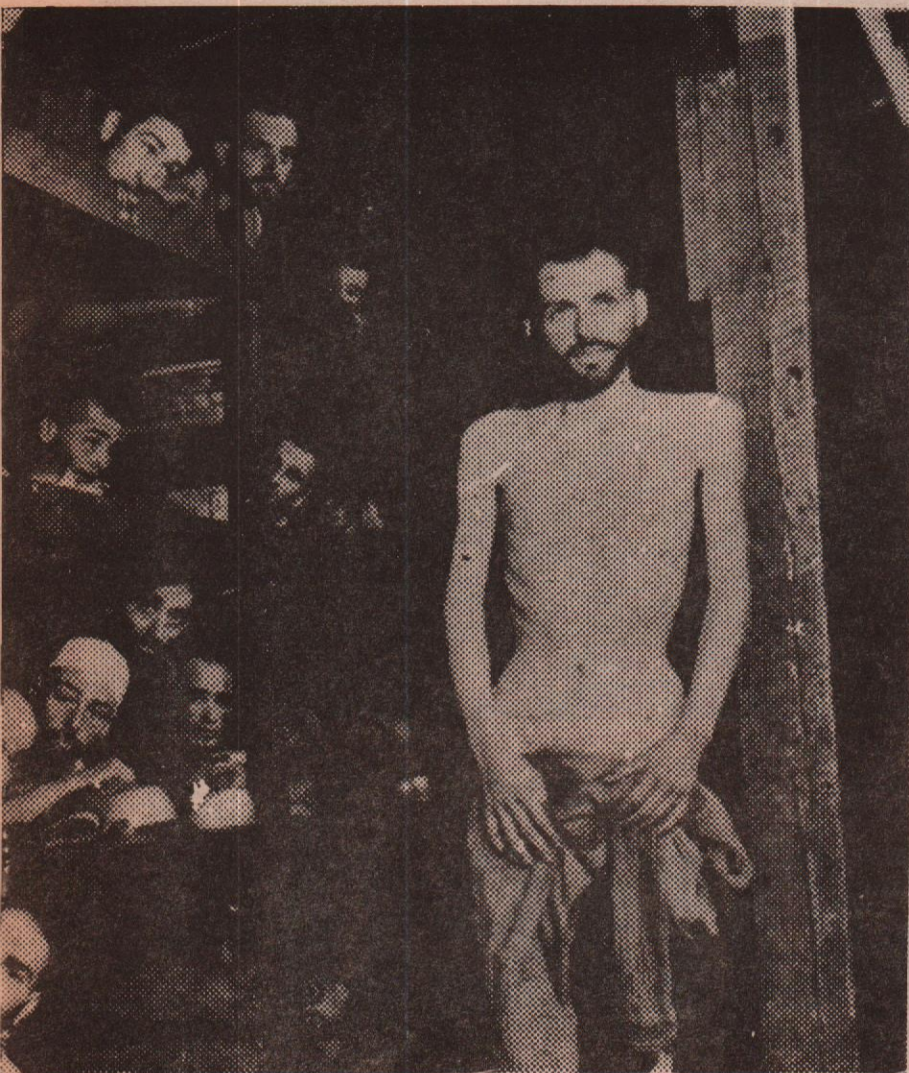
A POWERFUL Zionist connection runs from the so-called left of the Labour Party right into the centre of Thatcher's government in Downing Street. There is no difficulty whatever in proving this.

Top of the list, we have the most recent appointment of Mr Stuart Young, a director of the 'Jewish

denounce it as 'the reactionary Islamic government of Libya' and seek a 'neutrality' between US imperialism and Gaddafi? This is the position of 'Socialist Organiser', claiming to speak for 'lefts' in the Labour Party.

The same organ supported the Zionist-sponsored 'Money Programme' on

ANTI-SEMITISM



Everyone on the left regards Hitler's massacre of the Jews as the most terrible example of what we are fighting against. Yet many of the WRP's arguments about a 'Zionist conspiracy' stretching across classes, countries, and radically different political forces, echo the same logic as the Nazi ravings about the 'world Jewish conspiracy'.

question". Do "Trotskyists" support Gaddafi's "régime" [sic] against US imperialism on principle, or seek neutrality between US imperialism and Gaddafi? Newsline lies that Socialist Organiser is neutral.

And Socialist Organiser supported "the Zionist-sponsored Money Programme". Now we come to the knot-tying exercise.

"Here" from SO "is unqualified support for the work of Thatcher's appointee as chairman of the BBC" who is also a director of British Caledonian Airways [eh?] and the British Overseas Trade Group for Israel.

So it is all clear. They needed to put in a Jew as chair of the BBC to get the Libyan gold item into a little early Sunday evening programme! And of course only Jews backed by the Cabinet could organise this attack on the WRP.

Newsline continues: "SO has landed itself right bang in the middle of Thatcher's hand-picked Zionists as an outright supporter of their policies of witch-hunting the WRP and the News Line for our principled stand against imperialism and in support of the Libyan masses [sic] under their leader Muammar Gaddafi".

