

# A Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

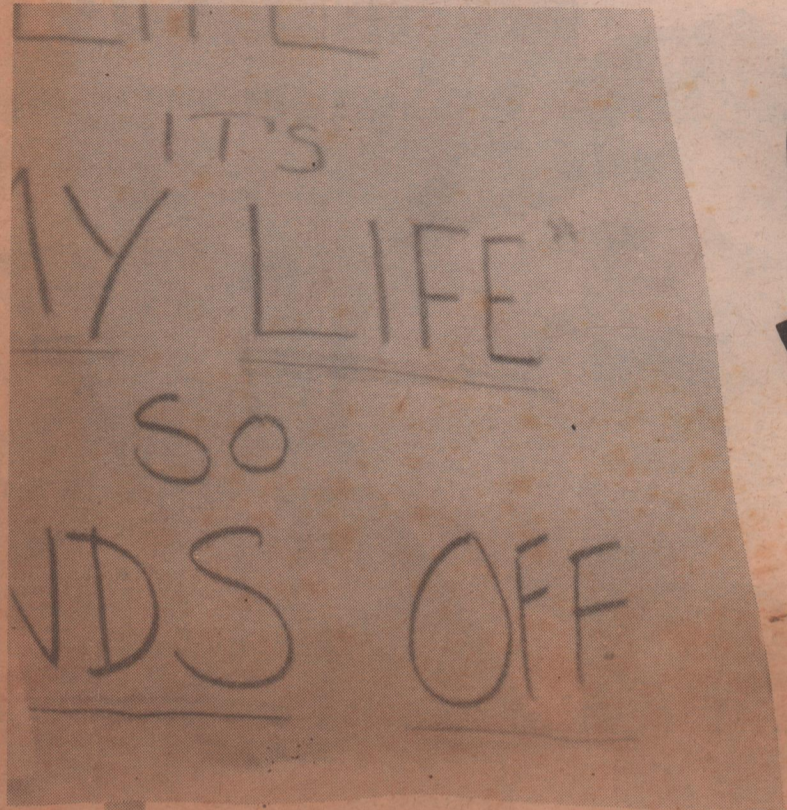
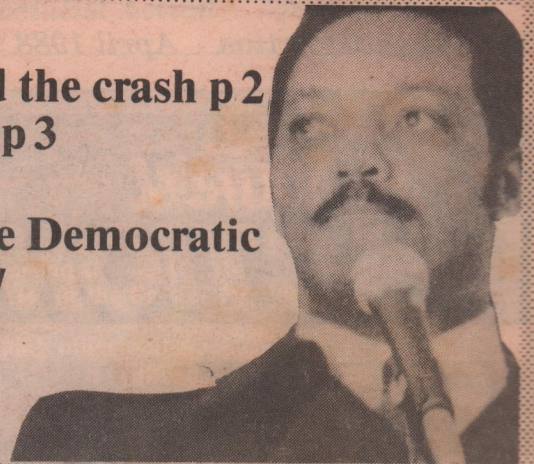
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# STOP ALTON

THE fight against David Alton's attack on abortion rights is entering a new stage. The campaign against his bill has successfully drawn together very broad support, particularly among women and in the labour movement. This has been reflected in the mass actions on the streets, the activity in the labour movement and the support for the FAB campaign. The impact of this is revealed in opinion polls showing increased support for abortion rights.

The bill begins its vital committee stage on 23 March. It is in committee that an amendment changing the time limit in the bill to 24 weeks is most likely to come forward. It is also possible that Alton's supporters may move special rules which allow the committee to meet virtually continuously until it has finished its business. If this were successfully done then the work of the committee could be over quite rapidly. The bill would then only face one further decisive stage before becoming law — its third reading in the House of Commons.

Alton has stated that he will not support an amended bill with a 22 or 24 week limit. However he knows that to be sure of maintaining his existing support he will have to make some concessions. His proposals are to allow exceptions to the 18 week limit for certain forms of foetal abnormality which he considers serious enough to justify abortion, and also in cases of rape, but only where the woman concerned has informed the police. All simply reveals Alton's hypocrisy - he is against all abortion, but will play God in determining which women he will allow to have abortions. However, despite the transparent manoeuvring of Alton, these amendments may be sufficient to secure him a majority at third reading.

The Fight Alton's Bill campaign therefore faces a particularly vital period, which could be as short as a few weeks, to prepare the campaign for the third reading. This time must be taken to maintain the activity of the local groups around the day of action set for 27 April, the 20th anniversary of the implementation of the 1967 abortion act. A further national action will also be called to coincide with the third reading.

The maximum pressure must be on MPs at the time of the third reading. Above all, it must be brought to bear on the Labour Party and those Labour MPs who did not vote to defend women's rights in January. Neil Kinno's office has recently written to FAB campaigners stating that the party does not implement a three-line-whip on the abortion issue because of the 'personally sensitive' issues involved. This gives the lie to those who have claimed that the three-line whip is a purely tactical question, and nothing to do with the 'conscience clause'.

The Labour Party could have stopped Alton on 22 January, it must do everything to stop Alton at the third reading. The price for failure will not simply be an attack on women's rights, but an enormous strengthening of the confidence of the right in society — they will come back for more, and the Labour Party will suffer as a result.





# Socialist ACTION



## Murder in Gibraltar and Belfast

FOR ANYONE who thinks the indiscriminate attack on the funerals in Belfast of the three IRA members murdered by the SAS in Gibraltar should reinforce the view that no useful purpose is served by Britain remaining in Ireland. Britain has enmeshed itself in seemingly never ending repression, murders and cover-ups.

Gerry Adams has accused the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) of collusion in the murderous attack on the funerals of Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Dan McCann. It is indeed almost impossible to see how such an attack could take place without the collusion at some level of the security forces.

Eventually the facts on that will be clear. It took seven years before the truth about the RUC's 1981 shoot-to-kill policy saw the light of day. It was only a matter of days before the truth came out that Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage and Dan McCann were clinically murdered in cold blood by the SAS in Gibraltar. The lies splashed in the media about a 'gun battle' with 'armed terrorists' were exposed by the eye witnesses who told how the three had been shot once and then had more shots pumped into them as they lay dying.

Although the great majority of people in Britain unfortunately felt no grief for the murdered IRA members, because they did not understand the justice of the cause for which they died, the opposite is true in Ireland. Even the *Guardian* and *Independent* had to report the remarkable display of grief as people lined every street of every village from Dublin to the border and as a one mile long column of cars followed the procession.

As the *Independent*, for example, reported: 'There were extraordinary scenes...On every street corner, on every roundabout, and on every bridge, men, women and children stood in silent tribute. Many waved black flags...Thousands more flags were decked along the route...As the cortege headed out of Dublin hundreds of cars followed. Many more joined the procession as it passed through each village. Outside houses, isolated public houses, and in lay-byes, crowds watched the cavalcade passed. Near the border at Dundalk virtually the entire population lined the streets in mourning.'

At the border, imposed by Britain, the first act of the security forces was to demand that the Irish flag - the tricolour - be removed from the coffins. So much for the Anglo-Irish Agreement's promise of 'respect for the nationalist tradition' of the minority in the north. That petty act of degradation excellently illustrated the nature of the Northern Ireland state for the great majority of Irish people.

It would of course be foolish to think that the huge Irish expression of respect for those gunned down by the SAS will find an echo in Britain. But the view that Britain's presence in Ireland serves no useful purpose is growing again. Britain's presence does not bring peace. Propping up the likes of Paisley and the Orange order is not a popular cause.

The protection of those who covered-up the shoot-to-kill murders and framed Stalker, the treatment of the Birmingham 6 and the shooting of Aiden McAneaspie, have increased disquiet in Britain. The new murders will increase it further.

For twenty years the British establishment, supported by the Labour Party and the TUC, has skillfully avoided the view that Britain should get out of Ireland from taking any active form. The unfolding futility, and increasing brutality, of British rule in Ireland must be used to break down that log jam.

# Behind Lawson's budget The boom and the crash

NIGEL LAWSON'S is the most openly class budget presented in Britain for a generation. It is almost unnecessary to repeat the figures — £1.80 a week gain if you earn £4,000 a year and £250 a week if you earn £100,000 a year. The reduction of the highest rate of tax to 40 per cent, giving Britain the lowest top rate of taxation of any country outside the United States, is so blatant that even Lawson may live to politically regret its impact.

But the key economic question is how long the government can continue in boom conditions — the situation which has allowed real wages to increase by more than 12 per cent since Thatcher came to power and provided the backdrop to her election victories in 1983 and 1987.

Here the most relevant facts are the rapidly deteriorating situation of the balance of payments — with a record monthly deficit of £905 million in December — and the continuing consequences of October's Wall Street crash. It is the latter which will be decisive and will form the background to the government's economic policy throughout the coming year.

By John Ross

The first phase of the crash, in October itself, was the collapse of share prices. The value of world stock exchanges fell by £2,000 billion. Its cause was the unsustainable US balance of payments deficit.

The second phase, which lasted through November and December, was the rapid devaluation of the dollar — in essence a huge price adjustment to seek to wipe out the US balance of payments deficit. Between September and the end of December the dollar fell in value by 15 per cent against the yen, 18 per cent against the deutsche mark and 13 per cent against the pound. This was in addition to the substantial devaluation that had already taken place earlier in 1987. While the dollar has recovered marginally since its low point it has still gone through a 10 per cent devaluation against its major competitors since the crash.

The third wave of the crisis, which is just beginning to work through, is the effects of the dollar devaluation — although it is still only the effects of the earlier dollar devaluation which are being felt and the consequences of the autumn's fall will come through only later in the year.

Despite the fact that the full force of the dollar devaluation has not yet been felt, the US balance of payments is swinging round rapidly. US exports in volume terms expanded by 28 per cent in 1987. Calculated on comparative purchasing powers, US goods are now 25 per cent cheaper than those of their competitors. The US trade deficit fell from \$17.6 billion in October, to \$13.2 billion in November, and to \$12.2 billion in December.

The consequence of this turn around in the US balance of trade is, however, going to be very different in the differing parts of the world — which is what directly connects the crash to the deteriorating British balance of payments.

The countries least affected by the turn round in the US balance of payments are the Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs) of South East Asia — South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan. These have been deliberately devaluing their currencies in parallel with the dollar. While the dollar devalued by 83 per cent against the Japanese yen between September 1985 and January 1988, and by over 50 per cent against the deutschemark, it fell in value by only 8 per cent against the South Korean won, 42 per cent against the Taiwan dollar, 10 per cent against the Singapore dollar and by zero against the Hong Kong dollar. The result is that exports from the NICs have represented an ever growing proportion of the US balance of payments deficit — the US deficit with the East Asian industrialising states jumped by 23 per cent in 1987 to \$35 billion. The US is now beginning to act against them with Reagan announcing on 29 January the withdrawal of their tariff privileges to enter the US market.

The significance of this for Western Europe is clear. With the United States taking action against the NICs they will redirect their exports to Western Europe — and their trade surplus with the EEC already increased by 20 per cent in 1987.

This new pressure from the NICs will be added to the export competition from Japan — which is running a trade surplus with the EEC at a current rate of \$20 billion a year.

The consequences for Western Europe of the dollar devaluation are clear. Western Europe has been financing its trade deficit with Japan and East Asia by a trade surplus with the United States — the EEC's visible trade surplus with the US in 1987 was \$24.3 billion. The devaluation of the dollar ensures this surplus with the US will disappear — shifting Western Europe, on the best estimates, into a \$20 billion trade deficit next year under the squeeze from Japan and East Asia on the one side and the United States on the other.

By the end of 1988 West German will almost certainly be the only West European country with a



balance of payments surplus. The rapidly deteriorating British balance of payments is part of this whole West European trend.

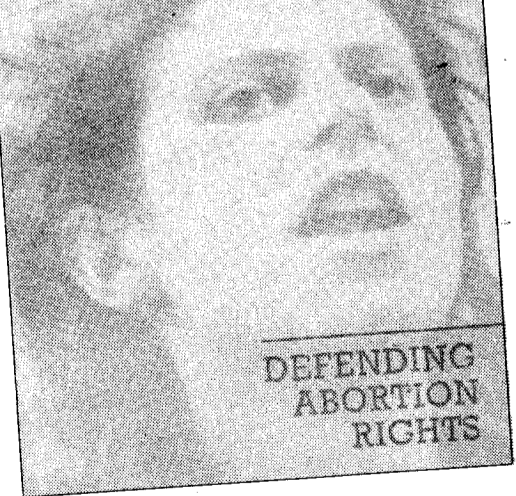
The way Western Europe will respond to that balance of payments crisis is also clear — by recession. The only effective means known to capitalist governments of correcting a balance of payments deficit is to rein back their own economies. The devaluation of the dollar, and the balance of payments deficits it will produce, means that Western Europe is heading into recession.

For Britain no issue could be more serious. Its trade is increasingly with Western Europe. It is in deficit with Japan and East Asia. One of the few export surpluses it runs in the world, with the United States, is about to be eliminated by the dollar devaluation. The oil price is falling. The Treasury projection is for a £4 billion deficit on the balance of payments next year. And the international context is going to get tougher after that.

Lawson is not going to run into an immediate crisis. But the forces unleashed by last year's crash are inexorably tightening their grip on Western Europe and Britain.

