

# SOCIALIST PRESS



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# BENN'S STAND TESTS LABOUR LEFT



Tony Benn speaking at the Blackpool conference

Squawks of rage from Labour Party headquarters, the Houses of Parliament, the Tory press and top union leaders are no bad thing. They generally mean that the right wing is under attack.

Last week's squawks arose after Tony Benn had well and truly set the cat among Labour's right wing ravens, Tribunite 'doves' and the vultures of Fleet Street.

His decision to stand against Healey for the deputy leadership of the Party has rudely disrupted the attempts by the right, the "centre" and the fakers of the Tribune Group to cobble together the fraudulent pretence of political "unity" on the basis of hollow anti-Tory rhetoric.

Benn's stand is a direct challenge to the growing arrogance of the party's right wing—now regrouped and organised in the ludicrously mis-named "Labour Solidarity" grouping.

## Clique

Having dried their tears at the loss of Shirley Williams, Owen and co., this shady clique of shadow cabinet spokesmen and union bureaucrats has gone on a rampage against the policies and constitutional changes agreed at last year's Blackpool conference and the special conference at Wembley.

Dennis Healey in particular has gone even further and called openly for a new

witch-hunt against the left within the Party, including the expulsion of supporters of the Militant tendency.

And in the absence since the January conference of a clear line of struggle for the Party's left wing, the "Solidarity" gang have seemed very much to set the pace of events.

## Splitters

Indeed from the outset it has been the right wing that has directed towards divisions and splits in the party.

\*Callaghan, having been defeated on policy and constitutional questions last October, resigned early to provoke an immediate leadership election under the old rules.

\*The right wing PLP went ahead with that election, despite the appeals of the Party NEC for them not to do so. Foot won after a four-cornered fight in which the press backed Healey.

\*After demanding that the left should support the outcome of the Wembley conference "whatever the outcome", Foot and the right wing, after having been defeated, at once declared their intention to overturn the decision.

\*The most virulent right wing opponents of party democracy and socialist policies then actually split from the Party to form the SPD—leaving behind them a large body of their co-thinkers.

\*Since then Healey and Shore have been grabbing press headlines and touring



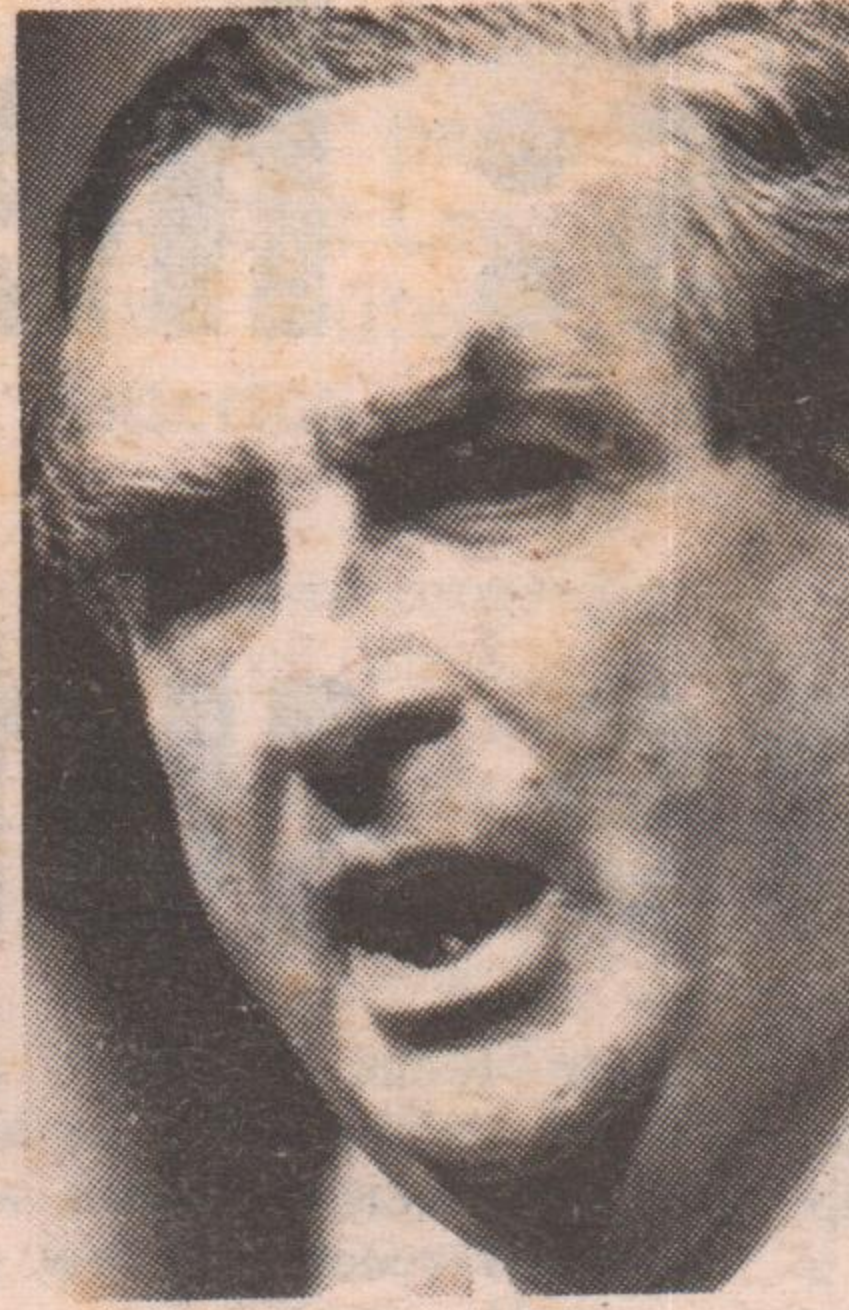
Evans

the country, arguing that the policies adopted by last October's conference are "unrepresentative", publicly attacking them, and seeking to witch-hunt and expel socialists from the Party in order to "reverse the trend".

In declaring himself as a candidate for the Deputy leadership, Benn is not so much initiating a new struggle in the Labour Party: rather he is at last offering leftward moving members of the Party a rallying cry and an issue around which to fight back against the right wing splitters.

He has particularly angered those who are fighting to reverse the Wembley conference decision, since he is now pressing home an election under the new rules—to take place the very day before Foot and his bureaucratic cronies make their bid to overturn those rules!

And he has annoyed union leaders, by making it quite clear that his appeal



Healey

for support is directed not so much to them as top bureaucrats, but to the rank and file membership in the branches, and to the delegates to this summer's union conferences.

This is an important and positive step towards breaking out the whole debate on democratic procedures and the fight on policy and programme beyond the Labour Party itself, into the wider trade union and labour movement.

## First step

It is the first step by a prominent Labour left winger to build a left wing current in the trade unions and break from the customary manoeuvres and back-stage deals that characterise relationships between Labour leaders and union bosses.

Such a turn is a particular embarrassment to left talking bureaucrats such as



Heffer

Moss Evans of the TGWU, and Clive Jenkins of ASTMS who have repeatedly postured as strong supporters of Benn.

Now they have the choice of breaking from their right wing TUC colleagues and throwing their practical support behind Benn's campaign, or standing exposed before their own members as allies of Healey and the right wing.

But it is not only the trade union leaders who find themselves put on the spot by Benn's stand: the same is also true of the bulk of the Parliamentary "Tribune" group.

Once clearly the left of the Labour Party, the Tribune group has been more and more overtaken by the growing leftward movement of the party's rank and file.

Clinging to its friendly relationships with the right wing and the union bureaucracy, the bulk of the

Tribune group has remained linked firmly to the trappings of Parliamentary democracy: dozens of Tribunites joined with the right wing to condemn the outcome of the Wembley Conference and pledge to campaign for its reversal.

Now the Tribunites' outright opposition to any serious fight against the right wing is epitomised by the reactionary statements from John Silkin, and the rumbly threats from Eric Heffer to stand against Tony Benn in a deliberate move to split the left wing vote and ensure Healey's re-election.

A minority of left wing Labour MPs however—prominent among them Reg Race, Michael Meacher and others—have lent support to Benn's stand, and begun themselves to turn towards mobilising the necessary movement in the unions.

There is no doubt that Benn, for all his correct and wide-reaching criticisms of the right wing and of the record of previous Labour governments, has serious political limitations.

## 'Alternative strategy'

In particular he, along with many of his fellow left MPs, and the Labour Coordinating Committee, remains committed to the so-called "Alternative Economic Strategy" (AES) as a solution to the capitalist crisis.

The AES certainly contains some progressive proposals—including the expansion of state spending on useful public works.

But at the same time it is strongly infected by nationalism, with its strident demands for import controls to protect "British" capitalist industry against "foreign" capitalist competition.

Such a policy wrongly directs British workers to seek a common "national interest" with their own employers.

And indeed the AES is seen by its supporters as a means of reforming and restructuring capitalism in

Britain rather than a strategy for the establishment of a planned socialist economy on the basis of nationalisation of the banks, land and major industry.

*Socialist Press* for this reason opposes the Alternative Economic Strategy (though on occasion our fight for partial and transitional demands may well bring us into a united front with supporters of the AES).

## Disagree

And we also strongly disagree with Benn's position of opposing the fight for immediate industrial action to bring down the Tory government.

Benn believes that this is a premature step since "first" it is necessary to change the character of the Labour Party and its leadership.

Such a view introduces a false separation between the political fight within the Labour Party and the development of the class struggle as a whole, and flows from Benn's still Parliamentary perspective of the fight for socialism.

But despite these limitations, Benn's campaign against Healey offers to reinvigorate the struggle for socialist policies against the right wing within the labour movement in the next six months.

At long last a left winger has taken up a fight to defeat and remove the right. On this basis socialists should extend to Benn their firm but critical support.

*Socialist Press* calls on readers and supporters in Labour Parties and trade union branches to utilise to the full this new opportunity for a political campaign in which basic issues of policy and programme can be debated out.

Benn has set the cat among the pigeons: it is up to socialists to make sure some feathers fly, and a principled Marxist leadership built within the labour movement as a whole.

# Stop WRP bid to gag labour movement press

Socialist Press Editorial Board statement

Socialist Press readers will know that last week's issue was reduced in size to eight pages. They may also have deduced from the page numbers and the lack of explanation that this was a last minute change.

But what they will probably not know is that the disruption of our newspaper was the outcome of a particularly nasty exercise in censorship and intimidation carried out by the Workers Revolutionary Party led by Gerry Healy.

Acting in her capacity as a Central Committee member of the WRP, actress Vanessa Redgrave recently issued a writ for libel against both Morning Litho Printers Ltd and Sean Matgamna of *Socialist Organiser*. The writ alleged libel in respect of an article in *Socialist Organiser* 33 entitled 'Gaddafi's Foreign Legion to Knight's Rescue'.

## Contesting

Sean Matgamna is contesting the libel suit, and defending his article.

But Morning Litho Printers, who became involved solely through their commercial relationship with *Socialist Organiser* promptly published an apology to the WRP in *Socialist Organiser* 37.

This was not enough for the WRP. Not content with

threatening court action against SO, they were determined to prevent that paper from being published at all. Redgrave therefore issued a further writ against both Morning Litho and SO for the text of an appeal for funds to defend the case.

## Circular

And she has issued a further writ against SO supporter John Bloxam for the text of a circular to SO supporters' groups seeking cash to fight the original libel suit.

Morning Litho were also until this week the printers of *Socialist Press*.

But according to Morning Litho Printers, Redgrave's lawyers told their representatives that further writs would be issued in respect of each and every reference to the WRP in any paper printed by them.

This threat proved to be effective. And last week Morning Litho refused to print a page of *Socialist Press* (this week's page 9), necessitating the last-minute deletion of two pages out of ten.

## Wealth

This monstrous abuse of Redgrave's wealth in an attempt to silence labour movement critics through the threat of action in the capitalist courts presented us with a problem.



Healy (foreground) with Corin and Vanessa Redgrave

As a matter of principle we could not remain silent about the WRP's outrageous actions in recent months.

Yet if we remained with Morning Litho, Healy was now free to denounce us each day as "scabs" and "police agents" in *Newsline* while legally blocking our right to reply.

In this situation we have had no choice but to change printers. We are grateful to East End Litho for agreeing to print our paper at short notice.

The new arrangements make possible a return to our old 12-page format—and an increase in coverage. This will enable us to play our part in exposing the WRP's attempts to suppress rival left wing papers and gag its critics.

Certainly the recent actions of the WRP appear most sinister. In taking Sean Matgamna to court the WRP can hope to gain nothing; but it is certain that such a legal confrontation would offer the mass media a new

chance to discredit left wing politics in general and Trotskyism in particular.

Sean Matgamna has quite rightly said that he has no wish to go into the courts on the issue; but if dragged into court by the WRP he will have no choice but to defend his article.

The only victors from such a case would be the enemies of the working class.

As an alternative, Matgamna has proposed to the WRP that a labour movement inquiry investigate the

charges he has raised and the WRP's claims to the contrary. We have no doubt that Healy will reject such a proposal.

Why is it that the WRP, which refuses to take legal action against the *Daily Telegraph* for its witch-hunting articles, insists on taking labour movement opponents into the bosses' courts?

The answer lies in the complete departure by the WRP from any vestiges of principle.

## Sabotage

Its activities particularly since the beginning of 1981 bear all the hallmarks not of political campaign work but of systematic sabotage against the revolutionary left in Britain.

After years in which the WRP had followed a deeply sectarian path far from the mainstream labour movement the Healy leadership decided to take part in the two Lambeth cuts conferences.

But they did so on the basis of a major political lurch to the right, involving support for swingeing rate and rent increases, support for the sale of council houses, support for popular-frontist "community councils", and opposing confrontation with the Tory government.

On these issues the WRP was correctly and soundly defeated, particularly at the January Lambeth conference.

Since then we have seen Healy's savage retaliation.

In Lambeth the WRP has scandalously attempted to equate the SWP with the National Front because they took the correct stand during the 'week of action' of opposing rate increases.

## Suspended

Since then WRP members and supporters on Lambeth Trades Council have fought to remove Vanessa Wiseman from her position as Trades Council President—arguing that since her victimisation by the NUT leadership means that she is suspended from union membership, she is not entitled to be a delegate! This outrageous WRP position has even been opposed by local members of the Communist Party.

