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Paper of the Socialist Organiser Alliance No.99 SEPTEMBER 9 1982 (Claimants and strikers 10p) 25p

ALLOW OUT SEP 22!



THE TUC this Thursday is likely to stop short of calling a 24 hour general strike in support of the health workers on September 22.

But the official support is strong enough for local unions and the organising to make September 22 a general strike.

In Scotland, a conference of 1000 union officials and shop stewards, on September 3, endorsed a recommendation from the Scottish TUC general council for a 24 hour general strike.

NUM president Arthur Scargill has called for a 24 hour general strike by mineworkers. The National Union of Seamen is likely to call for a 24 hour all-out strike, and so are the print unions.

The TGWU has directed its members to give 'maximum possible support', explaining that a 24 hour strike is difficult where it has members in continuous process industries. Liverpool docks stewards are call-

ing for a one-day strike.

The civil service unions are proposing 'at least one hour' of strikes. Even right-wing unions like the EETPU, the GMWU, and the ISTC are suggesting 'support' and 'selective action'. The UCW has called for 'up to 4 hours' of action.

To pull this action together into a real general strike, going beyond the hesitations of the union leaders, what we need are local labour movement committees which will leaflet, agitate, and organise.

Islington, London, already has a Health Workers' Pay Campaign, which organised a local day of solidarity strikes on September 3. Coventry NHS shop stewards have called a local trade unionists' conference on September 14.

Local Trades Councils, Labour Parties, and trade unions, should get organising now.

All out September 22!

PRESS GANG

Patrick Spilling is on holiday.
Press Gang this week is by
Andrew Hornung.

I was on the ferry coming back from the Continent on Friday September 3rd. Cut off from news of Britain in the torrid sunspots of Tuscany, I scoured the Italian press for articles about Britain containing an Italian word I could understand.

The going was tough, as it seems that the phrase, 'Volare, nel blu dipinto di blu' is no longer a major part of current Italian usage. The people I was talking to hadn't even heard of Perry Como!

The only news I could find was about some 'invasione' - which I take to be an 'invasion' - of 'volpones'.

Before you go scampering off for your never-opened-but-bought-with-good-intentions copy of 'Parliano Italiano', I'll tell you what this refers to: an invasion of foxes.

'Who were these foxes?' I wondered on that Friday, hoping the papers would tell me. The effort I took to choose the most informative of the tabloids on sale

was exhausting.

The 'Daily Express' headline was THE STING. The 'Sun' headline was THE STING; the 'Daily Star' headline was THE STING too. It sounded more like an invasion of wasps at this point. So I chose the 'Mirror' - same story but it didn't have the words THE STING written across the top.

According to the Mirror, police in Oxford had arrested 286 people for fiddling the dole. They had trapped these claimants by setting up a fake DHSS office. Foxy people these police!

Those arrested, said the article, had been claiming full money which includes payment for accommodation, while in fact many of them were homeless.

By the next day, the numbers charged were published: 173. Obviously, over a hundred people were arrested and detained without any reason. One was a lad who hadn't actually made a claim; he'd just been looking for a

friend.

The Oxford and District Solicitors' Association complained about the 'suspension of protection for defendants.'

The elaborate plan - likened in every paper to the fake betting shop in a Paul Newman-Robert Redford film that I suppose Oxford's Chief Inspector Plod had recently viewed on his video - netted such important criminal elements as vagrants who were 'living rough'.

Perhaps that's why the force mobilised for this important task was, according to the Oxford Mail, the Bicester-based Serious Crimes Squad.

Since then it has been reported - with rather less fanfare than either the original story, or the story about the invasion of foxes - that organisations concerned with the plight of the homeless have been trying for years to get the police to take action against the landlords who are running the claims racket.

In fact, the Oxford Mail



reports that police asked them not to run a story on homelessness for fear the plan to arrest the claimants would fall through.

According to the press, however, the police have not arrested any landlords.

No doubt when that happens, it'll be front page news again. No doubt all the tabloids will pick up the story about the plight of the homeless and unemployed and headline that too.

They'll couple that with detailed information about

the £500,000,000 worth of benefits that are not claimed.

Maybe they'll include details of what happened to the DHSS officials that refused benefit to 680 blacks in Oldham, in 676 cases without adequate grounds.

I look forward to the day. Though I fear that if there's an invasion of foxes that day, the homeless will be kept out of the headlines again.

Move this motion:

This union branch/Labour Party condemns the wholesale harassment of homeless and unemployed people which arose from the mass arrests of claimants at Oxford DHSS on Thursday September 2.

Such indiscriminate arrests, including well over 100 claimants known to be innocent, can only serve to intimidate the unemployed and further deter people in desperate need from claiming benefit to which they are entitled.

The fact that this - the biggest ever operation by Thames Valley Police - was aimed at the poor and the homeless is stark evidence of class bias at a time when big business tax evasion is known to flourish unscathed on a huge scale.

This branch therefore agrees to affiliate to the Oxford Defence Campaign, to donate ... to its funds, and to seek means of working locally in conjunction with other labour movement bodies in order to build and strengthen organisations to unite and represent the unemployed.

Stop the talks with Tories!

A LOT of attention has rightly been paid to the police's violent arrest of Ron Brown (Labour MP for Leith) at the demonstration in Glasgow (September 1) outside the Scottish TUC's meeting with Thatcher. But what were the STUC General Council members doing at the meeting?

Why were the leaders of the Scottish trade union movement meeting the CBI and the head of the Tory government in the plush surroundings of Glasgow's 'Holiday Inn'?

Do they believe that an appeal to 'Reason' will make the capitalists see the merits of a socialist system of production? Or is the STUC General Council just a shower of spineless bureaucrats who haven't got the stomach for a head-on confrontation with the Tories?

What happened at the STUC-CBI-Thatcher get-together was entirely predictable. The STUC produced all sorts of figures showing the disastrous levels of unemployment in Scotland (as if it were news). Thatcher replied by saying that nothing could be done about such unemployment, that there was no money to pay the NHS workers, and that this was all very unfortunate but necessary if the British (capitalist) economy was to become competitive again. End of meeting.

The STUC should have boycotted the meeting, just as they should be withdrawing from all the bi-partite bodies in which STUC bureaucrats collaborate with CBI and government representatives. May Brown's comment after her husband's arrest indicated a much better

Stan Crooke reports on Thatcher's visit to Scotland - and the STUC's meeting with her

line for the STUC to pursue: 'I would like to get my hands around her throat.'

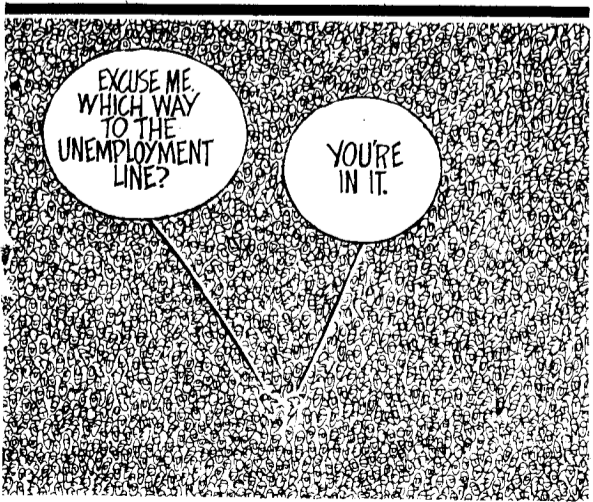
But to expect a fighting lead from the STUC is like expecting pigs to fly. Many of the union bureaucrats, including the STUC deputy general secretary John Henry, came to the meeting fresh from a 'fraternal' visit to the Soviet 'TUC'.

In the course of the delegation, Henry praised the 'major part' played by the Soviet 'trade unions' (which are not trade unions at all, but effectively prisons for the workers trapped in them) in decision-making and economic planning and control in the Soviet Union.

Another member of the delegation spoke of the 'atmosphere of confidence so obvious in Soviet factories' which reminded him of similar feelings in some Scottish factories (Clyde-bridge? Parkhead? Linwood? Carron? ...?) and leading Glasgow Labour Party member Agnes Maclean spoke of the 'great part' played by Soviet women in the factories and public life!

The STUC bureaucrats are therefore at least consistent. Just as they are ready to talk to the Kremlin bureaucrats whose Polish puppets have workers gunned down on the streets, so too they are equally prepared to talk to the head of a government which is massaging jobs in Scotland, and Britain as a whole.

Collaboration with the Stalinist bureaucracy on the one hand, and cap-in-hand pleading with the Tories on the other - these two aspects constitute the essence of the STUC General Council's politics.



'I thought it was a joke, and laughed'

16-year old Ian Bush told Socialist Organiser:

'I CAME back from Cornwall on the Monday. On the Wednesday I was told by the UB office to pick up my Giro from the old school building.

I signed in and they told me to go to a different building 'out of that door'. I was new to Oxford, so I didn't know where I was, but a couple of guys posing as workmen said to go on out of the door, where they are handing out Giros.

As soon as I walked out, two policemen jumped onto me and said 'You're under arrest'. They took me into the building and talked about charging me with fraud and deception. I thought it was a joke - and laughed.

But then they took my photograph, made me empty my pockets, took my shoelaces, earring, pendant and my watch.

I was number 35. They stuck me in this room. Fifteen minutes later there were 60 people there, with no ventilation. I asked to go to the toilet - they said 'We'll see what we can do' - and made me wait 2 hours.

I was in the room about 6 hours before I was taken to another room and then in to the CID. The CID bloke offered me a fag and told me to co-operate. He threatened me with violence. Then he realised I was a juvenile.

They asked my parents' name, address and phone number, and then rang them up, despite my objections.

After another 15 minutes or so they took me back downstairs and said they weren't pressing charges, they had nothing on me.

I said I could have told them that in the morning.

I eventually read my rights listed on a notice on the wall while my stuff was being given back to me. I was denied a solicitor

'They knew I was innocent'

Tony Kelleher

'I'VE lived in Oxford for 2 years, but broke up with my wife 2 months ago. I slept rough for 5-6 weeks until someone suggested I claim from DHSS.

They told me if I got a letter from a bed and breakfast place it would cover me for a claim. They referred me verbally to 137, Ifley Road.

So that's what I did. I got

or a social worker.

I came down to Oxford because Derby careers centre told me there's no job possible until the end of September because I packed in a government

scheme. It seemed like there's more jobs going down here.

But now I'm homeless, penniless and bloody hungry.'

Now I will stay

Les McLean

'AT 7 am those of us staying at 137 Ifley Road had a police officer in plain clothes come round knocking on all doors, checking who was there.

He claimed he was from the anti-Terror Squad, asking where we were between two dates in July.

Nothing else happened, so I came down to this school to sign on. I got my Giro and was told to go out of the door at the back. As I came out policemen grabbed me on either side, and marched me off.

I was given a number - 48 - and led over to a bloke with a Polaroid camera, and photographed holding up my name and number. We were taken to a room, 20 foot square, with 60 people - 59 men and 1 woman.

For 2 hours we asked questions - and then I saw three notices on the wall about my rights: you couldn't see them until you were going out.

My mother had heard about what was happening in Oxford and was worried until I phoned her up.

I've been in two minds about whether to stay in Oxford: but I think I will - because all this is obviously intended to drive us out of town.'

MADE HOMELESS

PAUL BRISTOW

'I'VE been made homeless by all this. I didn't collect my money on Thursday, though I signed on. And I couldn't get it after I was released by the police.

I went back to the DHSS - they sent me to the dole office - and by then it was 5.30 and too late.

This has left me on the streets since Thursday. I have not received my voucher for £42 to pay my rent. I haven't eaten for days. They won't give me

an appointment until Wednesday. But now I've got no fixed address - so I can only claim £18.50. Where can I stay on that?'

For more details of the Defence Campaign, write to OUWCU, 44b Princes Street, Oxford.

DHSS

Oxford snoop a pattern for the future?

HOW ARE we to explain the mammoth police exercise — 'Operation Major' — carried out against claimants in Oxford last week?

The operation was the biggest ever carried out by Thames Valley Police. It involved the setting up of a dummy DHSS office in a disused school premises — with civil service militants being threatened under the Official Secrets Act if they leaked information.

A top-secret police team [which according to the Oxford Mail used ex-directory telephones, avoiding the Oxford police switchboard, and a room with a separate entrance to the police station] worked for seven weeks to plot and plan the swoop. Hundreds of police were drafted in to carry out the arrests, cope with security, and follow up the paperwork.

A whole wing of Oxford prison was cleared in readiness for an influx.

The result was a highly publicised coup in which hundreds of innocent homeless and poverty-stricken people were subjected to harassment and vilification in the press and mass media.

Last week's round-up of so many people indiscriminately branded as 'scroungers' has enabled the press bosses to put a feather in the helmets of the Thames Valley police — who have recently suffered a particularly bad press, following TV exposure of their brutal methods of dealing with the victims of rape.

For the Tory press, brutal methods in handling the victims of Thatcher's crimes — mass unemployment and homelessness — are a cause for praise rather

than censure.

Meanwhile a crackdown on the growing body of homeless people on Oxford's streets, and a lash of the whip hitting also many youth and older workers who have travelled to the town from less prosperous areas in the hope of finding work, can be expected to drive some out of the town and deter others from coming.

Oxford is also a town with a politically active labour movement, and a record of support for civil service and other unions for the activities of the Claimants' Union and the struggles of the unemployed.

If the police and DHSS chiefs can successfully mount an attack on this scale in Oxford, they will hope to be able to step up intimidation on similar lines elsewhere in the country.

