

# Socialist Organiser

No. 249. October 24 1985. Price 25p. Claimants and strikers 10p.

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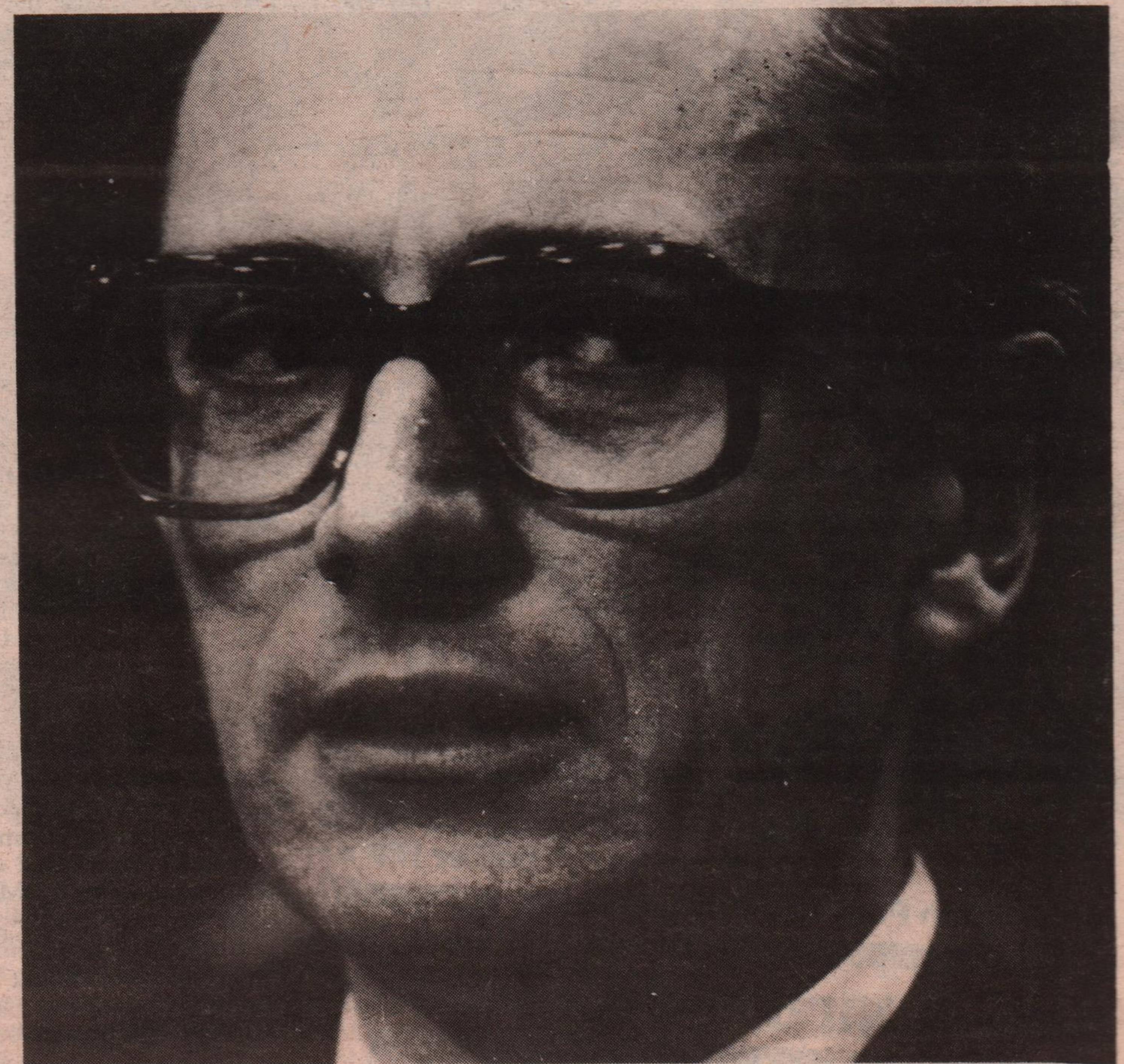
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# WANTED!

## Margaret Thatcher and Norman Fowler for

- \* Cutting £9 billion from social security since 1979 and planning to cut another £1 billion
- \* Handing out £13 billion in tax cuts mostly to the top-paid
- \* Driving youth into poverty wages by forcing them onto YTS and removing wages council protection
- \* Putting four and a half million on the dole
- \* Cutting house-building and education



## TUC national demo against Fowler cuts

Sunday 27 October, 11am from Jubilee Gardens, South Bank, march to the rally in Trafalgar Square at 2.15pm

## 'Provos have mass support' says Tory

"I see no analogy whatever between the position of the IRA ...and the PLO" — so said Tim Renton, Tory junior minister at the Foreign Office.

The difference, the Tories now tell us, is that the IRA has more support. Cornered by Orange bigot Ian Paisley, who wanted to know why the government refused to talk to the 'terrorist' PLO, yet insisted that Loyalists sit down in local councils with 'terrorist' Republicans, Renton replied that Sinn Fein had polled 10% of the vote in local elections.

The PLO, on the other hand has no representatives in the Israeli Parliament.

It's nice to see the Tories concede that Sinn Fein, and therefore the IRA, have popular support and are not a bunch of thugs and gangsters. But then why don't they start talking to Sinn Fein themselves rather than just telling Ian Paisley to talk to them? Why don't they give political status to Republican prisoners of war?

Renton is off the mark about the PLO. Pro-PLO candidates won a majority in local councils

in the occupied West Bank, when elections were allowed there in 1970 (although the PLO was and is banned there).

And of course the PLO has no representatives in the Knesset. The PLO is illegal in Israel and explicit support for the PLO disqualified candidates from standing. The Israeli Communist Party, which effectively supports the PLO, does have seats in the Knesset and indeed is the strongest party among Israeli Arabs — though most Arabs originating from the area which is now Israel can't vote for the Israeli CP or any other Israeli party, because they or their families were driven out of the area in 1947-9 and are now refugees.

When an Arab nationalist party, El-Ard, was formed in Israel in the 1950s, it was quickly suppressed by the Israeli state — not for 'terrorism', but solely for its opinions.

The Tories, as always, have double standards. The PLO are the chosen representatives of the Palestinian people. The Tories should recognise the PLO, and should talk to them.

# Liverpool under pressure

After two and a half years' battle between the Labour City Council in slump-wrecked Liverpool and the Tory government, Neil Kinnock has finally taken notice and visited the city.

He came on 21 October and used the occasion to denounce the Labour council! When councillors called a press conference saying that Kinnock had backed them against the Tories, he angrily dissociated and said that the councillors should be more pliant in face of Tory power, more 'realistic'.

Top trade union officials have also been visiting Liverpool, and they will set up an investigation into the options before the council.

Following the NUT's court case which got the council's redundancy notices ruled illegal, the council has withdrawn those notices. (Its plan was, as a 'legal device' to keep its credit good and protect councillors from criminal charges, to sack all the council's workers for three months from the end of December).

Three options are being discussed.

The right wing and the centre-left in the labour movement both nationally and in Liverpool advocate 'capitalisation' — effectively, borrowing money from next year's housing programme to fund this year's current spending. The District Labour Party, the council, and the main manual unions oppose this as a threat to building workers' jobs.

David Blunkett, leader of Sheffield City Council, has proposed a scheme whereby other Labour councils whose credit is good should put their borrowing powers at the disposal of Liverpool to see it through the year. Reading between the lines, the hitch here is probably that the other council leaders will demand political concessions in return for their goodwill — in particular, the removal of 'Militant' supporter Derek Hatton as deputy leader of Liverpool City Council.

Finally, it may be possible for the council to revise its rate to get through the year. 'Supplementary' rates are now illegal, and normally, once a council has set a rate, it is stuck with it. But the court decision in the NUT's case may make Liverpool's existing rate illegal and therefore invalid — the legal position is not clear yet — in which case a 'new' legal rate must be set.

If none of these three schemes is carried out, the council will run out of cash soon — chair of finance Tony Byrne says within three weeks.

The Joint Shop Stewards Committee has voted for an all-out strike if the council does not run out of cash, and local NALGO leaders have talked of similar action.

There will be problems, though. The JSSC, after the conflicts over the Sam Bond affair and the council's redundancy notices, is now a rump heavily dominated by the 'Militant'-led GMBU.

The GMBU voted 58% for a strike from 25 September, but decided then that it could not strike alone without an overall majority of the council workers. The prospects for a GMBU-only strike have become worse not better since then, with white-collar unions being rallied against the council and the national trade union leaders moving in.