In Leicester, WRP delegates to the Trades Council have formed a bloc with Tories and the right wing to push through the abolition of the sub-committees which had led local struggles against the cuts, to defeat a resolution censuring the Trades Council officers for seeking to obtain a state ban on a New National Front demonstration, and to secure the election of a WRP supporter as Trades Council Secretary.

And outside the BL car factories in Cowley the WRP recently distributed a lavish two-colour leaflet with no other purpose than to brand Alan Thornett as a "scab" and a police agent—to the delight of management and the right wing.

The WRP are inordinately fond of branding their opponents as "provocateurs" and "agents". Their most grandiose campaign along these lines has been aimed at the entire leadership of the American SWP: and by tortuous lines of specious "logic" the net has been widened to include Tariq Ali of the IMG and *Socialist Press* editor John Lister.

## Censorship

We ask the workers' movement and the revolutionary left to make their assessment: which party is now clearly bent on disrupting, discrediting, censoring and bankrupting their political opponents? What party is now playing exactly the kind of scabbing, sabotaging role that any provocateur would be proud of?

The *Newsline* is just completing yet another appeal fund, in which no doubt unsuspecting militants attracted by WRP propaganda gave hard-earned cash to "build the party".

Did they know that such funds are being used alongside Redgrave's wealth to muzzle and suppress the labour movement press?

It is high time they were told. We pledge ourselves to fight alongside other Trotskyists to expose the real politics of the WRP to its members and supporters, and to defeat Healy's attempts to sabotage the building of a revolutionary leadership in the British labour movement.

# SPECIAL FUND

## Back to 12 pages: help us to restore all the cuts!

This week marks the return to a 12-page *Socialist Press* and with it a partial restoration of the cuts we were forced to make at the beginning of the year.

The extra two pages a week mean that in particular we can increase our coverage of industrial news and the struggles against local councils implementing Tory cuts and massive rent and rate increases—coverage which has been unavoidably curtailed since we cut back to 10 pages last January.

So we've made a start. But unfortunately we are not yet in a position to publish *Red Youth* and *Woman Worker* as completely separate papers.

So whenever these publications appear they will also take four of our twelve pages. Our aim must therefore be to complete the restoration of the cuts made by publishing these two papers separately once more.

But if we are to succeed in maintaining the 12-page paper and reversing all the

cuts we have been forced to make we depend on two things.

Firstly, on top of our monthly fund of £850 we need to raise the £2,500 Special Fund launched last week. The continual rapid rise in inflation hits us two ways. It confronts us with continually rising costs in producing and distributing *Socialist Press*; and it reduces the living standards of our supporters and their ability to contribute to our fund.

## Expand work

Yet we make no apology in appealing to our readers and supporters to come forward with the money necessary to complete this fund which will, apart from warding off our creditors, ensure the successful return to 12-page production and, we hope, leave some cash spare to help expand our international work within the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

The other factor which can help guarantee the success of our return to 12 pages is the fight to sell the

paper.

We are determined to hold the price down to 20p and with our change to a new printer and a slightly larger page size, you'll be getting more for your money. So we hope this will make it easier for our readers and supporters to sell *Socialist Press*.

With hostility to the Tories growing all the time and a major debate about to begin within the Labour Party on the policies the next Labour government should implement, there will be every opportunity in the coming weeks and months to sell *Socialist Press* at work, at trade union meetings, Labour Party branches, to the unemployed and on demonstrations.

## Extra copies

We appeal to our readers and supporters to take the opportunities presented and help us increase the circulation and influence of *Socialist Press* within the labour movement.

Take a few extra copies each week to sell. Contact

your local *Socialist Press* seller or write to us at the address below if you would like to receive a few extra copies.

Meanwhile, we urgently need to raise the first £750 of our Special Fund. So far we have £457.00 leaving us £293.00 to raise within the next few days.

Why not send us a dona-

tion today—however large or small. The Special Fund runs until July 18—the beginning of the WSL Summer School—so you can send us a donation each month if you like!

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# ITALIAN CP: WHERE "OPPOSITION" MEANS SUPPORT!

By Henry Phillips

It might be supposed that when a political party which was vehement about its opposition to government policies found itself in a majority in the parliament it would vote to bring down the government it professed to hate.

Not, however, when the opposition party concerned is the Italian Communist Party! That was exactly the situation in a recent parliamentary session when the coalition government forces were depleted through the decreasing level of commitment of coalition MPs.

The Italian CP, however, seeing that it was in a majority on an important issue proposed the adjournment of the session until the next day!

## Goodwill

This is one example, among many, of the true content of the Communist Party's continued position of "opposition" to the centre-left government led by the Christian Democrats.

Despite the "opposition", the Christian Democrats know that they can only rule with a certain amount of goodwill from the Communist Party.

In fact the Christian Democrats are only too well aware that in the short term it is only the CP's "opposition" which saves them from an acute social crisis on a nationwide scale.

Because the CP's stance of "opposition" is necessary for the CP to maintain at least a modicum of control over its increasingly radicalised rank and file and to offer it some perspec-

tive to compete with the various "autonomous" movements among workers, the unemployed and students.

These movements tend to be erratic and geographically dispersed—but in some areas, like the city of Naples, they have presented a real challenge to the state authorities.

Naples today is the scene of daily protest demonstrations and occupations of public buildings by groups of unemployed workers and homeless people.

The unemployment rate in the city is over twice the national average of 9% and a whole generation of the city's youth is failing to find any work at all.

At the same time the chronic housing crisis in Naples has been made suddenly more acute by the migration which has followed last winter's earthquake.

## Upheaval

"Three months after the earthquake," said local CP secretary Antonio Bassolini, "Naples is in a vast and confused social upheaval."

In Naples itself, the CP has already lost control of these, the most militant and oppressed sections of the masses.

This is because in Naples the CP is itself (along with the



Italian CP demonstration

Socialists and Republicans) part of the coalition of parties which govern the municipality.

Naples' social upheaval is therefore beginning to show what can happen in the whole of Italy if the political control over the masses is lost.

On a national scale, therefore, CP "opposition" serves the interest both of the CP bureaucracy and of the Italian capitalist class.

"Opposition" is to all appearances in direct contrast to the CP's earlier plan for a

government coalition between itself and the Christian Democrats—a government embodying the "historic compromise".

"Opposition", however, is a logical continuation of the same policies of class collaboration and policing of the labour movement which under earlier different circumstances expressed themselves as the "historic compromise".

The change, however, shows that the social and economic crisis in Italy makes it increasingly difficult to contain the

working class within the confines of the traditional post-war political structure.

And after this tactic of "opposition" is exhausted there is no further logical step.

It remains, therefore, quite possible that the Italian CP will need to revert at some stage to a new version of the "historic compromise"—though this time it would have to demand more concessions from the Christian Democrats than in the earlier version.

And there remains a size-

able section of the Christian Democratic leadership which believes that in the end it will be necessary to take the step of bringing the CP directly into the government.

Even the strongest opponents of this are now almost openly admitting that there is no future in the continuation of the current crisis-torn conditions—and still less on a minority monocolour Christian Democrat government.

## "Non-political"

In the absence of the immediate possibility of military take-over then other "non-political" solutions are being mooted.

The latest of these proposals is for a government of technocrats—a so-called "institutional government"—to be led possibly by the president of the Senate Amintore Fanfani, the veteran leader of the right wing of the Christian Democrats.

This is seen by many politicians—by the small but influential Republican Party for instance—as a way of bringing the CP into the government in a more indirect way, by including CP technocrats.

The currency of ideas of this kind reflects the despair of much of the bourgeoisie about finding a solution to their problems of rule in the present parliament.

## Refused

The ideas are also encouraged by recent words of the President of the Republic, the Socialist Sandro Pertini in refusing point blank to dissolve parliament and call early elections:

"We've had enough. I am no longer willing to dissolve parliament. I have already warned: this parliament must die by natural causes. Don't expect me to dissolve it again. I will go to any possible lengths, even if they seem absurd, to send the government back before parliament. Parliament must assume its responsibilities."

But neither Pertini nor anyone else can square the circle of Italian parliamentary politics.

Meanwhile, as the problem continues unresolved, the present government's survival still depends on the CP—not because the CP votes for it in the way it used to, but because it won't on any important issue vote against it unless it can be certain in advance of losing the vote!

# Steel bosses profit from US war drive

C. Larry French, president of the National Steel and Shipbuilding Company, and chairman of the board of the Shipbuilders Council of America is obviously a big name in the shipbuilding industry.

Lately, he's been getting in the news for two reasons: one, his company has been locked in battle with the ranks of Ironworkers Local 627 in San Diego, which he has been trying to bust through frame-ups and with the cooperation of the union's international that has recently put the militant local under trusteeship.

The second reason Larry French is getting famous is that he, as a major spokesperson in his industry, is promoting enormous spending increases by the Navy to prepare for war.

The Reagan government has quickly adopted the view that the Navy will become a vital tool of American imperialism.

The Navy has received an increase of \$9 billion in its budget from the new admin-

istration to buy new ships and aircraft, which is a 40% increase over what the Carter administration had requested.

NASSCO president French has been leading the shipbuilding industry's campaign to inject new funds into the Navy which will in turn sign contracts with the shipbuilders.

"I think," says French, "what the Reagan administration ought to be backing is a

phased programme of increasing naval ship construction."

Small wonder that French thinks this, since, as noted in the February 1, 1981 *Maritime Reporter*, NASSCO has just received \$19.8 million in order to refit tankers to comply with Department of Navy codes for ships in use in time of war and national emergency.

Now things are moving rather fast. By February 27 the Reagan regime announced that, among the new batch of military "advisors" being sent to assist the military government in El Salvador will be an advisor from the Navy.

US and El Salvador navy vessels will be used to patrol the Gulf of Fonseca (the sea route between Nicaragua and El Salvador), which is the passage way of the alleged arms supply pipeline to the Salvadoran revolutionaries.

The US Navy will also be indispensable to American imperialism when the time comes for Reagan to dispatch thousands of troops backed by vital supply lines to what is quickly becoming the Vietnam of Central America.

The millions of workers and students who will soon be thrown into the national (and international) movement to oppose this war will be looking for ways to concretely stop this brutal intervention against the

Salvadorean masses.

The halting of military shipments to El Salvador by the ILWU should now be combined with the growing campaign to defend the right of NASSCO shipyard workers in San Diego to strike over safety issues, and to halt the attempts of Ironworkers International officials to put the local under trusteeship.

For the workers at NASSCO, the stepped-up war production has meant the deaths of two workers at the shipyard, two workers at trumped-up charges of three NASSCO workers, and a government and company attempt to bust the union.

The anti-war campaign should also be brought into the NASSCO shipyard. As part of the campaign to defend Local 627, NASSCO workers should address the entire anti-war movement and direct it against the shipyard owners, the Navy and the Reagan government.

NASSCO workers should prepare to join the nationally coordinated demonstration against the war and the draft that has been called on May 9 in San Francisco. At this demonstration and at the San Diego shipyard the following slogans should be raised:

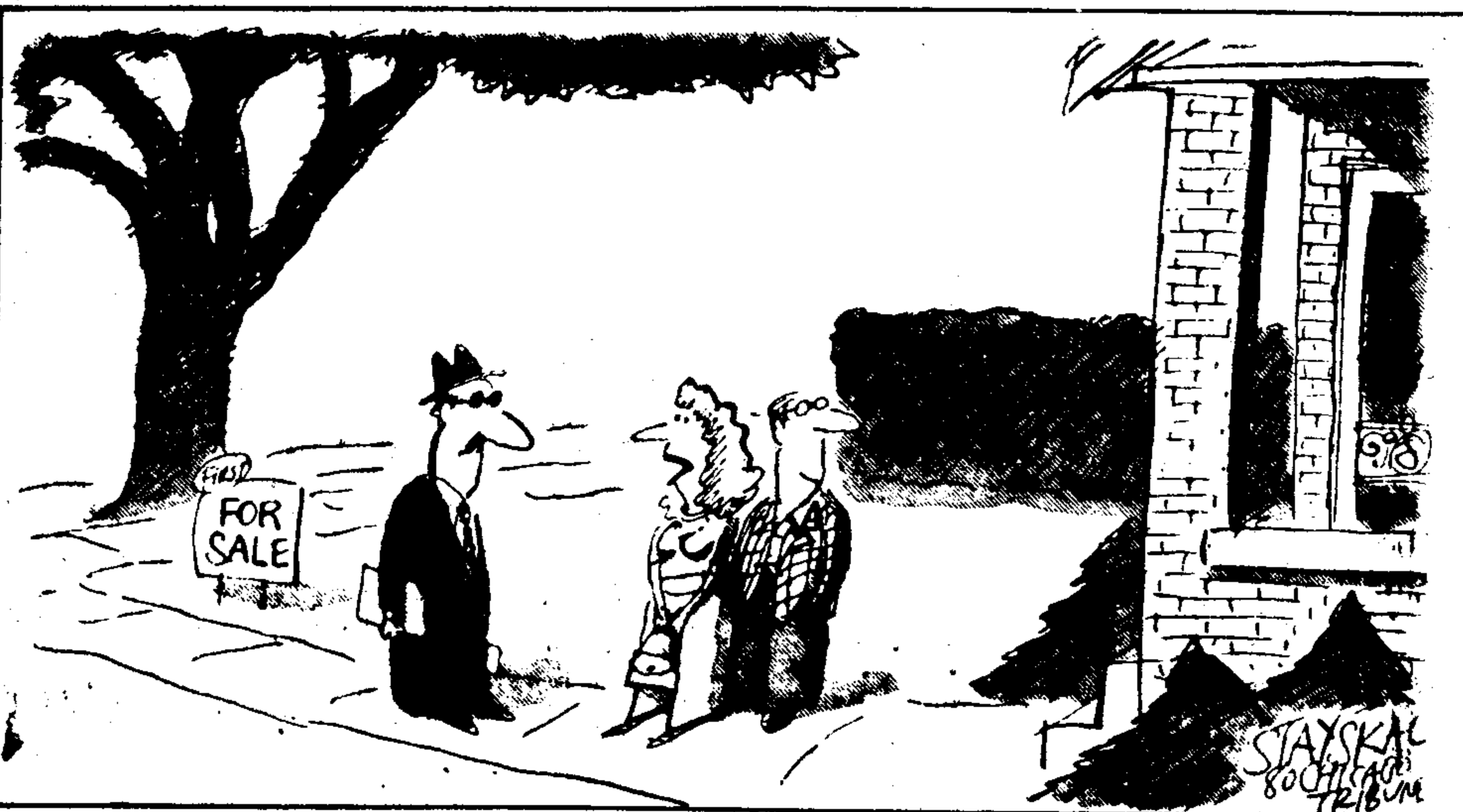
\*Strike against the War speed-up and killings at the NASSCO shipyard.

