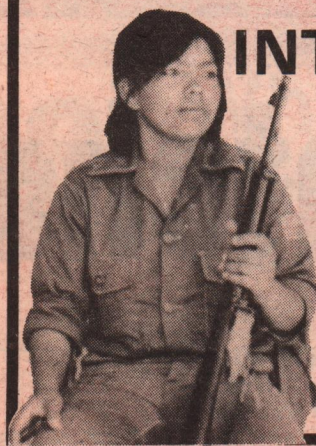


Socialist Challenge

Inside



**INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN'S
DAY
SUPPLEMENT**

See pages 5,6,7,8

AFTER BERMONDSEY... WHICH WAY FOR LABOUR?

The Bermondsey by-election defeat was the direct result of sabotage of Peter Tatchell's campaign by the right wing of the Labour leadership:

* for over a year a campaign was organised to force his Labour Party to select a different candidate;

* Bermondsey's electoral address and first press conference were scrapped by Party officials;

* *Militant's* editorial board was expelled the day before polling.

The sabotage of the right wing shows the bankruptcy of attempting to compromise with the right wing. The right wing of the leadership does not want to win an election on Labour's socialist conference policies. They will pull any stunt to sink the possibility of socialist victory.

Yet the derisory vote for O'Grady in

Bermondsey clearly demonstrated that the voters had no loyalty at all to the old Labour machine politicians.

The press smear campaign against Tatchell would not have been possible without the witch-hunt and harassment he received from the party leadership's right wing.

Bermondsey showed that Labour's biggest liability is those right wing leaders who:

* Divide the party with expulsions, attacks on local parties and interfere with democratic selection procedures, instead of leading a united struggle against the Tory government;

* Discredit Labour by openly stating that they will not carry out the overwhelmingly carried decisions of party conference.

These same leaders will take the

Bermondsey result as a green light to redouble their attacks on the left and on socialist policies. It was the leaders like these — Healey, Shore, Hattersley et al — who dominated the last Labour government and who led that government to defeat by breaking its links with the trade unions with their disastrous incomes policy, cuts in social expenditure and passivity in the face of rising unemployment.

Today they would even prefer a coalition with the Liberal/SDP Alliance to a Labour government that fought the British establishment to carry through socialist policies adopted by Party conference.

The peace treaties in the party have been entirely one-sided. The left can no longer afford them and neither can the Labour Party.

There is a way to win against the Tories, but it is not by the Labour party keeping quiet about the socialist alternative. The Thatcher government is on the defensive over nuclear weapons. They have just suffered a defeat at the hands of the waterworkers. Now they are being challenged by the miners over pit closures.

There is an enormous well of disgust and hatred for the Tories which Labour can tap — by siding with those in struggle against the Tories, by coming out clearly as the champion of the unemployed, the peace movement, trade unionists fighting for a living wage and for jobs, the women's movement and the black communities harassed by the vicious new immigration laws.

But the right wing will have none of it, and Foot himself capitulates to them at each crucial turn of events. Instead of a bold fight against the Tories we have only the witch-hunt against the left.

If Labour voters are confused, then no wonder! Instead of a party united around a clear alternative which offers a way forward from Thatcherism, they see a vicious war, which is entirely the responsibility of the right wing. Capitulating to the right will not win Labour the election — and it will create the basis for a continuation of the witch-hunt and the dominance of the right for years. 'The existing policies, leadership and membership' is a hopeless slogan — a whole section of the leadership is trying to *smash* the existing policies and the existing membership!

After the expulsion of the *Militant* leaders and the sabotage of Bermondsey the left must re-organise around the fundamental plans for a Labour victory:

- For a full and unequivocal commitment to unilateral nuclear disarmament
 - For a Labour government which raises the living standards of working people — no cuts, no statutory incomes policy
 - For full employment — a Labour government must introduce a 35 hour week.
 - For women's rights
 - Against Tory immigration laws.
- Fighting for these policies and defeating the witch-hunt is the way forward.



MINERS' STRIKE... see back page

Why Tatchell lost

By Carol Turner

'PETER TACHELL will go to parliament over my dead body.' In the small hours of Friday morning, the 15 month-old words of Labour leader Michael Foot returned to haunt him.

In the aftermath of the Bermondsey defeat, rumours are circulating that Foot will lose the party leadership to Labour's right wing. Why did Tatchell lose in Bermondsey? And what does this signify for Labour's chances in the general election?

Viewed from any angle, the Bermondsey result is a massive defeat for Labour. The big question now facing the Labour left is how to turn this round.

Advice

It's obvious that the tactical advice from Fleet Street near the end of the campaign paid off. In the last week of 'the dirtiest by-election campaign in recent history', the O'Grady vote collapsed, leaving the field clear for the Tory Party to unite its vote around the Alliance candidate and to clinch a crushing defeat for Tatchell.

Tory voters were openly advised 'vote Hughes to keep Labour's extremist out'. O'Grady supporters did likewise — and so did many other Labour voters. The derisive vote for all other candidates showed the whole campaign as a straight fight for or against Tatchell.

Throughout the last 15 months, the best ally in the keep-Labour-out campaign has been the Labour Party's own leadership. Since the dead-body speech of Michael Foot,

the witch-hunt hasn't let up.

It continued throughout the Bermondsey campaign, reaching a dramatic climax with the eve-of-poll decision to expel five members of the *Militant* editorial board. Labour's leadership has been consistently more concerned to fight the Labour left than to win the election.

The main responsibility for Labour's defeat in Bermondsey must be laid at the door of the national Labour Party.

Of course, the personal smear campaign against Tatchell hasn't helped. But this whole press campaign was first fuelled by Foot's public opposition to Tatchell. Such smears best take hold in a witch-hunting climate, like that created by Labour's leadership.

Fierce

During the by-election, the Bermondsey Party, and Labour activists throughout London, fought a fierce struggle against big national odds. Support for Tatchell came first and foremost from activists committed to defending a candidate who stood against the witch-hunt and in favour of implementing party policy.

Such support wasn't enough to counteract the national forces lined up against Labour.

There were weaknesses

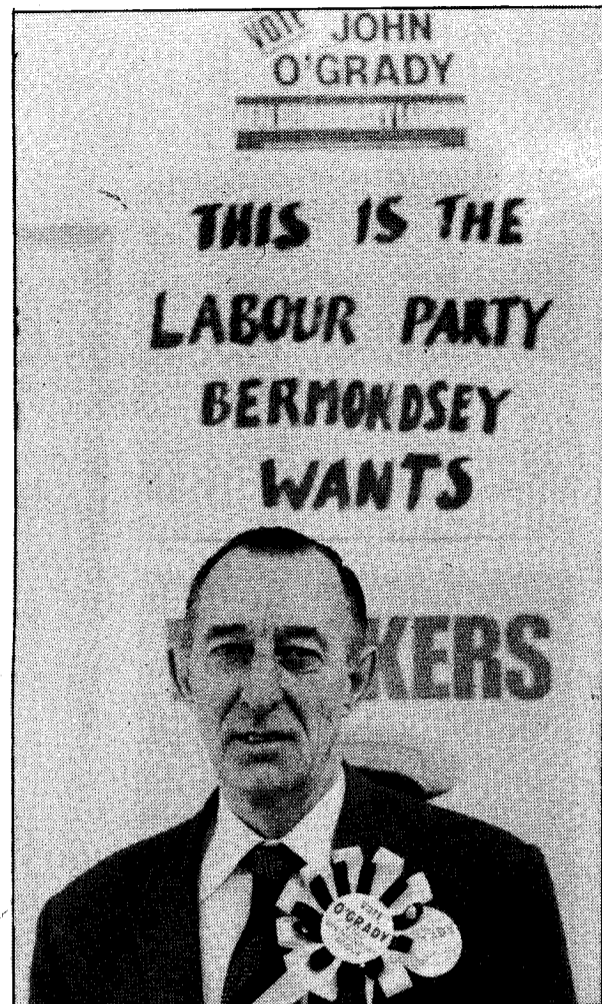
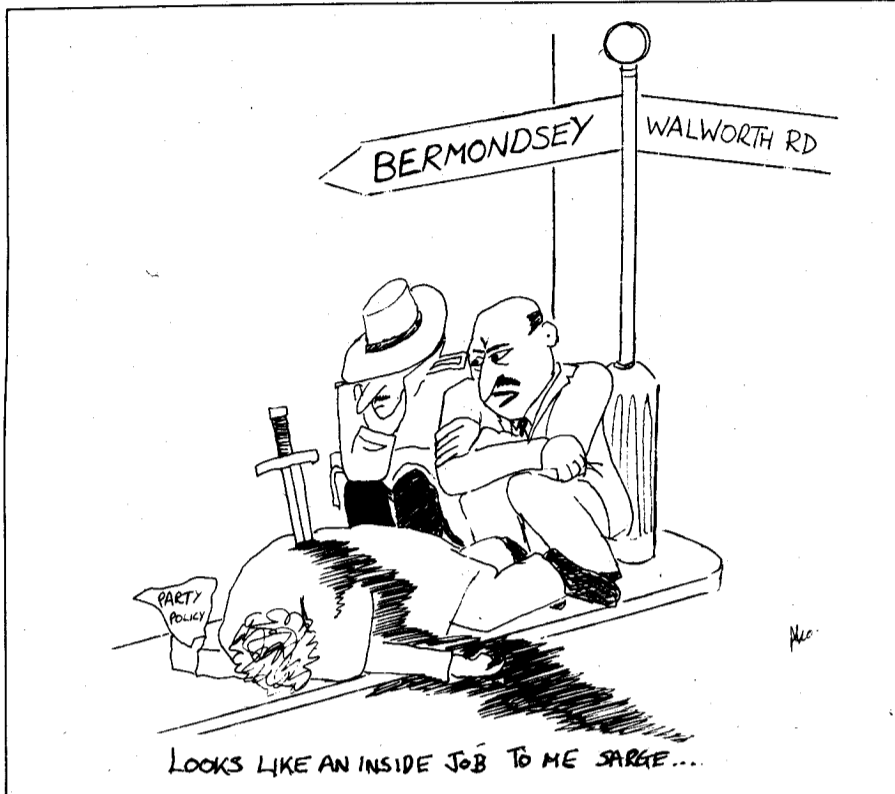


Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Well not exactly ... O'Grady was thrashed at the polls

too in the Bermondsey Party's campaign. In the circumstances, concentrating on Tatchell's credentials as a local candidate — together with keeping too low a profile on issues such as nuclear disarmament — was the worst possible campaign to wage. But the real pro-

blem was the fact that their candidate wasn't seen to be backed by his national party. Tatchell has never been presented publicly as part of a national Labour alternative to the Thatcher government.

This approach of the Labour leadership was simple. They would rather

lose the election than come to office on Labour's present policies — Bermondsey's result is a shot-gun pointed at the head of the Labour left. Tatchell's campaign has made one thing clear. Soft-pedaling on Labour's programme is no road to victory at the next election. We face a

clear-cut choice: dump Labour's policies — or fight to present a real alternative.

The left must campaign now to take Labour into the next election on a manifesto committed to party policies, supported by a leadership 100 per cent behind it. The result

of the Bermondsey campaign makes organising a socialist campaign for a Labour victory even more urgent.

In the words of Peter Tatchell: 'We've lost the battle, but not the war. Don't mourn the loss of Bermondsey — organise now for a Labour victory.'

How we fought witch-hunt

DURING the 1950s the right wing launched a witch-hunt against the Bevanite left wing of the party, and particularly against the newspaper *Socialist Outlook*. Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight was a victim of that witch-hunt. Here he talks to Socialist Challenge about that experience and the current witch-hunt. Socialist Challenge does not agree with Knight on the recognition of expulsions by local parties. Our position is expressed in the article facing by Alan Freeman and the letter to Mortimer from Islington Central.

Norwood will be one of the constituencies affected by the NEC's decision to expel the five editorial board members of *Militant*. Has the party taken a position on this yet?

Our executive committee will recommend to the General Management Committee that the expulsions be noted. We will campaign for the reversal of the expulsions, and the decision on the register, by the next annual conference.

You have experiences of witch-hunts in the past, don't you? What were they?

The campaign against *Socialist Outlook*, a left-wing rank and file paper in the Labour Party, first started around 1954. The paper was proscribed by the NEC, and this was endorsed at annual conference.

Three members of Norwood, including myself, were charged with being supporters of *Socialist Outlook*. And other charges were brought against me. I was secretary of the local Labour League of Youth then, the forerunner of today's Young Socialists.

I'd written an article advocating the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords.

I was charged with 'political amorality', and with 'corrupting the local LLY branch' by spending £10 on an Xmas party!

We had to appear before a sub-committee to answer the charges. We weren't allowed to have witnesses, nor were the accusers — members of the Norwood Labour Party — present. They were allowed to remain anonymous throughout for 'fear of any repercussions'.

We were duly found guilty, and the NEC voted to expel us from the party. Norwood was instructed to endorse the NEC's decision.

It refused. Representatives from the NEC reconvened the meeting, and again the GMC refused to expel us. I know they finally did expel the *Socialist Outlook* supporters. How did they manage to get round the GMC's resistance?

All this took many months. It took about a year to finally expel us. They then went through the whole process again



Photo: TED STORMER

Ted Knight, veteran of 1950s witch-hunt

and again, until eventually they got the decision they wanted.

