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Water, gas, power workers

UNITE TO WIN!

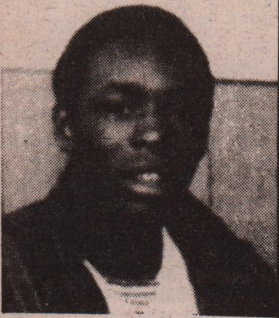
Roach
Family
Support
Committee

For an independent
public enquiry!
End the police intimid-
ation and mass
arrests

MARCH AND RALLY

Saturday February
12 at 1pm
Hackney Town
Hall, Mare Street
London E8

Hackney's racist cops
— see page 7



WITH the water workers' strike in its third week, gas workers' unions have rejected a pay offer of 4½% and power workers have rejected 4 to 4½%.

GMBU official John Edmonds spoke of the prospect of simultaneous strikes in all three industries; "the Government is backing itself into an argument with the three public utilities".

The EETPU has told members not to cooperate with moves to use alternative water supplies at power stations. In uncharacteristic style EETPU leader Frank Chapple declared that if power station workers were suspended, "it would result in action by our members".

Craft workers in the water industry are also set to strike, having rejected an offer similar to the one presented to the bulk of the workforce.

The possibility of a joint water/power/gas strike is there. But we could wait a long time if it is left to the top union leaders.

GMBU general secretary David Basnett has not even called out the union's water worker members in Scotland, despite a GMBU decision authorising him to do so.

The unions in the power industry have no plans to do anything on their pay claim before new talks on February 22.

Not a word

When Len Murray and Michael Foot got TV time on the new unemployment figures and the TUC Economic Review, they said not a word about the water workers.

And the Labour Left leaders — instead of going publicly to the picket lines as they did with ASLEF — have mostly been silent, all but a statement to Socialist Organiser from Tony Benn at the start of the strike.

The rank and file can and should take the initiative with delegations from the water workers to power stations and gasworks.

Already strikers have responded to management abuse of emergency cover, and the threat of the use of troops, by occupying water supply and sewage plants.

This strike can shake the Tories. They are visibly dissatisfied with the National Water Council management who, softened up over years of class collaboration, are hardly up to



their current role as the spearhead of Thatcherism.

The NWC's bumbling declaration that their 7.3% offer was "really" 8.5% can have done nothing but strengthen the strike.

Thames Water Authority have sent letters to every striker's home urging a return to work. In London police have tried to impose the Tebbit law strictly to prevent flying pickets, but elsewhere pickets are largely ignoring the Tory laws.

Two major steps are needed now to push the Tories into outright defeat:

*The election, and linking-up, of rank-and-

file strike committees not controlled by the full-timers. These committees should control emergency cover and organise picketing, delegations, and links with the power and gas workers. They should also link up with local support committees, which can be launched by trades councils and Labour Parties, bringing in other trade unionists (especially gas and power) and unemployed.

*From the base provided by such committees, maximum pressure on the union leaders to put their words into action and to call an all-out strike in water, gas and power.

O'GRADY - THE PROPERTY SHARKS' CANDIDATE!

Furore about nothing

Peter Tatchell spoke to Ian Swindale

What about the so-called 'Independent Labour' campaign?

The Independents have got no policies at all. Their whole campaign is a negative one, based on personal smears against me, and playing on people's prejudices.

I heard from a journalist today that their campaign headquarters is plastered with clippings from various newspapers, mainly focusing on my personal life. That is the extent of their campaign.

If you ask them what they are actually standing for they're at a loss to answer. If you ask them which of my policies they oppose, again they are at a loss to answer.

Not only have they got no policies but the record of O'Grady [the Independent Labour candidate] as leader of Southwark Council is a disgrace to anybody.

Star greets reject

WHATEVER else the SDP might fail to do, it did look when it was set up as if it could at least do one job efficiently — provide a safe berth for discredited Labour MPs fleeing re-selection.

But in Islington there just aren't enough berths to go round. After the Boundary Commission report is implemented, there will be only two constituencies in the borough — and three sitting SDP MPs.

Michael O'Halloran, MP for Islington North, is certain to be the one squeezed out. He was selected as Labour candidate only after highly dubious manoeuvres, and the high point of his career since then was as the only MP simultaneously to sign both pro- and anti-EEC statements.

Now O'Halloran wants to go back to the Labour Party. For left-wing activists this news is about as welcome as Al Capone returning to ask for his Party card back.

But if O'Halloran has few friends in the Labour Party or in the SDP, still someone has a soft spot for him.

The Communist Party paper, the Morning Star, on February 4 said: "His return to the Labour Party would be of limited (!) advantage, although he would nevertheless be welcome... one or two other SDP MPs might be considering reverse defection, which would be a heavy political blow for the SDP and a boost for Labour..."

Islington North Labour councillor Pat Longman told us: "If the CP values these SDP renegades so highly, then I would suggest they take them in themselves rather than wishing them on us".

He's the bloke who supported selling off Hay's Wharf, the entire site between London Bridge and Tower Bridge, to Arab oil barons to build the equivalent of 14 Centrepoints when local people in the area who he claims to represent as the real Labour candidate, want houses with gardens.

John O'Grady is the bloke who wanted to waste £30 million of the rate payers' money to build a new Town Hall, when that money was desperately needed to modernise older estates and to provide social services to the elderly and disabled.

He claims to be the real Labour candidate, the bloke who knows what the people of Bermondsey really want

and yet those policies he supported as leader of the council were not popular and he knows it.

He is clutching desperately at straws by resorting to this kind of smear campaign.

LDDC

Both Bob Mellish and John O'Grady sit on the London Docks Development Corporation. Bob Mellish is vice-chair, and is paid about £16,000 a year. He was appointed personally by Michael Heseltine. John O'Grady sits on the board and receives about £3,000 a year.

What Bob Mellish and John O'Grady never tell the people of Bermondsey is that they are actually paid employees of the LDDC.

They go around advocating the LDDC policies as though they are disinterested parties and yet they never declare their own personal interest.

Since Mellish and O'Grady have been on the board of the LDDC, it has vested, that is effectively stolen, 264 acres of land in the Southwark-Bermondsey constituency which it is now selling off to property speculators to build three yacht marinas in Surrey Docks, two million square feet of offices on Hay's Wharf and luxury flats on Corbett's Wharf, costing up to £170,000 each.

The LDDC was set up with the promise that it would create jobs for Bermondsey. In the three years

it has been established it hasn't created a single permanent job anywhere in this constituency. What it has done recently is give notice to quit to eight industrial firms employing 500 local people, so the land can be taken over to build these office blocks and luxury flats.

In the course of canvassing I have sometimes come across Labour supporters who are sceptical because while they would like houses with gardens and so on they don't think there is the money to pay for this and other aspects of Labour's programme. What would you say to those people?

There are a number of

different sources of finance for our programme.

First of all, the Labour Party is pledged to scrap the Trident nuclear system which the Tories plan to build at a cost of £11,000 million. So Labour will scrap that and put the money into new house building etc.

Wealth tax

Secondly we are pledged to introduce a wealth tax on the very rich and close the loopholes in Corporation Tax to ensure that major companies, many of which are making record profits, pay their taxes, and also through public borrowing.

So you are making it clear in your campaign that your plans for Bermondsey can only be carried out if the Tories are replaced by a Labour government.

Yes. And the next Labour government if it is going to carry out its promises, will have to be a very determined government, prepared to tackle the inequalities of wealth and power in our society and redistribute them in favour of the working class.

AS IF there aren't enough problems already for Labour candidate Peter Tatchell in the Bermondsey by-election, the Labour leadership managed to add another one this week.

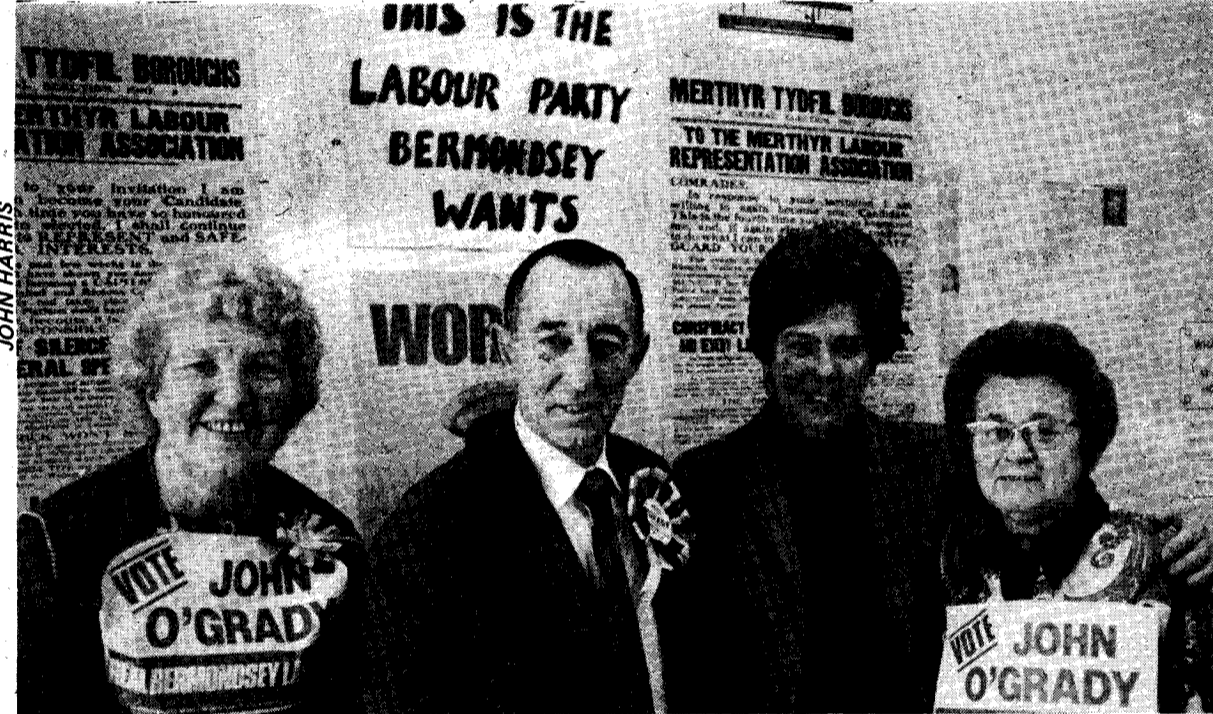
Fired by their obsession with the Militant tendency they ordered the pulping of 25,000 leaflets because they had been printed by Cambridge Heath Press, which prints the Militant newspaper.

Peter Tatchell's press conference to launch the Labour campaign was postponed and a "crisis meeting" was held between national officials and the local Party.

Having made a huge issue out of nothing, Labour leaders then blamed the press for blowing the dispute up out of all proportion. But it was the national officials who handed the press the opportunity to witch-hunt Tatchell even before the Labour campaign had been launched.

Not only has Bermondsey Labour Party used Cambridge Heath Press for its local material over a number of years, but the Labour Party itself has on occasion had material printed there until last year's conference decision to establish a register.

'Independent Labour' candidate O'Grady with helpers: his record is "a disgrace to anybody"



JOHN HARRIS

Briefing looks to election

by John Bloxam

75 people from five different Labour Briefing groups attended the conference 'Towards a National Network' last Saturday, 5th.

The only significant Briefing group not represented was the West Midlands. As the circulation figures for the local Briefings show — London 3500, Merseyside 750, Brighton 400 — the Briefing format has proved an effective way for the left to caucus, organise, and discuss.

conference that they had 'self-criticised' and would now (!) take CLPD seriously. But no conclusions were reached.

Implications

Ken Livingstone's contribution on 'organising at local government level' had major implications for those many in the Briefing network who have seen his activity as a shining example of Labour 'taking the power' at council level.

For Livingstone, the lesson of the GLC was the need "to have a clearer view of the limitations involved... Realistic assessment of how little power there is in local government. We're creatures of central government".

For those who took a different view, and presumably for the Clay Cross councillors, he had this to say — he was against "the standard macho argument of 'all over the top, take on the government'. There's not much point when they've got all the machine guns".

Tackle

There was no time (even if there was the inclination) to discuss all these points. But we will have to tackle them while organising a new Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory type body.

Comrades should remember that one of the standard arguments of the Wilson/Callaghan government was that they had little power and the IMF had "all the machine guns".

Turn outwards to build support!

by Jeremy Corbyn, Labour prospective parliamentary candidate for Islington North

THAT 1983 will be an election year is hardly news — Thatcher has deliberately tried to create a suitably nationalist and militaristic atmosphere, designed to divert attention from the real issues for the working class.

Our campaign has to be directed at and involving our supporters — a spurious appeal to the middle ground will not win their support, or the election. If people want a laissez-faire government they have got one, if they want an equally repressive social democratic one, the alternative is there for them.

All the expressions of working class opinion do not show opposition to

Labour's policies. They show that the policies are often not understood and there is little faith in the ability of a Labour government to achieve full employment, decent housing and a proper Health Service.

Our job has to be to point out the record of the last Labour government and the pressures it succumbed to from the International Monetary Fund.

An incoming Labour



The Labour Right's policies lost us the 1979 election

government will face tremendous pressures — immediate fall in share prices, speculation on the currency, obstruction from the Common Market and all out opposition to unilateralism from the Pentagon.

However, we will not reach an election victory if the party does not turn all its campaigning activities outwards to mobilise the support we can count on.

A major theme of the election has to be the way the Tories have systematically and efficiently paralysed the inner city areas. Islington has been fined £5 per head for cuts in local government alone; add to that the cuts in support for the Inner London Education Authority, the attacks on the local Health Service by cuts and closures, and the massive local unemployment rate of 24%, and the picture of Tory misery is complete. It is on how to campaign

practically that the party is weak. Every Labour Party should now be forming alliances with local unemployed groups to demand jobs, with Health Workers and Health Campaigns to defend our National Health Service.

The repressive and sexist legislation of the Tories must be fought by a real alliance with the ethnic minority and women's organisations, to oppose the Nationality Act and Immigration laws and to promote a real charter for women's rights.

We will win the election if we fight with all those fighting Toryism; you cannot do this if on the other hand the party leadership is trying to expel socialists and use every TV appearance to attack the left.

The politics of the Labour Right caused us defeat in 1970 and 1979; our job is to go out and fight to win.

Jeremy Corbyn

Time to review TUC's policies!

LAST week the TUC's Economic Review 1983 was published. It has well-presented facts and figures on the devastation suffered by the British working class since May 1979. It clearly and concisely demolishes the myth that unemployment is due to immigration or to new technology. It explains the case for women's equal right to a job, and shows how women have suffered doubly in the slump.

Some 3.9 million people are now unemployed (600,000 of them not showing up in the government figures), and another are on government schemes rather than proper jobs. The number unemployed for more than a year trebled between October 1980 and October 1982, to 1.2 million.

Since 1979, the number below the poverty line has increased by 1.5 million. Families on half average earnings have seen their real take-home income go down 3.2%, while families on five times average earnings are 18% better off in real income (figures for married couples with two children). And last year the top 25% of chief executives got pay rises of 18% plus.

The TUC also recalls the facts about inequality of wealth: the top 1 per cent owned 23% of all marketable wealth and about 80% of all privately held shares. And 100 companies account for 40% of industrial output and trade.

But what's the answer? The main job of the TUC is after all not to collect figures but to organise workers to defend their interests. And in that respect the Economic Review has little to offer. It's a bit more than Labour front-bencher Peter Shore offered in a recent TV interview with Brian Walden — a choice between devaluation and monetarism — but not much.

Its main proposals are:

- Increased public spending and a National Investment Board;
- Exchange controls, devaluation, and selective import controls;
- Gradual reduction of the work week to 35 hours over five years.

These policies will, the TUC argues, over five years reduce unemployment to one million.

The aim proposed is minimal enough: ten years ago a million unemployed would have been considered shocking. But will the policies even achieve that?

The Mitterrand experience

Increased state spending can sometimes pull a capitalist economy out of a slump, at least for a time. But with profit rates low, chronic overproduction in basic industries, and the world financial system in a delicate state, it is more likely to produce inflation, balance of payments crises, and runs on the currency.

Such, anyway, was the experience of these 'reflationary' policies in the 1970s, and such has been the experience of the Mitterrand government in France.

The Mitterrand government has also resorted to wage controls. Some Labour politicians supposedly on the Left — like Michael Meacher — have said plainly that they consider incomes policy an essential part of 'reflation'. And the TUC? It refers coyly and as briefly as possible to a 'National Economic Assessment' — on all evidence, just a new name for TUC-policed wage controls.

Will exchange controls and import controls help,

or simply foul up capitalist world trade even more while misdirecting the labour movement towards trying to export unemployment, rather than fight it? The TUC is "disturbed" at the "the growing clamour for negative protectionism in the major industrialised economies", and condemns "those who are content to divide up the misery to their best advantage through 'beggar my neighbour' policies". But the difference between such "negative restrictions" and the TUC's "managed trade" amounts only to good intentions: the TUC "wishes to see an expansion of world trade".

To believe in the TUC's answer we have to believe in a very superficial account of the causes of the slump. "The main cause of the world recession... is the restrictive policies pursued by the major economies, and pursued most vigorously by the UK". So all that's needed is a return to the expansionary public-spending policies of the '50s and '60s, and we'll all be better off, from the desperate claimants who will get jobs to the millionaires who will see business and profits boom!

The cause of the slump

In other words, the slump is caused by nothing deeper than political stupidity by Thatcher and Reagan.

But then why did the 1969-71 recession happen? What was the cause of the 1974-5 slump? Is it all just a chain of accidents?

Or isn't it more likely that behind these crises is a developing decay of the world capitalist system, with its chronic tendencies for production to outstrip demand, for investment to develop out of

balance with consumption, for the growth of capital to choke itself off through a falling rate of profit, and for national rivalries to dislocate the world economy? That the rise of monetarism is an effect of the slump (and then a secondary factor in deepening it), rather than its cause?

To identify the inherent contradictions of capitalism as the prime cause of the devastation is to point to socialist policies as the answer — and to why the TUC is so sup... in its analysis.

Common ownership of the major industries and banks, as the foundation for worker-controlled economic planning which could ensure decent jobs for all, is a professed aim of many unions. But the Economic Review has not a word about it.

It does not even propose such measures to defend living standards and jobs as automatic inflation-protection for wages (with a workers' price index) and work-sharing under workers' control with no loss of pay.

Inadequate though the TUC's proposals on a shorter work week and more public spending are as an answer to the crisis, they are certainly worthwhile as far as they go. But there is no proposal for the TUC to campaign, agitate, or take action to impose them if the government rejects its advice.