This budget is going to be very near the peak of Thatcher's power.

## WOMEN'S CHOICE



'Women's Choice — Defending Abortion Rights' THIS new pamphlet takes up the arguments which have been at the centre of the campaign against Alton, explaining why abortion rights are a matter of principle, not conscience, because women's equality is not possible without control over their fertility.

It is also full of useful arguments against reductions in time limits for legal abortion. A must for every person active in the FAB campaign or in the labour movement generally.

The pamphlet is available from Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP, at a cost of 75p plus 25p p&p. Reductions for bulk orders.

# Opposition to Alton strikes deep into the unions

TRADE union women at the 1988 TUC women's conference pledged their opposition to the Alton Bill and their determination to support wide-ranging campaigning to ensure it is defeated. The decision included the commitment to 'exert the maximum pressure on trade union MPs to vote against the bill', a reference to the 55 Labour MPs who voted against Labour policy at the second reading of the bill.

This conference decision was made in the context of widespread union involvement in the fight against Alton and the FAB campaign. Opposition to Alton was in no sense the view of a narrow section or small number of unions at conference.

Moving Composite 9 on abortion, Marian Braine, NCU, denounced the callousness and hypocrisy of Alton and the anti-abortionists who want to criminalise women who have late abortions — and who in any case oppose all abortions.

By Anne Kane

While recognising that the facility for late abortion will always be necessary, composite 9 called for a TUC campaign demanding positive changes such as improved, free, abortion facilities equally available throughout the NHS, more research into early prenatal screening methods and into surer, safer contraception, and for better sex education in schools.

From the NGA, supporting the motion, Megan Dobney, also picked up on the hypocrisy of Alton supporters, both inside and outside the labour movement particularly of those Tory MPs who put their names to the two-page colour SPUC 'foetus' adverts in January's National newspapers while supporting capital punishment.

The picture itself was a sick fiction, as she correctly explained. The "him" in

the picture was one woman's personal tragedy — a foetus from a miscarriage, suspended artificial-ly in saline solution'.

However, even more disgraceful is that one Labour MP, Dale Campbell-Savours, put his name to that advert, and that 55 Labour MPs voted against party and TUC policy on 22 January, with 36 voting directly with Alton. Many of these MPs are sponsored by unions which are part of the TUC and which have individual policies unambiguously in support of a woman's right to choose, not the privileged right of MPs.

She called for this sponsorship to be used to ensure these MPs vote in the interests of women in any future voting, and respect the party conferences, manifestos, constituency parties and unions which they are supposed to represent.

In the debate, speaker after speaker — representing GMBATU, the CPSA and the Health Visitors Association among others — got up to demand the pressure on these MPs, and the maximum turn out on 19 March. As the delegate from the GMB said to resounding applause 'I wish I could be sure that all such bills would come from the same party — unfortunately equality seems to be an academic exercise for some Labour MPs'.

Again to loud applause, Ivy Cameron, of BIFU, summing up from



the platform, hit out at the undemocratic structures within the movement which both let Labour MPs ignore policy, and allowed some in the union bureaucracy to use personal power to limit support being organised for FAB.

The debate had followed a well attended FAB fringe meeting, chaired by Ada Maddocks from the TUC women's committee and at which Bernadette Hillen from USDAW and the TUC general council spoke.

John Edmonds, general secretary of the GMB, sent a personal letter to every member of his executive stressing the importance of mobilising for

19 March. The GMB has produced its own poster — 'A declaration for a woman's right to choose'.

NUPE and the CPSA have produced and circulated thousands of leaflets. Tony Dubbins of the NGA sent a letter to every branch calling for support against Alton.

NALGO in particular has actively aided the FAB campaign nationally and has circulated thousands of leaflets and posters.

In some unions the anti-abortionists are organising a counter-attack. In the CPSA, for example, where the right wing controls the union journal, its pages have been used to attempt to whip-up a backlash

against the leadership's campaign against Alton.

It is simply not tolerable to the mass of women members to have anything less than full, active commitment to defence of the '67 Act and support for a woman's right to choose.

The sentiment and decisions at the TUC women's conference indicate that both some union leaderships and Labour MPs are being brought up sharply against this reality. It is leading many women trade unionists to organise ever more seriously to challenge those power structures which make a mockery of their policy decisions.

## Women show labour movement the future

THIS year's TUC women's conference was the most combative for many years. Alongside it the campaign against the Alton bill has struck deeper roots into the unions than any previous campaign against an attack on abortion rights. It appears that women trade unionists are demanding more, and demanding it more vocally and more determinedly with each year that passes.

The annual TUC women's conference coincided with the publication of the latest of a series of significant figures on trade union membership. The GMB has announced that in the quarter from September to December 1987 it experienced the first increase in its membership since 1979.

By Jude Woodward

The figures published show an increase in membership of 2,397, of which the majority are women. The other two unions to register a growth over the last period are USDAW and NALGO.

Aside from the important general fact that these figures seem to indicate an

end to the long stagnation and decline in union recruitment since 1979, these unions also share a particular concern with women workers in different fields. They have all engaged in high profile campaigns to recruit women workers.

The GMB in particular has estimated itself as the 'women's union' of the future. It appears that this is having a pay-off for the GMB.

Also published last week were figures which showed that the workforce is projected to continue to expand by 900,000 by 1995. Of this increase it is projected that 800,000 will be women, bringing the female workforce up to 12.3 million.

This continuing rise in the female workforce is having a decisive impact on the labour movement. It underpins the breadth of the response in the unions to the Alton bill.

While the response to Corrie was relatively swift and effective with the TUC calling a national demonstration straightaway, the response to Alton has in fact gone much deeper into the unions. With Alton the national TUC response has been rather less effective, but in the base of the unions there is a level of activity which surpasses previous campaigns.

The growth in membership of USDAW, NALGO and the GMB is significant not just for these unions but for the whole future strategy of the labour movement. It is no exaggeration to say that women show the way forward for the whole labour movement.

Winning the support of women is the key for the unions to turn the growth in the size of the workforce.

into growth in union membership, and winning women voters is a key to the election of a majority Labour government.

In this context the figures published by the Labour Research Department showing that even among the ten unions with the highest female membership there is only marginal improvement in the representation of women at executive and full time level spells real problems in the future for the unions.

Of the ten unions only the GMB has shown a significant improvement in the proportion of women on its executive, from 3 per cent to 28 per cent in two years since the last survey due to the introduction of a 25 per cent quota for women.

Only NUPE has achieved 50 per cent, while USDAW stagnated at 19 per cent, and NALGO at around 36 per cent. The TGWU's figure of 5 per cent is one of the most shocking.

At the level of full time

## The pro-death lobby

IN January of this year the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child, and other self-styled 'pro-life' organisations ran hugely expensive two page full colour adverts in the daily press.

Accompanying the by now well-known picture of a dead foetus suspended in saline solution the headline read: 'We've abolished the death penalty for murderers and terrorists, shouldn't we abolish it for him (sic) too?'

The advert was signed by 47 Tory MPs. But of these 47 no less than 39 had voted for the return of the death penalty in either 1983 or 1987 — the last

two occasions on which it was put to the vote.

However this was not a chance aberration. 204 of the Tory MPs who voted for Alton's bill were MPs when capital punishment has been voted on. 144, that is 71 per cent, voted in favour of the death penalty.

This is not surprising. Anti-abortionist Roy Hattersley MP, deputy leader of the Labour Party, when questioned by FAB activists about women who died as a result of septic abortion, is reported as responding 'They made their choice'.

When will the anti-abortionists drop their hypocrisy and stop calling us the murderers. They are quite simply the pro-death lobby.

## Women demand action from TUC

TUC PLANS to set up a new equal rights department came under critical scrutiny from women trade unionists at the annual Women's TUC conference in Blackpool 9/11 March. Anger erupted on the floor of conference as suspicion deepened that the TUC was deprioritising resources for the new department.

Radical shifts in the labour market — increased part time, home, and casual female labour — has provided a spur for the deeply ingrained 'male dominated' trade unions to attract women into their ranks.

Women activists at Blackpool were mounting pressure on the TUC leaders to ensure a properly funded, high profile department, powerful enough to take on campaigning issues decided by women themselves.

By Pat Tough

Motions on the conference agenda showed that women had felt most sharply the increased levels of exploitation of workers. Employment rights for the hundreds of thousands of part time, casual and home workers are virtually non-existent. Increased pressure on the trade union movement to protect this growing group of workers was strongly made.

Women delegates expressed anger at continuing job segregation in key industries, for example the railways, which de facto excludes women from areas of secure, well paid and well organised employment.

Campaigns like those of the GMBATU, USDAW, NALGO and other unions to recruit more women members through a higher profile on women's issues has not cut off organisation at the base. It has served to strengthen the self-confidence and determination of women trade unionists to insist that these unions really are their own organisations.

Several motions dealt with women's health issues, and strong condemnation was made of threatened restrictions in the abortion law and gay and lesbian rights.

Standing ovations for

Palestinian and South African representatives marked a genuine rank and file support for these struggles. It seemed odd then that a request for a collection for the South African representatives of COSATU should be brushed aside 'since the money couldn't get there'. Conference forced the collection.

The NUM and the EETPU came into sharp conflict. A motion — based on the international experience of the NUM during the 1984/85 strike and its continuing commitment to international solidarity — was sharply contested by the EETPU. The EETPU only just managed a seconder for its amendment limiting international solidarity to ICF-TU affiliates — which would have excluded COSATU for example which has refused to affiliate to any international trade union federation.

The conference has no formal power to shape policy, yet it asserted a determination to change the situation of women in the labour movement however long that might take. The situation where 45 per cent of the workforce is female but only a third of the TUC's nine million membership is female is an uneasy proposition for the trade union movement.

Lack of women in key positions (only 3 of the 87 TUC unions have female general secretaries) is an irony for an organisation which is 'publically championing women's equality'.

It is an symptom of the problems in the trade unions which made this year's TUC women's conference one of the most stormy and combative to have taken place, and which is ensuring that women's self-organisation within the unions is continuing to advance at a rapid pace.



## Shift to the right at London conference

**THERE** was a significant shift to the right at this year's Greater London Labour Party (GLLP) conference on 4-6 March. The whole atmosphere of the conference was marked by the first serious witch hunts organised by the London party — with the Bermondsey party suspended and Mandy Mudd, from Tottenham, threatened with expulsion.

The elections to the new, smaller GLLP executive also marked a shift to the right. Jeremy Corbyn was defeated in the election of the chair by Glenys Thornton by 138,000 to 548,000, and a right wing vice chair was elected. A number of left candidates in the CLP section of the regional executive were also defeated but in some cases this was due to a divided left vote. For example, Labour Briefing refused to support the only contested Black Section candidate — Kingsley Abrams. As a result a right winger got through on a lower vote than the combined total vote for the left.

The conference was effectively stage managed to present an image of the London party renouncing its 'leftist' past. So resolutions opposing the inquiry into Bermondsey CLP and calling for an emergency debate on the threatened disciplinary action in Tottenham were defeated.

Policies were adopted defending the NHS and opposing the poll tax but no effective action was agreed. NUPE opposed a call for one day strike action to defend the NHS and this proposal was duly defeated. The conference narrowly rejected a motion calling for CLPs to be given a greater share of the vote at annual national party conference. In previous years this position has been carried overwhelmingly.

Nonetheless the GLLP was the only party region

so far to adopt policy, virtually unanimously, calling for Labour to impose a three line whip on future votes on abortion.

The left has suffered serious defeats in London in recent years. But there are some important positive developments beginning to emerge. Ken Livingstone, Audrey Wise, Jeremy Corbyn, the Black Section, CLPD and WAC addressed the Campaign Group/Labour Left Liaison fringe meeting. This was the biggest fringe meeting even though it coincided with the LCC and Briefing meetings.

At the London regional women's conference the WAC slate was elected to the women's places on the GLLP executive against Militant and Briefing slates.

These developments show that the left in London is starting to realign itself with the left and campaigns in the party nationally. This marks the end of the period when its relative isolation was made worse by Briefing trying to make itself the umbrella of the left in London — a position it is unable to occupy.

The task now is to integrate the London left with the national left in the party. This can only be done by developing links between the national party campaigns in the LLL, the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, the left in trade unions such as the NUM, the TGWU, and the MSF, and the large number of activists in the London party.

## Threat to party democracy in North West

**THE NORTH West Labour Party conference adopted a statement by the regional executive which gave them the power to bring to next year's regional conference proposals on restricting business to matters directly related to the North West.**

This would be a huge attack on the rights of Labour Party regions to debate party policy. It

By Cath Potter

should be brought to the attention of every party activist. If political discussion were outlawed in the North West in this way then no doubt that example would be followed elsewhere.

The regional conference adopted policies to defend the NHS but sup-

port for strike action was not debated. The conference also opposed the poll tax but resolutions calling for a boycott of the poll tax were defeated.

The conference voted unanimous opposition to the Alton bill. However, resolutions calling for a three line whip on this issue and against the conscience clause were opposed by the regional executive and defeated on a card vote. The TGWU Region 6, NUPE and the NUM supported a three line whip on this issue. The GMB, MSF and USDAW voted against.

Emergency resolutions against Clause 29 were overwhelmingly carried.

The Campaign Group/Labour Left Liaison fringe meeting, addressed by Eric Heffer, Les Huckfield and WAC and attended by 65 delegates, was again the largest at the conference.