Gerry Healy obviously thinks that Thatcher has set the Jews on him!

Hour

"The question of the hour, we repeat, is the pro-Zionist policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations".

So who is in charge here? Zionism or Washington and London? Which is dog and which tail?

We shall see. But the author has more to reveal. He knows or senses something special about SO that explains how SO fits into the 'Zionist connection'.

"In the background of the 'Socialist Organiser' one can detect a powerful current of anti-Arab racism - also shared by Reagan and Thatcher. That is the substance of their support for the 'Money Programme'..." By contrast, Newsline "unhesitatingly supports the Libyan and Palestinian people and its leadership". Yes. And against what exactly do they need support? "Against the nuclear war plans of Reagan, Thatcher and the Zionists in their campaign to destroy all national liberation movements in the

is painted. It is a very familiar picture.

The Newsline editorial theorises along the well-worn paths of classic anti-semitism, such as that embodied in the Tsarist secret police forgery 'The Protocols of the Elders of Zion' (1905) - the book that has rightly been called 'a warrant for genocide' against the Jews of Europe under Hitler.

What the editorial asserts is that there is a world-wide 'Zionist' conspiracy linking and bonding people who are politically millions of miles apart - from members of Reagan's government to 'the centre' of Mrs Thatcher's cabinet, the commanding heights of the BBC and all the way through to... the publishers of Socialist Organiser.

And what links these seeming polar opposites? 'Zionism' and 'Zionist imperialism'. But Zionism here is a transparent code word, and plainly the writer is talking about a conspiracy of Jews - a conspiracy of political opposites who can nevertheless conspire together in the interests of 'Zionist imperialism' because they are Jews.

Who are the 'Zionists'? For Newsline the Zionists are all Jews who do not accept the proposal to smash and dismantle the Israeli state and to replace it by a Palestinian Arab state in which Jews are promised individual though not national rights - in other words all Jews except a few revolutionary socialists and a few of the ultra-religious.

"The Tories know that they can rely totally upon Zionist imperialism to produce the most hated reactionaries..." Newsline in effect defines all Jews as 'agents of Zionist imperialism' (or, to put it at the mildest, it assumes the right to so define any hostile Jew it can identify in any place of prominence within the capitalist system).

In this picture Zionist imperialism is no small or secondary power. Israel is not merely what it really is, a mere regional sub-imperialism with special features. "The question of the hour" is not US imperialism, or the domination of a large part of the world by Stalinist totalitarianism: it is the subservience of the US to 'Zionism', "the pro-Zionist policies of the Reagan and Thatcher administrations".

Tentacles

'Zionist imperialism' must be the very heart of imperialism, whose controlling tentacles reach secretly right into the centre of Mrs Thatcher's cabinet and into Reagan's too.

The Jews, it seems, are now the international janissaries of imperialism and - the logic is inescapable - possibly imperialism itself is only a projection of the Jewish drive for world domination.

Now there are Jews - or if you like 'Zionists' - in bourgeois cabinets, perhaps in some politburos still, in the BBC and in SO. The Jews are a people scattered through all segments of society and throughout the world.

Seek evidence that there may be a conspiratorial network of Jews, and you will find it - red Jews and Rothschilds, members of Reagan's and Thatcher's cabinets and writers for SO. These 'links'



The once Red Ken and future Lord Redken: in 1983 Livingstone rushed to appear in the pages of the daily Newsline, where he reassured Healy's WRP that he too thought they were the victims of a 'Zionist' conspiracy.

are the raw material from which theories about 'Jewish' or 'Zionist' conspiracies can easily be spun.

But - given the vast political gulf separating those linked together in the Newsline editorial - the only possible 'rational' common denominator on which to base such a theory is race (whatever that may be).

For of course not all the 'Zionists' are imperialists. Some of them are socialists and call themselves Trotskyists, like SO. They too are part of the conspiracy - and to judge by all the attention we were being given, a very important part of it. This is the proof of the vile racist basic structures and logic embedded in that editorial.

There is a parallel if not identity with Jewish world conspiracy theories popular before World War 2 (and still virulently alive in Eastern Europe). The Hitlerites and other anti-semites used to explain that both communism and finance capital - those seemingly implacable enemies - were really different aspects of a single world conspiracy, coordinated by the 'Elders of Zion' and directed against the German nation, against 'Christian civilisation', or whatever.

Centre

Likewise the Newsline editorial portrayed 'the centre' of Thatcher's government and SO as secretly linked and bonded - against the WRP and the Libyan and Palestinian peoples - by a hidden network of 'Zionists'.

But SO is opposed to Zionism (if that means Israeli chauvinism or Jewish exclusivism)? It supports national rights for the Palestinians? Though contemptuous of Gaddafi's claims to socialism, and of much of his hollow anti-imperialism, SO would defend Libya against an imperialist invasion? Why, all that is just a front, a mere sham division of labour among the conspirators.

Didn't the pre-war communists pretend to denounce finance capital and the finance-capital police shoot the communists in pre-war Germany? It's just a show to fool those who have not heard about the international Jewish conspiracy.