In short, all the proposals are just advice to the government — and evidently tailored to the limits of what seems 'reasonable' as advice to a capitalist government.

As the crisis gets worse, those limits get narrower; the TUC's words of advice emptier; and the need for the labour movement to change course towards policies for mobilisation and for a workers' government, more urgent.

Conveners silent as Ford screws the shop floor

By Harry Sloan

FORD union leaders knew last June that the company intended massive attacks on jobs. They were told to keep it quiet both from the press and from their members — and they did so!

Worse, they sat mute while the moves to cut the workforce began with the transfer of 60 workers from the engine plant to the Body Plant, linked to massive speed-up designed to pressurise older workers into leaving.

Virtually the whole of the Dagenham leadership, including prominent Communist Party member Sid Harraway, have been involved in this scandalous cover-up and jobs massacre.

Now management are pressing further ahead. Last weekend they revealed plans to cut a further 2,900 jobs at the Dagenham body and assembly plants — 28% of the workforce — on top of the 600 jobs already lost since last June.

Bankruptcy

Since Ford — with profits running in excess of £200 million per year — can hardly use the standard BL, Talbot or Vauxhall argument of impending bankruptcy as a threat to bludgeon union officials and conveners into line, they have come up with a new, multinational argument: equalising productivity levels in European plants.

This strong-arm tactic has already been employed at Halewood, where not long ago management an-



Convenor Sid Harraway kept the lid on Ford's plans to axe jobs

nounced that it wants to cut 1,900 manual jobs — 14% of the workforce — by April, while raising levels of output to those of its Saarlouis plant.

Dagenham workers are being compared unfavourably with their fellow Ford employees at Genk in Belgium, which also produces the new Sierra model. Manning levels in Dagenham, say management, are unacceptably high.

And there are increasingly explicit threats that the multinational Ford corporation could switch its production out of British plants unless the workforce toe the line and accept drastic speed-up.

Management are obviously encouraged in this tactic both by the general

miserable level of collaboration and capitulation shown by union officials and sections of conveners elsewhere in the car industry when threatened with possible closure, and by the particular attitude of the Dagenham leadership.

Commitment

Even now that Ford management are seeking to cut out all breaks, speed up the lines, and smash down job demarcation, union leaders are still declaring their commitment to maximising production in Dagenham.

The parallels with BL — in which successive management 'survival' plans drew in the support both of

union officials and the practical collaboration of the Communist Party, as well as right wing conveners — should not be missed.

Ford workers can pull back from the slippery path to speed-up and redundancies opened up by their leaders: but only if management threats and their selective figures are firmly rejected.

Ford UK is the most — if not currently the only — profitable subsidiary of the giant corporation. While it is plainly possible under certain conditions for management to supply particular components or even finished cars to fill gaps in production in Britain, they have no interest in winning up their British operations.

outdated than plants in Europe or Latin America.

On top of this the 'comparisons' between plant and plant are in almost all cases fraudulent. But to expose this, it is necessary for the Dagenham and Halewood unions to mobilise — to elect rank and file committees to demand full access to Ford's accounts and plans, and to seek immediate discussions and links with their fellow Ford trade unionists in Germany, Belgium, and around the world.

It is in no worker's interest to be carved up, one plant against another, by a cynical and exploitative management. An appeal to workers in Saarlouis and other plants to support the Dagenham workers' fight is



A multinational company with a multinational workforce — and the union leaders go for a 'Buy British' campaign!

and conditions, for parity of wages, and for joint structures to monitor and combat management attacks could win a response, and forge a powerful alliance in which strikes, occupations and boycott action could be taken with support on a European scale.

Ford management is not inhibited by national frontiers: unfortunately, however, this is not true of British trade unionists. Last weekend saw the Dagenham union leaders head a 'Buy British' campaign.

of imports' into Britain, setting up a 'Campaign for Import Controls Committee'.

Instead of reaching out for an international fight against a powerful class enemy, they see the task as preserving 'British' industry and 'British' jobs against 'foreign' competition.

The bitter practical consequences of such a policy can be seen in the squalid eight month silence by Dagenham conveners while Ford management stepped up the line

JOHN STURROCK (REPORT)

In brief

FURTHER developments in the strike wave in the French car industry have brought the Communist Party led CGT union federation into conflict with the CP/Socialist Party coalition government.

Last Wednesday, 2nd, a CGT protest at the Citroën Aulnay factory in pursuit of wage demands led to clashes with members of the fascist CSL, which acts as a 'company union' in Citroën. 17 workers were injured.

Despite the CSL's evil reputation, Labour Minister Jean Auroux promptly denounced the CGT as responsible. And now Citroën has sacked 15 workers, including the factory CGT leader Akka Ghazi and three other CGT representatives.

Strikes have continued in other factories. The paintshop at Renault Flins, where the movement began under the leadership of the CFDT union, voted on Friday January 27 to go back on the basis of bonus payments ranging from 70 francs to 155 (£7 to £15). On the same day, the 1983 national pay agreement for Renault was signed: an 8% increase.

THE ISRAELI inquiry into last September's Beirut massacre has produced its findings, selected sections of which have been made public. They include the resignation or removal of Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, criticism of Prime Minister Begin and Army Chief of Staff Raphael Eitan, and the recommended dismissal of the Military Intelligence chief.

The report is unexpectedly tough in tone, though its proposals are restricted to a cosmetic clean-up of the bloody Zionist war machine without whose savage invasion of Lebanon — leaving 17,000 dead and 30,000 wounded — the Phalangist murder squad would never have got into the Sabra and Chatila camps to massacre another 700 unarmed Palestinian men, women and children.

It poses a new crisis for the Begin government, which has so far weathered the storm of protest at home and abroad at the time of the massacre.

THE Australian Labour Party's new leader, Bob Hawke, has opened his campaign for the March 5 general election by dropping proposals for a capital gains tax. Hawke is also trying for an agreement with the trade unions for incomes policy.

So deep is the discredit of the Thatcherite Liberal-National coalition led by Malcolm Fraser, however, that Labour still looks likely to win. Latest opinion polls give Labour 52% of the vote and Fraser 31%, with 17% "don't know".

PRESIDENT Reagan has indicated US approval of the Turkish dictatorship of General Kenan Evren by doubling US military aid and handing out a hefty sum in economic aid. The US administration plans to give no less than \$755 million to support the military junta that presides over one of the most repressive regimes in the world — and a further \$175 million in economic aid.

The people without a state

KURDISTAN has never existed as an independent state.

Originally, Kurdish areas were divided between the Persian and Ottoman Empires. During the First World War, as a result of the break-up of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of new nation states, Kurdistan was divided into four areas in Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran.

During negotiations between the great powers of the time, including Britain, the Kurdish people were promised autonomy. That promise was never kept, and the Kurdish struggle in all areas has continued.

The Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran was founded during the Second World War. It was at a time when Iranian society as a whole underwent a transformation as a result of the downfall of the monarchy of Reza Khan, the Shah's father. For the first time in the recent history of Iranian Kurds, the desires of different strata of the population were translated into the formation of a new party, the KDPI.

The creation of the Party has its roots also in the continuing struggle of the Kurds in Iraq and Turkey.

The KDP was formed at a mass demonstration in Mahabad, and the demand for autonomy was declared at that meeting.

Months

In 1946 the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad was established, which lasted for 11 months.

If we go back and assess the history of the Party it is questionable whether the leadership in that era was in a position to declare an autonomous Kurdish state within the monarchical framework of the Shah. After the crushing of the Republic, the new generation continued the struggle under the new circumstances which necessitated clandestine activity.

At a KDP conference in 1948 the demand for autonomy was again raised, but this time the programme concentrated on the necessity for fighting the reactionary elements within Kurdistan who represented the higher classes in the society. During the government of Mossadeq and the democratic struggle in the whole of Iran in the early 1950s, the KDPI played a very positive role in organising the peasantry in some areas of Iranian Kurdistan and helped to raise the consciousness of the peasant population.

In the late sixties an armed struggle developed. Kurdish militants who had fled from the Shah's persecution to Iraq clandestinely came back into Iran and organised an armed struggle amongst the peasantry and through KDP local committees. This continued for eighteen months until it was brutally crushed by the central government, helped by the armed gang of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, who was then the leader of the

Mary Corbishley spoke to Hassan Ghazi, a member of the European Committee of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI).



'Peshmergas' — the Kurdistan liberation fighters

Kurdish struggle in Iraq and who had close links with the Shah, having become embroiled in US-Iranian plans for the area.

In spite of the different hardships torture and persecution the ideals of the KDPI were present amongst the Kurdish population. The KDP since its inception has represented a wide range of Kurdish society.

We have four main demands: the establishment of a democratic system in Iran, opposition to imperialism in Iran, especially US imperialism; the achievement of the political, cultural and economic rights of the Kurdish people, and their aspirations for autonomy.

During the escalation of mass protests against the Shah's regime in the late seventies, it became possible for different groups to organise and make direct links with the people. After the Shah's downfall in February 1979, the first open meeting in Mahabad was attended by 100,000 peasants and town dwellers. After 33 years of clan-

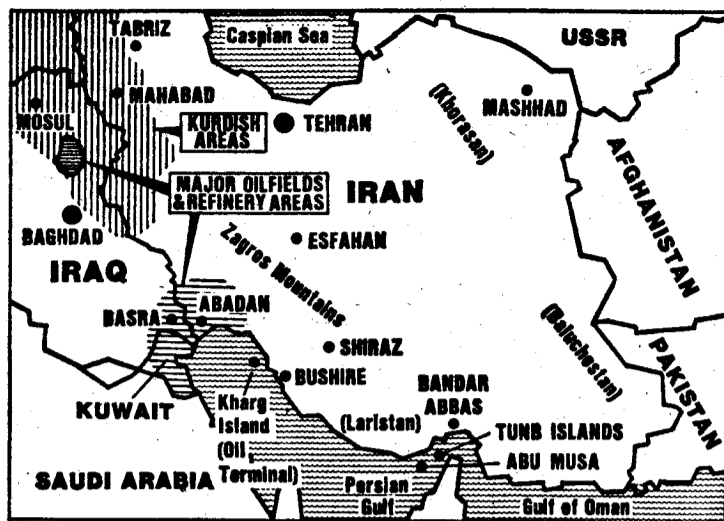
destine activity since the Mahabad republic, the KDPI could openly organise.

At the outset we made it clear that we would not necessarily seek confrontation methods in order to achieve our demands. At the Mahabad meeting we expressed our wish to negotiate with Ayatollah Khomeini's government on our legitimate demands which we saw as linked to a process of democratisation in Iran.

Prepared

Requesting negotiations didn't mean we had any illusions in the government. A delegation of the Bazargan government came to Kurdistan for discussions. They prolonged these discussions because behind it all they were attempting to provoke a confrontation.

But we were prepared. The people in Kurdistan were in a good position to take over the army barracks after the Shah's downfall. Kurdistan was the most militarised area of Iran during the Shah's regime.



Khomeini's firing squads have massacred hundreds

In March 1979 the new government started a war against the Kurdish people by attacking Sanandaj. After Sanandaj, the army entered Parveh on the pretext that the Kurds were trying to secede.

Ayatollah Khomeini declared a Jihad (holy war) against the Kurdish people, branding the leadership as infidels and agents of imperialism. Kurdistan was systematically bombarded from August to November 1979.

Then Khomeini called for negotiations declaring that the demands of the Kurds were legitimate. It was a ruse. We knew that Khomeini was trying to consolidate his constitution and was facing internal problems.

Invasion

It was not long before the attacks were resumed. Since March 1980 they have continued uninterrupted.

With the invasion of Iran by Iraq we felt that the government's ability to attack Kurdistan would be weakened. Our position was that the government should withdraw the Pasdaran (revolutionary guards) from Kurdistan and leave the internal affairs of Kurdistan to its people — we would then defend the borders.

This met with no response from the government. In fact the attacks on Kurdistan escalated.

When in June 1982 Iran invaded Iraq we also condemned this invasion, saying that it was for the people of Iraq to decide their own affairs and that the continuation of the war was a pretext for the government who were facing mounting turmoil and opposition in Iran.

Through the war the Iranian government was trying to consolidate itself.

In spite of the bombardments we can say that without exaggeration our movement has become stronger. In June a new base was created in Urumieh in Western Azerbaijan which coordinated all the government forces, the Pasdaran, the army and a new force, the Basidij (young Islamic fanatics).

The aim was to open up a new front against the

Iraqis and to cut links between the Kurdish liberated areas — those areas controlled by the KDP.

They wanted to gain control of a strategic road between Piranshar and Sardasht. Partial control by day has been gained and in their attempts they used the infamous 'human wave' tactic — sending young school children in front to clear a path for the tanks.

But the Peshmergas still control the road at night, the resistance has been led by the Peshmergas and local people's militias and casualties amongst government forces have been heavy.

The winter weather has aided our struggle and we hope that by next spring the Peshmergas will be able to regain total control. We also hope that the struggle will develop in other parts of Iran to extend the resistance taking place in Kurdistan. We see Kurdistan as a barrack of freedom in Iran.

What can the labour movement here do to support the fight for autonomy in Kurdistan?

In spite of the historical plight of the Kurdish people in spite of all their sacrifices

and hardships over many years in different parts of Kurdistan their struggle has not gained the worldwide support that it needs.

I think that the labour movement everywhere, including Britain, can play a very big role by showing their solidarity with the struggle of the Kurdish people.

We believe that our struggle is a link in the chain of the struggle of oppressed people everywhere.

I understand that in the 1982 Labour Party conference there was mention of the Kurdish struggle in the international report. We see this as a very positive step and we hope that this moral support will develop into more concrete solidarity.

An evening of Kurdish music and songs. Saturday February 19, 6pm, Camden Centre, Bedford Way, London NW1. Adm. £2.50, £1 unwaged.

New issue of 'Kurdistan News & Comment': 35p plus postage from Kurdistan Solidarity, PO Box 30, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

KSC Meeting: Sunday February 13, 8pm, Prince Albert, Wharfedale Rd, N1.

Advertisement

NEW!

The Socialist Workers' Party of the USA, an old-established Trotskyist group, has recently and suddenly announced that Trotsky's theory of 'permanent revolution' was wrong after all. This new pamphlet — 40p plus postage from PO Box 135, London N1 0DD — looks at the argument.



Selling the trillion dollar race to destruction

THE controversial and highly publicised Tory plan to place a £1 million advertising contract to 'sell' the case for Cruise missiles has apparently been quietly ditched. But Ronald Reagan is still intent on a much bigger \$65 million 'public diplomacy' campaign to sell his warmongering missiles policy to a sceptical European public.

Working on the scheme will be media consultant Peter Dailey and Reagan's national security adviser, William Clark. Their first enterprise has been the arrangement of a whistle-stop tour of Europe by US vice-president George Bush.

Bush's mission is to bolster up the NATO heads of state who are visibly wilting in the face of the rapid growth of the peace movement.

But despite the fanfare that greeted Bush's ceremonial reading in West Germany of Reagan's 'Letter to the people of Europe', he has brought no new policies, nor any hope of an easing of the arms race.

Instead all that was on offer from Reagan was a repetition of his 14-month old 'zero option' policy — one that is patently unacceptable to the Moscow bureaucrats.

Dismantle

Under the 'zero option', the Soviet Union would be called upon to dismantle all its medium range nuclear missiles in Europe.

In 'exchange', the US administration would agree not to deploy its stockpile of 572 Cruise and Pershing missiles in a string of European bases reaching from Greenham Common across to Sicily.

But the 162 medium range nuclear missiles possessed by Britain and France and on 115 submarines assigned to NATO would remain targeted on the Soviet Union — leaving Moscow at a marked disadvantage at the hands of the anti-Soviet NATO alliance.

Meanwhile Reagan proposes to forge ahead with the new and astronomically expensive MX intercontinental missile based in the American mid-west.

And the US is deploying 2,000 to 3,000 additional aircraft-launched cruise missiles carried on B-52 bombers over and above the controversial ground-launched missiles destined for Europe.

Far from lessening the danger of nuclear war, Reagan's every proposal in-

creases that danger, as part of the biggest arms build-up in recorded history.

In his budget proposals drawn up at the end of January, Reagan has allocated no less than 1.6 trillion dollars — that is, \$1,600,000,000,000 — over the next five years to projects including the production of MX and Pershing 2 missiles, the B1 nuclear bomber, and the Trident nuclear submarine programme. The total list of new hardware planned includes F-15 and F-16 fighters, C5 cargo planes, cruisers, aircraft carriers, assault ships and submarines.

Despite talk of cuts in military spending, Reagan has raised the arms budget by \$30 billion, while welfare, pensions and social programmes have been viciously cut back.

Opinion poll

A recent CBS-New York Times opinion poll showed that 63 per cent of Americans (as against 48% a year ago) reckon that cutting defence is the best way of cutting the budget deficit.

Reagan's priorities, however, are clear for all to see. And simply to garnish his fraudulent 'zero option' with trumpeted announcements that he is willing at once to sign such an agreement with Soviet leader Andropov does nothing to change these facts.

The Pentagon war chiefs, struggling in Central Am-



erica to preserve a string of increasingly shaky right wing dictatorships and turn back the new tide of struggle epitomised by the Nicaraguan revolution, are attempting firmly to establish their global military supremacy over the Soviet Union.

Having suffered humiliating setbacks to their power in the struggles of the late 1970s, they hope to create conditions in which they can intimidate the Soviet bureaucracy into withholding material support from anti-imperialist struggles and radical regimes, and check its expanding global power and influence.

But in doing so the US

imperialists are building up the potential for an escalation of tension and the ever-present danger of miscalculations that could plunge the world into war.

First strike

Significantly, US war chiefs have time and again declared that they wish to retain the 'options' of waging a 'first strike' nuclear attack, and using 'tactical' nuclear weapons in central Europe.

This is why NATO leaders have refused to echo Brezhnev's 1981 proposal to forgo any first nuclear strike.

And in reply to the most

keeping the enemy guessing at the level of likely response, while NATO doctrine is that the West could even use nuclear weapons first".

This attitude on the part of the imperialist powers is nothing new. It was firmly the position of NATO's former Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Alexander Haig, who declared in a letter to the NATO secretary general in 1979 that:

"One of our presuppositions in nuclear planning is that, under certain circumstances likely to develop in Europe, we may be forced to make first use of nuclear weapons".

This trigger-happy atti-

"I don't honestly know. I think again, until some place... all over the world this is being research going on, to try and find the defensive weapon. There never has been a weapon that someone hasn't come up with a defence. But it could... and the only defence is, well, you shoot yours and we'll shoot ours..."