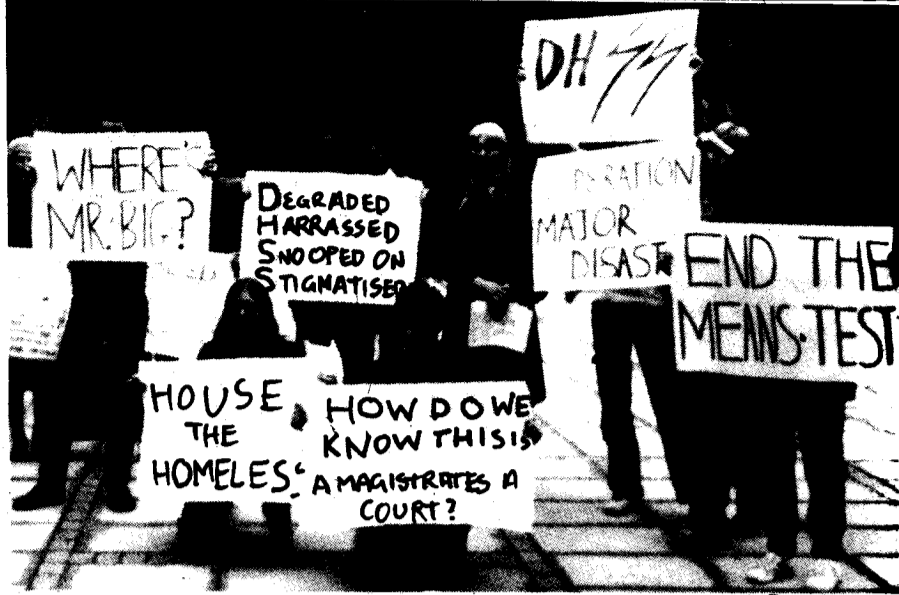
For this reason it is particularly important

that trade unionists and Labour Party members raise this issue in every town, and lend their voice to the petition of the Defence Campaign that has been set up with the backing of Oxford Trades Council.

The demand must be taken up in the civil service and other unions for a full-scale labour movement inquiry into this vicious operation.

And the labour movement must heed the warning: urgent steps must be taken to organise the unemployed in every town, to defend them against the machinations of police, civil service chiefs and landlords, and seek to mobilise the support of the trade unions for their struggles.

Contact: Unemployed Workers' Movement, 119 Maidstone Rd, Leicester.



Claimants and supporters picket the magistrates court

Trades Council speaks out

The following press statement was issued by Oxford Trades Council and distributed to TUC delegates

'OXFORD and District Trades Union Council condemns the Thames Valley Police, the Department of Health and Social Security, Oxford City Magistrates Courts, and the Government for Thursday's arrests of unemployed and homeless people at a bogus 'Unemployment Benefit Office' in the former South Oxford Middle School. We protest at both the nature of the whole operation and the manner in which it was conducted.

We think that Thursday's events are cause for national concern. Economic and social conditions are similar or worse elsewhere in the country. Similar large-scale actions involving hundreds of police are surely planned.

Unemployment has never been higher in this city. We have an acute shortage of housing. Over 300 homeless have been sleeping rough in Oxford in recent months.

On Thursday September 2, Conservative Councillors told the City Estates Committee that a disused church could not be turned into a much needed night shelter for the homeless because it was 'near two schools and in a residential area', and to use a church in this way would

be 'going against the principles of the church'.

While North Oxford residents were being 'defended' in this way against the homeless, Thames Valley Police were proceeding indiscriminately to arrest some 400 unemployed and mostly homeless claimants — not the 286 commonly mentioned. The police admitted they had no evidence against many of those held.

The conduct of the police and the magistrates courts has been widely condemned. Access to solicitors and probation officers was restricted. Few of the 168 charged had a solicitor to represent them. Some defendants were only told of their right to a solicitor after they were remanded in custody. Only 14 were allowed bail. 154 are still in custody.

To claim benefits, a person without paid employment is required by the DHSS to give a fixed

address. What kind of law is it that requires a homeless person to commit technical 'fraud' in order to be 'entitled' to benefit? And what kind of law is it that opens the door to crook landlords?

The DHSS in Oxford has known for years and colluded with the exploitation of the homeless by landlords in this manner. Informed in writing two years ago, they were still referring homeless claimants to the 'suspect' addresses this week.

We know what happened to 'Operation Countryman' investigating Metropolitan Police corruption. We cannot remember any so-called 'Operation' leading to prosecution for tax-evasion by big business management. We are outraged that DHSS officials and Thames Valley Police in the latter's biggest ever single action, should direct their 'Operation Major' against those daily pilloried as 'workshy' and 'scrounger' by Government, employers and media — unemployed and homeless workers.

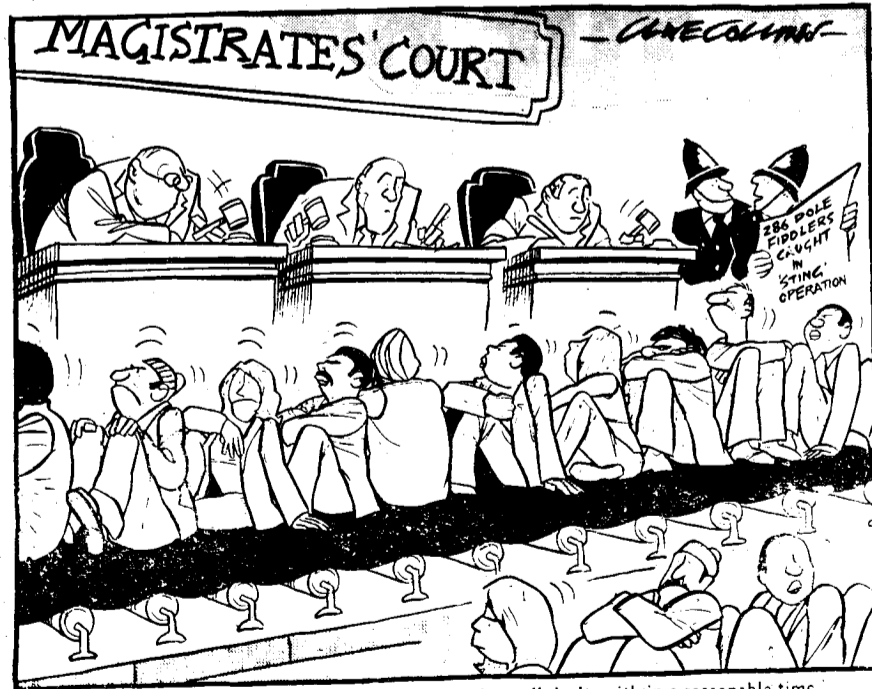
We are concerned that this attack on claimants will be repeated elsewhere, as part of the Government's plan to salvage profits on the backs of a working class cowed by unemployment and low pay. The intimidation and 'criminalisation' of claimants may also be designed to reward the government with an increase in the £500 million of benefits unclaimed each year.

'We have an acute shortage of housing. Over 300 homeless have been sleeping rough in Oxford in recent months'.

Sun puts racist boot in

Out of the 168 people charged during 'Operation Major', only two are black.

Yet the 'Sun' cartoonist felt obliged to increase this proportion, lending a racist slant to his abuse of the homeless and unemployed.



'A conveyor belt was the only way of getting them all dealt with in a reasonable time.'

QUESTIONS a labour movement inquiry must answer about the Oxford DHSS crackdown include:

- Who planned this massive operation — which it was known would arrest and harass hundreds of innocent people. Was it civil servants or the police?

- Who authorised the special arrangements made by civil servants to allow the police operation? Were trade unionists involved? Are similar swoops planned elsewhere?

- How often do civil servants in the DHSS operate in this way as an effective

arm of the police?

- Will the DHSS continue its practice of referring claimants to known 'suspect' addresses? What action is to be taken over the role of the landlords implicated in this affair, and their agents?

- Which council officers

agreed to make available the school premises — which were closed after an occupation against the cuts was broken up by police?

- How much did this huge operation cost local



...and building, they helped bailiffs smash a nursery occupation.

"REALISM" AND THE

Why have Reagan and Begin fallen out?
Harry Sloan reports



Reagan wants to fix up a deal which puts the Palestinians firmly in the grip of Arab ruling class leaders like Jordan's King Hussein...



REALITY IS a messy business. In a world dominated by reactionary forces, the events which shape our lives are often unpleasant, producing 'facts of life' which we find unacceptable.

The struggle for revolutionary solutions to the problems we face begins with a refusal to accept the world as it is, and a determination to mobilise the forces needed to change it.

The opposite to a revolutionary policy is for this reason continually referred to by the capitalist class and by the various liberal and reformist politicians as a 'realistic' policy.

Since the mass slaughter in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in May, politicians on all sides have looked for and sought a 'new realism' among the leaders of the Lebanese left, the Palestinians and the Arab states — by which they politely convey the fact that they wish to see further major retreats, concessions and betrayals by these leaders in the face of the armed might of Zionism, the pampered protege of US imperialism.

Unfortunately, they have not been disappointed. President Reagan's so-called 'peace plan' put forward last week is the most cynical move yet attempted to cash in on the military defeat inflicted on the PLO, the weakness exposed in the Syrian army, and the obvious refusal of the Arab bourgeois states to rally to the defence of the Palestinians.

The US plan appears daring in that it demands concessions from the Zionists. Reagan calls for:

- Elections among the

Collapse of Lebanese Left

IN LEBANON itself, the new 'reality' ushered in by the Zionist invasion has produced a spectacular political collapse of the Lebanese left.

The country's new President, Bashir Gemayel, leader of the fascist Phalange, has been allowed to take office, while the government has announced a ban on carrying weapons, wearing military uniforms, manning roadblocks, firing

slots, staging unauthorised demonstrations and even writing on walls.

So far it is the left wing militias which have fallen into line with these requirements while Gemayel's gang mates in the right wing militias continue to roam freely with arms through Zionist-occupied East Beirut.

And the two leaders of the main Muslim left wing militias, Ibrahim Koleilat

[Sunni] and Shi'ite Nabeih Berri, have not announced any boycott of Gemayel's government.

Were they to do so, he could find it hard to implement his constitutional requirement to appoint Muslims as Prime Minister and as Leader of the Chamber of Deputies.

But a more defiant position has come from the north of Lebanon, where an unlikely alliance of the

Sunni Muslim leader Rashid Karami and the former Maronite president Franjeh has declared its total boycott of Gemayel's regime, and proclaimed Tripoli and the north a 'liberated area'.

Gemayel can be expected to play for a while upon the weaknesses of the left wing forces in Beirut in order to consolidate his position. It is for this reason that he has kept his sponsors — the

Zionist state, who have armed and financed his fascist militia — politically at arm's length since achieving the presidency.

No doubt he explained this to them in a secret meeting with Israeli government spokesmen last week.

But with both Reagan and Gemayel posing as apostles of 'peace' and concord, the working masses of Lebanon have plenty to worry about.

announcement that seven new settlements would go ahead, bringing a further 2,000 Israeli Jews to the West Bank.

In case anyone believes these settlements — which, like other similar encampments, will be built upon land forcibly stolen from Palestinian Arabs — will be simply harmless groups of Jewish farmers, a spokesman for the World Zionist Organisation pointed out that three of them will be undisguised military outposts manned by 'soldier-farmers'. So far such military/agricultural formations have moved 25,000 Zionists into 100 villages on the West Bank and Gaza Strip — three quarters of them since Begin took office in 1977.

Begin's hard line response to Reagan flows from his different vantage point in assessing the 'realities' established by the Lebanon invasion. Reagan seeks to exploit the mood of retreat to force the pace for a negotiated settlement which will neutralise the most radical forces in the Arab camp and provide a basis for a long-term compromise in the interests of imperialism as a whole.

Begin sees the victory in Lebanon as further proof that by sheer brute force and arrogant use of overwhelming military superiority the Zionist regime can force the Arab and Palestinian leaders to accept defeat and eventually recognise Israel, while making no concessions at all.

He also presides over a coalition of extreme right wing and fundamentalist parties and groupings which are pressing the government to concede none of the territory of Biblical Israel.

Far from looking now to withdraw from land already conquered, the eyes of Begin and Sharon are already focused still further afield — on the enforced removal of Palestinian forces from

Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, to prepare for 'full autonomy' in these areas.

- A five year transition period in which the Palestinians would take over control, leading up to a 'final status' of 'self-government' by the Palestinians in association with Jordan'.
- Israeli withdrawal from

these occupied territories in accordance with UN Resolution 242, adopted after the 1967 war.

- The status of Jerusalem to be opened up for 'negotiations'.

But in return for these concessions, Reagan's plan offers the Zionists the lure of:

- Peace treaties with the

Arab states and recognition of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state,

- An explicit 'ironclad' guarantee of Israel's security.

As a gesture to create confidence, Reagan suggested an immediate freeze on Zionist settlements in the West Bank.

The immediate response

from the Begin government was complete rejection of the scheme, amid consternation that Reagan had apparently moved to outflank the Zionists with his proposals.

Begin protested that Israel had not been consulted beforehand, claimed a catalogue of aggressive acts by Jordan against

Israel, and rejected any concessions on the West Bank or Gaza.

"Judea and Samaria", he proclaimed, "will never again be the West Bank of the Kingdom of Jordan created by British colonialism".

Proof of the determination of the Zionist government was offered in the

Polish street barricades



AS more reports come out of Poland, the huge scale of the protests last Tuesday 31, on the second anniversary of founding of Solidarnosc, becomes clear.

Polish Solidarity Campaign News

30p plus postage from PSC, 69 Edinburgh Rd, London E13.

Join PSC: £8 for a year (unwaged £2) from the above address.

In Lubin, a copper-mining town in the south-west of the country, the protests continued right through to Friday.

According to Polish television, barricades were put up in the streets, and fires were started at the town hall, the concert hall, and the municipal library.

The police imposed a curfew, blockaded the town, and cut all telephone links.