You could object. Isn't the asserted common thread political Zionism? Isn't it a case of making Israel and hostility or friendliness to Israel the measure of all things? Isn't it a matter of starting with the Arab-chauvinist picture of Israel and reading everything off negatively from that?

No. Zionism here is not a political reference. Today 'Zionism' commonly means pro-Israeli sentiment of one sort or another. It includes the overwhelming majority of the people of Britain. If political Zionism is the point, then adding a Zionist Jew to the cabinet is to add nothing, as all the cabinet members are Zionists anyway!

There are Zionists and Zionists: there are Zionists and there are Jews. Plainly it is the Jews who are the core conspirators and who make up the special 'Zionist connections'.

The implication is inescapably this: that even anti-Zionist Jews like the SO writers the Newsline writer had in mind will have ineradicable loyalties and allegiances more basic than politics. These are the conspirators: some people are congenital 'Zionists' whatever their politics.

(And such ideas have not all gone with Gerry Healy. In his recent long article on the history of the Fourth International Michael Banda ascribed alleged errors by the movement over Palestine in 1947-8 to the 'Zionist proclivities' of Ernest Mandel. What is he talking about? There was no serious dispute in the FI on this question in 1948. Ernest Mandel played no notable part in discussing the position on Palestine in 1947 or '48. There is no political reason to link Ernest Mandel with Zionism in 1948 or 1986 except by way of the underlying thought that he has a 'Jewish' name, therefore is - or may be, I don't know - a Jew.)

I submit that whatever Charlie Pottins may say, the charge of overt, blatant anti-semitism is one that the Healyite WRP has to answer to, and that one of the clearest examples of it is this editorial. The writer sub-consciously (I assume) found himself pencilling in the outlines of the world view enshrined in the Protocols of Zion 'theories'. He fills those outlines, to be sure, with fervent

though incoherent and false 'anti-imperialism'; but then the Nazis and other anti-semites used to get very angry at the crimes of capitalism - what they called, in scapegoating fashion, Jewish capitalism.

How did the WRP arrive at such a position? There are reasons peculiar to the WRP and reasons which the WRP has in common with many 'Trotskyists'.

Though Healy's WRP has gone further into explicit anti-semitism than anyone else on the left - because of its leaders' paranoia and the malignant influence of the petrodollar brand of 'anti-Zionism', I think that the fundamental cause of this degeneracy is the mistaken position on the Middle East which the Healy WRP and the present one share with much of the left (and until recently with SO). As I'll prove below, much of the left has Arab-chauvinist and not working-class politics on the question, though for good anti-imperialist reasons and from the fine impulse to champion the defeated and oppressed Palestinians.

But first let us get out of the way what was specific to Healy's WRP in generating that editorial.

From the mid-70s or earlier the WRP saw the world and especially the international Trotskyist movement, mainly in terms of police 'conspiracies' and the operation of 'agents' and counter-agents.

Vast amounts of money and time were given over to the search for the 'conspirators' and 'agents' who were seen as being at the root of all evil in the world, and whose subterranean combats and manoeuvres sometimes seemed in the WRP's eyes to have replaced the struggle of classes as the locomotive of history.

You can find large numbers of individuals in the labour movement who will never be politically rational again after an intensive course by Mr Healy on 'world history and politics for the last 50 years as a spy-hunt'.

Add to this paranoid view of the world Healy's financial links with Gaddafi and Iraq, etc., which put Zionism and anti-Zionism at the centre of world politics because Libyan and Iraqi gold was at the centre of Healy's survival, and the scenario virtually writes itself.

There is more to it than that, though. There is the effect of an inbuilt 'Pabliste' tendency in the WRP to see the world in terms of the struggle of two basic camps.

This view arose first as the basic pattern of a world divided between the Stalinist states and the capitalist. But over the years it has shifted - and not only for the WRP - to mean imperialism and 'anti-imperialism'.

During the Falklands/Malvinas war most of those calling themselves Trotskyists accepted even the butcher Galtieri who ruled bourgeois (and indeed sub-imperialist) Argentina into 'our class camp'.

In the view of the world 'developed' by the WRP under the influence of paranoia and petrodollars, the Palestine question came to be seen as the central pivot of this struggle of the two basic camps, the imperialist and the anti-imperialist. The Arab bourgeoisies, whatever their 'faults' and 'limitations', were in the 'anti-imperialist' camp - ours.

Now if the Palestine question and 'Zionism' is the pivot of this world struggle between two basic camps, then I suppose it does make a sort of twisted sense to think that within the imperialist countries the 'Zionists', linked by ineradicable ties to the arch-enemy, the very core of imperialism - Zionist imperialism - are the main enemy, everywhere. As we saw above, the Newsline editorial even defined London and Washington politics by their relation to Israel, not the other way round. This was no slip: it fits perfectly into the picture.

In one sense therefore the world view held by the WRP - and not only by the WRP - implies and demands anti-semitism. What is remarkable is not the editorial but that the basic Trotskyist and socialist conditioning of Healy has kept open anti-semitism partly at bay, relying on such little mental tricks as the transparent pretence that 'the Zionists' are only a few super-villains and not most Jews.