How did all this effect the party? Did you campaign outside the party to build support for what you were doing?

Throughout all this, the whole of the party's energy was absorbed by the fight with the NEC. We attempted to argue our case publicly, but the press took the side of the right wing.

Over the next couple of years, there were further suspensions from the par-

ty. Some 180 people were expelled from Norwood over this period — including my mother, who they said 'obviously supported her son!'

What lessons do you draw for today's situation?

The difference today is that during the 50s and 60s we were in a period of relative economic boom and the militancy of the labour movement was at its lowest point.

The witch-hunt was able to go ahead because of the general climate

which had been created by the cold war. Opposition was limited.

Today's witch-hunt is taking place during an economic crisis. The working class is certainly not acquiescent. But the leadership — at the TUC and parliamentary level — is retreating before a Tory government. Therefore, it's necessary for them to silence conscious socialists within the party.

The attack on *Militant* is a forerunner of other such attacks. I believe we can fight this — and win — but it requires widening our support by taking the fight into the trade unions, as well as the constituency parties as a whole. The important thing is to take up the political issues which are at the root of this situation. Defeating the witch-hunt means politically defeating the right wing of the party.

Do you think parties should be prepared to be disaffiliated rather than carry out expulsions?

We should be very wary of being trapped into adventures which would facilitate the right-wing witch-hunt. Personally, I don't believe we should open the door to parties being disbanded and to socialists being excluded from membership by technical breaches of the constitution. Getting ourselves thrown out of the party won't help.

The NEC want us to oppose the expulsions in this way so they'll be able to disband the parties. The role of socialists is to conduct the fight inside the Labour Party.

Water Workers Smash the Four Per cent

By Pat Hickey

THE UNITY and militancy of the water workers has paid off despite a Tory hard line and a weak union leadership. The settlement gives 9 to 10 per cent over 12 months, and 12 per cent over 16.

Although the deal is well below the full claim, and leaves out comparability, it has opened the door for the gas and electricity workers whose claims are now in the pipeline and have been offered 4 per cent.

The union leaders have no excuse for not going for the full claim.

The water workers have shown that the Tories are not invincible. The negotiators took a harder line with the employers because the workers occupied the ACAS offices.

The start of a rank and file organisation, seen in the all-London strike committee and in the contacts made with other parts of the country around the ACAS lobby, now need to be built on. The deal includes some productivity strings which are to be negotiated in the next few months, such as flexible working and further efficiency measures.

The water workers will have to be on their guard

to make sure the deal is not undermined by job-loss and worsened working conditions. With a nationally organised rank and file capable of taking the initiative the comparability claim can be fought again next year.

It can also ensure that any deal is put to a full ballot of the membership, and not merely accepted on their behalf by the officials.

The Tories will not take this defeat lying down. They will now move against water workers by disbanding the national water council, and try to localise negotiations. Tebbit's threat to outlaw strikes in essential services cannot be treated as simply 'sour grapes'.

The union leaders have done nothing to stop his previous attacks on the unions and this gives him the signal to go ahead.

This is why rank and file organisation is now needed.

Expulsions 'sabotage' says Bermondsey

Why defiance is needed

By Alan Freeman

On the facing page Ted Knight, Norwood's chairperson explains why he wants his party to accept the expulsion of Militant editors Clare Doyle and Lyn Walsh. He argues that the alternative is disbandment and the expulsion of whole parties.

We think Ted Knight is wrong. First let us consider the constitutional argument, put forward by the party right wing and by the present leadership of the CLPD. Labour Party members, they say, must accept all decisions of the party or they will be flouting democracy.

This is an upside down logic. Party democracy in a federal organisation does not mean that the membership obeys every instruction of the leadership; it means the leadership obeys the membership. Suppose the party's new manifesto, in defiance of conference, pledges us to an incomes policy. Should the unions, as affiliated organisations campaign in favour of compliance?

Compliance with constitutional decisions does not extend to those decisions which interfere with the most basic rights of individuals and groups.

Conference never voted for expulsions. The decision to expel supporters of *Militant*, as Reg Race explained at Monday's press conference, is the NEC's and the NEC's alone. Those who defy the NEC's expulsions are attempting to *save* the party, save its members, its policies and its prospects of victory.

The CLPD if it values its name, should be four-square behind them if anything is to be left of the constitution they prize so highly.

What about the practical arguments put forward by Ted Knight? Four months ago *Militant* argued the same policy. In the pages of their paper they denounced the CLPs who voted, at the 30 October conference which founded Labour Against the Witch-Hunt, for non-recognition of expulsions.

Now *Militant* have changed their tune — none too soon. A balance sheet can be drawn. If the CLPs had accepted their advice, first, Tariq Ali would no longer be a party member, and second, they would not today be able to turn for help to the very CLP they denounced in October.



Witch-finder general John Golding

But thirdly, and most importantly, the list of CLPs signing the *Tribune* advertisement would not number forty — a good start — but well over a hundred. And in the face of defiance on this scale, the NEC — in an election year — would be unable to proceed, just as Ted Knight was unable to proceed with his Industrial Relations Act — because in their defiance the CLPs would be proving what everyone already knows, that the majority of party members are defending the democracy of the Labour Party by implementing its decisions not to have a witch-hunt.

Militant leaders are now in a position — if they choose — to make up for lost ground. They should put all their energies into building the defiance they now endorse into an unstoppable movement. They should campaign openly, on their platforms and through their paper, for a massive response to the *Tribune* advert and for the vigorous defence of Islington Central and Hammersmith North — and if it changes its tune Lambeth Norwood. This is not a policy for disbandment, but a policy to make disbandment an impractical option for the NEC in an election year.

And this is why Ted Knight is wrong. The witch-hunt cannot be stopped by giving into it. Suppose *Militant* supporters go, but Norwood — and Labour Herald — remain. For how long? Does anyone think the NEC will stop at five editors? The less resistance there is the further they will go.

Bermondsey Labour Party wrote to Michael Foot on 10 February asking him to get the expulsion of *Militant* leaders deferred until after the by-election. Bermondsey party secretary Anne Coltart told a packed press conference on 28 February.

She was speaking on a joint platform arranged by the three constituency Labour Parties who have been asked to expel *Militant* editors from their ranks. Two of the three parties — Islington Central and Hammersmith North will not do so.

The expulsions seemed to us like a calculated act of sabotage' she went on. Anne explained that the NEC campaign against Peter Tatchell played a significant part in his 'near hysterical overthrow' — beginning with Foot's condemnation of Tatchell in the Commons; the refusal, based on no evidence, to endorse Tatchell, leaving Bermondsey without a candidate for a year; their failure to do anything about Mellish's attacks; their silence about O'Grady and finally the pulping of £400 worth of leaflets which, she added 'they made sure Fleet Street knew about'.

Reg Race, MP, outlined the campaign which Labour Against the Witch-Hunt has launched for public declarations, in an advertisement in *Tribune*, that parties 'will

not expel, nor recognise the expulsion, of any Labour Party member or group of members arising from political disagreement with the NEC'.

Catapult

The advertisement is so far backed by over 40 CLPs and 200 individuals including NEC members Dennis Skinner and Audrey Wise, and AUEW Bob Wright.

The first half of the advert appears in *Tribune* this week and the sponsors will campaign for more signatories for a second instalment on the eve of the LPYS conference.

Militant's Tony Sauniois rejected charges that these actions were in defiance of the Labour Party's democratic procedure. 'It is the NEC which has acted in defiance of the will of the vast majority of party members,' he said. 'I am sure that if a conference were held now the trade unions would overwhelmingly reject what the NEC has done.'

As Reg Race explain-



Anne Coltart and Peter Tatchell at Bermondsey rally

ed, 'conference voted for a register. It never voted for these expulsions.' Moreover the NEC is attempting unilaterally to change the procedure for expulsion: previously it has been the right of CLPs to determine who shall and shall not be a member of the party.'

The stand taken by Islington Central and Ham-

mersmith Central puts the battle against the witch-hunt onto a new plane.

If the NEC want to press ahead with its divisive and destructive attack on party members and party policies, it will have to take on the constituency parties itself, expelling whole parties and groups of parties in an election year. The defence

of *Militant* and the parties who are standing by them is an urgent priority for the whole labour movement.

Has your CLP backed the *Tribune* advertisement yet? Every CLP in the country has been mailed with the text of the advert, which will appear this week. Get a copy and ensure it is discussed at this month's GMC.

Scottish YS meets

'WHAT HAVE women only marches got to do with socialism?'

This was the response of the Militant speaker at the 200-strong Scottish Regional LPYS Conference in Glasgow last weekend to the resolution moved by Linda McLaughlin on women's oppression.

This resolution, focussing on the slogans of a woman's right to work and a woman's right to choose, formed the pivot for the debate over the weekend.

It forced Militant supporters into a corner where their policies on women are concerned.

A key debate over the two days was the question of the fight against the witch hunt. Conference was united on the question of fighting against the purge of the left and left

policies. Unfortunately, Labour Coordinating Committee members called and got support for expulsions of the right wing from the party.

The strength of Militant speeches against the witch hunt was marred by open sectarianism towards Labour Against the Witch-Hunt (LAW).

They opposed resolutions calling for maximum unity of the left and in particular affiliation to the two anti-witch hunt campaigns, LAW and the Labour Steering Committee Against the Witch-hunt.

Decisions taken at conference on women's oppression, Ireland and Palestine went against the left and in effect make the fight against the right and the witch-hunt much more difficult.

Railworkers plan fightback

By John Shutt

Workers at the British Rail engineering workshop in Horwich, Lancashire have voted overwhelmingly to resist 15,000 redundancies.

BR management say they wish to retain the foundry and spring shop at the plant. But leaks from management show that this is only window dressing. Their aim is complete closure by late autumn. Closure hangs over other British Rail Engineering Limited (BREL) workshops at Shildon, Durham and Temple Mills in East London. Dennis Green, chairperson of the Horwich works action committee told Socialist Challenge:

'We are not going to accept this plan. We have been fighting for over a year now to

save Horwich and Shildon and management are deliberately trying to divide the BREL workforce to prevent united opposition. We are as determined as ever to resist. Only eight people at the mass meeting voted against the resolution to fight.

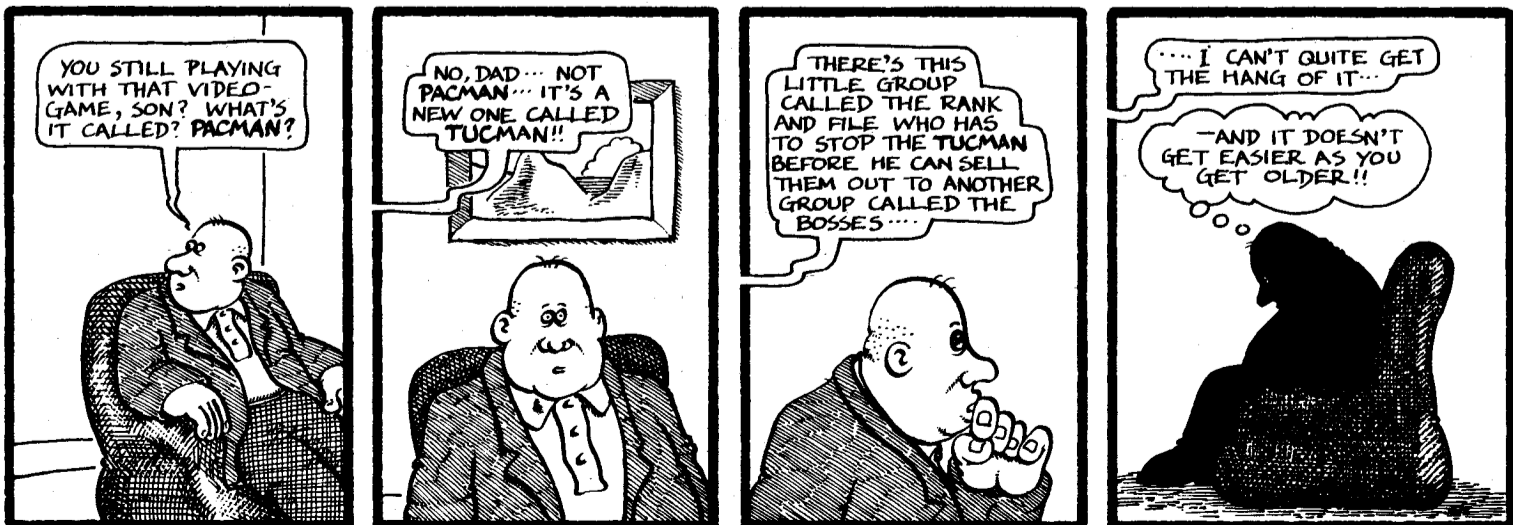
'What we need now is to unite with Shildon and Temple Mills in order to wage a joint campaign. We are looking to the national NUR and the Confed meeting of BREL workshops on Tuesday 1 March for firm leadership. We need immediate industrial action.

'As far as I'm concerned the workshops are in the front line following the Serpell inquiry. If they close us the way will be open for privatisation of the remaining workshops and massive redundancy throughout BR.

'We need solidarity immediately, not just from all the engineering workshops but from every NUR branch so that the workers at Horwich and Shildon know they are not going to be left to fight alone.'

Messages of support should be sent to: Works Committee, Horwich Loco Works, Horwich Lancashire.