A French news agency correspondent reported from Gdansk: 'At the exit from the Lenin shipyards, early Tuesday afternoon, about 5,000 out of the 10,000 workers on the day shift gathered around the monument for the workers killed in the 1970 riots.

'For about an hour they shouted slogans which left no doubt about their feelings: 'Free Lech (Walesa), jail Wojciech (Jaruzelski)', 'End the state of emergency', 'Free the internees', 'Freedom for Poland, bread for the people', 'The pope should come to Poland', 'Solidarnosc will win' ...

There was also another significant slogan: 'Break with the USSR'.

Then the Zomo riot police descended, with armoured cars, tear gas, and smoke bombs. The street fighting continued until the last barricade was beaten down by armoured cars shortly before midnight.

According to the Polish government itself, 34 out of Poland's 49 provinces were

affected by demonstrations of this sort.

For the workers, the motivation of the protests was clear. They were fighting for the freedom that they began to win with Solidarnosc, and for their economic interests. Under the ruinous rule of the bureaucracy, real incomes in Poland have dropped 25% since the beginning of this year.

Despite the workers' slogans about the Pope, the Church opposed the protests. Archbishop Glemp's comment was that there is 'no point throwing stones'.

But the bureaucracy is trying to find a scapegoat. Four leaders of the KOR (Workers' Defence Committee), including Adam Michnik and Jacek Kuron,

have been arrested and charged with plotting to overthrow the regime by force. How they did this plotting when they were already interned, is not explained.

The Polish government has also declared that it will not negotiate with the leaders of Solidarnosc. Gone, at least for the moment, is the vague talk of reconciliation. The August 31 protests have evidently convinced the bureaucrats that the Polish workers can no more be reconciled than a tiger can be tamed, and direct repression is the only answer.

Further arrests and victimisations must be on the way. Our solidarity will be needed.



Tear gas, bliflets, bludgeons — Poland's 'socialist' cops

International News International News International News

REAGAN PEACE PLAN



... but Begin would prefer to see all the Palestinians put on boats

Tripoli in the north of Lebanon, and the 30,000 Syrian troops from Lebanon's Bekaa valley.

The Reagan administration is equally keen to see such retreats, but looks much more to a longer-term arrangement by which the Arab regimes can be tied in to a stable relationship with imperialism and with the Zionist state.

Nor are the Americans isolated from a body of support inside Israel. Begin's Likud coalition has only a wafer-thin majority in the Knesset, while the leader of the Israeli 'Labour' Party, Shimon Peres, has spoken out strongly for the US plan and it has won backing in the press.

Peres has declared himself willing to fight an election on the issue, and an opinion poll suggests that up to 50% of Israelis might be willing to give up

all or part of the West Bank in exchange for a treaty with Jordan.

Peres has recognised that the US plan is most likely to produce what is needed to contain the struggles of the Palestinians and the Arab working masses. To preserve a long-term peace, the Zionists and imperialists need not to annihilate the credibility of the bourgeois Arab and moderate PLO leaders by seeking to enforce a humiliating deal which will never be accepted by the masses: such an approach would leave Israel single-handed to police the Middle East.

They need instead to enlist the support of those leaders in persuading the Arab masses to accept the 'reality' of the Zionist state and its military superiority, and that an 'autonomous' Palestinian mini-statelet is the best deal that

can be obtained.

In this dispute between gangland hoodlums, the Reagan gang wishes not to liquidate the Arab opposition, but after roughing them up a bit, to 'make them an offer they can't refuse'.

With Egypt already committed to a treaty with Israel and the Saudi regime having floated its own plan (the Fahd plan) which recognises Israel, it seems that Jordan's King Hussein would like to swallow Reagan's bait. It remains to be seen whether Yassir Arafat's Fateh wing of the PLO will also be lured by the prospect of an escape from their post-Beirut impotence to accept the 'autonomy' concept. Syrian president Assad is apparently opposed to any such compromise which leaves Syrian deprived of the Golan Heights and vulnerable to further at-

tack.

Two more 'hardline' elements of the PLO — Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, have opposed the Reagan scheme. But the 'moderate' spokesman left behind by the PLO in Beirut has said that if the plan really means a Zionist withdrawal from the West Bank and Gaza, then 'the rest is secondary'.

On the fence

Arafat meanwhile has remained balanced carefully on the fence, refusing to accept or reject the plan — leaving the most vigorous rejection to come from Begin.

The Lebanese war showed beyond doubt the refusal of the Arab leaders to lend

tangible support to the Palestinians — or to the Syrian forces under attack from the Zionists. If Reagan can entice these bourgeois leaders into a sufficiently swift and favourable response he may yet persuade — or possibly seek to bludgeon Begin into accepting — that his strategy is workable. Or he may win sufficient credibility among the Israeli electorate to enable Peres to make a real challenge on the issue.

Much hangs upon the current Arab summit meeting in the Moroccan capital, Fez — which is one reason why Reagan broke his holiday to rush out his plan.

The stakes for the USA are huge: not only can they hope to reduce the huge cost of providing military and economic support to

the Zionist regime.

And, as an added bonus, acceptance of the USA 'peace' plan would produce a framework in the Middle East which would effectively exclude the Soviet Union from any significant role.

Marginalise

As one US observer has pointed out, if a Palestinian state of some form has to be conceded, it is best that it be done on the initiative of the imperialists in such a way as to marginalise the militants.

Which goes to prove that in the world of political 'reality' there is more than one way of skinning a cat.

The bitter reality facing the Palestinians is that their rights as a nation, their very right to return to their homeland, are

incompatible with the existence of the oppressive Zionist state.

Yet US and world imperialism are committed to preserve that state: and the various Arab regimes — no matter how 'radical' their rhetoric — are too afraid of the potential strength of their own workers and peasants to contemplate any serious challenge to imperialism, or even the breaking of their existing links.

Embarrassment

For these leaders, the Palestinians are more or less an embarrassment which stands in the way of longer-term deals with the imperialists and an accommodation with the Zionists.

To fight Reagan's latest 'peace' strategy or Begin's butchery, the Palestinians and the Arab working classes must therefore fight for the overthrow of their existing conservative or nationalist regimes and leaderships, mobilising their mass strength to fight for democratic and economic demands as the basis for a revolutionary solution — the Socialist United States of the Middle East.

Yorks speakers tour

The Labour Committee on Palestine has received a big boost with the affiliation to it of the Bradford Labour Movement Campaign for Palestinian Solidarity and the Keighley Committee on Palestine and Lebanon.

With this support, the newly formed Yorkshire Region of the LCP has launched a speakers' tour of the area. Meetings will take place in Halifax, Leeds, Keighley, and Bradford

The LCP Yorkshire Region is also offering region speakers and a bookstall to all labour movement meetings. In you are interested, contact Cllr Barry Turner at 7 Westfield Cres, Undercliffe, Bradford BD2 4RH.

For details of or affiliations to the LCP nationally, contact 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, London N16.

IN BRIEF

Mexican takeover

MEXICO'S ruling 'Institutional Revolutionary Party' gave proof of some remaining radical nationalist vigour last Wednesday when it nationalised all private banks, imposed total exchange controls, and froze all US dollar accounts in Mexico.

The measures were in response to Mexico's foreign debt crisis. Announcing them, President Lopez Portillo declared: "The banks have looted us. Mexico is not finished. They will not loot us again".

The banks have indeed made huge profits during Mexico's recent feverish economic expansion. And recent flows of capital out of the country — which will now be blocked by the exchange controls — have helped create the state's economic crisis.

But the parallels with the radical nationalist policy of the late 1930s — when the oil industry was nationalised

— are limited. Full compensation will be paid to the bankers, all deposits will be safe, and foreign banks are not touched.

Similar to the 1930s is an effort by the nationalist bosses to get the working class to drop its own independent demands for the sake of the 'common' nationalist struggle.

The Financial Times (September 4) reports: "The Mexican government seems to have secured trade union agreement to a freeze of wages, or only minimal increases, in return for the nationalisation and the exchange controls. This may help keep the inflation rate to less than 90% this year. [But what will it do for workers' living standards?]

"Sr Fidel Velazquez, the veteran leader of the Confederation of Mexican Workers — the main labour organisation, with about three million members — has started

to tell workers that they must not expect a wage increase like that of 30% granted after a 40% devaluation of the peso in February"

This support from the unions is important for the government in order to meet IMF austerity conditions.

Argentina

AS THE Bignone government continues negotiations with international bankers over Argentina's huge foreign debt, the Air Force high command has intervened, opposing the talks.

The air force commanders, in a public statement last weekend, urged the government to break off talks rather than yield to pressure from Britain to lift economic sanctions and to declare a formal end of hostilities over the Falklands/Malvinas. This

Debts pile up

TWO THIRDS of Bolivia's export income — of its 'official' export income, anyway, leaving out the illegal cocaine trade — is eaten up in servicing its foreign debts.

Over 60% of Brazil's export income goes the same way, over 50% of Argent-

ina's, and about 40% of Mexico's. And the total debt outstanding from four countries — Mexico, Brazil, Chile, Argentina — exceeds the whole national income of Brazil.

Brazil, Argentina and Mexico were all, at one time or another in the 1970s, to one extent or another, prime highlights the continuing crisis in the military regime. Meanwhile the Argentine Communist Party has succeeded in getting 35,000 to its latest public rally. The policy announced at the rally was one of critical support for the Bignone government. The Argentine CP has had a semi-supporting attitude to the military regime for some years because of the regime's good trade relations with the USSR.

The five African 'frontline' states involved in South Africa's war against SWAPO in Namibia have unanimously rejected a suggestion that Cuban troops should be withdrawn from Angola as part of any settlement.

South Africa has repeatedly demanded a Cuban withdrawal — while itself launching raids and invasion forces deep into

Angolan territory and sponsoring the reactionary Angolan guerrilla forces of UNITA.

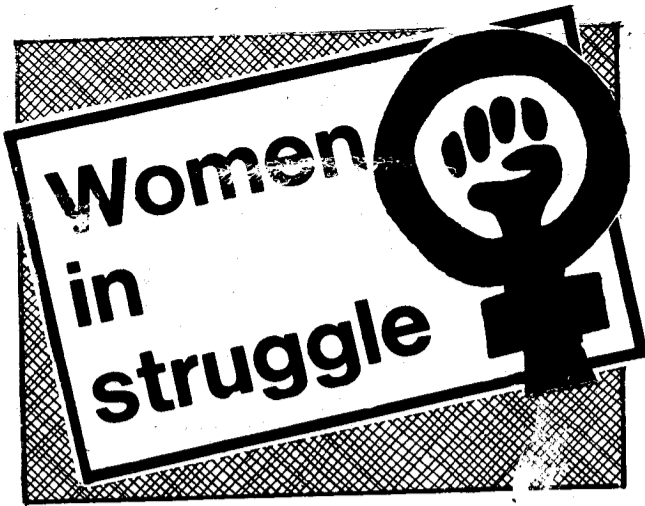
Plainly the frontline states — Angola, Zambia, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Botswana — see the Cuban presence as some form of protection of their borders against more such aggression.

Cubans stay

Now that the world economy has stymied growth, the debts are running far ahead of these economies.



Women have come to the fore in the trade union struggle - and the fight inside the Labour Party



SWP plays down gains of Labour women

For the Socialist Workers' Party, the more militant stand in recent years of the Labour Party women's sections is 'feminism on the moon'. But who's really out of touch with the real world? Gerry Byrne reports.

Some people have argued that the SWP in its latest self-isolationist binge has completely lost touch with reality and no longer recognises it even when it hits them in the face. Judging from Lindsey German's article 'Feminism on the Moon' in the latest Socialist Review, this is not precisely accurate.

The SWP can still recognise reality when it hits them in the face: Lindsey notes quite accurately the move by large numbers of feminists into the Labour Party and their goal of turning the women's organisation 'to a fighting mechanism for women's liberation'. Where Lindsey and the SWP fall down is in explaining this reality and especially on trying to square it with their view of the great downturn, the need to rebuild the labour movement from the bottom up and the uselessness of trying to relate to the Labour Party for this task.

It is for this reason that they have to warp reality

and downplay any positive gains that have been made.

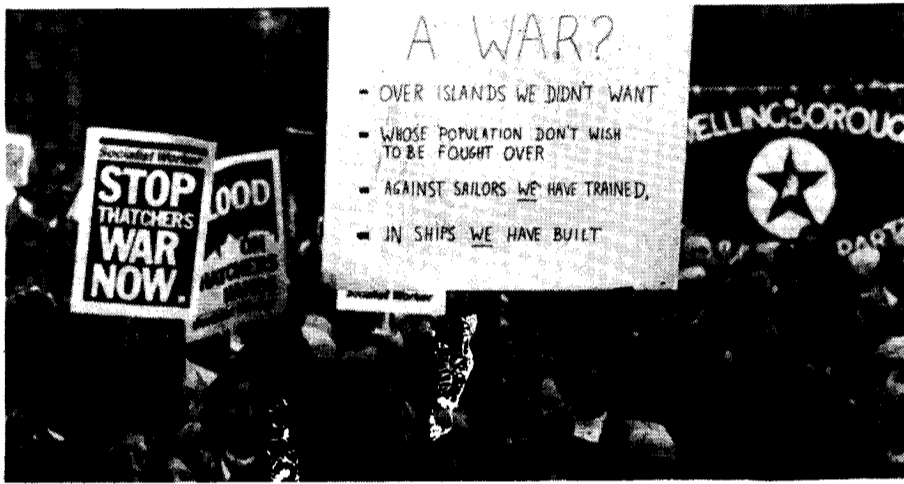
Lindsey argues that 'Because the distinctions between reform and revolution were so blurred, there was never a strong current which argued against joining the Labour Party, and for building an independent revolutionary organisation.'