# Dissatisfaction with Kinnock in Scotland

**THE SCOTTISH Labour Party conference, 11-13 March in Perth, showed the growing discontent and anger at Neil Kinnock's public attempts to dictate how to fight the poll tax to the Scottish party. The conference was dominated by the debate on the poll tax and the crises facing Scottish Coal and the NHS.**

After laying down the law to the Scottish party at the local government conference in January, Kinnock's speech to the Scottish conference did not even mention the poll tax, devolution or the general election result in Scotland.

By Ann Henderson

There was also frustration with the inability of the Scottish Labour Party to take the initiative in the campaign against the poll tax. Constituency party activists from all over Scotland, including a lobby of conference from Edinburgh, called for a stronger stand.

Gavin Strang MP called for an effective, collective non-payment campaign, without ruling out illegality. Dick Douglas MP, who resigned earlier in the year as chair of the Scottish PLP, met with an overwhelming response from conference when he said: 'Kinnock says pay. I say no!'

The conference endorsed, by a 2:1 majority, a statement on how to fight the poll tax, proposed by the Scottish executive. The executive itself had narrowly adopted the statement by 17:14 against opposition from Donald Dewar.

The executive statement effectively headed off the expected confrontation over tactics in the poll tax campaign — agreeing to support the 'Stop it' campaign designed to frustrate the registration process, and deferring decisions on a mass non-payment campaign and illegality until a special recall Scottish conference

in the autumn. However, the Scottish executive have already ruled out the most effective way to stop the poll tax which is for councils to refuse to implement it.

A resolution from APEX, ruling out illegality at the present time, was carried by trade union block votes, though it had been overwhelmingly defeated on a show of hands.

There is undoubtedly widespread opposition in Scotland to the poll tax. It appears that thousands of people in Scottish cities like Glasgow and Edinburgh have not registered on the electoral roll because they think it guarantees they will end up on the poll tax register.

It is clear that the Scottish Labour Party will have to decide whether to continue avoiding the issue or to place itself at the head of the resistance.

A sign of the unrest in the Scottish party was the launch of a new group called Scottish Labour Action which includes prominent Scottish LCC activists. This group had circulated all party organisations in Scotland with a statement which says: 'We are resolved to campaign within the party for a strategy aimed at making Scotland ungovernable without the creation of an assembly. To this end we call on the Labour Party in Scotland to:

1. Effect Scotland's right to self determination on such a basis as the people themselves decide.
2. Adopt the argument that the Conservative Party has no mandate in Scotland and to campaign

on this basis.

3. To support a policy of tactical non-cooperation with the government in the conduct of Scottish business in the House of Commons.

4. Urge the party to place more emphasis on initiatives launched in Scotland, where the Tories are in an embarrassing minority rather than at Westminster where they enjoy a massive majority.

5. Support mass civil disobedience in Scotland as a legitimate means of protest for the Scottish people.

6. Support, in particular, obstruction and civil disobedience in the implementation of the poll tax leading to a mass campaign of non-payment and to seek early and public declarations of intent not to pay from leading figures in the party and beyond.

7. Encourage the early establishment of an alternative democratic forum in Scotland.

'We realise however that for the party to be credible in putting this platform before the Scottish people then a much greater autonomy must be sought for the Labour Party itself. The party in Scotland must have the right to appoint its own full-time officials and must enjoy full policy and organisational autonomy. Further, the party's Scottish front bench should be elected by the Scottish group of MPs and not chosen by the London leadership.

Bob McLean, one of the group's organisers writes in the group's broadsheet: 'We believe the Scottish parliamentary group lacks a strategy. We are disappointed that the Scottish executive have not exerted a greater influence on events. Similar concerns have been raised by leading figures in the Scottish labour movement in-

cluding the general secretary of the STUC.'

He goes on to say: 'We respect Neil Kinnock, his achievements to date, and support him as the leader that will take the party into the next general election. This perspective, however, is essentially influenced by the political situation in England. We understand his position on the poll tax. Civil disobedience over the English poll tax would lack moral force and democratic credibility. Our argument with Walworth Road and the parliamentary leadership is for recognition of the Scottish dimension and the internal party devolution that should flow from it.'

The new group will hold a founding conference in Glasgow on 26 March.

Throughout the weekend of the Scottish party conference many calls were made for higher profile action for a Scottish Assembly.

By far the largest fringe meeting at Scottish conference for the third year in a row, was the Campaign Group (Scotland) meeting attended by over 250 people. 40 people attended the LCC meeting.

At the Campaign Group meeting John Mulvey, leader of Lothian Regional Council, put forward the case for resisting the poll tax and for the Scottish Labour Party to place itself in the leadership of that campaign.

Tony Benn said there was an alternative way in which the Labour party can build up its support. He said that the party had to support the obviously mass popular opposition and resistance to the poll tax. He explained why it was damaging that the Labour Party NEC had taken an ambivalent attitude to strike action by health workers in defence

of the NHS.

The Alton bill was the subject of much debate at the conference. Resolutions committing the Scottish party to oppose Alton and for the defence and extension of the '67 Act were overwhelmingly carried.

Margaret Stewart, of Stirling women's council, stressed that although MPs had their own views on abortion: 'They are not entitled to vote on that personal view in parliament, making laws that will deny thousands of women the right to exercise their conscience when the time comes.'

Women are under represented at every level of the Scottish labour movement. There is only one woman amongst the 50 Scottish Labour MPs. Scottish WAC are calling for more representation for women and for the 22 Labour MPs in Scotland — 44 per cent of the Scottish PLP — who did not vote against the Alton bill to be faced with this question during reselection. Maria Fyfe MP, speaking at the Scottish FAB meeting, distanced herself from the call for a three line whip and from WAC's campaign on reselection.

The adoption by Scottish conference of a positive policy on abortion was a big step forward.

Overall the Scottish party conference showed the growing frustration in the Scottish party with Walworth Road's failure to campaign effectively. It also showed the dissatisfaction within the Scottish party, and the strains this is creating in the Scottish LCC which dominates its leadership.

These issues, as well those raised by the policy review and the specific weaknesses of the Scottish party itself — such as its under representation of women — will dominate Scottish Labour this year.



# Ireland

## Withdrawal movement plans to broaden support

**THE MURDEROUS attack on the funerals of the IRA members killed by the SAS will increase opposition to the British presence in Ireland. But the contrast between the mass demonstration of condolence when the coffins arrived at Dublin and the gloating by the British media and government illustrate the sharply different tactics that have to be pursued in campaigning for British withdrawal in Ireland and Britain.**

The Labour Committee on Ireland holds its AGM on 9/10 April in Manchester. The National Council are proposing a new departure to significantly broaden the movement for British withdrawal from Ireland.

By Redmond O'Neill

After the Enniskillen bombing Kinnock tried to outlaw the policy of British withdrawal within the Labour Party. But this failed. In fact the PLP discussion which followed Enniskillen was the best debate on Ireland in the PLP for decades. Instead of ostracising Ken Livingstone it established the legitimacy of the minority current which argues for British withdrawal.

Having weathered that storm the withdrawal movement now has to face some hard choices in broadening its support.

The basis for such a step forward has been laid by the work of the LCI in the labour movement since 1981. The NUR, the NUM, the Campaign Group, Labour students, the Na-

tional Union of Students, the Labour women's organisation, London Labour region, a probable majority of CLPs and Labour Left Liaison have called for British withdrawal from Ireland.

Discussion within the trade unions on Ireland has started to be legitimised. Trade unions have started to discuss such questions as employment discrimination, civil liberties and, in one or two cases, withdrawal.

There has also been changes in the Irish community. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, the Birmingham 6 and the Guildford 4 frame-ups are provoking the very political opposition they were designed to stamp out. This is reflected in the *Irish Post* and other social, cultural and political developments. To take one example, the mass appeal of a pop group like the Pogues whose most recent album explains the frame-up of the Birmingham 6 (for 'being Irish in the wrong place and at the wrong time') and the murder of the IRA members at Loughgall last year ('kicked down and

shot in the back of the head').

It is not yet possible to win a majority for withdrawal in the British labour movement. But what is possible is to make withdrawal as much a policy of the left as, for example, support for Black Sections and the representation of women, have become. That requires consolidating the support of the Campaign Group, LLL and left LCC forces and going beyond it — above all in the unions.

In addition the step can be taken to mobilising this support alongside that of the Irish community, in more significant public activity, for British withdrawal.

But for this it is necessary for the LCI to work with other organisations and individuals with an interest in raising Ireland in the labour movement with a view to seeing Britain withdraw. In Scotland, for example, the LCI is organising joint meetings with the Campaign for Democratic Rights in Northern Ireland at this year's Scottish Labour and STUC conferences.

Similarly, the LCI must work for withdrawal with people like Clare Short MP who disagreed with its call for MPs to vote against the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The LCI also has to work with those who disagree with its view of Sinn Fein.

This is inevitable in

Britain. Opinion polls consistently show that a majority of people in Britain want Britain to leave Ireland. But support for Sinn Fein is virtually non-existent. The minuscule 2 per cent of British people supporting the hunger strikers' demands in 1981 — far less than virtually anywhere else in the world — shows the same fact.

The same thing is seen in the contrast between the British gloating over the execution by the SAS of the three young IRA members in Gibraltar compared to the dignified mass demonstration of grief and condolences by the people of Ireland on Monday 14 March. That contrast is real and will remain. There will no more be mass support for Sinn Fein in Britain than there ever was mass support for the Viet Cong in the United States. But there will be, and there is, growing opposition to Britain remaining in Ireland and calls for withdrawal.

The LCI National Council have given full support to the creation of a broad based steering committee to co-ordinate a year of action from October 1988 to August 1989. This will coincide with the twentieth anniversary of the civil rights movement in the north of Ireland. It will culminate in a national carnival and demonstration in August 1989 coinciding with the twentieth anniversary of the deployment of British troops in the six counties.



The year of action will highlight the continuing injustice, discrimination and denial of civil liberties in the north of Ireland and call for British withdrawal. It will be organised around a charter for British withdrawal from Ireland.

The steering committee co-ordinating the year's events is being convened by Clare Short MP. Preparatory meetings have been attended by John McDonnell, Peter Hain, Maeve Sherlock — the Labour candidate for president of the NUS — and individuals from the Irish community and radical performers. The steering committee will include Ken Livingstone and leading trade unionists.

The aim is through the year of action to extend an understanding of what is taking place in Ireland — and why Britain should leave — into far wider areas than previously been

possible. This will then culminate in the festival and, what is hoped will be, the biggest post war demonstration for British withdrawal from Ireland.

Instead of the broad based united front proposed by the LCI, *Labour Briefing* and TOM want to insist that the year of action is reduced essentially to the organisations which presently organise the annual Bloody Sunday commemoration.

That would be to miss the opportunity to substantially increase support for British withdrawal from Ireland.

Labour Women for Ireland and Irish Sections of the Labour Party have already adopted similar positions to those of the LCI National Council for a major initiative to broaden the withdrawal movement in Britain. In the case of the LWI this

coincided with a clear political change in direction at its recent AGM.

Enormous problems remain. Most unions with members in the six counties continue to avoid the issue of partition. John Freeman, Northern Ireland organiser of the TGWU has even tried to claim in a letter to *Marxism Today* that the proven pattern of religious and political discrimination in the six counties can be explained away in terms of the geographical distribution of jobs — something that not even the government tries to get away with.

Negotiating these obstacles to winning trade unions like the TGWU to British withdrawal and building a popular movement linking the Irish community and the left of the labour movement are the issues that the LCI will address in the coming year.

## Labour students prepare for NUS conference

**THE CONFERENCE of the National Organisation of Labour Students took place on 5-6 March. The conference clashed with the TUC march to defend the NHS. Delegates voted overwhelmingly to attend the demonstration and much business was lost from the agenda.**

As a result, the discussion on Ireland, to reaffirm NOLS' policy of support for British withdrawal from Ireland and affiliation to the LCI, was not taken.

By Polly Vittorini, President SOAS students union (personal capacity)

The conference did discuss the Alton bill and the poll tax.

On Alton the incumbent leadership of NOLS, the Democratic Left, attempted to defeat a call for a three line whip on Labour MPs to vote against the Alton bill. But in spite of the Democratic Left's big majority in the conference, delegates voted to support a three line whip.

Similarly on the poll tax, the Democratic Left organised for the adoption of support for the Scottish Labour campaign of encouraging individuals not

to pay the poll tax. This move was defeated on conference floor in favour of supporting councils who refuse to co-operate with the poll tax.

These votes demonstrate that a majority of Labour students are substantially to the left of the Democratic Left leadership of NOLS even though it was re-elected with 65 per cent of the conference vote. This anomaly continues for a number of reasons.

One is that Campaign Student candidates were prevented from standing in the NOLS elections. Their nominations were 'lost' at Labour Party headquarters.

Secondly, the largest opposition to the Democratic Left in the NUS, Socialist Students in NOLS (SSiN), has failed to grow in NOLS. The combined vote of SSiN and *Militant*, who vote for each others' candidates in NOLS elections, was less than last year's.

SSiN has failed to win over support in NOLS primarily because they stand against the official Labour candidates in NUS elections, whilst failing to participate in the fight to be official Labour candidates within NOLS.