"And if you still had that kind of a stalemate, I could see where you could have the exchange of tactical weapons against troops in the field without it bringing either one of the major powers to pushing the button".

Asked whether there could be a battlefield exchange of nuclear weapons without an exchange of strategic nuclear weapons, President Reagan replied: "Well, I would — if they realised that we — again if — if we led them back to that stalemate only because that our retaliatory power, our seconds, or our strike that they after their first strike, would be so destructive that they couldn't afford it, that would hold them off".

Ronald Reagan replying to reporters, October 16 1981. Quoted in a new Penguin: 'Defended to Death', edited by Gwyn Prins.



recent proposals from Soviet leader Yuri Andropov for a 370-mile wide nuclear-free zone in central Europe, NATO spokesmen have been quickly dismissive.

One declared that: "Total elimination of short range nuclear weapons from the crucial area of central Europe would go against the Western Alliance's doctrine of flexible response".

Flexible response

By 'flexible response' the generals plainly mean the ability to unleash nuclear weapons at will. Another stated this even more bluntly,

"The core of NATO's deterrence policy is aimed at

tude on behalf of the US leaders whose fingers will be on the control buttons of the new missiles has helped to build the massive peace movements that have emerged across the continent of Europe.

And it is this peace movement which has piled increasing pressure on the leaders of the 'socialist' parties, to the extent that the social-democratic governments of France, Sweden, Greece, Spain and Austria recently jointly appealed to Reagan to negotiate with the Soviet leadership rather than pursue the next stage of the arms race.

Even Britain's Dennis Healey, well-known for his pro-NATO stance, has welcomed Andropov's latest proposals and criticised

Thatcher and Reagan for rejecting them out of hand.

In West Germany, the coming general election already features the missiles issue at the centre of the campaign, with the right wing Christian Democrat government of Helmut Kohl upholding Reagan's line while the Social Democratic opposition headed by Hans-Jochen Vogel presses for acceptance of the Soviet proposals.

It is plain that the missiles will also be at the centre of the stage in the next election in Britain. With MORI polls showing 54%, and Marplan 60%, against Cruise missiles, the Marplan figures also show that a staggering 40% of Tory voters are against the missiles.

No wonder Thatcher — whose own election campaign relied so heavily on the slick salescraft of Saatchi and Saatchi — has begun to contemplate desperate advertising measures to stem the tide of CND.

Such problems have long been anticipated by the US war chiefs. Haig in the same 1979 letter pointed out that:

"We will never be able to put into effect our joint plans in this vital area unless quite exceptional efforts are made to check European tendencies towards neutralism, pacifism and unilateralism".

To conduct this propaganda war, he argues: "We should constantly bear in mind the necessity of further activating our collaboration with the mass media".

After exposing the myth of the 'free press', Haig speculates on the next step if people are still not convinced: "If argument, persuasion and impacting the media fail, we are left with no alternative but to jolt the faint-hearted in Europe through the creation of situations country-by-country, as deemed necessary, to convince them where their interests lie".

Ominously, he adds: "This would call for appropriate and effective action of a sensitive nature". Perhaps we have yet to see Haig's suggested 'situations' created, and the fruits of his 'sensitive

interventions. What is certain is that the increasingly energetic efforts of the imperialist leaders to promote their nuclear arms race have failed to check the growth of the anti-war movement.

But it is important that the movement against the missiles does not get derailed into acceptance of compensating increases in 'conventional' armaments (as now proposed by NATO's current Supreme Commander), or into demands for 'dual key' control over the new missiles (which according to MORI is supported by 93% of British voters).

To have Thatcher's hand move jointly with Reagan's in launching the missiles is no safeguard to the people of Europe.

Moreover, all experience shows that negotiations between the imperialists who devastated Vietnam, and the bureaucrats who sent tanks against the Hungarian and Czechoslovakian workers, will produce not disarmament but meaningless gestures.

The fact is that the root cause of the arms race is the national antagonisms arising from the capitalist system, coupled with the economic and political antagonisms between the nationalised economies of the Stalinist states on the one hand, and the exploitative, aggressive imperialist nations on the other.

It is in the struggle to weaken, disarm and overthrow capitalist governments and the capitalist class in the imperialist countries that we can put a stop to the nuclear war drive, and create more favourable conditions for the workers in the Stalinist states to wage their fight for the revolutionary overthrow of their ruling bureaucracies.

Many of those drawn into active support for CND do not agree with us on these implications: many seriously believe that pressure and public opinion can persuade the Thatcher government to change course on Cruise missiles. Others believe we can and should aim as a first step to stop the new missiles, but for British imperialism to remain part of the aggressive NATO alliance.

Yet the groundswell of support for unilateral disarmament in the British trade union and labour movement, and the growing body of rank and file opinion in the Labour Party opposing the NATO alliance as well as its barbaric weaponry, show that these questions can be must be raised within the anti-war movement.

Opposition to war can and must be developed into opposition to imperialism and the capitalist system which constantly drives towards war; and this means that the struggle against the missiles must be linked up with the other struggles against the Thatcher government.

A valuable step in this could be the campaign now floated by the Greenham Common women for a one-day national strike by women workers against the missiles. Such a move onto the industrial front would be a major advance for the anti-war movement.



Bush (left) with US arms negotiator, Nitz...

Women in struggle

South London Hospital staff get organised

by Jane Goss

THE South London Hospital is still open and it will stay open. That is the message coming from the South London Hospital Campaign which met last week to decide how to carry the fight forward in the wake of the Wandsworth District Health Authority decision to recommend closure.

The meeting was well attended and had support from workers from St. Benedict's and other hospitals which have waged a battle against closure.

The workers in the South London Hospital have also organised. They have formed an action committee and are meeting regularly to decide what steps they will take to oppose the attempted rundown which management will try to begin immediately.

Since the District Health



"The hospital is very popular with the local community"

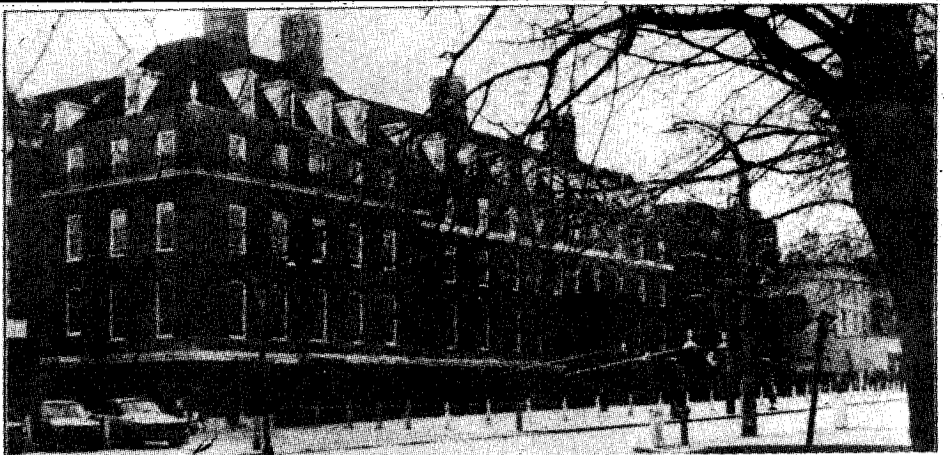
Authority meeting, which was well publicised following the disruption of the voting, offers of help and messages of support have been received continuously. The hospital is very popular with the local community and has a well deserved national reputation as a treatment

centre for women.

The fight for the South London is just one of the many battles raging in London over hospital closures and is a reflection of the national position with the Tories attempting to dismantle the NHS by privatisation and cutting services.

The campaign meeting agreed to support a press conference of all the London groups opposing closure of their hospitals. That kind of publicity will highlight the viciousness of the Tory attacks on the health of the working class.

If workers in hospitals



"South London is open - and will stay open"

could examine the books of the Health Authorities they would soon see that there is money available - money to spend on expensive brand name drugs to increase profits for already rich drug companies and money to pay for food and drink for prestige administrative and medical meetings.

But there is no money to give patients a decent breakfast and no money to hire enough staff to keep the wards clean.

Wreck

The Tories are determined to wreck the health service and our health workers and the community are fighting against it.

With solid support, the South London can stay open and lead the fightback - you can help by inviting speakers, passing resolutions of support, sending donations and contacting the campaign to find out what activities are planned.

Messages of support to: South London Hospital Action Committee, South London Hospital, Clapham Common, London SW4.

Donations to: South London Women's Hospital Campaign, 4 Louvaine Road, London SW11.

Reagan hits at young women



YOUNG women in the USA might seem to face enough problems with the massive 10.4% unemployment squeezing them out of any prospect of a job.

But Ronald Reagan's administration has done its best to make their lives even more unpleasant.

As of February 25, new regulations will come into force compelling federally-funded family planning clinics to notify the parents of women under 18 who are given prescriptions for contraceptives. Exceptions are allowed only where the notification might provoke violence at the hands of the woman's parents.

The regulations were brought in by Reagan's 'Health and Human Services' Secretary Richard Schweiker as a parting kick to American women before heading off to a well-paid job in private industry.

But Schweiker's replacement - a woman - appears set to endorse the new rules, despite the fact that before her appointment, as a member of Congress she twice joined with fellow Congresswomen to sign letters to Reagan opposing the idea!

The regulations are opposed by a strong lobby, including the American Public Health Association, and civil liberties groups who point out that the instructions discriminate against teenage women, since young men need no prescriptions for contraceptives, and do not face the danger of pregnancy.

But Reagan, whose candidacy was backed by the hidebound "moral" reactionaries of America's New Right, has stood firm in implementing the proposals.

Timid reform sparks backlash

20,000 Spanish women come to Britain each year for abortions. Abortion in Spain is at present illegal with prison sentences of 10 years not uncommon for both the women having abortions and those who perform or collaborate in them.

Amid a huge backlash from the Church, the Socialist Party has introduced a law, going through the Spanish Parliament at the moment, which would decriminalise abortions in three cases: for a woman who is raped, for a woman likely to undergo grave risk if she continued with the pregnancy and in the case of foetal deformity.

An abortion under these headings could still only be carried out with the permission of two doctors and a gynaecologist before 12 weeks. It is estimated that this would provide abortions for around 5% of the women who want them.

This reform was promised in the SP election manifesto, though it falls far short of the 1979 manifesto promise of abortions for all women who want them.

There are many abortion pro-choice groups in Spain who have been campaigning for reforms for years, who have been disappointed by the limited reform of the Gonzalez government. Campaigns have been launched demanding better

reforms and a demonstration was held in Madrid last week.

Surveys have been commissioned on what women actually want themselves. The only support inside Parliament for the feminists and pro-abortion groups demanding more, has come from Communist Party representatives, yet they too think there ought to be a 12-week limit.

The Socialist Party have not yet made clear how they think their reform should be carried out - namely how it is going to be paid for, which suggests that they think that women should pay for their abortions themselves.

Abortions can be got in Spain, as anywhere else in the world, if you have enough money - the going rate is over £300 - that's more than the fare from Spain to Britain and back including the money Spanish women have to pay here to get an abortion.

Predictably the Church has reacted virulently against any reform, with pastoral letters, screams of 'murder', and bishops hurling threats of condemnation to eternal hell on the heads of all socialists.

Reforms, however limited, are always welcome. But this law - despite the furore - will hardly make any impression on the vast majority of Spanish women.

Jo Thwaites



"Many pro-choice groups have been disappointed"

February	
Monday	7 14 21 28
Tuesday	1 8 15 22
Wednesday	2 9 16 23
Thursday	3 10 17 24
Friday	4 11 18 25
Saturday	5 12 19 26
Sunday	6 13 20 27

WHAT'S ON

SPARTACIST Truth Kit - a 68-page analysis by John Lister, published by the Workers' Socialist League. £1 plus 25p postage from WSL, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

BAN Plastic Bullets: a labour movement delegate conference. Saturday February 26, from 11am at UMIST, Barnes Wallis Building, Sackville St, Manchester 1. Sponsors include Labour Committee on Ireland. Credentials for labour movement delegates £3 from Plastic Bullets Conference, Box 15, 164-6 Hanging Ditch, Manchester M3 4BN.

WOMEN, Immigration and Nationality: meeting to discuss our future as a campaign. Sunday March 13, 1.30 to 4.30pm, County Hall, London SE1. All women welcome. Creche on premises.

NOTTINGHAM Campaign Against Rayner conference: Saturday February 19, 10.30 to 4.30, at Nottingham Centre for the Unem-

ployed, Hounds Gate. Creche and lunch available. Morning includes speakers from CPUSA NEC and Child Poverty Action Group, and a Labour MP; afternoon workshops on ESSP, job centres/ethnic monitoring, new supplementary benefit legislation. Open to all unemployed people and delegates from trade union and labour movement organisations.

LABOUR democracy and local government: day conference for District Labour Parties, Saturday March 26, 10.30 to 4.30, at Manchester Poly Students' Union. Sponsored by Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester DLPs. Contact: Frances Done, Manchester City Labour Party, Hulme Labour Club, 1 Stoneylow Close, Manchester M15

GAY LPYS meeting. Sunday February 27, 6pm, at 'Gay's the Word' bookshop, 66 Marchmont St, London WC1. Nearest tube, Russell Square. All LPYS members and non-members welcome

GAY YOUTH Movement: lobby of Parliament, February 14, 5pm at the House of Commons. Young lesbians and gay men are urged to attend.

EL SALVADOR Solidarity Campaign: Labour Movement conference, Saturday May 14, 10am-5pm, County Hall, London SE1. Credentials £2 from ESSC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

LABOUR CND national conference: Saturday February 19, West Midlands County Hall, Lancaster Circus, Birmingham.

Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine public meeting: THE FIGHT FOR PALESTINE Speakers: Tariq Ali, Ron Brown MP (Leith), Moshe Machover, speakers from Women for Palestine and Lebanese National Movement. Wednesday February 23, 8pm at County Hall, London SE1.

LABOUR Committee on Ireland: annual general meeting 1983 will be on March 26. Resolutions to be in by February 27. There will be an extended meet-

ing of the LCI National Council on January 22.

LABOUR Against the Witch-hunt National Council meeting. Saturday February 12, 1pm to 6pm, County Hall, London SE1. All CLPs affiliated to LAW should send delegates. Doubly important because of the NEC's definite decision to start proceedings against Militant.

Sheffield Labour movement conference on Ireland, Saturday March 19, Sheffield University Students' Union, 9.30 to 4.30. Sponsored by Sheffield Trades Council, Sheffield District Labour Party, and Sheffield LCI.

BRUTAL RECORD OF HACKNEY COPS

What type of inquiry?

WHEN a black woman, Aseta Simms, died in police custody in Hackney in March 1971, many people did not believe the official explanation.

According to the police, Mrs Simms had died of alcohol poisoning. There was swelling and bruising over one eye and on the head, consistent with her having been beaten, but the official story was that she had fallen.

Even the police doctor was not too convinced of the cops' story. The most he could say was: "It is arguable that some people might die with this level of alcohol in their blood stream".

Aseta Simms' death is the first item in a dossier of police racism and harassment in Hackney compiled by the staff of the Institute of Race Relations. The Dossier does not claim to be exhaustive. Rather, it highlights the incidents most protested about by black people in the locality. They are only a few of many incidents which have shaped the thinking of Hackney blacks.

In July 1975 police raided the Four Aces club in Dalston, looking for thieves, they said. They burst in with dogs, and in the ensuing disturbances arrested 18 black youths. The 'thieves' were, of course, neither found nor pursued any further.

The next year saw one of the most notorious of Hackney police actions. Just after midnight, Mr and Mrs White were woken by police who had entered their home with a warrant to search for stolen stereo equipment.

Mr and Mrs White were beaten, kicked, hit with truncheons and racially abused by the police. They were then arrested for assaulting their attackers! Both needed hospital treatment after the police had released them.

No stolen stereo equipment was found. Once again the charges arose from

By Andrew Hornung

the police action. The Whites were acquitted and were eventually awarded £51,000 in damages from the Met.

In July 1978 local black people were worried by a different aspect of state racism: they demanded that there be an inquiry in St Leonards hospital, where the administration was accused of failing to keep records of injuries to blacks.

Hackney police — above all the police at Stoke Newington station — were becoming notorious for brutality inside the nick. When five blacks were arrested in 1978, "Osmond Morris received injuries caused, in part, by police attempts to force their heads down lavatories".

The second death came in December 1979. A black youth, Michael Ferreira, was stabbed by racists in a main street in Hackney and taken by friends to Stoke



Hackney blacks demand inquiry into case of Colin Roach, found dead recently outside Stoke Newington police station

Newington police station. These friends were questioned for nearly half an hour — as if they were suspects — before police bothered to call for a doctor. By the time the doctor arrived, the unattended 19 year old had bled to death. Police say they did not realise that he was badly hurt!

Units

Early the next year, five Special Patrol Group units were despatched to Hackney. The criminalisation campaign could now be stepped up.

The local Council for Racial Equality called for the transfer of Hackney's Police Commander Mitchell after he was reported to

have said that the National Front was "the only party that spoke up for Britain". In July 1980, Hackney Asian Council called for a policy of non-cooperation with the police.

Later that year, black people protested at the arrest of 18 youths who were held overnight before being released, uncharged.

When in June 1982 scores of Asians attended a wake, Dalston police arrived to instruct some 20 of them to report to the station to prove they weren't illegal immigrants.

Some were held and questioned for up to 30 hours — including an 85-year old grandmother and a nine year old child. Not one of those detained turned out to be an 'illegal immi-

grant'.

Two months later came the quashing of the murder conviction of Newton Rose. Rose, a Hackney black man, had been convicted in large part on the basis of the 'evidence' presented by Hackney police.

Aware

By this time the community was becoming aware of the case of Mrs Knight and her daughter Jennifer. Mrs Knight and her daughter had been acquitted of the 'disturbing the peace' charges brought against them by the police, and complained to Scotland Yard about their treatment. Now local cops brought them into Stoke Newington nick again, this time on more serious

charges.

As the Caribbean Times reported, "Whilst in police custody, Mrs Knight received injuries to her head, arms, thigh and coccyx, and a cut to her face which required stitching".

Police made over 100 arrests of black youth during the summer of 1982. There was widespread talk of cops threatening to 'blow your heads off'.

In January 1983 Mrs Norma Richards and her two young daughters — the only black family on their Hackney estate — were found murdered. Walls of their flat were daubed with swastikas and nazi slogans. According to the police there was no evidence of a racist motive to the murder.