BAD TASTE



Text of Letter from Central Islington Labour Party to Jim Mortimer, General Secretary of the Labour Party.

'Thank you for your letter of 24th February, informing me of the decision taken by the NEC last Wednesday to exclude from membership of the Labour Party the five members of the 'Militant' editorial board.

'In reply to your letter, the Officers of this CLP have instructed me to draw to your attention the various motions passed on this issue by our General Committee over the past several months (copies of which have been sent to you periodically), and to inform you that, in accordance with the policy set out in those resolutions, and in accordance also with policy set out in an advertisement we have sponsored in *Tribune* this week, we do not recognise the expulsion of Peter Taaffe and Ted Grant from the Labour Party; and that we will continue to regard them as full members of this CLP. Consequently we are unable to accede to your request that the names of these two comrades be deleted from our membership records.

'We shall be conveying this correspondence to members of the General Committee.'

Stop the missiles

Youth march to Greenham Common

Youth CND supporters will march from Oxford to Greenham Common on the weekend 19 and 20 March.

Oxford youth CND is organising this sponsored march to stop cruise and for jobs not bombs.

Cathie Brown, Oxford youth CND secretary said: 'Since we first started organising the march, we've had a tremendous amount of support from individuals and organisations, ranging from MP's who have sent messages to young people locally who want to go on the march.'

We also wrote to Michael Heseltine, the defence secretary, because between Abingdon and Didcot we'll be marching through his constituency. We asked him to debate the marchers, but he's said he'll be too busy! We'll

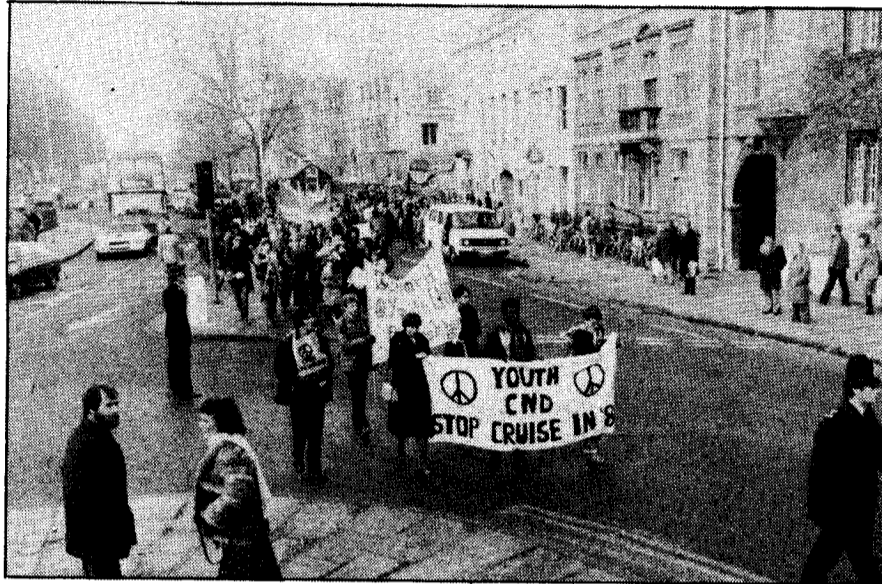
have to get him to send one of his acolytes instead.'

Labour MP Neil Kinnock, chairperson of CND Joan Ruddock and Annajoy David, national organiser of Youth CND, are among the march backers, which include the Southern region of the Labour Party Young Socialists.

Action

The march organisers make a special call for young women to come along, to applaud the tremendous protest of their Greenham Common sisters.

Rallies are taking place as the marchers wind their way through Oxford, Abingdon, Didcot and at the Greenham camp. Free food, accommodation and a disco are on offer to



Oxford Youth CND march to stop cruise in December '82

everyone who signs up.

Helpful hands are still needed to distribute leaflets, build labour

movement sponsorship, collect the £20 needed for each marcher and to be there on the day.

Contact: Cathie Brown, Oxford Youth CND, 10 Cunliffe Close, Oxford. Tel: 0865 52590



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Greenham peace camp under attack

HIGH COURT ACTION is being taken against the Greenham Common women. Two court attacks are planned to break up this popular focus for the anti-war movement.

On 22nd February the High Court in London adjourned an eviction case against 59 named women until 9 March, because there were too many to cope with. This headache will get worse as hundreds of women add their names to the list of defendants by signing statements admitting they have been to the camp.

Peace camper Helen John appealed, 'We want as many people as possible to come forward with their names. The courts are going to have to cope with thousands of us who do not want cruise missiles on Greenham Common or anywhere else.'

More threatening is the action taken by Newbury council. In January a secret meeting of a council sub committee changed the legal status of the common land. From now on anyone walking there is a trespasser. People living in Newbury should now apply for a special license to walk their dogs!

The council has applied for an injunction

against 21 peace campers. This would prevent them from stepping on the land or 'conspiring with others' to do the same.

If the women speak at a meeting anywhere in the country calling for support for the Greenham Common camp, they would be in contempt of court and could be put in prison. So much for Tory sermons about freedom of speech.

This intimidation has not put the women off. Far from it. They will now step up their action by building for the 31st March twelve hour blockade of the base and the women's day of action on 24 May.

Scottish women picket Faslane

THE LEAD that women are giving to the disarmament movement continues to grow with women in Scotland this weekend taking part in a picket of the nuclear bases at Faslane and the Holy Loch in the west of Scotland.

The Women's Day of Action on Sunday 6 March has been organised by Women for Peace, a Glasgow based group, to celebrate International Women's Day.

The event has the support of CND, the Anti-Trident campaign, the women's movement and large sections of the labour and trade union movement in Scotland. The Day of Action will consist of a blockade linking the three main gates to the base, from 10am to 4pm.

In choosing this as the central focus for International Women's Day, women in Scotland intend to show how seriously they take the disarmament question.

The idea for a Day of Action at Faslane arose after the success of the 12 December rally at Greenham Common. The many women from Scotland who travelled to Greenham felt it was important to organise action on a Scottish level to highlight the particular concentration of nuclear weapons in the west of Scotland and to aid the participation of the many women in Scotland who clearly support but were unable to attend Greenham.

The concentration of the population in the west of Scotland and its centrality to the government's nuclear strategy make Faslane important. Apart from the concentration of Polaris submarines construction has been taking place on the Trident missile system for the last year at Faslane.

The aim is to have this work completed by the late 1980s, but action to oppose this project is crucial now.

As Tricia Benzie from the Anti-Trident Campaign explained: 'With Trident the UK is increasing its target capability from 64 to 896, and its explosive power by three times that of Polaris. Trident will bring the accuracy of the missiles down to between 100 and 200 metres. While Trident has been called a second strike, that is a 'defensive' missile, it can actually be targeted against missile systems in the USSR and so can be used as a first strike missile.'

Trident would be a huge leap, in Britain's nuclear capacity. Opinion polls in Scotland have consistently shown a large majority of people supporting unilateral nuclear disarmament, with a recent one giving 73 percent specifically opposed to Trident.

The 6 March action will also publicise the peace camp of about twenty women and men which has been based there during the last year. The camp has recently been given a permanent status by Strathclyde Region by charging it rates and has had support from the local council.

To maximise the impact of this initiative it is crucial that it gets the support of all the forces involved in the peace movement.

For further information contact Glasgow Women's Centre on Saturday afternoon, 041-221 1177.

CND Diary

CND Diary will be a regular column in Socialist Challenge, giving a round up of useful facts, news and dates of forthcoming events in the Anti-Nuclear movement.

The listing of events is free and the details should reach us by the Wednesday, one week before publication. Send to CND Diary, Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

OUR congratulations to the inhabitants of Hamilton Road, Reading, who recently declared themselves to be Britain's first nuclear-free street! Hundreds of people turned up to a party to declare the street a nuclear free zone. The local CND during its campaigning discovered that a majority of the residents were anti-nuclear, and so the nuclear-free street was born.

IF you want an update on the situation at the Sizewell 'B' inquiry (covered in last week's SC), you could do worse than to subscribe to the East Anglian Alliance Against Nuclear Power's fortnightly magazine. It's called 'Sizewell REACTIONS', and subs cost £5.00. More details from EAAANP, 2 St. Helen's Street, Ipswich, Suffolk.

The Atomic Energy Authority's plans for coping with a nuclear reactor releasing radioactivity into the atmosphere were revealed last week at the Sizewell inquiry. They're going to hand out iodine tablets! They would also consider evacuation and sheltering. Seeing as there are no funds earmarked for a sheltering and evacuation programme I suspect that we will have to make do with the iodine tablets. I can just see it: "My god there's a melt-down, where's the iodine pills?!"

THE cost of the Falklands war is going up again. Members of the House of Commons Defence Committee who have just returned from the South Atlantic have informally let slip the following information:

a) the Ministry of Defence has underestimated the cost of keeping a military presence on the Islands. b) A political or military solution is the only thing that could cut the cost, and such a solution is not in sight. We, of course, could tell them how to solve the crisis — get out and stay out.

WHILE on the topic of the Defence Committee, there are apparently rumblings from some of its members about the fact that the Ministry of Defence seemed 'to be spending money as though there were no tomorrow' (quoted in the Financial Times). Next time you have to wait for overworked hospital staff to treat you remember where the cash is going ...

- * Until 6 March Hounslow Council/Hounslow CND Anti-Nuclear Week. Details from (01) 577 3429.
- * Wed 2 March Film '8 Minutes to Midnight' organised by Islington CND. Islington Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, N5.
- * Thurs 3 March Films 'The Lost Generation' and 'The Big If' organised by Havant CND. United Reformed Church Hall, North Street, Havant, Hants.
- * March 3-10 Film 'From Hitler to MX' at the Rio Cinema Dalston, London.
- * Fri 5 March Meeting 'Britain's Role in the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement'. Speakers Bruce Kent & Tom Benyon MP. Civil Hall, Wantage, Oxford.
- * Sat 5 March Scottish TUC CND Conference. 10am AUEW Halls, West Regent St., Glasgow.
- * Sun 6 March Women's blockade of Faslane Naval Base. 10am-4pm. Tel: 041 221 1177 on Saturdays for details.
- * Sun 6 March Peace Chain from Marconi 'Stingray' Torpedo factory nr. Neston to Capenhurst British Nuclear Fuels plant. Arrive 10.30. 'Link' from 12.00-1.00. Rally at Capenhurst at 3.00.
- * March 6-8 'Stop the Arms Race' (STAR) Women's Peace Demonstration in Brussels. Details Margot Miller 0993-842480.
- * Wed 9 March Meeting 'Civil Defence — Latest Developments'. Speaker Martin Spence. At the Market Tavern, Finkle St., Alnwick. 8.00pm.
- * March 10/11 Picket of Royal Aeronautical Society seminar on Electronic Warfare. Details from Ann on 10-633 0133 ext. 22.
- * Fri 11 March Benefit for Daws Hill Peace Camp. Band 'The Significant Zeros'. At Bucks College of Higher Ed., High Wycombe. Starts 7.30pm. Tickets £1 or 50p.
- * Fri 11 March TU Reception 'Together We Can Stop the Bomb'. Speakers Bruce Kent & Brian Mathers (Reg. Sec. TGWU) at Main Hall, UCATT, Gough St., Birmingham. Contact Ruth Longon (021)-632 6909.
- * Sat 12 March North London CND sponsored hike around the bunkers. Assemble Mill Hill East Tube 10.45, start 11.00.
- * Sat 12 March Labour CND fringe meeting at Scottish Labour Party Conference. 12.30-2pm at Windsor Restaurant, Perth.
- * March 7-19 (provisional). Distribution of Strathclyde Regional Council anti-nuclear broadsheet to every home in the region. (This covers half of the population of Scotland!)
- * Thurs 17 March 'The War Game' showing at Hargrave Hall. Hargrave Road, London N19.
- * Fri 18 March Meeting 'Cruise missiles and nuclear war'. Speaker Mike Pentz (CND vice chair) at 8.00pm, Shrewsbury Technical College, London Road, Shrewsbury.
- * 18-22 March Women from Greenham Common will be speaking in South Shields, Ryton, Hexham, Newcastle and Darlington. Details from Barbara Stabler on Newcastle 811668.
- * March 19/20 Oxford YCND march from Oxford to Greenham Common. For details contact Oxford YCND, 10 Cunliffe Close, Oxford.
- * Sun 20 March Faslane Peace Camp Festival
- * Wed 23 March 7.00-8.00 Surround the Town Hall in support of the Peace camp and in opposition to Civil Defence.
- * Thur 31 March 12 hour blockade of Greenham Common (women only) and Burghfield Royal Ordnance Factory (mixed).
- * Fri 1 April 14 mile human chain from Greenham Common to Burghfield via Aldermaston. Starts 1.30pm, followed by a festival at Aldermaston.
- * Sat 2 April Scottish CND March in Glasgow. Starts in George Square and ends at Carnival in Kelvingrove Park.
- * 8-10 April Campaign Against the Arms Trade National supporters meeting, Friends Meeting House, 16 Newton Terrace, Glasgow G3. Details contact (01)-278 1976.
- * 8-10 April International Peace Camp at Wycombe. Contact Bob Saunders Bourne End 22624.
- * 8-10 April Nuclear Free North Atlantic Conference Mitchell Theatre, Glasgow.
- * Sat 30 April East London Labour Movement Conference Against Cruise and Trident, to be held in Queen Mary College.
- * May March from Truro to Exeter via Plymouth, Barnstaple and Somerset (only for the fit!). Details from Stephen Hugget. Tel: Plymouth 268724.
- * Sat 7 May Youth CND Festival for Peace. Starts at 11am with a demonstration from Embankment marching to Brockwell Park. Bands, speakers and a festival village.
- * 10-12 May Demonstration outside Defence Components Expo '83, in Brighton. Contact (01)-278 1976 for details.
- * Thur 12 May Day of Action against Arms production at Thorn-Brymors Brimsdown site in Enfield. Organised by London Region CND's Trade Union sub-committee. Details from LRCND, 6 Endsleigh Street, London WC1.
- * 14-21 May Ealing Labour Party Disarmament Week. Contact David Bays (01)-992 0287.
- * 31 May-3 June Four day blockade of the US base at Upper Heyford. Details from 43 Peacock Street, London SE17.
- * Sat 4 June Anti-Trident Convention, Kelvin Hall Arena, Glasgow. Starts 11am.
- * 6 Aug Hiroshima Day. Labour Party/TUC Day of Action against the missiles. Also marches from all over Britain to Greenham Common.
- * 22 October Projected date for CND national demonstration in London.