\*No NASSCO ships to El Salvador, or to supply operations in El Salvador.

\*Build a Labour Party in California against anti-democratic trusteeship.

\*Free the NASSCO Three!

## war drive



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No. 1 Nov. 1979

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# Islington left sees light at the end of the tunnel

By J. L. Mahon

Important developments have been recorded in the long and complicated story of the Islington North Labour Party over recent weeks.

The battle of over ten years against a right wing group which has been accused of almost every form of sharp practice from packing meetings to completely illegal expulsions—and much else besides.

Occasional reference to these events has been made in *Socialist Press* over the years, particularly during the period in 1978 when the right wing majority on the GMC refused to follow the National Executive and to reinstate Keith Vaness.

Comrade Vaness, who spoke on the issue at a conference of the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, was expelled by the right wing for the 'crime' of criticising the right wing MP, Michael O'Halloran.

Readers of *Socialist Press* might perhaps be excused for some confusion about what has happened since that time.

## Dustbins

If they have seen London's *New Standard* they will have emerged with the view that the campaign consisted of searches through the dustbins of right wingers, photographing them going into meetings, and sending poison pen letters, threatening the spastic child of Michael O'Halloran.

Those who find these fantasies difficult to believe will have been able to see a more sophisticated version of the same story in a recent issue of the *New Statesman*.

Here they could have read an article by the editor Bruce Page to explain that a small group of ultra-right wingers had broken away recently to set themselves up as 'Social Democrats'. This, he tried to explain as part of the 'grass roots' of the Williams/Jenkins/Owen 'gang'.

In some ways the *New Statesman* analysis is even more fanciful than the routine witch-hunts of the ordinary capitalist press.

The account appeared to be unaware of the character of these 'grass roots'.

One of their leaders is Jim Evans, current Mayor of the borough, who tried to lead a walk-out from a recent GMC (at which he had lost the vote) by squaring up to a delegate who moved next business.

Another of the group is Pat Shearan, former bouncer and now manager of the Gresham ballroom on the Holloway Road and described in the *New Statesman* as 'chunky' and 'approachable'.

## Boycotted

He is now posing as the defender of 'traditional Labour values' in advertisements bought in the local *Islington Gazette*, a paper being boycotted by trade unionists at the moment because the proprietors are involved in the dispute at the *Camden Journal*.

These people are quite different from the claret-swilling Euro-worshippers of the newly formed Social Democratic Party.

They have not got their base in the merchant banks and the EEC gravy trains. The tiny group of ultra-right wingers in Islington is more into much tinier gravy trains, the mayoral chains of office and the 'fame' of getting their grinning visages into the local paper.

The events over recent

months within the Islington North Labour Party are of such Byzantine complexity that it is almost impossible to give a brief summary.

However, the main developments have amounted to the fact that the group opposed to O'Halloran and his cronies, after years of effort, recruited more and more people into the Party and into affiliated bodies like the Cooperative Party.

## Defeated

One ward at least, now has a membership of over 400, greater than the entire constituency party of South Islington.

As a result of this, they have finally defeated the pro-O'Halloran group.

The tactic of the pro-O'Halloran-ites was at first to refuse to accept new members.

When this failed they tried other means. When they had control of membership books they have then produced their own very doubtful people as members, for example in the women's section.

They have secured affiliations as from some TGWU branches which have not been clearly agreed by the branches themselves.

When they still lose, as in recent meetings of the GMC, they have tried to prevent meetings from taking decisions.

When it seemed certain that they would lose, they have boycotted meetings as happened at the St. George's ward AGM, and at the recalled AGM of the GMC.

Then they have cried 'foul', gone to the capitalist media pleading 'infiltration', alleging poison pen letters and any other fanciful inventions that occur to them.



Owen: recruits in Islington

In the summer of 1980 during the selection of the GLC candidate, the majority of the Executive attempted to impose a short list of five—at least two of whom soon afterwards joined the Social Democrats, while the rest were all extreme right wingers.

When this list was rejected in its entirety at a GMC meeting, they tried to prevent any further selection by beginning a round of challenges to their opponents on the GMC.

Since no decision could be made locally the matter went to the London Regional Council of the Labour Party. There it was agreed eventually to select Steve Bundred as the prospective GMC candidate.

Comrade Bundred, though not on the original right wing short list, was actually nominated by every ward and has the strong support of the current GMC majority.

He has since said in an interview in *Socialist Organiser* that

he sees the challenge to the Tories as a major task for the Labour GLC and stated the necessity to be prepared to defy the law in order to do this.

The weeks following the selection of Steve Bundred in the autumn of 1980 were clearly desperate for the old guard supporters of O'Halloran.

When it came to the branch AGMs in January, it gradually became clear that they would have great difficulty retaining control.

In Junction Ward they locked the doors as part of their desperate effort to hold on.

In St. George's Ward they did not turn up.

In Hillmarton, which they unexpectedly lost, they got through a motion of no confidence in the GMC delegates before they had even got to attend any meetings!

## Lost election

Meanwhile they rapidly increased their trade union delegates.

The Constituency Secretary Morgan Lear suddenly became an accredited delegate from the TGWU, though his membership of this union was not previously known.

He had long been known to be in NALGO, as an architect for the Islington Council.

Despite all their best efforts, however, the O'Halloran group did not get a majority in the AGM of the GMC.

They lost the election for President by one or two votes and community activist and left winger Maureen Leigh was elected.

At the initial meeting, once it had been established that by this vote they were in a minority, they prevented the meeting from taking any further decisions.

When the GMC was reconvened, with the agreement of the Labour Party national agent, the O'Halloran group realised they would not win. Their opponents were elected to all the positions since all but two or three O'Halloran-ites failed to turn up.

These developments are of considerable significance for the labour movement in Islington, quite independent of the national political situation.

The old gang which has run the council has suffered a considerable defeat.

Thus council leader Gerry Southgate has been voted off the GMC.

Bill Bayliss, his lieutenant and former leader, has failed in his efforts to retain control in the Cooperative Party, temporarily closed down in the course of the battle.

Social Services chairperson Audrey Bayliss has been faced with mass demonstrations and strikes in her department not just against cuts but also against the dictatorial methods of carrying them out.

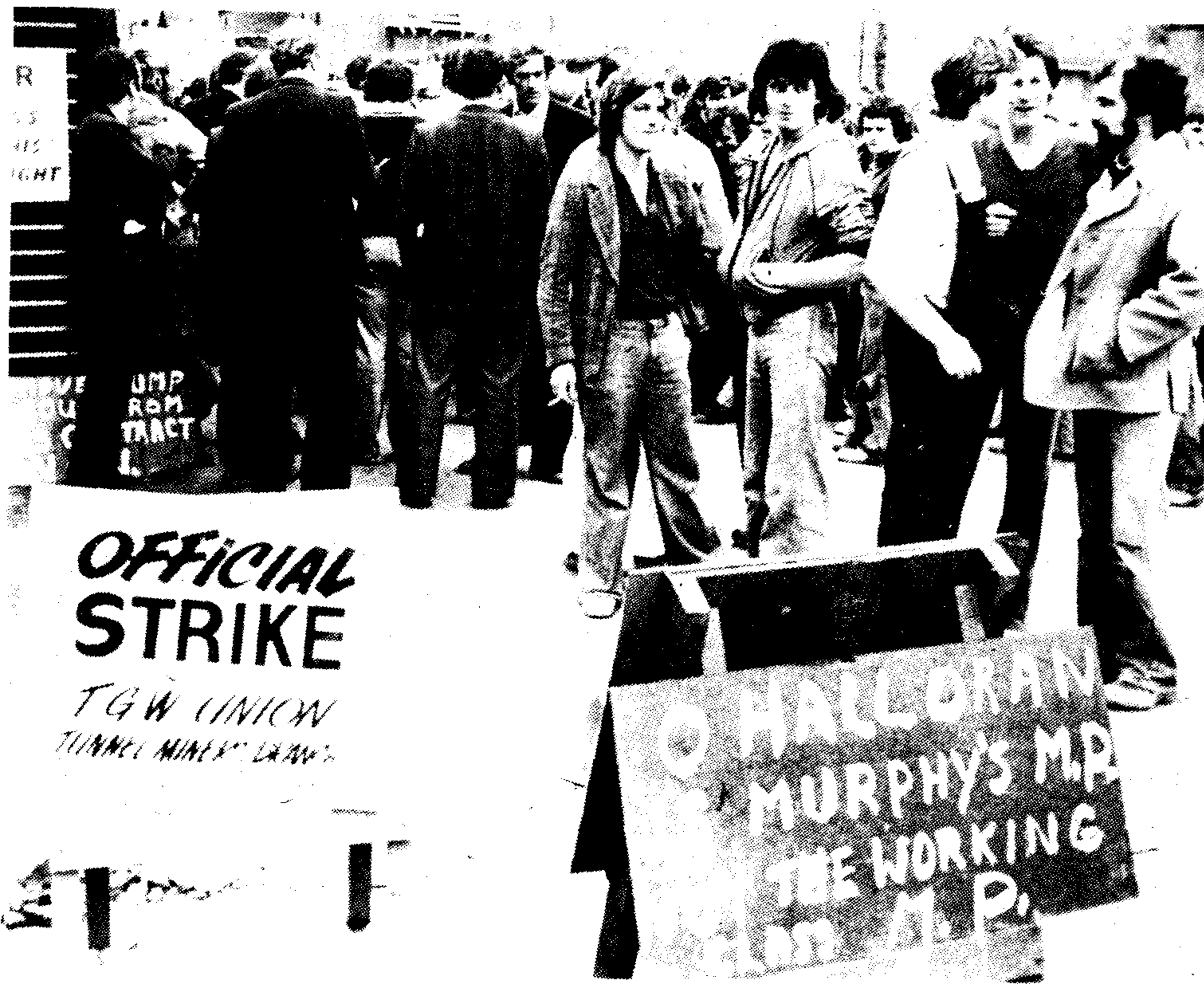
The crisis has caused the old group to break up.

The extreme right, led by Evans, Shearan and others, has defected altogether, and used the Social Democratic Party as a desperate and almost certainly unsuccessful attempt to retain some political support.

## Shamefaced

They have gained the support of former secretary Morgan Lear, who is agent for the Social Democrats in both South and North Islington for the GLC elections.

Other parts of the O'Halloran group have in a shamefaced way begun to turn up to some election meetings



Strikers protest at O'Halloran's political positions in 1977

and to address some of the envelopes for Steve Bundred's GLC election campaign.

For most of the old guard they have been concerned with efforts to hold onto some of their positions within the Council, which are now under threat.

Until recently the Labour Group was fairly evenly divided. The defection of Evans and Co means that the Southgate-Bayliss group can no longer be certain of dominance.

The anti-O'Halloran group has been portrayed as extreme left wingers and supporters of *Militant*.

Beside the fact that there are

no supporters of *Militant* on the GMC in North Islington, the anti-O'Halloran group is not in any way politically homogeneous.

The real political fight will now begin within the Party. This will no doubt take a number of forms.

For one thing, the GMC will need to continue its support for the candidature of Steve Bundred in the Greater London Council to the point of developing the struggle to bring down the Tories.

It will be necessary to be completely principled in the forthcoming battles, despite a virtually inevitable witch-hunt

when efforts are made to reselect a prospective parliamentary candidate to replace O'Halloran.

There is also an opportunity now to fight not simply for the defeat of the Southgate-Bayliss group on Islington Council, but for alternative policies.

This must include close identification with tenants' organisations and trade unionists locally, the development of socialist policies for the forthcoming local council elections, and the selection of candidates prepared to fight to the end against the right wing locally and the Tories nationally.

# Warley: rigging reselection fight

The rotten manoeuvres of the Labour Party's right wing to maintain their domination are once again being demonstrated in Warley East CLP.

Many delegates to the GMC in Warley East were amazed to discover when attending ward and union branch meetings recently that they were expected to submit nominations for prospective MP by March 21.

No GMC meeting had agreed to start the procedure for reselection of the MP, or approved a timetable.

It seems that right wing supporters of Andrew Faulds, actor and MP, on the Executive Committee, were anxious to ensure that the reselection took place on the basis of last year's GMC membership in case the composition this year was less sympathetic to Faulds.

To this end, a completely false minute was written into the minute book claiming that the October GMC had asked for the process of reselection to

start.

But this minute did not appear on the circulated written minutes which were sent out to GMC delegates and approved at the next GMC meeting.

Efforts that were made to stop this rotten procedure proved unsuccessful.

Clearly the right wing concluded that hostility to Faulds' politics within the local labour movement have reached a stage where only bureaucratic manoeuvres could maintain his seat.

In an area devastated by the capitalist crisis with derelict factories, the highest infant mortality in Britain and the lowest percentage of pupils reaching higher education, the struggle for a representative who will defend the interests of the people of Smethwick raises centrally the question of leadership and policy within the workers' movement.

Though many in the local party are aware that Faulds has nothing to offer, the stumbling block remained the lack of any clear agreement on what

individuals or policies are needed to replace him.

Lack of time prevented any serious campaign to win nominations for the four potential alternative candidates.

As we go to press it seems almost certain that the stampered reselection procedure will result in a vote by the GMC to endorse Faulds' name on a 'short-list of one' for the selection conference on April 11.

**WOMAN WORKER**  
March-April issue still available

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WC1N 3XX

# Wide support for anti-nuke conference: now turn towards labour movement action!

By Basil Hinton

Over 700 delegates at the CND conference on March 28—coming from a wide variety of union branches, trades councils and Labour Parties—confirmed the spread of the anti-missiles campaign within the workers' movement.

Speakers from the floor reflected a broad spectrum of positions and ideas on disarmament—ranging from the appeal from an elderly teacher for school youth to be taught the ideals of peace and goodwill (with no politics), to calls for class struggle methods to overthrow capitalism and smash the NATO alliance, with an outright rejection of any prospect of nuclear disarmament of the Soviet Union.

It was positions between these two extremes that attracted the most prolonged applause from the delegates: but there was precious little to enthuse over from the platform speakers.

Opening the proceedings, Frank Allaun MP said that he conveyed backing for the conference from the Labour Party NEC. They wished, he said, to fight to implement the Party's unilateralist position adopted at last October's conference as soon as Labour was back in government.