HEALTHY EATING

Readers may have seen press or TV reports on some scientific research which purported to show that potato crisps were about the healthiest food since fresh fruit and vegetables.

The author of the research – Professor Donald Naismith – of Kings College, London, did not actually *state* this but he certainly *implied* that the composition of crisps was in line with the recommendations of a report on diet and heart disease from COMA (Committee on the Medical Aspects of Food Policy).

The magazine *New Scientist* took Naismith's widely publicised report seriously enough to devote an editorial to its debunking.

The COMA report, amongst others, recommends that *fat* should only provide about 35% of the calories in one's diet. *Carbohydrate*, in the form of starch, not sugar, should provide about 54%.

Naismith claims that the composition of the crisp is close to these figures. Thus, fat makes up about 37% and carbohydrate 40% of a crisp. While carbohydrate is a bit low, the fat seems to be about right.

But Naismith is talking about the percentage weight while COMA is talking about percentage calories. Fat is particularly rich in calories and in fact supplies 60% of the calories in crisps. This is nearly twice the COMA recommendation. Similarly, the carbohydrate supplies less than a third of the calories, about half of the COMA recommendations.

Crisps

Lastly, Naismith tries to show that the fibre content of crisps, at 12%, is better even than wholemeal bread. However, relative to the calories in crisps and bread, the fibre content of crisps is only half that of bread.

After perpetrating this mind-bending assault on reason, Naismith then has the nerve to criticise the "uninformed opinions" of "self-styled nutrition educators" who are "holding to ransom the minds of the British public."

It is the educators, remember, who are trying to alert the public to the dangers of the crisps and sweets that their children shovel down their throats (not to mention the high-saturated fat, skin, bone, gristle and offal sausages and burgers that accompany them). Modern children



are already displaying the degeneration of blood vessels that their grandparents took a lifetime to acquire.

Of his own report, Naismith modestly says, "If the public is to be educated in healthy eating habits, this is the kind of information they need to assist them" As *New Scientist* says, "Really?"

Apples

Naismith's report seems to have done quite a lot of damage already. Children I have recently spoken to told me that they had heard that crisps were better for you than apples.

Is it possible that the Prof didn't know what he was doing? That he genuinely confused percentage weight with percentage calories? Who can say?

By the way, the report was prepared for SNACMA. This sounds like an unpleasant secretion but is in fact the Snack, Nut and Crisp Manufacturers' Association. Well, just fancy that!

NUCLEAR POWER, NO THANKS.

The pro-nuclear minority in the Labour Party is becoming more isolated. After the Scottish Labour Party Conference reaffirmed National Conference policy to halt expansion of nuclear power and phase out existing plants, the Southern, South-Western and Midlands regional conferences of the Labour Party have done the same.

The cinema and TV technicians union, ACTT, has also voted for an anti-nuclear power policy.

For a copy of the SERA/Friends of the Earth/Greenpeace pamphlet outlining a strategy for phasing out nuclear power, send an s.a.e. to me at Socialist Organiser.



Meryl Streep

Poisoned by despair

Belinda Weaver reviews the film 'Plenty', now on general release.

Something is missing at the heart of "Plenty".

Author David Hare seems to relish putting the boot into post-war Britain. His heroine, Susan Traherne, played by Meryl Streep, is at war with that society, and the words he puts into her mouth are cutting. The script is articulate and, at times, funny.

But he offers no alternative to Susan's reactions to the period – her rage, her later madness.

Solutions

Hare is a supposed left-winger. Yet the "solutions" on show here – despair and self-absorption – are hardly useful formulae for the transformation of a sick society.

The film opens and closes with scenes of the young Susan in France. The first shows her on dangerous SOE (undercover) work. In the final scene, she is gold and hopeful on a photogenic French hilltop after the defeat of the Nazis. Neither scene reveals any reasons for her involvement in the work of the Resistance. It's just a given – there is no clue to her ideals, her politics, her hopes.

In other scenes, she speaks of having lived very intensely then. She never shows any reasoned political or idealistic stance that might explain her work.

In post-war Britain, she refuses to find anything to match her wartime experi-

mat husband does rather better. His outbursts of exasperated love are convincing, although at times he seems almost superhumanly patient. But because he's a diplomat, that is, "tainted", Hare has to show him as blinkered and limited and conventional as well.

Only Tracey Ullmann, as Susan's friend, is allowed to be warm and positive. After all, she's working class. Bui Ullmann is given nothing to do beyond be warm and supportive (endlessly) to Susan. There's no scope for the character.

John Gielgud seems to be having a lot of fun with his fairly minor role. He gets some of the funniest lines to say.

Despair

The film is poisoned by despair, and by negativism. Even Lazar (Sam Neill), the lover Susan met during the war, returns only to disappointment. He too suffers from betrayed idealism – he confides that he "gave in" to "wife – suburbia – corporation". Gave in from what? Hare doesn't deign to say.