What about the role of her own organisation in this process? The SWP may not have been 'strong' among socialist feminists (the reasons for this Lindsey does not explain) but it and most of the other self-styled 'revolutionaries' did argue very strongly against joining the Labour Party, artificially counterposing their own 'independent revolutionary organisation' to the Labour movement.

Sexism

It was precisely this sectarianism, towards both the Labour Party and the women's movement, combined with the sexism of much of the 'revolutionary' left, which caused so many feminists to look to the Labour Party as a more habitable alternative.

Far from joining with illusions that the next Labour government would usher in the socialist/feminist millennium, they joined the Party to be part of the revolt against pro-capitalist policies of the last Labour government and to ensure



Labour women's conference voted to condemn Thatcher's Falklands war

that such an experience would not be repeated. And that is the significance of the 'conference rows' that Lindsey sneers at.

Arguments about structures to ensure accountability may not be very gripping for someone standing outside of the struggle, but they are a necessary part of the fight of the rank and file to impose some sort of democracy on sell-out merchants who head the movement: they are an indispensable part of the battle to ensure that conference policies do not take place on the 'moon' of good intentions, but are implemented.

Far from being 'pretty harmless stuff', they represent a real threat to the careerists, the bourgeois politicians who wish to have their hands free to go back on every promise, to flout every decision, and to offload their crisis onto the working class, and disproportionately onto working class women.

What is Lindsey's alternative for these most viciously under attack? Very little, it seems, beyond 'men and women unite and fight'.

She caricatures those who attempt to formulate an alternative to the trad-

itional male-defined priorities of the trade union movement, without suggesting how she would answer this structural sexual inequality, in wages, jobs, conditions and job security. She picks up on the phrase 'feminist incomes policy' without mentioning that those who argue for it (at least those I've come across) explicitly argue against the idea that wage freezes constitute such a 'feminist incomes policy'.

It is ridiculous to suggest that the key to the current pay battle in the hospitals is to demand that the miners, the steel-

workers or the rail workers should forgo a pay increase this year so the hospital workers' claim could be met in full.

Of course it's ridiculous, that's why nobody does argue it. It is certainly not the policy of the Labour Women's Conference, which is what her article focuses on.

But then to look at what that conference actually decided (for a national minimum wage and nationalisations, against NATO and the Falklands war etc.) would rather undermine her case, so it's best to distort it and maintain one's sectarian complacency.

And it does come rather ill from those who have just decided to wind up their rank and file movements, and turn their back on organising women and trade unionists round basic democratic demands, to lecture those who are engaged in a real struggle for democracy, on the need for organising the rank and file, for real accountability, regular elections etc.

Lost

All very fine words, Lindsey, we agree absolutely, but why, in practice, have you and the SWP decided to do the exact opposite?

The answer is that the SWP have already decided that that battle is lost.

'The Left has been routed by the right. Even in the increasingly unlikely event of Labour winning the next election, the composition of the parliamentary party will be almost the same as the last one'

Towel

Indeed? Even if on a sober assessment that were the most likely outcome (and that is certainly disputable) it is hardly the job of self-styled revolutionaries to throw in the towel while they have an ounce of breath left. Accepting defeat before the battle indicates the worst kind of demoralisation.

The right-wing may well succeed in their witch-hunt drive, but it will be at terrible cost to themselves (and their careers). The real revolutionaries will see to that.

And the way to ensure that militants (especially the women, who have shown an incredible determination not to be fobbed off) emerge from the bloodbath ready to fight again, is to organise them, explain what is going on and how much of a threat our democratic demands pose to the right's way of organising (and betraying), not to throw cold water on the whole effort and say it's doomed before we start.

WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK 20p

FIGHTING LOW PAY

COMING UP Women's Fightback AGM, October 23 County Hall London. Open to all women, but only members and delegates from affiliated groups can vote. For conference details send s.a.e. to 41 Ellington St, N7; to join WF too send £3 (or £5 to include regular mailings and the paper).

WHAT'S ON

AUGUST

Mon	2 916 23 30
Tue	3 1017 24 31
Wed	4 11 18 25
Thu	5 12 19 26
Fri	6 13 20 27
Sat	7 14 21 28
Sun	8 15 22 29

Paid ads 5p per word, £4 per column inch. Send to Socialist Organiser (What's On), 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

SHEFFIELD Socialist Organiser, next meeting Sunday September 12, 3pm at the Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Caledonian Road. Speaker from Labour Committee on Palestine, on the Middle East. Tea, coffee, and sandwiches provided for baby-sitting phone Nik, 607 5268.

LAMBETH/SOUTHWARK Socialist Organiser group forums: 8.30pm at 41 Cambwell Grove, London SE5. September 17: The fight against black oppression. September 30: Fighting women's oppression.

NOTTINGHAM Socialist Organiser meets every Friday 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd.

TURKEY Solidarity Campaign activities to mark the second anniversary of the coup in Turkey. Friday September 10: 11.30 to 1.30pm. picket in Fleet Street to protest at... events in Turkey since the coup. Sunday September 12: 2pm. Join the picket of the Turkish Embassy organised by CDDRT.

ISLINGTON Socialist Organiser, next meeting Sunday September 12, 3pm at the Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Caledonian Road. Speaker from Labour Committee on Palestine, on the Middle East. Tea, coffee, and sandwiches provided for baby-sitting phone Nik, 607 5268.

LABOUR Committee on Palestine (Yorkshire Region). Speaking tour on 'The Palestinians and the lessons of Lebanon'. Speakers: Omar al-Ahmed, Barry Turner, Garth Frankland, Roland Rance. HALIFAX: Friday October 8, 7.30 at AUEW Club, opposite Bus Station. LEEDS: Monday October 11, 7.30 at Trades Council Club, Saville Mount. KEIGHLEY: Wednesday October 13, 7.30 at Keighley Library Theatre. BRADFORD: Friday October 15, 7.30 at Central Library, Meeting Room 2.

MANCHESTER Socialist Organiser meetings. Sunday September 5. The fight for gay liberation. Speaker from Labour Campaign for Gay Rights. Sunday September 12: Solidarnosc two years on. Speaker from Polish Solidarity Campaign. Sunday September 19. Ireland, a nation divided. Speaker from Labour Committee on Ireland. All 8pm at the Lass O'Gowrie, Charles St.

POLISH SOLIDARITY Contact addresses: Solidarnosc Trade Union Working Group, Acorn House, 314/320 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1X 8DP. Tel: 01-837 9464. Glasgow Polish Solidarity Campaign. Ian McCalman, 18 Mossiel Rd, Glasgow G43. 041-632 1839. Edinburgh PSC. C/o Edinburgh Trades Council, 12 Picardy Place. Oxford Labour Campaign...

TRIBUNE Rally. Unite to defeat the Tories! Tuesday September 14, 7.30 at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. Speakers: Tony Benn, Michael Meacher, Les Huckfield, Chris Mullin, Ian Brown (EETPU Shell Carrington), Johnny Aitkin (EETPU London Press br.)

Workers' Socialist Review no.2

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Labour witch-hunt



Councillors say 'No

THE FOUNDING conference of the Association of Socialist Councillors in London is now planned for October 9.

The aim is to organise Labour councillors who are IN last May's borough elections, over 500 of the 1800 Labour candidates signed the statement circulated by London Labour Briefing. After the

ready to be class fighters against the Tories, rather than town-hall managers for the Tories.

A draft statement for the October conference is now being circulated, Excerpts:

London.

Since then Heseltine has announced his intentions to cut Council's budgets yet further for 1983/4, by reducing rate support grant from 56% to 53%, which will have a crippling effect on the services and programmes of many boroughs. We reassert what we said in the Briefing statement; 'Defend the jobs, services and living standards of the people of London. We will refuse to cut Council provisions no matter what the pressures and threats.'

We recognise that this means a change in the traditional attitude of Labour Councillors to the communities they represent. We want to see an end to 'behind closed doors' dealing and diplomacy with the Government. Labour Councils and Labour Councillors should become leading organisers of the resistance and counterattack.

Where threats of legal action - including surcharges - are made, we announce in advance that we will not tolerate these as reasons for abandoning our manifesto commitments; instead we will as necessary defy not only the

rulings of the District Auditor but also the whole undemocratic system of rule by unelected judges.

The Association opposes the witch hunt against socialists in the Labour Party. We assert our absolute right to organise together with those who think like us in the Party, and we deny the right of the NEC to curtail in any way discussion in the Party. Accordingly we support the Unregistered Alliance and declare that we will not register ourselves should any register be set up.

We will take active steps to make links with Socialist Councillors outside London, and with active groups of socialists everywhere. We will build links with all levels of the trade union movement, on the basis of this declaration and the Briefing statement, in order to unite the Labour Local Authorities and the Trade Union Movement into a mass campaign to bring down the Tory Government and the system it represents.

Contact: Keith Veness, 155c Green Lanes, London N16. Delegate's fee for October conference - £5.

Which way will TGWU votes be cast?

ON Monday the Times reported that the TGWU's support for the register is virtually sewn up. The quarterly EC meeting is not until September 20, but 'Most of the TGWU's lay regional councils have sent in motions to the union's national executive calling for support for a new register of political groups permitted within the party ... On the basis of opinion from the regions it seems certain that the traditional left will go along with the move to rid the party of its Militant incubus.'

'Support from the transport workers practically guarantees that the reforms will be implemented.'

The TGWU's official response to this is 'no comment', but its accuracy has been questioned. A TGWU member told SO,



Union votes will be decisive at Labour conference

'It's a typical attempt by the media to stampede people.' And from the timing of the report on the first day of the TUC, not only people in the TGWU.

What evidence exists does little to back up the Times. Not all regional councils have taken a posi-

tion. It is known that Scotland (Region 7) passed a resolution against all bans and proscriptions, including of Militant. Probably the right-wing can be certain of only 3 Regions (2,4 and 8). Even the South-West Region (no.3) is on record

as having moved the CLPD model resolution on 'Party Unity' at their Regional Labour Party Conference this year.

But even to have 'most' regional councils does not mean that witch-hunters have a majority, because of the different sizes of the

Regions. During the Deputy Leadership 'consultation exercise' last year a majority of regions declared for Healey, but on members represented Benn scraped home.

But while the Times appears to be jumping the gun on the outcome of the EC and delegation decisions, the pressures to accommodate to the witch-hunt in the TGWU are very real. On the Labour Party NEC, Kitson did vote for the register and its immediate implementation.

And the TGWU bureaucracy remains wedded to the Foot leadership. Evans himself said: 'There is no equivocation: we support Mr. Michael Foot completely as leader of the Labour Party' - the same Foot who, also at the weekend, reiterated his commitment to the register and consequent disciplinary action as central parts of his leadership.

Crucial

'It would be an absurdity if someone who continued or persisted in supporting the Militant Tendency were to be a Labour candidate.'

Of course, on one issue the Times is right. The TGWU vote is crucial. Rank and file pressure over the next week can still play a decisive part in ensuring that the EC declares for it being cast against the register and a purge.

SO info

Over 30 supporters from 21 groups attended last Saturday's Socialist Organiser Alliance Delegate meeting. Lengthy discussions were held on the witch-hunt and Party Conference. Minutes will be circulated shortly to groups and supporters, but the immediate practical decisions were:

■ Next Delegate Meeting, October 16th. The SO AGM decided that some of this meeting would be given over to looking at the Alliance's Constitution, and considering possible amendments. The deadline for such amendments has now been put to Monday, October 4th, and we urge all groups and supporters to consider the matter before then.

■ The resolution on 'Police Accountability' and amendments to AGM resolutions on the Worker's Government and unemployed work were referred to the Delegate Meeting on 16th October.

There was a lively discussion on improving the paper: full report next week.

UNREGISTERED ALLIANCE

A new broadsheet is out from the Unregistered Alliance. Its lead article - which we reprint here calls for a campaign in the unions against the NEC's proposed register.

Simple, clear resolutions are needed and fast, especially in the TGWU, GMWU, NUPE and USDAW.

Send copies of the resolution to your union executive and to the Unregistered Alliance, 28 Middle Lane, London N8. Copies of the broadsheet are available at this address.

ACCORDING to the Tory press, even 'left-wing' Trade Unions are straining at the leash to endorse the NEC's Register and embark on a programme of expulsions.

Luckily, this is mostly wishful thinking.

Of the Big Five, only the AUEW (ES) is certain to press for a witch-hunt. Of the others, both the GMWU and USDAW are specifically opposed to such a course by virtue of decisions taken at their own

1982 Conferences. And both the TGWU and NUPE can reasonably be expected to appreciate the folly of internal quarrelling at a time when the needs of their members cry out for a total concentration on attacking the Tory government.

Michael

Nevertheless, there are no grounds whatever for complacency. It will be argued that we must 'Do it for Michael' if

will be argued that Tony Benn backed a (voluntary) Register as long ago as 1980. It will even be argued that the Register is not a witch-hunt at all!

Urgent pressure is therefore required in every Labour-affiliated Union, particularly the four big ones mentioned above. Some Union leaders still don't appreciate the appalling divisions which the NEC's Register would cause in Constituencies up and down the land.

It would not just be undemocratic. Its implementation would be messy, bitter and prolonged. It would guarantee that we lost the next Election. The Labour movement simply can't afford it.

These basic facts must now be forcefully brought home. Executives, delegations and individuals must be vociferously lobbied to oppose the Register. Your own individual initiative could make all the difference in Black-pool.

The next few days are crucial. So make them really count.

Campaign for



Democracy

AN EMERGENCY resolution for the Labour Party conference is being circulated by the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy.

Constituency Labour Parties are asked to put emergency resolutions on the following lines:

'This conference is gravely concerned that conference amendments on the recommendations of the Militant

Tendency Report have been ruled out of order by the Conference Arrangements Committee on a basis which does not conform with the Party's custom and practice.