'Militant'-supporting GMBU

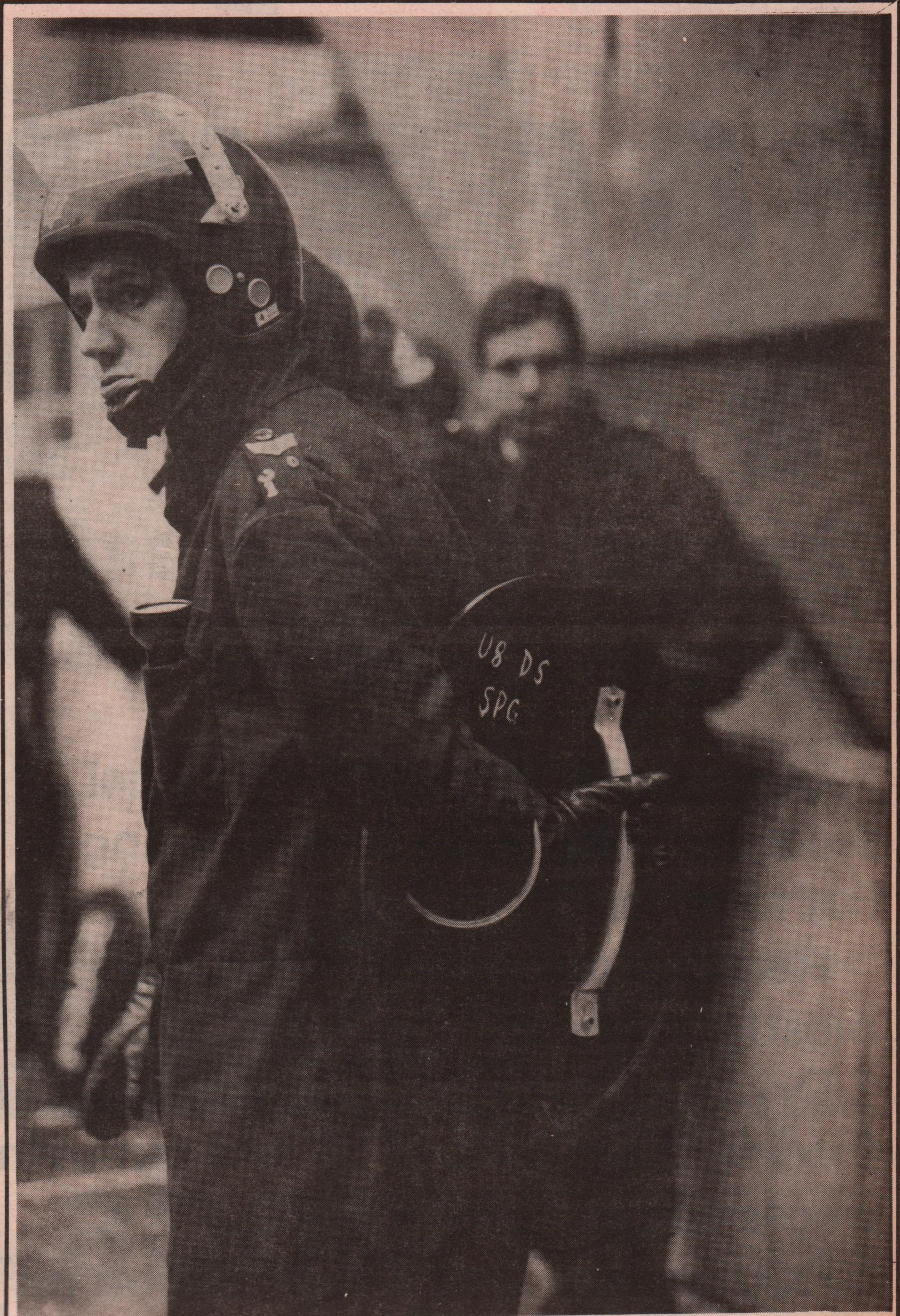


Photo Andrew Moore

## Return of the SPG

Officially the Special Patrol Group — the squad which killed Blair Peach in 1979 — is off the streets of London at the moment. Officially it is not on the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham, where tension and hostility exploded into a riot after a black woman died while police were searching her flat. Above: an SPG man on Broadwater Farm.

stewards speaking at labour movement meetings outside Liverpool have said that they think it best to look towards a struggle next spring, together with other councils (though they have not indicated support for any of the three options for buying time). The 'Militant' newspaper last week seemed to think that the most prudent policy was for the unions to accept one month's lay-off to balance the council's books.

"It would be preferable to have strike action before the lay-offs take place, but if the workforce decide that tactically it would be better to accept the lay-offs, and the loss of money that will mean, then the responsibility will rest solely with

Baker and the Tory government".

With the present level of divisions in the council workforce, a strike could fall apart, with some workers striking against the government, some striking against the council, and some trying to continue work.

### Legal device

The 'legal device' of redundancy notices has proved disastrous, and it has also given a lever to the Liberals and Tories in Liverpool. A 'Liverpool Against Militant' rally last weekend was reported as attracting 10,000 people.

Socialists have three tasks. First, to restore the basis for a

united working class fight. Council leaders should drop their gimmickry with 'legal devices' and state clearly that they are prepared to go illegal to defend jobs and services, and organising through a broad democratic labour movement campaign committee. This would make possible a united struggle — or create the trust necessary for an orderly retreat if one should be necessary and possible without loss of principle.

Second, to dissociate the genuine Marxist left clearly from the bureaucratic errors of the 'Militant' leaders.

Third, to defend 'Militant' unequivocally against any witch-hunt.

# MARCH AGAINST APARTHEID



# LONDON SAT. NOV. 2

Assemble: Hyde Park 12-1pm; Tower Hill or Kennington Park 12.30-1.30pm.

Rally: Trafalgar Square 3pm

Anti-Apartheid Movement

# A hell of a minority

It is obviously a very sad day for us, but it is no time to look back or to cry over spilt milk. We've got our work cut out and we must get on and do it.

There will be NUM branches set up in every colliery in the coalfield and we'll have an organisation as good as, if not better than, Lynk's within a very short time.

We may be a minority, but we are a hell of a minority. We've got the brains, we've got the activists, and Lynk is going to be left with a union of pit top winders and other surface workers, while we will have the underground workers.

We had a meeting at the NUM headquarters with

representatives from every branch in the area, and we have acting secretaries until such times as elections can be organised, which will be as soon as possible.

Our immediate difficulty is getting recognition from the Coal Board, and we recognise the fact that the Coal Board is going to be obstructive. But the Coal Board can't ignore the 7000 votes that we got. We shall be pressing at all levels that the Coal Board recognise the NUM in the Notts coalfield.

We are the only signatories to the agreements and Lynk's union hasn't got a single agreement because it doesn't exist.

As far as we are concerned we were, are and always will

be the NUM Notts Area. So in terms of the TUC and the Labour Party we are the recognised union and it is not for us to go out and seek recognition because we have already got it.

It is up to Lynk to go looking for recognition. While I am quite sure the Coal Board will recognise him, the Labour Party and the TUC are quite aware of what's been going on and they will not recognise Lynk. The TUC has said it, put it in black and white. So has the Labour Party general secretary.

So we don't see this as the most pressing problem.

I'm chair of Newark constituency and as far as I'm concerned, any Labour Party member who does not have

a bona fide trade union card will not be recognised as a member of the Party, and I'm sure that will be the case in other constituencies as well.

I'm also sure that if the members of Lynk's union were balloted on affiliation to the TUC and the Labour Party you'd see a very interesting result because I don't believe the people in that union have any intention of being associated with either the TUC or the Labour Party.

You cannot single out one single reason why they won the ballot. A major reason was that they controlled the apparatus, they'd got the money, the backing from the Coal Board, they dictated the terms of the campaign,

whereas we had no finances, because of the sequestration, and we've not been able to counteract the vast amount of propaganda that they have poured into the campaign with money at their disposal.

It will be very interesting to get a breakdown of the results, colliery by colliery. I think where you've had good branch officials in the past we will have got a better result.

I think some miners may have been swayed by the talk of large pay increases and so on coming from MacGregor and Lynk just before the ballot, but most people picking up their paper and seeing talk of £400 a week would have treated it as nonsense.

It is yet to be explained how they will be able to award these pay rises for one union but not for the other.

I am sure that the economic criteria of the Coal Board means that many pits in the Notts coalfield will close. I am fairly certain that the target of 50 superpits is not a pipe dream. The Coal Board are in complete control of investment and the amount of investment determines the rate of return, or the unprofitability of a pit.