Did Susan and Lazar want to fight fascism? Stop the war? Or did they just want to have the romance of living dangerously, Hemingway's "walking hand in hand with life and death"? If they did sincerely want to stop war, why didn't they get involved in politics? War hardly ended

in 1945, after all.

Hare may feel that he doesn't need to spell things out. He possibly assumes that his audience share a general political idealism which would applaud fighting the Nazis in groups like the SOE or the French Resistance as a model of heroic behaviour. But many strands made up that movement – anti-fascists, socialists, patriots. By not spelling out Susan's particular motivation, he can avoid explaining her later abstentionism.

Blurred

Hare purposely keeps the issues blurred. Post-war British society is really a backdrop – it's not in focus, not part of the story. If he brought in real issues, he'd have to deal with them, develop a specific response. By leaving Susan's ideals unclear, he can avoid showing exactly how they were betrayed, and by whom.

The film ends up in a blind alley. No-one working on it seems to have known how to end it, so it peters out by going back to the youthful Susan on her hill, to underline in the most heavy-handed way how far she has travelled from her early hopes.

But Susan's hopes have been shown *only* as a desire to live more intensely, *not* as a desire for a better society. In this context, Susan's revolt is really just the plaintive cry, "Life is dull".

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From Maidstone Prison

You have all heard about the attacks the NCB are making on our union and its members, and the continuing poverty and worry about bills that the miners are still enduring one year after the end of the strike. I would like to try to tell you about what it is like to be a miner in prison.

In my mining community our doors are open to anybody in need and we would never see one of our comrades without. This attitude was the one I brought into prison with me and I shared whatever I had with whoever needed it. But these people in here are not the same as us and certainly do not have the same outlook on life. It was some months before I realised that I had been persistently robbed, by both word and deed, of nearly all

This letter from jailed Kent miner Terry French is reprinted from the magazine Pitwatch.

I possessed. With my eyes open I started to see clearly the environment I was in and become more selective in the company I kept.

Since making that decision I have had a succession of four 'friends'. All have taken advantage of my friendship and called me 'a mug' behind my back. Now I shun anybody who tries to be friendly and gain my trust. Friendship means nothing in here, it's treated with contempt and is seen as a weakness. I live in a world of continual lies and mistrust which, because of my isolation from people of my own kind, is starting to

manifest itself in myself. To survive I have had to become selfish and deceitful and I hate myself for it. I've found myself doubting even what my wife and friends tell me at times.

Hardships

The physical hardships are nothing compared with what I've just described. The dirt, the stench, the cockroaches crawling on your bed, the rats running in the dining hall, pissing and shitting in a bucket, listening to the rattle of keys on the other side of a locked iron door, trips to the local hospital in handcuffs — all this I can contend with. But to attempt to destroy the trust I have in my fellow man is something I will never forgive them for.

As far as the staff are concerned, I'm treated with a

great deal of mistrust and suspicion. This stems from my four and a half month stay at Wandsworth prison where they caught me smuggling letters out to my wife. For this heinous crime I lost ten days remission and spent three days in the punishment cells. When I tell you that I was given one letter a week and one 30 minute visit per month I hope you will understand why I did it. Unfortunately the authorities have never been able to comprehend just how much I love my wife and have labelled me as a subversive for daring to write to her more than the regulations allow. Working at the pit for twenty years taught me that you only obey sensible, worthwhile rules. That is the way I have led my life, and that is the way I intend to continue leading it.

Yes, It's hard being a miner in prison. We don't seem to fit into the regime on either side of the fence and our isolation is all the more pronounced. But every so often I get a letter from a child thanking me for fighting for a future for them, and then it all becomes worthwhile and I know they can't beat me.

Content

The governor here thinks I'm stand-offish, what he doesn't realise is that it is contempt I'm showing for him and his staff. I am a miner, a productive worker, and that puts me and my comrades head and shoulders above them all. My message to all British miners is simply this: Fight or perish: the choice is yours.

The strike has been declared official by the AUEW and has received strong support from the shop stewards' liaison committee in Dundee. A number of speaking tours have already been organised to help build support for the strikers, and a Dundee-wide demonstration is planned for the end of March.

But management at Scottish Electric has also been receiving support from the "comrades" at other factories in Dundee: the latter have threatened to sack the employees for going on the picket line at Scottish Electric, on the grounds that they are engaging in "secondary picketing".

Clearly, if the strikers at Scottish Electric are defeated, then it will be a green light to other employers in Dundee to withdraw union recognition, especially in the context of changing patterns of employment in Dundee. The large workplaces have either shut down or drastically cut down their workforces in previous years, and a lot of smaller factory units the size of Scottish Electric have sprung up.

Send donations/messages of support to: Scottish Electric dispute, c/o John Kydd, Dundee District Secretary, AUEW offices, 26 South Ward Road, Dundee DD1 1TR.

NUM solid in Staffs

By Arthur Bough, President, North Staffs Trades Council, in a personal capacity.

About 100 miners and members of North Staffs Trades Council picketed Hem Heath Colliery in Stoke on 20 March to protest over a visit by Ian MacGregor.