DEMONSTRATE

Sunday 27 March

12 noon Assemble Jubilee Gardens near Waterloo Station

- CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST LAWS**
- Repeal the Immigration and Nationality Acts
 - Stop race checks ■ Stop racist deportations
 - Unite the divided families now

UNION STALLS ON FERNANDES

JOHN Fernandes, the black teacher sacked by Hendon Police College has found himself in the strange position of getting more support in his fight for reinstatement from his employers than from his union.

Brent Labour Council, who employ all the teachers at the college have said they back John's stand over anti-racist education for the cadets at the college.

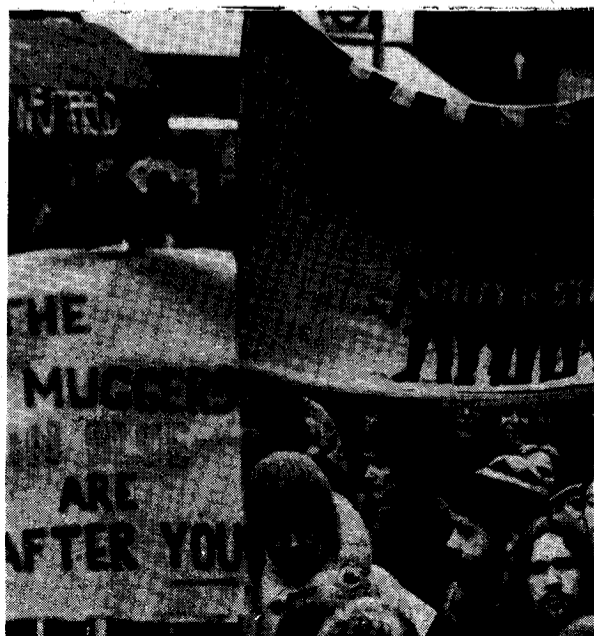
They are currently consulting their lawyers over possible legal action to force the college to reinstate John.

If this fails they will consider withdrawing all teaching staff from the college.

In contrast, John's union, NATFHE, despite publishing documents on the need for "multi-cultural" education, has been stalling over supporting John's campaign.

The NATFHE NEC have said they will only consider taking up the sacking as 'casework', not in terms of a campaign against racist attitudes in the police force.

Contact: Ad Hoc John Fernandes Committee, 16 Ashley Road, London N19.



"The local labour movement and black community should set up a tribunal..."

THE ROACH Family Support Committee began with a single demand: 'For an independent public inquiry into the death of Colin Roach'. To this it has added another call: 'For an end to intimidation and mass arrests'.

This second demand is a response to police attacks on demonstrators — attacks which boost the cops' campaign to criminalise black youth.

What kind of inquiry would an independent one be? Clearly not one carried out by the coroner — i.e., an inquest, the only kind of inquiry the police are offering. Still less one carried out by the police themselves. Remember Deptford!

And the Scarman inquiry into Brixton whitewashed the police, too.

What is the answer? Immediate action by the labour movement and black community, plus demands to wring every democratic right we can from the state.

The local labour movement and black community should set up a tribunal of investigation NOW, and demand full powers to cross-examine the police and to inspect police records.

At the same time we should call for the state to establish an official public inquiry, with legal powers to question the police.

We should call for the investigating committee of this public inquiry to be made up of representatives from the local black community, Council, and labour movement. If an inquiry is set up without such representation, then a labour/black community tribunal should monitor its proceedings — demanding full access — and produce its own counter-report.

Every demonstration around the Colin Roach affair has heard the call for the shutting down of the Stoke Newington police station. Other demands have been for the suspension of the Stoke Newington police station officers until an independent inquiry reports.

Both these demands should be pressed. To refuse to support them on the grounds that this won't solve the problem of the police as a racist force, let alone as an anti working class force, is absurd. It is about as sensible as refusing to support a wage claim because it won't get rid of exploitation.

To force any of these concessions would be a considerable victory. And the organisation of an inquiry set up by the local black community and labour movement would mark a big step forward in generalising the experience of the black community and making it available to the rest of the working class movement — which, as yet, is still deeply confused about the role of the police.

Cuts

Health care decimated in Brent and Coventry; housing, the hardest-hit but maybe the least noticed area of cuts. This week's centre page surveys some examples of the devastation caused by the cuts — and the fight back.

BRENT FEELS THE BRUNT



St Mary's, Harrow Road — workers occupied to fight the closure

BRENT, in common with most other Health Authorities, is suffering the latest round of Tory cuts. This time they're asking for about £1 million off the local health budget.

For Brent this means one hospital closure. Leamington Park, which has 95 geriatric beds, one casualty

department in another local hospital and a series of cuts that will further reduce the quality of care and mean loss of jobs, particularly in our hospital for the mentally ill.

Brent Community Health Council acted quickly when these cuts were announced in November. At an emer-

gency meeting we passed a resolution opposing all the cuts. This was backed up by a resolution put through Brent Council supporting our position and offering practical help with money for leaflets and posters to start a campaign to fight back locally.

Through well organised street leafleting and raising the issue in the local Labour Party wards and at the General Committee, we got a packed public meeting at the Town Hall of local people and health workers.

Many of the health workers had been told nothing about the cuts by management and none of the local people had been consulted.

A steering group representing the unions, community groups and the CHC was then set up to organise a lobby and demonstration at the District Health Authority meeting the following

month when the vote was to be taken about the cuts.

The lobby and demonstration was well supported and over 100 angry people caused a lot of disruption and told the Health Authority what they thought of the cuts and the Tory government but the vote was lost.

Strong

The Brent campaign is still strong. We will fight the closure of Leamington Park Hospital. We continue to have open meetings at the CHC and are producing a regular bulletin to make sure the issues are not forgotten about. The Steering Committee is strong and determined, with good links with the unions, the community and sympathetic members of the Health Authority.

However, we heard last week that we are not just fighting local cuts. The four Regional Health Authorit-

ies that cover London have plans to decimate the NHS in the Inner London areas. Places like Brent and Hackney will lose hospitals and hundreds of beds.

In these areas primary health care is very poor, with elderly GPs who won't retire and hardly even do home visits especially in the night, shortages of Health Visitors and district nurses. Women are increasingly being used as substitute nurses caring for sick children and the elderly relatives at home because there are less and less services.

The North West Regional Health Authority is already questioning the future of Brent's District General Hospital (Central Middlesex). If this hospital closes or even only changes use there will be no beds for sick children in Brent.

It is no good pretending that Brent CHC can fight this lot on our own. We are

witnessing the beginning of the end for the NHS. The Tories plans for selling off catering, laundry and cleaning services in many hospitals are well advanced. A Government circular will be sent out soon advising Health Authorities on privatisation of these services.

The labour movement's record on the Politics of Health is not very good. Separate campaigns come and go, fighting local cuts and hospital closures, but there has been very little attempt to challenge and change the power structure of DHAs and Regional Health Authorities.

They are accountable to no one, many members are appointed by Health Ministers and anyway the full time officials run the show picking up salaries three times bigger than an ordinary health worker.

There is little discussion in the labour movement

about the kind of Health Service we need and want.

We know what really makes us ill — poverty, stress, unemployment, junk food, poor housing, pollution, dangerous working conditions. Millions of pounds spent on high technology medicine have only a marginal effect on the health of ordinary working people.

We have all the statistics we need to prove it. The Black Report (Inequalities in Health) two years ago, stated once and for all that working class people suffer more ill health and disease and die earlier than other social classes.

We need to fight together to defend, democratise and extend the NHS as a Health Service planned to meet the needs of ordinary people, so that we all have an equal chance for health.

Jean Spray
Chairperson, Brent CHC
In a personal capacity

CARWORKERS DEFEND NHS

THE TGWU branch at the Talbot car factory in Stoke, Coventry, has decided to campaign against hospital cutbacks. It is calling for the Labour Party and trade union movement to get up a petition.

"We need a storm of protest", said Dave Edwards, TGWU convenor at the factory and Labour prospective parliamentary candidate for Coventry South West.

The Coventry Health Authority announced in early December that they intended in two years' time closing two hospitals, Highview, a 170-bed geriatric, and Paybody, a 50-bed eye hospital, and immediately to cut 50 beds at Bulson Road Hospital, a general hospital.

Local management told members of the Health Authority that the closure of the two hospitals would improve services as the buildings were too old and/or isolated. The closure of the other 50 beds is supposed to be beneficial because it will enable work to be upgraded.

The truth, of course, is rather different. And it's now 100 beds to go at Bulson.

Overnight

Management overnight changed their policy from one of no redundancies to one of voluntary redundancies. Under close questioning by the NHS joint unions' committee they admitted they wanted to get rid of 100 jobs and close five wards by April 1.

The Talbot TGWU branch has taken the initia-

tive of turning to local constituency Labour Parties for support.

At Coventry South West there was a ready response.

We are now discussing plans for a public meeting to start a campaign of mass publicity.

Problems — and Policies

WHERE CAN THE MONEY COME FROM?

SOCIALIST ORGANISER has argued for a fight by the labour movement and Labour Councils against cuts and rate rises. But what's the alternative?

The immediate demand is for more money from central government, and it's easy to pick on items, like arms spending, that it could come from. But there's more wrong with the system of local government services and finance than just the bargaining balance between councils and central government.

When councils get the money, somewhere around a third of it (varying from council to council) goes on interest charges. This drain could be stopped by nationalising the banks and financial institutions, putting the entire credit system under public control, and providing interest-free loans for public projects.

Another drain — more difficult to put figures to — is the profits of suppliers and contractors.

The demand for nationalisation without compensation of the drug companies which leech the National Health Service has gained more and more support in recent years. Why not the same for educational suppliers, and for the building industry?

Of course if such demands are simply confined to election speeches and left abstract they will not grab the imagination or mobilise the support of the working class.

But there is no need to leave them vague. Councils are obliged by law to publish their accounts — and circulate them in some form of 'balance sheet' to ratepayers each year along with increased rate/rent demands. The figures, however, are presented in confusing and complex fashion — meaning that

few workers are aware of their implications.

Labour councillors could make a major contribution, not so much by "opening" the books but by taking steps to make the figures accessible and intelligible to workers, and by setting out to draw the facts to the attention of the trade union and labour movement.

Union branches, stewards' committees and public meetings on council estates could be approached, the situation explained, and support built up for demands of nationalisation alongside a strengthened opposition to cuts or rate/rent increases. Particular suppliers or contractors could be 'targeted' for closer scrutiny, involving the trade unions covering that industry — and the profits, deals, and financial links of such firms highlighted by campaigns.

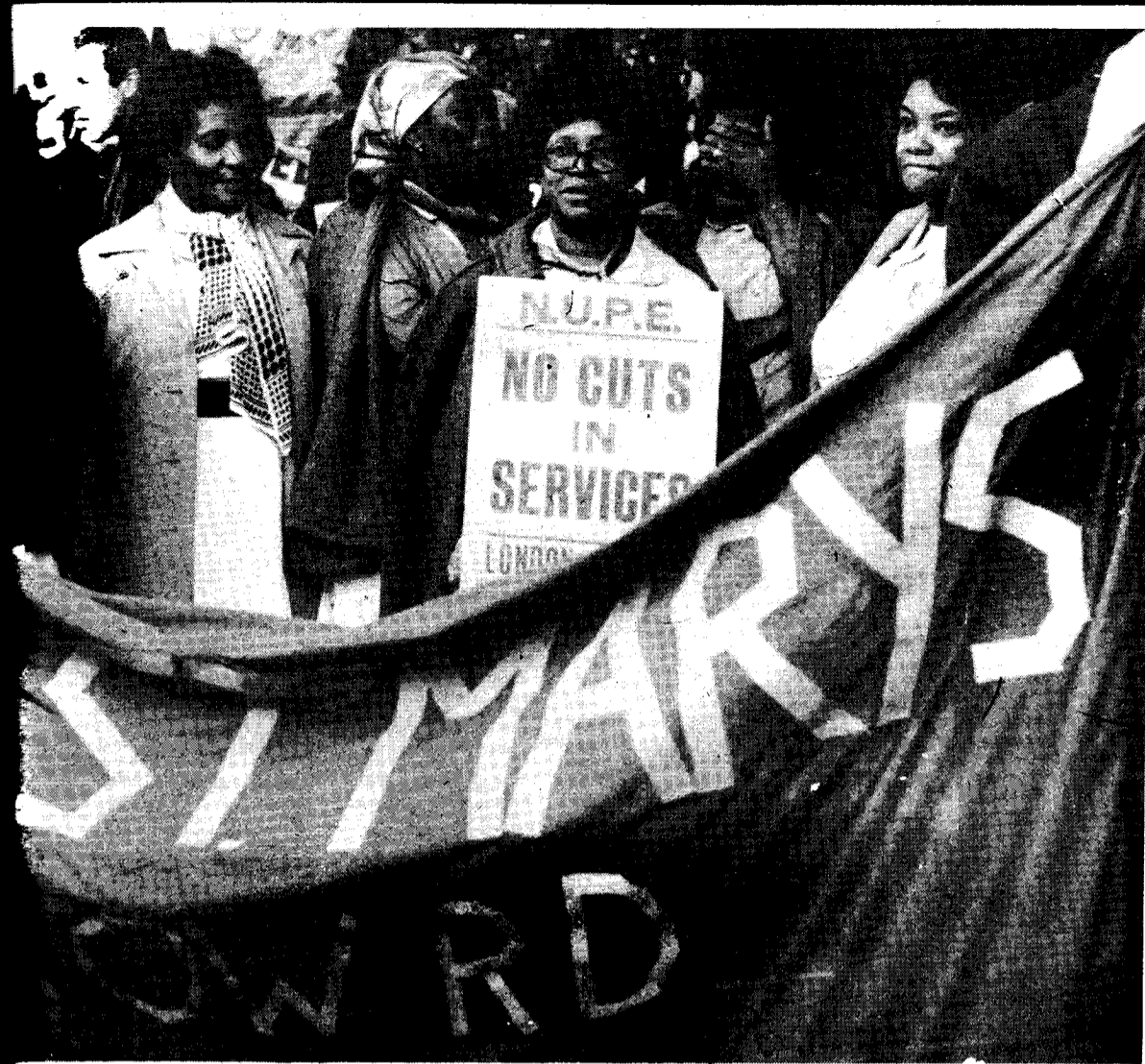
In this way the bosses' propaganda of "overmanned" public services and "overpaid" council employees could be turned around, to expose the profiteers feeding off the working class in the area.

And then what about rates? Obviously the resources for council services — housing, education, libraries, roads, social services, etc. — have to come from somewhere. The present system of local government finance ensures that a big chunk of them comes from the meagre amount that working class people have in their pockets after producing profits for the bosses.

Councils sometimes give rate relief to businesses. But they cannot raise the rates on big business property without also hitting domestic ratepayers (and small businesses).

Labour councils have conducted a poster campaign to defend existing local government autonomy against moves by

Thatcher's Britain



"Inequalities are mirrored in housing..."

Housing - singled out for cutbacks

NHS drug budget is a staggering £1,700 million per year. Private drug firms cream off an estimated £100m each year in profits - a large slice of which comes from grossly inflated charges for branded and over-promoted drugs available more cheaply in generic versions.

The recent Greenfield Report has pointed out that at least 10% of the NHS drugs bill - £170 million - could be saved if doctors would prescribe the cheaper generic drugs.

Meanwhile NHS waiting lists have grown to 5,000, as inadequate, underfunded facilities struggle to cope with the need for hospital treatment. The NHS is not alone in facing a cash crunch.

The private medical plans shamelessly boosted by the Tories have failed to attract the increased numbers they expected, while their costs have risen sharply - leaving BUPA with a £1.9m loss last year, and both BUPA and the Private Patients Plan hoisting premium payments by between 35% and 82%.

(Facts and figures from a feature article in the new Labour Research, February 1983)

Tories to restrict it. But they have never yet gone on the offensive - demanding that councils should be able to decide their own tax system.

Councils should be able to tax businesses - whether sited in their area or not - which employ people living in the council's area. It is those businesses, after all, that profit from the labour power which the council's services help to maintain.

The principle is the same as the agreement won by many workers, under which employers pay for their monthly travel everywhere Metro/bus ticket.

Labour councils should also demand the removal of the restrictions which compel them to get central government approval for capital spending. These restrictions are currently being used by the Tories to hinder Camden Council's plans to buy Arlington House hostel and ensure decent conditions there.

Most important, perhaps, in developing the struggle beyond mere bargaining within the existing system, is the issue of control of the services provided.

Several Labour councils are making moves towards centralisation, with one of the motives being greater community control. The objective, surely, should be a full system of control by elected (and recallable) representatives of the community and the workers in each service - health, education, housing, etc. That's how we could remould the services to the needs of the working class.

HOUSING is one of the least politicised areas of struggle and yet it remains one of the most central and crucial aspects of our lives.

Not only do we all need somewhere to live, the sexual, racial and class inequalities which pervade our society are almost exactly mirrored in the way in which housing resources are allocated. To the women, lesbians, gays, blacks, ethnic minorities and working classes go the slums; and to the men, straights, whites, middle and upper classes go the adequate and luxury homes.

Over the past two decades, housing has invariably been singled out whenever successive governments have introduced cuts, and apart from special interest groups such as CHAR, Shelter and some Tenants' Associations there has been a minimum of positive responses. In tandem with cuts, there has been a subtle and yet devastating change in central (and by inference local) government housing policy.

Post-war

The massive post-war redevelopment programmes have been superseded by area-based improvement programmes aimed, not at demolishing slums and building new homes, but at the rehabilitation of sub-standard or slum housing.

These area programmes are smaller in scale and much less expensive than redevelopment and they

by Angela Birtill and Steven Taylor

A review of a new report, 'Housing Action?', £1.80 from CDP PEC, Brookside, Seaton Burn, Newcastle upon Tyne NE13 6EY.

have formed the basis of all government policy since the early 1960s. They have also been completely unsuccessful.

Council

Additionally, Council house building has given way to Housing Association acquisition and rehabilitation, echoing the trend that first emerged late in the 19th century, when central government was afraid that state provision would lead to socialism. At the present time, Council house building is virtually at a standstill, and local authorities are referring an unprecedented number of houses to Associations.

The area based policy has also led to a concentration of available resources in those small, geographical areas, thus starving other neighbourhoods who have not been designated as 'special'. The area policy has led to the obvious, and totally incorrect conclusion, that 'if you don't live in a designated area, then you can't possibly be living in a

slum'.

In the face of these attacks on housing provision, and the pro-Landlord legislation which has been introduced on a massive scale, overtly political opposition has been virtually non-existent. Labour shadow ministers have made their usual and totally ineffectual noises, while the principled left both inside and outside the Labour Party has remained virtually silent.