But he stuck firmly to the confused line of that resolution, which called for unilateral disarmament while making no call for Britain to get out of NATO. And he went on to



Todd

compound the confusion by talk of reducing British arms spending to the level of other NATO countries!

TGWU National Organiser Ron Todd spoke of the destabilisation of world politics by nuclear weapons and stressed the importance of trade union involvement in CND.

## No clue

But though he talked of the TGWU heading this fight, his speech gave no clue as to any concrete action that the TGWU leaders are prepared to take, other than the occasional conference speeches.

NUPE delegate George Will emphasised the impact of



Allaun

increased arms spending in increasing the cuts in social services. He pointed out that this had begun under the last Labour government—but, as some later speakers pointed out, he gave no clue as to what NUPE, as a major public sector union, was prepared to do about it.

Bill Niven of AUEW/TASS underlined the need to transfer industrial production away from armaments to socially useful products. He challenged the notion that arms production is essential to maintain employment.

Other speakers from the floor talked of the futility of expecting a right wing Labour government like those of Wilson



Reg Race

and Callaghan to do anything to disarm British imperialism or withdraw from NATO.

Some pointed to the danger of our towns being missile targets and the nonsensical rubbish being peddled by the Tories on Civil Defence against nuclear attack.

## Boycott and black

They called for unions to boycott and black such arrangements and also to black work on missile installations.

There were calls to build anti-missile groups within the unions and factories and to use the strength of the labour movement to oppose the war drive of capitalism and imperialism.



Anti-missiles march

But when one speaker attempted to point out the links between the war drive and unemployment by allowing a worker from the Lee Jeans occupation to use half her allotted time to describe the fight there, the chairperson, Olive Gibbs, refused the request.

After prolonged jeers and slow handclapping, Gibbs was forced to relinquish the microphone to the organising committee who called for a vote.

## Defeated

Gibbs' position was almost unanimously defeated and she then left the chair and walked out of the conference.

The Lee Jeans speaker then described the background to the occupation, and declared support for the Jobs not Bombs campaign.

Dave Hallsworth from Tameside Trades Council linked the present war drive of Thatcher and Reagan with the continued involvement of Britain in Ireland, and condemned the TUC's role of bipartisanship in this.

The other major note of dissent was the question of whether the resolutions should be taken at the conference.

The organising committee opposed this, but the vast majority of delegates voted that they be taken.

We then heard Reg Race MP correctly identifying obstacles to the campaign's success—membership of NATO, secrecy of governments, and the present non-accountability of the Parliamentary Labour Party and Cabinet when Labour is in government.

The conference ended with resolutions being taken on such orientations as opposition to NATO and the Warsaw Pact, for a European Nuclear Free Zone, and other confused positions.

But the best resolutions pointed out the need to build the campaign within the labour movement and, also called for the organisation of a massive demonstration in London next October.

## Rallying call

This was the rallying call for delegates to take back to their branches and organisations.

But to judge from the politics of the platform it is obvious that a sustained fight must be mounted in opposition to the bureaucracy in the unions and the right wing of the Labour Party who will mouth pacifist sentiments but avoid any concrete orientation to oppose the Reagan/Thatcher war drive.

# Renfrew tenants fight

By Donald McVicar

The rents and rates struggle in Renfrewshire in the West of Scotland is daily gaining momentum.

Already thousands of tenants have signed pledges that they will refuse to pay the increased rents, rates and laundrette charges being levied by the District Council.

In an area where tenants associations have long been defunct, they have sprung to life again in a mood of defiant militancy.

In the Glenburn estate in Paisley a quickly-called tenants' meeting received an excellent response leading to the establishment of an organising committee which drew over 30 to its first meeting. Mass campaigning with leaflets stickers, etc., is already underway.

The campaigning leaflet released by Glenburn Tenants Association gives some indication of the mood in the area when it refers to "the cringing acquiescence of the Renfrew District Council in the face of the Tory onslaught" and goes on:

"Take heed, Renfrew District Labour Councillors... irrespective of the outcome of the immediate struggle, the groundwork is now being laid that will shatter you and the

Tory government forever."

The bitter mood of tenants toward the Labour-dominated council was again expressed at a mass meeting in Linwood last week.

Already infuriated by the closure at Talbot, the tenants were in no frame of mind to listen to the weak-kneed explanations of the sole Labour Councillor who turned up.

Tom McNamara, Secretary of the Renfrewshire Federation of Tenants, expressed the feelings of the meeting in his denunciation of the treacherous role of the Labour Council who misguidedly thought they would buy off the tenants' revolt by changing the initial 50% rent increase to an increase of 35% on the rents plus about 60% on the rates.

Speaking on the same platform, George Grant, AUEW convener at Babcocks engineering works, exposed the extent to which the tenants were being milked by the moneylenders who, through the interest charges on loans, cream off over 50% of the money paid in rents and rates.

A further meeting has been planned for Linwood and for Glenburn. In the latter estate the meeting this week will be addressed by Tom McNamara, George Grant and local tenants

John Docherty.

Where does the movement go from here? The next step must surely be a massive demonstration through Paisley bringing together the tenants with the youth, the unemployed, Talbot workers and all those facing the onslaught of the Tory government.

The Constituency Labour Party must come out more clearly on this issue. Going on record as being opposed to the increases is not sufficient.

The demand for greater accountability of Labour councillors to the Party can only be meaningfully pursued by the local Party campaigning openly alongside the Federation against the increases.

## Approaches

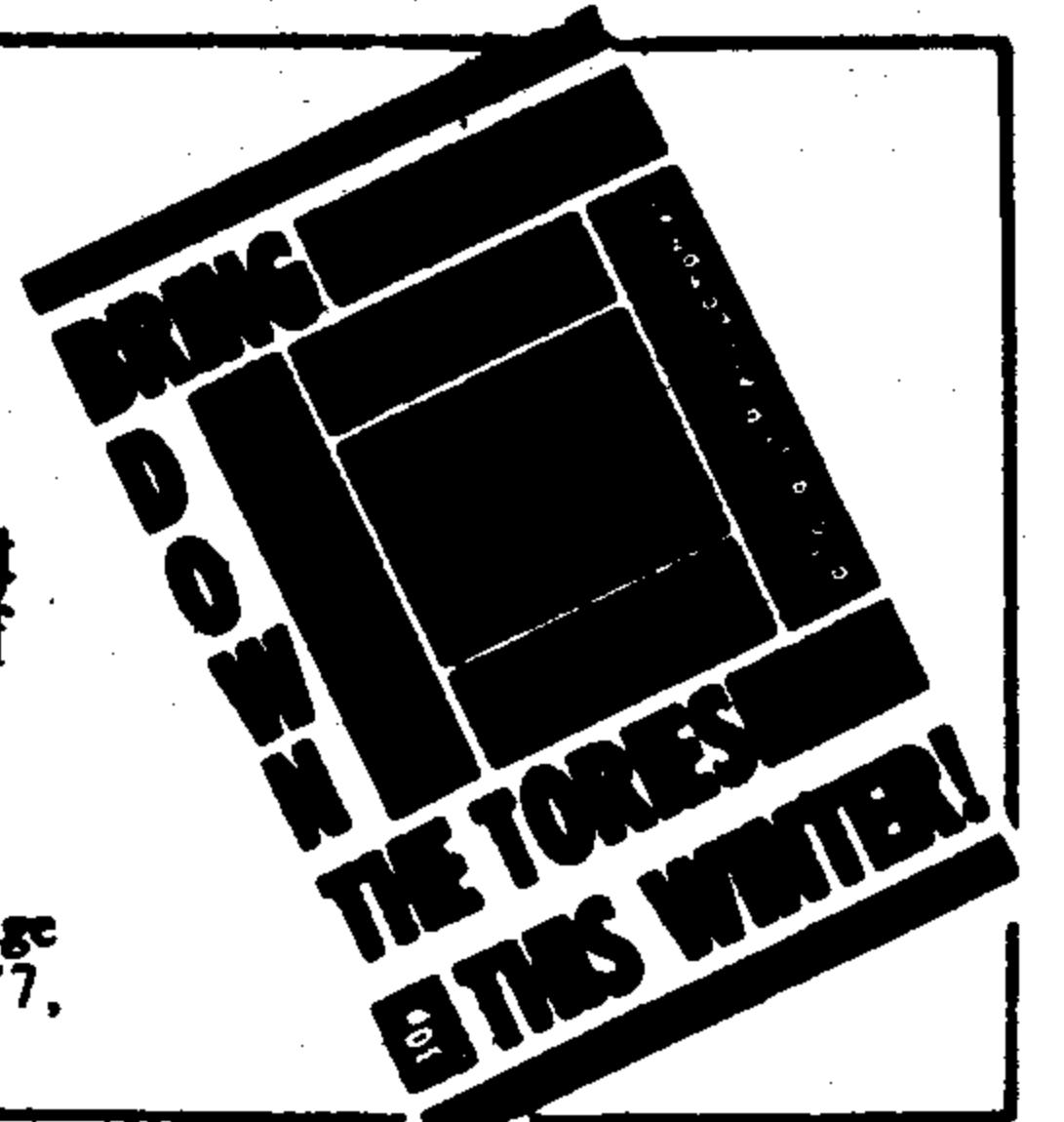
Fresh approaches must also be made to NALGO urging them to support the tenants' action by refusing to process the administrative business essential to the implementation of the increases.

The Federation has displayed energy and initiative throughout the campaign, constantly broadening its scope, and is no doubt considering proposals along the lines suggested above.

## Our policies

Socialist Press pamphlet outlining programme of action against the Tory offensive.

Price 45p including postage from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.



# EL SALVADOR:



## BREAK FROM CAPITALIST

## POLITICIANS!

We publish below the text of a resolution on the civil war in El Salvador adopted by the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee at its meeting on 28/29 March in London.

**"The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterised by a historical crisis of leadership of the proletariat."**

In the more than 40 years since this opening line of the Trotskyist Transitional Programme was written, events in every country have confirmed this fundamental position over and over again.

Today it is El Salvador which demands most urgently a resolution of the crisis of leadership.

In El Salvador the masses

are waging a heroic struggle against Duarte's savage imperialist backed military dictatorship. A great feeling of solidarity with the Salvadorean oppressed has developed within the world working class.

### Concern

Growing class hatred for the imperialist butchers is combined with increasing concern amongst workers over the future course of the civil war.

Every class conscious worker and every organisation that bases itself on the interests of

the world's working class must fight to turn these feelings into action.

And the policies of the leadership of the struggle in Salvador must be put under revolutionary criticism, guided by the urgent need to draw lessons for the crucial struggles that lie ahead.

In 1979 a mass uprising in Nicaragua smashed General Somoza's bloody dictatorship, giving a powerful impulse to struggles throughout Central America, and dealing a heavy blow to imperialist control.

In neighbouring El Salvador,

a revolutionary upsurge spear-headed by the working class gained further strength in struggles against the landowners, the bosses and their US-backed military dictator Romero.

In the face of a rising challenge to their power and profits, the US imperialists, together with their allies and agents, tried to head off the mass movement by kicking out General Romero in October 1979 and replacing him with a new bourgeois-military government which promised reforms—while escalating repression.

The chronic economic and political crisis of the ruling class and the forward drive of mass struggle opened up the possibility—and the necessity of a revolutionary solution in the interests of the masses.

The mass movement, with militant workers in its front ranks, was striving with all its spontaneous fighting strength towards the seizure of power.

Yet the leaders of the mass organisations and guerrilla armies acted to disorient the struggle and deflect its thrust from power.

The responses ranged from the open treachery of the Stalinist PCS (which entered the new military government) to the inability of the centrist and petty bourgeois nationalist forces to map out any consistent perspective for mass revolutionary mobilisation against the unstable government.

The reactions of the Stalinists and petty bourgeois leaders to a revolutionary situation flow from their class collaborationist politics.

Although masked by various shades of rhetoric, their political line in practice always directs towards the search for allies among the "democratic" sections of the bourgeoisie, and towards limiting the struggle to one for "democratic reform" of the existing, decayed capitalist system.

### "Solution"

Yet in reality (as confirmed most recently in Nicaragua and in Zimbabwe) not even the most elementary needs of the masses can be secured while capitalist property, in whatever reorganised form, dominates the economy, and while production remains geared to profit.

The class collaborationist "solution" is not only incapable of abolishing poverty and suffering, but, by lulling and disorientating the masses, it opens

the way for the strengthening of capitalist reaction (Chile!).

Only the working class, armed with a revolutionary programme and party, is capable of building a fighting alliance of the masses and carrying through the struggle to smash capitalist power and reconstruct society in the interests of the oppressed.

The treachery and confusion of the leaderships (with the exception of the BPR centrists) over the October Junta in Salvador deflected the mass movement—but it did not demobilise it, since it had already developed a powerful scope and momentum.

### Determination

The working masses surged forward with renewed determination and combativity, toppling the government in January 1980. But they were unable spontaneously to break the obstacle of misleadership and establish their own government.

The leaders of all the mass organisations were forced under pressure from their own supporters on the one hand and the attacks of the bourgeoisie on the other into an alliance (the CRM) committed to overthrow the new bosses' government—but united around a minimum democratic programme.

Class antagonisms were developing into civil war. Every serious conflict raised the question of power, and demanded an answer.

Crushing poverty and oppression were pushing a militant and determined mass movement towards a direct challenge for power. The Salvadorean masses stood at the head of a mighty wave of struggle in Central America.