Socialist Challenge Special Supplement

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The origins of our celebration

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY has a rich and lively tradition in the history of women's struggle for freedom and liberation.

LEONORA LLOYD explains the origins and importance of 8 March for women the world over.

American women socialists organised the first ever 'Women's Day' on 28 February 1907 to demand political rights for working women.

But it was not until the anniversary of an uprising of the Prussian proletariat on 19 March 1911 that the first International Women's Day celebration took place.

It was proposed by Clara Zetkin at the second International Conference of Working Women in 1910, and she suggested that it should be an annual celebration.

Spark

In 1913 the date was changed to 8 March which was the anniversary of an important strike by women textile workers in New York in the 1880's. It has remained on this day ever since.

The spark that ignited the Russian revolution was lit by working women in Petrograd in 1917. They were determined to celebrate as usual on 8 March (23 February under the old Russian calendar). But the social democrats (the revolutionaries) felt that the time was not right for strikes.

At the time the city was in ferment and they knew that a strike would lead to open revolt, which the workers were not well enough prepared for.

Women textile workers, however, went on strike and called on the metal workers for support. This event led to the February revolution and from there to the famous October revolution of 1917.

The communist countries continue to celebrate International Women's Day, but in a style more reminiscent of Mother's Day in the West than of the militant traditions of the early years.

In the early 1970's the women's movement again began to organise around 8 March, celebrating our

growing strength and our understanding of the importance of international links.

Today those links have become much stronger through such struggles as the fight for abortion rights and the growth of the peace movement, both led by women.

This year women have leapt into the news as the most committed and militant campaigners against nuclear weapons. The peace camps at Greenham Common and other US military bases have been the focus of a growing movement to stop the missiles in 1983.

1984 will see the first international conference of the International Contraception, Abortion and Sterilisation Campaign (ICASC) in Mexico, just a few months before the population control agencies hold a conference there.

And in 1985 there will be a conference in Nairobi to mark the end of the

United Nations Decade of Women, when governments will put on record the advances made in the position of women.

We know that any such gains will have been made despite governments and not because of them. Gains have and will be won by women fighting in their homes, in hospitals, schools, factories, offices and on the streets.

We must continue to fight against attempts to stop us controlling our bodies, to force us back into the home and to turn the clock back — as the present Tory Government would have it — to the days when we started to celebrate International Women's Day.

The need for a strong international movement has never been greater. We have an honourable history to build on. The events planned all over the world around 8 March give us the chance to celebrate and to gain strength together to carry on our struggle.

(Leonora Lloyd is a member of Acton Labour Party Women's Section, the National Abortion Campaign steering committee and ICASC).



London

Come and Celebrate International Women's Day at County Hall, SE1.
Saturday 5 March

Assemble 11.30am County Hall for march across Waterloo Bridge, the Strand, down Trafalgar Square, up Whitehall, over Westminster Bridge for Conference starting 1.30 'Third World Women's Struggle is First World Women's Struggle'.

All events women only.

Tuesday 8 March

Women and Peace Convention Panels, Films. 12.30-1.30 What War means to Women in London with Valerie Wise, WONT, Peace Groups. 2.30-3.30 Fermenting War with women from Greenham, Czech women, Russian women, Latin American and Middle East women. 6.30-7.30 Money for Arms or Money for Peace? Green Party, Francis Morell, Selma James, Women from South Africa, Namibia, Phillipines and Ghana.

Birmingham

Saturday 12 March

Demonstration and rally around the theme of 'Women and War' Assemble 12.30p at Chamberlain Square (in front of Central Library) for march to Digbeth Civic Hall. Rally in Assembly Hall with speakers, creche and stalls.

Speakers include Clare Short (Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Handsworth); Pat Muddeman (West Midlands City Council); Helen John (Greenham Common Peace Camp); speakers also invited from Women and Ireland, Youth CND, and El Salvador Solidarity Campaign.

SCOTLAND

Sunday 6 March

Women's Day of Action at Faslane. Women's blockade of Faslane Naval Base. 10am-4pm. Tel: 041-221 1177 on Saturday for details

Cinders and the World of Work

CINDERS, IGNITE or Cinders and the World of Work is a play that Broadside Theatre Group will be performing on Friday 4 March at County Hall to join with Revolution Youth and Socialist Challenge in celebrating International Women's Day 1983.

LINDA, a member of the theatre company, talked to us about the play.

The central character, Cinderella, is a young woman who goes from unconsciousness about her oppression to a state where she's learning that she's got to stand up for herself both at home and work and link up with other women.

As a young woman she learns a lot about life and we can try and highlight the need for women to organise together to control their own lives. The play deals with questions like housework, wagelessness, YOPS schemes and WEEPS.

It is based on the experience of women in the Hoover dispute in Merthyr Tydfil when the men refused to support the women's stand on jobs.

It's about the way women are organised within a union and the sexist and patriarchal attitudes that women have to confront in order to get the unions to fight for them.

It also looks at wagelessness and how women are treated by the DHSS, the kind of harassment they get.

Our group is a mixed group and we've shown the play to lots of labour movement groups: to Deptford Unemployed in the Albany, to two NUPE schools for women, two to three ASTMS branches, lots of Labour Party womens sections, Brabant Road Trade Union Centre, for BIFU and the CPSA.

We've also done a general performance at Battersea Arts Centre but mainly we like to serve local groups. Most male trade unionists have taken the idea that male behaviour is similar to the way we portray it but some think we go over the top.

Generally the reaction is quite positive but one argument that often comes up in a defensive way is that women aren't interested in trade unions — rather than that men should change the unions to accommodate women.

One union we've performed a lot for is NUPE. They seem to be the best because they seem to have done a lot more than any other union to involve women. They've had a lot of schools, appointed women training officers, campaigned for women to become shop stewards.

We're a part-time group, many of us work as well as doing the play since the Arts Council cut our grants. This is our first full-length show.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Revolution/Socialist Challenge Celebration Rally

Come to the rally and hear speakers invited from



Greenham Common
Youth CND
Ireland
Nicaragua
El Salvador
Women Against Apartheid
Palestine

Come and celebrate and help build all the campaigns fighting for Women's Liberation and Socialism. Displays, films and music also available.

Friday, 4 March 1983, 7.00pm
County Hall, London SE1
(Waterloo Tube)



Clara Zetkin

Tradition One

Decades of consistent agitation by Clara Zetkin in *Die Gleichheit*, at women's conferences meant that the partly latent, partly acute dissatisfaction felt by many women had already been formulated theoretically and activated politically. The war policy brought them into open conflict with the party.

Werner Thonnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*, p78)



WOMEN AND THE

Two traditions

the present disaster (the First World War) will, in the course of years, decades and centuries, emit a sanguinary radiation, in the light of which future generations will view their own fate, just as Europe sensed the radiation of the great French revolution and of the Napoleonic wars ... Yet how small were those events ... in comparison with what we are performing or experiencing now, and especially what we are heading for ..

Trotsky, *The Psychological Puzzles of War*, September 1915.

GREENHAM COMMON has startled the left and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament leaders. In the breadth of its support and its militancy it has rekindled the fire of the early actions of the modern women's liberation movement.

The women at Greenham have shown that they are the most militant fighters for unilateralism, being willing to go to prison for a cause they consider to be just.

Their actions have boosted the confidence of the disarmament movement, making it easier to argue for a mass action orientation in the labour movement and pushed forward the growth and development

of a mass autonomous women's movement.

In the struggle against the imperialist war drive today women know that the stakes are high. Millions of people in Europe and America now realise that a nuclear war would be more horrible and more terrifying than any previous threat to world peace we have experienced this century.

VALERIE COULTAS takes a look at the struggles of women in the First World War to show that, in the long run, only those women who take a clear stand against capitalist war will be able to consistently fight for the cause of women.

WHEN England declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914 the leaders of the Second International crumbled before the wave of jingoism that swept through Europe. They

voted for the war credits of the capitalist parties in government at that time.

Out of the window went the watchwords and symbols that the International had been committed to at the Congress held in Stuttgart in 1907. These mandated the parliamentary deputies to vote down war credits and, urging the working class of all countries to unite, said that it was a crime for workers to shoot each other.

An irreconcilable attitude to the class struggle had long given way in practice to peaceful bargaining and parliamentary reformism.

Now the world was at war even formal reference to such aims was dropped as the mass workers parties tripped over themselves in urging the working classes to go and die for the fatherland.

Such was the context for the women's movement in Europe to respond to World War I.

The formal commitment to socialism, and the practical adaptation to capitalism, is always strikingly evident in the field of women's rights.

The majority of leaders of the Second International, in parallel with their overall attitude to the class struggle, were quite willing to commit themselves to women's liberation on paper.

But when it came to confronting the male chauvinism of the labour movement, such as male workers' fear that women would take their jobs, they backed down.

Lasalle took this view to its most extreme point when he argued that women should stay at home and not be allowed to compete with male workers — particularly for skilled jobs.

It was in arguing against such ideas that a powerful proletarian women's movement had been built up within the German Social Democracy. Their journal, *Die Gleichheit*, was edited by Clara Zetkin and was selling 110,000 copies in 1912 just before the outbreak of war.

At the 1907 Socialist Women's conference also held in Stuttgart, an International bureau had been established to lead the work of



socialist women throughout the International.

Die Gleichheit was not simply a paper of the German Social Democracy but it led women throughout the International as a whole.

And perhaps because of the disenchantment that women like Clara Zetkin had experienced with the majority of the German Party over women's issues the leading women in the German Party were some of the key left-wing figures in building up the minority opposition in the International against the support for the imperialist war.

In the case of Rosa Luxemburg it was because of the diffidence shown towards a woman being given the position as editor of the Leipzig paper, *Die Arbeiterzeitung* in 1898.

'Decades of consistent agitation by Clara Zetkin in *Die Gleichheit* and at women's conferences meant that the partly latent, partly acute dissatisfaction felt by many women had already been formulated theoretically and activated politically. The war policy brought them into open conflict with party policy.' (Werner Thonnessen, *The Emancipation of Women*).

Right up until issue number 16 *Die Gleichheit* was to emphasise women's desire for peace — despite the requirements of the censor and party discipline.

It reported peace demonstrations by Social Democratic women pointing out that women had to 'bear the psychological burdens of war as wives, mothers and sisters of soldiers, as housewives facing the difficulties



FIRST WORLD WAR

in feminism



of food production and as mothers of small children growing up without their fathers.

'The physical demands which women, like all those who stayed at home, had imposed on them by the increasing shortage of food were now made even worse by physical and psychological exertion at work.'

Increasing amounts of blank space were to appear in its columns as the war drew on. The editorial board allowed this to occur to reveal to their members the democracy of imperialism at war. Lines ran from the offices of *Die Gleichheit* to Switzerland, England, France and the United States.

In 1915 Clara Zetkin organised the International Women's Conference in Bern, without the approval of the Party leaders. Women from all the

belligerent countries participated and voted through a resolution of opposition to the war, after a big debate on pacifism.

Zetkin returned only to be arrested in August. The party leaders began to prepare their counter-measures against the left-wing women.

The oppositional social democrats in Germany had joined together to oppose the party line and formed the 'Social Democratic Working Group'. This tendency was condemned by the Party executive.

Then the majority moved to expel Louise Zietz, a minority left-wing supporter from the Party Executive. *Die Gleichheit* was used to protest against this expulsion — but then the Party leaders moved against the real thorn in their side.

Zetkin was forced out of editor-

ship of the paper and the 18th issue bore a new sub-title: 'Magazine for the interests of workers' wives and women workers'.

The magazine now had a totally different flavour. The paper was to become less popular, less 'intellectual'.

Its report of the 1917 Conference of German Social Democratic women gave political content to these supposed questions of style. It reported: 'The conference was not completely drenched, as such conferences usually are, in radical verbiage.'

The 'radical verbiage' that had gone of course was the opposition of the German Social Democratic women's movement to World War I.

Clara Zetkin was thus forced out of the party into the Independent Social Democratic Party, only going over to the Spartacus League set up by Luxemburg and Liebknecht after Social Democracy had committed its final betrayal of the German workers in 1919.