So some men are going to be in for a very rude awakening when they find that the

short term gains that they have had dangled in front of them aren't going to materialise and beyond that there is a strong possibility that instead of having a well-paid job they won't have any job at all.

I reckon when I get to the pit on Monday there will be hundreds of men coming up and saying 'I didn't vote for them', and yet they got 72% of the vote.

There's no point dwelling too long on the reasons for the defeat. The priority now is to get the Notts Area NUM organised and participating to the full in the national union.

I spoke to some members of Derbyshire NUM and they told me they were pleased that they won the vote in the three pits and it was swung eventually by the transport drivers who a few years ago were in the TGWU and were begging on their hands and knees to be allowed into the NUM.

There now has to be a campaign throughout the labour and trade union movement to ensure that the decisions of the TUC and Labour Party not to recognise Lynk's bosses' union is adhered to.

*Paul Whetton is the provisional secretary of Bevercotes (Notts) NUM.*

## Isolate the scab 'union'!

The Coal Board has rushed to capitalise on Lynk's victory in the Notts miners' poll.

On Monday 21 October the Notts NCB area director, Albert Wheeler, announced that he would only recognise Lynk's organisation for negotiations in that area.

Other supporters of scab 'unionism' are also trying to profit by the occasion. Branch officials at Daw Mill, Warwickshire, where there was heavy scabbing during the 1984-5 strike, are going to ballot their members on joining Lynk's 'Union of Democratic Mineworkers'.

It is all the more crucial that the TUC and Labour Party stand by their policy of not recognising the breakaway. This will be a difficult struggle.

Instead of coming out firmly against Lynk, the TUC finance and general purposes committee on 21 October decided to seek conciliation. Labour MP Don Concannon has sided unequivocally with Lynk, and will try to blackmail the Labour Party into recognising the breakaway with the threat that it will otherwise lose seats in Notts.

## After Gillick: build a campaign!

### Riot

The police tried to start a riot in Southall.

That's what local people have been saying after the events of the last few weeks.

The police have been:

\*Putting the word around that coachloads of black people from Tottenham were on their way to start a riot in Southall.

\*Questioning youth club members about whether or not they have been to Tottenham recently or seen outsiders provoking trouble.

\*Leafleting schools and homes in Southall, Uxbridge and Acton predicting a riot on the weekend of 12-13 October.

\*Attempting to stir up trouble between Afro-Caribbean and Asian youth.

\*Moving a District Support Unit from Newham to Southall because it is 'closer' to Tottenham!

In the event there was no real trouble at the weekend. Mixed groups of Afro-Caribbean and Asian youth gathered at Southall Broadway but the police moved in heavy and everyone disappeared.

As Suresh Grover from the Southall Police Monitoring Group put it: "Most people around here just think it was simply an excuse for the police to justify moving the SPG into Southall again".

(Information: City Limits)

The Law Lords last week upheld the right of women under 16 to receive advice on contraception and abortion without having their parents informed. This was an 'appalling defeat' confessed Victoria Gillick who has been campaigning to make such advice unlawful since 1980.

The Law Lords decided that a doctor would be justified in counselling an under-16 year old without parental consent on five conditions:

- 1) That the girl will understand the advice;
- 2) That she will not be persuaded to inform her parents;
- 3) That she is likely to have sexual intercourse with or without contraception;
- 4) That her physical or mental health are likely to suffer without contraceptive advice or treatment;
- 5) That it is in her best interests to be given advice or treatment without parental consent.

Gillick's defeat is an important victory. There will be fewer unwanted pregnancies, fewer unhappy young women, fewer suicides and probably fewer abortions, too, as a result of it.

But the New Right will be back. There was not a big campaign against Gillick from the women's movement, and certainly not from the labour movement. Most of the ruing in the campaign came from the medical profession and the DHSS.

Gillick's views are that even the Catholic church has backed the Law Lords' decision. Further attacks on women's rights may



not be so easy to tackle.

Direct attacks on abortion rights, for example, are due in the shape of a revamped campaign by Powell.

Women and men in the labour movement need to organise now to defend and extend reproductive rights. We need campaigns at least on the scale of the anti-Corrie campaign of 1979 — labour movement backed demonstrations, etc.

Gillick's defeat must be the beginning of a stronger campaign for women's rights by the labour movement, not a momentary setback in the use of the moral-majority right.

Socialist Organiser London public meeting

Workers Against Apartheid

Speaker: Bob Fine, just back from South Africa.

Sunday 3 November, 7.30 at the Cock Tavern, Phoenix Road, Euston.



## An illegal hold

This illegal arrest — the hold could have stopped the demonstrator breathing — occurred last Saturday on the picket of South Africa House.

The National Union of Students called a march to leave Trafalgar Square at the same time as a picket was forming at South Africa House, which is in Trafalgar Square. Over 1000 students decided to stay on the picket as NUS marched off with well less than that number.

The police moved in and arrested 280 pickets — almost all of them students. What happens to those charged will be decided at NUS executive on Sunday 27th, where Simon Pottinger will be proposing that they are given legal help and costs by NUS even though they chose to picket and not march.



## Dead at work

289 workers were killed last year in work accidents in manufacturing and service industries, and 150 in construction and demolition.

The total number of fatal and serious injuries per 100,000 workers in manufacturing is rising fast — from 71 in 1981 to 87 in 1984.

Construction is even worse — there, deaths have risen from 17 in 1982 to 150 in 1984.

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A great number of these deaths at work are the fault of management.

The Health and Safety Executive (an official government body) recently surveyed deaths in maintenance, which run at about 100 per year. It concluded that 83% of the deaths could have been prevented, and that seven out of ten were the direct result of management errors.

It is very rare, however, for employers to face any serious penalties for killing their workers. Only a handful of cases each year go to the Crown Courts where penalties greater than a £1000 fine can be imposed.

Last year the first-ever prison sentence was handed out for a health and safety offence. Normally the employers only get fined. The average fine last year was £329 — a token amount even for small employers.

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Three things lie behind the rise in deaths and injuries at work.

First, increased pressure on workers. As unemployment mounts and unions are weakened, workers generally work faster, often longer hours, and are less willing to complain about unsafe practices.

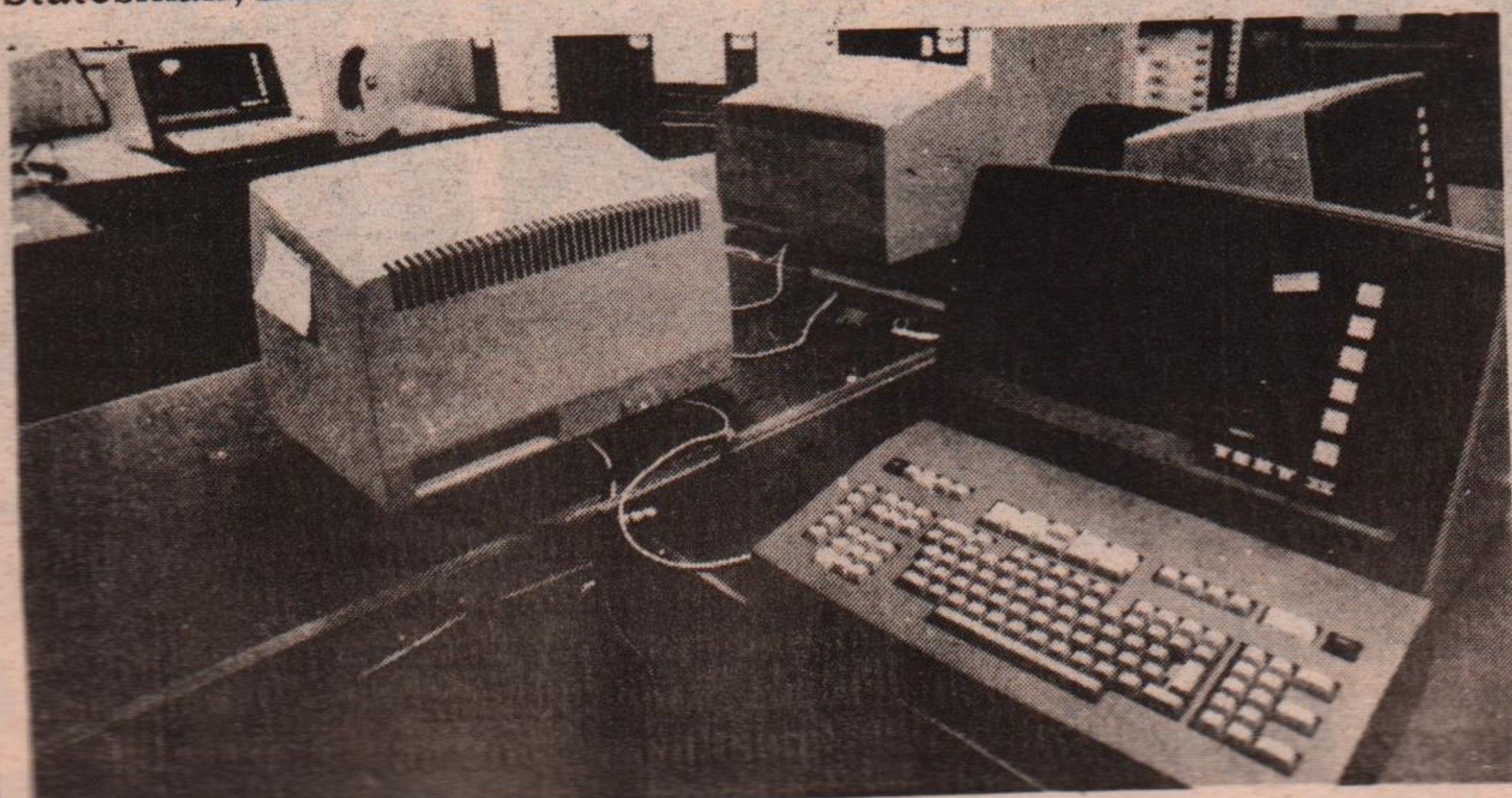
Second, in construction especially, the increase in small cowboy firms.