The protest highlighted the fact that nine miners remain sacked in North Staffordshire, and 500 nationally. But MacGregor, who swept into the colliery with his police escort, clearly had no intention of stopping to discuss the matter.

Despite the closure of Wolstanton Colliery as a direct result of the defeat of the 1984 strike, the NUM in North Staffordshire remains solid, and the fighting spirit of those miners and the Women Against Pit Closures group that stuck out the strike is undiminished.

That spirit was evident in the Anniversary Social organised by the North Staffs Miners' Wives Action Group on 14 March.

Only a handful of scabs have joined the UDM despite visits by Lynk and attempts to promote the UDM by the local press. At the last meeting of North Staffs Trades Council it was agreed to call

on all trades unionists to boycott the Albion Pub in Hanley, where the UDM hold their branch meetings.

Now build workplace branches

All 39 trade unions with political funds have voted to keep them. The final two results, from ASTMS and UCATT, were announced last week, with overwhelming votes in favour of retaining the political levy.

This is a big blow to the Tories. They had hoped to cripple the Labour Party, which relies upon the political levy for finance and the political activities of the unions more generally, through legally compulsory ballots on the political fund.

The Tories had believed that passive members of the trades unions could easily be mobilised to vote against the political fund. The ballots would be an expression of 'common sense' and result in a major depoliticisation of trade unions.

Indeed if the Tories' aims had been met, the Labour Party would have suffered a very serious defeat.

Instead it is the Tories who have been knocked back. The labour movement now needs to capitalise on this success. The thousands of trade unionists who voted to keep the political levy must be won to an active support for the Labour Party. Now is the time to initiate workplace Labour Party branches and draw trade union members into political acti-

vity. The NUR has already decided to do this.

We need to make sure that support for the political fund is transformed into a Labour vote, and that trade unionists are made active campaigners for a Labour vote.

But we also have to make sure that the support that is built for Labour is not merely tame support for Neil Kinnock. We need a socialist campaign for a Labour victory: a campaign that links winning votes for Labour to a fight for socialist, class struggle policies, and a rank and file fight for working class interests.

Organising activists in the trade unions around such an approach to the next election can be a first step towards organising a rank and file movement across the trade unions: a democratic, national network of trade union militants that could reverse the defeats that the working class has suffered over recent years.

The success of the campaign to keep the political fund shows that a reservoir of political consciousness exists within the trade unions. It shows that the Tory claim that the trade union rank and file are not interested at all in politics, is false.

The trade union leaders should give a lead in organising that reservoir; but if they fail, rank and file activists must take the initiative.

Barons

This government proudly states that the power of the unions has been handed back to the members and away from the trade union leaders or barons as this government calls them.

Well, if this is the case and the unions are controlled by the members, how does Eric Hammond justify his position?

Hammond has set out to have complete dictatorial control over the EETPU and suppress the membership.

Evidence is coming to light of the difficulty members of the EETPU are having in getting resolutions through from their Branches, due to the way Hammond's bureaucrats are operating.

Hammond, along with people like Lynk of the deplorable UDM are obviously Maggie's darlings of democracy. Whose democracy? Definitely not open socialist trade union democracy, that's for sure, when we see and hear the corruption within the coal industry and now the Wapping scandal.

But I think that due to the rank and file members that these people will be kicked out of the trade union movement forever.

Perhaps they could be walled in at Dulwich, alongside their precious leader. After all, they must be on very good pay-offs, mustn't they?

How much, Maggie?

JOHN MATTHEWS,
TGWU Branch Secretary

Dundee union fight

In the longest-ever strike in Dundee, workers sacked from the Scottish Electric engineering plant are fighting for reinstatement and recognition of their union (AUEW).

The strike began on November 14 last year, to demand the withdrawal of redundancy notices served on three of the ten-strong workforce. One of the three declared redundant was the shop steward, Sid Campbell.

This was an attempt at victimisation — the redundancies were declared despite the plant managing offering overtime every night and all week-ends, and the redundancy notices were issued just 24 hours after the shop steward had submitted the first annual wages and conditions claim.

The rest of the workforce went on strike to demand withdrawal of the redundancies. Two weeks later they received a letter from management telling them to return to work or face the sack.

The strike remains solid, so management sacked the rest of the workforce, and now also refuses to recognise the union.

The degree of victimisation involved in management's tactics is reflected in the fact that it has offered jobs back to nine of the ten sacked workers, but not to the shop steward. But the strikers are not prepared to return to work unless all ten are reinstated, and their union recognised as well.

Scottish Electric has attempted to take on scabs to replace those sacked, advertising in the local notoriously anti-union D.C. Thompson press, which published the adverts but has refused to publish articles about the strike. (A lot of Scottish Electric's work is done for D.C. Thompson).

Only two scabs have started work with the company, both of them lacking the engineering skills of the sacked AUEW members.



Easter NUS

By Simon Pottinger

campaigning strategy in Further Education and so on.

Most interestingly, SSiN is the only group on the left which has submitted policy on racism and fascism. The debate will centre around extending the NUS campaign, particularly towards Anti-Fascist Action, and "no platform".