It is not difficult to understand why this has been the case. Private and Council tenants do not have the same political muscle as the trade union movement, and neither do they have the charisma that attaches itself to international campaigns.

Housing is largely an 'invisible' issue, affecting only those who live in slums and not those of us who are fortunate (or rich) enough to live in adequate housing. The organisation of such people is invariably local to begin with, and it is often difficult to 'link up' different tenants' groups and build towards a more national campaign.

Councillors

However, we ignore housing as a political issue at our peril. Those who are most subject to the inequalities in our society are often more likely to become involved in housing campaigns, whilst 'fighting shy' of the more esoteric (but equally important) campaigns favoured by the Left in this country. It is these very people who we



Housing: an 'invisible' issue...

must win over if we are to achieve a more equal and just society, and it is essential that we pay more atten-

tion to where people actually are, rather than where we (theoretically) would wish them to be.

"THE DANGER IS CUTS, NOT RATE RISES"

Socialist Organiser argues for the labour movement and Labour councils to fight for 'no cuts, no rate rises'. But many on the Left believe that this is 'purist' — it 'belongs to the realms of fantasy'. Brent Labour councillor Frank Hansen presents his arguments in defence of the rates option.

Our Writeback page will be open for comments and criticism.



The Tories have clobbered 'overspending' Labour councils

MICHAEL Heseltine's final kick in the groin for local authorities before his departure to the MoD has left Labour Councils in London and other urban areas with some very difficult choices to make.

The 1983-4 block grant settlement is specifically aimed at clobbering the 'overspenders', i.e. Labour councils who have broadly devalued jobs and services through levying higher rates.

Nationally the percentage of local government expenditure financed by Government grant has been cut from 56% to 53% — and most of this cut will be focused on those authorities who exceed the DoE's expenditure target for their area. For each of the first two percentage points of spending above target, the grant loss is equivalent to a 1p rate (£½million in Brent). For every percentage point thereafter, the grant loss will be 5p (£2½m in Brent).

Brent's target for 1983-4 is £132.6m to which a block grant of £60.5m is attached. (This in itself represents a £5m cut compared with last year's hypothetical allocation of £65.5m grant). To meet this target we would have to slash £15m to £20m off our budget — which equates to approximately 2,000 redundancies!

Levels

To maintain jobs and services at their present levels (including some recent growth), we would have to spend about £147m. At this level of expenditure block grant would be reduced by £18m to approximately £42.5m. Translated into rate figures and taking into account the GLC and police precepts, it would mean an increase in the region of 30%.

To expand our budget to take on board committees' growth aspiration (manifesto commitments), we need to spend approximately £153m. In this case grant loss would rise to nearly £27m and the rate increase would be 40-50%.

In purely financial terms there are various positions beginning to emerge in the Labour Group.

1. Expand the budget,



i.e. to £153m. This would mean £6m growth, but would mean levying £15m extra in rates to pay for it.

2. 'No cuts' — in real terms. Defend the existing budget plus committed growth, i.e. a rate increase of 30 to 35%.

3. 'No cuts' — in nominal terms. Defend the existing budget but exclude committed growth. The rate increase drops below 30% but in reality there are cuts.

4. A lower rate (perhaps 20%) plus substantial cuts (perhaps 5%). Already a section of the right have indicated that they will not vote for a high rate increase — if carried out this spells the end of Brent's Labour Council given the casting vote situation: 33 Labour, 30 Tories, 3 Liberals.

The political options are:

- No cuts/no rate increase. One section of comrades in Brent argue this as a position of principle. In reality, in my opinion, it boils down to purist propaganda which offers no practical alternative to the labour movement given the present class balance of forces.

Firstly, such a struggle could not be launched on

the basis of one local authority. If Brent's Labour Group opted for bankruptcy (a complete impossibility given the present composition of the group), there is no evidence to suggest that it would even get the support of its own unions, let alone the public at large — despite the fact that we mobilised the largest-ever Council strike for the health workers' 'Day of Action'.

To embark on such a course on a 'try and see what happens' basis is sheer adventurism which would almost certainly lead to a crushing defeat and a Tory administration which would inflict massive cuts.

Even if a group of Labour Councils could unite on this basis (highly unlikely), such a struggle would probably not attract sufficient forces in terms of real industrial muscle to bring about a Tory U-turn, let alone bring down the Thatcher government.

After nearly four years of Tory attacks and numerous betrayals by the Labour leaders the working class movement is on the defensive. This is the reality whether comrades like it or not. The idea that a small group of radical Labour

Councils can turn the tide by provoking an all-out confrontation belongs to the realms of socialist fantasy, not the actual reality or potential of the existing class struggle.

• Disengagement. If a large number of Labour authorities disengaged simultaneously then this would undoubtedly provoke a national crisis in local government. Achieving such unity, however, is not a practical proposition given the different levels of grant settlement in each area and the right wing domination of most Labour Groups.

Disengagement makes sense only if we can honestly say that we cannot defend jobs and services given the present financial arrangements (e.g. if King carries out his threat to place a cap on rates — particularly commercial rates). It assumes that, in practice, it would be better to let the Tories take over rather than implement massive cuts.

Betrayal

Disengagement on Brent Council at present would be tantamount to a betrayal of local working class inter-

ests because: (1) we can defend our existing programme, albeit at the expense of rate rises, and (2) the local Tories would literally decimate jobs and services.

• No cuts — put up the rates. In practice the only effective action Labour authorities can take is to deflect the blows which the Tories are raining down on local government. The Tories want Labour authorities to carry out cuts. By refusing to do so we are actually thwarting their plans and preserving the organised power of the working class (through jobs).

The argument that rate increases and cuts are exactly the same is nonsense. If it were true then the Tories themselves would not be talking about curbing local authorities' powers to levy rates, and indeed there would be no point whatsoever in having Labour Councils. It assumes that there is no difference between a Tory council having a nil rate rise and massive cuts, and a Labour council raising rates and implementing nil cuts — an argument which most working people would ridicule.

Attack

Cuts represent a 100% attack on the working class, rates actually redistribute income. In Brent 50% of rates come from business, 30% from relatively well-off Tory ratepayers, and approximately 20% from people who live in Labour areas (rate rises do not hit the unemployed insofar as they are paid under UHB). In this sense, the working class receives more in jobs and services than it pays in rates — although it cannot be denied that rates raise the cost of living for working people, at least those in employment.

In an ideal situation, where the labour move-

ment was on the offensive and we could begin to prepare a general strike to remove the Tories, then we would not have to choose between such 'lesser evils'. The reality is that the Tories will not be removed this side of a general election, and Labour authorities must make the choice of defending the worst off at the expense of the middle class and small business.

At the same time we must use our position on the council to campaign for more resources from central government, and for a Labour government which will inject millions of pounds into the inner city areas and actually reduce the rates burden.

The real danger in Brent is not the imposition of a high rate rise, but that the maverick right will vote with the Tories and Liber-

als to inflict substantial cuts. This is where the political attack of the local Labour parties must be: against those who want to ditch the manifesto and carry out cuts.

In this context, the programme of the 'hard left' on the Labour Group must be as follows:

- No cuts — defend the manifesto, including growth.

- No rate rise — reject the Tories' proposal for an 85p increase. Indeed we should be considering cutting rents.

- For a continuing campaign with local Labour Councils against the Tory government.

- For the election of a Labour government which will really challenge the power of the ruling class by implementing Labour Party policies.

A QUESTION OF SOLIDARITY

Independent Trade Unions In South Africa

90p
Bob Fine
Lawrence Welch

New pamphlet from the Socialist Forum for Southern Africa Solidarity. 90p plus 20p postage. available via Socialist Organiser, 28 Middle Lane, London N8 8PL.

In the second part of a survey of the industrial struggle, John McIlroy argues that many on the Left have overestimated or oversimplified the downturn

MANY on the left overestimate the depth of the downturn and see the movement in full flight before the Tories concluding that we can do little except wait for an improvement in the economy. A good example of this tendency is the Socialist Workers Party.

In their press Lindsey Greig argues that "Many organised workplaces today are little better than the unorganised shops of a few years ago". The job of socialists is to rebuild workplace organisation by agitating round issues such as asbestos and screwing up the courage to cross picket lines "to salvage something from a disastrous position".

Tony Cliff quotes the Communist Party leader of the 1920s, J.T. Murphy, "you can't have a rank and file movement if the factories are empty", to draw parallels with that period. Jack Robertson, reviewing Richard Croucher's book "Engineers at War", draws from Croucher's description of the '20s and '30s "lessons those of us faced with a new slump and a new downturn need to remember".

The SWP stare reality in the face so intensely that it becomes distorted in the process. They end up studying the evidence we have looked at, but only seeing one side of the coin.

But something will turn up. SW tells us "Several things can create such a change of mood. An expansion of the economy can be reducing unemployment marginally and making workers feel their jobs are no longer at stake if they strike".

Alternatively, the Tories may lose their nerve or the workers may take to the streets. "Periods of defeat and demoralisation like the present do not last for ever. One or other of these developments is inevitable in the not too distant future." (SW, 6.11.82).

Impressionism breeds paralysis and a position not much different from that of Len Murray!

That this approach distorts and exaggerates the problem can be seen by looking at what was happening on the shop floor in the '20s and '30s, and at Croucher's book.

Unemployment soared from almost nil in early 1920 to over 2 million by the summer of 1921. By 1924, as the unions pushed back in a series of long and serious defensive battles, they shed more than a quarter of their entire membership. The unions faced straight wage cuts, and the employed deserted



"The SWP have always underestimated such questions as who controls the unions"

OVERESTIMATING THE DOWNTURN

in droves.

After the decisive defeat inflicted in the 1926 General Strike, the employers had an even freer hand. Union membership — over 45% of the labour force in 192 — had declined to 33% by the early '30s. During the '30s there was not one national strike.

Croucher gives the flavour of those years, "After this disastrous thirteen week lock out (in 1922) substantial wage cuts were inflicted and AEU membership dropped by 25% on the 1920 total. Effective shop steward activity was largely extinguished as the lockout provided the employers with an ideal opportunity to re-employ selectively..."

"Life on the shop floor had become extremely difficult by the end of 1922 and the defet of the General Strike made it even harder. It was a brave man indeed who would try to negotiate under the circumstances and the atmosphere in the workshops was one of fear..."

"To be known as a steward — some tried to operate secretly just collecting subscriptions and fighting quiet rearguard actions in a whole range of subterranean ways — was to court dismissal".

In certain shops every AEU member left the union. In other shops there was minority membership but no stewards, no negotiations, no day to day representation. Engineering workers were often hired and sacked within the day, unable to keep up with the pace required by a driving management.

It was only by 1941 "that for the first time in some 20 years engineering workers did not have to go in fear of losing their jobs to the daily stream of unemployed calling at the office in search of work." These extracts give us a vivid glimpse of what the depths of a depression really looked like (SW's description of today).

It is obvious that we are not in this situation here and now. But the SWP's analysis is wrong not only because it is one-sided but because it focusses only on the trade union struggle, which it confuses with the class struggle.

This is a vital point. If we are to understand what is happening in the class struggle we cannot, as we have done until now, simply focus on developments in the unions vital as these are. The SWP, because it sees moves forward or back, left or right, largely in terms of strike statistics, misses the point.

Undoubtedly some sections of workers are demoralised and cynical and can see no way forward. Some have moved to the right. But the Tories have been unable to inflict a decisive defeat on the unions. At the same time there has been a limited but substantial politicisation as many other workers, faced with the impasse on the industrial front, are turning to wider solutions, solutions which focus initially on the election of a Labour government.

Even if it is in a limited and distorted way, they see that the framework of economic struggle is too narrow.

Consequently there has been a ferment in the political party of labour which has created a limited dislocation of right wing control.

We talked earlier about the immense task Thatcher has on her hands in rescuing capital from its predicament. The margin for error is slim — and the dislocation in the Labour Party punches holes in the bosses' safety net — the assurance that a 1974 style Labour government is available to take over from Thatcher as it did

from Heath.

In 1970-74 there were big industrial struggles, but no complementary upsurge in the Labour Party.

Of course we must not overestimate the fight in the Labour Party. It is increasingly coming up against the limitations of the left in the unions. But socialists, unless they are incorrigible sectarians, must be involved in it, seeing the burning necessity to integrate the union struggle with the Labour Party struggle.

The SWP abstain from it. They can't see it at all. Their only scenario for a move forward is direct struggles like 1972-74.

This affects their analysis of what is going on. Really they only look at half of the screen.

They have, of course, always fatally underestimated the question of politics and government. The SWP first derided the importance of the developments in the Labour Party — an argument contradicted by the intensive coverage of the Labour Party struggle in their press — and then after the reverses at the last Labour Party conference, just as the fight reached a new tempo, they claimed that the left was already defeated.

The fact that the SWP blind themselves to the fact that the future of the working class is bound up with what happens in the Labour Party as well as the unions puts their analysis of what is happening on the wrong tracks.

Chapple, Duffy and Evans are more clear than Tony Cliff. They see how clearly the question of union democracy, of who controls the basic organisations of the working class, is bound up with the question of who controls the

Labour Party. They see how clearly in the last three years the fight in the Labour Party has become intertwined with the fight in the unions.

But even in focussing solely on the unions, the SWP have always underestimated such issues as who controls the unions. They have always focussed far too narrowly on the workplace. They fail to see that, particularly in a period of downturn, the fight cannot be just to build, control, link up workplace organisation. This has to be part of a fight to take control of the union machines.

We need to go across and up the unions, linking the struggle against the employers with the struggle for a new union leadership in the context of democratising workers' organisation.

In this context "the bureaucratisation of the shop stewards' movement" is double-sided. When stewards lose their roots in the membership, and are unable to mobilise, that is fatal. But the greater integration of stewards into the unions has the potential of focussing a fight for control of the machines, a fight which is ever more necessary in the face of the centralisation of capital and the growing role of the state.

To combat modern capitalism, workers need strong centralised organisations transformed and democratised.

The SWP, however, focuses on workplace organisation explaining the downturn almost exclusively in terms of organisational weaknesses, the sectionalism of stewards, the growth of full-time convenors, etc., at the expense of an examination of the problems of

rank and file consciousness — of which these organisational problems, important as they are, are an expression and a reinforcement.

The SWP's failure to confront the problems of the political consciousness of the rank and file means that they see more and more militancy generalised to more and more workers combined with abstract arguments about how good a socialist society will be as sufficient. They completely misunderstood the need for socialists to fight in struggle with the rank and file to develop and transform their existing consciousness if we are to move towards that society.

Some on the left make the apparently opposite mistake of viewing too optimistically the state of the struggle. This mistake produces different consequences, but is rooted in the same soil as the SWP's: a failure to understand the problems of political consciousness. This kind of analysis has been brought to bear to explain the recent failure in the NUM.

It is based on the idea that the main explanation for setbacks is that the workers are only too willing to fight, but tricked by the press or their full time officials.

Unlike the SWP's, this kind of explanation has a strong element of truth in it. There is a crisis of leadership in the working class movement. Struggles are sold out by full-time officials.

But it underestimates the depth of the problem facing the left, tending to see it as somehow external to the movement. Trickery and tactics are after all much easier to set right than a crisis of ideas amongst the rank and file. Often a wrong emphasis

on these factors can adversely affect our strategy.

Let us take the miners' ballot as an example. One argument has been that it was tactically wrong to link closures with wages on the voting paper.

But this was not just an abstract gesture. Scargill did campaign before, through and after the ballot to highlight the closure issue and to argue cogently that it was intrinsically bound up with the wages fight. He knew that a strike built on the spine of a fusion of these issues would be stronger. He believed in telling what is to the members and fighting for an acceptance of the correct strategy. It is pointless to fight over wages and not closures.

We spent a lot of time criticising Bill Sirs in the 1980 steel strike over this. In the film, A Question of Leadership, he is able to keep asserting correctly in formal terms, "The strike was not over closures".

Scargill's decision ensured that if there was to be a strike the members would know clearly what it was all about. I think that is a first principle of strike strategy, and as the Kinneil situation shows the question of closures could not have been any more immediate.

But even if we concede that the closure question was a tactical mistake its explanatory value is slender, in my view.

Another explanation has been the power of the press. Peter Heathfield, North Derbyshire NUM area secretary, asked in Socialist Challenge, "Why do you think the executive lost the ballot?" gave as the only reason "... the kind of propaganda campaign that the tabloids especially conducted. I can't recall an occasion when papers like the Sun, Mail, Express have devoted pages to persuade miners not to support their trade union. The propaganda war was won by our enemies."

Peter's memory is faulty. If he wants examples of vicious press campaigns, what about the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974? The point is that in those years the membership rejected the information and views of the Sun and Express not to strike and not to continue the strike. They came out and they won.

Every big strike with minor exceptions produces a press offensive. Why it works in one case and not in another is the question.

Did the miners' leaders wage a better campaign against the propaganda of press and employers in 1972 and 1974 than they did last year? Far from it.

Scargill — and to give them their due, the executive as a whole — fought to build industrial action in a way unprecedented since the days of A.J. Cook. In 1972 and 1974 the right wing leadership gave no lead and ran no campaign. In 1974 Gormley manoeuvred to the last minute against the strike.

Of course there were inadequacies, of course there could have been improvements. But to explain the failure to get a yes vote in terms of the weaknesses in the campaign — or the intensity of the press offensive — is to severely underestimate Arthur Scargill, and to see his members as gullible idiots.

Continued next week

"The Tories have not inflicted a decisive defeat"

Giving a lead to the jobless

Playing games with history?



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.

IN REPLY to Mick Jarne's letter on the People's March in SO 116, I would like to agree about the cynical motives of Foot and the right wing in the Labour Party. It isn't just the resources which would be put into a People's March, but also the political awareness and mobilisation this would create in the working class.

As Shore tries to dump policies won by the movement at Labour Party conference on the 35 hour week with no loss of pay and payment for school students over 16, and shows reluctance to talk of big reductions in unemployment except as an argument to push through an incomes policy, a march calling for full employment which mobilises hundreds of thousands of working people can only be progressive.

Mick is fundamentally mistaken to think that only direct action by the unemployed themselves can change the political situation.

A central task for labour movement activists is to mobilise around the issues of unemployment and unilateral disarmament, linking these mobilisations up with the election of a Labour Government on these policies. This mobilisation will create massive difficulties for the bureaucracy in the labour movement, who are hell bent on ditching these policies and will create better conditions for a fighting leadership in the labour movement.