Third, Tory cuts in numbers of factory inspectors. Recruitment was frozen for four years; it started again last year, but numbers are still well down.

In construction this led the Health and Safety Executive to the remarkable (and at the time secret) decision to stop all inspections on sites run by the big building firm Costains.

The HSE's rationale was that they had best concentrate their inspectors on smaller firms where safety standards were worse.

Two workers died on Costains sites during the year for which inspections were stopped. (Sources: Financial Times, New Statesman, Labour Research).

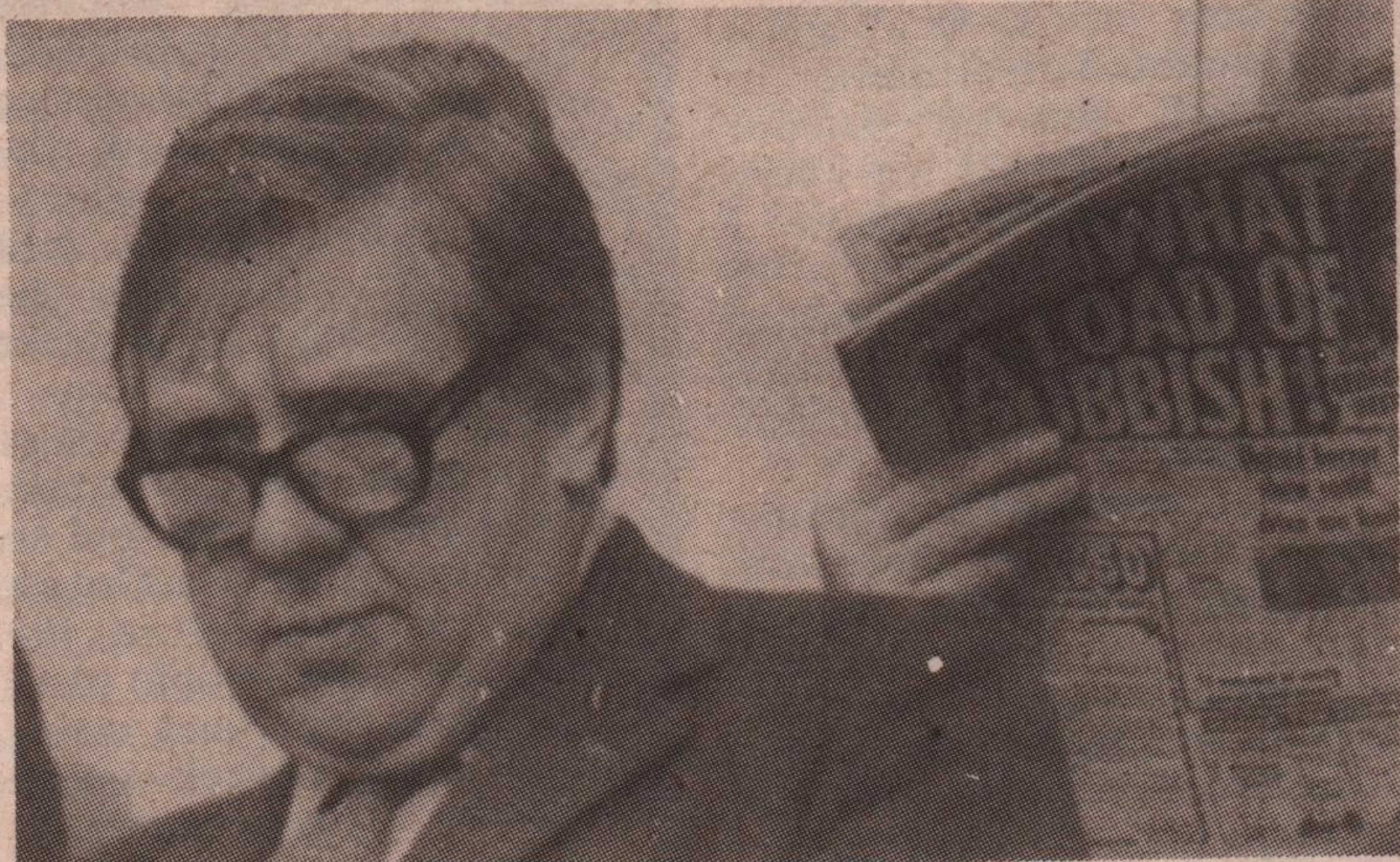


Two studies recently — one by the Commission for Racial Equality and one by the Policy Studies Institute — have shown serious discrimination by employers preferring to give jobs to whites rather than to equally-qualified blacks.

Among recent set of figures sums up the result of this discrimination.

Among males with O levels, 9 per cent of whites are unemployed, 18% of Asians and 25% of West Indians. 6% of whites with A levels, City & Guilds, ONC or OND are unemployed, but 22% of Asians and 10% of West Indians.

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## Labour turns

'Labour turns to capital' was the headline of the Financial Times editorial on Monday 21 October.

It was commenting, fairly aptly, on a speech in which Roy Hattersley recommended more share-ownership by workers as an answer to the class struggle. "This, he said" — so the FT report on the speech itself ran — "would allow the role of profits to be accepted by the trade unions..."

Hattersley also "stressed that the central state monopoly was the right form of social owner-

ship only for public utilities."

Understanding Roy chose to unveil his new insight not to a working class audience but to the Institute of Personnel Management.

The FT comments: "Mr Roy Hattersley finally scrambled the front seats of which are already occupied by Mrs Margaret Thatcher, and David Owen: wider share ownership... It is a sign that the political and economic differences of the parties are perhaps not quite as great as sometimes pretended".

## China Rambo

'Rambo', the notorious film celebrating US imperialist machismo, is showing in cinemas not only across Britain but throughout the world.

In El Salvador, land of death squads and civil war, 'Rambo' has broken all box-office records. In China, too, where life is also pretty violent — in recent years thousands of Chinese have been executed for theft, 'delinquency' and such-like offences — 'Rambo' has packed in the audiences. China is also a very repressive society sexually, which may have something to do with it, (or it may just be that any Western film screened in China would be sold out).

I don't know about the film's success in Japan, but according to a recent newspaper report, regular TV coverage there is unimaginably violent. Not long ago, for example, a man was murdered with 30 TV reporters stationed waiting for the attack to happen and filming it as it took place. They didn't try to stop or arrest the murderers.

A violent, raw, sexist society, it seems, calls for glamourised violence in its recreation. Media

experts have debated whether violence on TV significantly encourages violence in society, but perhaps the cause-and-effect relation is the other way round.

# 42% for VDU

42% of workers find their work more interesting when working with a visual display unit (VDU) according to a survey published by the Labour Research Department.

But 33% find it more stressful, too.

The survey was based on 206 questionnaires completed by trade unionists at workplaces with a total of 7,000 VDUs used by 17,000 workers. It indicates that the most common complaints of workers were glare from the screens, uncomfortable posture, heat, stuffiness and noise.

In only 25% of cases were workers receiving improved pay or fringe benefits for using VDUs.

"VDUs, Health and Jobs" is available from Labour Research Department, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HE, price £1.25.

# A milestone of the left's retreat

Vladimir Derer, secretary of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, presents his view of the Labour Party Conference.