'Conference therefore resolves that these amendments shall be accepted as being in order and shall be placed before this year's conference for consideration in the normal way'.

Socialist Organiser Alliance

Get Organised!

Socialist Organiser is not just a paper. We fight to organise workers in the struggle for a new leadership in the labour movement.

If you agree with what we have to say, you can help. Become a supporter of the Socialist Organiser Alliance - groups are established in most large towns.

To 'Get Organised' in the fight, or for more information, write at once to us at 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Name

Address



The law and gay workers

PREJUDICE RULES

THE CASE of Judith Williams, sacked from her job for being a lesbian, is, unfortunately, nothing particularly unusual.

About a year ago, Susan Shell, a nightcare attendant in a residential home for girls, was similarly dismissed for admitting her homosexuality. A gay civil servant was asked to move offices almost immediately after a previous transfer because, according to Michael Foot, Minister for the Department, he was "an unsuitable person to be put in an office where the public might have access".

Tony Whitehead, a trainee manager with British Home Stores, was forced to resign after he appeared on a television programme about being gay. Apparently there was a danger that customers might not want to buy goods from a homosexual!

A woman teacher was informed that she was 'medically unfit' to teach. According to the Occupational Health Officer, "A lesbian cannot be trusted to teach in a girls' school where some of the girls are quite well developed".

These examples represent just the tip of the iceberg of anti-gay discrimination at work. Many other cases, particularly involving gay women, working-class gays or gay members of ethnic minorities who have problems enough anyway, remain unknown.

Unlike racial discrimination or discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status, anti-gay discrimination is not outlawed by legislation. No one is suggesting that the Race Relations Act, Sex Discrimination Act or Equal Pay Act are the panacea for all the ills of discrimination, far from it (especially after Denning's parting shot on the issue of Sikhs). They do, however, indicate some kind of recognition of the problems faced by women and racial groups. Homosexuals just don't seem to exist at all!

As a result of this, many discriminatory practices at work can continue with impunity - victimisation, no promotion, no jobs to gays.

The only situation where there is any scope for legal redress is if a gay worker



can show that she or he has been unfairly dismissed. The Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act 1978 provides an employee with the basic right 'not to be unfairly dismissed by his (sic) employer', although the Tories have now limited this right to employees who have worked for the same employer for 52 weeks (longer in small firms).

Dismissal will be fair if it relates to one of four specified reasons, including the workers' capability to do the job and her or his conduct, or for 'some other substantial reason of a kind

By
Deb
Baxter

such as to justify the dismissal of an employee holding the position which that employee held.' The employer must also have acted 'reasonably'.

In other words, the determination of a fair or unfair dismissal is left largely to the whim of the industrial tribunal or court concerned. Given the general anti-gay bias, especially, the prevalent 'corruption theory' (linking homosexuality with child molesting and evil influence), let alone the bourgeois male propensities of most employers, it is unsurprising that of the few gay workers who have claimed unfair dismissal, even fewer have succeeded.

Initially, unfair dismissal cases are decided by local industrial tribunals. If the employer or employee is not satisfied with the tribunal decision, then she or he may be allowed to appeal to the Employment Appeal Tribunal for a more authoritative ruling, from there to the Court of Appeal and, ultimately, to the House of Lords.

No gay worker has, however taken a case further than the Employment Appeal Tribunal. In fact, only four cases have ever got that far.

It was the 1980 case of Saunders v. Scottish National Camps Association where the Employment Appeal Tribunal came down most heavily on the side of the employer to effectively legalise discrimination against homosexuals.

John Saunders was a



'Acceptable' - open show of heterosexual affection



'Unacceptable' - open show of affection in their masses

maintenance handyman at a children's camp. He was dismissed when his employers discovered he was gay.

According to a letter they sent him: 'The reason is that information was received that you indulge in homosexuality. At a camp accommodating large numbers of schoolchildren and teenagers it is totally unsuitable to employ any person with such tendencies.'

Despite a psychiatrist's report stating that Saunders was neither promiscuous nor attracted to children and evidence that homosexuals are no more likely to 'interfere' with children than heterosexuals, the Industrial Tribunal declared the dismissal fair. This decision was upheld on appeal.

Not justified

Having accepted that dismissal purely on the grounds of homosexuality probably had no scientific justification, the Employment Appeal Tribunal cleverly sidestepped a contentious issue. The employer, it stated, could not be faulted for doing 'what in his judgement is just and proper'.

Effectively, therefore, an employer may legally dismiss a gay worker simply on the grounds of her/his sexuality despite

proof that such action is totally arbitrary and the result of mere prejudice.

Because decisions of the Employment Appeal Tribunal, unlike those of individual Industrial Tribunals, have the force of precedent (i.e., oblige future Industrial and Employment Appeal Tribunals to decide similar cases in the same way) Saunders' case jeopardises the employment of thousands. Its implications extend far beyond the gay workforce too.

In a later 1980 Employment Appeal Tribunal case, the Saunders decision was used to justify the dismissal of an epileptic worker. In effect, the Employment Appeal Tribunal has legalised a purge of those 'undesirable' sections of the workforce that smacks more of Hitler-style fascism than so-called 'British democracy'.

In the interests of objectivity (to maintain a Fleet Street tradition!), it must be said that, unlike the Employment Appeal Tribunal, Industrial Tribunals have, on occasion, supported gay employees' claims of unfair dismissal. Ironically, though, the reasoning behind their support has often been motivated by and actually seems to reinforce anti-gay prejudice.

In a 1976 case, for example, concerning a senior social worker, Ian

Davies, dismissed after a conviction for gross indecency, the Industrial Tribunal ruled that the dismissal had been unfair and recommended immediate reinstatement.

No contact

Their main reason for making this decision? Ian Davies' work was mainly administrative 'and

did not bring him into contact with members of the community, except occasionally, and then only in groups ...'. In other words, the tribunal accepted that homosexuals are potentially a dangerous species but, in this instance, the employee was out of the way of temptation and, therefore, safe to remain in his job.

Davies' case is typical of that of many dismissed



Gay people fly in the face of sexual stereotypes. Above: women protest against 'Miss World' contest.



Like the demand for abortion rights, the call for gay rights is a demand for... (text cut off)

OK?

The silent 2 million



gay worker, however, the implications of such a minor conviction may extend to job loss and beyond. Employees of the Department of Education and Science, for example, may be blacklisted on the official 'List 99' and, especially at a time of high unemployment, never be able to re-enter their profession. And all because of totally unfounded beliefs about their sexuality.

Message

The message for gay workers is clear. They are a danger to society, they corrupt young people, they are ill or abnormal and, more fundamentally, although it is rarely considered, let alone verbalised, they are a threat to the existence of the family unit on which the wealth of capitalism relies.

It is time for gay workers to 'come out' in their masses and force society's acceptance of homosexuality as an alternative rather than a deviance.

Victimisation

Unfortunately, the disincentives are becoming stronger every day. A public admission could result in victimisation from employers and fellow workers, or, what is worse, yet completely legal, the sack.

The Labour Movement must take up this challenge. This means that in every Trade Union, at every level and in every Labour Party Branch the issues must be raised - and not just by gay workers. What are you doing?

by Martin Thomas and Tony Brockman

SOME BLACK primary school children, when asked to draw a picture of themselves, will produce a figure with a white face. So strong is the pressure of racialism that they deny their own skin colour.

With another minority in this society, the process of self-negation is more dramatic. The members of that minority will try, painfully, throughout their lives, to appear 'normal'. And not without cause. Otherwise they may risk imprisonment, electric shock treatment from 'helpful' psychiatrists, losing their jobs or houses, having their children taken away from them, or being beaten up.

This is the homosexual minority. It is a very large minority, far larger than

many people think.

According to surveys conducted in the USA by Kinsey, 4% of men were exclusively homosexual, 10% had been so for three years or more. 19% of men aged 20 years were bisexual or predominantly homosexual. 37% of men had had some homosexual experience going as far as orgasm.

About four per cent of women were exclusively homosexual from the age of 20 to 35, and 13% had had some homosexual experience to orgasm.

The socialist attitude on gay rights should surely be that people's individual sexual preferences are a purely private matter, and the state (or employers, or education authorities, or doctors) have no right to interfere. 'Everyone', as Marx put it, 'should be able to attend to his bodily needs without the police sticking their noses in'.

It is simple enough. Yet all the existing 'socialist' states oppress homosexuals to one degree or another.

And in the writings of Engels we can find reactionary sentiments on the question of homosexuality.

The 1967 Act which legalised homosexuality between 'consenting adults in private' (in England and Wales) lays down an age of consent of 21 (instead of 16 for heterosexuals) - and there have been cases of up to 18 months' jail for sleeping with 'under-age' men.

'Soliciting', holding hands in public, etc. can be prosecuted under common law. In Stockport police have drilled holes specially in the walls of public lavatories so that they can arrest gays for 'gross indecency'.

What are the prejudices which back up the reactionary attitudes to homosexuals?

• 'Homosexuality is unnatural biologically'.

At best, this argument is just about on the level of 'if God meant us to fly, he would have given us wings'.

Obviously all civilisation is 'unnatural' - but are we against civilisation? A certain amount of heterosexual activity is - or, at least, until very recently has been - 'natural' in the sense of being necessary for the continuation of the species. But that doesn't mean that homosexuality is unnatural.

Two anthropologists survey 76 primitive societies about which information was available. In 49 of them homosexuality was considered normal.

D.J. West, a writer who describes homosexuality as a 'perversion', 'deviation', and so on, nonetheless writes in his book on the subject: 'Exclusive preference for the opposite sex is an acquired trait, and involves the repression of a certain amount of homosexual feeling which is natural to the human being'.

In this sense, it is the person who is totally non-homosexual who is 'unnatural'. All the indications are that in a society with a minimum of repression, most people would be to one extent or another bisexual, and it would be the people who were attracted only to one sex who were unusual.

• 'Homosexual activity is disgusting'.

So is heterosexual activity if looked on with a cold and jaundiced eye!

• Many people still associate homosexuality with loitering in public lavatories or with child-molesting.

Given the enormous number of homosexuals in the population, it is clear that if any large proportion were accustomed to loiter in public lavatories, then every lavatory in the country would be choc-a-bloc. A few do seek sex in public lavatories. Why? Because the great bulk of 'normal' social life in this society is designed to exclude and suppress homosexuality.

ent and aggressive child-molesting is almost exclusively heterosexual.

Nearly all socialists would feel ashamed to come out with obviously prejudiced remarks about gay people. Yet the prejudice is often there, covered over.

'The most common reaction of comrades who have discovered that I am gay has been one, not so much of hostility as of embarrassment mingled with an uneasy tolerance. 'Yes, of course, you're oppressed and we sympathise but really the best thing to do is to work for the overthrow of capitalism'. No doubt if such comrades encountered an obscure minority like one-legged green men from the Cayman Islands, they would say something similar' (Bob Cant in 'Gay Marxist' no. 2).

But homosexuals are far from being an obscure and irrelevant minority. Of around 25 million working men and women in Britain, something like two and a half million must be more or less active homosexuals.

The sort of pressures involved are indicated by this statement from a gay mechanic in a Coventry factory:

'All the time I have to pretend to be what I'm not. I have to make up girl friends that don't exist and even tell anti-queer jokes. Sometimes the strain gets unbearable'. (Quoted in 'Gay Marxist' no. 1).

Will this worker come to the forefront as a militant - or will his embarrassment make him try to stick timidly to private life? If he were to join a socialist organisation, would he be able to work harmoniously there; or would he feel a constant strain?

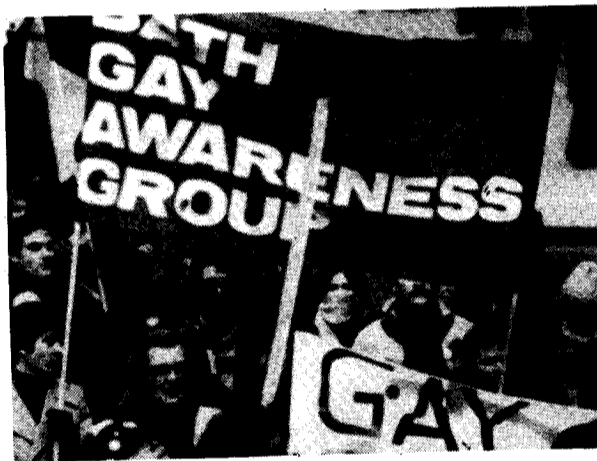
Above and beyond the strain on gays, prejudices against homosexuality link up with the ideologies which express the oppression of women.

Homosexuality is regarded as 'abnormal' because, by separating sexuality from the begetting and upbringing of children, it cannot fail to challenge the sanctity of the bourgeois family and the associated sex stereotypes.

Men who see manliness as defined by 'acquiring' women must condemn as 'queer' those men who opt out of that race for acquisition.

And female homosexuality is simply ignored. If sexuality is seen as a matter of men acquiring women, then the very idea of women having a sexuality which doesn't depend on men can hardly be recognised - even as a 'perversion'.

Given the 'certain amount of homosexual feeling which is natural to the human being', anti-gay bigotry expresses a hatred and fear that the bigots feel for their own sexuality. The call for state repression reflects sexual guilt and moral repression.



A minority - but an extremely large minority

Defend Judith Williams!

'THE NALGO blacking of Care Concern is holding very well', a spokesperson for the 'Defend Judith Williams' campaign told us this week, 'and we think it is having a major effect'.

Care Concern is a private firm which runs homes for people put in care by local authorities. Judith worked at Berwyn College, a home for adolescent girls in North Wales. She was sacked on May 27, not for any fault in her work - which had been praised - but for being 'temperamentally unsuitable', in other words for being a lesbian.