I was on the last People's March — as indeed Mick was — and agree with Mick about the undemocratic and corrupt practices of some elements in the leadership of the march. However, the question is, can this be stopped by sitting on the fence or by getting stuck in now to prevent a repetition.

Finally I would like to say a word about campaigning against unemployment.

The attempt to build unemployed workers' groups have been a dismal failure and the only real campaign has been the People's Campaign for Jobs. It may not be perfect, but it has the links with the trade unions and political parties of the working class, and at the moment this is the terrain which the fight against unemployment will carry on in.

We have to try and make it an ongoing campaign which doesn't just end after the march, and this may be the way organisation of the unemployed linked to the working class movement will proceed. We cannot hark back to the 1930s and Wal Hannington as we are in a different period, where the working class hasn't suffered a major defeat and therefore unemployed people still look to the trade union movement despite its massive faults.

DAVE AYRTON
Sheffield

I MUST say I love these SO "discussions" that begin with a torrent of words from John O'Mahony and then urge readers to "express themselves as succinctly as possible". What a pity that never seems to apply to O'Mahony himself! Still, I suppose there is a good side to that in terms of political clarity since the more he writes the worse he gets.

To begin with comrade O'Mahony should be informed that you can only accuse people of libel if what they say is untrue. Unfortunately for O'Mahony the points made by Tony Richardson (SO115) are admirably proved by his own article on "The Problem of the Protestants". Maybe O'Mahony should consider applying his views on terrorism (see the articles on the Chelsea and Ballykelly bombings) to his own bombastic verbal terrorism.

But these are secondary matters. There are, politically, a number of significant points to be drawn from his latest outpourings.

Firstly, we have the curiously myopic view of the Irish people which O'Mahony seeks to foist on Socialist Organiser. I can hardly believe that it is a coincidence that all the blood and thunder is directed against the republicans and the regime in the South while imperialism and the Protestant reactionaries get a soft ride.

For example, according to O'Mahony, the INLA are "sectarian assassins" and are "engaged in a sectarian binge". The IRA were denounced in equally "yellow press" language after the Chelsea bombing for "indiscriminately" "cutting a swathe" through civilians. Similarly, in the South we have "backward, Catholic, bourgeois partitionist bigots".

But in the North? Well, for O'Mahony the virulently pro-imperialist Protestant population who have organised endless pogroms against the minority Catholic population — not least in 1968-9 against their demands for civil rights — are certainly deserving of a slap on the wrist. "It is true that they have played a bad role in modern Irish history", he says. Note, comrades, "a bad role"!

O'Mahony is truly the master of understatement. In pubs all round Belfast he would have ex-B Specials rolling in the aisles. But let us go on.

"The Protestants had privileges over the Catholics in better chances of jobs and houses amidst perma-

nent higher unemployment", O'Mahony informs us. Obviously the point about unemployment is to show, as he attempts again later, that these were no real privileges. All nice mild stuff, isn't it?

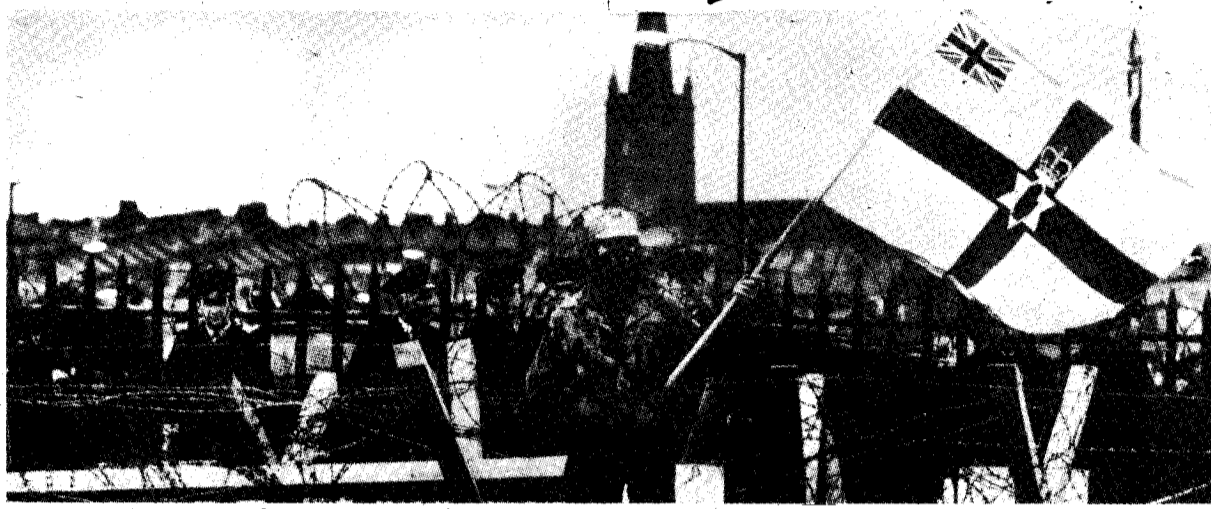
Not a patch on the vitriolic hatred which pours from O'Mahony's pen when he is dealing with the petty bourgeois nationalist movement. Obviously, the Shankill butchers, like the rest of the Unionists "played a bad role". So what we have is, in practice, apologies when we talk about the Protestant community and denunciations for the "priest-ridden" Catholic community — O'Mahony's phrase, not mine!

But O'Mahony is even more outrageous in his attempts to rationalise a defence of the Protestant community when he is playing games with history. According to O'Mahony "They are a community put down in Ireland mainly by free immigration from England and Scotland and, much less importantly, by official British colonisation".

This, comrades, is lying, pro-English rubbish!

How, with this "overview" does O'Mahony explain the rebellion of 1641 against the forcible plantation of Ulster by Scots and English Protestants? How does he explain Cromwell's invasion and the burning of Drogheda? The driving of the resident population south and westwards to Connacht? The almost total redistribution of lands in the North and Midlands of Ireland in that period? The imposition of reactionary English laws designed to exclude all Catholics from holding public office? The years of military rule? Did you, by any chance, forget these comrade O'Mahony?

Of course, as always, comrade O'Mahony is diplomatically coy on such issues. "Lands were taken in a series of confiscations" he tells us, conveniently removing the context. But in order to hide the real



"The virulently pro-imperialist Protestant population have organised endless pogroms..."

course of events he also has to fiddle with his dates.

The English "conquest" of Ireland is carefully placed in the 1590s. In reality, as he well knows, this marked the emergence of a conscious policy of colonisation only — unless O'Mahony thinks that it was James I and Charles I who violently imposed the Acts of Supremacy and Uniformity in Ireland. The conquest took place in the 1640s as part of a Protestant crusade against Catholic Ireland and only at that stage took the form of the military suppression of the Irish people (or maybe O'Mahony also has a new definition of conquest).

With such a record of historical accuracy at hand it is hardly surprising, then, that O'Mahony should also "forget" to point out that the opposition to Cromwell came not only from the native population but also from the Anglo-Irish free settler population, many of them protestants, who were also

driven from the land! Still, what is a little truth among friends? Having rewritten the actual history of Ireland, O'Mahony arrogantly boasts "That is the outline of the dominant element in the historical picture". If O'Mahony were a painter he would produce fakes!

So, let us look at his glib panorama of recent events, and the more modern parts of his catalogue of historical sleight of hand. We are told, with reference to the Protestant community, "what bound them to England and the ruling class arose in the first place from the fact and the awareness that they were different, that their part of Ireland was more advanced and from their feeling of being threatened".

You can almost see Ian Smith reading this sort of rubbish and feeling better. But the situation is worse, because O'Mahony's rationale for Protestant reaction goes further. For we have an almost sympathetic presentation of their "opposition to being incorporated as a minority in a largely agrarian, backward and priest-ridden Catholic bourgeois state." Clearly, for O'Mahony, Protestant imperialist enclaves are eminently superior to Catholic bourgeois states!

In any case, what we get

is certainly a novel view of Ulster Unionism. Unfortunately for O'Mahony, Bonar Law, the then Conservative leader was somewhat more honest when he addressed the massed unionists on April 9, 1912 at Balmoral, a suburb of Belfast. "Once again you hold the pass," he informed them. "The pass for the Empire".

Tell me, comrade O'Mahony, when the audience clapped and cheered this reactionary bilge were they expressing their noble hostility to Catholic "backwardness" or their prostrate, reactionary pro-imperialism? Were the Ulster Volunteers a militant expression of advanced social relations or a reactionary expression of the distorted, combined and uneven development imposed on Ireland by imperialism?

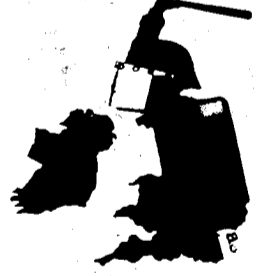
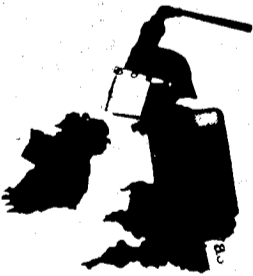
Inevitably, the end-game of this ludicrous series of political charades sinks to the absolute depths. "The way forward for the Protestant working class is within the framework of a united Ireland — and possibly within a wider British/Irish or European framework". What the hell is he talking about? What is a "wider British/Irish or European framework"? A new expanded United Kingdom? A bourgeois regroupment through the EEC?

The only such framework that I know of in the lexicon of revolutionary Marxism is the Socialist United States of Europe. But then such concepts would never enter into the thoughts of one so elevated as comrade O'Mahony. He is after all "a working class democrat" and a "consistent democrat".

So, inevitably all that we get are demands for a democratic programme which begins from the "maximum democratic rights for the Protestant community" in the form of federal autonomy.

Comrade O'Mahony, you should try thinking about the revolutionary tasks in Ireland in terms of the theory of permanent revolution. Then perhaps you could avoid falling into what Tony Gard correctly described in SO 118 as "a reactionary divisive notion which has no part in the Marxist programme."

PETER FLACK
Leicester



SCIENCE Sixth sense

by Les Hearn

HUMANS possess many of the senses of other animals, though usually to a less developed degree, but up to now we have seemed to lack a sense of direction.

Animals often seem to be marvellously in tune with their environment, and perhaps the most impressive demonstration of this is in the ability particularly of birds to migrate hundreds or thousands of miles, often to an exact location, regardless of the absence of clues for the senses of sight or smell.

Now it seems that humans also have a direction sense, as two recent findings demonstrate.

In an experiment a couple of years ago, a group of volunteers were blindfolded and driven, by a roundabout route, to an unknown destination.

They were then able (still blindfolded) to point fairly accurately to where they had come from.

This direction sense seemed to rely on detecting the direction of the Earth's magnetic field — as was

shown when some of the volunteers had magnetic 'hats' put on their heads. This completely mucked up their direction sense.

So it seems that humans (well, some at least!) can detect the Earth's magnetic field and can remember their movements in relation to it.

The animals that can also do this seem to possess special organs — deposits of magnetic material in their heads — and it has just been shown that humans also have deposits of magnetic material in their heads, behind their

noses.

So far, no nerves have been found joining the 'magnetic organ' to the brain, but it seems likely that they will be discovered eventually.

So, scientists have discovered something else new about humans — or is it only a re-discovery? Perhaps, with the growth of civilisation and our growing control over our environment, we have merely learned to ignore this never very strong sense. Perhaps it was already declining in importance when humans

evolved. Once aware of such a sense, we should be able to train and develop it. However, there is an obstacle. We have filled our environment with 'magnetic pollution'.

Over the last 100 years or so we have made a vast quantity of objects out of magnetic substances such as iron, steel, nickel, etc., as well as covering the countryside with a network of current electricity (and the multitude of electric motors that run off it), all of which produce magnetic fields.



Ireland - which way forward?

A number of letters in this and recent issues of Socialist Organiser have focused on the question of political perspectives for Ireland, and in particular the politics of the Republican movement and the issue of the Protestant working class in the Six County Northern statelet.

This question is of paramount importance both for the British left and for the building of a revolutionary leadership for the Irish working class.

But for it to be adequately discussed involves examination of historical and political questions which cannot be adequately handled within the restrictions of a letters column.

Socialist Organiser is committed to self-determination for the Irish people as a whole and unconditional withdrawal of British troops. There are, however, different views among us on such questions as whether to support a federal solution giving some autonomy to the Protestant-dominated areas within a united Ireland.

For this reason we are opening our pages for the submission of discussion articles on this and related questions on Ireland. The discussion is opened with an article, in two parts concluding this week, by John O'Mahony, who has contributed most regularly to the paper on Ireland.

We invite further articles as contributions to the discussion. While not restricting the scope of replies, we would urge readers to express themselves as succinctly as possible.

IS IT 'capitulation to imperialism' by way of the Protestants to be concerned with the democratic rights of the Protestant Irish people? No, it is not. A basic document of the Communist International said this:

"... the entire policy of the Communist International on the national and colonial question must be based primarily on bringing together the proletariat and working classes of all nations and countries for the common revolutionary struggle for the overthrow of the landowners and the bourgeoisie. For only such united action will ensure victory over capitalism, without which it is impossible to abolish national oppression and inequality of rights."

This refers to the relation of the workers of the oppressed nations to the workers of the imperialist countries. It applies, I believe, with all the greater force to the relationship of the Irish Protestant and Catholic working class.

Our concern for democratic rights is primarily, of course, for those to whom these are most denied, the oppressed. We must nevertheless on all questions of relations between nations, fragments of nations, and communities be, to quote Lenin again, 'consistent democrats'. The Protestants of N. Ireland would be oppressed within a united Ireland which bore any resemblance to the Southern state (whose Catholic framework, on abortion for example, is defended by the Provisionals).

Everything that has happened in Northern Ireland over the last 15 years refutes the idea that the Protestants are defined as a community only by 'pro imperialism'. They have always been pro-British only on certain conditions.

The Presbyterians were discriminated against and oppressed until the end of the 18th century. Protestants were the leaders, organisers, and in Northern Ireland the backbone of the Irish Jacobins (the United Irishmen) and their uprising in 1798.

Even in the 19th and 20th century reactionary, Orange phase, they have felt themselves to have their own interests, and have frequently been rebellious. Often in the mid 19th century Orangemen threatened to 'kick the Queen's crown into the Boyne' — a reference to what they had helped do to the Catholic King James after the Whig revolution of 1688. They organised, armed and drilled to oppose British plans for Home Rule (albeit in alliance with a powerful British ruling class faction).

During the last 11 years the Protestant workers have largely broken from the long-lasting ruling-class-led Protestant bloc — not, unfortunately, to socialist class consciousness, but to populist Paisleyite bigotry.

In the last decade the Protestant (mainly working class) masses have brought down three governments, organised powerful militias, and defeated the British government's entire strategy for Northern Ireland with a general strike (1974).

Are the Protestants the 'basis' of British rule in Northern Ireland? Yes, in the sense that if they did not want it, it could not last long. But they have not been the basis of British strategy since the fall of Stormont, and Britain had turned its face to the Southern bourgeoisie and the new Catholic middle class in Northern Ireland almost a decade earlier.

Britain no longer has any military or economic reason to hold on to Northern Ireland. It was British government pressures after 1964 that forced the effete bourgeois political elite in Northern Ireland to try to form links (1965-6) with the Southern state and begin feeble moves to reform the sectarian statelet.

It was this that encouraged the Catholic civil rights movement and at the same time triggered the Protestant backlash which culminated in the major pogrom attempts of August 1969, which put the troops on the streets and led for a while (until October 1969) to the internal secession, behind barricades, of Catholic Derry and Belfast.

The British government's alternative to the old system of Protestant rule that it was forced to scrap in 1972 was the 'power-sharing executive' and a Council of Ireland, set up in late '73 and early '74.

Britain was then 'basing itself' heavily on the Southern Irish bourgeoisie and on a big section of the Catholic population in Northern Ireland, the majority of whom voted for the party which then expressed the joint interests of Britain, the Southern bourgeoisie, and the middle class Catholics — the SDLP.

They were to share power with a section of the Protestants led by Brian Faulkner, isolating and politically ghettoising (they hoped) the irreconcilable Protestant supremacists. The Protestant general strike of 1974 brought the whole strategy crashing down.

Were the Protestants in 1974 acting as tools of Britain against the rest of the Irish people? No, they were not, neither in their intentions nor objectively. And in the light of this what sense does it make to talk, as many comrades do, as if 'Catholic' means anti-imperialist?

If to be anti-imperialist is to be against the British government and its policies for Ireland, and to use 'revolutionary' methods (including working-class methods, in a reactionary cause), then the Northern Ireland Protestants have been the

Protestants and Republicans



"Unity will not be achieved just by preaching its advantages: the antagonism is too deep and bloody..."

most potent 'anti-imperialist' force in Ireland.

The tragedy, of course, is that their purpose has been to restore their sectarian supremacy within the artificial 6 County state. They are concerned not with 'imperialism' but with their own interests as they see them — that is, with their relations with the Irish Catholics.

Defeated

It is the Protestants who so far have defeated every British effort to collaborate with the Irish bourgeoisie in rearranging the mess it created in 1920.

Britain would readily agree to a united Ireland tomorrow if enough Northern Ireland Protestants would. Britain is not 'using' the Protestants now against the rest of the Irish people as a section of the British ruling class used them 70 years ago.

Britain's crime is that it chooses to hold the ring, maintaining the partition settlement, and to beat down the Catholics.

To picture the Northern Ireland Protestants (or any comparable community) in one-dimensional terms as just politically 'pro-imperialist' is therefore radically to falsify reality and adopt attitudes alien to our socialist programme. It is to relate to the problems that Ireland's history has created for the working class in Ireland, and for socialists in Britain, through crude ideological spectacles, sealing ourselves off from the realities of Irish politics.

Like the Irish Republicans, Tony Richardson tries to define one million Protestants out of existence by the use of an inadequate political tag. The Protestants? Why, they are just British imperialism in Ireland: there is just imperialism and anti-imperialism. The magic words 'pro-imperialist' are pronounced and that settles it. Let's move on.

Central

But it doesn't settle it. The attitude of the Protestants is the central problem.

Either the Protestants will be conciliated in some way, or they must be coerced, subjugated, conquered, and maybe driven out.

Who will conquer them? It is inconceivable to me that we should advocate it, even if we thought it possible.

Does Tony Richardson advocate it? That's what's implied by what he writes (and also by the present policy of the Provisional IRA, not to speak of the 'socialist' INLA).

This is a recipe for Lebanon-style civil war, which would involve Catholic/Protestant mutual mass slaughter, mass population shifts, and very probably the repartition of Ireland into 'pure' orange and green segments. Britain could most likely keep whatever links it wanted with the resultant Protestant area. Nothing conceivably progressive or 'anti-imperialist' could come from such a development. Nothing.

