

Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

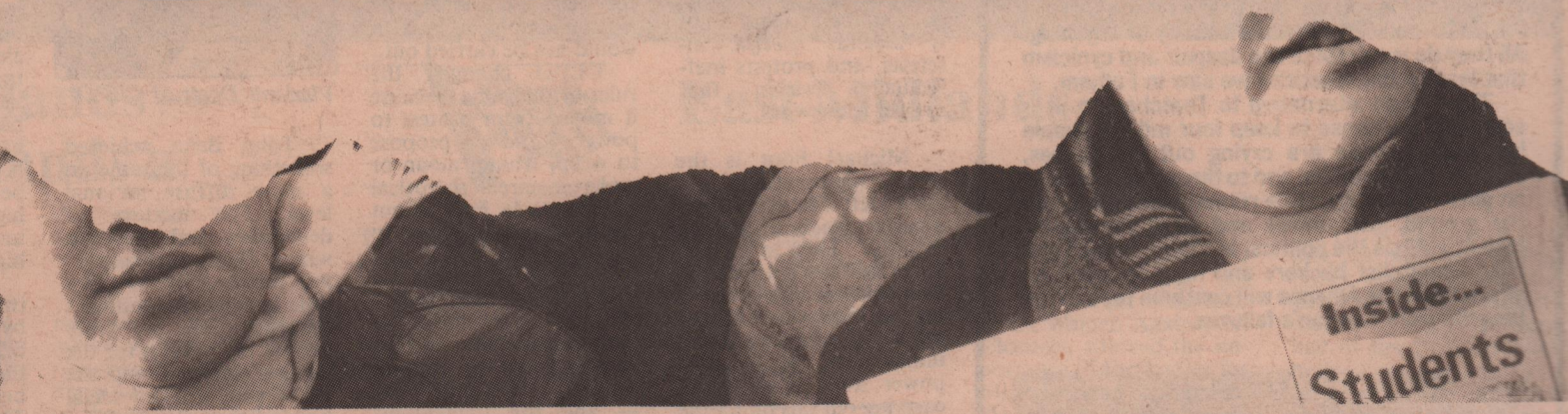
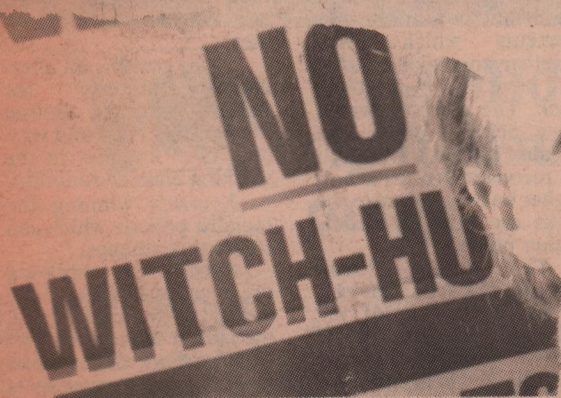
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NO

EXPULSIONS!



ON 26 MARCH the Labour Party NEC will launch its most serious witch hunt for thirty years. The Kinnock leadership of the party, elected on proud boasts of modernising the party and providing democratic leadership, will be attacking inner party democracy on a scale which Wilson and Callaghan never even attempted

Neil Kinnock in fact is going right back to the days of Gaitskell by reintroducing the list of proscribed organisations. No one reading the 'majority report' to the NEC can have any doubt that the sole accusation against those who are threatened with disciplinary action is that they support the *Militant* newspaper.

We are in reality now having thought control reintroduced in the party. *Militant* cannot be sold at party

meetings — unlike the *Sun*, *Times*, *News of the World*, *Daily Mirror*, or any other paper that openly attacks the labour movement or firmly supports the right wing on every issue!

All the attacks on the 'organisation' and fund raising of *Militant* are a fake. Everyone knows that various right wing organisations, and right wing journals read within the party, have been financed by every pro-capitalist organisation from the CIA downwards. And the key to publishing capitalist papers is advertising — withholding advertising from the left wing papers has for this entire century been one of the ways used by firms to kill the left wing press.

But whereas it is OK to be financed by the CIA, or to run a journal financed by capitalist advertising, it is unacceptable to run a paper financed by ordinary party members! What a scale of values!

And what political authority has Kinnock and the right wing for this purge? None. There has been endless talk of 'Labour's missing millions' and how the left loses the party votes. But what is the truth?

The record is that for the last thirty years, when Labour has been losing votes hand over fist, the party has been led continuously by the right — and is again under Kinnock. To blame those who never had power, and to excuse those who held it continuously, is the oldest trick in the book. It is on a par with those who blame the problems of the British economy on its workers, who have never held power, and not on those who own the entire thing and have run it in their own interests.

When did Labour last win an election? In 1974 after two miners strikes and when Labour had its most left

wing practical programme ever. When was Labour last massively popular and ahead in the opinion polls? In 1979-81 when the constitutional reforms within the party were going through and the Bennite left within the party was at its peak.

Left wing policies did not bother the voters then. It was the offensive of the right wing after 1981, including the SDP split, which plunged Labour into unpopularity — just as it was the right wing policies of 1974-79 that took Labour from electoral victory to the catastrophe of 1979.

The record is that the Kinnock leadership has been a total failure even in the most simple electoral terms. After rapidly recovering to 35 per cent after the electoral defeat of 1983 — and 35 per cent is still an historically abysmally low level — Labour has made no progress whatever. All the shift in votes has

been between the Alliance and the Tories. None has gone to Labour. Kinnock's attacks on the Tories, as is now openly discussed, are a total failure. His performance over Westland was a disaster.

Having failed to take the party forward Kinnock is now turning to attack those who have attempted to defend the interests of the working class and labour movement. The witch hunt is a total sideshow put on for the benefit of a Tory press that would still not call for a vote for Labour if everyone to the left of Dennis Healey were expelled.

What is needed is unity against the Tories. Not this charade on the NEC. The entire party must rally to support those who are being threatened in Liverpool, and who next week will be dragged before the worst kangaroo court ever seen in the history of the Labour Party.

A Socialist ACTION

Lawson's budget

THREE hours after the budget the BBC duly interviewed four Fulham households. Household one: father a railworker, yearly income £7000, net weekly benefit from the budget 0.96p. Household two: father a postal worker, mother part time cleaner, yearly income £9000, net weekly improvement 14p. 'I'll save it up to buy a share' explained the disgruntled father. Household three: a single unemployed woman. No change. Household four: self-employed businessman expecting £¾ million turnover next year. Net benefit £3.56 per week.

These figures surprise no-one. The next part, however, ought to give pause for thought to the backers of realignment. How would these people vote? The married women were not asked, so we don't know their intentions. But the railworker was changing his vote — from Labour to Alliance. The postal worker likewise. And the unemployed woman was going to keep right on voting Tory.

Of course media stunts are always suspect. But these responses ring depressingly true. People just don't believe there is anything else over the horizon other than four million jobless, grinding and growing poverty for the dispossessed, and the steady crumbling noises of the welfare state collapsing round our ears. Nobody can honestly believe that if Labour came to power tomorrow, anything substantial would change. So there is no reason to vote Labour.

This is why the most pathetic aspect of a pathetic budget is the pathetic response of the 'opposition'.

The economy is in a gigantic mess. Unemployment is permanently four million. Manufacturing production is still lower than in 1979. An enormous trade deficit is covered up only by an oil surplus running out even quicker than expected. Only five million workers are left producing industrial goods. Last year the 'service' sector, the much-vaunted replacement employer, created the grand total of 109,000 new jobs. And a new world slump is looming: the current wave of mergers and speculation is a sure sign of the financial frenzy that precedes a crash.

Only the most radical measures can solve economic problems of such a scale. The new economic policy emerging from the stable of Roy Hattersley and John Prescott is simply not an answer. Boiled down to the essentials, the new policy abandons full employment. Prescott's 'Planning for Jobs' document comes up with virtually the same answer as the SDP: let local authorities and local job creation schemes fiddle around creating a few jobs here and a few jobs there, but accept the basic Tory credo: don't pump too much new money into the economy, and whatever you do, don't take on the City.

These policies convince nobody of anything. All they do is reinforce the despair and cynicism that lead to the reactions we saw in Fulham.

There is an alternative to Thatcherism. It is economic nonsense to keep four million people idle while people are crying out for houses, schools and hospitals, and to throw away billions on gifts to the City while running industry into the ground. But unless and until the labour movement has the political will to confront Thatcher's capitalist backers and fight for such an alternative, the Alliance will continue to reap the benefits from Lawson's failures.



The next issue of Socialist Action will be out on 2 April

The left the party needs



Women Against Pit Closures conference

WHEN THE Labour Left Coordination (LLC) was formed in autumn last year it was done on a basis that evaded the key political choices which faced the left. In fact two lines, and two analyses of the objective situation were built into it.

But the disputes which have erupted in the LLC, and which we looked at in Socialist Action last week, symbolise the fundamental choices which face the left. JOHN ROSS looks at the issues.

THERE is no doubt when the foundation of the contemporary Labour left should be dated from. In June 1973 the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) was formed. It marked a qualitative break with anything that had gone before in the party in recent decades. The reason was that the CLPD set out to transform the relations of power that existed in the party, and through that it affected the relations of power in society.

The Labour left which had existed prior to 1973 might be popularly termed a 'protest' left. In more precise Marxist phraseology it was a *corporate* left — that is one that accepts the overall frame work decided by someone else (capitalism) and simply defends *specific* interests, and protests ineffectually, within that overall framework.

Michael Foot is the ideal representative of such a left. Michael Foot is a perfect leader of 'the opposition'. He is at his best when morally belabouring someone else who is carrying out some vile policy or other. And the more unlikely he is to take power away from those carrying out this policy the more magnificently Foot joins in the fray. But it is impossible to imagine Michael Foot wielding power for the labour movement.

The Labour Party itself, of course, historically has been a corporate, subordinate party within capitalism. It has accepted the frame-work of capitalism and attempted, in the real world, to frame its policies within the frame-work set by capital.

Never did Labour seek to establish the working class as the *leading* class of society — and indeed the entire idea of a class struggle, and a leading class, was historically rejected by the official party.

Within the Labour Party itself the left was the embodiment of such an 'oppositional', corporate, spirit — even a caricature of it. The left endlessly framed resolutions to win majorities at conference which registered its 'protest' over the state of the world. These were then duly rejected by the Parliamentary Labour Party and the party leadership.

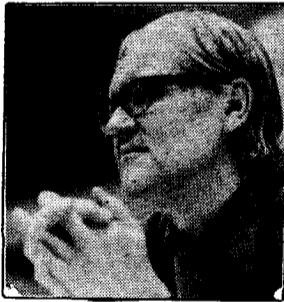
The final culmination of this tradition was *Labour's Programme 1973* — undoubtedly the most left wing practical programme the Labour Party has ever had, whatever criticisms one makes of it. With the left having captured the NEC for such a policy Harold Wilson simply declared it would not be carried out.

CLPD changed the rules of the game because it moved from protest to power. It did not propose to weep, whine, moan or make inspired rhetorical speeches a la Foot about the situation. It set out to secure power within the party to overcome those who blocked the party's will. The result was the momentous fight over the constitutional changes within the party in 1979-81 — and the tremendous fights within the party that accompanied them.

CLPD was the first element of a *hegemonic* left in the labour movement in Britain for decades. That is a left which sought not to 'protest' against someone else, but which sought real power in its own right — not power for its own sake, of course, but power as the necessary means to open up the transformation of society to a different scale of social values and organisation.

Since 1973-79 we have seen other elements of such a hegemonic left emerge.

Ken Livingstone, in London, created something in the GLC that authentically changed the framework of Labour politics. The GLC achieved mass popular support by creating an alliance of working class organisations, women, black people, young people, and the oppressed of London. This was undoubtedly done on a reformist basis — the foundation of the GLC's policies was the huge rates income it possessed — but then other previous leaders had had such an income and had made nothing of it. Livingstone created Labour as a hegemonic, leading force in London for a brief period — before the debacle of the defeat on the rate capping struggle.



Vladimir Derer of CLPD

Tony Benn achieved something of the same on a more diffuse national level. The mixture of democracy and socialism which Benn increasingly put forward for the first time contained significant elements of a truly hegemonic politics for the Labour party — and the left within it. The social basis of that development was strongly confirmed by the unequivocal support which Benn gave to the miners strike.

Finally it was the leadership given to the miners strike — with Scargill as a symbol of the entire struggle and those involved in it — which raised the left itself to a qualitatively higher level. Scargill showed that the social alliances which Labour needed could be created not in *collaboration* with capital, and through taxing it, but in a struggle against it.

The leadership which was given to the strike permitted the broadest social alliances seen since the 1920s to come into ex-



Black sections news conference

istence — and by that the strike broke the mould of the existing left.

What occurred during the strike and at the 1984 Labour Party conference — with the miners in open alliance with the black section, supporting the demands of women's self-organisation within the party, linking up with the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and supporting the fight in local government — capped off the most important series of social alliances seen in the struggle for socialism in Britain for six decades.