Already weakened by deepening economic crisis and worldwide sharpening of struggle, imperialism was driven towards the final desperate



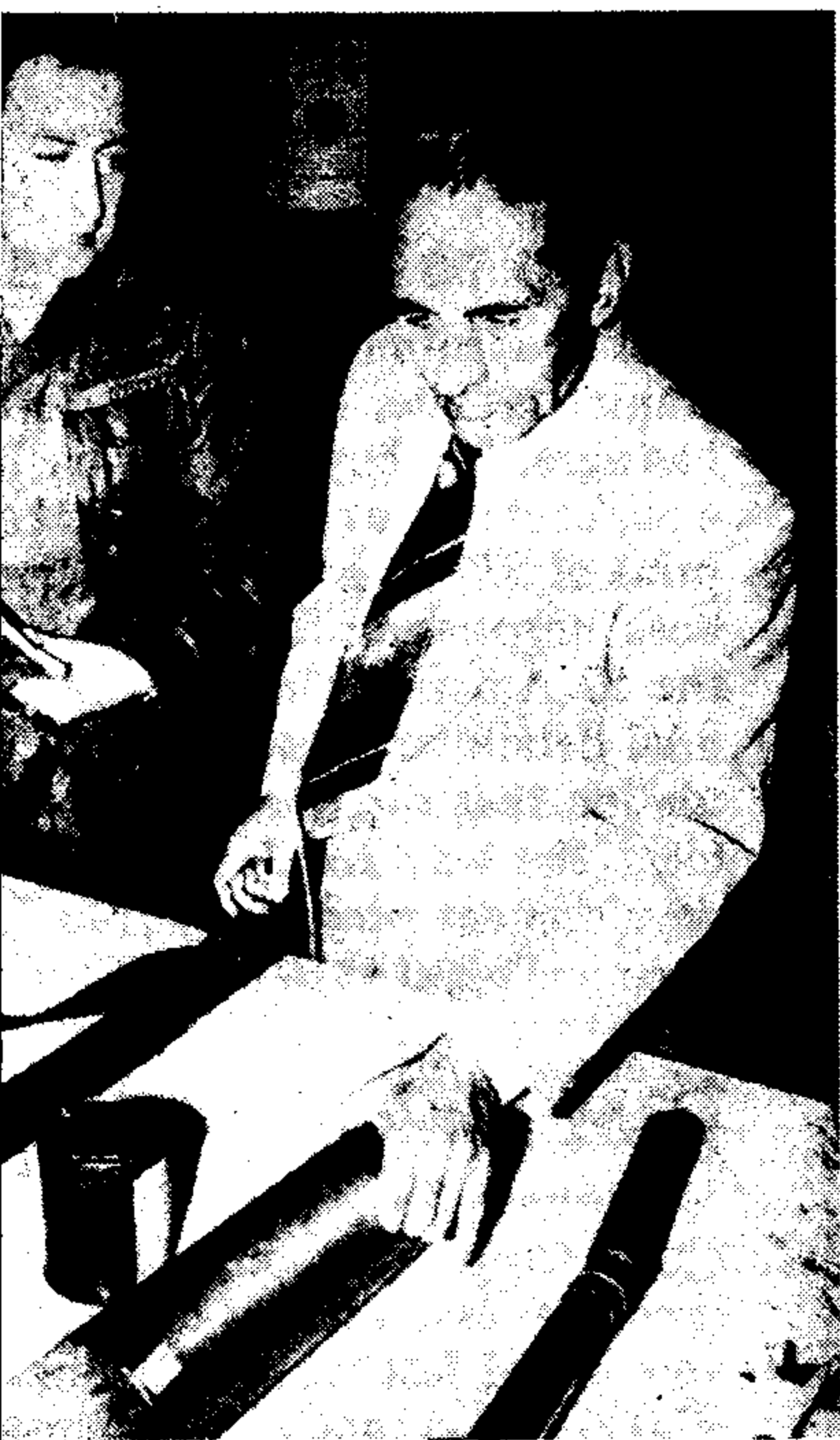
Revolutionary militia training in El Salvador

Duarte

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Government forces



Guerrillas

defend capitalist rule. A counter-revolutionary was decisive under the direction of US imperialists, pushing the challenge through bloody

situation the only for the working the immediate and preparation for the of struggles into general strike to lead an armed insurrection of power.

**Action**

mination and fight- were there. And action was forced back whether the forward or not.

youth and militants themselves built of struggle, development network, to arm themselves. and methods of

struggle (factory occupations, land seizures, mass mobilisations, armed self-defence) faced in the direction of a revolutionary overthrow.

**Strength**

A bold policy was needed to take forward this organised strength and militant action—by developing revolutionary combat organisations (soviet-type councils, workers' and peasants' militia) and raising a revolutionary programme of democratic and transitional demands to weld together the workers in action, rally behind them the urban and rural poor, and draw in rank and file soldiers.

Above all, a revolutionary leadership had to be built. In this decisive period when spontaneous militancy could take them no further forward, the masses were politically disarmed by their leaderships. Forced to respond to the

great tide of militancy, the CRM called for a series of general strike mobilisations but these were general strikes that were limited from the outset from above to no more than protests, shows of strength short of a real struggle for power.

Called without preparation and with no serious perspective of victory, these actions led to tremendous sacrifices and blows which in turn brought a level of exhaustion and drained the revolutionary energy of the working class.

The counter-revolution became bolder, and began to regain some of its lost ground, strengthening its murderous hold in the towns, the nerve centres of control and power in any state.

The struggle had reached an impasse.

The core of the mass movement, the urban working class, had been forced back. The focus of struggle shifted towards the

rural areas and rural guerrilla warfare. The general strike called in August 1980 failed to find the massive response of earlier strike calls.

Even during the general strike mobilisations, the CRM leadership had turned further away from the proletariat, showing its class collaborationist strategy by forming a popular front alliance (the FDR) with capitalist politicians, "progressive" army officers and other elements who argue a solution different from that of the US imperialists.

These elements lack a social base, and are isolated even from most of the Salvadorean capitalist class, which has openly gone over to the side of reaction.

The FDR operates as a political force only with the assistance of the Stalinist, centrist and petty bourgeois nationalist leaders who use them as a key component of the politics of class collaboration.

For those sections of the

# U.S. Hands off El Salvador



The Reagan-Thatcher Axis Threatens World Peace

## March and Rally Saturday April 25th

Chair: Stan Newens M.P.

Speakers:

**Michael Foot M.P.**  
Leader of the Labour Party

**Dr Salvador Moncada**  
Representative of the Frente Democratico Revolucionario (F.D.R.) of El Salvador.

**Alan Sapper**  
Gen. Sec. A.C.T.T.

**Ken Gill**  
Gen. Sec. A.U.E.W.-T.A.S.S.

**Ted Sullivan**  
Nat. Sec. T. & G. W. U.

**Eric Heffer M.P.**  
N.E.C. Labour Party

**Fenner Brockway**

**Assemble 12.30pm Speakers Corner**

international bourgeoisie and for the Social Democratic traitors of the Second International who either oppose Reagan's strategy or hesitate over its chances of success, the bourgeois liberals of the FDR are a lever to strangle the revolutionary movement from within.

For the same reason the class collaborationist line of the CRM leaders is supported by the Stalinist bureaucracies in the Soviet Union and Cuba, as well as the petty bourgeois Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

Brezhnev, in his drive to defend the parasitic Kremlin bureaucracy through "peaceful coexistence" with imperialism, goes even further in trying to hold back the struggle—he has withheld arms and aid to the FDR and to the guerrilla command, the FMLN.

The Castro bureaucracy, facing the rather different problems of preserving its own "peaceful coexistence" on the American doorstep in the Caribbean, has put on a very different display of rhetoric from that of Brezhnev—with tub-thumping declarations of solidarity with the Salvadorean struggle.

But Castro, too, accepts the concept of revolution by stages, and therefore supports popular frontist blocs rather than the extension of socialist revolution throughout Central America.

Meanwhile the FDR/FMLN popular front leadership stands as a political obstacle to the Salvadorean masses. The popular front acts to turn the masses away from the urgent need to build their independent organisations and pursue their own class interests.

The masses have already paid a terrible price for the mistakes and crimes of those Stalinist, centrist and petty bourgeois leaders who provided no answer when the crucial question of power was posed.

The FDR/FMLN summoned the masses to the "final offensive" in January this year.

But the courageous efforts of the guerrillas, workers and peasants could not in themselves overcome the difficulties already created by previous policies.

The dictatorship, bruised but unbroken, recovered from the offensive with the help of massive injections of US economic and military aid.

The counter-revolution has not succeeded in smashing the

masses or breaking their resistance. But this is true in spite of the existing leadership, and thanks only to the spontaneous strength of the masses, which has continually clashed with the political barrier of the class collaboration of their leaders.

But they now face terrible hardship and danger in the bloody civil war. And they face a growing military intervention by the US imperialists, determined to shore up the Duarte dictatorship.

Every day the workers and oppressed face the terror of the bosses' butchers. Every day they are forced to look to their own strength and initiative for self-defence.

Their courage and determination, and their striving for an independent road urgently need to be taken forward behind the independent banner of a worker-led anti-imperialist united front.

This demands a mighty regroupment and cohesion of the urban working class, to build its independent organisations hand in hand with the workers of the countryside, and to rally the masses and the guerrilla fighters against any alliance with bourgeois politicians and for a socialist programme that addresses the needs of all layers of oppressed.

The political struggle against the class collaborationist leadership must be taken within the joint military struggle against imperialist reaction.

On this basis the organisational and political force can be built to defend against the counter-revolution and move prepared and united onto the offensive for power and for socialist revolution.

\*Develop the independent underground committees of struggle at workplaces and in the communities.

\*Develop, link and unify struggles through the building of councils of workers, peasants, guerrillas delegates: fight to draw in delegates from the rank and file of the army.

\*Build the armed struggle as part of the self-defence and mobilisation of the masses.

Build workers and peasants militias to defend against state and paramilitary terror. For the arming of the Salvadorean masses.

\*No alliances with capitalist

agents. No secret diplomacy. Down with class collaborators!

\*For a workers and peasants government based on the independent organisations of struggle. Down with the Duarte dictatorship.

\*Expropriate the capitalists and imperialists. Nationalise banking, industry and the big farms under workers control. Cancel the foreign debt.

\*Nationalise the land under the control of farm workers and poor peasants. For a programme of cheap credit and other material aid to the poor peasants.

\*For a massive programme of public works and services under workers' control, to meet the needs of the people and provide jobs. For a planned socialist economy, demanding aid and trading links with Cuba, the USSR and other workers' states.

\*Full support to revolutionary struggles throughout Central America. The defence of a workers' government in Salvador rests on the defeat of imperialism throughout the region. For a socialist united states of Central America and the Caribbean.

\*Solidarity with the PST and other Trotskyist groupings in El Salvador!

Workers of Nicaragua.

\*Build the struggle alongside your Salvadorean class allies. Fight for a workers' and peasants' government to expropriate capital in Nicaragua. Reject the imperialist blackmail! Workers of the World

\*The masses of El Salvador must not be left to fight alone!

\*Mobilise your strength, use every possible means to weaken the imperialist enemy and aid the workers' struggle.

\*Organise blacking, strikes and all other necessary action to halt arms and aid to the Junta!

\*Mobilise to demand arms and aid for the masses of El Salvador!

\*Build the struggle against the class enemy in your own country!

\*Hands off El Salvador! \*Cuba off Central America and Cuba!

\*Victory to the Salvadorean workers and peasants!

\*Build the workers revolutionary socialist party in El Salvador!

\*Reconstruct the Fourth International, world party of socialist revolution!

# Turn anti apartheid fight towards blacking action

By Bob Sutcliffe

It is welcome news that, despite the international economic crisis, the international campaign to isolate the white racists of South Africa is gaining ground.

On April 21 the British Anti-Apartheid Movement held a mobilising conference, attended by about 300 delegates, to plan a one-year long campaign in Britain for the implementation of economic sanctions against capitalist-apartheid South Africa.

This could become a very important campaign in support of international solidarity with the oppressed majority in South Africa. In *Socialist Press* too we have continuously advocated the implementation of measures of economic blacking by the labour movement against South Africa's economic interests.

But there will be a number of problems to be overcome if this campaign is to contribute to the weakening of the Botha regime and the South African state.

Some of these problems are in no way the responsibility of those who lead the Anti-Apartheid Movement and operate within it.

It was noticeable for instance that at the mobilising conference there was a relative absence of delegates from union branches representing manual workers in those industries which have close economic relations with South Africa.

The great majority of the union delegates were from the white collar unions such as NALGO, the civil service unions and the bank and postal workers unions.

## Key Industries

A successful campaign will have to gain mass support among factory workers in key industries.

And, at the pressing of some of the delegates, the conference agreed a plan to send speakers from AAM and from the trade union congress of South Africa, SACTU, to speak at factory gate and union branch meetings in the industries most concerned in order to arouse more support for sanctions.

There was also a noticeable absence of the groups of the revolutionary left who are represented very badly these days at most mobilisations on Southern Africa. To our knowledge the only groups represented on April 21 were Militant, several of whose supporters were delegates, the RCG and the WSL.

Given the significant influence which it is possible for the Anti-Apartheid Movement to have, and the urgency of the tasks which it sets out to perform, the absence of revolutionary socialists from this arena at the present time is a very serious error.

## Internationalism

It means that a campaign which could be of great benefit to the oppressed people of South Africa may go in the wrong direction because of the relatively unchallenged influence within the anti-apartheid struggle of such forces as leading reformists from the Labour Party and the Communist Party.

That danger was very apparent in many parts of the debate at the mobilising con-



Anti-Apartheid demonstration London 1978.

ference. A number of the delegates—and most consistently those who were members of the Communist Party—put forward a conception of the fight for economic pressure against apartheid which was deeply wrong and which, if not successfully challenged, will make the campaign at best impotent, at worst a step away from proletarian internationalism.

In the first place the sanctions were seen as one which would be primarily carried out by the governments of states rather than primarily by the direct blacking action of the labour movement.

## Sanctions

And that will mean sanctions which it is much easier for capitalists and the South African government to evade, even though states might have to play some role in a successful sanctions campaign.

Only if the labour movement hangs onto control of the sanctions can they possibly become effective.

This point is linked closely to the central role which many delegates saw the United Nations taking in the operation of sanctions. Such intervention would remove sanctions one stage further, from democratic control by the working class.

The record of the United Nations for action on South

Africa is of course appalling—because it is basically an organisation dominated by imperialism and Stalinism and which on major issues does only what those two reactionary forces agree that it should do.

Although the African countries intend in the forthcoming meeting of the UN General Assembly to take mandatory sanctions against South Africa under the special clause in the constitution which forbids the Security Council to block a resolution, this will not make any significant difference.

The fact is that already there has for some years been a mandatory UN ban on supplying arms to South Africa.

But this as a recent film made by Granada TV shows clearly and terrifyingly has not stopped South Africa being in the position to manufacture a nuclear shell plant, which give it one of the most advanced and dangerous military technologies in the world.

## Bulwark

In reality the bourgeois states which dominate the UN are highly unlikely to implement sanctions against capitalist South Africa: as the recent pronouncements of the Reagan regime have shown, the imperialist nations see their role as supporting South Africa as a bulwark against revolution.

In spite of what many of the AAM delegates would like to think, a successful campaign of sanctions cannot be carried out within the confines of capitalist law.