Blacking

NALGO members are blacking all placements of children in homes run by Care Concern.

The defence campaign is also seeking blacking of Care Concern by other unions. At least eight branches of the TGWU's white

collar section, ACTSS, have called for blacking by the TGWU.

Twelve Trades Councils and nearly 100 trade union branches [NUPE, TGWU, NATFHE, NALGO, CPSSA, SCPS, NUT...] have passed resolutions supporting Judith, and so have many Constituency Labour Parties. The campaign is planning a picket of the headquarters of Care Concern in Ruthin, North Wales, around the end of October.

You can help by:
• Sending from your union branch a resolution calling for reinstatement and for blacking of Care Concern; and a letter of support to Judith personally;
• Sending a donation to the campaign;

• Letters of protest to Care Concern, 100 St. Lucia Street, London E1 1AA.
• Letters to Judith Williams, Campaign for Judith Williams, Greencroft Gardens, London NW6 3PE.

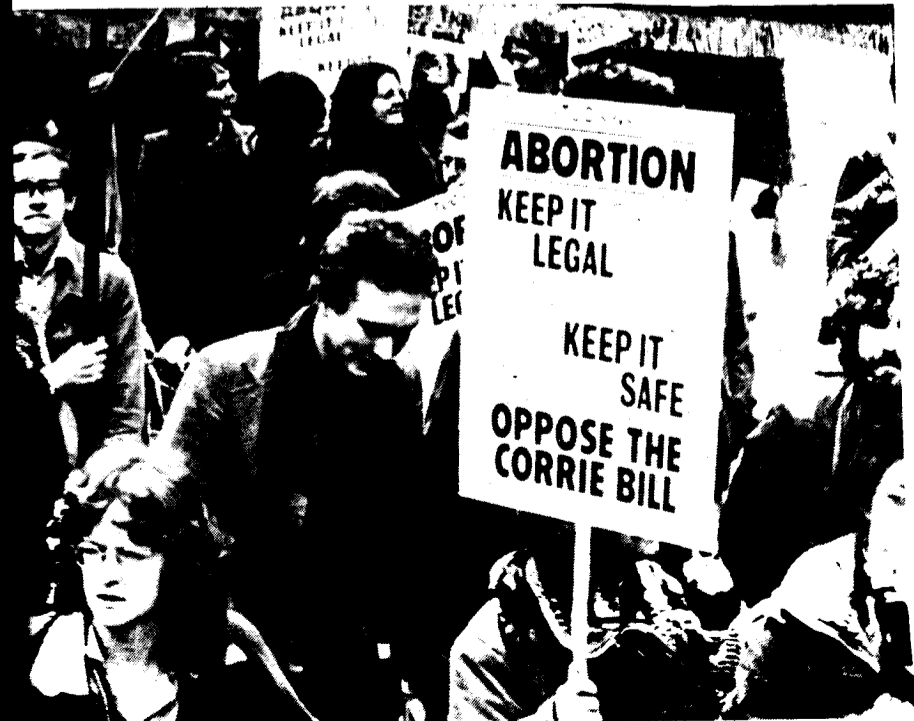
gay workers, in that it concerns a male homosexual sacked following conviction for a sexual offence, usually gross indecency. (Because of the common beliefs concerning female sexuality, that women are essentially passive, there is no corresponding 'offence' for lesbians.)

Gross indecency 'offences', occurring as they often do, in public lavatories, are easy targets for bored policemen wishing to increase their conviction rates. In reality, there is nothing 'offensive' about them as they almost always occur behind closed doors.

Low penalties

Low penalties

The criminal law itself recognises this by providing low penalties. For a



for individuals to have the choice on how to dispose of their own bodies

GLASGOW COUNCIL SOAKS THE POOR

Stan Crooke reports on a long struggle by tenants in the Gorbals

'GOD bless her, and all who sail in her.' Although there is no record of Queen Elizabeth II actually using these words to open the Hutchesontown E housing scheme in the Gorbals (Glasgow) in July 1972, they are certainly the most appropriate words she could have used; so bad was the dampness in the scheme that it rapidly achieved a national notoriety.

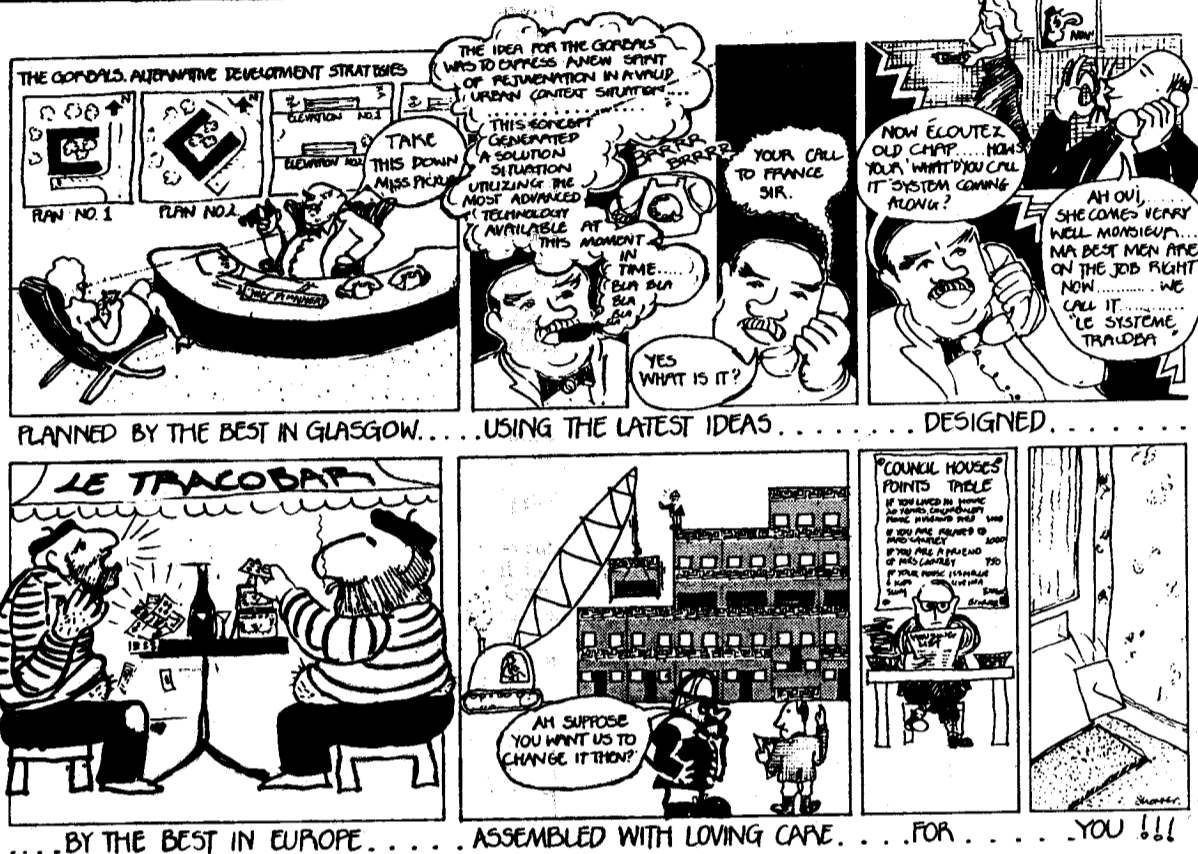
The Hutcheson E scheme consisted of two high-rise blocks (24 storeys) and twelve low-rise blocks (7 storeys), with 384 flats in the former and 759 in the latter, housing a total of 2,500 people. The blocks were built between 1969 and 1973, using the TRACOBA system of design and construction.

The TRACOBA system, first used in France in 1959, basically involves building housing blocks from prefabricated kits, like Lego though on a larger scale. The system has both advantages and disadvantages: advantages for penny-pinching district councils and money-grabbing private contractors, disadvantages are for who ends up living in the flats.

In 1967 the National Building Agency issued a Certificate allowing the British concessionaires of the TRACOBA system the right to use it in Scotland - but not for low-rise blocks. It was in the low-rise blocks that the worst dampness occurred.

The first tenants moved into the scheme in December 1971. And the first complaints about dampness were made in ... December 1971.

As more tenants moved



into the scheme, more complained about dampness. But the complaints were ignored: in 1972 the authorities passed the flats as fit for human habitation, and the remaining blocks were built using exactly the same method.

Seventy per cent of the TRACOBA flats in the Gorbals suffer from dampness. First there is the unpleasant, musty smell. Then the wallpaper becomes discoloured and begins to peel away. Fungus and mould cover the walls.

The fungus and mould spread to the furniture, carpets and clothing. Some tenants have had to throw out new carpets which had become rotten and stinking after only eight weeks.

Health suffers too. Respiratory diseases

are aggravated by dampness and possibly caused by it, and dampness is a health hazard for asthmatics, sensitive to the fungus spores.

Other features of the TRACOBA flats include flooding in the verandahs, inadequate sound-proofing between rooms, lack of drying areas, regularly faulty lifts, lack of play-space, inadequate waste disposal arrangements, etc., etc.

For the tenants in the Gorbals, these conditions are part of a whole way of life: high levels of unemployment, low wages for the few with work, social isolation caused by the large number of high-rise flats, remaining pockets of the old slum tenements, large tracts of derelict land, rat-infested abandoned buildings, lack of child-care facilities (made even worse by recent cuts), traffic hazards, and corruption in local government.

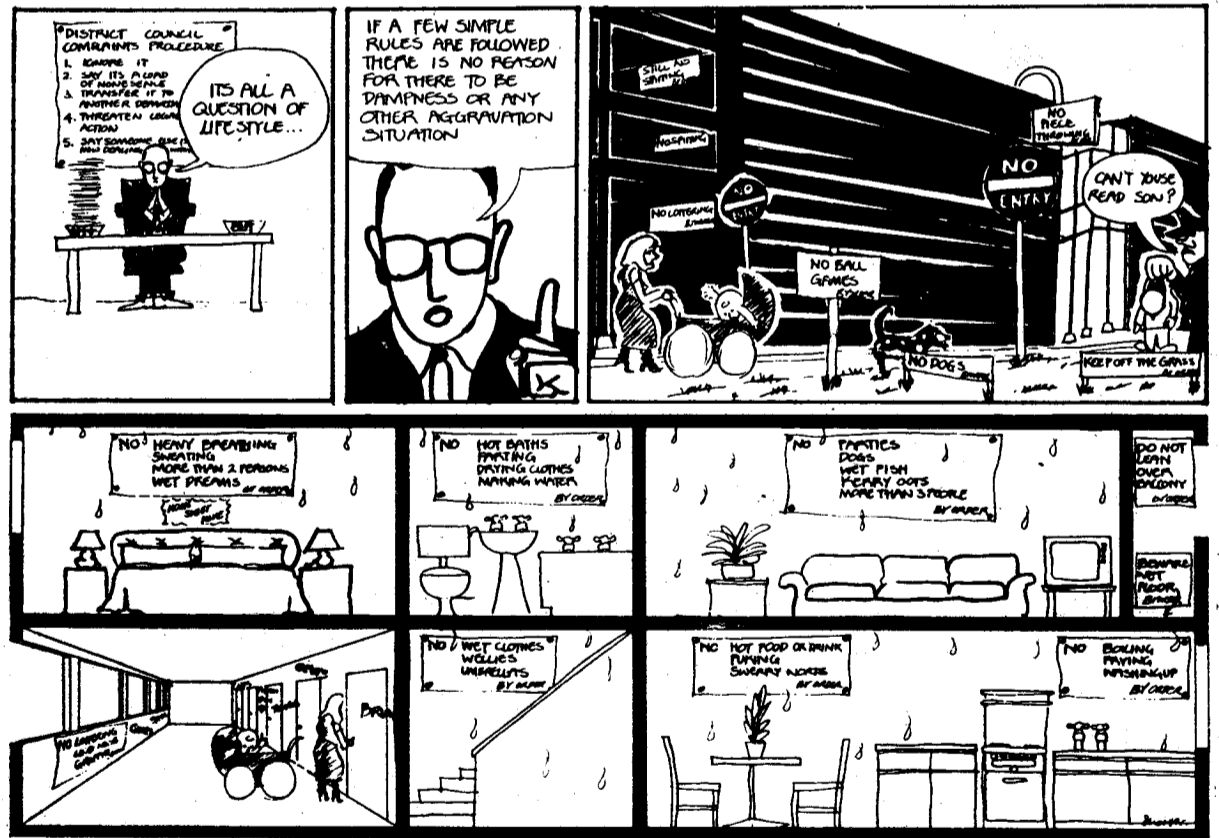
In the early seventies, continual complaints to the then Glasgow Corporation produced only a visual inspection of some of the flats by a Clerk of Works, and a few tips of insulting advice.

Tenants were told to leave all windows open and turn up all heating - and never mind the massive electricity bills.

Stop

The dampness was attributed by the Corporation to 'heavy breathing'. So stop breathing? The Corporation suggested that tenants should leave the windows open when having sex so that the condensation caused by heavy breathing would escape.

...the dampness was caused by their heavy breathing.



To prevent growth of fungus on furniture, it was suggested that furnishings should be moved 18 inches away from the walls (effectively halving the usable room space).

Following in the traditions of Victorian capitalists who said that poverty was due to workers' fecklessness, the corporation tried to blame the dampness on the tenants.

But the tenants started to organise.

In May 1975 Hutcheson Tenants Association and Levenson Tenants Association organised a public meeting and a petition to the Corporation. At a public meeting in October 1975 the tenants first-dampness campaign GADC was established.

The campaign committee wrote to the District Council demanding a remedy of the dampness problem in line with the 1897 Public Health Act; and on getting no response, began preparing for legal action against the Council.