The embryo of a truly hegemonic force had emerged within the labour movement. The breach which had been started by CLPD in 1973, had become a decisive series of social alliances and a tremendous social force.

It would of course be completely utopian to imagine the level of social alliances, and organisation of the left, which was put together in the strike could be maintained at the same level after it. But what is important is that the key elements which came together to make up that left have not been rolled back. The divisions which have occurred since, are because the left now has to be reconstituted on a new higher basis — because the tasks are now on a new higher plane.

The initial break through of CLPD was met by the formation of the SDP and the offensive of the trade union bureaucracy against Benn. The miners strike was met by the highest level of repression seen for decades.

It is not possible to go back and start off in a mechanical sense where CLPD began in 1973. The battle around accountability, around power within the party, remains a fundamental element without which nothing will be resolved. But a far higher level of hegemony and of strategy is needed within the movement today.

No strategy for the left can be adequate today which does not place as its foundation the key social alliances, and the organisations which symbolise and register them, in the party. These alliances

must directly take in their international dimension.

The black section, Women Against Pit Closures, the Women's Action Committee, the NUM, and many others, together with CLPD, must be the bases on which a new higher level of development of the left within the party must be based. These need to forge links with the Campaign group of MPs, and most fundamentally, to recreate their links into the trade unions.

The tasks which confront the left in the party are clear!

First the struggle against Thatcher — and that means putting right at the top of the agenda solidarity with struggles such as Wapping and securing justice for the miners.

Second the fight against coalition — because the right wing of the trade unions, and their intellectual advisers in *Marxism Today*, are already preparing coalition with the Alliance as their political project for attacking the labour movement.

Third creating an alternative majority for Labour through uniting the working class and winning over its allies in the working class community.

Fourthly winning the socialist policies which can create this alliance.

Fifthly creating organisations which can express such an alliance in the labour movement.

These are the tasks of the left over the next years in the labour movement.

An analogy, on a far higher level of class struggle, may be taken from another country. The Nicaraguan revolutionary Thomas Borge said that what marked out the FSLN from all other forces was that it had 'a nose for power'. It did not intend to weep, whine, moan or 'protest' about the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua. It set about methodically to overthrow it — a struggle that took twenty years. It was constantly guided by that 'nose for power'.

In 1973-79, on a much lower level, that was the type of politics which the left learnt in Britain. It is what it has to relearn again.

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Stop the purge

ON WEDNESDAY 26 March the Labour Party national executive meets to consider disciplinary charges against 12 members of the Liverpool Labour Parties. The result is already a foregone conclusion: the object of the NEC exercise is to expel alleged supporters of the *Militant* newspaper from the Labour Party, thereby re-establishing the old discredited proscribed list.

The 12, along with the Liverpool district party and its city council, have already been tried and found guilty by the party leadership, loudly supported by the media. All that remains is a show trial.

It is vital for the democracy of the Labour Party that every single member understands that and resists the attacks of the leadership. The regional conferences which have taken place already show the situation that is being created within the party.

In the West Midlands last weekend the chair and standing orders committee blatantly manipulated the agenda to allow a resolution calling on the NEC to

expel all *Militant* supporters. It was carried by a huge majority, with the aid of the trade union bloc vote. At the same time, the East Midlands regional conference carried a statement in line with the NEC majority position, also by a big majority (see reports on this page).

By Carol Turner

In the North West, an emergency resolution to lift the suspension of the Liverpool district party was massively defeated. And at the South West conference efforts to raise the expulsions of *Devon Labour Briefing* supporters were blocked by the platform with threats to close the conference.

Likewise, Yorkshire conference the previous



Kinnock

weekend saw attempts to put the witch-hunt issue on the agenda frustrated. And at the beginning of March, even London regional conference — in the past a bastion of the left — narrowly defeated a resolution too against expulsions. In all of these cases delegates were treated to witch-hunting speeches by Labour's right wing, and the refusal to condemn the purge was accompanied by attacks on left policy, including those passed by previous annual conferences.

At the same time that the regional conferences

have shown the union delegates lining up in support of the Liverpool witch-hunt, the Campaign Group of MPs fringe meetings at those same conferences have been on average two or three times bigger than previous years showing that the currents which Kinnock wishes to drive from the party continue to organise and to campaign for their positions. The women's TUC and the recent annual meeting of the Labour Party Black Section too indicate that women and black people remain amongst the most militant forces within the labour movement.

In the wake of the regional conferences, the left of the party must take serious stock of the trends which have emerged, in order to plan an adequate strategy against this onslaught by the Labour leadership. Any serious strategy of combatting the long term drive of the Kinnock-Hattersley leadership to defeat the most advanced sections of the party must have at its centre the need to campaign within the trade unions themselves.

NUPE is a leading part of the Labour leadership's witch-hunt. In particular it is the supposedly left leaderships of unions such as the NUR to which pressure must be brought to bear to call those leaderships to account and to put a halt to the witch-hunt in the Labour Party.

The inquisitors who produced the majority report on Liverpool, and party general secretary Larry Whitty, claim that disciplinary proceedings arise because the party rules and constitution have

been breached. In a letter which accompanies a summary of the majority report sent in bulk to every Constituency Labour Party, Whitty says: 'As you will see, there can be no doubt that there was widespread abuse of the party's constitution: this abuse is the reason for all the recommendations of the summary report.'

Compare that sentence — and the content of the summary it accompanies — with the full version of the majority report. Whitty's claim is downright fabrication.

The majority report is clear as day. It says (14.10): 'In addition to queries about irregularities in the DLP itself, therefore, the investigation team consider that there are serious questions about the eligibility for party membership of a few key individuals in Liverpool. It is therefore suggested that these individuals be presented formally by the NEC with such charges with a view to disciplinary action.'

The so-called abuse to which Whitty refers is simply the peg on which to hang a justification of the party leadership's drive against socialists in the Labour Party. By expelling a few supporters of *Militant*, Kinnock and Co are trying to lay the basis for weakening those currents within the party which are prepared to fight the Thatcher government and which demand that the Labour leadership do likewise.

It is in the interest of the labour movement as a whole to repel this attack.



Heffer resolution to the NEC

THE February national executive, which heard the report on the inquiry into Liverpool District Labour Party and voted to bring disciplinary proceedings against some of its members, was presented with a resolution from Eric Heffer, supported by Joan Maynard, Tony Benn, Jo Richardson and Dennis Skinner, which said:

The NEC recalls the words of Jim Mortimer, then general secretary of the Labour Party, at the 1982 party conference when introducing the NEC report on the *Militant* Tendency. He made it clear towards the end of his speech that the NEC proposals were not a 'prelude to a purge of the left within the party'. He underlined this by saying, 'We are not initiating a witch-hunt or a purge'. He also said 'we should not be afraid of entering into... debate' with supporters of the *Militant* newspaper, on what he rightly referred to as political 'issues of importance to the labour movement'.

The NEC endorses those views and is therefore against the expulsions of any members because they read and support the views of the journals of the left or right within the party. The Labour Party, because it believes in a democratic, pluralist party, does not indulge in witch-hunts, thought control or guilt by association. Within the labour movement, and reflected in the Labour Party, there have long been groups of different kinds, standing for certain political positions and views, who are organised, sometimes with paid staff, at varying levels. It therefore accepts that the Labour Party is a 'broad church' with many strands of opinion and views, some of which are influenced by the views advanced by socialist journals and newspapers. This is not a new phenomenon in the party and has existed since its foundation.

The party, in our view should not return to the days of proscribed lists and intolerance, but should accept that in an age of increasing demand for diversification, groups, tendencies, strands of opinion, journals, newspapers of one kind or another, with widely differing views are bound to exist. This diversification is something to be welcomed, showing that the party is a healthy, dynamic, socialist force, able to mobilise support from wide sections of the people.

Our main task today is to work for the election of a Labour government at the next general election. To do that we are convinced that internal attacks on each other, leading to disciplinary action, can only help our political enemies who are backed by an anti-Labour press which is geared to do all in its power to stop Labour getting back into government. We ask all party members to stop any witch-hunts, to get rid of the witch-hunting atmosphere that is beginning to develop in the party, and to concentrate on defeating Thatcher and her government at the next election. Labour is the only party which can seriously begin to deal with Britain's problems.

Witch Hunt News No 2: Out Now

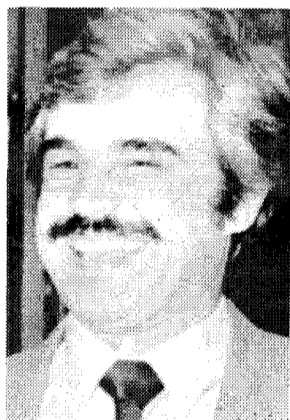
Witch Hunt News is published by CLPD and LLC in cooperation with the Campaign Group of Labour MPs as a service to the labour movement. The latest issue contains material on Labour's NEC and on the right of appeal to party conference, as well as an update on witch-hunts happening across the constituencies.

Orders to: WHN, c/o 36 Melbourne Road, London E17

Contribution to the costs of publishing and bulk orders for distribution are particularly welcome.

Cheques should be made payable to 'Witch Hunt News'.

Price 20p per copy or £1 for 10 copies (both including postage).



Larry Whitty

Regional Conferences.



West Midlands — right demands a purge

THE WEST Midlands Regional Labour Party gave its full backing to the witch hunt in the party at its annual meeting last weekend.

By Mick Archer, Birmingham-Ladywood Labour Party Delegate

A resolution calling on 'the NEC to use its powers to expel all known *Militant* members' was passed by 506,000 to 132,000. Yet, in the normal course of events, the issue of party discipline would never have been debated.

It was the last item on the agenda and the conference was running well over time. But Brian Mathers and the TGWU delegation changed all

that. Half way through a debate on health, they proposed to bring the party discipline item forward, above discussions of the Fowler Review, family planning, policing, education, and racism.

With the support of the standing orders committee and the conference chair, the agenda and standing orders were pushed to one side in a desperate bid to get the resolution endorsed, despite the protests of delegates. As with all previous conferences it was the bloc vote of the major unions which decided the fate of this and every other resolution.

Every controversial issue, even those consistent with Labour Party policy, was crushed. Out went

resolutions and amendments calling for renationalisation without compensation, for the election of the women's section of the regional executive at the regional women's conference, for racism and sexism awareness-training for all prospective parliamentary candidates, and for affirmative action for women, ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

An emergency resolution calling for support for the national Justice for Mineworkers Campaign was ruled out of order.

Fifty delegates attended the fringe meeting organised by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, CLPD, and LLC. Speakers were Tam Dalyell, Victor Shonfield and Councillor Amir Khan.



East Midlands

THE PASSING of a resolution in support of the print unions was the most positive decision by the East Midlands regional Labour Party Conference this weekend. On the question of the witch hunt a regional executive statement in line with the NEC position was carried by a large majority.

Mary Donnelly, Notts East Labour Party Women's Section

On black sections a composite from the standing orders' committee was remitted with a large section of the conference being against the formation of black sections.

Diane Abbott had been well received earlier when speaking at the well-attended Campaign group fringe meeting. She argued that 'the Labour Party has to get black and ethnic minority people more involved to be a genuinely strong organisation.' Over a hundred delegates heard her, Dennis Skinner and Peter Willsman of CLPD.

Possibly the most important question for the

conference was the NUM's continuing struggle. The mood of the Justice for Mineworkers' fringe meeting was one of determination. An impressive platform emphasised the depth of the attack on the whole labour movement, represented by the NCB's current campaign.

Margaret Beckett, shadow social services minister, placed the sacked miners' hardship in the context of imminent sweeping DHSS reforms.

Jack Jones, Leicestershire NUM secretary, demanded that a future Labour government 'first and foremost look after its

own, and particularly those sacked mineworkers, on the day they get elected.' Pam Oldfield, Notts Women Against Pit Closures, stressed the importance of the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign. 'As long as working people remain sacked and imprisoned the resolutions adopted by the Labour Party should be at the forefront of the labour and trade union movement. It is vital, therefore, that everyone involve themselves in this campaign.'

Mark Hunter, sacked from Welbeck colliery in Notts, explained that it is because the UDM is losing ground fast that the NCB is forced to take action themselves.

Peter Heathfield urged the 120 delegates and visitors to force conference to take up the fight for justice.

True to form, conference had to remit the composites dealing with

the UDM due to concern over its wording. Strong policy is needed and this situation is singularly useless to those in the front line of the NCB's attacks now.

A lot of sympathy and concern for the NUM was visible among delegates, however. The attendance at the Justice for Mineworkers' fringe meeting and the sizeable collection taken bears witness to this. Hundreds of Justice for Mineworkers leaflets urging affiliation to the campaign were taken away and will help to translate sympathy into active participation by Labour Parties in the region. The leaflets also publicised a rally to be held in Notts.

● 13 April, rally organised by Notts WAPC and Justice for Mineworkers. Arthur Scargill will be speaking. Festival hall, Kirkby in Ashfield, Notts 7.30pm.