The experience of the UCW significantly not mentioned even by its delegate who spoke—in the TUC's last week of action against South Africa is the best illustration of that.

## Illegal

When UCW members tried to place an embargo on telephone and telegraph communication with South Africa, the courts told them it was illegal.

The UCW leadership, and behind them the TUC, cravenly backed down meaning that in concrete terms that week of action contributed absolutely nothing to overthrowing apartheid. If anything its weakness brought comfort to the racists.

Many AAM delegates argued in effect not only that effective sanctions would not need to challenge capitalist legality but also that they could gain the support of a significant section of the capitalist class.

They argued the need for a 'broad based' campaign, an argument which they used to justify not placing the central emphasis on independent actions of the working class, and not linking the question of action against South African

racism with the struggle for socialism or indeed with any other progressive demands.

This refusal to centre the campaign on independent working class action leads to what is in some ways the worst and most negative aspect of this whole position—its nationalism.

Delegates, especially from the Communist Party, argued, as they often have done before, that if there was resistance to sanctions from workers on the grounds that they would cause hardship, the AAM should argue that sanctions would materially benefit British workers.

In the first place they say, if Britain does not impose trade sanctions against South Africa then other African countries will impose sanctions against Britain and this will be even more harmful to British jobs.

## Disinvestment

They also say that if British firms are prevented from investing in South Africa then they will bring their capital back home and invest it in Britain thus providing jobs for British workers.

They talk as if the capital belonged to Britain rather than plan an anti-capitalist programme, a part of which would be in support of action by workers in South Africa to

control and take over foreign capital in their country.

Such a possibility was not mentioned by any delegate to the mobilising conference.

A campaign for international solidarity which sets out armed with arguments of nationalism and narrow self-interest will not achieve a strengthening of proletarian internationalism, it will lead in the direction of reaction and disillusion.

Of course, the CP argues that there is still not widespread support for sanctions and therefore it is necessary to recognise that fact. Their self-interested arguments not only make concessions to nationalist sentiments in the working class but they bolster and add to those sentiments.

## Material Hardship

Of course, as some delegates recognised on March 21 there is a problem involved in arguing for policies which will bring some material hardship on those who implement them. The answer is not to cheat and deny that those hardships will occur but to present other policies to deal with them.

This means that the campaign for effective sanctions against apartheid must be linked with the struggle for workers' control throughout industry, the fight for jobs and wages and conditions.

A successful campaign of sanctions must be backed by the correct demands on those questions; it will not make those struggles more difficult, because it will weaken the capitalist class as a whole at one of the pivots of its worldwide strength—in South Africa.

For this reason it will also be essential to centre the campaign for action against apartheid on building concrete supporting action in relation to the numerous struggles in which South African workers will certainly be involved during the proposed AAM year of action.

The fight of South African workers for decent wages and better conditions and for the most elementary democratic rights is every day creating new needs for international solidarity actions in support of specific struggles.

## Opportunities

Too many delegates at the AAM conference were unwilling to admit that and to act upon it.

It is important for revolutionaries in the workers' movement to seize decisively the opportunity created by the AAM's plans for a sanctions campaign and to make sure that no opportunity is lost to make that campaign a practical demonstration of proletarian international solidarity which strikes a major blow at apartheid.

The dates so far proposed in the campaign are:

April 25: National Day of Consumer Boycott of South African products and signing of sanctions petition.

June Month of Action on Shell and BP.

October 15 Day of Action on Barclays.

October 24-31 Trade Union Week of Action.

The detailed content of this campaign and whether it will be a step forward or backwards will be settled by the actions of socialists in the unions and the AAM over the next few months.



# A LABOUR INQUIRY - NOT THE BOSSES' COURTS!

A writ has been issued by Vanessa Redgrave, a Central Committee member of Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party, against Morning Litho Printers Ltd and Sean Matgamna.

The writ alleges libel in respect of an article on the WRP by Sean Matgamna entitled 'Gaddafi's Foreign Legion to Knight's Rescue', published in issue 33 of *Socialist Organiser*.

The writ is being contested by Sean Matgamna, who has additionally appealed both to the WRP and to the wider labour movement to prevent the case being taken to court. He has correctly proposed that Redgrave take any complaints she may wish to raise not to the bosses' courts but to a labour movement inquiry.

*Socialist Press* is, as an act of fraternal solidarity, reprinting the statement on the issue from the *Socialist Organiser* Editorial Board.

We condemn this utterly unprincipled use of the courts by the WRP against the labour movement press. And we endorse the appeal for funds to the S.O. Labour Movement Press Defence Fund.

When Julian Lewis and Paul McCormack tried to use the law courts as a weapon in their fight to control Newham North East Labour Party, they were condemned throughout the labour movement. The act branded them as aliens within our movement. Ultimately it did them more harm than good.

The WRP's attempt to use the courts against *Socialist Organiser* is an attack on free speech, on free comment and on free debate in the labour movement.

It shows what little confidence the WRP has in its ability to make a political response to our comments on them (SO 33).

It shows the WRP to have as much contempt for the principle of keeping the bourgeois state out of the affairs of the labour movement as had the mysteriously funded Lewis and McCormack.

Why does the WRP choose this course of action? Because SO's outspoken comments on them threaten their central project of the moment.

They are making a concentrated effort to rebuild support for the WRP in Lambeth.

In an effort to regain some credibility they have entered the service of the right wing and of Ted Knight, who leads a big section of the left in Lambeth.

## Foredoomed

They swung what weight they have behind Ted Knight's foredoomed policy of trying to fend off the Tory cuts drive by hiking up the rates and the rents.

Now they support Knight's 10% general cut—the proof positive of the bankruptcy of Knight's anti-Tory policy.

Meanwhile, *Newsline*, snarling at the left, makes its characteristic contribution by spitting the slander that we are 'Thatcher's people'. A *Newsline* editorial seriously equated the Socialist Workers Party with the NF because both oppose rate rises in Lambeth.

And with the impudence characteristic of them, the *Newsline* carried an immediate public attack on Cllr Bryn Davies for daring to vote against Knight's policy! In this coin they pay for their alliance with Knight and his right wing allies.

Ted Knight and his comrades have views on how to fight the Tories which we emphatically disagree with.

We have discussed these issues many times in SO. But Knight and his politics is one thing. People who brand the left as the equivalent of the NF for opposing Knight are clearly something altogether different.

The WRP has set up one of their so-called Youth Training Centres in Lambeth (the other is in Liverpool).

These offer night-school style training and facilities to youth on a very broad and supposedly non-political basis, ask for money from businessmen, etc., appeal for volunteer instructors and so on, without any reference to politics other than 'anti-Toryism'.



Gaddafi

But the Youth Training Centres are run by a political party, a party which for the last 20 years has gained its only (transitory) successes from recruiting politically raw young people to its ranks.

Its purpose for the Youth Training Centres is as a means of drawing young people into a network at the centre of which is the WRP.

Politically the WRP is today an unknown force to most labour movement activists, who would naturally incline towards toleration of it. The SO article argued against toleration of the WRP, especially as people fit to offer 'training' to vulnerable young people.

The result was a writ against the printer and against Sean Matgamna (who usually writes for SO under the anglicised version of his name, John O'Mahony).

Why not make a formal tongue-in-cheek apology? For a number of important reasons. In the first place, SO values its own reputation as a responsible and serious non-sectarian socialist paper.

## Bludgeoned

We do not lightmindedly attack or condemn socialists or those who call themselves socialists (or anyone else!). SO can and will defend Sean Matgamna's article on the nature and character of the WRP.

In the second place, it is an important matter of principle for a working class newspaper like SO not to allow itself to be bludgeoned into silence by Ms Redgrave's money, which is being used on behalf of the WRP leadership, even though her money gives her an enormous advantage in litigation.

Redgrave and ourselves are, of course, equal before the courts. But the libel laws are a rich person's option. No libelled striker or victimised shop steward ever has, in reality, such

an option, though it does exist in law.

It is part of the general problem of formal equality under capitalism encapsulated in Anatole France's apt description:

"The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to steal bread, to sleep under bridges and to beg for food."

## Conflict

Free speech and free comment are vitally important for the labour movement. They are irreplaceable where its own affairs and the affairs of those who claim to be a part of it are concerned.

Thirdly, the original article was a blow in a necessary and unavoidable political conflict with the WRP arising out of the struggle in Lambeth.

That conflict continues: the political health of the labour movement in Lambeth and perhaps other areas will be affected by whether or not the point of view of SO can be expressed and heard by the labour movement.

We are not prepared to abandon our viewpoint or be silenced because the WRP is richer than we are.

And while a tongue-in-cheek apology would provoke a cynical wink from those in the know, it would add considerably to the problems of the uninitiated—young people in the Youth Training Centres, for example—in getting to know what's what.

## Wealth

They are the people who most need the benefits of free comment in the affair.

Fourthly, given that our real opinion is that SO should in honesty defend the article in court, to make an insincere apology would be to allow our selves to be forced to tell lies under the compulsion of Ms



Healy

Redgrave's wealth.

We are not prepared to tell lies to the labour movement or to the youth. That is in general a rock-basic rule. It is urgent to preach it and to live by it because for fifty years deliberate and systematic lying and other falsifications of truth have been a major part of the labour movement.

Spreading outward from the totalitarian Stalinist state via the Stalinist parties, the politics of lies and double-talk, of the double standard or none, of 'anything goes' for my organisation or for my faction, the politics of the numbed or dead conscience and of the supple spine—these have wreaked havoc with the political consciousness and the political morality of the labour movement. They are not the sort of politics SO exists to promote.

## Bankruptcy

Not for nothing did Leon Trotsky preach and insist again and again that one of the first principles of revolutionary politics was 'to tell the truth to the labour movement and to the masses'.

We subscribe to Trotsky's principle. And we will fight for it.

Fifthly, while the WRP uses the courts and the threat of bankruptcy to present SO with the option of paying out a lot of money or denying its opinions by issuing a formal apology that would be a lie, the WRP's own press spews out libels against its socialist opponents of such a volume and at such speed as to deserve at least a nomination for the Stalin prize for mendacity.

With utter lack of scruple it uses the libel laws to inhibit its critics and relies on the scruples of those it libels to keep it out of court.

It has used the threat of the courts against working class newspapers before. Yet it is not uncommon for *Newsline* to

accuse its socialist opponents of murder or complicity in murder!

To give one of many cases:

A youth who supported the US WRP (the Workers League) was shot dead in October 1977. For three years there were no arrests—a common occurrence in New York. *Newsline* commented:

"While the police investigation has never begun . . . the International Committee of the Fourth International [the WRP's international self-projection] have exposed [they mean repeatedly made groundless allegations about] the FBI agents who control the leading positions in the revisionist SWP [not connected to the British SWP] as the ringleaders of this political murder . . ." [emphasis added]. "[The vicious killing did not stop a struggle to unmask and drive out the agents of counter revolution in the workers' movement]" (*Newsline*, October 16, 1980).

Three or four days later a suspect was arrested and *Newsline* rushed its editor, Alex Mitchell to New York. His report carried the ritual attack on the SWP (USA)—but not quite as strong as before. Now the charge against them was that: "The agent-led revisionist SWP refused to support the campaign and fought against it wherever possible" (*Newsline*, 20 October 1980).

## Truth

The 'campaign' which the SWP (USA) would not join was the campaign of the US WRP to get the police to arrest the killers, whose 'ringleaders', they insisted were the SWP's leaders!

This is typical *Newsline* fare. Reading the WRP's press reminds SO how important Trotsky's principle about the necessary link between revolutionary politics and the fight for the truth is. It does not suggest to us that we should apologise to the WRP.

For all these reasons we have decided to fight the case. SO would not choose to spend time and effort on this. There are many far more important things. But we do not consider the only alternative to be an option for us.

We ask trade union branches and Labour Parties to condemn Vanessa Redgrave's and the WRP's use of the courts against the labour movement press.

## Tribunal

For socialists, the only proper tribunal for accusations against a labour movement newspaper or tendency is a labour movement inquiry.

Merely by taking out the writs, the WRP has already drawn us into a costly process that now strains our usually stretched resources. So we are starting a fund to pay for our defence.

We ask our supporters to send us a supporting donation. And we ask the SO groups to discuss what they can do to raise money to cover the cost of the case.

## Appeal for funds

LABOUR MOVEMENT PRESS DEFENCE FUND

Send donations to Jonathan Hammond [Hon. Treasurer], c/o 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY. Cheques payable to 'Labour Movement Press Defence Fund'.

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Address: .....



# Walk-out over wage freeze

**600 workers employed at an engineering firm in Hull have come out on indefinite strike.**

This action came after management at the firm had put up notices informing the workforce that they would receive no annual wage increase, and 10% redundancies throughout the offices and works, with the continuation of the four day week.

The firm, Priestmans, which makes cranes and diggers, is part of the giant Acro group who also have plants in the Manchester, Stockport and Sunderland areas.

The notices were put up on Friday 27 March and provoked an immediate walk-out by all the shopfloor workers, followed by a mass meeting on the following Monday of the membership of all six unions involved.

This meeting voted unanimously for indefinite strike action until all redundancy notices are withdrawn and negotiations begin on a realistic wage increase.

Last year the firm made 65 workers redundant and put the workforce on a four-day week.

The workers reluctantly agreed to the short time working with the view of averting more redundancies; but since then production has actually

increased though a large majority of the workforce are in such a poor financial position that they were claiming family income supplement, rent rebate, and free milk.

The management, seeing the past cooperation of the workers as a sign of weakness have been encouraged to take this action to further exploit the workforce.

## Robot welders

Perhaps more important is the fact that the management are keen to introduce new machinery into the plant such as robot welders, which would greatly reduce the workforce, and would be met with massive resistance.

To carry out such measures the management would have to inflict a major defeat on the trade union movement within the plant, and this could be one of the reasons for this present attack.

The strikers have put a 24 hour picket on the gates but the office staff who are in the main non-trade unionists have scabbed by crossing the picket lines to go into work.

Up to now the strike has yet to be made official and though the strike committee see this as one of their priorities they have stressed that they intend to

control the action, and in fact refused to allow a full time official to address the mass meeting.

The strikers have also been drawing support from local trade unionists and have been given full backing by the Hull dockers and the Hull TUC who have also offered to provide the use of the TUC rooms in Hull.

They have also had some contact with other plants in the Acro group with the view of getting a guarantee that they will black any work usually done by Priestmans.