Attempts were made to get legal aid for eleven tenants who would act as a test case, but aid was refused.

Some tenants had gone on a rent strike in protest at the dampness, and in 1976 the Council began taking some of them to court. The first case was heard in June 1976. The court was presided by Justice James and a judgement that the Water Board anti-dampness campaign (Edin-

burgh). As soon as the hearing opened, the district Council's solicitor announced that the Council was not pursuing the case. The same happened with further cases, and soon over 130 tenants were on rent-strike. At the same time, though, the campaign's own plans to use the courts ran aground. A vague promise by the Council to do 'everything practicable' against the dampness was, in legal terms, an adequate defence for the council under the 1897 Act.

So the campaign continued. On November 28, 1976, 500 people attended a campaign meeting itself, 150 attended an overflow meeting in the same building, and many others had to be refused entry due to lack of space.

The meeting was covered by the national media, and there could no longer be any doubt about the GADC's mandate from the Gorbals population. The District Council backed down slightly and promised in December 1976 to re-

compensation and as rapid re-housing as possible.

Since 1978 the GADC has continued its struggle against the District Council, though on a lower level of militancy since its mass base has been eroded by re-housing. The bulk of its work has been about negotiations with the District Council over the level of compensation and details of re-housing.

Re-housing has, in a manner of speaking, finally been sorted out. Only nine flats are still occupied in Hutchesontown E. Eight of those nine have already signed agreements to move into a new house. The ninth is waiting for repairs to her new house to be concluded before signing the agreement.

But the issue of compensation and repayment of rent arrears remains even now - 10½ years after the first complaint about dampness, and seven years after the first tenant going on rent strike - still far from settled.

And now, after the mammoth struggle against

house tenants living in damp housing, and not to re-let damp flats once they became vacant.

But promises are one thing, action quite another. In the first six months of 1977 only 35 families were rehoused. It took a lot more campaigning - including a 1,000 strong rally on May Day 1977 - to get over 100 re-housed in the second half of 1977.

GADC activists felt, justifiably, that they had made more than their fair share of sacrifices and that it was time for others to take over the leading positions. In January 1978 the GADC was therefore re-organised, a new committee was elected, and campaigning priorities were established: maximum

dampness, the area is faced by the threat of the District Council selling off the property to private contractors. Did the people of the Gorbals fight against inadequate council housing for ten years in order that it might be replaced by inadequate private housing? Or wasn't the aim all along, and still is today, for decent council housing in place of council's purpose-built slums in Hutchesontown E?

The GADC used a variety of methods of struggle at the same time, it refused to fall into the trap of relying exclusively on one form of action - even a militant one like a rent-strike - and thus giving the council an easy run since it can focus resources on that one

Jobs not bombs!

North West Youth CND and Labour Party Young Socialists branches are organising a Jobs Not Bombs march from Manchester to Blackpool on September 28 to 29. Starting with a march of Labour Party members. Details: North West Youth Centre, 100, St. Mary's, Salford. UMS, Secretariat St. Manchester M6 2SE 9114 or 485.

Oil workers of the world unite!

I WAS glad to see your oil and petrochemicals supplement last week. One point which could have been covered more was international links.

Typical of a chemical multinational, chopping jobs, is Akzo, where I work. In June of this year stewards representing various European locations met to determine how to combat the multinationals' destruction of jobs.

Akzo, which also operates in textiles as British Enkalon, has axed plants in Liverpool, Todmorden, Middlesborough, as well as the giant nylon site in N. Ireland.

That followed closely on the closure of the Ferenka site (textile cords for the tyre industry) in Eire, a combined loss of over 8,000 jobs.

Dutch stewards reported on the deterrent of statutory financial penalties, and the Union's legal right to oppose job losses as how they were successful in defending jobs.

Akzo's defeat at the hands of united action across Europe, when they tried to victimize seven Spanish trade unionists, and the successful defence of 10,000 textile jobs in Breda (Netherlands) by occupation, and sympathy strikes in various countries, determined the conclusion of the meeting - that united action on a scale that crosses national boundaries is necessary to stop multinational giants like Akzo destroying jobs, and contact at international level is required to guard against trade unionists being divided along national lines.

The official movement as represented by the TGWU is putting out inadequate calls to halt the closures, reverse government policy, end the misuse of

Britain's oil resources, which without the support of direct and united action is doomed to failure.

There are numerous combines, such as Shell, ICI and Akzo, but these are hampered from taking co-ordinated action by union structures, plagued by divisions deliberately created by the bosses organisation (Chemical Industries Association) to separate workers by the device of differing settlement dates and pay structures.

There have been attempts, like the recent Chemical Combine meeting in Nottingham, to create a united shopfloor response to the industry's problems. Unfortunately the meeting spent most of its time on bargaining structures, without coming to grips with producing a unifying response to job losses, although hopefully in the next meeting in October will take up the issue.

Taking as a typical example the Greater Manchester area, job losses continue unabated, the largest of which is the threat to the Shell plant at Corrington.

Campaigning to stop job losses at the site must be organised not only on a basis of action obviously of a company-wide nature, but also by activating a co-ordinating response from the many other plants within the region, which includes multinationals like ICI, Ciba Geigy, Akzo. The blacking of Shell products by workers determined to stand together would cause havoc in the ranks of the bosses.

Building such a campaign will require the backing of the mass membership at Shell, and their involvement in preparing and distributing broadsheets; speakers will be required to call on



fellow trade unionists for funds and backing.

A necessary call is for a joint meeting of stewards within the Manchester area, whose task must be to co-ordinate the defence of jobs, not just at Shell, but at any other plant threatened.

A successful defence of jobs by broad united action, will then be a springboard for the shop-

floor to take on the task of organising nationally, where with potentially greater strength than the miners, Thatcher's destruction of oil/chemical jobs and her criminal wasting of our North Sea assets can be halted.

Tom Hart
Rochdale

Happy Birthday!

Dear Comrades,

As it is one year since the relaunch of Socialist Organiser, I would like to

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congratulate you on the overall standard maintained by the paper. In this context, and fully understanding the difficulties of producing such a paper regularly, I would like to make several fraternal comments and criticisms.

First of all there is a real problem. Despite tremendous improvement in the layout - particularly the photographs - the paper still seems to be packed. Changing this, however, would mean cutting back on vital coverage. There is no problem for committed readers but new readers might find the tremendous acreage of newsprint a bit forbidding. I don't know what can be done about this.

Secondly, I would like to see a slightly more popular and simpler style in the writing. I think it is patronising to argue that workers will not read long articles. There must be a bit of a challenge and people will relate to the paper overall.

But I would like to see front and back page, and page 2 and three made

crisper and more arresting - then people will take longer articles in the middle pages

I would also like to see the writing made a bit more humorous and pop journalistic, as in Press Gang and Graffiti, without going to the level of the Socialist Worker.

Thirdly there has been a drop off in the debate content of the paper in the last six months. I would like to see a series of people - SO writers and others - such as Vladimir Derer, Reg Race, Chris Mullin, Tariq Ali, etc., asked to contribute on how they see the way forward for the Labour Party.

Debate

S.O.'s coverage on the industrial struggle has been improved in the past year but has also lacked a debate framework. How about a similar series of articles discussing the way forward here?

Whilst maintaining its own distinctive approach these suggestions could involve wider sections

around S.O.

Finally, I think that S.O. has been absolutely abominable in what might be called culture or the wider world.

Culture

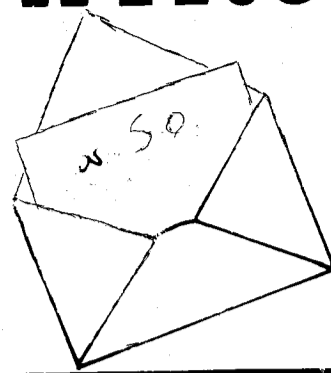
Music, sport, literature, and art are political, yet they are just not covered in S.O. Whatever happened to the rock column? Why is there not a weekly TV column? Coverage of films is sporadic to put it mildly!

What readers appreciate here is regularity. S.O. should ensure that at least one and a half pages every week is given over to these matters.

They are vitally important. Politics is more than strikes and Labour Party meetings and this must find significant and regular recognition in the paper.

Yours fraternally,
Rocky Sullivan,
Ormskirk,
Lancs.

Writeback



We invite readers to send us their letters up to a usual maximum length of 400 words. Send to 'Writeback', Socialist Organiser, c/o 28, Middle Lane, London N8.

Would we release these people?

Dear Socialist Organiser, Raymond Attwell in his plea 'Defend the Kray Twins' has placed his finger on a central dilemma facing any Socialist Government in the realm of social and penal policy.

The dilemma is this. Whilst recognising the social relativity of the concept of 'criminality' as a product of the barbarous insanity of capitalism, we must also grasp the disequilibrium that would exist for any progressive Government between releasing 'criminals' convicted under capitalism, and the fact that in most cases their political consciousness would not correspond to socialist norms of behaviour.

This was indeed a problem faced by the Bolshevik Government of 1917, who released convicts under an amnesty, only having to re-arrest most of them a few months later for crimes against people and socialist property.

Abbott

I have just read Jack Henry Abbott's 'In the Belly of the Beast'. Abbott has spent thirty of his forty years in a US Maximum Security prison, and most of his life has been in solitary confinement.

However, under an ironic quirk of the US prison system Abbott was allowed to receive books. He read all the great works of literature, philosophy, and politics, becoming a committed revolutionary in the process. An amazing achievement for someone who has 'never experienced human relationships'.

For Abbott, the only human beings in these prisons were the mass murderers in solitary.

Abbott argues that by defending human integrity through violence against warders who try to brutalise them, this elite of 'philosopher-prince' prisoners preserve the basis for transcending the sub-human condition of becoming mere 'Pavlovian dogs' which is the fate of prisoners who succumb to the regular beatings disbursed by these totalitarian institutions.

Norman Mailer, rather like Attwell, took up Abbott's case and earned him a parole early this year.

Relapse

However, after only a few weeks outside, Abbott murdered a waiter in a bar for serving him the wrong drink. Everything went back to square one.

Maybe a solution under the right sort of Government would be a series of institutions that would facilitate a transition for such people to 'normal' society.

What is clear, however, is that Ray Attwell and Norman Mailer are pioneering a line of development that up until now has received scant attention from socialists.

Yours fraternally,
Baz Haslam,
Salford.

Trotskyism and cricket

Dear Comrades,

The views in the recent letter in S.O. from two comrades arguing that cricket simply reflects capitalism and that the Falklands war has led to a real reflection in this sport of chauvinism are dangerously simplistic, but unfortunately prevalent. I well recall S.O. supporters criticising my good self for attending Anfield to watch Liverpool every second Saturday on the grounds that I was succumbing to the opium of the masses, though I had nothing stronger than a few pints of Higsons and any post-match euphoria was to be put down to the exhilarating quality of Dalglish Souness and Alan Hansen.

Brutes

Our modern sport existing in our nasty brutish society has nasty brutish aspects and reactionary values which express and reinforce capitalist ethics, just like music, literature or the cinema. It can and does reflect more progressive values such as teamwork, co-operation, fairness, generosity.

As the Trotskyist C.L.R. James put it in his excellent book 'Beyond a Boundary' which I would recommend to all comrades who take a one-sided view of cricket in its own way as with other sports 'grasps at a more complete human existence'. Apart from being a thing

of drama and beauty, James describes how cricket was an integral part of the West Indians' attempt to find themselves as a nation and overcome the cultural inheritance of imperialism and racism, expressing very progressive political values.

Sport can be the battleground for fighting reactionary ideas. James chronicles the fight to achieve a black captain for West Indies cricket and for the West Indies to take its place as the world cricket champions against the prevailing racist ideas.

Against the blacks have a natural sense of rhythm' argument, he points out that the greatness of Learie Constantine was not due to his marvellous West Indian eyes and marvellous West Indian wrist. It was due to if you must have it, to his marvellous West Indian brains'.

At the moment for example, there is a tremendous battle opening up against sexism in sport which SO supporters must not ignore when sexists ask what have women ever achieved? we should reply as we watch Andy Roberts, Colin Croft, Lillee or Tommo thundering to the crease 'Fast bowling!'

For indeed the first over-arm bowler was Christine Willes of Kent who bowled in that fashion to avoid her arm getting caught up in her crinoline!

Yours sincerely,

Casper Gutman.

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PHOENIX FALLS INTO THE ASHES

Another nail in the coffin for Sheffield steel jobs. John Cunningham reports.

THE merger between River Don BSC and Firth Brown will be yet another nail in the coffin of Sheffield's ailing steel industry. The merger to form the Sheffield Forgemasters Holding Company is in fact a job cutting and rationalisation exercise. Seven hundred jobs will go in Sheffield and a further 400 elsewhere, mainly at the Breadmore Forge, Glasgow, part of Johnson Firth Brown which owns Firth Brown, Sheffield, the largest private steel works in the country.

Steel, once the pride of Sheffield, has taken one hell of a beating since the recession started to really bite in Sheffield. Some 20,000 jobs in steel have gone since 1978 and the fall in manufacturing output in the area is now twice that of the worst year in the thirties.

In Sheffield 1 in 8 is now unemployed, and in nearby Mexborough the

figure is 1 in 5 - the blackest spot in the whole of South Yorkshire. On top of all this many are on short time working. In 1981, some 16,000 were only working 4 days or less.

The merger, called 'Phoenix 3' between Firth Brown and River Don, has to be seen in the context of this gloomy backdrop. It is not a particularly novel development - BSC and the private sector already overlap in many areas.