Put Black Sections on Labour's NEC

SINCE THE black sections were formed three years ago our major opponent on the left has been the *Militant* newspaper. In that time both the level of discussion about the self-organisation of the oppressed, and the manner in which it has been able to strengthen the class struggle, has developed enormously. Yet the campaigns around the importance of self-organisation in the struggle for socialism have failed to find their reflection in the LPYS.

By Kingsley Abrams

The Labour Party black section, which is actively involved in building an alliance for socialism around the struggles of the working class and oppressed, has launched a major campaigning intervention into this year's LPYS conference. The main themes of the campaign have been to build the LPYS by uniting all those in struggle against the Tories — whether it is victimised black youth or sacked miners. We see the need for the LPYS to support the key international struggles against imperialism such as the struggle to isolate apartheid, to get Britain out of Ireland and to keep the US out of Nicaragua. If the labour movement is going to do any of this it has to stop witch-hunting socialists and stop attacking the LPYS.

By our campaign we have demonstrated how much more importance the Labour left needs to attach to the LPYS. We have also been instrumental in uniting those on the left in the LPYS. To that goal the black section called a meeting in Birmingham on Saturday March 15 to work out our tactics for the campaign and develop the maximum unity around support for Black Sections.

The meeting was attended by a number of LPYS representatives — some of whom supported journals such as *Youth Action*, *Labour Briefing* and *International*. The discussion led to agreement to establish a campaign committee that would produce a bulletin prior to the conference and would hold daily caucuses throughout the conference. Sponsoring LPYS branches will each have a vote and are encouraged to make a donation to the campaign.

There is no doubt that this year's conference will mark a dramatic change from all previous LPYS conferences. The Black Section urges all those in the LPYS who support its policies to join the campaign committee. Remember unity is strength!

LPYS Conference

THE BLACK section's decision to stand a candidate for the LPYS place in Labour's NEC has shaped the whole debate at the youth section's Easter conference. Linking with the struggles of youth, from the inner-city rebellions to the struggle against apartheid, the black sections' platform is a radical reorientation for the LPYS. It has brought together a left in the LPYS which is firm in its commitment to black self-organisation and endorses a programme of struggle to build Labour's youth section.

The response of the *Militant* leadership of the LPYS has been to stand a black woman candidate, Linda Douglass, on an anti-black sections ticket. Despite her platform this candidature is a partial victory for all those fighting for black representation in the labour movement. The LCC youth have indicated they support the black section campaign. It remains to be seen whether this commitment to black sections is more than purely formal. Only *Socialist Organiser's* 'marxist' candidate completely ignores this central debate at the conference.

Alongside the campaign bulletin the major fringe meetings will take up the theme of the leading role of black people in the fight against the government, building the LPYS through an alliance of all those waging that struggle and defending the YS from budget cuts and other measures designed to shackle Labour's youth to its leadership.

The black sections will have their own fringe meeting at LPYS conference with Kingsley Abrams, Amir Khan and others. Labour Left Co-ordination have an anti-witch hunt fringe meeting with a broad range of speakers. *Youth Action's* fringe meeting will be on the theme of building the LPYS as an alliance of struggle; an alliance for socialism with a black sections speaker, a youth from the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, and a speaker from the ANC have been invited.

At the conference there will also be collections and publicity for Broadwater Farm, the print-workers and the Justice for the Mineworkers Campaign.

Black sections: leading the left.



THE THIRD national conference of Labour Party Black Sections was the conference of a movement that has come of age. Black sections are no longer just an issue to be debated and voted on — we are an established part of the left of the Labour Party. Black sections can demand to be represented on every forum, campaign and platform of the Labour left — and increasingly we are.

Labour Party Black Section is now a recognised and substantial component of the left, an irreducible fact which must be reflected on every slate and campaign within the party. Indeed it will only be a matter of time before the Campaign Group of Labour MPs are confronted with the need to take an unambiguous position on the question of black sections.

The last year has seen the black sections movement and its supporters starting to play a leadership role in the left of the party. The selection of parliamentary candidates is a measure of the ascent of the movement over the last three years.

The almost certain election of black section supporters like Bernie Grant and Diane Abbott will bring the struggle of black people into parliament for the first time since Shapuji Saklatvala was elected in Battersea in 1922. These black section MPs will also have a major role to play inside the Campaign Group of MPs itself, at the moment the

only credible national leadership which the left in the party has.

By Mike Wongsam, Black Section National Committee (personal capacity)

Black section supporters have been amongst those councillors that stood firm in the local government dispute amidst the general collapse of resistance on the part of the majority of Labour administrations. Black section too has led the left into the LPYS, to challenge the domination of *Militant*.



Marc Wadsworth



Linda Bellos

Kingsley Abrams' campaign for the youth place on Labour's national executive has marked a first intrepid step of the left as a whole into the Young Socialists. His candidature is already receiving broad support.

It is no accident that the purge underway in the Labour Party involves a leading member of black sections, Amir Khan. The black section executive has taken a principled and campaigning stand on the witch-hunt against *Militant*, illustrating its mature ability to play a leadership role despite obvious differences with *Militant*.

This significant advance on the part of the black section movement was reflected at its recent annual conference in Lambeth. Not altogether

surprisingly, the two previous conferences were dominated by internal matters. But this year's was dominated by external business. All of us there had the clear impression that we were participating in the annual conference of an integral and genuine body of the Labour Party — which black section is, in all but legality.

Reach

Thus the women's and youth committees addressed reports to conference. And conference voted on 20 resolutions from local black sections dealing with issues of policy, campaigning in the trade unions, constitution, etc.

It is the leadership team — the black section national executive — which has to be accorded the credit of achieving this internal stabilisation and of establishing the movement as a component part of the Labour Party left. The manner in which it has responded to the many questions it came up against during the last year in commendable — the uprisings in Handsworth, Brixton, and Tottenham, the witch-hunt, etc.

But a disappointment of conference was that not one of the executive positions up for election was contested. Posts with more than one nominee saw nominees withdrawing at

the conference. This included Amir Khan, nominated for treasurer and suspended from Birmingham — Sparkbrook Labour Party as part of the Labour leadership's campaign of witch-hunts. A big blow could have been struck against the Hattersley witch-hunt if conference had overwhelmingly voted Amir Khan as an officer of black section national committee.

There are many debates still to be had and tactics still to be settled within the black section movement. But in our three short years of fighting for black people's right to self-organisation, in order to hammer out and confront the party as a whole with our demands, the black section and its leadership has already shown the key role we have to play.

Black Sections

Regional Conferences.



North West

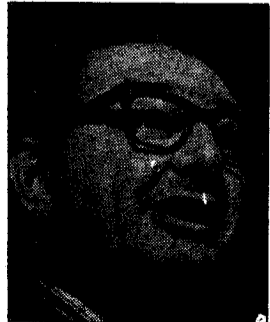
THE NORTH WEST regional Labour Party was dominated by the issue of the Liverpool enquiry. An emergency resolution from Liverpool Garstang for the lifting of the suspensions of the District Labour Party was heavily defeated by the trade union block vote. The drift to the right, particularly in the unions throughout this year's conference, was strongly influenced by the breakup of the left in the Liverpool-dominated unions.

by Cath Potter, Labour Women's Action Committee

In previous years supporters of the *Militant* newspaper have been the only coherent alternative to the right wing majority in the North West Region.

Mersey

But a new alignment of forces behind the Campaign Group, Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC) and the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD), emerged at this year's conference with resolutions on the economy, on reselection, on the non-registration of the UDM, and on South Africa. The Campaign Group/CLPD joint fringe meeting, with



Eric Heffer

Eric Heffer, Derek Hatton, Billy Etherington (NUM) and Cath Potter (LWAC) was attended by 150 people, the largest fringe meeting for more than five years. CLPD supporters sold 150 copies of *Campaign Group News*.

The rest of conference was a rather drab affair, with the general run of resolutions being those on public rights of way and increased play time for children. Hardly anyone mentioned the miners strike other than the SOGAT '82 North West group delegates, who defended the leadership of Arthur Scargill in moving an emergency resolution to boycott *News International*, which was passed unanimously.

Future

The high spot of the conference was the standing ovation given to the speech of Enoch Mahaso, of the executive of the South African Metalworkers Union, an affiliate of COSATU. Conference unanimously passed a resolution on South Africa from Gorton and Stockport. These gave support to the ANC and COSATU, committed the regional executive to organise a two week tour of COSATU's representatives and a regional demonstration with the North West TUC and Anti Apartheid Movement.



South West

THE SOUTH West Labour Party regional conference was marked by a stark contrast. Most of the debates were stage managed and sterile. But militant delegates managed to take many struggles into conference.

By Mike Polley

The majority of the split regional executive suffered a setback over the financial burden they tried to heap on the women's organisations — the executive was attempting to drastically increase the affiliation fees for women's organisations. Swindon SOGAT delegates, with help from supporters, initiated a successful conference collection and delegation to Wapping. Delegates also forced a debate on the police.

But most of the conference was well 'managed'. Under orders from Walworth Road the platform prevented any discussion on the witch hunt. Efforts to raise the attempted expulsions of

Briefing members in Exeter resulted in the chair switching off the microphone on a regional executive member, refusing to let conference hear the issues, and threatening to adjourn the conference!

The resounding success of conference was the left's fringe meeting. An unprecedented 70 turned up to hear WAC's case for the shadow election for women's places on the NEC, from CLPD, and from Steve Reicher from Exeter *Briefing*. But pride of place went to Dave Garbutt from Swindon SOGAT who detailed the attack on the print unions.

The meeting ended with a powerful address from Maureen Gill of Notts Women Against Pit Closures, who linked the print and pit strikes with the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, saying that the fight to defend trade unionism against the state goes on.

The meeting established a regional steering committee and launched the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign in the South West. Over £60 was collected, plus £24 for SOGAT.



Women have taken a lead on the Wapping picket lines

Women's TUC largest yet

DELEGATES ATTENDING the Women's TUC in Leicester this year would have come away with the clear impression that there are more and more women involved in struggles against this Tory government than ever before — struggles ranging from the fight against Murdoch, privatisation, to demands for better health facilities for women. What was also clear was that support for the Women's TUC is growing, with unions which have traditionally been male dominated sending women delegates.

By far the most important debate this year was centred around the document produced by the TUC entitled 'The Wider Involvement of Women in the Trade Union Movement' — with the vast majority of speakers being extremely critical of the patronising and insulting attitude toward women prevalent throughout the document. This was coupled with general criticisms that the recommendations do not go far enough to change the balance of forces in favour of women, as well as the fact that the unions have so far even failed to implement the TUC Charter, 'Equality for Women in the Trade Unions'.

Many women clearly feel that the TUC is unwilling to take seriously the issue of involving more women at every level of the unions. The growing number of women active at the rank and file level of the trade union movement is clearly increasing and yet the key positions within



By Carole Regan, NUT delegate, personal capacity.

the union bureaucracy are still held by men.

This attitude is coupled with the restrictions placed on the discussions and motions that the Women's TUC can debate through a constitution which states 'The title of the Conference shall be... and its purpose shall be to discuss the special problems of women workers and young

persons'. This has added to the frustrations that delegates felt. However a motion tabled by the NUJ, proposing a change in the structure of the Women's TUC by deleting the above clauses and substituting... its purpose shall be to encourage women to play a full and active role in the trade union movement, was carried.

This decision was particularly significant as the change has been strongly resisted at past conferences, and the vote clearly indicates the unwillingness of women activists to be continually relegated to the sidelines in major discussions affecting the whole trade union movement.

Another important aspect of the resolution was the demand that the Women's Advisory Committee organise a briefing meeting for all women delegates attending the TUC on the evening before the Congress. This is the first step in the recognition of the importance of women's caucuses in encouraging and supporting women's participation at every level of their union.

There was little evidence or support for change from the Women's Advisory Committee itself despite many calls for action in support of women at the forefront of a fight against the Tories. Small

groups of women are engaged in struggles throughout the country against privatisation — struggles which are being ignored by the TUC bureaucracy generally and which are increasing in number and importance.

The standing ovation given to the SOGAT delegates when they spoke to an emergency resolution on the Wapping dispute was given with a sense of real willingness to give solidarity to the struggle — what was lacking was a commitment and leadership from the TUC and union bureaucracies.

What was disappointing, but expected, was that none of the unions involved in struggle recently, or who are currently fighting, were included in the 'newly' elected Women's Advisory Committee. Once again we had the same bureaucrats voted in, with the usual 'deals' taking place between the larger unions to ensure that nothing or no one changed at the top.

The stagnation at the top should not be confused with the attitude of the rank and file women. The establishment and activity of the miners women's support groups, were clearly one of the most important influences on women trade unionists — with many women referring to their importance

and wanting to develop further women's involvement and integration in the whole trade union and labour movement.

This year's conference indicated the preparedness of many women to take on a fight against the Tories not simply at the level of their own sector or industry, but across these boundaries. This was notable from the position that the National Union of Teachers delegation took and spoke on — giving clear support for the workers at Wapping, at GCHQ, against privatisation, etc.

The commitment given by many unions to support the TUC call for a 24 hour stoppage as soon as the first trade unionist at GCHQ sacked was unequivocal. But, as with many of these policies, we will need to campaign within our own unions to ensure that the TUC call is built for and supported by massive strike action.