It is also a rejection of their pro-imperialist policies. SSiN oppose NUS policy for British

withdrawal from Ireland and defend the racism of the state of Israel.

At NOLS council in February, where official Labour candidates for NUS elections are selected, SSiN walked out and stood no candidates. *Militant* also stood no candidates.

The walkout was in protest at the high number of Labour Clubs which were disallowed from voting in NOLS national meetings. This year about 25 clubs, of all political descriptions other than Democratic Left, were ruled out.

This was indeed an undemocratic attempt by the Democratic Left to reduce the vote against them. But it was not significantly higher than last year.

The election of the Democratic Left to the national committee of NOLS also confirmed the course of the Democratic Left in NUS elections of standing a minority slate of only 8 official Labour candidates for the executive of NUS, which has 21 places.

Clearly, Labour should fight for a Labour majority on the NUS executive. Indeed, given the massive support for Labour among students, not doing so amounts to actively giving leadership places to bourgeois parties in NUS elections. SSiN's response to this course has been not

only to stand in addition to NOLS candidates, but against them, in elections where Tories and Alliance candidates stand. This is indefensible.

Furthermore, opposition to the politics of the Democratic Left leadership of NOLS in this context has to involve undertaking a fight to be the representatives and leadership of NOLS, as well as fighting for campaigning action in NUS. This does not justify fighting Labour candidates in NUS with the help of reactionary forces such as the Zionist 'Union of Jewish Students'.

The approach adopted by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs in February this year is absolutely correct: NOLS should stand a full slate; where NOLS candidates stand they should be supported; but where NOLS does not stand official Labour candidates, students must be given the chance to vote for Labour candidates against the Tories and Alliance parties; such additional Labour candidates must support official Labour candidates where they are standing. This is also the policy of Campaign Student.

The central issues which have to be confronted at this year's NUS conference in April are how to defend NUS as a

national union and how to defend the interests of all students against the deepening Tory attacks.

This will be resolved not only through policy adopted but in the leadership which emerges at conference. This leadership has to be a Labour leadership if students are to gain the support of the labour movement. It also has to be one which campaigns in support of those in struggle worldwide against

Thatcher and her imperialist allies and defends the interests of the oppressed.

This year students will have the chance to vote for a current which is standing in support of these principles in addition to, not against, official Labour candidates: the Internationalist Alliance for Socialism, which comprises candidates from Students for Palestine, the Nicaragua Solidarity

Campaign Student Network, and Campaign Student. Candidates will be standing at both NUS and NUS Women's conference.

Such a current in the present situation has the potential to draw together a campaigning majority on the leadership of NUS and break up the unprincipled NOLS-CP-SDP alliance which currently controls the executive of NUS.

## Campaign Student conference

**THE first ever conference of Campaign Student was held on Saturday 12 March at the London School of Economics.**

By Polly Vittorini

The conference opened with a session on 'Building an alliance for socialism' which was addressed by Ann Pettifor of the Labour Women's Action Committee, and Pat Younge, NUS vice president education.

Those attending were told of the need for the labour movement to take up the demands of women, and for the TUC to actively support the struggles of students in defence of education and for students as a whole to become part

of the alliance for socialism being built by the Campaign Group, Labour Left Liaison and its allies.

Workshops were held on 'Winning the majority — Labour's policies for women' with FAB and LWAC; 'Lesbian and Gay Liberation' with the Stop the Clause campaign; 'Black self-organisation and self defence' with the Black Section and Broadwater Farm; 'British repression in Ireland — the case for withdrawal' with the LCI; 'Solidarity with the Palestinians' with Students for Palestine; and on the Sandinista revolution with the NSC student network.

A debate on 'Which way for NOLS' with SSiN participating concluded that NOLS should stand a

majority slate for NUS. When, as this year, it stands a minority slate, independent Labour candidates should stand in addition to official candidates, so that students have the opportunity of voting for pro-Labour candidates in every election.

Support was expressed for the 'Internationalist Alliance for Socialism' slate, standing for NUS in order to draw together a campaigning majority on NUS executive.

The latest Campaign Student bulletin can be ordered at 20p each from Campaign Student, c/o SOAS students union, Malet St, London WC1E 7HP.



# JESSE JACKSON

## AND THE BREAK UP OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

FOR ALMOST four decades, from Roosevelt's election in 1932 until Nixon's victory in 1968, the Democratic Party completely dominated US politics. It held the US presidency for 28 out of 36 years. The only Republican president in that period, Eisenhower from 1952 to 1960, faithfully continued the policies laid down by Democratic president Truman — and was succeeded by Democratic president Kennedy. During that four decades the Democrats frequently controlled both the Senate and the House of Representatives — and continue to control the House of Representatives today. All essential parts of the American labour movement, notably the AFL-CIO, the US equivalent of the TUC, were tied to the Democrats.

The corollary of Democratic supremacy was the political backwardness of the US working class. The US working class failed to form any mass working class party at all. Furthermore, in a certain sense, it regressed. Prior to World War I a small but significant Socialist Party existed. Its presidential candidate Debs secured 900,000 votes, six per cent, in 1912. Between the wars a working class party, the Farmer-Labour Party in Minnesota, could win seats in the US senate and House of Representatives as well as the state governorship.

### Roosevelt

This development of the US working class was brought to an end first by repression following the end of World War I, then by the boom of US capitalism during the 1920s, and then finally, was killed during the 1930s when the entire leadership of the US labour movement supported Roosevelt and the mass of organised American workers voted solidly for the Democrats. US imperialism emerged from World War II not merely in the strongest position any capitalist power has ever occupied — the United States accounted for one half of the world's

output — but with the American working class more politically integrated in US capitalism than ever before. By the beginning of the 1950s independent working class political organisation had been eliminated as a significant force in the US. The problem of mass trade union organisation of the US workers was solved during the 1930s with the rise of the Congress of Industrial Organisations (CIO). But political independence of US workers seemed further away than ever.

By Mick Marratt and John Ross

This lack of political organisation of American workers weighed heavily, and adversely, in the international relation of forces after World War II. The AFL-CIO functioned as almost a direct arm of the American state department and CIA in international affairs — using funds and influence to split the labour movements of other countries and preaching a full blooded cold-war line in the US itself. When the Vietnam war started in the mid-1960s the AFL-CIO gave it unstinting support — as it had earlier the Korean war. Without even a reformist political organisation of the American working class every struggle throughout the world was weakened — because of the role played by US imperialism in the world, there is no international class struggle which does not rapidly need assistance in the United States.

When opposition to the policies of the US ruling class did start after World War II this commenced *outside* the core of the American labour movement. Above all it started with the Black movement in the 1950s and 1960s — which smashed apart legal racial segregation, 'Jim Crow', and transformed US politics. But that struggle was not organised *through* the US labour movement.

### Vietnam

The same occurred with the second wave of struggle against US imperialist policies — the anti-Vietnam war movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. This rocked the United States, but its driving

force were student mobilisations. The great bulk of the white American working class, while increasingly opposed to the Vietnam war, still remained locked firmly into support for Democrats or, increasingly, became apathetic and cynical about any of the major US political parties.

Given this decades long hegemony of the Democratic Party over the US working class few events in the world are therefore more important than the cracks in this supremacy which began to appear in the late 1960s. They are even more striking in the presidential election of 1988.

### Cohesion

The first crack in Democratic supremacy was the decline in the electoral support of the party itself. After winning seven out of nine presidential elections between 1932 and 1968 the Democrats then lost four out of five. While Democratic domination of politics in the states has even increased it is clear that the Republicans have achieved dominance at the presidential level.

Coupled with this has been the disintegration of the internal cohesion of the Democratic Party. This has now reached farce proportions with the so called 'seven dwarves' running for Democratic presidential candidate, the 'on/off/on/off' candidacy of Hart, the clash between the politics of Jackson and southern Conservative Gore, the fact that no candidate is likely to have a majority at the Democratic convention, the refusal of major Democratic leaders such as Cuomo to stand and so on.

The break up of Democratic coherence is in fact inevitable. The Roosevelt coalition was built on a combination of support from northern labour and southern white racists (the 'Dixiecrats') under the hegemony of the biggest sections of US capital. That coalition was first split by the rise of the Black movement in the 1950s and 1960s. The Vietnam war weakened it via the white trade union in the South. The Black population rallied more than ever before to the Democratic Party — but with increasingly great

demands from it. The final symptom that was the campaign of Jesse Jackson for the Democratic nomination for president in 1984 — the first major campaign for the presidential nomination by a black candidate in a US capitalist party in history.

The Democratic consensus is now disintegrating in three basic directions.

- The first, that most clearly tied to US capital, is so called 'neo-liberalism' — 'neo' because it is not liberal at all, promises no concessions to the working class or oppressed, and wraps rhetoric in few individual issues with acceptance the basic economic policies of Reagan.
- The second is the attempt to forge a closer alliance with the labour bureaucracy and labour aristocracy around a chauvinist platform of protection of US industry. This is the policy advocated at this election by Gephardt — but it is not a policy, at least at present, acceptable to the US ruling class.
- The third current is that of Jackson — which cannot win.

Given that no serious current in the Democratic Party is capable of gaining a majority it will almost certainly nominate a nonentity, Michael Dukakis, for president — who will almost equally certainly be defeated by Bush. That will make five Democratic losses in presidential elections out six.

The travails of Gephardt, Dukakis et al need not detain us, but the really significant development in the election is Jesse Jackson. In 1988 Jackson has had an impact in US politics far greater than any impression given in the British press. Here Jackson is presented as the 'black candidate'. But the truth is that Jackson's campaign has been eating much deeper than previously into the white population and the white working class.

### Minority

In 'the whitest states in the union', Maine and Vermont, Jackson won 28 and 27 per cent of the vote in the Democratic primary. In Minnesota, where the minority populations as a whole make up only two per cent of the state, Jackson got 21 per cent of the vote — and defeated all his competitors in the trade union stronghold of Min-



neapolis. In Iowa, heartland of the mid-west, and a state with a negligible Black population, Jackson quadrupled his 1984 level of support. On 'Super Tuesday', in 21 primaries and caucuses, Jackson won a stunning victory — with 31 per cent of the vote, beating his closest competitor, Michael Dukakis, by almost five percentage points. Even in the South it is estimated that 10 per cent of white voters supported Jackson.

### Racism

All this is on top of the overwhelming support Jackson has among Black Americans. He received over 90 per cent of the Black vote. For a Black candidate to win the Democratic primaries in states such as Mississippi or Alabama is to indicate that a political revolution has taken place in the United States in the last thirty years. But the fact that Jackson's support is also cutting into the white working class indicates a still deeper political process — particularly in a society which is one of the most racist in the world.

Jackson is gaining support by presenting politics far to the left of any other Democrat. His rhetoric is that 'economic violence is the critical issue of the day', and that 'beyond social justice is the quest for economic justice and fairness'. He argues for black empowerment through local control of government and the community and for a woman's right to choose.

Jackson gives particular emphasis to foreign policy. The 'Jackson Doc-



# JACKSON



of the United States but also to the signs of rising discontent in the white US working class — a working class whose real wages have now been stagnant for more than a decade. These elements of discontent are shown both negatively in the rising electoral abstention and positively in events such as the Hormel, Minnesota, meatpackers strike, the Watsonville, California strike of Chicana cannery workers, the march of 200,000 people in Washington DC for gay and lesbian rights, and the thousands and thousands who are working daily for peace and justice in Central America. It is necessary for US imperialism to attempt to prevent these forces organising themselves politically independently of either of US imperialism's twin parties. Because if they do, if they created even a reformist labour party, this would drastically weaken the position of US imperialism and its room for manoeuvre. It would be a turn in the entire world political situation.

Jackson's mission is co-opting the discontent that is beginning to manifest itself in the US. And, obviously, he is proving to be remarkably successful. He is putting forth a series of demands that are obviously resonating in the ears of the American working class — which is the real significance of the fact that he is now getting support well outside the Black population.

## Significant

Yet Jackson also understands the real situation. He knows he has no chance of being selected as Democratic candidate for president. And once he is defeated, and another white racist capitalist is selected, Jackson will duly call for a vote for that candidate. Having marched people up to the top of the hill he will then urge them to support the candidate of the same racist capitalist party they have been tied to for five decades. This road, to remobilise forces and then to push them once more behind the Democratic Party, is Jackson's historical role. He is not a step towards independent working class political organisation in the United States but the attempt to head it off. But what is interesting, and historically profoundly significant is that US imperialism is now forced to use such methods to attempt to head off even potential US working class and Black political action.

In the United States today, the absurdity of the 'seven dwarfs' running for Democratic candidate, in the real sense and success of Jesse Jackson's campaign, one of the greatest dramas in world politics is beginning to unfold. This is the break up of the Democratic Party and the first steps of the US working class towards creating an independent working class party. It is a drama that will take decades to unfold. But as it does so it will affect every part of world politics. And when the American working class do form such a party the entire political situation on the planet will be transformed from top to bottom.