1985 Annual Conference of the Labour Party may be viewed as just one more milestone along the road of Labour Left's retreat. The Party's right wing leadership had almost everything its own way.

The sole exception was the resolution on women's reproductive rights, which Conference carried by a massive majority on a card vote, despite the National Executive Committee's recommendation to oppose. From now on Labour MPs who in the past voted for the White, Benyon, Corrie and Powell Bills will no longer be able to hide their opposition to Party policy behind conscience clauses. It remains to be seen, however, whether the Leadership is prepared to enforce Party discipline on this issue.

### Opinion

True, the NUM Lesbian and the one on Gay & Lesbian Rights were also carried against the NEC's advice, unfortunately, however, by a less than two-thirds majority. This means that these Conference 'decisions' amount to little more than an expression of opinion.

The same is true of the composite resolution on local government which proposed "to fully compensate those representatives of the Labour movement who have suffered personal loss, bankruptcy, disqualification" as a result of non-compliance with the rate-capping and claw-back legislation. This resolution was singled out by Neil Kinnock as "the one which got away" despite the fact that it was previously earmarked by him to be shot down. It was carried 'overwhelmingly' on a show of hands, but there was no card vote.

Hence the decision need not be included in the next Party Programme.

None of these demands will go into the Manifesto. In other words, even here the Party's right wing managed to hold the line and the Left won no more than a small consolation prize.

On all other issues where Conference divided on the Right/Left lines, the Left was routed. The most important setbacks were on Economic Policy and Reselection.

On Economic Policy Conference approved the recent NEC document, 'A New Partnership, A New Britain', which provides a totally inadequate basis for a genuine 'alternative strategy' by blandly substituting vague talk about increasing "the involvement of working people in taking key decisions" for a definite commitment to a significant extension of public ownership in key sectors of the economy.

It is clear that years of waffle about "workers control" and "old style nationalisation" have at last borne fruit. The resolution which demanded the taking into public ownership of 25 of the top manufacturing companies, a demand which featured in the Party's 1973 Programme and was carried by Conference only three years ago, was this time defeated with the NEC recommending opposition.

On Reselection, the resolution which asked that any changes in the present reselection procedure should not be introduced before the next general election was declared, by the Chair, defeated on a show of hands. All calls for a card vote were defeated.

Some delegates may have



Photo: Stefano Cagnoni, IFL

been taken in by the NEC's assurances that the issue will not come before Conference next year. The NEC's record on assurances is such, however, as to make it highly probable that it will introduce its proposals for an alleged extension of franchise next year. Even the modest form of accountability provided for under the existing procedures for mandatory reselection have been a thorn in the PLP's and Leadership's flesh even since it was first introduced in 1980.

Last year the NEC failed to get through Conference its proposal for an optional 'extension of the franchise' in parliamentary selections. It is obviously counting on a pre-election change in the climate of opinion within the Party to enable it to push through proposals which would do away with any meaningful form of accountability.

### Ditch

Such changes are, of course, essential if the next Labour government is to be free to ditch with impunity even the present, much diluted, version of Labour's aims promised in the current NEC's statements.

The Party Leader's intervention, and the delegates' response to it, was a suitable corollary to these developments. The public attack by Neil Kinnock on the NUM leadership and on Liverpool's Labour administration make it clear that this is part of the parliamentary leadership's strategy to crush the Left within the Party by appealing over the heads of Party members to the electorate at large. (Perhaps this is the extra-parliamentary action Kinnock's side-kicks on the Labour Coordinating Committee have been fantasising about).

The welcome these moves have received in the bourgeois media makes further comment unnecessary. It is clear, however, that the last pretence of loyalty to fellow Party members has been thrown overboard.

This is not to suggest that criticism of what is regarded as tactical mistakes should be suspended. Criticism, however,

should be advanced through Party channels only. When fellow members of the Party are under attack by Labour's enemies, that is the time to close ranks, not to deepen divisions.

The idea that the watering down of the Party's socialist commitment and marginalising the Left is going to improve Labour's electoral prospects is a delusion. When presented with the choice between two social democratic parties the electors will choose the genuine article.

### Conclusions

What conclusions should the Left draw from the above developments? The first is that the strategy it adopted after Labour's defeat in the 1979 General Election was based on an erroneous assessment of the situation. Until 1981 the Left was a major influence on Party policy and, within the Party, it occupied a commanding position. It lost it because it failed to appreciate that when Labour is in opposition, and above all when it is confronted with a determined opponent, the question of Party unity is paramount, even though it must sometimes involve a measure of 'compromise'.

Some aims have to be temporarily abandoned if others are still to be effectively pursued.

Even after 1981 the Left could still have advanced in a number of directions, had its objectives been integrated within the framework of Party unity. Failure to adopt this strategy meant that the field was left clear for the conditions of Party unity to be dictated by the Right wing. If the forward march of the Left is to be halted, then the present is dispersed and marginalised forces of the Left must learn to work together.

As a beginning they should cooperate at least on issues on which there is agreement, in the longer run, however, such cooperation will succeed only if strategies adopted are appropriate to the requirements of a given situation. Cooperation must therefore go hand in hand with a critique of the assumptions on which the politics of the various Left groups rest.

# The knives are out

Stan Crooke looks at the Fowler Reviews, what they mean and how to fight them

THE findings of the Fowler Review Teams, set up in 1983-4 by Tory Secretary of State for Social Services Norman Fowler to examine the Social Security system, were published as a government Green Paper on 3 June this year.

The proposals put forward in the Green Paper would cut the social security budget by £1 billion a year. A White Paper with more definite proposals for legislation is due in November.

According to Labour MP Gordon Brown, the Green Paper proposals would mean the following cuts:

- 600,000 households would lose Supplementary Benefit (to be Renamed Income Support), and two million more would have their money cut. Total cut: £180 million.

- 20,000 households on Family Income Supplement (to be renamed Family Credits) would lose benefit altogether. Another 100,000 would lose £5 a week.

- Widows would lose a £15 million in the first year, rising to £100 million later.

- 1.8 million families would lose all housing benefit, and another 5.2 million would have their money cut. Total cut: some £500 million.

Social spending in Britain is already lower as a proportion of national income than in other West European countries, including Italy and Ireland. Since 1979 the Tories have cut £9 billion from the social security budget, and handed out £13 billion in tax cuts, mainly to the wealthy.

These attacks on the worst-off sections of society are not dictated only by blind class hatred on the part of the Tories. They fit into the Tories' whole strategy to try to solve the crisis of British capitalism at the expense of the working class.

Capitalists are not making big enough profits. To help increase profits, the Tories try to cut state expenditure, a major item of which is the social security budget.

Denis Healey, under the last Labour government, had already made Britain's rate of tax on businesses one of the lowest in the capitalist world. The Tories have cut taxes further for the rich.

Cuts in social security are also designed to push down wages. All other things being equal, raising profits means cutting wages.

The submission from the Institute of Directors to the Fowler Review Teams was quite open about this. "The problem is that supplementary benefit has been extremely generous... The problem is not that low pay is too low... but rather that supplementary benefit has been too high".

Leading monetarist academic Patrick Minford claims that "the key ingredient that stops wages moving down is the unemployment and supplementary benefit level".

Lord Young, now Employment Minister, argues that "The level of benefit for young people can act as a disincentive... for boys and girls there should ideally be... no benefit at all". And Fowler himself says that his reform of Family Income Supplement will "prevent families in nearly all circumstances from facing a position in which there is little or no financial benefit to be gained from continuing in lower-paid jobs".

Cuts in social security also have an important role in the ideology of the Tories and the self-styled new Moral Right, with its emphasis on the importance of the 'family unit' and its attempts to force women back into the home.

## Campaign

The Institute of Directors submission to the Reviews says that "child benefit should be reduced; it weakens the family by replacing parental provision with state provision". Social security cutbacks will force women into the role allotted to them by the New Right — an unpaid workforce caring for the young, the elderly, the sick and the disabled.

All in all, the Tories reckon that social security cuts will have a bracing, disciplining effect on the lower orders. As one journalist reports, "Those closest to Ms Thatcher believe the current concerns about unemployment and poverty are grossly exaggerated for partisan purposes... One report that has much struck her recently is that the unemployed are said to spend £9 a week on beer".



Birmingham and Oxford DHSS workers struck for better staffing. Photo: John Harris.

## Cuts in supplementary benefit

EIGHT million people in Britain — one in seven — now depend on supplementary benefit. Another 1.4 million are entitled to it but do not claim it.

The Reviews propose that supplementary benefit be renamed Income Support and claimants be categorised into four different 'client groups': unemployed; single parents; sick and disabled; aged over 60 years old.