At a special EC meeting of the Hull TUC which was addressed by a member of the strike committee it was agreed that the Priestmans banner would lead a demonstration against unemployment held on Saturday April 4 and that there would be a joint collection shared between the Priestmans strikers and the Hull unemployed union.

The following week will be crucial as attitudes harden, and the danger to the solidarity of the strikers will come from the trade union bureaucracy who in past disputes at the plant have divided the workforce and brought about defeats.

This must be resisted at all costs, by the strike committee continuing to control the strike.

# NUJ appeal for print union solidarity

The thousands of jobs being lost in the newspaper, printing and publishing industry were clearly linked at last week's annual conference in Norwich of the National Union of Journalists to the growing "gap between verbal opposition to redundancies and the performance in practice of all leading print unions."

Delegates passed a resolution that called for public statements of support from other print unions and for a print union picketing pact.

## Amalgamation

These steps must be the basis of the discussions agreed for amalgamation with the NGA.

With current disputes in which this issue is crucial to victory at Pergamon, Camden Journal, and Eastern Counties Newspapers, conference committed the NUJ to support action against unemployment—compulsory, "voluntary" or natural wastage.

Such industrial action is to include the spreading of action to all operations of a company and occupations to ensure continuous production.

A reception given by ECN was called off after delegates voted to boycott it.

## Bully boy

And the conference condemned millionaire Labour Party and ASTMS member Robert Maxwell, (hailed by the *Financial Times* as the "bully boy of the unions" after he had stepped in to sack thousands at

the British Printing Corporation) for sacking NUJ members at Pergamon Press.

The NUJ executive was instructed in a motion from Book Branch to campaign in the TUC for non-cooperation and action against the government.

The Oxford branch moved for the campaign to be built around a call for the general strike necessary to avoid further defeats for the working class.

The NEC and "lefts" said this would upset the General Council and a Communist Party member asked sarcastically why the proposer had forgotten to call for "all power to the Soviets".

Despite these attacks the Oxford motion secured some 50 out of 250-300 possible votes.

The union's TUC delegation was censured, again on a move from Oxford, for failing to move reference back at the 1980 TUC of the section of the annual report covering disaffiliation of Tameside Trades Council, and for failing to carry out policy on Poland. Delegates instructed the NEC to give assistance to Solidarity.

## Disarmament

Delegates overturned efforts to prevent discussion of nuclear weapons, and opposed the Trident programme and the siting of Cruise missiles in the British Isles. It voted in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Ireland again featured prominently in the debate. Following February's NUJ-organised con-

ference on censorship of the Irish war, delegates called for the lifting of Radio Telefis Eireann's censorship of Provisional Sinn Fein and others under section 31 of the Broadcasting Acts.

A motion calling for an NEC delegation to investigate censorship in the north and for the preparation of a code of conduct for those reporting on the area was remitted to the NEC for action.

So, on a technicality, was a motion demanding the same media coverage for Provisional Sinn Fein hunger striker Bobby Sands, in his capacity as candidate in the Fermanagh/South Tyrone by-election, as his Loyalist election opponent Harry West.

Representations to the Republic's Minister of Posts and Telegraphs were made immediately.

In an important debate, the move to exclude the Irish Republic from the union's abortion policy was defeated, the courageous Irish Women's Right to Choose Campaign (3, Belvedere Place, Dublin) backed, and the NEC failure to implement union abortion policy in the North of Ireland deplored.

The permanence of the union's Equality Working Party was secured, but a proposal for an annual women's conference to follow that held in 1980 was thrown out.

The liveliest fringe meeting was addressed by speakers on racist media coverage of the Deptford fire and on the oppression of black journalists in South Africa.

# Officials block strike to save cleaners' jobs

Local GMWU officials poured cold water on the militant feeling at a mass meeting of Hull school cleaners held in the city hall on the 18 March.

The members were calling for strong action to fight the attacks on their jobs being made by the Tory-controlled Humberside County Council.

Unlike the membership who would have been prepared to come out on indefinite strike action, this was the furthest thing from the leadership's minds.

Instead the area organiser told the meeting that at this moment in time strike action was not the answer.

He was at pains to stress that other council workers in the Humberside area had pledged support for any action taken by the Hull cleaners—other than strike action!

This was done to isolate the Hull cleaners and defuse the situation.

The leadership then went on and pushed through a motion calling for the "withdrawal of goodwill" which will be ineffective as far as fighting the cuts in the workforce is concerned.

The cleaners have their branch meeting next Tuesday, April 7, where a motion will be moved to step up this "action" in the event of any

cleaner being made redundant. The only action to be effective is all out strike action which must be supported by all the cleaners, and the leadership must be forced to give full backing to the strike action.

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# Foot backing for Pergamon strikers

The strike by nine NUJ members at Pergamon Press, Oxford is now five weeks old.

In the last week several things have happened to take the strike nearer to the national prominence which it deserves.

Mr Robert Maxwell, a Labour Party and ASTMS member, is now Chief Executive of the largest printing and publishing group in Europe.

Yet while the Tory press reports on the 'miracles' that Maxwell is working with the bankrupt British Printing Corporation plants he has just taken over, by which is

meant the 3,000 or so workers who have been or are due to be put on the dole, nothing of the reality of Maxwell's activities surfaces in print.

For the Pergamon strikers, the 'miracle'-working Maxwell appears in a different light.

Since they went on strike over an agreement covering conditions and wages five weeks ago they have been sacked, libelled, and the company is now interviewing to fill their jobs.

But in their fight for reinstatement and a serious response to their claim, the Chapel have won a lot of support and some important

allies.

The most important of these is none other than Michael Foot, the leader of the Labour Party.

On a visit to Oxford last Saturday to address a regional Labour Party rally, Foot stopped to talk to strikers who were leafleting outside the rally.

This followed an approach by the NUJ General Secretary to which Mr Foot, himself an NUJ member, has responded.

He will now be looking into the dispute and seeing what can be done. As he went into the rally he wished

the strikers success.

Earlier in the week six of the strikers were present at the NUJ 1981 Annual Conference to witness conference unanimously pass a resolution supporting them and condemning Maxwell for his attitude to the strike.

The Chapel will now be pressing ahead for the national publicity and support which their case cries out for.

Donations to the strike fund and messages of support should be sent to the Pergamon NUJ Chapel, c/o 5, Union Street, Oxford.

# Civil servants must spread the struggle

With the campaign of selective strikes and general disruption by civil service workers now into its fifth week, the effects on government revenue are becoming more and more apparent.

Thatcher's response has been to invoke the cosy understanding the Tories have with Fleet Street editors to suppress information and to create the impression that everything in the Treasury is rosy.

In addition to this, 'D' Notices have been used to prohibit mention of some of the more security-sensitive areas of disruption.

Last week saw the passing of the civil service pay review date—April 1—and the day was marked by rallies, demonstrations and walk-outs by over 250,000 members of the civil service trade unions.

This again showed the unprecedented militancy and determination of the rank

and file that has existed from the outset.

Each time the call is made the response is strong and the union leadership has little room to manoeuvre to engineer a sell-out.

Nevertheless it is clear that the bureaucracy will need to make its move soon.

Among the nine civil service unions it is only in the CPSA and SCPS that there has been any history of the bureaucracy being overturned on key questions.

In such conditions any recommendation from the union leaderships in the Council of Civil Service Unions will have great weight amongst the membership.

To counteract this, all union activists must fight to keep 15% as the only acceptable deal, and to prepare the rank and file to reject any sell-outs involving the restoration of the Pay Research Unit in place of an annual claim to be decided by a special pay conference.

A further potential area

for the "negotiations" which has been touted in some quarters is the imposition of no-strike clauses for many civil servants.

This clearly reflects the shock expressed by Thatcher and the Tories at the ability of civil service workers to disrupt the government's financial heartland.

But what is even more worrying for the bourgeoisie is the way in which defence establishments, spy stations and NATO bases have been hit.

In a period where the war drive is gathering pace and CND is on the upsurge it is crucial to demonstrate the power of organised workers to disrupt the war machine from within.

The lessons of the present dispute therefore reach much wider than the confines of the wages struggle.

It is with this in mind that both Tory rulers and union leaders hope to restrict its scope and duration.

## Lee Jeans: sitting tight

As union officials and convenors across the country continue to supervise wholesale closures and redundancies, the determined occupation of the Vanity Fair plant in Greenock is still going strong after 2 months.

The sit-in by 240 women and 10 men has become the principal focus for the jobs fight in Scotland after misleadership and confusion allowed a mass meeting vote against occupation to be carried at the nearby Talbot plant at Linwood.

### Wage earners

Husbands of some of the VF occupiers are among those made redundant at Linwood. Indeed 75% of the women now sitting in the plant (average age around 20) are the sole wage earners in their households, in an area of near-total industrial devastation.

Financial support is being widely raised for the VF occupation—but more is always needed. Donations and messages of support should be sent to the treasurer, c/o TGWU, 4, Bougham St., Greenock, Scotland.

## Glasgow marches banned

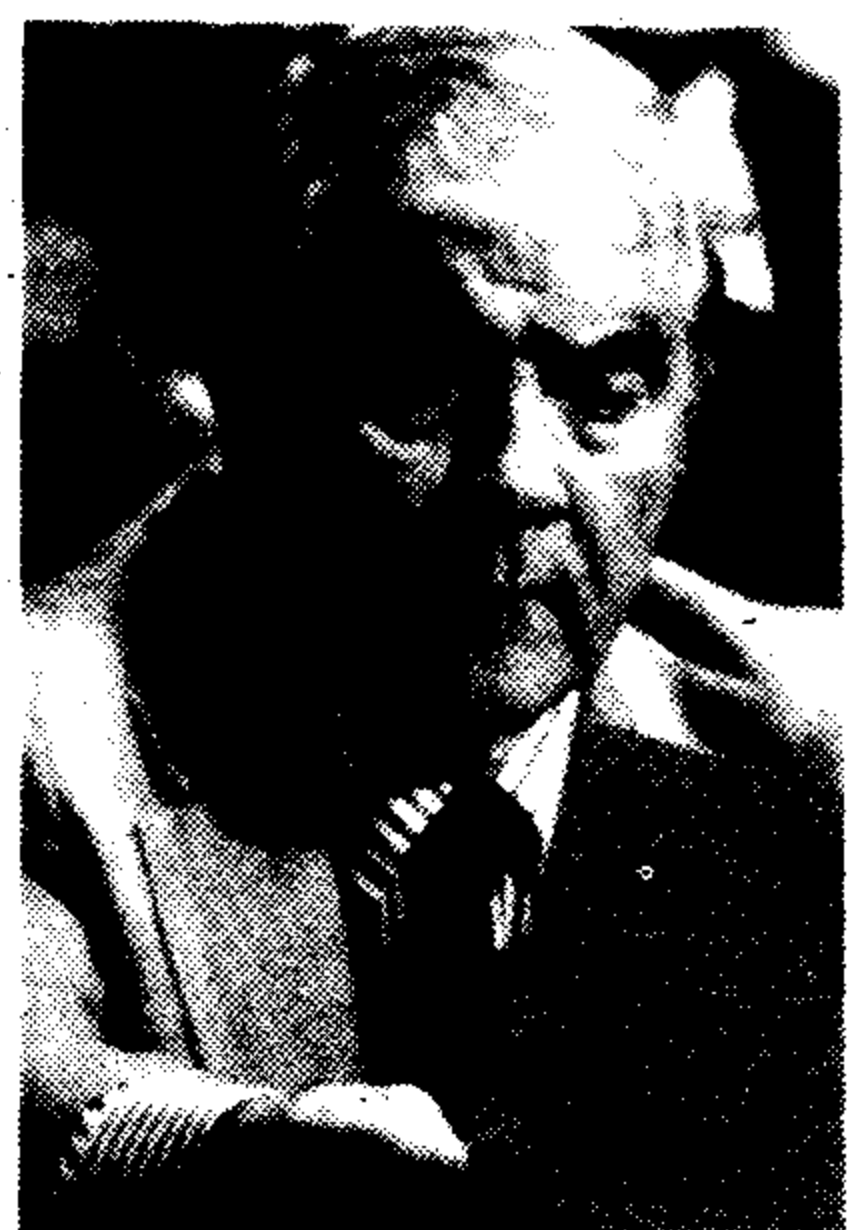
THE PLAGUE of state bans on marches has now spread to Scotland with a draconian three month ban on marches throughout the Strathclyde area.

The ban was imposed to prevent a march in solidarity with Irish hunger striker Bobby Sands and a Loyalist counter-march.

And like every other such ban it prohibits all labour movement mobilisations in the area.

## Joe prefers Tories

"I must say sometimes it is better to talk to Tory Ministers than to Tony Benn."



Gormley

So said miners' leader Joe Gormley last week.

He was praising the "sense" now being seen by the government on the question of pit closures in the wake of the strike wave which Gormley himself so strongly opposed.

Addressing the conference of the Electrical Power Engineers' Association, Gormley declared that—as if persuaded by his rhetoric rather than the prospects of an all-out miners' strike, the Tories:

"realised it was important to listen to what we had to say. I felt they were listening. I felt it was just as easy to talk to those Tory Ministers as to some of my own colleagues in the

Labour government previously."

### "Left wing?"

Does this speak volumes on the "left wing" Thatcher government or on the extreme right wing Wilson and Callaghan governments previously?

Certainly with Gormley so appreciative of the Tory leaders' appreciation of him, it is easy to see why he and so many of his fellow TUC bureaucrats remain so opposed to action to force them out of office.

After all—if these nice Tory Ministers were brought down, perhaps Gormley might wind up actually talking to Tony Benn instead!

## FBU leaders plan strikes to save pay agreement

Fire Brigade Union leaders are to plan a series of one day strikes in the summer if local authority employers maintain their refusal to reinstate the pay agreement which settled the

### 1977-78 strike.

8,000 firemen last week joined a mass lobby in protest at the attacks on their pay agreement and drastic cuts in the fire service by many local authorities.

The pay agreement was effectively broken in the

November 1980 pay settlement, in which employers conceded not the full 18.8% due but a two-stage deal, with 13% in November and a further 5.8% this month.

Management made it plain that they want future pay reviews to take place in April—making it more than likely that last year's deal would remain in force until April 1982!

The compromise deal was eventually accepted only on the casting vote of the FBU national chairperson on the eve of the first of a series of one-day strikes.

### No strings

Executive members insisted that there were "no strings attached".