Although the Women's TUC still suffers from a stifling bureaucracy, as does the TUC, nevertheless the message was clear — there are massive struggles ahead, and although there have been some setbacks, victory can be achieved with a united response from the whole movement.

Model Resolution

This branch notes that the Women's Section of the Labour Party NEC is the only section not elected by the people they represent. The trade unions elect the trade union section, the CLPs elect the constituency section, the Young Socialist, elect the YS representative and the socialist societies elect their representative. But the women's section is elected by all delegates at annual conference. We believe that this is an inequitable and undemocratic situation which devalues women's participation in the labour movement.

Policy adopted at the national labour women's conference calls for a change in the Labour Party constitution to elect the national Labour women's section of the Labour Party NEC. As part of the campaign for this constitutional change, shadow elections for the Women's Section of the NEC are being held at this year's national Labour women's conference. This branch supports this action and urges the divisional council-NEC to send delegate to the National Labour Women's Conference with a mandate to vote in the shadow elections.

● For more information on the shadow elections, or to let LWAC know that your trade union branch has supported the model resolution, contact: *Anni Marjoram, LWAC Secretary, 12 Chatham Road, Bath, Avon (phone: 0225 63961) or Sue Nyfield, London Region LWAC Organizer, 37 Manor Park Road, London N2 (phone: 01-444 6758).*

Support grows for LWAC shadow elections

'CAMPAIGN with us for women's representation in the Labour Party', says the latest leaflet from the London region of Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC).

Since the recent annual meeting of LWAC decided to run shadow elections for the women's section of the party national executive at the forthcoming national women's conference supporters up and down the country have begun to organise nominations. LWAC argue that Labour women's conference is the most representative national body of women in the party and should therefore elect the women section of the NEC.

The London leaflet concentrates in particular on the trade unions. It is the block vote at annual conference which ensures, year after year, that the women elected to the women's section of NEC are not the ones whom women in the party — and rank and file women trade union members, for that matter — would themselves elect.

London LWAC have produced a model resolution aimed at the trade unions, urging them to mandate their delegates to the national conference of Labour women to support and vote in the shadow elections.

Perhaps the first union branch on which some pressure should be applied is that of the

IRELAND UNFREE

Irish students tour

LAST WEEK two Sinn Fein councillors toured British colleges speaking on recent events in Ireland and the London-Dublin Accord. HUGH BRADY and GERRY DOHERTY are elected members of Derry City council. Both are ex-prisoners. Gerry Doherty is also president of Magee college in Derry. The tour was organised by Labour Committee on Ireland student officer Conor Foley.

The tour takes place in the run up to the British National Union of Students (NUS) conference and will end with a meeting between Doherty and NUS president Phil Woolas. Hugh Brady is councillor for Martina Anderson, being held in Brixton prison. He was refused permission to see her. Brady and Doherty explained to ANNE KANE how a dialogue on Ireland is beginning to shift opinion among British students.

Could you explain why this tour is taking place at the moment?

The tour is being done as an appeal from one student to other students. It is presenting a republican analysis of what's happening in Ireland.

It is taking place in the run up to NUS conference because we are asking NUS to adopt a coherent policy on Ireland by calling for the withdrawal of British troops.

NUS at present does not have a policy on Ireland, since NUS policy has lapsed. It's important that they adopt a progressive policy of British withdrawal rather than return to their previous position of 'peace, jobs and progress'.

What would be the importance of such a policy shift by NUS?

It's important that any group in Britain adopt such a position. This is an issue that affects every student in Ireland. Also the Union of Students of Ireland (USI) has similar motions going to its conference on 5-6 April, just before NUS conference. There would obviously be a much strengthened basis for liaison and support if both had similar, pro-withdrawal positions.

For NUS the change would be significant. With 1½ million members NUS is the biggest youth organisation in western Europe. It's considered a very mainstream organisation. A shift by NUS would be a big reflection of a change in mood in Britain in favour of removing the British presence from Ireland.

Where have you spoken, and what has the response been?

Given the time of year, with terms just ending, the response has been very good. We've spoken at Manchester university, Leeds university, London School of Economics, Queen Mary's College. We also had a meeting with Peter Archer, Labour Party spokesperson on the north of Ireland on the issue of strip searches in Brixton prison.

What are the main issues that have been raised at your meetings?

The main one has been the fear of a blood bath following British withdrawal. Secondly people are interested in the London-Dublin accord.

There is a difficulty in the lack of awareness of actual events. Tours like these, by allowing people to hear the republican side of the story may show ordinary British people how they've been conned by the British media. Even trying to cut through the effects of daily doses of the Sun and the BBC in this way is difficult because of the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act against republican supporters coming into Britain. If the authorities had known we were coming, our travel arrangements, there is no way we would have got into the country.

It seems that people here are waiting to see what will come out of the accord. When nothing changes maybe then they'll start supporting real change.

ON 18 MARCH Reagan is going to the US Congress with a demand for \$100 million in aid for the Nicaraguan 'contras'. His rhetoric has been feverish. 'Nicaragua,' he said, 'is a country held captive by a cruel clique of deeply committed communists at war with god and man.'

But amid growing evidence that the 'contras' are losing the war, both the Nicaraguan government and the solidarity movement believe that Reagan really has only two options: to give up and let Nicaragua live — or to invade.

ALAN FREEMAN looks at the choices facing the US government — above all in Nicaragua but also faced with the rising tide of disorder in the 'third world'.

IN MID-FEBRUARY this year Honduran and US intelligence sources gave Reagan a blunt message. With 5,760 losses from death or injury in the last year, the 'contras' — US-financed counter-revolutionaries trying to unseat the Sandinista government in Nicaragua — are losing.

Last year the contras claimed 12-15,000 troops in the field. The Honduran foreign minister now says there are only 2,000 left. Their sabotage inside Nicaragua has been drastically cut. This year's coffee harvest has been almost free of harassment. In contrast last year the contras attacked over 100 farms, burning 20 and killing 39 coffee-pickers.

This is the background to Reagan's renewed demand for money from the Congress. His appeal comes before it on 19 March, and on 31 March the \$27 million 'humanitarian' aid he got for the contras last year runs out.

The tone of his drive to get the money was set in a broadcast on 8 March. Reagan was, he said 'asking Congress for the tools so that we can finish the job.'

'Nicaragua,' he said 'is a country held captive by a cruel clique of deeply committed communists at war with god and man. How can Congress ignore this storm, gathering so close to our homeland?'

His communications director went one stage further: 'with the vote on contra aid,' he said, 'the Democratic Party will reveal, whether it stands with Ronald Reagan and the resistance or with Daniel Ortega and the Communists.'

But Reagan today has a great deal more in mind than just a few more military toys for the dispirited contras.

On Wednesday 5 March, three days before Reagan's broadcast, US engineers started operation 'Cabanas 86' in southern Honduras, 15 miles from Nicaragua's border and in the heart of the 'Kisan' contras base area. Two thousand US and 800 Honduran troops will take part in these counterinsurgency exercise, seven miles from the border. A further 2,000 troops began a 'strategy and communications' exercise on 13 March.

The engineers' role is to build a large aerodrome for C-130 transport

aircraft. This completes the infrastructure needed for an invasion of Nicaragua. The US now has a network of military highways, strategic arsenals and supply dumps, airports and a sophisticated communication and electronic surveillance stretching from Panama to Honduras and surrounding Nicaragua.

On 6 March the Congress Armed Services Committee — which later approved Reagan's request, giving him his first Congress victory — asked defence secretary Caspar Weinberger whether American troops would be necessary to halt the spread of communism in the region. 'Ultimately, that would indeed be the case,' he replied simply.

Another indication of what is coming is that at the beginning of December last year Frost and Sullivan, a respected New York firm which investigates the political risks involved in investment in various countries, made its predictions for 1986. It characterised Nicaragua, El Salvador, the Philippines, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Nigeria as the highest risks. 'The probability of North American intervention in El Salvador have diminished in recent years,' it said, 'but the possibilities of intervention in Nicaragua have risen. The Reagan administration seems determined to unseat the Sandinistas by 1988, most probably at the end of 1986 or the beginning of 1987.' (our emphasis)

It would be hard to make matters plainer. The administration of the United States of America is directly considering — is directly forced to consider — sending its troops into a foreign sovereign country, Nicaragua, to overthrow its government. Reagan is conducting an all-out diplomatic and propaganda drive to create the political conditions which will allow such an invasion to occur.

Confronted with that situation the issues confronting the labour movement in Britain are: first, how serious is this threat? Second, why should it respond to it? Third, how can it respond?

A clear answer to 'why' settles all the others. What has to be grasped is that the struggle unfolding in Central America is not a local conflict — although even that would demand a response. What is happening in Central America is the key to the entire international situation.

The US administration desperately needs to re-establish the capacity of the United States of America to intervene

militarily not only in Central America but in any part of the world where its interests are threatened. This capacity was lost when Nixon had to pull out of Vietnam. Today economic and political conditions make it ever more necessary it regains that capacity.

In the situation it now faces the US cannot rely, as in the past, on its economic pulling power to sustain its system of alliances. The world debt crisis, whose centre in the US banks, is the outward expression of two contradictory facts: first, the USA is the richest, and the leading capitalist power of the world; second, it is in decline. The US must impose by force what it once achieved with dollars.

Recently the oil crisis, the tin crisis, and the growing agricultural price-cutting war between Europe and the USA intensify and highlight this situation. The imperialist powers, led by the USA, are gleefully dismantling the price fixing cartels which protected the prices of the commodities on which a whole range of third world countries, already groaning with debt, depend. This spells ruin for countries such as Indonesia, Mexico, the Middle East, and everywhere else that depends on the export of foodstuffs or raw materials for survival. In east Asia, where the Japanese economy is also slowing down, the results are particularly dramatic.

The consequences are entirely



predictable. The economic crisis, desperation and poverty racking the third world is throwing up revolt upon revolt. Dictators, former staunch friends of the USA, have tumbled in Haiti and the Philippines. The USA may be able to find temporary replacements such as Aquino for lost friends such as Marcos. But without the dollars to back them up, such figures are little more than fingers in the dyke. And the problem is that today there are not enough dollars to go round.

What is happening to Napoleon Duarte in El Salvador is a very good illustration. Only forty per cent of the people voted in his 'election' — at gunpoint. It was claimed as a big US political success — a cosmetic exercise to justify United States military aid. Without it the Salvadorean government would have fallen to the FMLN eighteen months ago. Yet, even with the sophisticated technology of the USA



NICARAGUA PREPARES

behind him, Duarte has been unable to inflict any significant defeats on the guerrillas.

Moreover Duarte had been unable to carry through any economic reform. On the contrary, he has been forced to declare draconian austerity measures leading to cuts of 40-60 per cent in the living standards of an already desperately poor people. The result has been a mushrooming of the mass organisations — the unions, the women's organisations, the human rights organisations — which look to, and are led by, the FMLN.

The US administration knows full well that it can hold in reserve — and where appropriate, use — a capacity to send in its own troops, it will not be able to contain the effects of its own economic problems. And if it cannot get its troops into Nicaragua where it faces its greatest problem, it will not be

able to get them to the decisive areas of the world. The US world role and world conditions are therefore directly tied to the immediate threat in Central America.

Three 'external' developments stand in the way of the United States — factors which the Nicaraguan government fully understands and exploits to the maximum. These are: the political climate in the USA itself; the opposition to a US invasion by the governments of Central and Southern America; and mass international opposition which includes opposition to US action in Europe.

The 'internal' development is the advances the Nicaraguan revolution itself has made, in the midst of a civil war, in unifying and consolidating the people of Nicaragua themselves. This in turn raises the military price the US would have to pay for any intervention.

Since the middle of last year the

Overthrowing Nicaragua's 'dictatorship' — Reagan's disinformation campaign

EUROPE'S GOVERNMENTS and social democratic parties are a special target for Reagan. They support Contadora. In 1980 the Socialist International even set up a committee to defend the Sandinista revolution with Gonzalez, Brandt, Mitterrand, Austria's Kreisky and Portugal's Soares.

Reagan's counter is crude but dangerous. 'The Nicaraguan people, just like the Philippines people,' he said on 8 March, 'have the right to self-determination through democracy.' Nicaragua's government had to be removed because it was opposing the 'great wave of democracy sweeping the Americas'.

This campaign ignores a few minor problems. First, how do you defend self-determination by invading someone? And what assistance is the USA giving to the 'wave of democracy' passing through South Africa? How does it square with US backing for South African puppet troops like UNITA?

The campaign lumps together genuine anti-dictatorial struggles as in Haiti with fake cosmetic elections like Duarte's in El Salvador where torture,

killings, and jailings continue as before. It obscures what is happening in the Philippines where a mass democratic movement, viciously repressed with US help, threatened to bring down Marcos and his whole rotten edifice. Aquino was promoted to deflect this mass movement and protect US interests. She has formed an absolute government, accountable to no-one, together with Marcos' cronies!