No-one proposes a confessional state for Ireland. But I can think of one thing worse than the confessional state in Lebanon — what existed there when the system broke down in communal civil war.

Yet this is the only road the Republicans' new policy leads to. By way of a trite and false 'political' labelling, the Provisionals have now, I believe, broken with Republicanism.

Over nearly 200 years there have been many different 'Republicanism's in Irish history. But from the Protestant-led Jacobins whose very name, United Irishmen, summed up their programme to 'unite Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter under the common name of Irishman', to Patrick Pearse, joint leader of the 1916 Rising, who (foolishly!) welcomed the arming of the Protestants in 1914 as 'guns in the hands of Irishmen', central to Republicanism has been the task of uniting the Irish people.

Pearse rejected any notion of coercing the Northern Protestants. So, from realism as much as from Republican doctrine, did most of those who led the 1919-21 Irish war of independence.

Democratic Republicanism is compatible with socialism — even the strain of petty bourgeois Republicanism developed by Pearse and others at the turn of the century, with its unintentionally divisive Catholic mysticism and Gaelic-language revivalism. Explicitly Catholic 'Republicanism' is not, even when it justifies itself with rhetoric about imperialism and justifies its attitude to the Protestants by calling them pro-imperialist.

We should understand and sympathise with the dilemmas of the often subjectively-social-

ist Northern Republicans. They are locked into the 6 County bearpit, with little serious support in the South, where they did not even try to contest the recent election. The British working class movement has remained hostile or indifferent. They know that Protestant/Catholic unity is not theirs to create.

They face the bitter sectarian bigotry of the Protestants — especially of the Protestant working class. They know it is the Protestants who stand in the way of British withdrawal.

Implicit in their position for a long time, as in Fianna Fail's in the South, has been the demand that Britain coerce the Protestants into a united Ireland. They have made no progress for 11 years.

Their recent N.I. election success? They got the same proportion of the Catholic vote in the late '50s, and then could also elect a couple of (abstentionist) deputies to the Dail. The election success is anyway irrelevant for the basic problem of relations between the communities: it has been against the Catholic SDLP.

These are the reasons why partitionist and 'two Irelands' policies have entered the political soul of Northern Republicanism.

Opposite

Often in history the results of actions are the opposite of the intentions. The Provo policy now is a recipe for sectarian civil war, culminating in repartition as the final hardening-out of two fully distinct Irelands.

The mass graves of mutual communal slaughter by sections of the Irish people would mark the historic end to the great dream and goal of Irish Republicanism — which Irish and other socialists can proudly pick up — to wipe out sectarianism and foreign domination in Ireland, and to unite the Irish people.

It is no service to the Republicans, or to the Catholic or Protestant people of Northern Ireland, for us to ignore the implications of the Republicans' position, or to praise the 'social' turn when it goes together with a sectarian turn which is fundamentally reactionary.

Ireland, north and south, is an advanced bourgeois society. In the EEC the 26 Counties

have political equality with, and the same formal weight as, Britain — and on issues like the Common Agricultural Policy it opposes Britain.

That the Catholics' current struggle is just does not mean that it is socialist, or that we can gloss over the question of the Protestants' democratic rights by saying it will be solved by the socialism allegedly implicit in the Catholics' struggle. The only anti-imperialist programme for Ireland is an anti-capitalist, and that means a working-class, programme. It thus requires the unity of the working class, or of a big majority of it.

That unity will not be achieved just by preaching its advantages: the antagonism is, and was even before 1968-9, too deep and bloody. The approach of preaching unity is essentially that of Militant. It has no purchase on reality, and less now than at the beginning of the present cycle, when in 1970 a revolutionary socialist candidate could get 9000 votes in Derry.

The anti-imperialism of the Provos and of the Northern Ireland Catholics is deeply felt, but limited by their politics, by the traditional Republican fetish of 'physical force', and by the position of the Northern Ireland Catholic community — centrally by its relationship to the Protestants.

The populist socialism of the Provos and INLA, which has militarist elitism at its core and assumes that the Protestant Irish proletariat can be ignored or coerced, is in no way a working class policy.

The division in the Irish working class simply rules out the possibility of a socialist strategy being developed out of the present military struggle. Talk of 'permanent revolution' is just a self-consoling way of ignoring the realities, and in Ireland it serves to make most 'Trotskyists' practically indistinguishable from the nationalists. In Britain too it has helped to shift the bulk of the left to acceptance of the crudest 'Catholic nationalism'.

The notion that there can be Irish socialism created or initiated by a military formation against the probably armed opposition ('pro-imperialist' opposition, if you like) of about half the Irish working class, is a strange one for a Marxist to hold.

Tony Richardson (and other comrades) not long ago used to advocate for Northern Ireland a united working-class militia based on the trade unions there. This is an attractive idea, but a fantasy, because the sectarian division also goes deep in the unions. The mass UDA of 1972 would have had good claim to being the 'trade union militia'.

What does that position have in common with Tony Richardson's present position, and his current — diametrically opposite — attitude to the Protestants? Everything. For in neither case does he base himself on a concrete picture of Northern Ireland reality and its problems and possibilities.

In his attitude to the Protestants he has swung from one side of the political spectrum to the other without ever touching hard ground.

Jim Denham (SO 116) is therefore absolutely right about Tony Richardson's method — dogmatic socialist phrasemongering in form, and in content uncritical (though unintentional) acceptance of a sort of narrowed-down Irish

Catholic nationalism.

Whereas Marxists must try to understand reality, the better to equip our class and ourselves to change it, the phrasemonger settles for satisfying words which mirror his her emotions and serve to seal him/her off from the real problems. And if you do not try to think things through concretely, and settle instead for hollow 'Marxist' phrases, the actual politics which pile up behind the barriers of dead phrases will inevitably come from random impression, emotional attractions and repulsions, and empirical adaptation to powerful forces operating in the given situation. You only package emotions, wishes, fantasies about N.Ireland in the acceptable form of familiar ideas (permanent revolution, imperialism/anti-imperialism, 'socialism is the only solution' etc.).

With this method facts can be disturbing, and to try concretely to think through implications would risk collapsing the whole fantastic structure of words. You end up not with Marxism but with a sort of kitsch 'Trotskyism'.

Of course none of this proves that I am right about anything. I think it shows that it would have to be an accident if Tony Richardson is right about Ireland.

We should support the Catholics for the justice of their cause and because of the fundamentally reactionary character of Orange politics and of the partition of Ireland maintained by British military force. We should fight for a Socialist United States of Europe; for a workers' republic in Ireland; for unconditional withdrawal of the British Army; for a united Ireland; and within that for a democratic settlement between Catholics and Protestants, to include autonomy for the heartlands of the Protestant community, details of such a system to be negotiated.

But if we indulge in vicarious romantic Irish nationalism, private fantasies about 'permanent revolution', or pretences that the Irish socialist revolution is in the offing, then it will only hinder us — as the various Irish solidarity movements have been hindered for over a decade — from winning that support in the British labour movement for the Catholics which it is our responsibility to win.

Finally, an analogy. Talking to US socialists in the early '30s, Trotsky insisted on brutal honesty about the racism of the American workers.

To the blacks, said Trotsky, "the American workers are hangmen".

He did not then advocate that the socialists turn their backs on the 'pro-imperialist' sections of our class. Hangmen they were; but still, our class. His programme was class unity — and, immediately, defence of the most oppressed against all the hangmen.

And, after all, when we discuss the Northern Ireland Protestants, we are talking about a big section of our own class — probably close to half the Irish working class — and as much as a quarter of all the people who live in Ireland! Our starting point has to be James Connolly's dictum against all abstract nationalism — "Ireland apart from her people means nothing to me".

CORRECTION: A typing error in the first part of this article made it refer to 'the English conquest of the 1590s'. It should have been 'the Elizabethan conquest'.

Jobless youth used to attack jobs

WE need to be aware of the differences between the objectives of the Manpower Services Commission — trying to operate as a service for the unemployed — and the way the MSC is used as a vehicle for enforcing Tory attacks/controls on the unemployed.

The compulsory element of Youth Training Initiative along with the minimal allowances of £15 per week, was fiercely opposed by the MSC — who had drawn up a totally different set of proposals for training the unemployed.

The government forced the MSC to adopt the YTI as the Tory government had drawn it up, though widespread opposition to the compulsory training, and the low allowance, forced the government to make concessions on these points.

Objective

The objective of the government is to provide training (YTS) or full-time education for all under 19 years old.

Those who chose to do neither will have no right to claim Supplementary Benefit, and therefore will not have the freedom to leave home at 16. It is part of the strategy to underplay the real levels of unemployment at the expense of the youth, who will be treated as part of the family unit for the purpose of means testing — spreading the burden of unemployment throughout the family.

Because the government has been defeated at the outset — on the level of allowance and compulsory element of YTS — this will not mean that in the future they will not try again. It will be easier to tighten up the scheme once it is operating, as they are currently doing with the Community Programme scheme.

The training element is, in fact, dressing up the YOP schemes to make them more acceptable for the labour movement and those

Mick Jarmaine looks at the new Youth Training Scheme

concerned about the plight of the unemployed.

The concept that young people have to be trained to the work ethic, before they are able to get a job is being popularised by the Tories — and wrongly accepted by many in the labour movement as an attempt to cover up the real nature and cause of mass unemployment, presenting it as caused by individuals' unsuitability for work.

The cruelest part of the deception is that it gives hope to the youth that they stand a better chance of getting a job, when the real problem is that no jobs being available in the first place.

Accepting that these schemes help the youth — by in some way giving them something to do — is a patronising concept, helping the class enemy to enforce their attacks on the working class. The schemes do nothing to tackle the real problem — creating new, useful jobs. Instead they cover up the problem — and if anything help employers to cut jobs.

Training schemes are currently run by workers paid by the MSC through the CEP scheme. The rates for CEP workers were based on trade union rates of pay.

The transfer of CEP to CP is reducing the allowance to levels which would make most of the participants only a little better off than they would be on the dole, and now there is growing widespread opposition from local trade unionists to supporting the CP

scheme.

To support YTS, with the CP scheme operating alongside it, would amount to supporting low wages brought about by wage cutting.

Once again the employers will receive their share of the tax-payers' money, via the MSC.

In industry and local government apprenticeships are now almost non-existent. Existing training facilities are not being used.

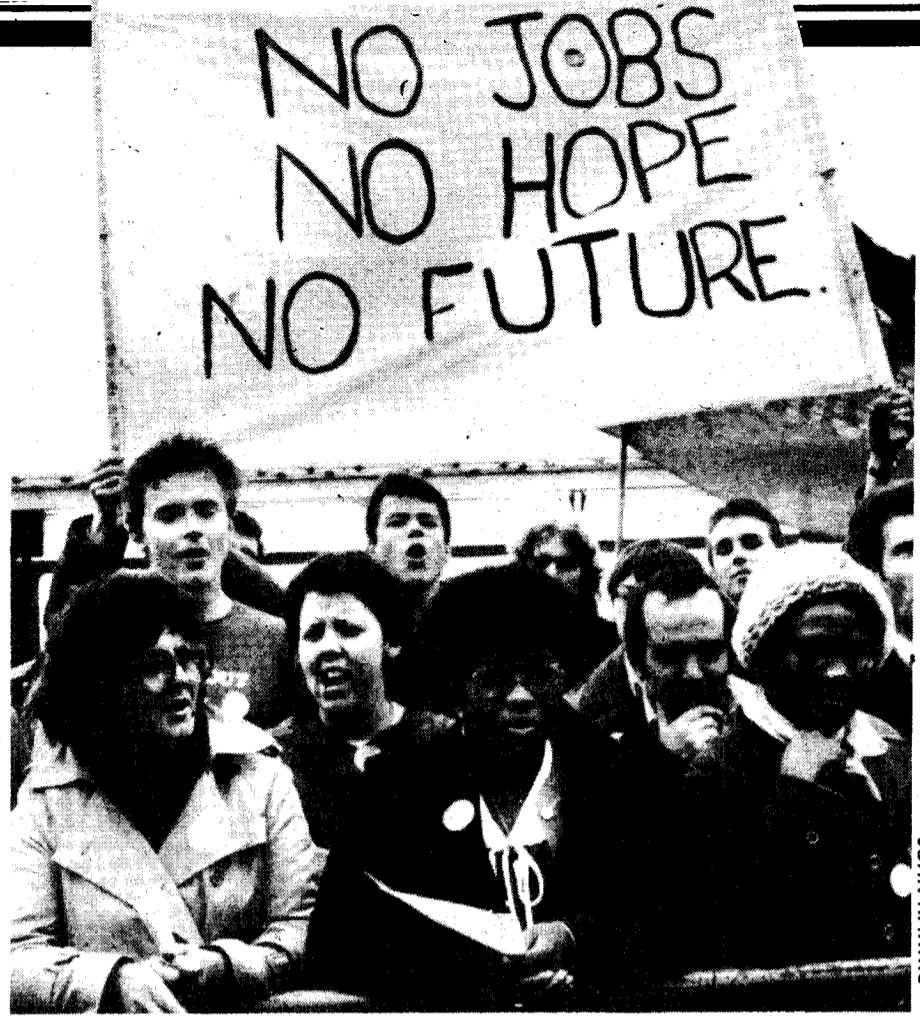
In large engineering factories these facilities will be hired out to the government to reduce the overheads of the factory. Similarly, any production capacity currently not being

used can be adapted for the same purpose.

Production work could be carried out under the guise of training — which means attacking jobs, particularly those of the unskilled and semi-skilled.

On top of this, employers will receive subsidies that encourage them to take on extra young workers. This will result in the disappearance of all paid jobs for young workers.

Labour councillors should surely be fighting for youth to be taken on direct as full-time workers and trained as such. They should not support the YTS. What employers will pay young workers when the MSC will do it for them?



"To support YTS would amount to supporting low wages..."

Organising union Broad Lefts

Phil Holt, secretary of the Broad Lefts Organising Committee, spoke to Kevin Feintuck



Alex Kitson has raised the issue of voting proportions at Labour conference

OVER a year ago the Labour Coordinating Committee called a conference of the various Broad Lefts in the unions in order to create a body which could provide a forum for liaison between the rank and file of the various unions where we could share the lessons of the fight to defend members' interests and against the right wing.

From that meeting we set up what was originally called the Liaison Committee of Broad Left Organisations and became the BLOC (TU).

The idea of the organisation is to cooperate together with the Labour Left, to ensure that the policies which have been decided by the movement shall have a stronger voice within the grassroots of the movement.

Open

There are relatively few open Broad Left organisations because of the nature of many of the right wing-run trade unions.

Altogether we have contacts of some sort in anything between 25 and 40 trade unions, and of these about one-third are what I would call flourishing Broad Lefts. The remainder are either loose organisations or else groups of contacts who are prepared to fight the right-wing. In all the major unions we have contacts with either organisations or else influential individuals.

In some of the older established Broad Lefts there was too much stress on being an electoral machine, and this is one of the main reasons why the right were able to take control.

I think that the left is now much more aware that the struggle around policies must come first and foremost. If we can win mem-

bers' hearts and minds to correct policies, it should follow that candidates standing on those policies should be elected, provided there is a minimum of organisation amongst the left.

This lesson can be seen very clearly, for instance in the CPSA and in the POEU, whose Broad Left I am secretary of.

In this process we can educate whole new strata of activists, and make sure that the Broad Lefts are not just at the top of the movement but reach right down to the workers on the shop floor.

Attack

The question of democracy does not just apply to Labour Party or TUC conferences. On many day-to-day issues leaders can, by manoeuvring or keeping their members in the dark, get away with conning their members into believing that they have carried out democratic decisions without having actually done so.

Part of our job is not just to make sure that votes are cast correctly at conferences, but also to ensure that the rank and file control their leaders and receive full information about what is going on in negotiating bodies and national executives and so on.

This democracy, we think, should be extended right down to branch level.

Another important issue is the recent success, only partial, of the campaign to set up workplace Labour Party branches. This brings up the ongoing issue of the relationship between the trade unions and the Labour Party, because clearly we have to develop the most effective forms of organisation to defend working people's interests.

The discussion must be aimed at making sure that the leadership of the movement is much more responsive to the rank and file. This immediately brings us into conflict with the right wing, because they want to open up the issue of voting within the Labour Party, for instance their idea of one man, one vote. The difference between ourselves and them is that we want informed discussion within the party and to encourage activity within the movement. The right wing want to do completely the opposite — they want to discourage activity within the movement and to prevent

the rank and file from being fully informed before making decisions.

Postal ballots are a move towards these objectives.

In other words, the whole point of conflict between us and the right wing is one of fundamentals, we want the greatest control over our leaders, they want the greatest control over the rank and file.

We shouldn't rebuff the right wing when they want to open up the debates on the block votes and so on, but we must make it quite clear that it is the left which wants genuine change towards an active, democratic structure.

The main disputed issue at our conference I think, will be the proportion of the vote at Labour Party conference held by unions. This is inevitable because the issue has already been raised by Alex Kitson and a number of leading personalities in the movement, and because of the feeling in the CLPs about misuse of the block vote at both Labour Party and TUC conference.

I think we must not lose sight of the need for the Labour Party to continue to be based on the trade unions — it is and must remain the political expression of the organised working class.

Once that principle is firmly maintained we can talk about proportions, but the most important thing is that the block vote must be cast as directed by a fully-informed membership — that is the real issue before conference.

The conference is essentially one for floating ideas and establishing a broad consensus. We will be producing a discussion document for the conference which should be circulated to organisations beforehand and people may wish to discuss it, move amendments and so on.

On immediate tasks: firstly, the left last year drew up a list for TUC conference. We failed to do that for the Labour Party conference, and I feel that this was a great mistake.

For instance, some unions voted for right wingers, purely and simply because they were not informed about which candidates the left could unite around.

In the absence of any other organisations we are quite prepared to be seen as campaigning for an agreed Broad Left list.

More important are the basic policy issues. For instance, the question of democracy is crucial to the decisions which have been taken by conferences. As has been described in all the socialist papers it is clear that the right is preparing to ditch many conference policies.

Our job is to make sure that this is very difficult, if not impossible and the question of democracy is the key.

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3% for bus crews!

THREE per cent is the measly offer to municipal busworkers, already working long hours on atrocious basic wages [£65 take-home, for example, for drivers and conductors, for a five-day week of extremely unsociable shifts].