The unemployed will receive the Income Support basic personal allowance (except that those under 25 will be paid at a lower rate on the grounds that they are not fully independent). The three other categories will receive the basic personal allowance plus a special premium.

Meanwhile, all extra payments will be abolished.

62% of claimants receive an AR ('additional requirements') payment for, e.g., heating, diet, laundry, etc., of some kind. In December 1982, 87,000 claim-

ants received ARs of £7 or more per week. Some disabled claimants receive ARs of up to £30 or £40 per week. 90% of pensioners receive ARs.

ARs will be completely scrapped.

The number of SPs — one-off 'single payments' for such things as bedding, furniture, removal expenses, etc. — has grown from 0.8 million in 1981 to three million in 1984. In 1983, nearly two million SPs were made, at an average amount of £75.64. These give the supplementary benefit system some limited flexibility to respond to need. Under Fowler's scheme, need won't count.

SPs will be replaced by loans from a new 'Social Fund', administered on a DHSS office basis by the local DHSS management.

Those most in need will suffer most: they are the most dependent on AR and SPs, and will therefore suffer the largest drop in living standards as a result of their abolition.

There will be a new Capital

Limit (i.e. the amount of savings a claimant can possess before s/he is denied benefit) of £6,000. Now it is £3,000. But weekly benefits will be cut by 40p for every £100 of savings between £3,000 and £6,000.

The earnings disregard (i.e. the amount a claimant can earn each week before it is deducted from his/her benefits) is also to be increased from £4 to £5, with certain categories of claimants being entitled to an earnings disregard of £15.

A racist new length-of-residence limit will be introduced: "the claimant will need to have been present in the country for a set period to qualify for Income Support".

The Social Fund will be the only element of flexibility in response to need — to cope with "the exceptional circumstances and emergencies faced by a minority of claimants". It will be administered by the local DHSS office. Payments out of the fund will be on a discretionary basis, and most payments will be in the form of recoverable loans. The

Social Fund will have a fixed, cash-limited annual budget.

The idea of any entitlement to extra money is to be scrapped, almost entirely, in favour of 'discretion'.

In practice, this will mean more means-testing and a lower take-up rate. (Only 50% of those entitled to means-tested Family Income Supplement, for example, actually receive it. About £1 billion of benefits goes unclaimed each year).

There will be no appeal beyond the local office where the original decision was taken. One of the objections contained in the Green Paper to the current method of making single payments is that the rate of appeal is too high. (In fact, it is now 21%, as against 45% in 1976).

The decision to create a Social Fund has clearly been influenced by the American system of public assistance, which is predominantly discretionary, administered at local level and often made conditional on changes in the behaviour of claimants.

# More rent and rates to pay

THE Fowler Reviews aim to cut a further £500 million per year from Housing Benefit.

All the 7.2 million households in this country who get Housing Benefit — a third of all households — will lose money. Worst affected will be council tenants, well over half of whom claim means-tested Housing Benefit, and pensioners, of whom four million will lose some of their Housing Benefit, and 1.2 million all of it.

All claimants will have to pay 20% of their rates, currently paid in full by Housing Benefit. Even those on the poverty line of the new 'Income Support' will end up paying some rates out of their own pocket, thus cancelling out any marginal increase in the rate of 'Income Support' as against present Supplementary Benefit.

Entitlement to Housing Benefit will be assessed at 'essentially' the same levels as for Income Support. Thus 1.8 million people will be completely excluded from Housing Benefit.

A new 'capital cut-off' will also be introduced for the first time: no-one with savings of £6000 or more will be entitled to receive Housing Benefit. And benefit will also be cut by 40p for every £100 of savings between £3000 and £6000.

A 70% 'tapered' reduction of benefits will be applied. This means that for every £1 earned over the income level which entitles a claimant to the full rate of Housing Benefit, 70p

will be deducted from the benefit. Even claimants who receive help with rates alone will be subject to this taper: at a 70p loss for every £1 earned, their rates rebates will quickly disappear completely.

This will reinforce the 'poverty trap' — the pattern whereby the combined effects of tax, National Insurance, and loss of benefits makes the effective 'tax rate' on low incomes very, very high, indeed higher than for big incomes.

It will also hit owner-occupiers, especially elderly ones. So will the proposal no longer to include mortgage interest payments in the assessment of housing costs.

Finally, changes to Housing Benefit proposed in the Green Paper will involve a back-door form of rate-capping. Local authorities will suffer a further cut in central government grant if they do not keep Housing Benefit expenditure at a level which the government likes.

Housing Benefit expenditure partly dependent on rent levels in the private sector, and local authorities have only limited control over it. Local authorities would therefore end up being penalised for the profits of rack-renting private landlords, who are certain to reappear on a large scale if the Tories press ahead with their ideas about abolishing the Fair Rents Act.

Government subsidies to local authorities for housing benefit are to be cut straight away. At present local authorities receive 100% subsidy for certificated benefit and 90% subsidy for standard benefit. This will be reduced to 80% for the lot.



The old are under threat from Fowler

# Pensioners on the poverty line

IN 1985, two out of three pensioners live on or just above the poverty line; a million pensioners live below it; three quarters of all pensioners on supplementary benefit have no savings at all.

If State Earnings Related Pensions (SERPS) are scrapped, it will make the pensioners' plight even worse.

It now seems that the Tories will step back from this proposal, but more because of the administrative difficulties than because of the consequences for pensioners. According to the Financial Times, "Life assurers, pension fund managers, and pension consultants were unanimous in telling him that it could not be done". The CBI is also against abolishing SERPS.

The Green Paper proposed abolition of SERPS over a 15 year period beginning in 1987. Long-term abolition is to be combined with complicated phasing-out arrangements in the short term: SERPS would continue for men over 50 and women over 45, whilst 'added years' would be given to men over 40 and women over 35.

Employees not covered by SERPS would have a pension provided either by an occupational scheme or a personal pension arrangements. But occupational pension schemes will be undermined by allowing employees to opt out of them in favour of personal pensions, and by ending the minimum guarantee provided by SERPS on the index-linking of occupational pension schemes.

In practice, therefore, the Green Paper's proposal amounts to scrapping the benefits of SERPS in order to clear the way for cowboy private pension scheme operators.

The SERPS pension is based on the best 20 years of earnings over a working life. This helps in particular those not in regular or continuous employment — often women — and the sick and

disabled. The 'portability' of SERPS benefits those who change jobs frequently. And SERPS can be inherited by a widow from her husband.

All this would disappear in the jungle of private pension schemes. Many workers would find themselves un-pensionable in the private sector (because they would not be a 'viable proposi-

tion' in the eyes of profit-motivated private pension schemes) or end up with only a minimal pension in retirement (because private pensions are simple money purchase pensions — the less you can afford to pay in, the less you get back as a pension).

The chief rationale of the abolition of SERPS is plainly stated:

with people living longer, a British capitalism stagnating, the Tories are afraid that a scheme may commit future governments to paying out much in pensions. The Green Paper says:

"We should not place on our successors the responsibility of meeting all our financial expectations in retirement". Pensioners

# Reviewing ways to do

THE Fowler Review Teams had a 'nil-cost remit' — i.e. their proposals were not to involve any increase in the costs of the social security system.

And the composition of the review teams was one guarantee that they would produce the desired results.

Three of the four teams were chaired by social security ministers, Rhodes Boyson, Tony Newton, and Fowler himself (so much for the teams' 'independence'), and the fourth, concerned with Housing Benefit, was chaired by Jeremy Rowe, chair of the London Brick Company and deputy chair of the Abbey National Building Society.

Boyson's attitude is clear from

his book 'Down With The Poor' in which he writes "The moral fibre of our people has been weakened... No-one cares, no one bothers — why should they when the state spends all its energies taking money from the energetic, successful and thrifty to give it to the idle, the failures, and the feckless".

There were no claimants on the Review teams, but plenty of businessmen, including TV members of the Institute of Directors.

A standard question put to those appearing before the Review of benefits for children and young people was what they thought the welfare state was for — to relieve poverty or to redistribute income, etc. From the point of view of the members of the Review team, the 'correct' answer was relief from poverty.

Indeed, in the case of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), as soon as the magic words 'relief of poverty' had been spoken, the chair interrupted, as he was not interested in what we saw as the other functions of the welfare state.

Members of that Review team were open in their hostility to a universal child benefit and their support for 'selective' (i.e. means-tested) benefits.