Yet now, only six months after the settlement they are forced to face up to the fact that the pay agreement—linking Fire Service wages to the "upper quartile" of male manual earnings—is no longer in operation, and can only be restored through industrial action, beginning in July.

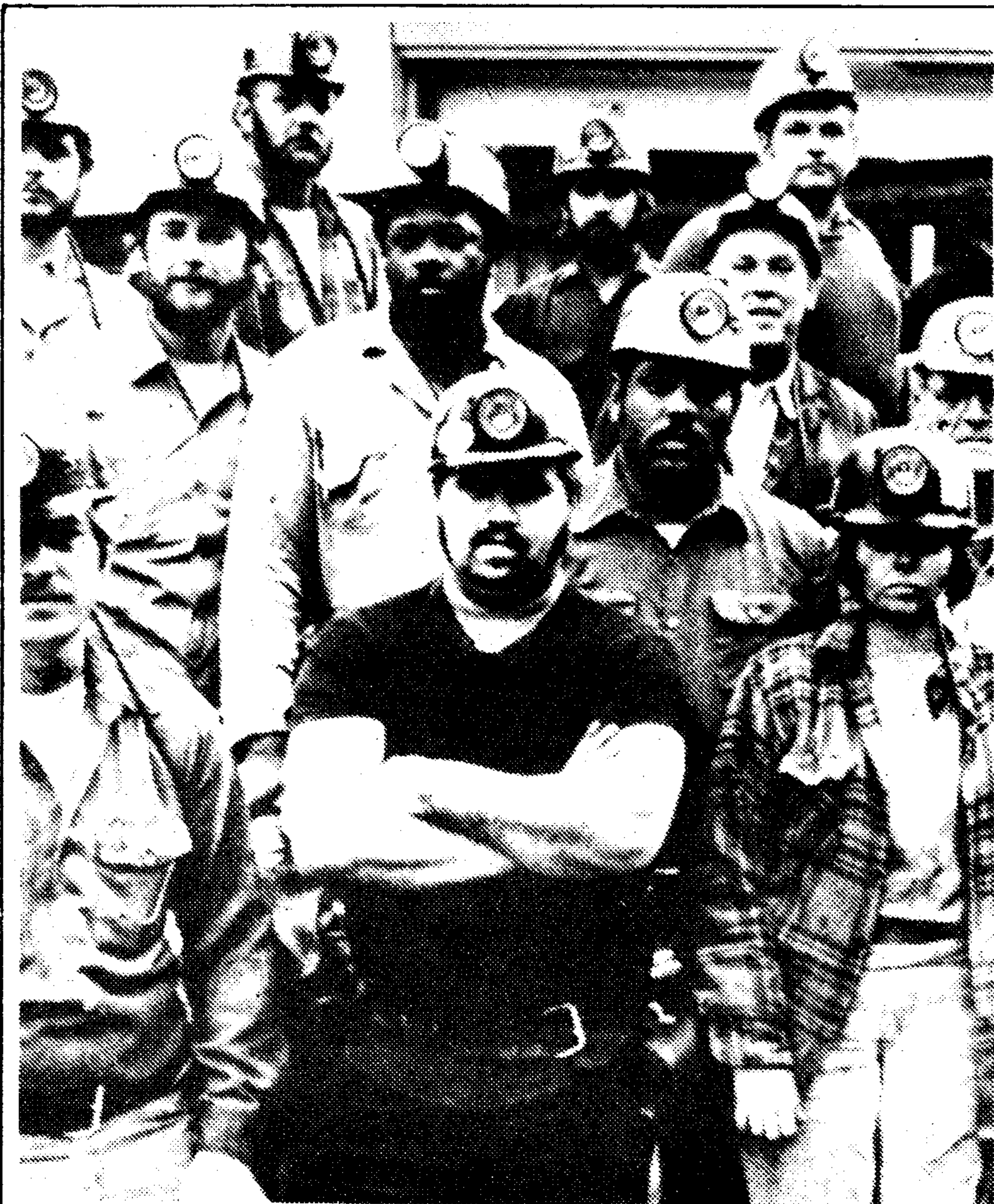
## Gorbals nursery occupied

Parents this weekend occupied the threatened Moffat Street nursery in Glasgow's Gorbals district in a last-ditch bid to halt its closure by the Labour council.

Plans include the axing of 150 nursery places at Moffat St and Ballater St. The closures are blamed on "falling rolls": the "falling

rolls" are themselves related to the fact that 760 council houses in nearby Crown St. are left vacant and uninhabitable because of damp.

Meanwhile, working women in Glasgow are forced to shoulder the full burden of oppression—homelessness and a chronic lack of child care and other facilities.



US miners

PHOTO: SWP Militant

160,000 US coal miners, members of the United Mine Workers of America, are on indefinite strike for an improvement in the terms of their 3-year pay contract.

Despite a recommendation from UMWA President Sam Church and from the union's executive to vote for acceptance, miners voted 2-1 in a ballot to throw out the bosses' offer.

The deal axes their cost-of-living protection, offers them 5% less than miners in the Western US coalfields, and sacrifices an arrange-

ment that levied a \$1.90 per ton royalty on non-union coal—money paid into the union pension fund.

Many miners see this last concession as opening the door to future destruction of the union by artificially cheapening non-union coal.

Hard negotiations had already forced back the employers from a number of planned attacks on conditions—including imposition of a seven-day working week and company-by-company instead of industry-wide pensions.

But the fact that US miners are prepared to face a

strike possibly longer and certainly harder than the 111-day stoppage in 1978 seems to some extent to be based on questions much deeper than their particular objections to the new contract.

The miners are the first big section of workers to be in a position to wage war on the Reagan administration, whose attacks on US workers include a demolition job on health and safety legislation, and a \$130 million cut in the compensation scheme for miners suffering from Black Lung.

A chance to hit back seems to have been regarded as too good to miss.

# SOCIALIST PRESS



## Inquire into British coup plot!

Allegations that Lord Mountbatten together with press barons discussed plans for a possible coup in Britain in 1968 have not been in any way answered by the various evasive government statements in the last week.

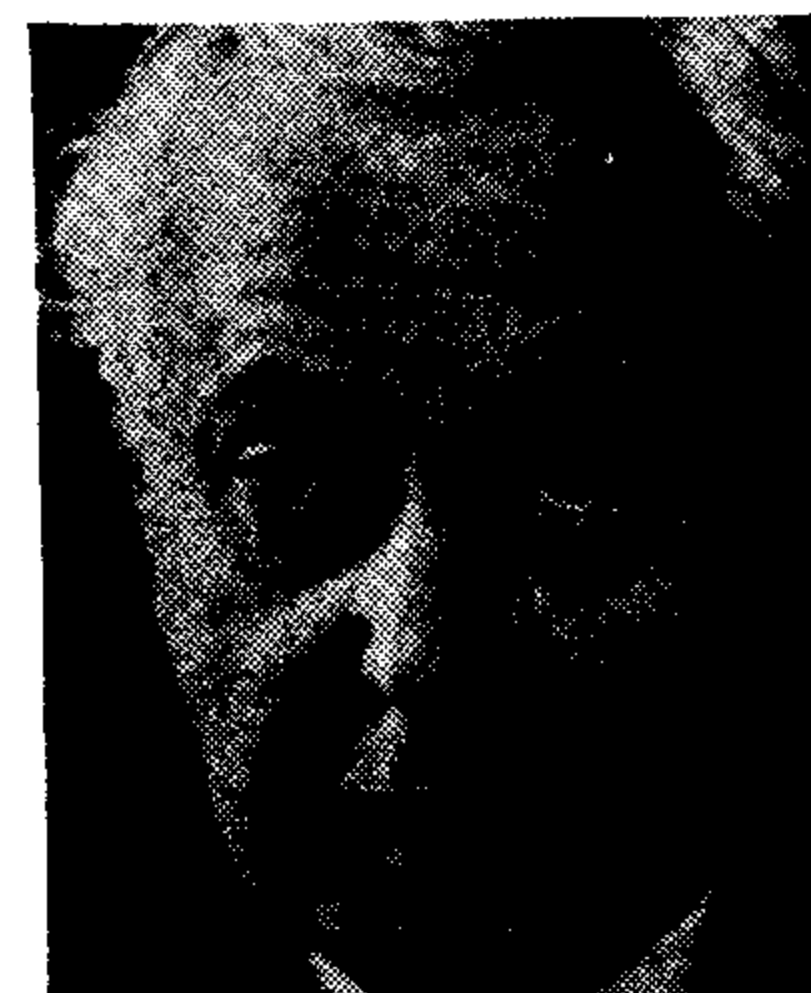
Labour MP Ted Leadbitter's appeal for a full official inquiry has met firm opposition from the Tories.

But the Prime Minister of the day, Sir Harold Wilson has now said that he regards the affair as a plan for a

coup to take over the machinery of his government in that year of stormy and revolutionary struggles throughout Europe.

Wilson has never raised the matter for debate within the labour movement. Nor have other ministers in his government.

The Tories may well wish to hush it up. But it is time the workers' movement mounted its own inquiry into the whole affair.



## 15,000 protest racist law

Over 15,000 people joined the national demonstration against the Tory government's new racialist Nationality Bill last Sunday.

The demonstration, organised by the Campaign Against Racist Laws, took place at a time when even official figures confirm that discrimination by employers against ethnic minority groups is getting worse.

A new survey shows that unemployment among racial minorities has risen by an astounding 82% in the last year—more than double the national average increase.

An estimated 1 in 5 black workers are now without a job as against an overall average figure of 1 in 10.

For the Tories the Nationality Bill offers an opportunity to rekindle racist fires and further restrict the rights of ethnic minorities in Britain and British citizens overseas.

## "Tap on!" -Whitelaw

Tory Home Secretary Whitelaw successfully opposed a move last week for legislation to restrict unauthorised telephone tapping.

MPs voted 262 to 175 to delete an Opposition clause in the British Telecommunications Bill which would have introduced fines of up to £5,000 and 3 years imprisonment for phone tapping or interception of mail.

Whitelaw replied that such restrictions on illegal activity could endanger the lives of police and security informers—who presumably depend upon unauthorised phone taps for their survival.

Also deleted was a call on the Home Secretary to report each year to Parliament on the number of warrants issued for authorised telephone tapping.

Whitelaw kindly pledged however that he would only authorise tapping if it were "necessary".

But in the debate Ian Mikardo had pointed out the extent to which mail is intercepted in London, claiming that no less than 400 addresses have their mail intercepted on a permanent basis, with many more on an ad hoc basis.

# POLAND: KREMLIN'S COUNCIL OF WAR

Arguments continue among leaders of Poland's independent trade union, Solidarity, over the terms under which last week's General Strike call was lifted.

But it is becoming increasingly clear that this decision has served only to postpone a more direct reckoning between the militant Polish workers' movement and the bureaucratic rulers in Warsaw and Moscow.

### Brezhnev

The threatening noises against the Polish unions being made by the Kremlin leaders reached a peak at the weekend with the sudden decision of Brezhnev to go in person to attend the Czech party congress in Prague.

At the same time Warsaw Pact manoeuvres in and around Poland were stepped up and prolonged for an indefinite period. East German reinforcements were declared to have been informed "politically and militarily" about the "combat tasks" they would be called on to perform.

And Soviet troop movements on the Polish border were interpreted by the Reagan regime as a possible prelude to a military intervention.

Certainly the propaganda war has reached fever pitch, with the official Soviet press churning out political attacks on Solidarity and the reformist KOR dissident movement, branding them as "counter-revolutionaries" and "anti-Soviet" and implicitly castigating the Polish regime for tolerating their existence.

### Party congress

But what particularly concerns the Kremlin is the fact that, under huge mass pressure, the Polish Stalinists have been forced to convene a Party Congress for July 20, and to pledge that elections for a new central committee will be conducted by secret ballot with an unrestricted list of candidates.

The prospect of a wholesale overturn of Polish party bureaucrats by a radicalised membership alarms not only Brezhnev but also the most diehard elements in the Polish leadership.

One of their most vocal representatives, Stefan Olszowski, has been at the

head of the Polish delegation to the Czech congress and no doubt deep in discussion with Brezhnev and top Stalinist brass in Prague in the last two days.

There is little doubt that Olszowski would be a leading candidate for a Moscow puppet replacement of Polish leader Kania in any moves to crack down on the Polish masses.

The danger remains very real and immediate. The Polish workers must be prepared to defend themselves and their organisations against a ruthless Stalinist attack.

And the workers of Eastern Europe must be mobilised not simply to defend the Polish workers but to take action to build their own Solidarity-type unions and overthrow their own parasitic Stalinist rulers.

Solidarity leaders have now revealed that they backed down from strike action under threat of martial law and bloodshed by representatives of the Polish bureaucracy.

"This time it looked as if it wasn't a bluff," declared the new Solidarity spokesman, Janusz Onyszkiewicz.

But this was not the unanimous view of Solidarity leaders. Gdan's shipyard worker Anna Wrotynowicz a leading figure in last summer's sit-in struggles, was dismissed from her post after urging the strike to go ahead irrespective of the 11th hour deal with the government.

And press spokesman Karol Modzelewski resigned in protest both at the deal and the way it had been agreed.



Brezhnev



# SUPPORT HUNGER STRIKERS!

By Thursday April 9, the day our paper is published, Bobby Sands will have been 40 days on hunger strike in the 'H' Block of Long Kesh.

And he will be seeking to "borrow" the votes of the electors of Fermanagh and South Tyrone by standing as an "Anti-H Block/Armagh" political prisoner candidate, against a Loyalist candidate.

His campaign—backed by hunger strikes by three fellow republican prisoners—is for the restoration of political prisoner status to Irish prisoners of war.

Sands' hunger strike, unlike the 53-day hunger strike by 7 Long Kesh men last winter, has been con-

sciously and systematically kept out of the British press.

And it has been ignored by British trade union and Labour leaders who tacitly or openly support the continuation of British imperialist rule over the six counties of Northern Ireland, and the battery of state repression needed to uphold such domination.

### Alongside

Yet the struggle by the Irish people for the right politically to determine their own future runs alongside the struggle of the British working class against the Thatcher government.

We owe the Irish prisoners not only moral but material support in their



Newry demonstration backs hunger striker

struggle. This means waging a fight within the British labour movement for resolutions, demonstrations and for direct action to halt the imperialist war effort and force the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

After a very slow start to the campaign in Britain, at last a national demonstration has been called in London for Sunday April 26.

We urge readers to fight for maximum delegations from Labour Parties and