But the campaign is having its impact. In February a delegation from the Second International visited Nicaragua. It included Italian Senator Margarita Boniver, a member of a French group called 'resistance internationale' which in 1985 collected signatures for an open letter to Reagan demanding military aid to the Contras!

On returning the West German SPD delegation member, Hans-Jurgen Wischniewski held a press conference which he used to attack the Sandinistas. The development of the revolution had got much worse, he said. There was 'no positive' development towards democracy and the 'Sandinistas did not listen to international opinion any more'.

This is a socialist speaking of a

country which, two years ago, held the freest elections Central America has ever seen, in which the opposition has full legal rights, its own parties and newspaper — in the middle of a war with the world's mightiest power.

What does Reagan want?

He does not expect European support for a US invasion. But he can try to neutralise European social democratic opposition.

He tries to exploit a deep contradiction in 'Eurosocijalism', which relies on European capital for its plans. European capital has been happy to try to wean Latin American countries away from US influence, believing the end result will be an extension of their sphere of influence.

Reagan is raising the stakes to the point where either he wins or all capital loses out. After all, if the USA sends troops into Nicaragua and then loses, no-one's foreign investments will be safe. 'Back us,' he says 'or reap the harvest of our defeat.'

In such a conflict there is no middle way. There is no peace with warmakers until they have been forced, one way or another, to abandon their plans for war.





REAGAN FOR WAR

USA has therefore been engaged in a systematic diplomatic offensive to try and overcome these obstacles — and has achieved more success than is widely understood.

As far as the United States is concerned Reagan has pulled out all the stops — even labelling all opponents the 'enemy within'. Vietnam is still engraved on the inside of the American bourgeoisie's skulls. Many judge — quite correctly — that a drawn-out war of intervention with possibly heavy US casualties would cost it dearly. The risk is that a war of intervention would sow the seed of a serious, mass domestic opposition for the first time since the Vietnam war itself. That is why Reagan is still encountering domestic opposition, including in Congress.

But the Reagan administration itself has weighed these risks. It has decided that the threat of leaving the third world to its own peoples now far

outweighs the threat of domestic opposition. This is extremely important to grasp because the internal opposition in the USA is, in the last analysis, one of the most important factors, coupled with a threat of military defeat, which has held the White House back.

No-one should be fooled into thinking that the installation of Aquino, and the export of Duvalier, represent a new 'democratic' phase in US thinking. On the contrary, they are of a parcel with the installation of Duarte in El Salvador, the regime of Cerezo in Guatemala, and the government of Azcano in Honduras. They aim to give a democratic 'cover' for stepping up the US's military role. The removal of Marcos in the Philippines and Duvalier in Haite was to head off revolt. It was no 'democratic' turn in US policy.

The second problem to which Reagan has been applying himself is the attitude of the governments of Cen-

tral America. In 1985 Nicaragua secured a great diplomatic victory on the Contadora group of countries — Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela and Panama — was formed and began drawing up a peace treaty for the area which was due to be signed in November last year. The addition of a group of 'support' countries — Argentina, Uruguay, Peru, Brazil — was a further success.

The key sections of the Contadora treaty — which aimed also to secure the signatures of Honduras, El Salvador, Costa Rica and Guatemala — were the two articles dealing with the role of foreign and Central American armed forces in the region.

Article 17 of the draft treaty of 7 September read to: 'Proscribe the carrying out of international military manoeuvres in the respective territories (of the countries concerned). All manoeuvres of this type in progress must terminate no more than 30 days after this treaty is signed.' Article 22 called for a moratorium in the build-up of armaments in the region, and for a stabilisation of armed forces in conformity with the region's needs for stability and security.

For the USA such a treaty, if signed by Nicaragua's neighbours, would have been a disaster. The USA has always pretended that its military activities in Central America are directed against 'foreign' military activity by Cuba and the USSR. This is minimal to non-existent. The real threat to the regimes of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala is the existence of Nicaragua, providing an example of a dramatically different social order to their own and serving as an inspiration to their peoples to revolt. It would therefore cost Nicaragua, and the FMLN, nothing at all to have a treaty signed opposing foreign military manoeuvres. It would cost the USA, however, everything.

Moreover the treaty as it stood guaranteed Nicaragua its most important political requirement, namely, the right to armed forces sufficient to meet the actual threat it faced — that of invasion from the USA. The US has never accepted that 10 May 1984 decision of the International Court of Justice calling on it to 'respect Nicaragua's right to sovereignty and political independence, which must not be called into question through military and paramilitary activities promoted from outwith its territory.'

Early in 1984 the *Washington Post* published a four-page secret document from the Department of State which was sent to all US embassies in Latin America. 'the collapse of the Contadora group,' it said, 'is preferable to the signature of this document'. The US assiduously set about blocking the signing of the treaty. Six months later the treaty, which was to have been signed in November, is in abeyance and no further proposals are on the table to resume discussions around it.

The suspension of the talks on the

Contadora treaty was first proposed by the Costa Rican chancellor at the meeting of cooperation between the countries of the EEC and Central America in Luxembourg on 10-12 November 1985. The reason given was that Costa Rica was to hold elections in 1986, and that Honduras and Guatemala had just held elections and needed to reorganise 'administratively'.

The underlying reason was much more serious however. On 12 September a revised draft version of the treaty had been drawn up by the Contadora group. This contained two crucial amendments which were unacceptable to the Nicaraguan government. First, it amended article 17 to demand that foreign powers 'regulate' their exercises instead of ending them: in effect, nullifying the entire article. Secondly, substantial modifications were made to the articles dealing with the proposed moratorium on arms build-up.

No matter how bold the declarations of principle accepted by the signatories, two crucial concessions had been made to the US point of view. The US would not be prevented from carrying out its military manoeuvres, and Nicaragua would be prevented from organising to defend itself against US invasion.

Why were these concessions made? Above all in response to a concerted economic, political and military offensive from the USA — one directly linked to the economic situation. Throughout last year the debt situation of the Central American countries has been deteriorating to crisis point. Debt renegotiation is now crucial to the survival of the Contadora governments (see table 1).

The USA's message is simple: it has reminded these capitalist governments that in the last analysis their interests lie with it against their own workers and peasants. The terms imposed recently on Panama led to an instant general strike. Mexico is on the verge of being cut off by the world's bankers. Hon-

duras, on the other hand, and El Salvador, who have conveniently 'elected' US puppets, whatever their economic problems, at least have a hotline to US funds when they really need them.

On the military front, the USA has handed the Contadora group an ultimatum. It has escalated the level of military force employed and told the group to put up or shut up. On 2 December, for the first time in Central America, the contras deployed a SAM-7 ground-to-air missile on Nicaraguan territory, bringing down an MI-8 helicopter and killing 18 people. (This missile, made in the USA, was presumably part of the 'humanitarian' aid voted last year by Congress). It signalled a qualitative step up in American military involvement.

It was at this point that discussions were suspended. Nicaragua's point of view was very simple: the Contadora group, faced with such an escalation, could not react 'even-handedly' as if the USA and Nicaragua were two squabbling brats. They had to accept that the principal danger to peace in Central America was the USA itself and draw the appropriate conclusions. Recent news suggests that this stance has brought Nicaragua a very important diplomatic gain: a joint treaty with Costa Rica for mutual defence of the frontier.

However, as regards the Contadora and remaining frontier countries, the issue remains substantively unresolved. Until and unless the principle of Nicaragua's right to defend itself against an attempt by the USA to unseat its sovereign government by force is accepted and acted on, and until and unless the governments involved are prepared to take this understanding to the point of risking a rupture in their relations with the USA, there can be no genuine guarantee of peace. Reagan meanwhile is stepping up his preparations for war against Nicaragua.

How Central America's Debt has grown

	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984
Total external debt (Millions of dollars)	8,501	10,111	11,281	13,541	15,379
Debt service as per cent of exports	20.6	29.1	30.9	41.1	43.4
External debt as per cent of Gross Product	39.0	52.2	57.8	62.8	95.9
Interest as per cent of exports	10.4	16.5	17.6	26.7	28.0
External debt per capita	416	480	520	605	663

Table 1

Source: Panorama de centroamerica y del caribe



Jeremy Corbyn replies to Amnesty

THE NICARAGUA Solidarity Campaign has expressed great concern at a recent Amnesty International report on human rights in Nicaragua. The introduction refers to a 'pattern of frequent, although generally short-term, imprisonment of prisoners of conscience; prolonged pre-trial incommunicado detention of political prisoners, and restrictions on their right to a fair trial; and poor prison conditions for political prisoners.'

Dealing with the contras, it referred to the 'frequently reported torture, mutilation and execution-style killing of captives by irregular military forces opposing the Nicaraguan government.'

The campaign has protested that the report spends only four pages on the contras and 32 pages on the government. Unfortunately some of the left press has seized on the contents of these 32 pages — and paid scant attention to the rest.

We asked JEREMY CORBYN, MP, who recently visited El Salvador as part of a labour movement delegation, for his views on

the report and its context.

Amnesty also state that they had access to the government unparalleled anywhere else, and that the government has followed up instances of human rights violations and punished the officers responsible. It is unfortunate that this has not received the same publicity as other aspects of the report.

There is without doubt a campaign to label Nicaragua a dictatorship. A weekly paper, produced all over Central America, carries this line. This campaign is rather hypocritical against the background of what we saw in El Salvador, where there is also a civil war.

People are alarmed that Reagan wants to spend \$100 million in Nicaragua. But he spends \$1 1/2 million every day in El Salvador. Here 'democracy' is a sham. Formally, Duarte won in an election. After all, voting was compulsory. But political freedoms either do not exist, or exist on the surface only. The death squads claim between 1500 and 2000 victims per year. The detentions continue. Under decree-law 150, anyone suspected of being an FMLN member can be arrested and detained without trial, and this is the main device used to remove second-rank union leaders.

Reagan calls this democracy. Contrast it with Nicaragua. In 1983, for the elections, there were foreign delegations who were given a complete free run to go anywhere they wanted. An all-party British team attended and even the Tory said the elections were completely free. The opposition's legal rights are guaranteed under the constitution and they continue producing a daily paper even under civil war conditions.

I think that support from European governments has slackened off, and we have been trying to do something about it. Judith Hart is putting down a motion in support of the Intra-American Development Bank Loan to Nicaraguan farmers, now being negotiated. We want to fight against the British policy regarding export credit guarantees to Nicaragua, which are the lowest possible even though Nicaragua's record of payment is among the best in the region. This is clearly politically motivated.

The best support has come from Scandinavian governments. The French have given aid from time to time but little of late. And the British hide behind the need for a 'joint European response'. It is an example of the EEC's power to block and hold things up — we favour bilateral initiatives.

Unite to fight apartheid

THE MOST important political alliance which has to be forged in struggle against apartheid in South Africa is that between the organisations of the black South African working class and the revolutionary nationalist African National Congress (ANC). The formation of the 500,000-strong Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in December last year represented a giant step forward in that struggle. This unity in struggle has taken a further huge step forward through a joint meeting held in Lusaka on 5-6 March this year of COSATU, the ANC, and the ANC-aligned South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU). The outcome was the declaration which we print below. The delegations to the meeting are worth commenting on. Jay Naidoo, general secretary of COSATU, was a leader of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). The declaration therefore represents the convergence in struggle of the two most important components which came together to create COSATU itself — the FOSATU-affiliated unions and the ANC influenced trade unions. This declaration is above all important for the entire struggle in South Africa. But it also relates to a decisive debate which has been taking place in Britain. It has been argued by some in Britain that the non-racial trade unions in South Africa would come into increasing conflict with the ANC. That a convergence of the unions with the ANC would represent a step backwards for the trade unions. The exact reverse is the truth. The trade unions are being drawn together with the ANC in the joint fight against apartheid. This is the decisive political development in South Africa today — a development which should receive 100 per cent support. It is the decisive united front which can destroy apartheid.

DELEGATIONS of the Executive of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu), the National Executive Committee of the South African Congress of Trade Unions (Sactu) and the National Executive Committee of the African National Congress (ANC) met in Lusaka on 5 and 6 March 1986.

The respective delegations were led by Comrade Jay Naidoo, General Secretary of Cosatu, Comrade John K. Nkadimeng, General Secretary of Sactu and Comrade Oliver Tambo, President of the ANC. During the course of the discussions Cosatu and Sactu held a separate session to discuss matters of common interest as trade unionists.

The meeting resulted from the common concern of all parties arising from the fundamental and deep-seated economic, social and political crisis into which the Botha regime and the apartheid system of national oppression and class exploitation have plunged our country. There was common understanding that the Pretoria regime and the ruling class of South Africa are powerless to provide any real and meaningful solutions to this general crisis, that lasting solutions can only emerge from the national liberation movement, headed by the ANC, and the entire democratic forces of our country, of which Cosatu is an important and integral part.

In this regard it was recognised that the emergence of Cosatu as the giant democratic and progressive trade union federation in our country is an historic event in the process of uniting our working class and will immeasurably strengthen the democratic movement as a whole.