The SDP and Liberals want to overturn the policy of no platform for fascists, but we should see them off fairly easily.

The major "side" issue at conference will be threatened deratification of any "Zionist" student society at South Bank Polytechnic.

Once again the logic of blandly equating Zionism with racism has run its course into thinly veiled anti-semitism. Not only, however, is a Zionist Jewish Society to be banned at South Bank, but any other society which refuses to put a line condemning Zionism into its constitution.

SSiN will not support this. We use 'no platform' against fascists and racists, not to further anti-semitic ends.

Other emergency motions will probably cover the print dispute and student union autonomy. SSiN will fight to continue and extend support for the print unions and build a national campaign to defend our unions alongside those in the broader movement.

In the elections for NUS president this year, the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) candidate, Vicky Phillips, is running against the Left Alliance's Andy Whyte in what promises to be a close contest. SSiN will be working for NOLS where they are standing, and our own candidate Simon Pottinger will be running for Vice President Welfare because NOLS are not standing.

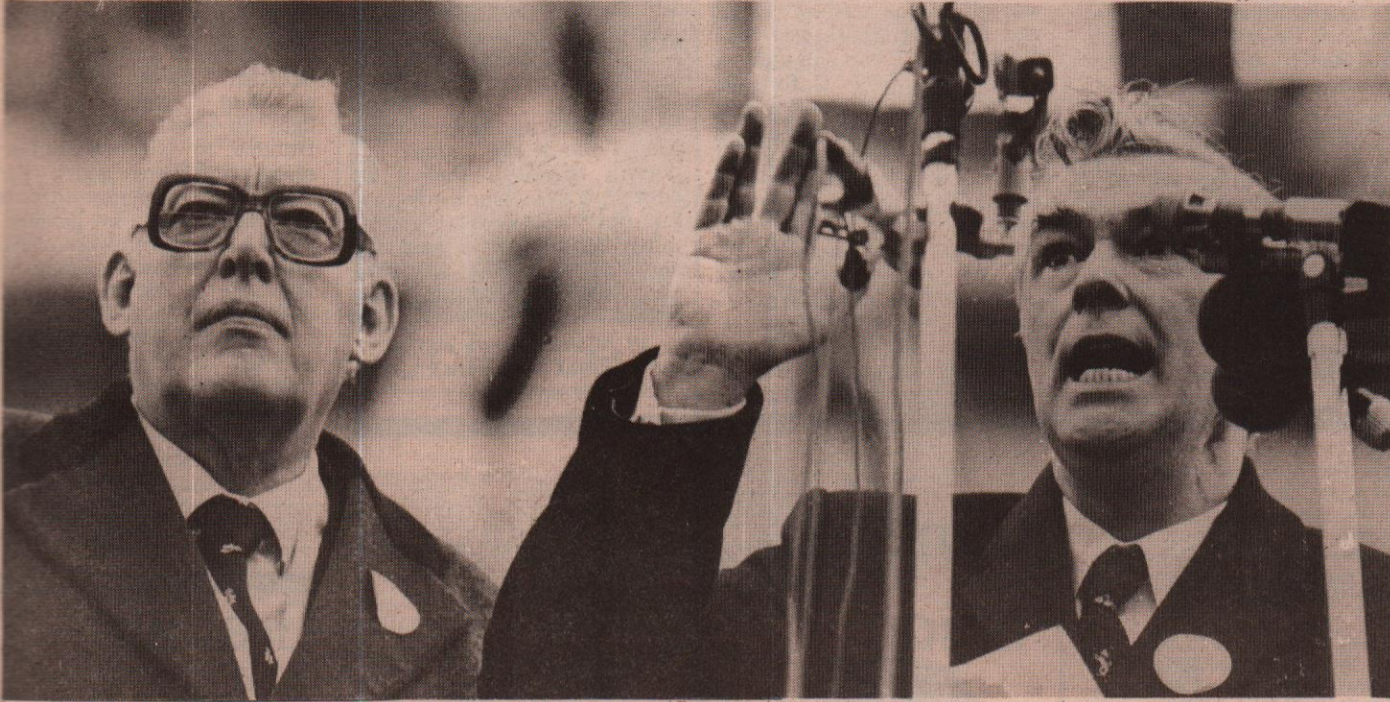
Michele Carlisle, Andy Burke and Melanie Gingell are the other three SSiN candidates who will be contesting part-time posts on the executive.

BLOC CONFERENCE

Saturday 19 April at 11.00 a.m.
Sheffield City Hall
£3 per delegate, up to five delegates
per labour movement organisation

Socialist Organiser

Money still needed



Unionist leaders address rally. Photo: Derek Speirs(Report).

THE ARMY AGAINST THE ORANGEISTS

There was some spectacular violence in Northern Ireland last Monday, 31 March. But it was much less than it might have been.

The planned Orange protest movement, which focused on Portadown in Co. Armagh, was nipped in the bud and outmanoeuvred by the police authorities. The Orangeists were thrown into disarray by a last-minute ban on their planned march.