The attack unleashed on Clara Zetkin and the movement of women behind her is very relevant today. The leaders of the social democracy were afraid to bring the debate out into the open.

By submerging the debate into one about bringing *Die Gleichheit* into line with 'the needs of the masses who had no intellectual or political background', they hoped to obscure the fundamental divide over the August 4th policy and the clash between left and right within the party.

They denounced Zetkin for the decline in circulation of the magazine when the real cause was the decline in the strength of the workers' movement because of their craven support for the war.

In fact the party had deliberately reduced the circulation of *Die Gleichheit* because of its anti-war policy, encouraging, through the trade unions, women to read the *Gewerkschaftliche Frauenzeitung* (Women's Trade Union Paper).

The emphasis of this trade union paper was very strictly on union problems — political education was neglected. Some social democratic women began to explicitly counter-

pose it to *Die Gleichheit*.

It sided with the majority in the party and it was left free from the censor's pen.

Coinciding with the massive increase in women's unemployment from 9.5 million to 15 million its circulation rose to 100,000 a year after it was launched in 1916 while *Die Gleichheit* and the membership of the women's section began to decline.

Many party leaders were forced to admit that the split with Zetkin and left-wing women had weakened the women's organisation in the party.

Mrs. Kahler, speaking in 1919, gave her explanation as to what had happened:

'They (the women) have increasingly moved to the left-wing of the Party, and therefore, even today, the attitude of the USPD seems much more acceptable to them than what we tell them.'

During the Malvinas war socialists and feminists in Britain gained a sense of what it means to stand up and argue against a war being carried out directly by your own government, your own ruling class.

At the Labour Party Women's Conference in Newcastle last June, the platform took over twenty minutes to try and explain why the conference should not call for a withdrawal of the fleet and yet, by a narrow margin, a victory was gained for such a stand.

The feminists who backed their capitalist governments in waging the First World War paid a price. They sacrificed their feminism for patriotism.

In Germany the Social Democratic Women's Movement became a shadow of its former militant self, reduced to state supportive work when its militant head was chopped off.

In the USA, the left-wing Women's Party continued to campaign for the vote, picketing the White House with slogans that contrasted 'Kaiser Wilson' to 'Free Russia' where women had the vote after 1917.

On the other hand the National American Women's Suffrage Assoc-

iation prioritised war work over campaigning for the vote, dissociating themselves with women's party activists who were sent to jail for their protests.

In England when the war broke out Christobel and Emmeline Pankhurst's anti-German zeal knew no bounds.

The *Britannia*, Christobel's new journal, harangued the cabinet to take a stronger stand against the Germans.

All campaigning for the vote ceased as the Women's Social and Political Union mounted demonstrations calling for compulsory national service for women financed by that well known feminist Lloyd George!

Sylvia, whose East End Federation had been expelled from the WSPU, took a completely different road. Not only did her newspaper, *The Dreadnought*, campaign against the war but she continued to fight for the vote and for maximum protection for the rights of women workers in the new jobs they were forced to take up.

Ironically enough in 1916, after years of campaigning for women to be given the vote on the same terms as men — on the basis of a property qualification — the WSPU leaders turned full circle and said that women were quite willing to forgo their right to vote to 'allow soldiers and sailors to have the vote'.

The lessons of the struggles of women in World War I are crystal clear and have a burning relevance for women today involved in the disarmament and the feminist movements.

The feminists who stood up to their imperialist rulers and fought against the war were also those who fought most consistently for the demands of women.

These are two traditions in feminism — one that bases itself on class struggle and one that bases itself on class collaboration.

Only a resolute struggle by women on behalf of their sex and all the oppressed will achieve the liberation of women.

On this International Women's Day March 1983 Socialist Challenge will be celebrating the former and not the latter tradition.

Christabel Pankhurst

Tradition Two

▣ The *Britannia*, Christobel's new journal, harangued the cabinet for not pursuing a hard enough line against the Germans. All campaigning for the vote ceased as the Women's Social and Political Union mounted demonstrations calling for compulsory national service for women, demonstrations financed by that well known feminist Lloyd George!

Imperialism

Women's number one enemy

SOLIDARITY with women in the national liberation struggles and revolutionary movements around the world is an important part of our celebrations and reflections on International Women's Day.

ROS KAPLAN reports on the dual struggle of women in the colonial and semi-colonial world against imperialism and their own oppression as women.

Solidarity is perhaps even more urgent this year as the west, and in particular the US, carries out and backs wars in Latin America, Africa and the Middle East. These wars can rapidly escalate to horrifying proportions, as we saw in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon.

Important questions are being raised as to the nature of our support, our understanding and how we as feminists in the west identify with women struggling in the 'third world'.

It has been argued that too much importance is placed on what side to take, when supporting national struggles, instead of letting women in these struggles speak for themselves.

Mistaken

'Coverage of international issues, often revolves around supporting either 'y' or 'x', especially in regard to particular liberation struggles.

'The problem with this is, that it's recording struggle in an unnecessarily polarised way.

'For example, 'Western/British feminists must (or must not) support armed struggle' — rather than reflecting the voices of those women themselves engaged in the struggle or debate'. (Roisin Boyd, *Spare Rib*, March 1983).

I would approach this differently and say that it is of fundamental importance that feminists do take sides, do support national liberation struggles.

This is directly related to our politics on western imperialist domination and subsequently its effects on the women's

movement internationally. The unwillingness to take sides, and a confusion over western imperialism led to a 'sitting on the fence' attitude over the debate over the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, in some of the feminist press.

Zionists were demanding equal voice when articles started appearing on Palestine, some complaining bitterly about the anti-semitism of women who dared raise the question of solidarity with Palestinians.

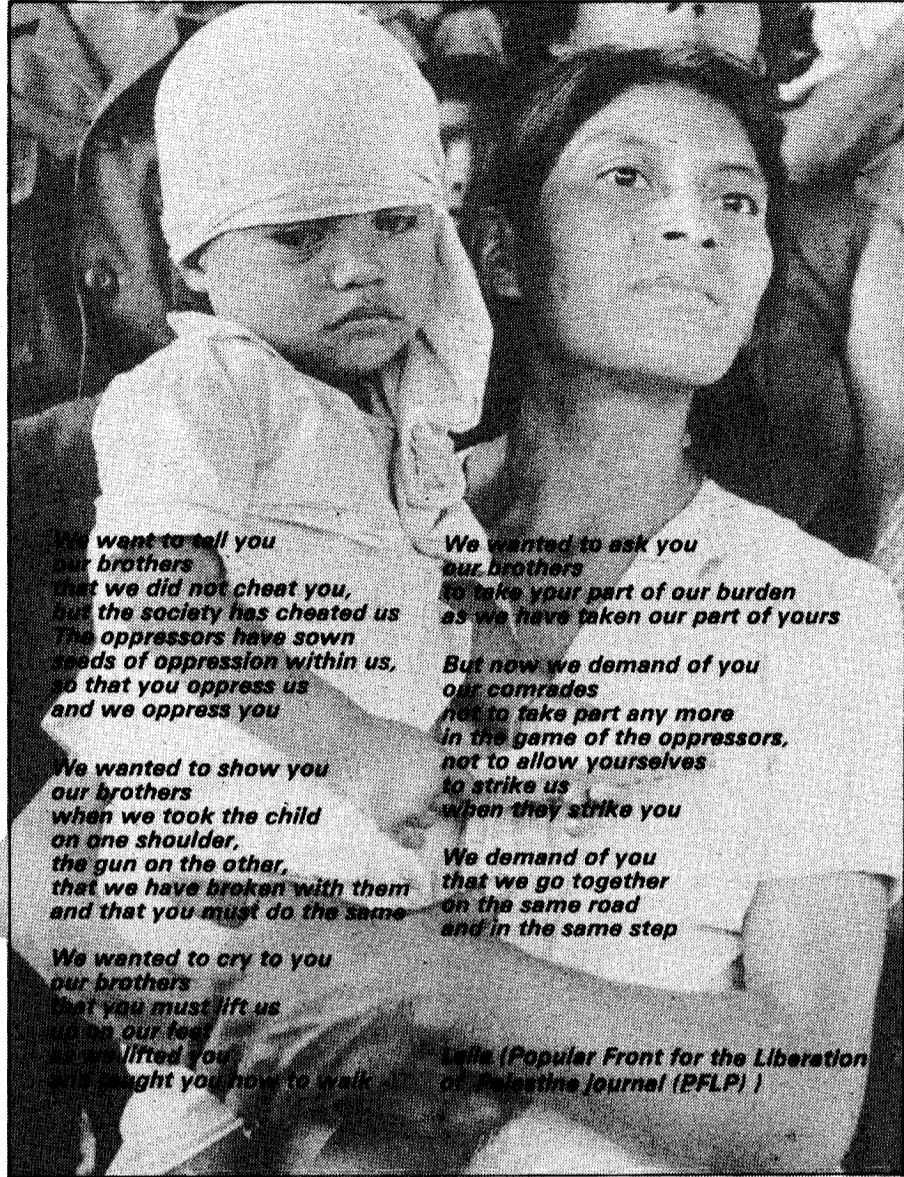
On the other hand, Jewish women in Israel were the most active in the anti-war movement. The anti-Zionist feminists were physically assaulted in the streets as they marched in black protesting against the attempted genocide in Lebanon.

If the historical and present day effects of western domination in the third world is not adequately explored then we can fall into a dangerous trap of concentrating solely on the oppression of women by the male society they live in. This leads to a failure to support national struggles because they do not immediately raise separate demands for women.

Women in the third world are the most oppressed section of the world's population.

They are oppressed as members of a national group or ethnic minority, as black and Asian women in South Africa (and this country), as Palestinians and as El Salvadoreans.

Their countries are exploited economically, providing cheap labour, raw materials, used as markets



We want to tell you our brothers that we did not cheat you, but the society has cheated us. The oppressors have sown seeds of oppression within us, so that you oppress us and we oppress you.

We wanted to show you our brothers when we took the child on one shoulder, the gun on the other, that we have broken with them and that you must do the same.

We wanted to cry to you our brothers that you must lift us up on our feet, lifted you, might you now to walk.

We wanted to ask you our brothers to take your part of our burden as we have taken our part of yours.

But now we demand of you our comrades not to take part any more in the game of the oppressors, not to allow yourselves to strike us when they strike you.

We demand of you that we go together on the same road and in the same step.

(Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine Journal (PFLP))

become the symbol of traditional society and its values.

This becomes especially evident when in a community like the Palestinians living inside 'Israel's' 1948 borders, the continuation of village and home life is necessary for the continuation of the Palestinian identity and daily survival.

So it is not surprising that 'feminism' can often become equated with western influence and domination.

For example, in Iran during the Shah's 'White revolution' women's veils were forcibly removed in public as a 'westernising measure' — humiliating them, forcing them back into the protection of the family.

Western feminism was equated with sexual promiscuity, another import from the west.

It is these effects on the development of women's participation in their liberation struggles that we perhaps don't pay enough attention to.

Women in countries like Vietnam, Nicaragua and Cuba have become radicalised as part of the growing anti-imperialist movement in their country.

Through this struggle and their growing involvement in politics, once the sole domain of men, they see the liberation of their country in terms of both ridding themselves of foreign domination and as a revolution within society.

In some national movements women organise as women, raise separate demands for women and fight for more participation of women, such as in El Salvador and Nicaragua.

But this very much depends on the conditions under which people are struggling.

For Palestinians, the overriding question is the liberation of Palestine. Their participation in the

leadership of the PLO is as yet token.

Their contribution to the revolution is seen in traditional mothering and supportive roles.

But there are concrete historical reasons for this 'backwardness', one being the phenomenal problems of continuing a struggle when you are stateless.

Yet younger women are becoming more and more active — many have been imprisoned and tortured. Their commitment to the struggle is immense.

The failure of the Algerian and Iranian revolutions to give equal rights to women has led to a great deal of pessimism towards the anti-imperialist movements.

While I'm not for one moment trying to minimise the oppression women face in traditional Islamic society, as explained above the biggest obstacle to their liberation (and ours) lies in imperialism and the international ruling class.

Only through the successful defeat of western domination will women be in a far better position to struggle for full equality with men in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

The right to education, access to fertility control, the reduction of the rates of infant mortality can only be achieved with the overthrow of capitalist domination.

The demands that feminists raise in the West have to be drawn out of the anti-imperialist struggle, not imposed in an artificial way isolated from the experiences and consciousness of the mass of women.

Building on our internationalist tradition in the women's movement, joining the anti-nuclear and anti-imperialist movements in the west is one major way we can support and defend women in their struggle for liberation internationally.

for western consumer goods and as testing grounds for the latest arms and drugs.

This and much more leads the whole society into poverty, starvation and military and political repression. The greatest burden of this falls on women.

Women's oppression within a society is often used to justify western domination and colonisation.

How often do we hear of the 'benefits' the west is bestowing on the 'third world', the liberalising effect it has on the situation of women, pulling them out of the traditional home — and into the sweat shops as cheap labour. Benefits such as cheap consumer goods, make-up and western films showing women as sex objects.

At the same time, the west has propped up traditional institutions such as

the family, the tribe, actively encouraged sectarian divides in order to rule and oppress with greater ease, thereby increasing the exploitation and domination of women.