After extensive discussions on the current internal and international situation, characterised by a warm spirit of comradeship, the three delegations agreed on a number of important issues. They

agreed that the solution to the problems facing our country lie in the establishment of a system of majority rule in a united, democratic and non-racial South Africa. Further, that in the specific conditions of our country it is inconceivable that such a system can be separated from economic emancipation.

Our people have been robbed of their land, deprived of their due share in the country's wealth, their skills have been suppressed and poverty and starvation has been their life experience. The correction of these centuries old economic injustices lies at the core of our national aspirations. Accordingly they were united not only in their opposition to the entire apartheid system, but also in their common understanding that victory must embrace more than formal political democracy.



The Cosatu delegation explained that the principal tasks facing their federation is to consolidate their membership and affiliates, rapidly effect conversion of the general unions which are part of Cosatu into an industry-based union, within each industry bring about mergers in order to realise the principle of one industry, one union and to unite the entire working force of our country under the banner of Cosatu.

At the same time, as a representative of our working class, Cosatu is seized with the task of engaging the workers in

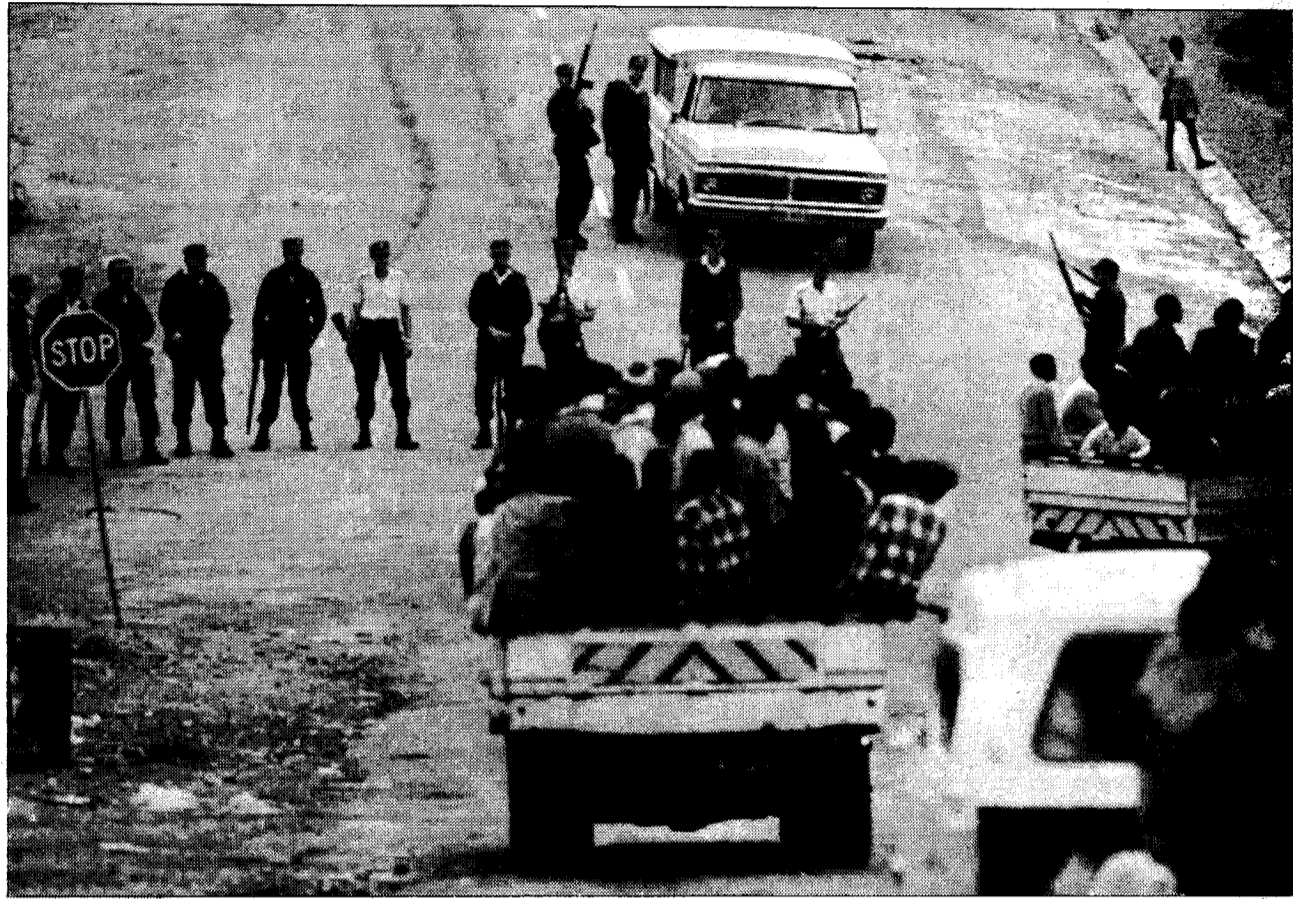
the general democratic struggle, both as an independent organisation and as an essential component of the democratic forces of our country. In this regard, the advancement of the interests of the workers and the democratic struggle of our people requires that Cosatu, in working together with the other democratic mass organisations, seek to build disciplined alliances so as to ensure that the mobilisation of our people in united mass action also deepens the organisational basis of all democratic organisations of the people.

The delegation of the ANC also reported to the meeting on its policy, its programme, its strategy and tactics. The ANC emphasised the need for the greatest possible mobilisation of all the people of our country to join in united political action against the apartheid regime, equally and in combination with the mass political struggle to defend the people against the enemy armed forces and to give the people the possibility to seize power from a white minority regime which holds on to power by the use of force.

The three delegations agreed that it is of central importance that the campaign for the immediate unconditional release of all political prisoners, including Nelson Mandela, should develop with even greater intensity. They agreed that the three organisations would do their utmost in pursuit of this goal.

As the crisis of our country deepens, so too does the resistance, anger and the will of our people to fight back. In the process many issues have emerged and will continue to emerge as central campaigning issues.

At this very moment the entire democratic movement is confronted with the task of finding the correct campaign to destroy bantustan education and establish in its place one single democratic,



non-racial, free and compulsory system of education for all the children of our country.

Similarly it has become imperative that the workers of our country, together with all the democratic forces, work together to destroy the pass laws — the badge of slavery — and the whole system of influx control and prevent the Botha regime from re-introducing this hated system in any guise whatsoever.

In these and all other campaigns facing our people it is the duty of the democratic forces to work together and consult one another in order to establish the maximum unity in action by all our people. The delegations further agreed that the obstacle to any negotiated solution is the Botha regime. They concluded that no negotiations are possible while the leaders of the people are in prison and while the Pretoria regime refuses to accept that our country should be governed by all its people, both black and white, as equals, as brothers and sisters.

In this context the national liberation movement, headed by the ANC, explained that neither negotiations nor 'talks about talks' have taken place and that the ANC is committed that any

negotiations, if and when they should take place, must be public and involve the entire democratic movement.

In the discussions between Cosatu and Sactu, both agreed that the widest possible unity of trade unions in our country is of utmost importance in our people's struggle against the apartheid regime and bosses. Both agreed that there was no contradiction whatsoever arising from their separate existence.

The meeting between all three organisations was characterised by an overwhelming optimism that despite all the manoeuvres by the Botha regime and its allies, despite the heightening repression, victory over the system of white minority racist rule is not far off.

The meeting reiterated the commitment of the three organisations to fight for a society free from the chains of poverty, racism and exploitation which would require the restructuring of the present economy.

7 March 1986



'Eurosocialists' show their colours

France: right takes the reins, Mitterrand stays in the saddle

MITTERRAND appears to have achieved the goal he set his party in the French elections. The socialists are set to be the largest single party while the right wing UDF and RPR parties will have a narrow majority, insufficient to form a strong government without backing either from the socialists or — ominously — the fascists.

The fascist National Front has won 37 seats and the Communist vote has collapsed to under 10 per cent.

Mitterrand has achieved his aims by trampling on French workers, making the fascists a real force, and conceding most of the French Thatcherites' policies in advance. In return, he will hold the balance of power until the presidential elections of 1988.

More strategically Mitterrand has succeeded in the goal he has set himself since the early 1970s — to transform the relation of forces between the Socialist and Communist Parties on the French left. The aim of this is to create the conditions where the Socialists can govern, if necessary, in tandem with the parties of the French right.

For over twenty years, from 1945 to 1968, the

French Communist Party (PCF) was the totally dominant force of the workers movement in France. It controlled the largest trade union federation, the CGT, and had mass electoral support — above all in the 'red belt' of the Paris suburbs. The PCF used that position to give back handed support to right wing government after right wing government — and above all to the regime of General de Gaulle. The PCF's aim was to forge 'French national unity' against the United States.

But despite the Communist Party having successfully bolstered French capitalism, the French ruling class naturally showed no gratitude. The revitalisation of the French economy and industry during the 1950s and 1960s opened up the way for French capitalism to create a new reformist Socialist Party to rival the Communists. This is what Mitterrand has now built.

The policies which the Socialist Party has pursued in government since 1981 — with an increase in unemployment of a million and a base created for the virulent racists of the National Front — have opened up the way for a further shift to the right. The new government if the right is pledged to tax cuts for the rich, dismantling sections of the welfare state, attacks on the

unions, and mass privatisation. Despite verbal opposition, and some gestures that will doubtless be made, there is no indication that Mitterrand, who remains president, will seek to seriously block any of these measures.

Equally significant are the shifts in the military field. In a long article in *Le Monde* last month Mr Jaques Chirac, leader of the galling RPR and a possible prime minister, unveiled his own interpretation of 'European defence integration' pioneered by Mitterrand.



Mitterrand

It means, bluntly, acceptance of NATO's basic strategy of deploying tactical nuclear weapons in a European theatre against superior conventional forces. The difference is that Mr Chirac wants the weapons to be French.

'It is towards the political construction of Europe, notably in defence, and not only towards the construction of an economic Europe, that our efforts should be directed ... This quest, in the company of our partners, for a European defence personality, could only reinforce the effectiveness and cohesion of the Alliance.'

Military

He then goes on to outline a policy which, so far, France has rejected: the deployment of neutron tactical weapons, decoupled from strategic systems, to be used to destroy troop concentrations and other battlefield military units. This is in line with NATO's 'flexible response' strategy, but Chirac's aim is a European variant of this policy.

The real direction of 'European defence' is greatly clarified by this statement of objectives. Far from a non-nuclear defence alternative, it means a Euro-nuclear defence alternative. Despite the electoral success of the Socialists in France, at least, Euro-socialism has opened two doors it will find hard to close: the door to Euro-Thatcherism and the door to Euro-Reaganism — not to mention the largest mass racist group in Europe.



Socialist prime minister leads Spanish state into NATO

SPAIN'S PRIME minister Felipe Gonzalez has won the NATO referendum, to Reagan's delight. In a 60 per cent turnout, just over 53 per cent voted 'yes' to three carefully-rigged questions set by the government.

Forty per cent voted 'no' though only one daily paper — Madrid's radical *El Pais* — supported them along with only one small and divided parliamentary party, the Communists.

This vote greatly clarified both Spanish and European politics. The 'Eurosocialists' have scored a real coup, but exposed their project's implications.

The 'no' and 'yes' campaigns brought together two class alliances. A broad coalition of peace groups, the two trade union federations and the left parties outside the Socialist Party opposed NATO. The great majority of Socialist Party supporters must have voted 'no' to reach 40 per cent.

On the 'yes' side, Gonzalez proved himself better able to lead the bourgeoisie than its own parties. He was widely expected to lose because the

right wing Alianza Popular (AP) party called on its supporters to abstain. He won because he persuaded AP's voters to disregard their leadership.

By Alan Freeman

Gonzalez' victory highlights the close links between the Common Market's economic and military role. On the eve of the poll a group of AP bankers publicly renounced their party's abstention call. Without NATO, they said, Spain would be frozen out of the EEC's key economic decisions.

A second argument influenced voters. Being part of NATO, it was said, would mean being in 'Europe' and helping it counter US influence. This argument was important because the peoples of the Spanish state have great reserves of anti-Franco feeling, and remember that

the USA backed Franco.

The carefully-phrased ballot did not mention NATO but called for membership of the 'Atlantic Alliance' — whatever that means — outside NATO's military command.

Unless Spain joined 'Europe', said the socialists it would have to face the USA alone. These arguments are of a kind with the position of Mitterrand in France, Kinnock, Owen and Heseltine in Britain, Craxi in Italy, and Schmidt of the German socialists. They propose strengthening Europe's military weight within NATO as a counter to US military hegemony.

Gonzalez' argument is demonstrably false. If Spain's entry into NATO was a step towards challenging US foreign policy objectives, why was it welcomed with such relief by the US administration? Moreover, if he had removed US bases or if European socialists, basing themselves on the huge anti-missile movement, had prevented cruise coming to Europe



Reagan and Gonzalez

regardless of NATO directives, who can doubt that it would have been a far greater blow to Reagan's warmongering than any amount of 'European military coordination'?

Finally the line of 'European military integration' simply substitutes European nuclear madness for US nuclear madness. The Western European Union is not

evolving towards demilitarisation but towards increased militarisation; not towards denuclearisation but to greater reliance on nuclear weapons 'made in Europe'.