This offer was overwhelmingly rejected at a national meeting of TGWU

passenger services delegates, representing about 70 municipal concerns, last Tuesday February 1.

One-day

The meeting resolved to call a one-day strike on Wednesday February 16. Delegates were not informed, however, that further negotiations are planned for Friday 11th.

Given the lack of democracy in the union — some delegates not elected, no provision for wage offers to be voted on by the rank and file, etc. — it is clear that the union bureaucrats are hoping to stitch up a deal and avoid a fight.

The original, not so outrageous, claim for 54% to

return us to 1975 living standards has already been melted down to 13% in the form of an 8% rise (to match inflation) on the basic wage and 5% in the form of an extra day's holiday per year.

Activists in the industry should argue that only an all-out strike from February 16 can win the full claim; that busworkers cannot afford anything less; that all wage offers should be voted on by the full membership; and that we should immediately link up with the water workers in their struggle for a living wage.

Phil Hardy,
shop steward, Leicester
City Transport



Map strike ended

THE STRIKE at Stanford's Map Shop in London over 10 sackings and union recognition is now over.

At a meeting at ACAS on Monday January 24, the shop's owners refused to budge on reinstatement and would only offer 'compensation' of £500.

The strikers' union, ACTSS, advised them to accept this offer, and at a meeting last week they agreed to do so.

All ten hope to maintain their membership of the London booksellers' branch of ACTSS, set up as a result of the strike, and are considering ways of using their compensation money collectively.

Will Adams

Hostel picket Go-ahead for jobs march

STRIKERS at Arlington House hostel in Camden, North London, have called a mass picket for Thursday February 17.

It will be from 11.30am to 1pm at the head office of the hostel's owners, Rowntons — 12-14 Bondway, Vauxhall, London SW8.

The strikers are demanding that Rowntons reinstate them and increase their pay rates — about £30 a week including overtime — or hand over the hostel to Camden's Labour council. Rowntons have turned down

a purchase bid from the council, and talk about putting the hostel on the market with vacant possession within eight weeks.

Camden council has also put two Environmental Health officers working full time on the hostel, with a view to putting pressure on Rowntons by insisting they make improvements.

The strikers need support on the picket lines, and donations — to Arlington House Strike Fund, c/o 8 Camden Rd, London NW1

AFTER a prolonged and embarrassing turn round in position the TUC General Council has now dropped its initial opposition to a Scotland-London march against unemployment, and set up an organising committee to promote it.

Last November, the General Council went so far as to forbid regional TUCs to support the march. But as NALGO, TGWU, NUPE and other union executives swung in favour of the protest, this was dropped in December and on January 26 Len Murray issued an appeal for "maximum assistance" from unions to finance the march and supply organisers for it.

The reason for Murray's eagerness to provide organisers is not hard to see. With the TUC's wretched record on unemployment — both on defence of jobs and organising the unemployed — exposed in such a campaign, it will be necessary for union officials to move in, in the hopes of stifling the voice of the rank and file, as they did during the 1981 People's March.

Though no details are yet fixed, likely suggestions would

include starting the march in Glasgow early in May, marching down through the North West — the main centre of support for the protest, and offering a more populated route for the marchers. It is suggested that the march might begin with a Scottish contingent of around 60, and grow as marchers joined it in towns en route.

Whatever the precise details worked out by union officials it is obvious that the potential of the march for stimulating political discussion and mobilisation of the entire labour movement can only be fully tapped if there is a serious and sustained fight for rank and file control and against all the forms of political censorship which seriously undermined the impact of the People's March.

And this means that we should begin now to prepare to fight in the labour movement not only for support committees, but also for the organisation of the unemployed and for policies in defence of existing jobs and conditions.

Where to find us

THERE ARE Socialist Organiser groups in most major towns and cities. See below for details of your area — and if you want more details, or if there is no group listed for your area, fill in and return the 'Get Organised' form.

• SCOTLAND

Glasgow. For details of meetings contact paper sellers or Stan Crooke, 114 Dixon Avenue, Glasgow G42. SO is sold at Maryhill dole (Tuesday mornings) and Rutherglen shopping arcade (Friday lunchtime).

Edinburgh. For details of meetings ring Dave, 229 4591. SO is sold at Muirhouse (Saturday 10.30-12) and the First of May bookshop, Candlemaker Row.

• NORTH-WEST

Wallasey. Contact Colin Johnstone, 1 Wellington Road, Wallasey.

Liverpool. Contact 733 6663. SO is sold at Progressive Books, Berry St, and at News from Nowhere, Whitechapel.

Manchester. Next meeting Thursday February

Next Socialist Organiser delegate meeting: Saturday March 5, 11am to 5.30pm, Co-op rooms, 57 Micklegate, York. (Phone 0904 425739 for accommodation or creche). Please make plans to choose and mandate your group's delegates now.

17. 7.30, UMIST students' union, business meeting and discussion on 'The Capitalist State'

Stockport. Contact c/o 38 Broadhurst St. Meetings every Sunday, 7.30pm: phone 429 6359 for details. SO is sold at Stockport market every Saturday, 11 to 12.30.

Rochdale. Contact 353 Rochdale Old Rd, Bury. Next meeting Monday February 14, 8pm Castle Inn: John McIlroy on 'Why Thatcher is winning'. SO is sold at Metro Books, Bury.

Hyndburn. Contact Accrington 39573. Meetings weekly — see SO sellers for day, time and venue. SO is sold at Broadway, Accrington, every Saturday from 11.30 to 1pm.

Stoke. Contact Arthur Bough, 23 Russell Road, Sandyford (84170).

• YORKSHIRE AND NORTH-EAST

Durham. Meets every Tuesday, 6.30pm, Students Union bar, Durham university. SO is sold at the Community Co-op, New Elvet.

York. Contact: 425739. SO is sold at Coney St on Saturday mornings, at the Community Bookshop, outside the dole office most mornings, and at the University on Friday mornings.

Leeds. Contact Garth Frankland, 623322. SO is sold at Books and Corner Books, Woodhouse Lane.

Bradford. Contact Barry Turner, 636994. SO is sold at the Starry Plough bookshop.

Sheffield. Meets every other Wednesday, 7.30pm at the Brown Cow, The Wick. Next meeting Wednesday February 16: 'The Tories and the Falklands Factor'. SO is sold outside Boot's, Foregate (Saturday 12 to 1), and at the Independent Bookshop, Glosop Road. Contact: Rob, 589307.

Hull. Meets every Wednesday, 8pm: details from SO sellers. Childcare available. SO is sold at the Prospect Centre (Saturday 11-12).

Halifax. Contact 52156. SO is sold at Halifax Wholesale, Gibbet St, and at Tower Books, Hebden Bridge.

• WALES

Cardiff. Contact 492988.

• MIDLANDS

Birmingham. Meets alternate Fridays, 7.30, the Labour Club, Bristol St. Next meeting Friday January 14. SO is sold at the Other Bookshop, Digbeth High Street.

Coventry. Contact Keith White, 75623. SO is sold at the Wedge Co-op, High St. Meets on first and last Thursday of each month, 7.30 at 'The Queen', Primrose Hill St, Hillfields. Next meeting: Thursday February 24, 'Armageddon', a video made by the BBC about the effects of a nuclear attack on London.

Leicester. Contact Phil, 857908. SO is sold outside Supasave (Friday 4.30 to 6), the Co-op, Narborough Rd (Saturday 11-12.30), and at Blackthorne Books, High Street.

Northampton. Meets alternate Mondays. Next meet-

ing February 21. For details contact 713606.

Nottingham. Meets every Friday, 7.30pm at the International Community Centre, 61B Mansfield Rd. SO is sold outside the Victoria Centre (Saturday 11 to 1) and at the Mushroom Bookshop, Heathcote St.

• SOUTH

Oxford. Next meeting Thursday February 10, 8pm, 44b Princes St, main hall: 'Fighting the Regional Health Authority budget cuts', with Jo Coxhead (Oxford CoHSE branch secretary) and Ken Williamson (ASTMS/MPU), in personal capacity. SO is sold at the Cornmarket (Saturday 11am to 1pm) and outside Tesco, Cowley Rd (Friday 5pm-7pm). Also at EOA books, Cowley Road.

• LONDON

North-West London. Meets fortnightly: contact Mick, 624 1931. SO is sold at Kilburn Books.

Islington. Meets every other Sunday, 3pm at Thornhill Neighbourhood Project, Orkney House, Copenhagen St. Contact: Nik, 607 5268.

Haringey. Contact 802 0771 or 348 5941. Meets every other Thursday, 7.30pm, Trade Union centre, Brabant Road.

Tower Hamlets. Contact 790 4937. Meets fortnightly on Fridays, 6.30 to 8.30pm. Next meeting February 11.

Newham. Contact 555 9957.

South-East London. Contact 691 1141. Next meeting Thursday February 10, 7.45pm at Lee Centre, Islibie Rd, off Lee High Rd. Pat Longman (Islington councillor) on 'Socialists and local government'.

Lambeth/Southwark meets every other Wednesday, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5. Business 7.30 to 8.30, open forum discussion 8.30. Next meeting February 16, 'What is happening in El Salvador?' Speaker Al Clarke, El Salvador Solidarity Campaign. SO is sold at Brixton tube, 5-6pm every Thursday. Estate sale every Monday, meet at 6.30pm, Lansbury House.

Hounslow. Meets fortnightly on Sundays, 8pm. For details phone 898 6961.

Hackney. Contact c/o Andrew Hornung, 28 Carlton Mansions, Holmleigh Rd, N16.

SO is sold at the following London bookshops: Colletts, Central Books, The Other Bookshop, Peckham, Bookplace (Peckham Rd, SE15), and Reading Matters [Wood Green Shopping City].

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

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Trade union Broad Lefts Organising Committee conference: Sat. Feb. 19, County Hall, London SE1, on 'Democratising the Block Vote'.

Credentials for delegates from trade union bodies and Broad Lefts from Phil Holt, 108 Prince's Boulevard, Bebington, Merseyside L63 7PE (051 645 137)

FUND - ACT NOW!

Oh dear! With just £50 this week — £20 from Ellen Taylor in Sheffield and £30 from a jumble sale in East London — we've reached £222.50 for February.

We won't get £1000 this way!

All 50 groups should make sure they have a drive on raising money for the fund in the next couple of weeks. There's still time to organise fund-raising for February — if you organise it now. Even small groups can organise collections and ask readers for donations.

Dropping to £50 is a danger signal; and all groups must react now. We need another £777.50 this month. What are you doing for the fund?

Send money to: The Treasurer, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.

Socialist Organiser

FIGHTING TO TURN OFF THE TAPS

Martin Thomas reviews the reports from the picket lines

AT SWINLEY in Surrey, workers from Swinley Park Hospital have been supporting the water picket line. In Newham, East London, local trade unionists in NALGO, GMBU, and NUPE have made donations and are backing a public support meeting called by Newham North West Labour Party (7pm, Thursday February 10, at the TGWU offices, 43 West Ham Lane, Stratford).

Support is also expected for a picket called by the water workers at the Thames Water Authority offices in Barking Road.

Oxford Trades Council has called a public meeting for Wednesday 9th, where a support committee is likely to be set up. In Stoke, Labour Party and Trades Council meetings have invited water workers to speak.

Longbridge

Elsewhere union officials unwilling to give support have been called to account by their members. At BL Longbridge, the works committee (in which the Communist Party is influential) refused to invite a water workers' speaker to address the shop stewards... saying that they did not think there would be enough support.

Several stewards have protested, and are contacting Edgbaston water workers to organise a delegation to the works committee.

Also in Birmingham, local Socialist Organiser supporters are arranging visits by water workers to Labour Party ward meetings.

Emergency

In Coventry, AUEW branches and Coventry South West Labour Party have protested at a statement to the local press by Coventry West AUEW district president Mel Griffin. Griffin told the press that the water workers should accept the offer and their strike was a 'disgrace'!

Emergency cover is being withdrawn in more and more areas after abuse by management.

At Frankley works in Birmingham, workers got an agreement with management for monitoring emergency cover, and under this supplies to a number of hospitals were maintained.

Then management demanded that one chlorination tank be closed and another opened. A mass

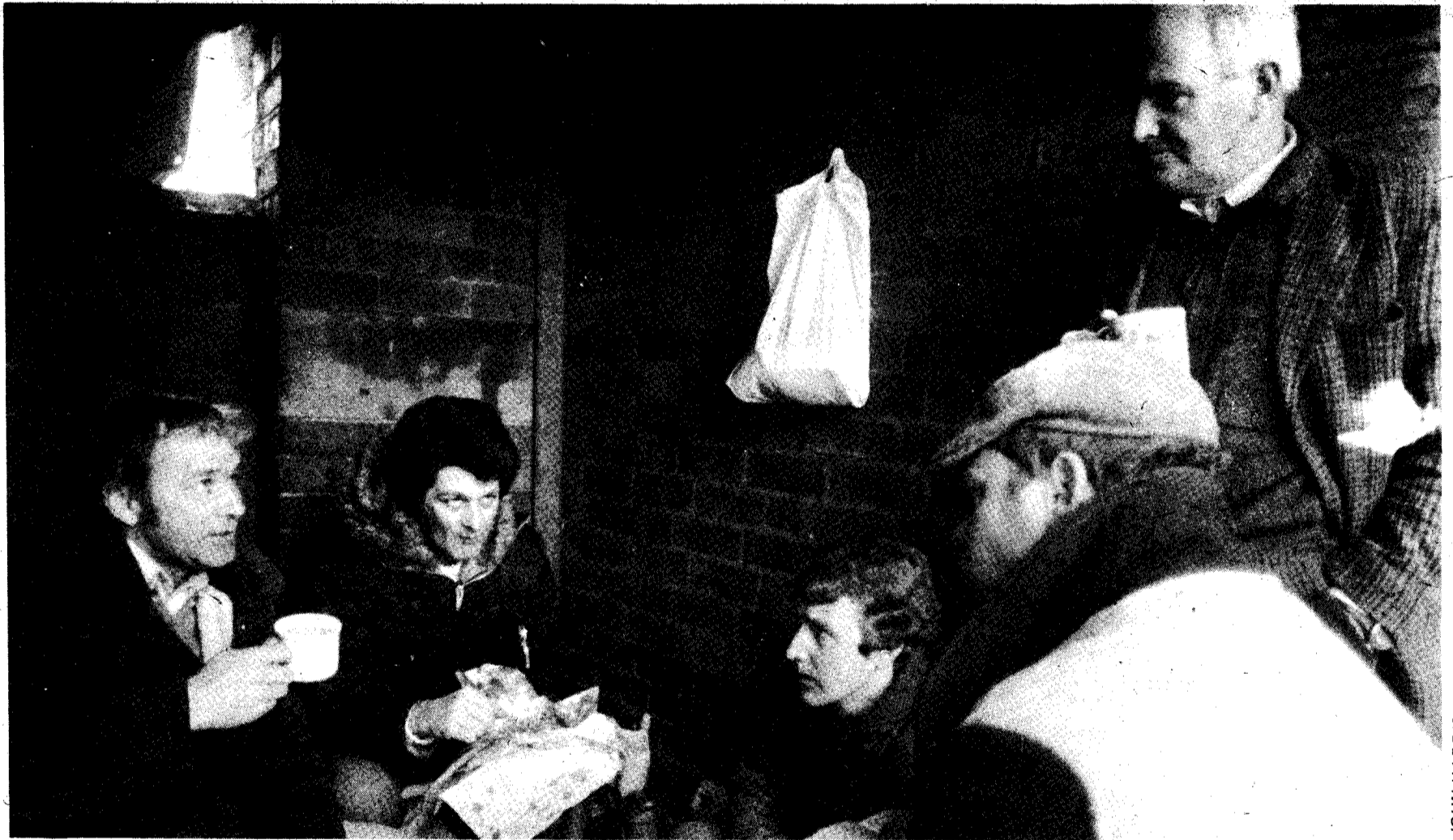
meeting voted not to comply, but instead to send supplies of clean water to hospitals directly in tankers. Management refused to accept and the monitors were told to leave the works.

At Edgbaston, also in Birmingham, pickets were largely in favour of cutting emergency cover down to hospitals and dialysis machines, though at present they are also installing stand pipes where mains fail.

In Leicester emergency cover is still on, but feeling for withdrawal is growing.

In Burslem, Graham Atkinson of the GMBU told us that in return for putting a hospital back on as an emergency, the strikers are demanding a meeting with management to put an end to NALGO members doing chlorination work.

• Reports from Carla Jamison, Mike Foley, Pat Lally, Arthur Bough, Jim Denham, Dave Spencer, and Mick Jarman. Please phone in reports from your local picket lines to next week's Socialist Organiser — 01-609 3071, on Monday and Tuesday evening.



JOHN HARRIS

Heseltine runs from CND challenge

by Harry Sloan

FROM one gaffe to the next, the Tory leaders scarcely seem to put a foot right in their attempts to quell the growing movement against Cruise missiles.

First came the ludicrously leaked plan to spend £1 million of taxpayers' money explaining to them why they should pay even more for the chance of being blown to bits in nuclear war.

When the uproar over this became too embarrassing for the campaign to have any positive effect, there came a humiliating climbdown. Meanwhile, as the new Defence Secretary, the supposedly charismatic Michael Heseltine has been struggling to

find his feet in the debate.

This was not made any easier when he ran into an angry crowd of Greenham Common women outside a Tory meeting in Berkshire.

Refuting those who have suggested they are simply limping pacifists, the women knocked him to the ground, and severely dented his image.

Nor did he do anything to repair the damage when in his speech he arrogantly refused to debate the missiles question with CND speakers.

His argument? Those opposed to the Cruise missiles — a majority of the population according to every recent opinion poll — have 'closed minds' and would not listen to his

arguments.

These are dandy tactics indeed to win over the "don't knows" whom the Tories need to persuade of their case for supporting Reagan's arms drive.

Nothing is more calculated to enrage and harden the attitudes of Heseltine's opponents than this lordly accusation that we have 'closed minds'.

Once again the impact of the Greenham Common struggle is shown — the way it has generated a new climate of discussion reaching into and beyond the organised labour movement, and driving forward the fight for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

• Background on the arms talks — see page five



JOHN HARRIS

BERMONDSEY Labour Party is convinced that the only way to counter press lies and convince Labour supporters who may be influenced, is to get out on the doorstep and talk to them. But to do that requires a lot of time and a lot of people. With only two weeks to polling day, help is now urgently needed. We urge London readers to put in as much time as possible in that period canvassing for Peter Hatchell. Your CLP has been twinned with a ward in Bermondsey. Find out which one it is and take some of your Party members with you or ring 703 6511.