The police and army were able to seal off the roads into the town and cancel buses booked to take Orange parties to the

By John O'Mahony

demonstration. The organisers had boasted that there would be 20,000 demonstrators at Portadown. In fact they got only a little over 3,000.

The fighting and rioting that followed – and not only in Portadown – points to what is likely to happen in the summer when the Orange 'marching season' gets under way.

* In Lisburn sectarian attacks were launched against Catholic families.

* Shops were looted in Portadown.

* Buses, cars and vans were hijacked in Belfast.

* 125 plastic bullets were fired

by the mainly Protestant police at Protestant crowds. In Portadown 49 people were injured, 13 of them policemen.

* Two policemen's families were driven out of their Protestant neighbourhoods in Craigavon.

* 100 British soldiers were airlifted to the centre of Portadown to seal off a Catholic area from invasion by the Orange marchers. This was the biggest British troop presence on any Orange demonstration so far – and another pointer for the future.

* 28 members of the paramilitary Ulster Defence Association – among them the UDA's chief political representative John McMichael – were rounded up for questioning in a series of well-coordinated raids throughout the Six Counties.

* An incident which may symbolise what is happening occurred at Springfield Road police barracks, which lies at the top of the Catholic Falls Road area but is bounded on one side by the Protestant Springmartin area. In the last 15 years it has frequently been attacked by the IRA. Last Monday it came under fire from the Protestant side.

RUC chief Sir John Hermon justified banning the march on the grounds that Orange paramilitaries planned to take control and to use bombs and guns in a confrontation with the police and army, with the intention of rousing Protestants across the province. Ian Paisley, on the other hand, accused the police and the Northern Ireland Office of deliberately trying to draw the Orangeists into a confrontation: this was Paisley's way of suggesting to his supporters that they should avoid confrontations.

But Paisley no longer has the popular political clout he once had. He led his followers on a march to defy the ban during the

hours of darkness between Sunday and Monday, claimed a victory, and urged Orangeists to do nothing else that day.

It is impossible to know how many who would otherwise have turned out stayed at home because of Paisley, but certainly thousands did not heed him.

The Official Unionist Party, whose leader James Molyneux vowed 'Never Again' after the one day strike and riots of 3 March, was conspicuously absent from Portadown. The role of moderator was left to Paisley – who failed, at least in large measure.

The inevitable process of splitting and division among the recently united Orangeists seems to have been accelerated by Portadown. Some Orangeists are now beginning to talk about the need to make peace with Britain.

Plastic bullets against Protestants; unprecedented involvement of troops against Protestants; sectarian attacks – these are the indicators of the new basic situation in the Six Counties, the radical alienation from Britain of the Protestant majority.

If the OUP and perhaps others now seek 'compromises' short of the abandonment of the Anglo-Irish agreement by Britain, that may damp down some Protestant anger. It will not damp it all down and it may simply lead to the isolation of those who want 'compromises'.

All the strong legal and constitutional weapons against the British government have already been exhausted. There are only two roads open to the Orangeists: to compromise or to go deeper into opposition, including illegal opposition.

They will not all choose either course – and some will try to avoid any clear choice. The big question after the Orangeists' Easter Monday is: how many will choose to go into illegality?

£27.90 was collected last weekend at LPYS conference for our premises fund, and although mail has been held up by the Easter holiday, we've also had donations from:

Margaret Bulaitis £20; Glasgow So, £21 from a social and £5 from their '50 Club'; Gordon McNeil £5; Christine Priestley £10; first instalment from a sponsored swim by Ruth Cockcroft, £7.50; Cathy Nugent £17.60; Jake Jackson £3.

As we go to press two SO supporters are cycling 108 miles round the boundary of the Greater Manchester Council to mark abolition day, and we'll be getting in the money for sponsorships for them in coming weeks.

Please send donations to Socialist Organiser, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.

Local Group	Target	So far	Per cent
North London	1600	1291.68	81%
Nottingham	1000	965.01	97%
South London	800	899.26	112%
Manchester	1000	778.95	78%
East London	760	648.12	85%
Merseyside	500	487.50	98%
Cardiff	600	462.50	77%
Glasgow/Edinburgh	560	394.00	70%
Durham/North East	200	291.80	146%
Sheffield	400	259.41	65%
York/Harrogate	300	213.10	71%
West London	500	200.00	40%
Coventry	350	213.10	71%
Stoke South	200	198.00	99%
Stoke North	200	172.75	86%
Basingstoke	560	127.47	22%
Colchester	100	67.80	68%
Birmingham	100	65.00	65%
Aberdeen	20	46.00	230%
Oxford	40	40.00	100%
Canterbury	90	43.00	48%
Southampton	60	16.00	27%
Leeds	60		
Central/general	5000	1553.20	31%
Total	15000	9413.63	63%

YOUTH fightback

YOUTH FIGHTBACK no.4 – OUT NOW!

Fighting racism, South Africa, YTS, and the politics of Militant.

25p by post from: Tim, 33 Hackworth Point, Rainhill Way, London E3.