This provides the background to the international allies lined up by the two campaigns. Chancellor Kohl, of West Germany, was brought in to

try and persuade Fraga's party to join Gonzalez. NATO heads of state rubbed shoulders with figures such as Neil Kinnock. flown in to explain to Spanish voters how the could remain in NATO without having nuclear weapons imported on their territory. This is presumably based on the Labour Party's great achievements in this

direction. The 'no' campaign, in contrast, lined up peace women and movements from all over Europe. Tony Benn and the present from the rest of Europe. Just as Gonzalez has chosen his allies to save Spain's working class and its anti-war movement, Socialists in Britain should draw the appropriate conclusions.

Become a supporting subscriber

LAST SEPTEMBER Socialist Action launched a fund drive of £15,000. By this week we have raised £11,045. This money has enabled the paper to survive following the damaging split from the editorial board last autumn. It leaves us six weeks to raise the £4,000 to complete our fund drive goal by the target date of 4 May.

But Socialist Action is setting a definite target. It wants to turn those donations to the fund drive, which it continues to welcome, into regular income. For that reason, like *New Socialist*, Socialist Action is launching a

scheme of supporting subscribers.

The aim is to get our regular readers and subscribers to contribute a special sum over and above our regular subscription price. We are introducing two schemes.

● We are asking those who take out a subscription to the paper to consider paying a special supporters rate of £12 for six months, or £25 for twelve months. That once and for all payment will help us greatly in the production of the paper.

● Most importantly we are asking for a regular weekly or monthly contribution from those who support the paper. Those £20, £50 or £100 we sometimes receive from readers are tremendously

valuable. But they would help us still more if we knew money was coming on a regular basis. And a smaller sum frequently is easier for most of our readers than a larger amount irregularly.

So from this week we are printing a bankers order form which can give us a regular monthly income. We are asking our readers to make it a top priority over the next three months to turn the contributions we receive into regular income.

We have now taken the first important steps to overcome the effects of the split. Our new staff are rapidly learning their skills. We are rebuilding the work we do for other organisations. It will still take us months to get back to our previous level — we have been forced to miss a couple of issues since September and will be forced to miss a couple more. But there is no doubt that we are getting there. And it is only the tremendous contribution from our readers that has made it possible.

What we need to do now however is regularise and stabilise our income. Pushing up and stabilising our weekly and monthly income is the key to the future of Socialist Action. And that means to the paper which has more than any got out the news on the witch hunt, supports every week the black section, fights for the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign, supports WAC's shadow election campaign, defends Nicaragua, fights to get Britain out of Ireland and builds the campaign against apartheid.

Socialist Action is still the only paper in Britain where you can find the major speeches of Arthur Scargill in the miners strike, the best record of Women Against Pit Closures, which has printed all the major statements of the black section, which carries the major speeches of Oliver Tambo and the leaders of the ANC, which prints major statements by Gerry Adams and Sinn Fein, which carries the major speeches of the FSLN and interviews with its leaders. We believe it is a paper worth supporting.

And that opens up the way to something else. To overcoming the split. Because those who would split over the level of political differences which existed in the editorial board of Socialist Action can produce only another in the long line of sectarian grouplets of the British

left. Fighting that whole tradition of sectarianism is a key part of what Socialist Action is all about. Helping our paper to survive is a key part of fighting to overcome that split.

The key in the next three months for that is to finish the target for the

fund drive and above all to turn those donations into regular income to the paper. We ask every one of our readers to discuss making, or increasing, a regular contribution to Socialist Action.

Become a supporting subscriber!



Standing Order Mandate

Fill in this form and send it to your own bank. We will be notified by your bank.

Please send... £(pounds) on the day of each month, starting in the month of , to the account of Socialist Action, a/c No. 70372315 at the Cooperative Bank, Islington, sort code 08-90-33, until further notice.

Other Books

A NEW paperback, *Malcolm X Speaks* has recently been published for the first time in this country. Price £3.75 plus 22p p&p, it is available from Other Books. The Other Books mail order service offers a wide selection of socialist, anti-imperialist and radical literature, including the following by and about Malcolm X and the struggle for black liberation:

Malcolm X: The Man and His Ideas
George Breitman, Pathfinder Press, 60p + 12p p&p

Two Speeches by Malcolm X
Pathfinder Press, 60p + 12p p&p

Malcolm X Talks to Young People
Pathfinder Press, 60p + 12p p&p

The Assassination of Malcolm X
George Breitman, Pathfinder Press, £2.25 + 28p p&p

Leon Trotsky on Black Nationalism and Self Determination
Pathfinder Press, £2.25 + 22p p&p

By Any Means Necessary: some last speeches by Malcolm X
Pathfinder Press, £3.25 + 34p p&p

The Last Year of Malcolm X: the evolution of a revolutionary
George Breitman, Pathfinder Press, £3.95 + 34p p&p

Malcolm X on Afro-American History
Pathfinder Press, £2.25 + 22p p&p

Make cheques or postal orders payable to IMRS. Orders with payment should be sent to: Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. If the total value of books ordered is over £10, then simply add 15 per cent for postage and packing.

These and other books, together with a wide selection of magazines, posters and postcards are also available from Birmingham's Other Bookshop, 137 Digbeth (just off the main shopping centre) phone 021-643 5904

A PIECE of the ACTION



THE UNIONS



Behind the London busworkers strike

IN A SERIES of branch ballots, London's busworkers have voted by overwhelming majority to strike from 24 March. Following a now-familiar pattern, Telford Beasley, head of London Buses Ltd (LBL) and formerly a director of United Biscuits, has already called this undemocratic and promised a High Court injunction against the TGWU. But his new-found concern for democracy is not matched by concern for busworkers jobs or conditions.

By Rob Jones

On 4 March LBL gave the formal 90 days notice of their intent to scrap all existing agreements on wages and conditions of service. Hard won benefits such as staff status, sick and holiday pay, and severance money will now all have to be renegotiated. Moreover, this comes on top of plans to close at least five more garages, privatise more routes, convert others to one person operation (OPO), and introduce a fleet of minibuses driven by part-timers on lower wages.

Only last year management proposed a £40 a week wage cut, which they have shelved but not abandoned. The consequence of this latest package will be the loss of 1500-2000 jobs and a worsening of conditions, and the further deterioration of an already poor public transport service for the capital.

London's busworkers are not noted for militancy. The last time the bus section of the transport workers union took prolonged strike action was for seven weeks in 1958 when the Macmillan government attempted to force a three per cent norm for all wage settlements. But the scale of Tory attacks on public transport has already provoked a series of short stoppages at fleet and garage level. This reached its highest point with an 82 per cent vote for a strike over the pay claim in July last year.

That vote showed the anger of over 7000 busworkers. But years of weak leadership and a near refusal by the London Bus Committee (LBC) to campaign for a fight has told in this latest ballot: a low turnout. Busworkers are not confident that their leadership has either the resolve for, or a strategy capable of, an effective fight.

The vote for strike action was organised by secret ballots following branch meetings. This allowed the membership to hear management's proposals, the union's response and the views of fellow workers before casting a vote. The problem is that the LBC did not campaign for a strike vote or explain how we would fight. Even so the vote was 2:1 in favour. It gives a clear mandate for action. The task now is to convince the waverers.

This job is more difficult because of the miners' defeat. 'What chance have we?' is the refrain. The message is peddled loudest by those who are opposed to strike action. But there is genuine concern about how to fight. Bus workers have no illusions about the struggle we face.

At the centre of the dispute is the Tories' plan to scrap a subsidised public transport service and to hand over passenger traffic to the profit of private operators. Their decision to create London Regional Transport, a holding company answerable to the Ministry of Transport, was part of that process. This government has made every dispute about the future of London's transport into an issue of national political priorities.

It is not enough, therefore, to say this is just another industrial dispute. But that is how the union leadership sees it. The demands they are putting forward are weak. They call for a slowing-down of the cuts, rather than total opposition. But busworkers should be bold enough not only to call a halt to these attacks but to openly declare our opposition to the Tory government's priorities.

We can and should present the case for an adequately-financed and integrated public transport service. That means cheaper fares, and an end to OPO and the reintroduction of crew buses. Busworkers should demand that government resources are reallocated for the benefit of people not profits. As the GLC cheap fares policy showed, such a campaign would be enormously popular. It would help the union win the allies it needs to turn back the management offensive.

Busworkers haven't chosen this fight, management have. We can enter it from a position of strength or allow them to dictate the terms of our retreat. As a member of the London Busworkers Committee, Tony Isaacs, put it: 'There are no guarantees that if we take management on we will win. But if we don't take them on — we can't win.'

Kinsley Drift fights on

THE NCB has brutally and publicly rejected the recommendation that Bates colliery remain open. Kinsley Drift in west Yorkshire is the next pit in the firing line. But Kinsley Drift is fighting back. PAUL WILKINSON, Kinsley Drift NUM, personal capacity, reports on Kinsley's fight for survival.

ON 25 March Kinsley Drift will be at the national review for pit closure. Kinsley will be the next pit in line after Bates.

Labour

There is no doubt there is a future at Kinsley Drift if the mine were run properly. Any pit can be made 'uneconomic' if you take away the labour. We have lost 200 miners through redundancies without replacement. Headings are stooed because of a shortage of miners and no face replacements when the units have exhausted.

Only two years ago Kinsley Drift had the highest output of coal per shift in the Barnsley area and made a profit of £2.2 million in 1983. Capital costs of £18 per tonne of coal are put on at Kinsley Drift, and to wash our coal costs £63,000 a week.

Kinsley Drift was opened in 1979. Just six years of producing coal, at

a cost of £60 million to open. The Coal Board admits to 12½ million tonnes of mineable reserves of coal. We are going through a bad patch at the moment but all pits have their ups and downs

Pressure

A tremendous amount of pressure has been put on the miners at Kinsley Drift, using American style tactics to get people to vote away their own pit, jobs, and community. Twenty three pits have caved in under this kind of pressure before they ever got to the independent review body. But the Kinsley miners, with the support of their wives, family, and community have resisted the pressure.

Morale

To keep morale up at the pit we formed Kinsley Drift Community Action Group. We used leaflets, public meetings, and had a very successful march and rally. Two thousand local

people attended the march. But as usual we had very little or no media coverage. If we had voted to close ourselves we would have made front page news, but because we are fighting they ignore us.

The decimation of the local community, and its attendant social evils of mass youth unemployment, do not figure in the account book mentality of the government or the Coal Board. The cost of closure is far greater when you take into account the social costs or even the real costs of redundancies, loss of rates and tax income, and future payments of social security benefits to those who would be thrown on the industrial scrap heap.

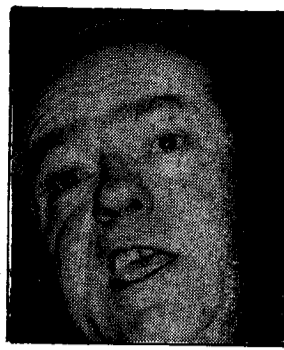
The arguments of the strike are more valid now even than in 1984. We need you to support us to help save Kinsley from the butchery of the Coal Board.

We have had a campaign video made. You can hire the video or buy the video for £10.

● For a speaker, or to send a donation or letter of support contact Margaret Dawson, 14 Common Road, Kinsley, Nr Pontefract, West Yorks. (0977-614260)



Vote Tocher Vote for democracy



BALLOT PAPERS are now out for the election of a new president for the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers (AUEW). The Broad Left candidate, John Tocher's right wing opponent is Bill Jordan. A victory for Jordan would be a blow to the whole labour movement.

By Bill Alder

As Tocher explained to Socialist Action: 'My opponent is part of the Mainstream organization. They've come out quite openly that they are consorting with the EETPU and the UDM. They're consorting together with a view to splitting the TUC, to break the traditional relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party and move towards the SDP.'

Jordan and the right wing majority on the executive council claim to be the champions of democracy. Their record and their plans for the future prove this claim to be a lie.

On several occasions executive council has overridden the views of the an-

nual national committee (the supreme policy making body of the union). For example, the executive wound up the union's sickness and superannuation scheme without reference back to the members. Most disastrously, it has invariably reached agreement on wage rates with the engineering employers without the members having any say whatsoever.

Democracy

The effect of this lack of democracy can be seen in the national minimum time rate. Only £101 a week for a skilled engineer.

To gain complete control over the members, the right wing wants to weaken the basic unity of the AUEW — the shop

stewards committees, branches and district committees. The frequency of branch and district committee meetings has been halved; the authority of district committees to authorise industrial action has been removed. Only executive council can now make strikes official. It is rumoured that the executive wants to stop the quarterly meetings of shop stewards in every district of the union.

Political

The right's plan is to weaken the bodies which are most accountable to the members, concentrate power in the hands of the executive, and hold periodic postal ballots conducted through the AUEW journal (edited by Gavin Laird) and the national newspapers of Murdoch, Maxwell and Shah. Such measures would pave the way for the right's long-term aim: amalgamation with the EETPU on the basis of the latter union's undemocratic rules and structures.