Faced with an occupying foreign power, the oppressed group will also respond by a gathering in of people into what is secure and familiar — the family and religion. Women

Photo: CARLOS AUGUSTO GUARITA (Photom)

Women all out for peace

May 24th — International Women's Day for Disarmament

AFTER the success of the December 12th and 13th actions, women from Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp together with other Women's Peace Groups throughout Britain and Europe are calling for a women's day of action for peace on May 24th.

We are asking all women everywhere to join in silent vigils in town centres to simply meeting together as groups of women to discuss our feelings about nuclear weapons/show slides and videos/put on exhibitions.

To make this an effective day of action women need to be organised so that they can leave their homes for the whole of the day of demonstration and of redundancy of pay. We are asking of the various Unions to make a day of Action for Women's Peace.



Blockade of Greenham airbase

nuclear disarmament companies working at Greenham. should move resolutions in support of this.

Send for the information pack about 24 May which includes a model resolution, a list of regional contacts and a blacklist of construction

For further information about 24 May Women's Day of Action for Peace please contact:- Carmel McConnel, 16 Arundel Road, Brighton, East Sussex Tel: (0273) 604265.

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Is a women's strike possible?

ON 24 MAY women's peace groups are calling for a day of European-wide action against the missiles. They have asked that women from all occupations — paid and unwaged — strike for the day and participate in various protests and activities.

Is a call for a women's strike just a utopian pipe-dream? The experience of the 1981 women's strike in Holland is the most striking example of how effective such actions can be.

Holland has fewer women in paid work than any other West European country. But tens of thousands of women left their jobs for the day on 30 March 1981.

The strike was in response to a bill being discussed by the Dutch Parliament the following day on abortion.

The call for a general women's strike was announced on 8 March dur-

ing a celebration of International Women's Day and advertised mainly by word of mouth via a telephone chain around the country.

From 8 March strike committees were formed up and down the country. Help to aid the success of the strike came from social welfare organisations and sympathetic men who organised childcare.

The trade unions, however, refused to endorse the strike, saying that it was a 'political' issue and therefore no concern of theirs! But women inside the various unions got together to organise and support the action.

Women of all ages and backgrounds joined the strike which took on a carnival atmosphere with hundreds of local activities organised all over the country.

Although the strike couldn't be counted an economic success because it didn't bring industry or commerce to a halt, it was

very successful in other ways.

It sparked off a big debate in the trade unions about their attitude to such issues as abortion and whether they could really neatly divide off the 'political' from the economic.

And although the bill did get through — if only by a majority vote of one — the strike showed that women can organise together to fight for their demands in a big way.

A majority of women in Britain are against the siting of cruise and Trident missiles here this year. Greenham Common has captured the imagination of everyone fighting nuclear weapons, and has the direct support of many women never before active on political issues.

A general women's strike could be a big success in broadening the active involvement of women up and down the country in the campaign to stop the missiles.

more... easier... action on... labour... pushed forward... growth and develop...

Socialist Challenge 4 March 1983

Day of women's mass action against cruise!

IRELAND

Livingstone visit beats media gag

By Steve Roberts

KEN LIVINGSTONE'S visit to Belfast last weekend struck a major blow against the media black-out on serious debate on the Irish visit. At the same time Owen Carron, the Sinn Fein MP, addressed a 300 strong conference called to boost the campaign against plastic bullets.

Livingstone's visit was greeted with the predictable howls from every section of the daily press. But the message that he brought back could not be blurred over.

He reported that Sinn Fein leaders that he spoke to had indicated their willingness to negotiate a settlement with the British government, but that it was the Tories who were refusing to talk.

The GLC leader said that the basis of the discussions should be a declaration of withdrawal by the British government. The Unionist parties could not continue to veto political developments in the north.

'I believe that once the British government removes that right of veto, there will be a greater degree of political realism among the political representatives of the Unionists as to what sort of negotiations will be required for Protestants in a united Ireland.'

Instead of backing Livingstone against his press critics, Labour leader Michael Foot attacked him for not meeting working people on all sides.

Unionist

In reply Livingstone explained that the Unionist parties have every opportunity to put their case in the media and have free access to Britain. His purpose was to meet the banned Sinn Fein leaders whose point of view was not given a fair hearing. He encouraged Foot to also go to Belfast.

Another Sinn Fein leader, Owen Carron MP, addressed a conference against the use of plastic bullets in Manchester last weekend. He explained how the plastic bullets were used to terrorise the nationalist communities

in the north and political protest.

The conference also heard a moving plea from Kathleen Stewart, mother of a 13 year-old killed by a plastic bullet. Mrs. Stewart has fought a seven year campaign to clear the name of her son, accused by the British army of being a mob leader. Her case against the British government is currently before the European Court in Strasbourg.

The 300 delegates at the conference (of whom 124 came from Labour Party bodies and 84 from trade union bodies) also heard speakers from the Green Party from West Germany explain how rubber bullets were being stocked up by police for use against peace demonstrators.

Jonathon Rosenhead spoke on behalf of the joint campaign organised against plastic bullets by the National Council for Civil Liberties and the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science.

He said that the myth promoted by the army was that it was a case of either lead or plastic bullets. In fact it was the case that both were used and both could be lethal. There were now 10,000 plastic bullets being stockpiled by 19 police forces in Britain.

As Richard Balfe MEP summarising the theme of the conference put it: 'The security forces in Ireland are now practicing on the Irish people what they will practice on the working class in Britain in the future.'



Ken Livingstone



Carol Kelly was killed by a plastic bullet

Photo: Information on Ireland

Muhammad Idrish must stay!

By Bob Smith

'I WAS amazed and disturbed ... it brought home to me the dismissive, racist, anti-worker attitude of Waddington and the Tory government.' That is how Muhammad Idrish summarised the outcome of his latest attempt to appeal against his deportation.

Amazed and disturbed because after travelling to London with supporters from Birmingham and Bristol, including MPs Peter Snaipe and Arthur Palmer, his deputation lasted just 5 minutes. 'It was like talking to a brick wall', explained Peter Snaipe, 'he was convinced

of his facts to begin with.' The deputation to Tony Waddington MP, Minister of State at the Home Office, was the latest step taken by the defence campaign.

Muhammad, a Bangladeshi social worker in West Bromwich, and a member of Dr. Barnardo's

NALGO branch, was ordered to leave the country after his marriage to his British-born wife broke down. He has been resident in Britain since 1976 when he came to study in Bristol.

Since his separation however the Home Office have refused him leave to stay in the UK. Today he is one of about 250 people who face deportation every month because of the Tory immigration laws.

Unlike many, though,

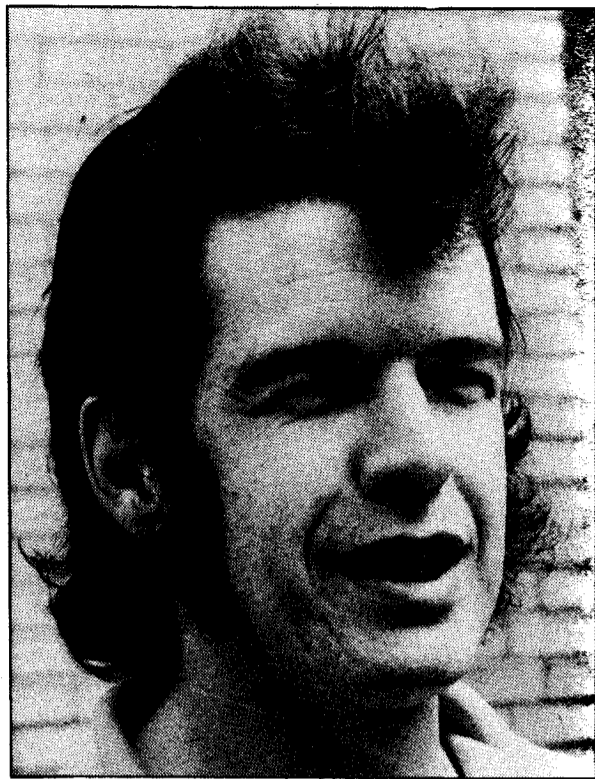
Muhammad Idrish has decided to fight and won the support of the labour movement. 21 MPs are supporting his case, as are Clare Short (prospective Labour candidate for Bangladeshi, the Bangladesh Workers Association, the Indian Workers Association, Birmingham Trades Council, and his own union NALGO.

His NALGO branch have decided to send him as their delegate to their national conference —

even if it means paying his fare from Bangladesh.

Muhammad says: 'I will not run away. I will raise the money needed to take the case to the High Court with the help of the defence campaign.'

Resolutions of support, affiliations (£5 individuals) and donations to Muhammad Idrish defence campaign, c/o Barry Lovejoy, 30 Antrobus Rd., Handsworth, Birmingham 21.



Dave Cook

Proportional representation and left advance

By Dave Cook (former national organiser of the Communist Party).

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE distorted the view of myself and the Communist Party when it argued (SC281) that 'according to EC member Dave Cook their policy is for a coalition between Labour, Liberals and SDP and Tory wets'. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The issue of proportional representation has to be set against realities of British politics which cannot be dodged. Labour's share of the vote has continually declined since 1951. In 1979 it was below 40 per cent for the third time running, including a minority of working class votes. The spectre of a centrist coalition has been placed on the agenda.

The question for the left cannot be reduced to how to scrape a Labour majority on a minority of votes. It is also how in the longer run we can build a genuine political majority for change in a leftward direction. Without the active support of a majority, Labour will be unable to implement significant social change.

At present that potential majority is made up of Labour voters, plus supporters of the Alliance parties, Nationalist parties, the Communist Party and some Tory voters and abstainers who have opted out of party politics.

The key strategic problem facing the left is how to build a political majority that includes part of the centre but is under the leadership of the left. My argument is that PR will force Labour to face up to this question sooner and more fully.

Some on the left believe that if only Labour

changes there will be a mass swing to the left. But this is a pipe dream. Only by mass politics, of industrial and extra parliamentary action, politicising trade union affiliations, and building broad and democratic movements outside the Labour Party will a majority for change be built.

Cases in point are CND and the People's March for Jobs. The 'leave it up to the councillor' sort of paternalism will not achieve this kind of mass mobilisation.

By increasing their

chances of council and parliamentary representation, PR would give new energy to a whole range of political movements. This would be a major boost to the construction of the sort of 'active' majority that must be won by a Labour government.

It would give Labour a strong incentive to broaden its concerns, and facilitate electoral collaboration between Labour and the Communist Party, ending the undemocratic imposition of one anti-Tory candidate.

Because of British political realities PR would strengthen the Alliance and Nationalist parties. If PR were introduced it would mean — on some issues and some circumstances — parliamentary collaboration by Labour with parties to its right and to its left. Such a broader based government was a feature of Popular Unity in Chile and of the present Mitterand government in France.

Simple class loyalty is proving inadequate for a Labour government committed to leftward advance. A left-led government which will go in that direction requires the kind of popular mobilisation which PR will only encourage.

EDINBURGH. Day school on the struggle in Central America.
5 March, Societies Centre, The Pleasance. 10am-4pm with speakers Jenny Pearce, Robin Cook MP, video and workshops. Food and creche available. Benefit event at same venue from 8.45pm onwards. Organised by Edinburgh Latin American Solidarity.

This week **BOB PENNINGTON** concludes his series on British social democracy, tracing its development from the formation of the Socialist League in 1932 to the rise and fall of Bevanism in the late fifties and early sixties.

The rise and fall of left social democracy

AFTER THE crushing defeat of 1931 there was a revival of the left inside the Labour Party.

But by 1932 the left had divided. The ILP at conference that year had agreed to stay in the Labour Party but insisted that the Parliamentary Labour Party change its standing orders to bring it more under the control of the whole party.

The PLP rejected this out of hand and at a special conference the ILP voted by 241 votes to 142 to disaffiliate. This made sure that it lost its influence on the majority who stayed inside the LP. Furthermore it sent it into a permanent decline. From a total of 16,773 members in 1932 it was reduced by 1935 to 4,392.

The mantle of the new left inside the Labour Party fell on the Socialist League which held its inaugural meeting on the eve of the 1932 Labour Party conference. Its executive consisted of all shades of left opinion from those hardly left of centre, right across to people sympathetic to the Communist Party.

Its members included people like Stafford Cripps, who in typical British social democratic manner was able to combine austere Christianity, with left reformism and a belief in a constitutional monarchy.

Others on the executive included Nye Bevan, Clement Attlee, Ellen Wilkinson, and distinguished academics like Harold Laski and G.D.H. Cole. It was under the influence and prodding of the Socialist League that Labour issued *For Socialism and Peace*, its third programme and its most radical.

Attlee

This called for 'nothing short of immediate public ownership ...' of concerns like 'banking and credit, transport, water, coal, electricity, gas, agriculture, iron, steel, shipping, engineering, textiles, chemicals, insurance ...'

Clement Attlee, the candidate supported by the left and the Socialist League, was elected leader of the Labour Party in 1935 and optimists saw this as the green light for further left advances. However the new 'left' leader had taken account of the revival of Labour's fortunes at the 1935 election where it had polled 8,325,260 votes and won 154 seats.

The Labour leadership could see power at Westminster beckoning once again, but only if the party stayed on the path of moderation.

The Labour Party therefore remained officially aloof from the anti-fascist mobilisations of the thirties. Despite Labour's support for the Spanish Republican government the National Council of Labour supported non-intervention in the Spanish civil war. This meant starving the anti-fascist forces of arms.