Don't be put off by the absurdity of some of the bit players — a socialist misunderstand the system of the world. But this is one of the great stories of world politics.

trine' is 'support for international law, respect for the principle of self-determination and human rights, and international economic justice'. He condemns the invasion of Grenada and the bombing of Libya, supports the Arias peace plan in Central America and the right of the Palestinian people to a homeland — although within the limits imposed by a 'two state' solution. Jackson was a prominent speaker at the 200,000 strong march for lesbian and gay rights in Washington DC — which was conspicuous for the absence of other presidential hopefuls and at which Jackson went out of his way to publicly hug people with Aids. Jackson maintains a rhetoric against big business, condemning corporate 'merging, purging and submerging'.

Dream — of fairness, equality and the ability of anyone to 'make it', given half a chance. Indeed, this is summed up in his campaign slogan: 'I was born near an outhouse, and I'm headin' for the White House'.

All of this is of major significance for US politics. It represents a churning up of key forces which have supported the Democratic Party. But what is the importance and dynamic of Jesse Jackson's campaign, and his 'rainbow coalition' in American politics? To answer that is to see one of the most decisive political processes in the world.

## Liberalism

The power which made the supremacy of the Democratic Party possible was the gigantic rise of US imperialism during and between the two world wars. FDR's 'New Deal' worked because US capitalism recovered from the capitalist economic crisis of 1929-31 and was able to make concessions — the most important being the acceptance, without any real attempt to eliminate it, of the mass unionisation of the American working class. On that basis the power of US imperialism, then approaching its zenith, was able to integrate the majority of the working class into support for the Democratic Party. The Democrats, capitalising on 'New Deal' liberalism (which had its overtly vicious moments, such as McCarthyism in the fifties), remained American capital's party of choice from the 1930s to the late 1960s. The

decline of US imperialism is bringing down the Democratic Party with it.

The structure Roosevelt built first began to come apart with the economic and political strain of the Vietnam war — the war being launched, of course, by a Democratic president. The old Rooseveltian consensus collapsed completely with the worldwide economic crisis of the seventies. Suddenly the Democrats weren't able to offer the working class such things as regular wage increases anymore. And when no one is offering you anything, you begin to lose interest in an electoral system in which your interests aren't considered.

The result was the growing abstention by American workers from electoral politics. By now almost 50 per cent of the American population, and a higher proportion of the working class, do not bother to vote in presidential elections. The working class support which kept the Democrat's in power is evaporating. This is why the Democrats have won only one presidential contest since 1968 — Carter's in 1976.

## Failure

This crisis of the Democratic Party becomes still deeper as its leadership responds by moving progressively to the right — trying to win votes from the Republican Party and jettisoning 'special interests' (for which read Blacks, women, and labour). This electoral policy has met miserable failure — and will continue to do so.

But in particular for the mass of the

US Black population this road to the right is not open. They are at the bottom of the heap of American capitalism — and also are the most advanced section of the US working class. 'Neoliberalism', abandoning 'special interests', has nothing to offer them. They are consequently no longer prepared to accept the law being handed down by white Democrats who support racist policies both in the United States and internationally and who now have no concessions to offer. It raises the historical threat of a break with the Democratic Party by the Black population.

## Discontent

Jackson's role is to attempt to maintain the allegiance of the Black population to the Democratic Party by another means. He is attempting to revive the Democratic Party by bringing back into active politics those who have either been excluded from voting or fallen into greater and greater apathy over the years. Jackson's campaign can be clearly understood if one grasps it as an attempt by American capital to head off the murmurings of discontent from the dispossessed of the world's most powerful nation — from Blacks, Hispanics, from workers and farmers, from women, gays and lesbians. A last ditch attempt to bring discontent, once more, into the welcoming arms of the Democratic Party.

To recover these Jackson is forced to relate not just to the Black population

## Dispossessed

Jackson's avowed attempt to build a 'coalition of the dispossessed' enjoys support from diverse sectors of the population. These include those struggling against the devastation of the family farm due to the policies of the Reagan government, through Chicana cannery workers in Watsonville California, to organisations actively engaged against intervention in Central America. Jackson has not shunned such support but has appeared on picket lines and has actively intervened against attempts to foreclose family farms.

Jackson has also attempted to present the mythology of the American



**THE STRATEGY** of permanent revolution implies that Marxists learn to take advantage of all the hesitations and uncertainties of the bourgeoisie in order to win over the popular and peasant masses and advance the revolutionary process in an uninterrupted manner toward socialist objectives. In other words, a combined democratic-socialist revolution, under proletarian direction, is an objective possibility in the peripheral capitalist regions, and this possibility does not depend on the prior achievement of the bourgeois democratic revolution (the classic stagist doctrine of the Stalinists). On the contrary, it depends on the partial or total success in accomplishing these tasks, and/or the capacity of the proletarian vanguard to win leadership of a block of progressive forces.

In Nicaragua as in Cuba, the economy before the revolution was based principally on cash crops for export: cotton, coffee, sugar, livestock breeding. The development of capitalism in the countryside since 1960 — notably the cotton boom — had signified the displacement and dispossession of small producers of corn, beans, rice and sorghum. This capitalist 'process' contributed to the growth of poverty. Likewise, it had two important social consequences:

1) the development of an enormous mass of rural workers into proletarianised or underproletarianised conditions, in which many only worked during the four months of the harvest; it is estimated that 78 per cent of the rural labour force experienced such a proletarianisation;<sup>1</sup>

2) a vast process of rural exodus that saw the victims of 'land clearings' for cotton and ranches leave for the towns. However the urban industrial development remained too limited to absorb the mass of displaced people; they were therefore condemned to a miserable life of underemployment, surviving day to day in the shantytowns.

According to Orlando Nunez, one of the leading theoreticians of the Sandinista Front, 'masses of proletarians who are not organically integrated into the centres of productive capital, and consequently must earn their meagre pittance in the margins of the sphere of circulation' are found in these shantytowns.<sup>2</sup>

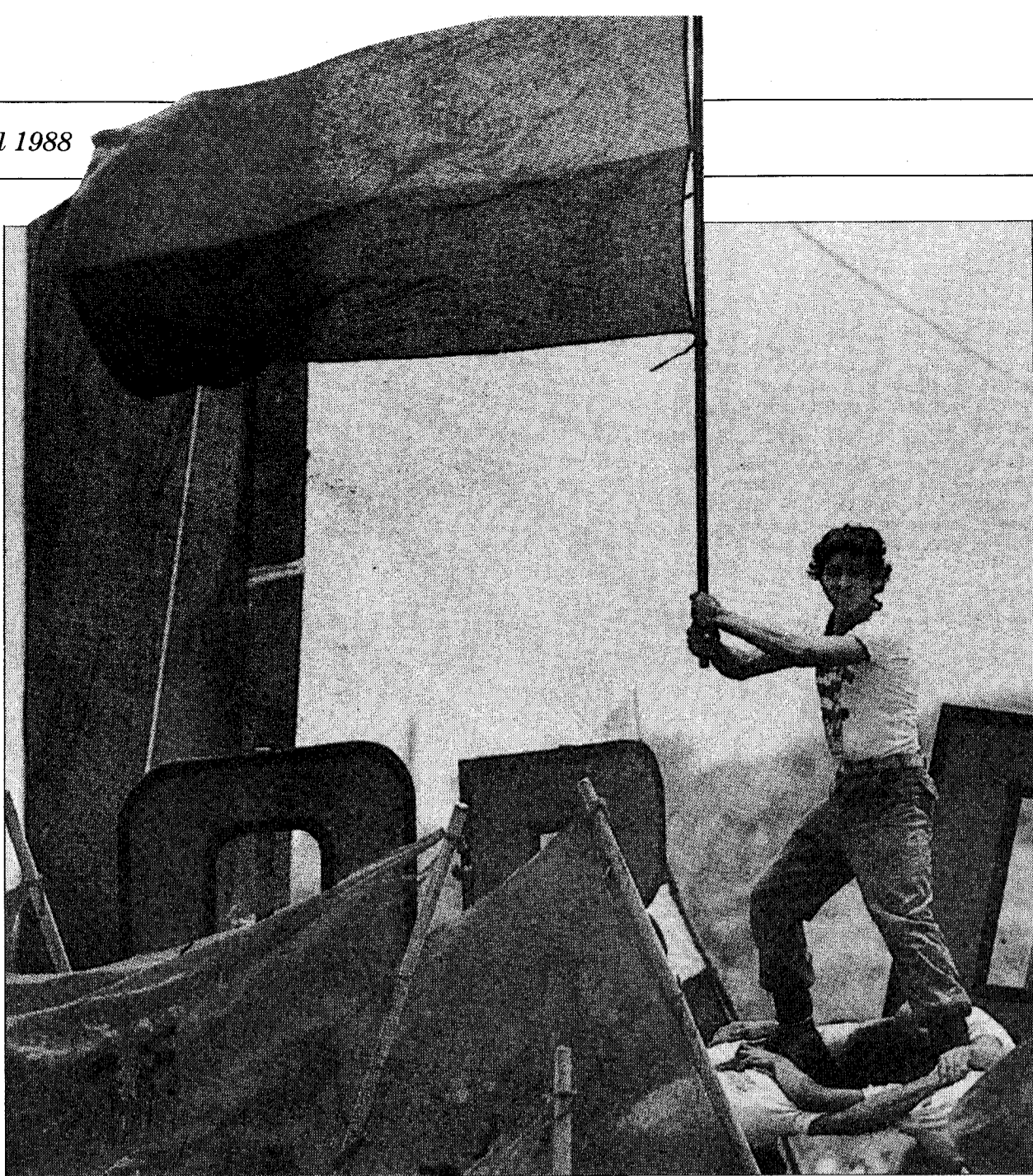
## Contradictions

The combined and unequal character of capitalist development in Nicaragua had the result of aggravating the social contradictions in the cities as well as in the countryside, leading to the formation of an explosive mass of poor — landless, unemployed (or underemployed), oppressed — of which the industrial working class was only a small minority.

To this it is obviously necessary to add the 'gangster capitalism' of Somoza and his band, marked by corruption, nepotism and violence, as well as the traditional economic, political and military dominance of the country by US imperialism.

Important sectors of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie opposed Somoza, but without the least intention of setting off a popular insurrection against the National Guard, or of struggling against American hegemony.

It is probably in comparison with its Cuban predecessor that the particular dynamics of permanent revolution in Nicaragua can best be illustrated. First, we note that the Sandinista experience reproduced a number of familiar motifs of the Cuban revolution: 1) the formation of a radical anti-imperialist movement under the banner of a legendary Jacobin revolutionary leader (Marti,



# PERMANENT REVOLUTION

## the Nicaraguan Experience

**THE revolution in Nicaragua is full of theoretical implications. The revolution itself posed crucial questions of the relations between the FSLN, a revolutionary socialist organisation, and other political currents. Since it came to power the FSLN has carried through a land reform, and other democratic measures, more radical than in any**

**other country of Latin America apart from Cuba. Yet these democratic political tasks were carried through by political power passing into the hands of the Nicaraguan working class. In this article MICHAEL LOWY, author of a notable book on Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, looks at the lessons of Nicaragua.**

Sandino); 2) a movement (the July 26 Movement and the FSLN) which led the struggle against a brutal dictatorship supported by US imperialism (Batista, Somoza); 3) by a combination of rural and urban insurrections, the old state apparatus and the repressive organs were completely destroyed; 4) a new revolutionary army was organised based on the unity of guerrilla and popular militias, but the government remained a coalition with the representatives of the antidictatorial bourgeoisie (Urrutia in Cuba, Robelo in Nicaragua); 5) as the masses are mobilised and armed and the revolution takes more and more radical measures (beginning with attacks against the rural oligarchy and foreign capital), the coalition disintegrates and the bourgeois forces pass to the counterrevolutionary camp.

Like their Cuban co-thinkers, the Nicaraguan Stalinists — the Nicaraguan Socialist Party (PSN) — participated very little in the revolution. The PSN participated in the opposition of the bourgeois coalition,

UDEL (Democratic Union for Liberation), stressing that the revolution against Somoza had a uniquely democratic and nonsocialist character. They objected to the strategy of the FSLN as 'ultraleft', as 'sterile adventurism' marked by 'Maoist and almost Trotskyist influences'. Even after the launching of the 1978 insurrection, they still considered it as a 'premature insurrectional act of well-intentioned young patriots who placed an ultraleft primacy on the armed struggle that did not correspond to the concrete reality of the country.'<sup>3</sup>

The social composition of the revolutionary movement resembled that of the Cuban process: The Sandinista base as well as its popular support was made up especially of poor peasants, workers, the urban poor of the shantytowns, of students and of intellectuals. The youth — and notably students from secondary schools — were perhaps the most crucial component of the popular revolt, so much that the word *muchacho* (young man) became

quasi-synonymous with Sandinista during the years 1978-79. When they attacked certain turbulent neighbourhoods, Somoza's National Guard automatically considered the whole population between twelve and twenty-five years old to be suspect of Sandinism.