A vote for Tocher is a vote to defend the relative democracy of the AUEW constitution and rules. A victory for Tocher would make it easier for AUEW members to control their union and better wage the struggle against the engineering employers.

Tocher himself puts it like this: 'National committee, is the forum for debates over policy. The EC function is to enact that policy, not to sabotage it. So the difference in stance between Jordan and myself is that I would be endeavouring to operate the policy of national committee.'

Forum

That does not mean single union agreements. It doesn't mean that you renege on your word that's been given to the TUC.

'It means you remind the membership of the policies of the TUC. Most importantly, it means you support members when they're involved in struggle with their employers.'

Building the Justice campaign

By Evan Pritchard

ABOUT 75 people attended a meeting at Gwersylt near Wrexham on 11 March, to publicise the Justice for Mineworkers Campaign.

After the campaign launch on 2 March, the drive is now on to build a justice campaign in every area of the country.

Cath Jones of South Wales WAPC, and Dick Withcombe from the North West Region support group told the Gwersylt meeting of the problems still being caused by the sequestrators.

Withcombe gave the campaign history and stressed the need to build the justice campaign, pointing out that the NUM needed £25,000 a week for the victimised men. Cath Jones too spoke

of the need to keep the support groups alive.

Les Sweeting, chair of Betteshanger NUM in Kent and a sacked miner, spoke proudly of the Betteshanger occupation and of the walk-out by Betteshanger underground workers on the anniversary of the end of the strike, after he and other sacked miners had leafleted the pit. Dennis Pennington from Bold in Lancs, describing himself as 'temporarily sacked' also called for stepped up support for the Justice Campaign.

Jack Collins firmly pointed out that the sacked miners were still paying their subs and therefore the wages of 'Willis and his gang'. Prescott, Labour's employment spokesperson, should tell the NCGB that if they didn't reinstate the victimised miners

'their jobs would be on the line', said Collins.

The meeting was moved by the story of the miners families' suffering told by Betty Turner, wife of a South Wales sacked miner. And Mick Thomas from Blaenau Ffestiniog quarry workers (back out on strike again after a recent temporary return to work), and Jim Kelly from the nine-month long Silenight dispute. Both reminded the meeting of the hardships of other workers in struggle.

● The Justice for Mineworkers Campaign can be contacted at Durham Mechanics Offices, 26 The Avenue, Durham DH1 4ED (phone: 0385 61375-6). Affiliation is: £50pa for national bodies, £25 regional, £5 local. Speakers and literature are available on request.

WAPC video

A VIDEO on the activities of Notts Women Against Pit Closures (WAPAC) is available from The Other Side video collective and Nottingham Video Project.

Entitled *Side by Side, Women Organise* it was produced directly in cooperation with Notts WAPC groups. It documents the way they came into existence to defend their communities during the 1984/85 miners strike.

The struggle is related by women themselves in conversation, poetry and songs. Many of the women describe how they became aware of class and sexual politics during the strike. Anger and bitterness at the betrayals of the TUC and Labour party leaders is mixed with women's new found confidence and determination to fight and win.

The media portrayed the Notts strikers as isolated and depressed — when they mentioned them at all. *Side by Side* shows a different picture — picture of women's

strength and defence of their communities. Of links made with other mining communities from Scotland to Kent, and with women trade unionists and other socialists from all over the world.

Side by Side is available on VHS for sale (£10) or hire (£4) with all profits going to Women Against Pit Closures.

● All enquiries to The Other Side Video Collective, 29 Lees Hill St, Sneinton, Nottingham NG2 4JW, or phone Nottingham Video Project, 0602-470356.



For a single teachers union

THE Easter conference of the NUT will be debating a Lambeth motion calling for unity with the National Union of Schoolmasters-Union of Women Teachers (NAS-UWT) into one single TUC-affiliated union.

This proposal will seem paradoxical to a large section of members of the NUT. The NAS-UWT was the union which entered into united action with the NUT over pay, yet voted by more than 2:1 in their ballot to accept the ACAS offer which effectively sold out the pay campaign of 1985.

That very settlement, however, has caused a crisis within the NAS-UWT ranks. Firstly, those who voted against the settlement will have felt

By Ray Sirotkin, Lambeth Teachers Association (personal capacity)

betrayed by their leadership. Secondly, as the NUT are continuing with sanctions such as not covering for absent colleagues, NAS-UWT members will feel personally vulnerable.

For both these reasons, many NAS-UWT members are likely to join the NUT.

a Fighting Union (CASU) has called for a rejection of the offer, seeing the threat the settlement poses. As the service conditions of Scottish teachers are better defined, they will be able to deal with the Scottish secretary's Rifkin in the House of Commons on conditions and assessments.

Despite the limitations of the settlement, NUT members must learn two important lessons from the Scottish dispute. Firstly, the strength of Scottish teachers. Eighty-five per cent are members of one union, as opposed to 50 per cent of teachers in England and Wales who

are NUT members.

Secondly, their tactics flowing from having this strength included being prepared to boycott exams, giving urgency for the employers to make an offer so as to call off the boycott.

NUT members would do well to take notice of this. Indeed members of the NAS-UWT, the second biggest teachers union in England and Wales would also gain by realising that all teachers benefit from a united front of the NUT and the NAS-UWT.

those of its members who recognise the need for a single TUC-affiliated union.

During the pay campaign, the experiences of the memberships of the NAS-UWT and NUT have taught them that united trade union action gives strength. The period ahead will include a fight to see that the unity of action is translated into the formation of a single trade union for teachers, thus strengthening our ability to defend the interests of all teachers.

Unity

A call by the NUT for unity will attempt to put a brake on the anti-union

Socialist ACTION



Build the Wapping picket

DISTRIBUTION of Murdoch's papers can be stopped. This was the message from the 10,000-strong Saturday Wapping demonstration called by the London district council of SOGAT 82. Only vicious police attacks finally broke the picket at 2.30am Sunday — a five hour delay.

Support for the picket has been progressively growing. Other sections of the Labour movement have seen the Saturday and mid-week demonstrations as key events around which to mobilise. Miners, and the Women Against Pit Closures (WAPC) movement in particular, have given a lead on this. WAPC have mobilised with women in SOGAT and other women on two

major Saturday night demonstrations.
By Brian Grogan

Support groups are now being established in most major centres and in a number of mining communities. These have been initiated primarily by the printworkers themselves but are drawing in many of the activists who supported the miners through their year-long dispute.

These are beginning to raise funds, gather political support through rallies and conferences and mobilise for the mass pickets and demonstrations.

Miners at South Kirkby and Frickley collieries in Yorkshire have instituted a £1 a week levy. Martin Tighe, branch president at Kirkby NUM explained why: 'The print workers were one of the NUM's staunchest supporters in our strike. They are now in the firing line and need our support. We are ready to respond to any calls for solidarity the printers make.'

This sentiment was echoed by Arthur Scargill, president of the NUM, at a demonstration through South Kirkby to commemorate the second anniversary of the death of David Jones on the picket line in the coal strike. 'Miners will respond in their thousands if the print workers ask them,' he said.

As a result of this mounting pressure, the TUC and Labour Party leaderships have now spoken out in support of the dispute, with Neil Kinnock speaking at a support

rally at Wembley and Shore and Prescott speaking last Wednesday at Wapping.

Unfortunately, despite the mounting movement, the demands of the print union leaderships are confused. They are unclear whether they are demanding complete reinstatement of their members or simply adequate redundancy pay. This situation will undoubtedly be exploited to the full in the negotiations now agreed with Murdoch.

Moreover, the concentration on a consumer boycott of the Sun and

other Murdoch titles is obscuring the need to unify printworkers on the other national dailies against the attacks on all printworkers. This is especially marked in the failure to link the struggle against Murdoch with the struggle against Robert Maxwell in response to Maxwell's closure of the Scottish Daily Record. This entire approach poses the need for solidarity strike action in Fleet Street.

By echoing the attacks of the Tories and the police on militant pickets Brenda Dean also tends to undermine solidarity.

Instead of this approach, the print union leaders ought to take a leaf out of Scargill's book and demand action from the TUC and Labour Party, not just fine words. This could start with dumping Labour's prospective parliamentary candidate for Stevenage who is a Sun journalist presently scabbing at Wapping.

No barbed wire or electric fences will prevent victory if the printers win the full active backing of the labour movement. Building the support committees and mobilising for the Saturday night demonstrations is today's key task.

A turning point in the dispute

LAST SATURDAY night saw by far the biggest turn out in the Wapping dispute. Ten thousand pickets nearly controlled the area around the plant until the police were able to regroup. Murdoch's papers were five hours late in appearing. FRANK GORTON gives an eye witness account.

MURDOCH failed to move his papers from Wapping on Saturday night. The largest mass picket so far of print workers, their families, and supporters held the field until 2.30am on Sunday. Reports indicate that the papers were five hours late and many had no advertising section.

Around 7-8,000 assembled at Tower Hill for a nine o'clock march on Wapping. They were joined by others later. Feeling the strength of a demonstration larger than any before, the print workers set off in high spirits. The march had an

air of democratic control of the streets — which were occupied from pavement to pavement.

Print union banners, the Hackney NALGO banner, NUT banners, and Rolls Royce Park Royal were present. To chants of 'Here we go ...' the throng rolled purposefully towards Wapping.

This peaceful, and profoundly dignified, response to Murdoch's attack on printers' right to work gave all the more authenticity to the anger and outrage that exploded at the sight of the ranked police lines, and the ever

provocative 12 foot high iron railings in front of the razor wire. Within minutes 60 feet of the iron railings were bent through 90 degrees and the mounted police were on the pavement to fill the gap in Murdoch's defensive line.

Also within minutes the police on horseback discovered that it was not the best place to be. Over exposed and extended, and without sufficient room to manoeuvre — and possibly feeling like a row of pop up targets at a coconut shy — they withdrew in some disorder.

Before the vast majority of the demonstrators were even in sight of the plant, the police were on the street in combat formations. Police with tall shields interlocked, mobile praetorian guards with

round shields, snatch squads, rioting mounted police proved inadequate in their attempts to intimidate the print workers. Even out of control mounted police deliberately trying to run print workers down and, apparently oblivious to the welfare of their mounts, did nothing to stem a growing realisation that tonight the papers would be stopped.

With the London branches of the print workers in control of the streets, and the police on the rampage, the pickets defended themselves with crowd control barriers. These were used to restrict the mobility of the cavalry. Every street Murdoch's lorries had previously used as rat runs to avoid pickets was blocked by these barriers or hastily assembled

barricades of wooden pallets, building rubble, council estate dustbins, and in one instance a dormobile van.

Private cars and taxis were guided through the road blocks but the determination to try to block the roads to Murdoch even simply by sitting down was strong.

A representative of the local tenants spoke of the understanding by the residents of the printers cause. Improvised songs, soon to be followed by duplicated song sheets, deepened the feeling of solidarity and control. The street party mood deepened into the early hours of Sunday morning with an ever changing interaction and discussion between the different groups on the

line. International events were registered: hundreds of leaflets about a meeting to be addressed by a returning labour movement delegation to El Salvador were well received, and a cry of 'Mama Doc — Papa Doc — Mur Doc' sent an appreciative roar of humour down the line. Acclaim of the Portsmouth SOGAT branch's attendance was long and loud when they boarded the bus for home at 1.30am.

With print workers in control, with flying pickets active at an auxiliary printshop at Worthing, with radio contact between six concentrations of activity, with regular information reports about the overall state of play, with cheers of approval at these reports, and requests for the pickets to remain in the line 'for a little while

longer', a truly effective picket was maintained.

With reports of 40 per cent absenteeism in Rupert's fortress due to demoralisation, and with the evidence of wire meshed buses still parked up at Liverpool Street Station for Murdoch's 'workers' after 2.00am, it seems clear that the scabs, as well as the cops, are not a happy lot.

A corner was turned on Saturday night. A new situation has developed. Mass picketing carried the day and all class conscious militants should organise to build the pickets even bigger.

As one woman was heard to be singing quietly to herself as she walked home 'I'd rather be a picket ...' Build the Wapping picket.

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NATIONAL MARCH & RALLY - SUNDAY 6th APRIL 1986

SOGAT - nga - NUJ - NUJ

IN SUPPORT OF PRINTWORKERS IN DISPUTE WITH MURDOCH

Assemble at Tower Hill/Lower Thames St. from 12 noon.
March to move off 1.30pm.

ROUTE
Lower Thames St. to Upper Thames Street,
New Bridge Street, to Ludgate Circus,
Fleet St, the Strand to Trafalgar Sq

Rally at Trafalgar Sq, to commence at 3.0pm.
until 5.0pm.
Speakers will include BRENDA DEAN-TONY DUBBINS, & HARRY CONROY NUJ General Secretary, & Trade Union & Labour Leaders, details of others to follow.

COACHES
Set down point:- Tower Hill.
Pick up point:- The Embankment.
From Northumberland Avenue to Waterloo Bridge.

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MARCH AND RALLY

Saturday 22nd March, 1986

Assemble Lower Thames Street, EC3, at 8pm
March to: King Edward VII Memorial Park
For Rally at 9pm