Attempts by the Socialist League to launch a unity campaign with the Communist Party were

stamped on by the Labour executive who in 1937 disaffiliated the League and two months later declared membership of the League 'to be incompatible with membership of the Labour Party'.

When the Socialist League dissolved itself under these threats from the right, Bevan, Cripps and Strauss founded *Tribune* as the new voice of the left. Despite its odd salvos from the side lines *Tribune* did not organise against Attlee's steady drift to the right. In fact it called for a new Lib-Lab pact. A policy which played right into the hands of the right.

War

In September 1939 Britain declared war on Germany. In May 1940 Labour entered into Churchill's coalition government and Attlee was made deputy premier and the Labour Party shut up shop having concluded an electoral alliance with the Tories.

In the war years only Bevan of the old left leaders attacked the policies of the coalition government. The others, without exception, prosecuted the 'patriotic' war and voted for reactionary measures at home and abroad.

But the war years began to stir a deep radicalisation within the mass of the people. Unemployment disappeared, and better still labour was short. The promises of a 'better world' made by capitalist politicians invoked a response for reforms and social improvements on a mass scale and when the coalition ended in 1945 the country went to the polls.

The result stunned the Tories, the media, and many of the Labour leaders. The Labour Party got 12 million votes and had 389 MPs. Labour now held office and had a clear majority.

Welfare

The new Labour government nationalised the Bank of England, cable and wireless, coal mining, railways, canals, road haulage, British Airways, gas, electricity and steel. Labour also launched the welfare state with the NHS as its greatest seen achievement.

However what had happened was that Labour had nationalised those industries that were necessary to the capitalist economy, but in which the capitalists considered were not profitable enough for investment. Even the war time controls on prices and profits, the controls of the use of raw materials and the monopoly of foreign trade by the state, all



Attlee acknowledges Labour's landslide victory in 1945

measures which were vital for any serious anti-capitalist government intending to change society, were abolished under the pressure of big business.

Neither did the left inside the Labour fight for a more radical programme. What opposition there was to Attlee came from the MPs who were not strictly speaking left social democrats, but were fellow travellers of the Communist Party and their opposition was mainly on issues which affected relations with the USSR.

Won

In 1950 Labour won the election but its reforming zeal had run out of steam. Any other measures meant taking on the capitalists whilst the alliance with the USA and the forces of anti-communism could only be financed by reductions in public spending claimed the right wing.

When Gaitskell, Labour's Chancellor im-

posed charges on the NHS, Nye Bevan, Harold Wilson and others took up an attack on the leadership.

Bevanism had been born. Its foundations lay in the inability and refusal of the right wing to carry out a reformist social democratic programme. Bevan's base lay in the constituency parties and amongst a limited number of union activists.

New

The new Labour leaders, people like Gaitskell, Roy Jenkins and Tony Crossland in alliance with the right-wing union bureaucrats closed ranks against the Bevanites.

By the late fifties the Bevanites had got a new influx of support. The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament was experiencing a massive growth and Bevanites like Michael Foot were prominent in its activities.

The left inside the LP got a new fillip and

defeated Gaitskell's attempt to delete Clause Four from the Party Constitution. Despite Bevan who as Labour's shadow foreign secretary had reneged on supporting unilateralism at the 1957 Labour Party Conference, by 1960 the Labour Party Conference was voting for unilateralism.

Horrified

The victory was short lived. The right horrified at the decision under Gaitskell's leadership said they 'would fight, and fight again' to reverse the decision. The left, unable to capitalise on their victory, failed to mobilise on a big enough scale in the party and the unions and one year later the Conference reversed the decision.

Bevanism and its continuation, the Tribune group of MPs, had passed their peak and the left was in decline from which it would not recover until the emergence of Bennism in the late seventies.



Wilson and Bevan after resigning from Cabinet over health charges

Reading List

For those wishing to read up the history of the Labour Party in Britain the author recommends the following books:

Parliamentary Socialism, by Ralph Milliband, published by Merlin Press. Easily the best Marxist analysis and has the advantage of being eminently readable. *The Labour Party and the Struggle for Socialism* published by Cambridge University Press, by David Coates, useful short guide, but suffers from ultra-leftism. *The Labour Party, Myth and Reality* by Duncan Hallas, a Socialist Workers pamphlet, is a concise history with good facts but sectarian conclusions.

Conclusion

IN THIS series we have examined Germany, French, Spanish and British social democracy, showing how they have each reacted to the big events of history.

German social democracy failed to mount any serious challenge to the rise of German fascism and from being the biggest workers' party in Europe outside of the Soviet Union it was swept aside by Hitler.

In France under Leon Blum the French social democracy failed to lead the mass radicalisations of the workers in 1936 to a decisive victory. The price for this was the advance of Hitlerism in Germany which led to the collapse of France in May 1940.

In Spain despite a radical programme and having the support of millions of workers and peasants seeking social change, its policies of accommodation to the capitalist politicians put the kiss of death on the Republican cause.

In Britain despite two pre-war and six post-war governments the capitalist class still remains firmly entrenched and only last

week, after four years of a reactionary Tory government, we had the humiliation of Bermondsey.

Yet these people whose record of defeat remains unblemished and consistent, denounce marxists as utopians and romantics. They contrast their practical common sense to the abstract theory of the marxists.

But it is only marxism, with its theory of the class war and its understanding of the capitalist state that can provide practical solutions to the problems of the working class.

That is why the fight to win the left reformist workers to the programme of marxism is so important. Today in Britain that fight has to be waged inside the unions and the Labour Party.

If such a struggle is not successful the social democratic leaders will continue to mislead and to sell out to the establishment.

Coming on March 16th -

By Alan Freeman
(editor of Socialist Action)

A new newspaper - Socialist Action - is coming out next month.

It comes into a Britain which, perhaps five years ago, many would not have believed possible. A Britain of mass unemployment, growing militarism and economic failure.

It is a Britain whose labour movement is on the defensive. Labour is lagging in the polls, its leadership attacking its policies and membership, its left divided and unsure.

We aim to revive a dormant tradition in the labour movement, in the hope that it can help resolve this crisis and reunite the left: the tradition of Tom Mann, John Maclean, James Connolly and Sylvia Pankhurst. We see this as a tradition of militant struggle by

the oppressed, without concession or compromise to the establishment or its wealthy backers, coupled to an appeal to the labour movement to take on its shoulders the construction of a new society.

We aim to take our place beside those at the forefront of the battle against the Tories. We will join the fight to stop cruise in 1983, to defend jobs and social services, for women's and black people's rights, to defeat Thatcher and ensure a Labour victory.

Success

We believe, however, that the best chance of success does not lie with compromise and capitulation to the Labour Party's right wing and their counterparts in the unions. Nor do we accept the drive towards coalition implicit

in the present orientation of the *Morning Star* and *Marxism Today*. We think success will come through the combination of mass action with a battle for accountability in the unions and the Labour Party.

We do not accept the suicidal equation that argues Labour can only defeat the Tories by surrendering its members and its policies to the undemocratic cabal now in control of the leadership.

We say the road to victory and to unity was abandoned with the 'truce' of Bishops Stortford - a truce which only one side has observed. Unless the right wing is resisted - in both the Labour Party and the unions - it will lead us to defeat. An alternative exists: for the Labour Party to unite behind those leading the fight against Thatcher: the water workers, the

Greenham Common women, black people fighting for their rights.

We welcome *Briefing* and *Socialist Organiser's* call for a socialist campaign for a Labour Victory. We will seek with them to build a united coalition of Labour Party and trade union bodies, to campaign for a manifesto which includes Labour's socialist policies adopted by conference - above all unilateralism and a rejection of incomes policy - and for an alliance with extraparliamentary action which offers the best prospect for putting these policies into practice.

Socialist Action will be an open paper. It will not be the house journal of a select few. It will be open to contributions from everyone fighting Thatcher and Reagan. We do not see ourselves as a rival to others on the left, but as the partisan

A Socialist ACTION

of a particular point of view which deserves a voice.

We welcome *Tribune's* new editorial policy under Chris Mullin's editorship, and the invaluable work of *Briefing* and *Labour Herald*. We look forward to collaboration with these papers and have agreed to provide members of *Briefing's* collective with a weekly column.

We differ with the approach which led *Militant* to refuse to join the above papers in calling for the British Fleet to withdraw from the South

Atlantic. But this disagreement takes second place to a united defence of their absolute right to remain in the Labour Party.

Of what will we be partisan? Of the interests of working people the world over. We intend to battle against imperialism wherever it surfaces because we believe that 'No nation that enslaves another can ever itself be free'; we believe that the unity of working people is a higher aim than national unity.

We stand beside the liberation movements of

the third world as strongly as Solidarnosc, and its movement for workers' self-management which we regard as the best model yet proposed for the type of socialism we should seek to build.

We think that the journal closest to the views we shall be advocating is *Socialist Organiser*, particularly since it amended its previous editorial position on the Falklands war. With patient work and discussion we hope that the efforts of *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Organiser* can be united.

Why we propose unity to the WSL The Socialist League and revolutionary unity

AT its December conference the Socialist League, British section of the Fourth International, adopted a proposal to approach the Workers Socialist League for talks aimed at the fusion of the organisations. Ray Brown, a member of the Socialist League's political committee here explains to Socialist Challenge the reasons for this proposal.

AS we approach the general election the Labour movement is in ferment. The result of the Bermondsey by-election will rapidly accelerate the right wing offensive inside the Labour Party. This offensive which has been deepening since the 1981 Labour Party conference

has opened up important divisions inside the left itself as we saw at the CLPD conference.

As the right wing bureaucracy tries to overturn left wing policy decisions and impose Healey as leader, and with its other arm sabotages industrial action, some peo-

ple on the left want to fight back and others argue that a fight should be abandoned in the name of 'unity'.

The divisions inside the left which have opened up don't divide revolutionaries from reformists, but they do define the necessary ground for united action of the left against the right wing bureaucracy and the Tories.

For example, revolutionary supporters of Socialist Challenge and Socialist Organiser have fought alongside supporters of *Tribune* and *Labour Herald* against the witch-hunt and against Foot's attempts to fudge the manifesto. In the trade unions revolutionaries have fought alongside those supporters of the Labour left prepared to organise in support of struggles like the train drivers and water workers against the Tories. Equally we have campaigned with the new Broad Lefts when they have mounted real challenges to the right-wing bureaucrats even when simply at the level of elections like John Aitken's presidential campaign in the EETPU.

Action

In these kinds of united action we have often worked with supporters of the *Militant* despite the generally ultra-sectarian policies of this newspaper.

In many of these struggles, in the Labour Party, unions and CND, revolutionaries have been able to play an important leading role. In particular the supporters of Socialist Challenge and Socialist Organiser have often worked closely together.

Today these efforts need to be strengthened through a campaign of the whole left to challenge the right in the run-up to a general election.

For this reason the Socialist League gives its

fullest support to the calls from both Socialist Challenge and Socialist Organiser for a socialist campaign for a labour victory.

We believe this campaign should base itself on linking the left in the Labour Party to the mass movements and industrial struggles which alone can defeat the Tories' offensive. But inextricably linked into this recomposition of the left as a whole there is also a process of political re-alignment of the organisations outside the Labour Party.

Treachery

The Communist Party is moving more and more openly to a popular frontist type line - and at the same time attacks the Labour left for 'ultra-leftism' when it criticises the compromises and treachery of Michael Foot.

But the biggest test for the far left in recent years has been the Malvinas war. The *Militant* tendency was to the right of Tony Benn, refusing to even campaign for the withdrawal of the British fleet. Their chauvinist policy was a further step on the road of degeneration into right-wing adaptation to British imperialism combined with ludicrous sectarianism to every movement forward of the labour movement such as CND or the Bennite left.

Passed

The only revolutionary organisations that can be said to have passed that test are the Socialist Workers' Party, the Workers' Socialist League and the Socialist League. All took a defeatist position. That is to say all campaigned for the labour movement to recognise that the defeat of the British government was the lesser evil, that the labour movement should take advantage of the war

to bring down Thatcher.

After initial hesitations, including calling for self-determination for the islanders, the WSL in addition took the position that Argentina's claim to the Malvinas was just and therefore that revolutionaries must support a victory for Argentina. The SL fully agrees with this position. In fact we think it marked a major convergence between our organisations against the tide of adaptation to British imperialism in the labour movement.

It was in this context that our December conference discussed the proposal for fusion with the WSL. We have long held the view that many of the divisions between revolutionaries are unnecessary products of a long history of sectarianism on the British Marxist left. We have long held that the political complement of this sectarianism has been a tendency to politically adapt to British imperialism. The *Militant* is a startling confirmation of this view.

United

We have long held the position that the WSL and British section of the Fourth International should be united in a single organisation. Today, we are convinced that this is a burning practical question for the supporters of both organisations. Furthermore, the practical similarity of our organisations' perspectives makes this all the more possible to test out in a process of joint work and discussion nationally, and in every single area where our forces are active.

In our opinion such a process will attract literally hundreds of, at present, unattached, socialists to the fused organisation. This in turn would strengthen the forces seeking to unite the left-wing of the trade union and Labour Party in a com-

mon struggle against the right-wing bureaucracy, which is the chief obstacle to the fight against the Tories.

For all of these reasons we think our proposal must be considered seriously by the WSL and by all socialists.