It is, however, important to note several differences between the two revolutions. The FSLN, for example, was from its origin in 1961 endowed with a clearer programmatic definition, more to the left than the July 26 Movement at a comparable stage in its development (between 1954 and 1959). The two founders of the Sandinista Front, Carlos Fonseca (killed by Somoza's troops in 1976) and Tomas Borge (current minister of the interior) were Marxists who had quit the Stalinist Nicaraguan Socialist Party in protest of its reformist orientation. In 1969 Fonseca wrote in a key FSLN strategical document published in Cuba that: 'Our goal is the socialist revolution, a revolution that aims to defeat Yankee imperialism and its

local agents... We must guard against the danger that the insurrection will be manipulated by reactionary forces within the anti-Somoza opposition. The objective of the revolution is a double one. One part of its task is to break the power of the criminal and traitorous clique that has usurped power over the years. The other part is to stop the capitalist component of the opposition, whose submission to imperialism is well known, from taking advantage of the crisis to seize power in its own name.'<sup>4</sup>

Another distinctive trait of the Nicaraguan revolution is the relationship between the respective roles of urban insurrection and rural guerrilla warfare: The *decisive* political/military moment in the destruction of Somoza's well-oiled war machine was the massive armed uprising of workers, the urban poor and the youth of the towns — first in the provincial centres (Masaya, Lyon, Esteli), then in the capital (Managua).

The relative maturity of the FSLN is easily understandable since the Nicaraguan revolution took advantage of the Cuban revolutionary process.

## Transition

On the other hand, the transition to a collectivised economy after the overthrow of the dictatorship was effected much more slowly in Nicaragua than in Cuba, where two years after the victory of the insurrection capitalism had been completely uprooted. It would be false to draw the conclusion from the prolonged character of the transition that the Nicaraguan revolution had taken no anticapitalist measures or that it had remained a prisoner of the 'bourgeois-national stage.'

Paul Le Blanc, author of one of the best revolutionary Marxist studies of the process in Nicaragua, justly remarked: 'From the beginning, the Nicaraguan revolution did not limit itself to "bourgeois-democratic" tasks. To the contrary, it dismantled capitalist political power. It was only in crossing the limits of bourgeois democracy, in effecting changes going in the direction of socialism, that it was possible to put into practice even the "minimum programme" of the revolution.'<sup>5</sup>

The first element of this 'transgression' is therefore political: the Sandinista revolution destroyed the repressive bourgeois apparatus and established a new revolutionary state, popular militia (worker and peasant), Sandinista unions, and local popular committees (CDS — Sandinista Defence Committees). Though the anti-Somoza bourgeoisie still participated in the government for a year or two, real power was in the hands of the Sandinista insurrectional forces from July 1979.

## Popular

It is perhaps useful to compare these events to those happening at the same moment (1979) in Iran: in both countries, armed powers — well-equipped, supported by US imperialism — had been defeated by vast popular insurrections in which the proletariat and urban forces played a decisive role.<sup>6</sup> Soon after, however, their trajectories diverged, following two radically distinct political projects: Sandinism and Islamic fundamentalism. The Iranian religious nationalists executed a number of generals and police officers and organised a new paramilitary force (the Pasdaran), but they *did not* destroy the Shah's old Imperial army. Today, this traditional military apparatus, 'rehabilitated' by the war with Iraq, is used by Khomeini and his regime (with the support of the Pasdaran) to break workers' combativity, oppress the Kurdish people, and massacre leftist organisations. In Nicaragua, to the contrary, there were no executions (the Sandinistas abolished the death penalty) but the Somozaist army, the National Guard, was entirely dismantled and replaced by the



revolutionary forces and the armed people (in militias).

As for social measures, the first great initiative of the Sandinista revolution was the agrarian reform. Even if this initially only struck Somoza and his accomplices — estates comprising more than 20 per cent of the arable land in the country! — it was soon extended, especially after 1983, when owners of 'un-productive latifundias' were expropriated. Whereas before the revolution, 37 per cent of the land was part of large landed property (more than 350 hectares), this percentage fell to 12 per cent in 1984. In other respects, the collectivised sector made up of state farms and cooperatives reached 37 per cent of the land that same year. Certainly, the majority of the land remained in private hands, but the peasants union (UNAG) and the agricultural workers' union (ATC) severely limited the power of the rural bourgeoisie.

Other economic measures led to not inconsequential incursions into capitalist property: from 1979, the new revolutionary power seized numerous enterprises belonging to Somoza and his gang — which made up the nucleus of the first Public Property Sector (APP) — the banks and the insurance companies, and the natural resources; foreign trade was gradually nationalised, and the first moves toward national economic planning begun. In 1980, violations of the laws against decapitalisation and economic sabotage allowed for the confiscation of factories and land. The urban and rural workers' unions (CST — Sandinista Workers' Confederation and the ATC — Association of Rural Workers) acquired a very important role in the application of this legislation, leading to a continuous chain of expropriations of counterrevolutionary capitalists.

It was in order to draw the lessons of this contradiction between the political nature of state power and its economic structure that a document on Nicaragua, issued by the Fourth International, considered July 1979 as the first stage in which the construction of a new workers' state, in which the expropriation of bourgeois and imperialist property would signify its consolidation. The contradiction between the socio-economic content of the property forms and the class content of the revolutionary state is 'contained in the straightjacket of the newly installed power.'

## Tensions

In not less than seven years after the victory of the Sandinista insurrection, the largest part of the Nicaraguan economy remains in private hands. In previous revolutions (Russia, China, Cuba, etc) there was always a period of several years between the conquest of revolutionary power and the transformation of the economy, but this transitional period was never as long as in the Nicaraguan case. Elsewhere, the Sandinista leadership has underlined on several occasions that, until the new order, it wanted to maintain a mixed economic system and that it did not intend to collectivise production in the near future. These politics flow from objective conditions: the impossibility of the revolutionaries taking the management of the factories into their own hands, the necessity of avoiding a catastrophic interruption of production, the lack of technical cadres, the weight of small and medium producers in the rural and urban economy. Certainly, this contradictory situation creates tensions, economic problems (the noninvestment of private property, capital flight, speculation, etc), and permanent conflicts between the private sector — led by COSEP (Superior Council of Private Enterprise) and adversary of the revolution — and revolutionary forces (the government and the unions).

Let us underline however that the Nicaraguan 'mixed economy' has nothing to do with the way the term is usually used (notably in European social-democratic programmes). Far from describing a friendly division of

labour between the public and private sectors, it is a question here of a conscious struggle of the Sandinista forces (including the CST and the ATC) to control and limit the economic power of the bourgeoisie, and submit the entire economy to a new logic, the logic of the people's interests. Sergio Ramirez, vice president of the republic since 1984, explains the Sandinista orientation in the following terms: 'At the present moment, the revolution remains favourable to the mixed economy project. We don't mean this as a justification of two economic models, in which one stands for the same old mechanisms of implacable capitalist reproduction — as if the popular revolution allows a "free zone" for a private capitalist system, archaic and intact. It is rather that the mixed economy must begin with the harmonious and limited insertion of the private economy into the overall strategic framework of the public property sector. To the latter the political responsibility must come back to leading the national economic system towards change and towards the production and distribution of wealth.'

## Jurisdiction

The process of transition toward socialism therefore takes an extended form: though the mass of the bourgeoisie has not been expropriated, its control over the economy has steadily declined since 1979. John Vincour, a journalist for the *New York Times*, has offered the following sombre reflections on the conditions of 'free enterprise' in Nicaragua: 'It is estimated that nearly 60 per cent of the economy remains, at least nominally, in private hands. But as the government controls all the banks, all the sources of foreign trade, and has total jurisdiction over imports, and that it fixes production quotas and designates priorities, the entrepreneurs are hardly agents of the crown which the government can control with the payment of salaries.'

The spokesmen of the Nicaraguan bourgeoisie utter regrets similar to Enrique Bolanos, a rich landed proprietor, capitalist and president of COSEP: 'The State tells me what I must do, what I must produce and controls all the routes of distribution. Is that a mixed economy? What does that mean in these circumstances.'

It is difficult to say for how much time the Nicaraguan private sector will accept the rules imposed by the Sandinista revolution; the bourgeoisie is more and more divided among those who are disposed to collaborate and those — represented by COSEP — who put all their hopes in the contras and in Reagan's intervention plans.

1 See Carmen Diana Deere and Peter Marchetti, 'The Worker-Peasant Alliance in the First Year of the Nicaraguan Agrarian Reform', *Latin American Perspectives*, spring 1981, pp. 42-45.

2 Orlando Nunez, 'The Third Force in National Liberation Movements', *Latin American Perspectives*, spring 1981, p.7.

3 Cited by Paul Le Blanc, *Permanent Revolution in Nicaragua*, New York: published by the FIT, 1984, p.7, and Gerard de Sede, 'Nicaragua sous la menace', *Politique Aujourd'hui*, Paris: October-November 1983, p.131.

4 Carlos Fonseca Amador, 'Nicaragua heure H', *Tricontinentale*, No. 14, October-November 1969, pp. 40-47.

5 Paul Le Blanc, op. cit., p.20.

6 For an interesting comparison of Nicaragua and Iran, see Manuel Aguilar Mora, 'Populisme et revolution permanente', *Quatrieme International*, July-September 1980.

7 'La revolution centro-americaine, resolution adoptee par le XXIIe congres mondial de la Quatrieme Internationale' (1985), Paris: *Quatrieme International*, special issue 17/18, January 1985, pp. 92-111.

8 Cited by Paul Le Blanc, op. cit., p.20.

9 John Vincour, 'Nicaragua: A Correspondent's Portrait', *New York Times*, 16 August 1983, p.4.

10 Marcel Niedergang, 'Le Front est partout', *Le Monde*, 3 November 1984, p.4.

The above article, newly translated by Keith Mann, is reprinted from the *Socialist journal*, Bulletin in Defense of Marxism, March 1988.



# US hands off Panama

**MONEY is running out in Panama. There is no money to pay the public employees, including the armed forces.**

The root of this unprecedented crisis in Panama lie in a concerted effort by the US government, local and foreign banks, the Church, and the right wing opposition to Panama's present ruler General Manuel Antonio Noriega.

By Mark Jones

In a bizarre sequence of events President Eric Arturo del Valle — most probably at the instigation of the US — decided to sack General Noriega three weeks ago and was in turn sacked by Noriega himself, after which he went underground to become the focus around which all sections of the opposition to Noriega could rally.

The near financial collapse of Panama has been brought about by the US government's blocking of Panama's funds held in American banks. The decision was taken by the US National Security Plan Group — which includes Reagan, secretary of state Schultz, National Security Council adviser Colin Powell and defence secretary Frank Carlucci. Congress has also demanded sanctions against Panama by an overwhelming majority.

Meetings have taken place to study even further economic sanctions against beleaguered Noriega. Among the sanctions already imposed the US has stopped the monthly payment of US\$6.5 million to Panama for its right to use the Canal up to the year 2000 when it must return the waterway to the Latin American country.

The US's desire to push back the 1977 Carter-Torrijos agreement over the return of the Canal to Panama doubtless provides the backdrop to the

confrontation between Noriega and Reagan. But that is a relatively long term consideration on the part of US imperialism.

The key immediate cause of the confrontation is based on the importance that US imperialism attaches to developments in Central America, especially regarding its policies vis-a-vis Nicaragua. Panama would provide one of the strategic military points from which to launch an invasion. But Noriega and the decisive sectors of the Panama Defence Forces — for their own reasons — are not prepared to go along with such a policy. It is this relative independence which is not acceptable to US imperialism.

Noriega descends from a somewhat unusual line of populist Panamanian generals who have tried to make some improvement to the humiliating position they find themselves in relation to the US. Their authority as rulers of Panama is seriously impeded by the presence of 10,000 American troops garrisoned in 14 bases within the country.

The US have been busily inciting right wing politicians to engage in civil disobedience campaigns which would create the conditions for ousting Noriega and drastically reduce the power of the Panama Defence Forces, historically, the effective driving force behind the various populist regimes of Panama.

The strategy is aimed at enhancing the position of civilian non-nationalist bourgeois politicians (like Panama's Christian Democracy) and turn the country into a version of Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico has the status of a 'Free Associate State' within the political system of the US (an association described as 'neck and rope' by Cuban poet Nicolas Guillen).

The latest move against

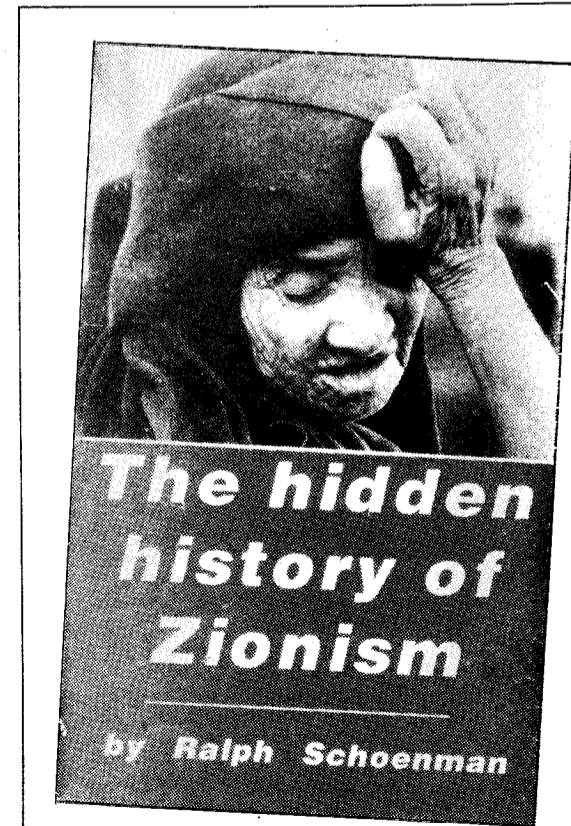
Noriega has come from the church, whose leader, Archbishop of Panama, Marcos McGrath, has issued a communique on behalf of the Panamanian Catholic church, demanding that the armed forces subordinate themselves to civilian power and proposing the formation of a government of 'national reconciliation' led by deposed President Eric Arturo del Valle.