One Review team member Barbara Shenfield, argued that "there is very much more choice today [than in the 1940s] about having children and ab-

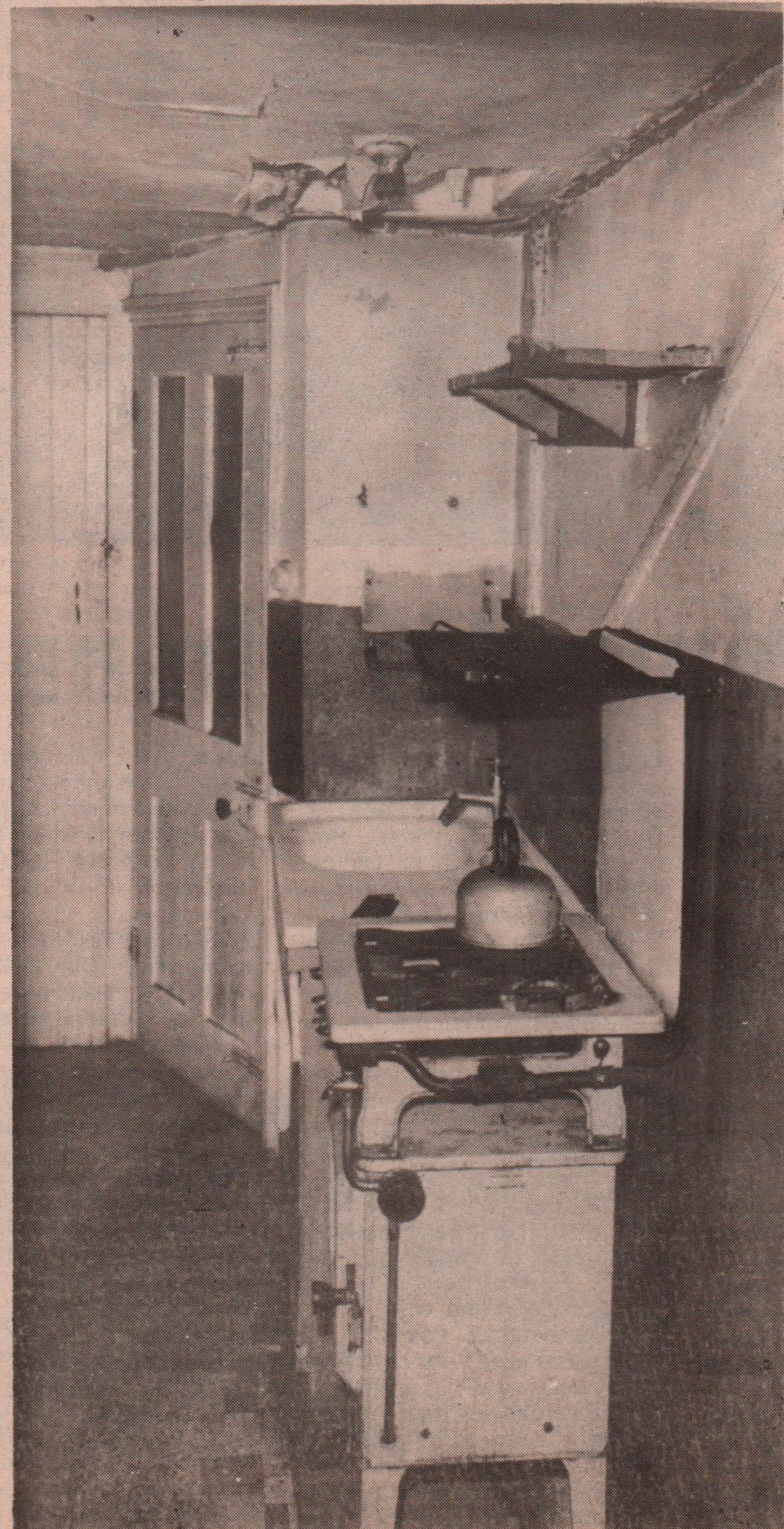


Photo: Haringey Public Library

# Cuts in DHSS

The Green Paper also proposes staff cuts and privatisation in the DHSS. "Simplification" of the social security system, the extension of computerisation, closer links between the DHSS and the Department of Employment, and between the DHSS and Inland Revenue will all result in cuts in DHSS jobs, as well as involving cuts in benefits for claimants.

Such cutbacks in staffing levels come on top of the 10,000 jobs already axed in the DHSS since 1979, and in addition to the planned scrapping of 25,000 jobs through the existing Operational Strategy for computerisation and another 2000 through replacing personal visits to claimants with

postal claims forms.

Despite the potential benefits of computerisation, the net outcome of such cutbacks will be to increase the pressure on the remaining staff and lead to greater friction between staff and claimants.

The Tories plan to set up a new Social Security Management Board, which will include members from outside the civil service.

The civil service is anything but a democratic and accountable body. But the effective privatisation of top management of a major department at the civil service is certainly a further step away from any form of accountability and towards further privatisation and cutbacks in the DHSS.

# Caused by capitalism

THE TUC has called a demonstration against the Fowler Reviews; Labour leaders have promised that the next Labour government will reverse Fowler's cuts and have called for support for local anti-Fowler activity.

But the official labour movement has so far done very little in the way of organised day-to-day campaigning.

At local level this has often created a vacuum filled by social workers, welfare rights officers, community workers, community development officers and so on, who have organised street corner leafleting, petitions, and public meetings.

Campaigns against the Fowler Reviews have thus often been not very political or orientated to the labour movement. Vague appeals to 'public opinion' are preferred to serious efforts to mobilise the labour movement against the cutbacks.

## Substitute

But this is a class issue. Street theatre and song-and-dance routines may help build a labour movement based campaign, but they are no substitute for it. Strikes will be needed to stop the Tories.

And not just strikes by the civil services unions — but strikes by the trade union movement as a whole.

Since any strike against the Fowler Reviews will be political and thus in breach of Tory anti-union laws, such strikes will also raise the broader question of trade union opposition to and defiance of the anti-union laws.

The campaign against the Fowler Review is not exclusively a trade-union one. It must also involve all levels of the Labour Party. The Parliamentary Labour Party should commit itself to a campaign of parliamentary obstruction at Westminster and consistent campaigning outside Parliament.

Labour-controlled local authorities should also provide full

support, both financially and through opening up their facilities to local anti-Fowler campaigns, with no strings attached.

The fact that social security attracted more resolutions than any other issue at this year's Labour Party conference indicates the potential for mobilising the Party membership.

The basis for campaigning against the Fowler Reviews is the network of local groups which already exists throughout the country, roughly comparable to the network of miners' solidarity groups during the strike and often including the same people.

## Central

Operating on the basis of class politics and a labour movement orientation, such local groups can play a central role in winning working-class mobilisation against the Fowler Reviews.

But to campaign only against the proposals of the Fowler Reviews is insufficient. We must also campaign for an alternative.

But the question 'what kind of social security' begs the question 'what kind of society'. Most aspects of social security assume the existence of poverty, unemployment, and low wages, and try to moderate them.

So long as capitalism exists, of course we have to fight for better ways of moderating its effects — improved rates of benefit, abolition of means-testing, etc. — but the problem is how to combine the fight for better social security with the fight to overthrow capitalism.

So we need a series of transitional demands which combine

the defence and improvement of claimants' rights and benefits with an attack on the power structures of capitalism.

We must fight for abolition of means-testing and more staff in DHSS offices — but also to abolish the whole hierarchical and non-accountable management structure of the DHSS, replacing it with joint claimants—trade unionists' control and management.

We must campaign for better benefits — but also for higher wages, through the establishment of a national minimum wage and automatic wage rises in line with a working-class cost of living index determined by bodies involving consumers, trade unionists, and claimants. Benefits should also be index-linked.

## Abolish

Higher rates of benefit for the unemployed would be a major step forward, but we should also fight to abolish the need for unemployment benefit (save for transition periods between jobs) through abolishing unemployment: cutting working hours, but not wages; nationalising all firms threatening closure and putting them under workers' control; retraining at trade union rates.

The entire philosophy which underpins the social security system — one which blames the poor for being poor and discriminates in particular against women and black people — must be challenged. But to challenge that is to challenge the philosophy of capitalism itself.

Benefit	Cost £m	Number of people receiving it (thousands)
Retirement pension	16 592	9 410
Supplementary benefit	6 807	4 645
Child benefit	4 272	12 210
Invalidity benefit	2 946	1 315
Housing benefit *	2 889	4 780
Unemployment benefit	1 611	980
Widows' benefit	823	420
Family income supplement	140	220

\* Not including rate rebates

Figures for 1985-6.

## Women lose out

Contempt for women runs through the Green Paper. Women are the largest group in society dependent on social security. Nearly 600,000 mothers receive one-parent benefit and some 13 million child benefit payments are made to women, in addition to two thirds of supplementary pensions.