Phoenix plans number 1 and 2 are already past and gone - and slowly but steadily the Tories are achieving their aim of hiving off profitable parts of BSC to the private sector. BSC holds 50% equity stake in at least 4 private firms - Alloy Steel Rods, Round Oak Steel, Templeborough Rolling Mills and Firth Brown Fox.

BSC also has varying stakes in a number of other private firms, including Bridon Wire (10%), Kiveton Park Steel (36%) and Lee Bright Bars (45%). So increasingly it looks like the Tories' plan is to blur the divisions between private and public sector



in order to facilitate their aims to do away with nationalised industries altogether. Phoenix 3 therefore is a part of the Tories' strategy, not an isolated incident.

As Thatcher said in the House of Commons earlier in the year, when defending her hatchetman, Ian McGregor: 'The aim is to get BSC into sound operating shape and when it is, I think perhaps we can denationalise it.' Getting BSC into 'sound operating shape' means running plants like BSC River Don down to such an extent that it has little hope of survival

on its own and is easy meat for the type of merger being proposed.

BSC River Don was before nationalisation Firth Vickers - where J.T. Murphy, famous Sheffield revolutionary, once worked turning gun barrels while reading the works of James Connolly and Marx. A major supplier to the armaments industry, it has suffered badly from the turn to high technology armaments which need less steel plate, etc. It also lost many orders at the time of the overthrow of the Shah in Iran.



Over the last decade it has made steady losses of about £1,000,000 a year. Jobs have been eroded steadily. 78 jobs went in 1971, 29 in 1972, 80 in 1977 and approximately 400 in 1979. The plant is now only a shell of its former self.

In 1972 the workers staged a sit-in against the closure of sections of the plant. They were inspired by the example of UCS on the Clyde and were prepared to fight, but over the last few years the response to redundancy has not shown the same fighting spirit.

In November of 1979 a mass meeting voted to accept redundancies on a voluntary basis.

Firth Brown, by contrast, was fairly stable until quite recently, but in February 1981, a massive 1,250 redundancies were announced. A fight looked like developing, but a slight retreat by management on 100 jobs and offers of voluntary redundancies was enough to defuse the situation and the bulk of the redundancies went through.

What Phoenix 3 involves isn't known exactly. Management and Govern-

ment have not revealed where and when the redundancies are to occur - what is known is that Firth Brown together with River Don Stampings (despite its name part of Johnson Firth Brown) is to merge with River Don to make the country's largest forgemaster with 'peripheral' forges like the one in Glasgow being shut. £27 million of public money is being put into the new venture, though the stock market price of Johnson Firth Brown is put at only £13 million. The profitable parts of the JFB set-up are excluded from the merger.

Requests by Shop stewards and the Sheffield City Council for information have been ignored.

SCIENCE

Comfortless crumbs

By Les Hearn

THIS WEEK'S column is based on 'Abusing your loaf', the section on bread in the book 'Swallow it Whole', by Hannah Wright (New Statesman's survival guide to the food industry, price £1.50).

The section looks first at what is taken out and put in to make your standard loaf which (according to the submission of the large bakers in the Monopolies Commission Report on Bread and Flour in 1977) 'has no rival in the world for cheapness, nutritional value, and keeping quality'.

To make the refined white flour used in British bread, at least 75% of each of the 19 or more nutrients in wholemeal flour are removed.

Then four nutrients are added - vitamins B1 and B2 (removed during refinement) and iron and calcium. Of these, the iron compound used is probably not capable of being absorbed by the body, while the calcium is not nowadays necessary. So there are 'two and a half useful nutrients'.

On the other hand, there are 26 permitted chemical additives, of which some 15 or 16 are likely to turn up in a sliced white wrapped loaf, including 'bleach, a mixture of several 'flour improvers', yeast stimulants, emulsifiers, various preservatives, and anti-

oxidants'.

These additives are supposed to be well-tested but the government food committees responsible for authorisation seem to be rather feeble. One case illustrates this.

In 1903, a bleach, Agene (methionine sulphoximide), was introduced as an additive to flour. In 1927, a food committee called unsuccessfully for its withdrawal. Twenty years later, when it was found to cause 'running fits' in dogs, Sir Edward Mellanby (chairman of another food committee) called again for its withdrawal.

Three years later, another committee called for its withdrawal (it was used in 90% of bread flour by this time). It was finally withdrawn in 1955. Only in 1965 did anyone test its effect on humans, finding that in high doses it caused hallucinations and disorientation.

Testing of additives is carried out by the Flour Milling and Baking Research Association (FMBRA), two-thirds financed by the industry itself!



'Swallowing it whole' means swallowing a cocktail of chemicals

The case of BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) shows how the needs of industry tend to be paramount.

BHT, which prevents the fat used in baking going rancid and helps bread keep longer, is an essential part of the highly profitable 'Chorleywood Bread Process', introduced in 1963.

In 1960, BHT was found to cause liver enlargement in animals. In 1963, the Food Standards Committee recommended its withdrawal unless 'overriding technical need could be proved'.

Though technical need

was never proved, in 1971 another committee re-established its use, because liver enlargement was not in itself thought to show a hazard to humans. The FMBRA were 'not asked' to work on BHT.

On the continent, all food additives must be named on wrappings, and British bread would be banned anyway. Bleaching agents are banned from other Common Market breads.

Interestingly, in France the word 'pain' (bread) is defined as a mixture of soft wheat flour, water, yeast, salt, and ascorbic acid

(vitamin C).

British bread has some striking effects on British health. Starting with teeth: research shows that while white flour alone does not produce cavities, when mixed with sugar (as in bread and jam) it causes more cavities than sugar alone.

This is because white flour helps glue sugar to the teeth, giving it more time to attack the enamel. This combination of flour and sugar still provides around half the protein and energy of the very poor.

Wholewheat flour actually contains a substance which helps prevent cavities.

The vitamin E and four B-vitamins removed from and not replaced in refined flour all have important roles in health. Vitamin E in particular is chronically lacking in the British diet.

Constipation

Further down the body, we find that constipation is almost the norm in Britain, as a result of the low fibre content of refined flour. The bran removed during milling would otherwise provide bulk to, and keep moisture in, the other materials passing through the

bowels. This would cause a faster and easier throughput.

In a Third World diet, food passes through the body in only 1½ days, instead of between three days and two weeks in Westerners.

Diseases of the intestines are rare in Third Worlders. Constipation gives rise to piles and diverticulosis (infected ruptures in the walls of the bowels) as well as increasing the risk of bowel cancer, probably through all-owing cancer-causing substances to remain in contact with the walls of the bowels for longer periods.

Your taste for white bread (I don't touch the stuff) is highly profitable for the bread industry, who also own the large millers. (And they have the nerve to charge more for unrefined flour!)

At every stage of refinement, there is an opportunity for further profit - that's why you don't see many adverts for wholemeal bread!

Inadequate

The response of the trade union leadership, particularly the ISTC, has once again been woefully inadequate. Bill Sirs set out 4 options to fight this and other redundancies - overtime bans, limited stoppages, work to rule and refusal to talk about severance pay. As River Don's convenor Cliff Wright remarked, 'These options are not going to deter anybody from shutting down the steel industry. The union movement, including ISTC, has opted for soft options over the years, just doing next to nothing, which has no effect on those closing the industry down.'

'We are either here as trade unionists to stop the destruction of the industry in this country or we are playing games. We want total industrial action that will stop the closures and make the government sit up and listen to what we are saying.'

Stop Rot

Clearly Cliff Wright's words need to be put into action if the rot is to be stopped. Action is needed now if management's waiting game is not to wear down the workforce. The workers must demand full access to the management's plans and take action if details are not forthcoming. An occupation is necessary to stop any movement of equipment and any closures; and a fight by the whole movement to prevent de-nationalisation.

Socialist Organiser Science Group
Interested in science and interested in socialism?
Contact: SO science group, c/o Les Hearn, 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

Socialist Organiser

Fight the Tories, not the Socialists!
LABOUR MOVEMENT CONFERENCE
 Open to delegates from all labour movement organisations. Saturday September 11, from 10.30am at Wembley Conference Centre, London.

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STOP THE WITCH HUNT!

John Bloxam — who was National Organiser of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy in 1980-1 — argues that what we need now in the fight against the witch-hunt is a new united front of the Left, on the model of the RFMC.

WHAT NEEDS to come out of the 'Fight the Tories, not the Socialists' conference this weekend is a new version of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee which led the final stages of the battle for mandatory reselection and election of the Labour Party leadership.

Whether it will be another question. The conference will be big. Wembley Conference Centre will be full, and the Conference is backed by three national unions (ASLEF, Bakers, and FBU), the South Wales and Kent areas of the NUM, and many Constituency Labour Parties and union bodies.

The right wing has cause to be concerned, because such a display of the strength and breadth of the opposition to the register, two weeks before Party conference, before the constituency mandating meetings and before the crucial unions have decided how they will vote, cannot fail to be an important boost to the Left.

The Conference 'Organising Committee', apparently dominated by Militant, has presented a statement for discussion and voting at the end of conference.

The preamble argues that the witch hunt will not stop at Militant, but threatens all the 'serious left'. It is the right wing's counter-offensive against rank and file gains, and especially the democratic reforms. And it's a massive diversion from fighting the Tories.

The statement itself rightly focuses on opposition and defiance.

This Conference of the Labour Movement resolves to:

1. Fight for a united struggle against the Tories to secure the election of a Labour government committed to socialist policies
2. Campaign for a total opposition to the register at the forthcoming Labour Party conference and beyond.
3. Oppose any expulsion of Militant supporters or any socialists from the Labour Party for the ideas they hold, and the introduction of any bans, proscriptions or other witch-hunting activities, and defend the right of CLPs to select Parliamentary candidates of their choice.
4. Secure the election of

WITCH HUNT!

a National Executive Committee opposed to witch-hunts and committed to fight for Conference decisions and Labour's socialist aspirations as stated in Clause IV part 4 of the Party Constitution.

Without points 2 and 3 'opposition' to the witch-hunt is at best waffle. Together with a boycott of the register and a commitment from CLPs to refuse to expel or discipline members, they are the basis for defeating the right-wing's intended civil war.

For those who want to know what the register is really about, and how 'fair' it is:

At an early stage in the campaign against the register the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign approached Labour Party headquarters with some questions about the criteria for finding groups unacceptable. The reported response from the new general secretary, Jim Mortimer, says it all.

The possibility of winning the vote at this year's Party conference depends not only on 'winning the argument' but also on persuading sections of the trade union leadership that the rank and file will bitterly resist the attempted counter-revolution in the Party if the register goes through.

If the union leaders think that substantial sections of the left will sit by while Militant and others are attacked, then they will go ahead and support Foot.

A commitment to fight and win, together with pressure from the rank and

file of their unions, is the only way they can be forced to back off.

The chief fault of the Conference statement is that it begs the question of who is going to coordinate and organise the campaign.

The register is not going to be defeated by a one-off Conference, however large and militant, and it is not going to be defeated by people afterwards just going their own way.

The right wing is now well organised. To win, the

LARC should register, he said, and they shouldn't worry too much about the 'requirements' the NEC had laid down (for example, the condition that all meetings should be open to all Labour Party members, which could destroy LARC by flooding all its meetings with anti-abortion bigots). After all, purred Mortimer, LARC was not the target — the register was meant for others.

left is also going to have to be organised both in the Labour Party and in the trade unions, both nationally and locally.

Reforms

That is how the Left won the democratic reforms. The problem now is that though opposition to the register is very widespread, it is almost completely uncoordinated. The main effort so far at a united campaign — the Unregistered Alliance, which Socialist Organiser fully supports — is still weak, with both Militant and Tribune



"The heavy parent: 'My dear, if the violence of those Militants succeeds in establishing the excellent principle of the deportation of the politically undesirable, well, I for one will feel that they have not lived in vain.'"

Left — Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, Socialist Organiser, Labour Coordinating Committee, Militant, etc — with each group retaining its autonomy but subordinating secondary differences to the common cause.

Unity magnified our strength then. It would do the same now. The September 11 conference ought to elect an ad hoc committee pledged to work with others to form a new Rank and File Mobilising Committee, and

call on delegates to go back to their delegating bodies with a proposal to support this Mobilising Committee.

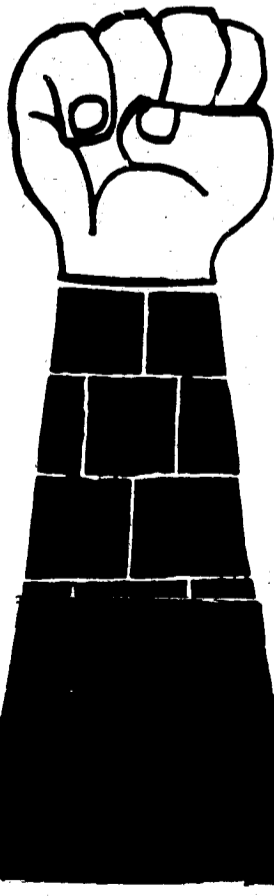
It should also endorse the October 30 conference of CLPs and trade union bodies against the witch-hunt, and resolve to use that conference too to build a new Mobilising Committee against the witch-hunt.

The possibility of considering these points depends on whether or not Conference will be able to amend

the statement. The Conference material gives no indication that amendments will be allowed, inquiries by Socialist Organiser to the Organising Committee have got no clear answer, and it looks like we will face a take-it-or-leave-it statement.

Delegating bodies should certainly 'take' it, but should also put pressure on the Organising Committee to run the Conference democratically and permit amendments.

£6000 fund



This week: £41.77 from Birmingham (including proceeds from 'Garden Party against the witch-hunt'), £17.75 from Coventry (proceeds of raffles, etc.), £15 from Stoke, £15 from Hull, and £50 miscellaneous.

Still a long way to go! Send contributions to Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL. Cheques payable to Socialist Organiser.

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