The church's position has been endorsed by the main right wing political parties, the Christian Democracy, the Authentic Panamanian Party and the Civilian Crusade.

The latest nail in the coffin has been put by Felipe Gonzalez, leader of

the Spanish Socialist Party and Spain's Prime Minister, whose administration has graciously offered General Manuel Antonio Noriega asylum in Spain 'as soon as its is requested formally'.

The US claim to be defending 'democracy' and 'civilian rule' in Panama is a straightforward fraud. The British labour movement should call for US hands off Panama and an end to economic sanctions against that country. The ease with which a crisis has been provoked in Panama simply reveals what the US and Britain could and should be doing to overthrow the apartheid regime in South Africa.



Available from: Other Books, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Price: £1.50 plus 50p p&p.





## The hidden history of Zionism

RALPH SCHOENMAN'S *The hidden history of Zionism* is compulsory reading for anyone interested in the current uprisings on the West Bank and Gaza against Israeli occupation — which should be everyone. It is the best factual indictment of Zionism available in a compressed form in English. Perhaps its only weakness is that it is so damning that some people will simply find it impossible to believe the factual picture it presents. But then, as Schoenman explains, he was in the Sabra and Shatila Palestinian refugee camps on a day that Christian Lebanese militias, guided by the Israelis, murdered up to 3,000 Palestinians. And that experience is enough to permanently shape anyone.

What Schoenman reveals is one of the worst ironies in history — that the Jewish people, who suffered the holocaust at the hands of the Nazis, should be the bulwark of a state whose methods are now among the most barbaric and horrific in the world. That is the degree of corruption which Zionism has led to.

The catalogue Schoenman gives is overwhelming.

First how Zionism, by its nature, lead its supporters from the beginning to cooperation with every form of imperialism. We need simply note the approach of Theodor Herzl to the Ottoman Empire for a Zionist state in Palestine as a bulwark of that Empire against Arab revolt. As Max Nordau, a prominent Zionist leader, wrote: 'The Turkish government may feel itself compelled to defend its reign in Palestine and Syria with armed force...In these circumstances, Turkey can be convinced that it will be important for her to have in Palestine and Syria a strong and well-organised group which...will resist any attack on the authority of the Sultan and defend his authority with all its might! The road from there to a puppet of US imperialism was straight and narrow.

## Collaboration

Second that direct collaboration with imperialism was inevitable given the aim of Zionism to crush the Palestinian people. As Jabotinsky wrote: 'colonisation has its own integral and inescapable meaning understood by every Jew and every Arab... It has been necessary to carry on colonisation against the will of the Palestinian Arabs... as long as there is the faintest spark of hope for the Arabs to impede us, they will not sell these hopes — not for any sweet words nor for any tasty morsel, because this is not a rabble but a people, a living people. And no people makes such enormous concessions on such fateful questions, except where there is no hope left, until we have removed every opening visible in the Iron Wall! Schoenman makes clear the methods to which the Israeli state resorts to ensure 'there is no hope left'. The history of aggression, massacre, and torture in the book is not easy reading.

Finally the logic of Zionism leads to contact with the Jews' greatest enemy — Nazism. Perhaps the most disgusting episode recorded in the entire pamphlet is the secret deal between Rudolph Kastner of the Jewish Rescue Committee in Budapest and the Nazis whereby 600 prominent Jews were to be saved on condition that silence was maintained about the massacre of 800,000 Hungarian Jews. A Nazi negotiator of this, SS general Kurt Becher, is now head of a German company which trades with Israel.

We don't agree with all political analyses in Schoenman's pamphlet. But as a factual exposé of Zionism it is truly devastating. It deserves the widest possible circulation.

Ralph Schoenman, *The hidden history of Zionism*, is available from **The Other Bookshop**, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Price £1.50 + 50p p&p.

# Botha clampdown — sign of weakness

ON 24 February, the South African regime banned 17 anti-apartheid organisations and 18 of their leaders. This was primarily aimed at the three million strong United Democratic Front and the township based organisations affiliated to it. It also covered AZAPO and Detainees committees.

While allowed to formally exist, the banned organisations are forbidden from 'carrying on or performing any acts whatsoever'.

By Paul Atkin

COSATU, the main trade union federation with one million members was banned from carrying out anything other than pure trade union activities. Last year, COSATU affiliated to the UDF and adopted the Freedom Charter. It thereby brought the core of the South African black working class into the heart of the struggle for freedom.

It has been specifically banned from calling for sanctions, the release of detainees, legalisation of political organisations, boycott of apartheid institutions and from calling strikes on political anniversaries.

In the last year the western press has presented a picture of Botha getting back in to the driving seat, a declining mass movement and widespread demoralisation.

In 1987, the UDF established SAYCO, the South African Youth Congress, and the Womens Congress in early summer. At the end of the year, clashes in Natal with Buthelezi Inkatha organisation showed the UDF and COSATU making inroads into the base of Botha's key black collaborator.

Last year, COSATU led ten major strikes, including the historic miners strike last autumn, resulting in nine million working days lost, involving 263,000 workers and six hundred million Rand in lost production. None of this indicates a mass movement on its knees.

All the repression

thrown against the movement has been insufficient to crush it.

Last year, three thousand COSATU members were detained. Three NUM stewards are on death row. Eighteen rail workers are on trial charged with murder. Striking rail workers were shot at last April. Six were killed. Metal workers waiting for a bus after their AGM in November were shot at. One was killed. Nine miners were shot dead during their strike. The national headquarters of COSATU was blown up last summer. Local union offices have been bombed.

The homes of anti-apartheid activists and leading trade unionists have been fire bombed by vigilante squads. By the time of the banning order on 24 February, only two members of the UDF national executive were still at liberty. All the others had been banned or arrested.

These new measures are the most sweeping to be adopted since the 1960s.

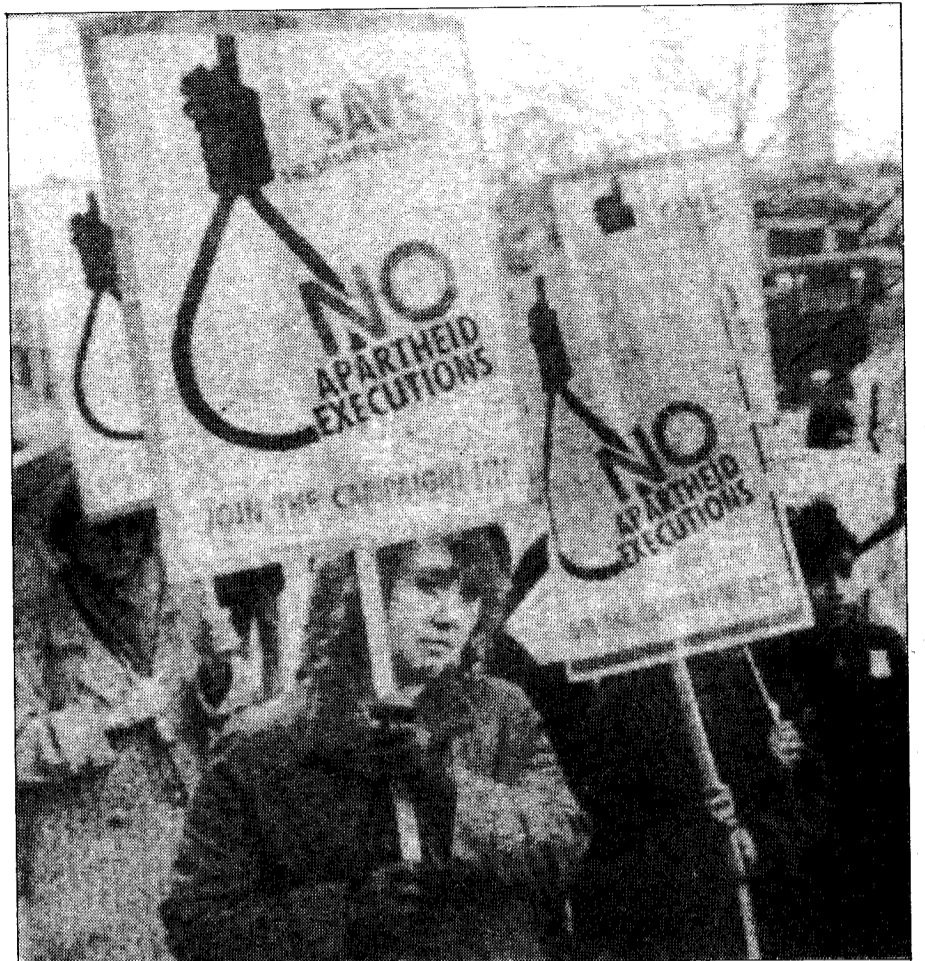
Unlike that period, the assessment of the ANC is that the mass movement against the apartheid regime is now too deeply rooted to be overcome. Many of the affected organisations were already having to operate underground due to the occupation of the townships by the South Africa army.

The scene is set for further mass detentions and repression.

One of Botha's aims is to open the space for a layer of collaborators. The town councils set up by the regime in the townships have been boycotted and uprooted by the mass resistance. Town councillors have been physically eliminated or driven out of the townships. In so far as they function at all it is courtesy of the military occupation of the townships.

Further elections to these bodies are due in October. The regime feared the same level of mass boycott that undermined and discredited its tricameral parliament.

The ANC issued a statement in Zambia that the regime is establishing 'machinery to set in place refurbished puppet bodies and dummy institutions. Fearful that mass resis-



London protest against Sharpeville hangings

tance will once again reveal the hollowness of their co-optive efforts, the regime is trying to disarm the resistance before the battle can be joined.'

However, the prospect of a rehabilitated layer of township collaborators is not a bright one for the regime and the boycott of elections is certain to go ahead and stick.

At the same time, the regime has left a space for less formidable opponents. NACTU, the union federation that unites the old CUSA and the Africanist AZACTU does not suffer the same restrictions that COSATU does.

NACTU is affiliated to the ICFTU, along with the US AFL-CIO and the British TUC. COSATU is non-aligned. Bishop Tutu, despite the banning of his own organisation set up to protest at the banning of the 18, will still have scope to search for 'forms of peaceful change' through the churches. The rest of

## SHARPEVILLE 6

THE DECISION to hang the Sharpeville 6 breaks new ground in judicial murder. They have been condemned for 'having common purpose with' a crowd that killed a township councillor, after he had shot at their demonstration.

Justice Botha admitted that the 6 themselves did not do it. They are being hanged because they were there, they are black, they happened to be the ones arrested. It could have been anyone on the demonstration.

This is naked state terrorism.

'The government has declared war on the people of South Africa' — Albertina Sisulu, executive member of the UDF, one hour before being banned.

the movement does not have that opportunity.

Botha is not in a strong position. His army is suffering losses in Angola. The banning orders did not prevent his National Party's jittery base shifting towards the ultra-right Conservatives and the

fascist AWB. That the AWB's gotterdamering solution of restoring the nineteenth century Boer republics as a last laager of white supremacy has got any credence at all is clear evidence that the white racists are starting to lose their confidence.

# Abortion rights victory for Canadian women

ON 28 January this year the women of Canada won a long awaited and decisive victory when the Canadian supreme court ruled that the existing abortion law was in breach of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The ruling stated that: 'Forcing a woman, by threat of criminal sanction, to carry a foetus to term unless she meets certain criteria unrelated to her own priorities and aspirations, is a profound interference with a woman's body and thus an infringement of security of the person.'

Justice Bertha Wilson put the case even more strongly in her contribution to the court ruling. She stated the Charter

'guarantees to every individual a degree of personal autonomy over important decisions intimately affecting his or her private life. Liberty in a free and democratic society does not require the state to approve such decisions, but it does require the state to respect them.'

By Jude Woodward

This ruling also brought to an end the 20 year long campaign by one doctor, Dr Henry Morgen-

taler, to win the right to perform abortions for women in Canada. Dr Morgentaler began his campaign in June 1968 when he performed his first illegal abortion in his Montreal clinic.

In 1984 the Ontario Supreme Court rejected Morgentaler's contention that Canada's abortion law violates the country's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, yet the Supreme Court jury acquitted him of breaking the abortion law, despite his open and stated defiance of it.

This verdict was appealed by the Crown — that is the British Crown! — and it is judgement on that appeal which was announced on 28 January.

Prior to this decision abortion in Canada could only be carried out subject to a series of punitive conditions with the decision being made by hospital abortion committees which excluded any doctor who actually performed abortion, with the operation only being legally performed in specially 'accredited' hospitals.

This system meant that access to legal abortion was denied to thousands of Canadian women, and predictably provision varied enormously from one state or one area to another.

The response to the court decision was one of tremendous celebration by Canadian women and pro-choice campaigners.

Predictably the response of the Liberal government was one of consternation, with Barbara McDougall, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women arguing that 'There's not a consensus among women on the role of the state on this issue', so she would be consulting with her colleagues in the government.

The governing Liberal Party upheld the pre-28 January law, as did the Conservative Party. Only the New Democratic Party met the ruling with unequivocal approval, calling on the government to establish non-profit making abortion clinics in every state, so that 'people have access so they can exercise that freedom' decided by the court.