Support mounts for El Salvador conference

THE 14 MAY labour movement conference on El Salvador is gathering support. The January issue of the miners' journal printed a back page article announcing two delegates from the national executive will attend.

National union backing also comes from transport union TGWU, civil service union CPSA, print union SOGAT, telecommunications union POEU, public service union NUPE as well as the Sheet Metal and Fire Brigade unions.

Now local and regional trade union and Labour Party branches are sending for delegate credentials. With over two months still to go the conference organisers, the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, are confident they will get an impressive turnout.

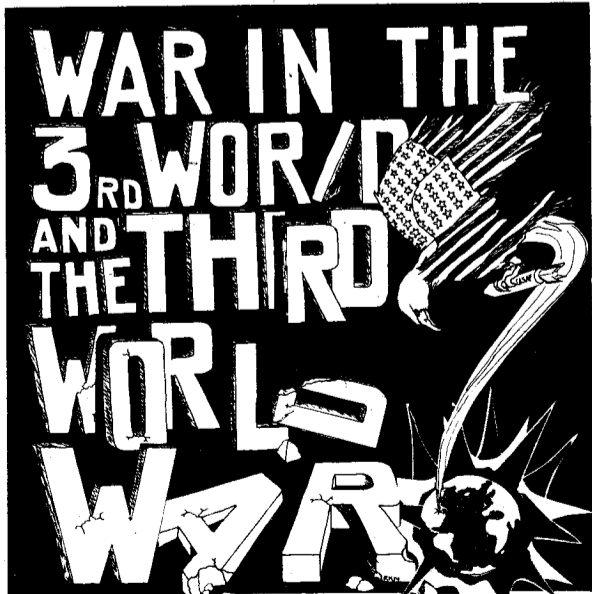
The May conference gives trade union and Labour Party members a chance to stop Reagan and Thatcher's aggression in

the region and to fight for a Labour Government which will reverse these policies.

Sessions are organised to look at practical solidarity and aid for the workers and peasants of El Salvador.

Effort is needed to get delegates from labour movement organisations. The El Salvador Solidarity Campaign can send speakers, video and film for branch and workplace meetings.

Labour Movement conference on El Salvador. County Hall, London, 14 May 1983 10-5pm. For information write to ELSOC, TU Commission, 29 Islington Park St. London N1.



This conference aims to examine the links between liberation struggles in Central America, the Middle East and Southern Africa and the European peace movements. Speakers include journalist Fred Halliday and FDR representative in Britain Salvador Moncada. Organised by Palestine Solidarity, Central America Solidarity and Anti-Apartheid. 10-6pm, Friends Centre, Ship St., Brighton.

Socialist Challenge

By Nick Howitt and Barry Wilkins

FOLLOWING its decision to close Lewis Merthyr pit the Coal Board has once again come up against the militancy of the South Wales miners.

At the end of last week, miners in a pithead ballot decided to go on indefinite strike from Monday 28 February to save the colliery.

Just over 55 per cent of miners voted for the action. The real percentage of support is however substantially higher. Eight of the most militant pits were already on strike, so balloting was more difficult for many miners who have to travel long distances to these pits.

Action began on Monday 21 February when 28 miners started a stay down strike at Lewis Merthyr. They included Des Dutfield, who is lodge secretary and also miners union area vice-president. The strike rapidly spread to seven more pits — Mardy, Tower and Penrhawceiber on Tuesday and Trelewis Drift, St Johns, Coedely and Britannia on Wednesday.

An area conference on Wednesday decided to hold a pithead ballot on Thursday with the area executive recommending a vote for strike action.

Lobby

However, delegates from militant pits and a lobby of Lewis Merthyr miners bitterly criticised the area leadership for not calling an immediate all out strike.

They pointed out that the strike mandate from December 1982 still stood. Over eighty per cent of South Wales miners voted

then for all out strike from the 17 January 1983 to force the coal board into £400 million investment and new recruitment in the coal field.

The strike plan was shelved in January on the understanding that talks with the Coal Board would produce positive results. But in fact the opposite has happened, and the miners are now eager to renege the fight.

Welcome

On Thursday, the day of the ballot and their fourth day underground, the 28 Lewis Merthyr miners came to the surface. One hundred and fifty striking miners from neighbouring pits, including area executive member Dai Davies gave them a tumultuous welcome. Cheers greeted Des Dutfield when he spoke about the fight to save the pit.

'The situation is far from hopeless. The seam we've been working will last for years. Over 500 jobs here have to be safeguarded. We're not prepared to let them get away with it and let other jobs follow.

Extreme

'If the situation goes unopposed, South Wales will become the industrial wasteland the Tories want. This has been an extreme action in an extreme situa-

tion. It has been well worth it and we are fully confident that support will be shown in other pits.'

Closure

The Coal Board classifies over half of the South Wales pits as 'short life'. Their closure programme threatens the industrial life blood of many valley communities. If they can get away with closing Lewis Merthyr pit, others will follow. One such threatened colliery is Britannia.

The lodge secretary Tom Bowden spoke to Socialist Challenge: 'No bloody way will we let them close these pits. At meetings at every shift here the response was immediate. We won't stop the strike until all the closures are withdrawn. We'll move into other coalfields to meet, discuss and picket with this message — "if you can't help us today, god help you tomorrow". The water workers have proved this government can be nudged out of the way. We'll be calling on support from railworkers, seamen, dockers and drivers to stop all movement of coal.'

Serious

The South Wales miners are very serious about this strike. They realise that the future of the coalfield is at stake. Ivor England, Mardy lodge secretary told Socialist Challenge that his lodge voted 90 per cent to support the strike. 'We had a lodge meeting on Saturday to organise getting out to other mining areas. We've already booked coaches and three hundred miners from this pit are ready for picketing.

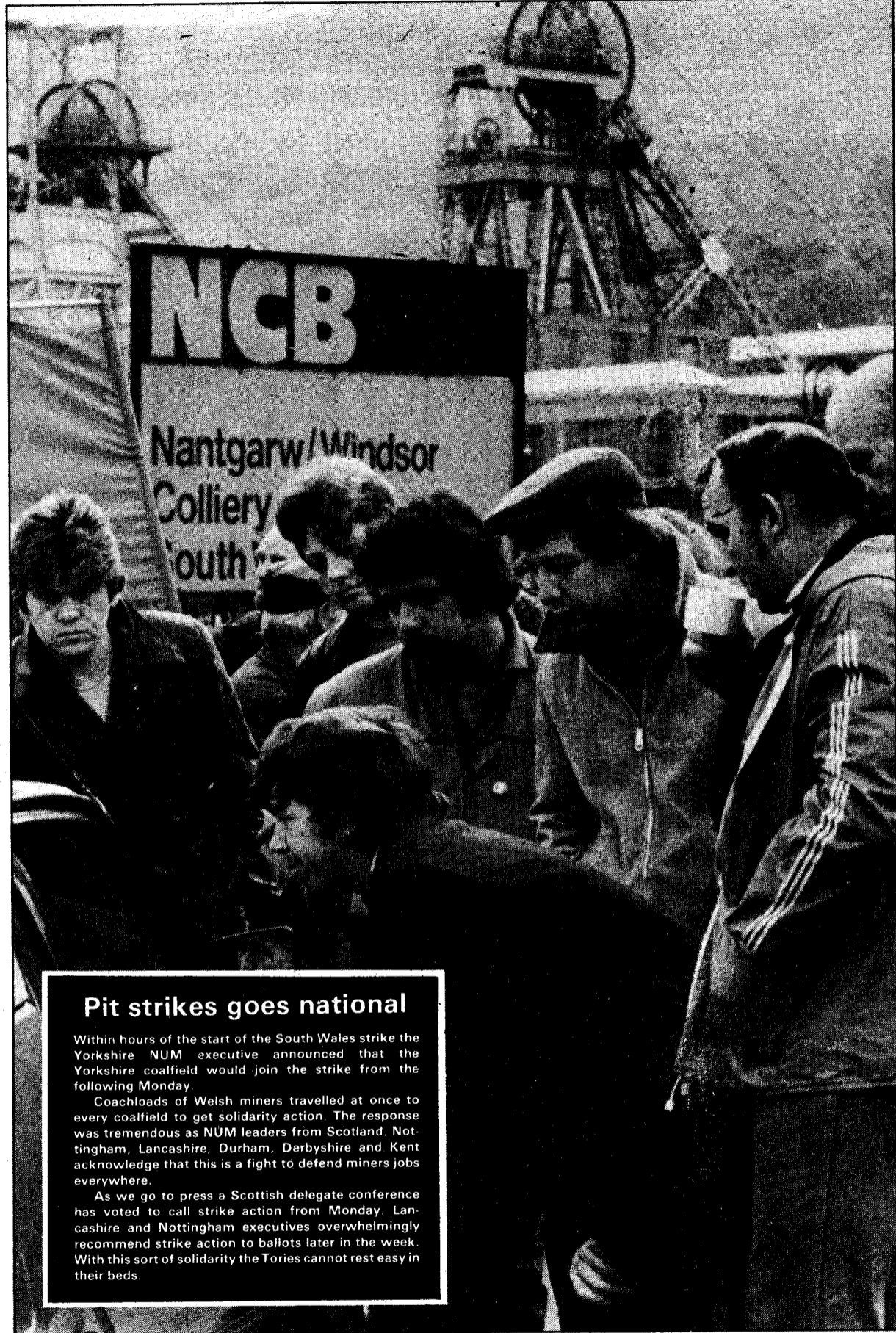
'We've got to extend this strike to North Wales, Kent, Yorkshire and other areas to make it a national strike. I am confident that we will get a good reception from miners and other workers who want to see a fight against Thatcher's policies.'

Long

At Trelewis Drift pit the vote for strike action was 89 per cent. Lodge committee member Paul O'Sullivan told Socialist Challenge: 'This could be a long strike because the Tories think they can beat us. Therefore it is vital to escalate this to a national stoppage. The prospects for this are good. It's tremendous that we've already received support from Kinneil in Scotland.

'We'll be spreading this strike as from Monday. The rank and file have forced a reluctant leadership into this strike. Now we must force the leadership to turn this into a strike beyond just resisting pit closures and for guarantees on the investment and recruitment

South Wales miners launch fight AGAINST CLOSURES!



Pit strikes goes national

Within hours of the start of the South Wales strike the Yorkshire NUM executive announced that the Yorkshire coalfield would join the strike from the following Monday.

Coachloads of Welsh miners travelled at once to every coalfield to get solidarity action. The response was tremendous as NUM leaders from Scotland, Nottingham, Lancashire, Durham, Derbyshire and Kent acknowledge that this is a fight to defend miners jobs everywhere.

As we go to press a Scottish delegate conference has voted to call strike action from Monday. Lancashire and Nottingham executives overwhelmingly recommend strike action to ballots later in the week. With this sort of solidarity the Tories cannot rest easy in their beds.

In February 1981 Welsh miners led the way with strike action against Tory plans for pit closures. The government made a hasty and humiliating retreat. Two years later Thatcher and her pals at the Coal Board try it on again. This time too, Welsh miners strike to defend their jobs and call for national backing.

we need for a secure future.'

Vigorous

The South Wales miners can roll back the Tory offensive over closures and redundancies in the coal industry. The vigorous lead from the rank and file has turned around the situation in January, when a majority on the area executive retreated from the fight. Under this pressure, a reluctant executive has been compelled to support the strike.

South Wales miners are confident that the strike can be spread nationally. It can and must become an offensive battle for the investment and recruitment the industry needs. With support already promised from rail, transport and seamen's unions and the Wales TUC to halt the movement of all coal, this is a battle that can be won.

The Thatcher Government was dealt a damaging blow by the waterworkers. Now the miners can go for the knockout.

Miners Occupy Coal Board offices

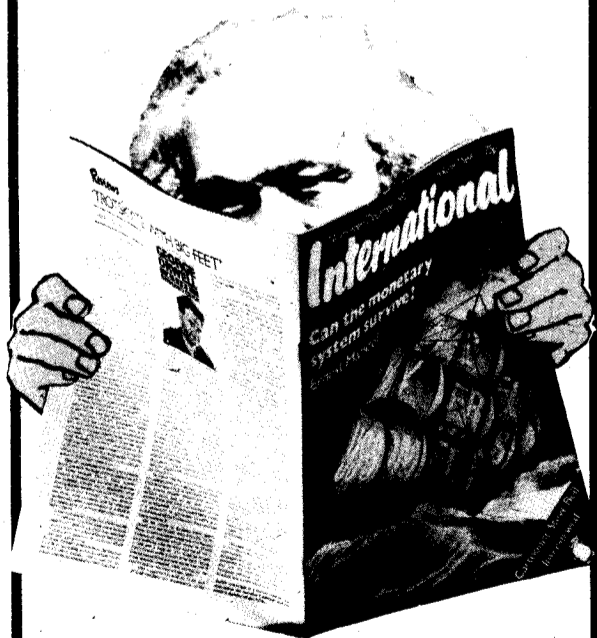
ON MONDAY, the first day of the strike, over 400 miners from many different pits occupied for six hours the South Wales NCB headquarters in Cardiff.

They were in jubilant spirit. Management offices were turned into

lodge committee rooms and signs such as 'Tower Lodge' appeared on the doors, indicating which miners were in occupation.

Terry Davies, lodge secretary of Trelewis Drift told Socialist Challenge: 'With this occupation we will show the Coal Board that we mean to fight this strike to the finish.'

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