# Support the Rover strike

**THE 7,000 workers at Rover's Solihull plant are still on strike. Now into their fourth week, they are dogged in their determination not to go back to the wages and conditions being operated by Land Rover management on behalf of the government.**

After eight years of peace the thought of a rebellious action by the workforce was nearly unthinkable to the strikers. Most pickets would say a cats whisker, a small concession, in the negotiations would have continued the eight years peace.

is defiant. No one is allowed to pass unchallenged. The pickets, new younger workers and the old hands, are drawn together to show the company that eight years of Land Rover peace is over.

There is widespread support. For instance a social at the Chelmsley Wood, a dormitory town in the East Birmingham area, attracted up to a thousand people last week in a demonstration of solidarity and of people anxious to know what's happening.

**By Steve Griffiths**

The absolute intransigence and arrogance of Rover management, in order to pursue its 'profitisation' in preparation for a sell off, underpins the company's refusal to talk. The strikers realise that the management want to impose another eight years of undisturbed and continuous production.

The feeling on the gate on Mondays' mass pickets

The Leyland back to work movement has tried to get organised. There have been fascists promoting it. But it has been confronted by the Families for Strikers movement with women in the lead.

Strike activists on the pickets are looking for a



way forward. It is felt that supplies to the Sherpa van site, and to the car body taxi building firm, should be halted effectively.

The tough nature of management has posed a difficult problem for Land Rover workers to solve. The TGWU and its local official are being criticised for allowing a 'no discipline' statement to be made to all those who are said to be wanting to return to work.

The tremendous

response during this last week, starting on 15 March, has shown that the officials could not get away with this sort of statement.

But Land Rover workers also realise that the stakes are high. If management's strategy is to sit it out the opposite must be the case for the trade unionists at Rover.

A movement to open up an offensive against the company, and to gain the support of other workers, is an absolute necessity.



Photo: Graeme Cookson

## Teachers ILTA officers re-instated

**FOLLOWING lengthy court procedures, the officers of the NUT have been forced to re-admit both to membership and to office eight members of the Inner London Teachers Association (ILTA) who were suspended or expelled from the union a year ago. These included NUT executive member Bernard Regan and ILTA general secretary Mike Loosely.**

The court action arose after the NUT leadership's original attempt to get the eight ILTA members suspended or expelled was overturned by the disciplinary tribunal. The NUT leadership then used the union's own appeals procedure to get these sentences overturned and the original ones reimposed.

**By Ray Sirotkin**

A test case was taken to the courts, which has now ruled that the right of appeal was inserted into the union rules for the use of defendants only, and therefore could not be used by the prosecution — in this case the union leadership — to seek a harsher sentence.

However, much more is involved in this verdict than concern that justice is finally reached.

The NUT always represented some of the worst traditions of the British labour movement — chauvinism, elitism, sectoralism and professionalism. The 70s saw the development of currents within education, particularly on the left of the NUT, which started to challenge this approach.

The early 80s were dominated by and large with pay struggles, and the NUT started to emerge as an active union, prepared to engage in industrial action on a large scale.

But the 'new realist' current was well represented on the NUT executive — and it still is. In particular, this current always opposed advancing

on social questions using the 'aims and objects' of the union rules as a pretext for preventing the National Abortion Campaign, CND and so on.

What is now the 'Broad Left' — comprising Labour right wing and CP — usually capitulated to this pressure. The Broad Left has always been more concerned with an alliance with the right than with the left.

When Kenneth Baker threw down the challenge with his legislation on pay and conditions, the NUT leadership had either to fight or apply the 'new realist' approach. They chose the latter. They had already scaled down the industrial action and were campaigning around a Baker type agreement with local authorities.

They restricted the fight against Baker to propaganda and grand lobbying of the House of Lords.

In Inner London, the NUT, in ILTA fought for a strategy to defend the interests of teachers while the NUT nationally was backing down.

There was a mass response of London teachers to the ILTA call for action in January 1987. The success of this is measured by the fact that the NUT leadership was forced to call for official action after this date, though never enough. Baker imposed his conditions on teachers.

Given the need to mobilise the maximum fight against Baker's new proposals in the Great Education Bill (GERBIL),

we would expect even the most hesitant bureaucrat to give reluctant support to mass action. Yet on 8 March, when all other ILEA trade unions were on strike, when parents were mobilised for exactly the sort of alliance which teachers need to make with parents — one that involves action — the NUT refused to allow ILTA to even ballot the membership for action.

Not only that, but Fred Jarvis, NUT general secretary, went on local radio to explain that NUT members were being told not to take action but to work normally, including crossing picket lines.

As it happens, many schools in Inner London defied the instruction from the NUT leadership. There were an estimated 15,000 teachers, support staff, cleaners, schoolkeepers, parents and trade unionists who marched that day.

Since Baker's victory, teachers have been on the defensive. The ILEA under Neil Fletcher's leadership has pursued a strategy that betrays retreat, including a cuts package of £93 million — although only with Tory support. In this situation, the NUT leadership is quite happy to see a large part of the left in the Inner London NUT wiped out by what Baker and the ILEA throws at it.

It is therefore ironic that the courts have helped put a break on this retreat by insisting that the disciplinary measures taken against the ILTA eight were unlawful.

The challenge for the left at this Easter's NUT conference is whether this legal victory can be turned to assist the more difficult task of getting the union to mount a serious campaign which goes well beyond propaganda to fight GERBIL.



## Thorn-EMI Victimised for supporting the health workers

**A MARCH of 500 healthworkers and their supporters would be impressive at any time. But the 500 strong demonstration in Stretford Manchester on 8 March was particularly special.**

It took place outside a factory, not a hospital, and it was in support of engineering workers, rather than workers in the NHS.

However the demo was still part of the campaign in defence of the NHS — or rather it was to defend the right of workers outside the NHS to take industrial action in support of the health service.

Management at Thorn-EMI in Stretford issued threats of dismissal against GMBATU convenor Dave Hodgkinson, and Keith Davenport and

Kevin Frisby, GMBATU and AEU stewards, for ignoring a court injunction and organising a strike of 560 workers on 19 February in support of the Manchester health workers' day of action.

**By Geoff Ryan  
North Manchester  
General hospital**

The three were also threatened with legal action to reclaim £45,000 Thorn-EMI say they lost in production because of the strike. Writs were also threatened against Bill Jordan and John Edmonds, general secretaries of the AEU and GMBATU.

On hearing of the threats from Thorn management Greater Manchester Healthworkers Shop Stewards

Committee decided to organise protest action. The turnout of 500 is testimony to the need that healthworkers see to defend other workers, and their ability to mobilise.

After seven hours of secret talks with Thorn-EMI, John Tocher, divisional organiser of the AEU, hatched up a deal which involved: final warnings from Dave Hodgkinson and Keith Davenport, and an official warning for Kevin Frisby.

While this represented a retreat by Thorn management, it initially included a major threat to trade union organisation in the plant — that Thorn's management would 'review' the position of its fulltime convenor.

Thorn-EMI is one of the few plants in the Trafford Park area that has a full time convenor, therefore the 'review' was a

clear threat to get rid of it.

The AEU locally has not confined itself to cooking up this deal. Before the 19 February day of action the Manchester Confed unanimously decided on a one day strike in support of the health service, but then did nothing whatsoever to win support for this.

Only two factories, Massey Ferguson and Thorn-EMI decided to carry out the Confed decision, and both were met by injunctions from the employers. The Massey workers backed down, and Thorn workers were left isolated.

However the unity of the Thorn's workforce and solidarity from other workers have achieved victory, because Thorn-EMI management have now been forced to withdraw their threat to the full time convenor position.



# For a national day of strike action to defend the NHS

THE demonstration for the national health service on 5 March, and the response to the call for a day of action on 14 March, were magnificent. They gave a small indication of the breadth of support for the NHS and the potential for the campaign in its defence.

Unfortunately, rather than using these actions as the first steps in mobilising for a serious fight with the government, the leaders of the TUC and the health service unions, NUPE and COHSE, have attempted to play down and limit the action they have already called.

Neither Rodney Bickerstaffe of NUPE, nor Hector Mackenzie of COHSE supported the call by nurses to be allowed to address the 5 March demonstration. The reason was simple. Any nurse who spoke would have challenged them to strike on 7 March, general of action organised by COHSE.

**By Geoff Ryan  
NUPE, Central  
Manchester Health  
Authority**

COHSE itself has been in retreat since calling for action on 14 March, so that in many areas in the end all COHSE proposed was lunch time vigils outside hospitals. In this they have been ably assisted by the NUPE leadership, which in some cases refused to back even COHSE's limited action.

And despite his call to 'Make budget day NHS day', Neil Kinnock was totally silent on how to force Lawson to come up with the funds the NHS desperately needs.

But the problem is not confined to their silence on how to actually win the campaign. In a most blatant piece of scabbing NUPE officials in South Yorkshire went out of their way to get miners to reverse

their decision to strike on 14 March in support of the health service.

Now all the leadership is offering is a series of selective actions, accompanied by the usual in-fighting between NUPE and COHSE. The health service campaign faces a crossroads. Either this lack of leadership will wear down and demoralise the fight in defence of the NHS or ways will have to be found to rebuild the campaign.

There has not been a consistent national response to the various calls for action on the health service. In some where there have been successful actions in recent weeks, there was probably a slight decline in support for 14 March.

Nevertheless technical staff at Manchester Royal Infirmary took 24 hour strike action, with broader strike action at other Manchester hospitals.

In London there remains a high level of support for strike action in the hospitals, with support being won from bus drivers, Heathrow engineers, and train drivers at Kings Cross. Unfortunately in London NUPE called for action on 15 March thus splitting the movement.

In areas where action recently has been more limited, such as Sheffield and Newcastle, 14 March showed stepped up involvement.

The level of organisation among those who want to fight is higher already than it was at any point in the 1982 campaign. In many areas joint shop stewards or strike committees bring together



Photo: Graeme Cookson

stewards and activists who want to go beyond the limitations imposed by the labour movement leadership.

Alongside these there are bodies such as London Health Emergency with more than 220 affiliates in trade union, labour and community groups. Similar bodies are now being set up in other areas.

This type of campaigning organisation, together with the organisation of hospital stewards and activists, can be a real point of pressure to prevent the backsliding from the leadership.

A national health shop stewards conference involving these committees could help draw in those areas which have so far not

been so well organised. A properly built national conference with delegations from the hospitals and the stewards committees could at least exchange useful information about what is going on in other areas.

Nevertheless neither these committees collectively, nor such a national conference, can substitute for nationally coordinated official calls for action from the unions and the labour movement as a whole.

The unprecedented level of activity that has already taken place in the hospitals, despite the difficulties of large scale strike action in the need to provide emergency

cover, has indicated the willingness of health service workers to fight for the NHS.

Busworkers, train drivers, miners, groups of engineering workers, have all shown that the whole working class is prepared to defend the NHS despite the obstructions of the national labour movement leadership.

There can be no doubt that the response to a clear call for one day strike action from the TUC and Labour Party would be overwhelming.

The coming nurses pay review, the ancillary workers pay claim, Thatcher's 'review of the NHS', the fight against privatisation especially in Scotland, as well as the continuing

overall crisis of the NHS will ensure that it continues to be a major issue in the next few months.

The argument for the TUC to call a day of general strike action as part of an escalating campaign of action in defence of the NHS as the only way to force the Tories to back down has to be stepped up.

The failure of Neil Kinnock and Robin Cook to clearly endorse nurses' actions has undermined the campaign of both the health workers, and Labour itself in defence of the NHS.

The opportunity of the local elections must now be taken to turn this around. But not in empty rhetoric, the real anger among health workers,

and health service users, must be mobilised in a serious challenge to Thatcher's rundown of the health service.

Now that Lawson has shown that he prefers to give tax concessions to his rich friends rather than fund the NHS Labour should now change the terms of the debate. Rather than the '2p for the NHS' campaign, the issue should focus on the enormous spending on Trident, and other nuclear weapons systems, calling for a transfer of this spending to the NHS.

Alongside the call for a one day general strike, this policy could unite the whole working class in a real campaign in defence of the NHS.

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## Publications fund drive WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

READERS have responded immediately to the launch of our £8000 publications fund drive in the last issue of *Socialist Action*, by sending in donations large and small, as well as promises of more.

Donations received so far amount to £510. In order to guarantee the production of *Socialist Action* this money needs to keep coming in. We feel confident that the goodwill and support that *Socialist Action* has built up on the left will ensure that this target is met.

The left press has only this support to rely upon. There are no Maxwells or Murdochs crying out to sink their personal fortunes into this paper — for which we have to be grateful! It is produced by a lot of hard work based on a commitment to defending the interests of the working class and looking for every opportunity to take forward its struggles both in Britain and internationally.

The support the paper gets back can be no greater than the degree to which it succeeds in doing this. Not engaging in rhetoric — though that is often tempting and *Socialist Action* is

no more immune to this danger than it is to the many other dangers that beset the left — but attempting to explain as accurately as we can what needs to be achieved, and above all what can be achieved.

One thing which we think needs to be achieved is to maintain the regular production of this paper, which we think is useful to the whole left. And our fund drive can and will achieve this.

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