Under the Green Paper, widows will suffer from the current Widows' Allowance (£50.10 per week for 26 weeks plus £7.65 for each dependent child) being replaced by a lump sum payment of £1000 on bereavement (equivalent to £37 a week for 26 weeks), thus leaving them £11 a week worse off.

Moreover, the age of entitlement for Widows' Pensions will be increased from 50 to 55 for the full pension, and from 40 to 45 for the lower age related pension, as a straight forward exercise in cutting expenditure.

All mothers will also suffer as a result of a number of other cuts proposed by the Fowler Review teams. The current universal and non-means tested Maternity Grant of £25 is to be replaced by a means-tested grant of £75 from the Social Fund (if there is any money left in it at the time of application) to low-income families. Thousands of mothers will automatically be disqualified, and thousands will refuse to undergo a means test.

Maternity Allowance will be paid (or not paid) on the basis of contributions plus a "recent work test", as opposed to the current entitlement based solely on contributions. Again, thousands of mothers will be disqualified from receiving it.

A new "Family Credit" is

to replace Family Income Supplement (FIS).

The new Family Credit, which will not entitle children of recipients to free school meals or welfare foods, will be paid through the employer to the main bread-winner on the basis of the latter's net income.

Since the main bread-winner is usually a man, this will further reduce women's already limited independence. And by assessing Family Credit on the basis of net income rather than gross earnings, the Tories are encouraging employers to cut wages even further, in the knowledge that Family Credit will top them up.

A new "Family Premium" will be paid to those on the new Income Support currently Supplementary Benefit) at the same rate regardless of the number of children. This means less help for large families, and a further blow against women's independence, as the Family Premium will be paid to the Income Support claimant (usually a man).

The future of Child Benefit is also doubtful. In the 1984 uprating it was increased by only 15p, thus reducing its real value by 35p. The introduction of inadequate and means-tested benefits such as Family Credit and Family Premium are probably part of the long-term plan for abolishing Child Benefit completely.

From pregnancy, through motherhood, and into old age, women will see their income cut and their independence even further reduced under the weight of the Tories' plans for dismantling the social security system.

## Down the poor

how many children to have.

"Why should someone who consciously decided not to have children be expected to pay for others who decide to have a particular number of children?"

Shenfield is a member of the right-wing Adam Smith Institute and co-author of its pamphlet calling for health cuts. In its submission to the Fowler Reviews the Adam Smith Institute called for privatisation of social security benefits.

Even if a serious review of the social security system had been desired (which it wasn't), other aspects of the procedure of the Fowler Reviews ensured that would not be it.

The piecemeal approach of the reviews — they were established at different times, staggered between November 1983 and April 1984, and each was limited to a few particular aspects of the social security system — guaranteed that no overall assessment could be made of the system as a whole.

And the Housing Benefit Review team, for example, was "not concerned with general housing policy issues... or with income tax relief on mortgage repayments".

None of the Reviews considered reform of taxation. The whole exercise was set up so as to focus on finding the cheapest ways of giving paupers a pittance to restrain them from begging or theft, rather than on the functioning of the whole tax/

benefit system to redistribute income — let alone on what makes the initial market distribution of income so unequal.

Submissions from outside bodies were invited by the Review teams, but made difficult by the timescales.

Even the Confederation of British Industry, hardly the claimant's best friend, decided not to submit any evidence to the Fowler Reviews due to the short time-scales, and instead wrote to Fowler suggesting that no short-term changes be made until after a more thorough examination of all the issues involved.

The hearings of the Review teams certainly did not amount to a 'great debate'. People who made submissions often got short shrift.

At one hearing of the children's and young people's Review team, a Tory MP who suggested that taxes might be raised to pay for higher benefits was cut off in mid-sentence and told: "I wonder if you could stop there, unless you actually want to sum up the rest of what you are saying in something like two sentences... You have been speaking for 7½ minutes by Greenwich Mean Time".

The Reviews did not call any claimants to give evidence; they did not commission any research; and they have produced no official summary of the evidence submitted to them.

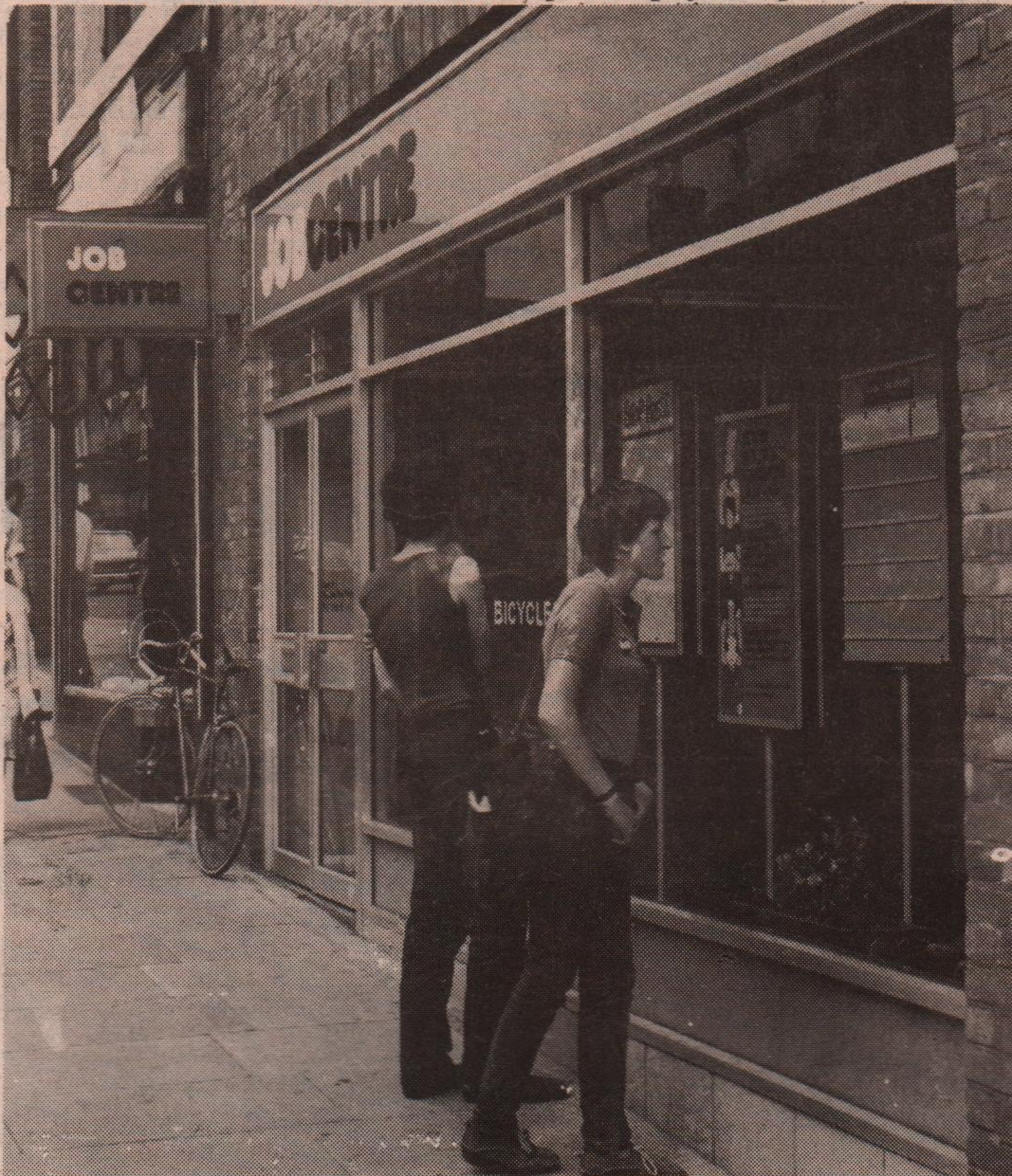


Photo: Steve Bell

## Handouts for the rich

Billions of pounds can be spent to beat the miners' fight for the right to work. Billions of pounds are available for Trident. Pay-rises of up to £500 a week are awarded to generals, judges and Whitehall bureaucrats. "The country" can afford to give away £13 billion in five years in extra tax concessions to the most well-off. And yet, "the country" cannot afford a decent social security system?

In one sense, though, the Tories are honest, for once, in recognising that the third-rate, cut-price, means-tested social security system they have on offer is all "the country" can afford: the crisis of capitalism is too deep, and any government which acts on behalf of the capitalist class and in

defence of their interests will — given its priorities — not be able to afford to improve the social security system.

Far from being a radical and modernising break with the past, the Green Paper continues, and makes worse, the approach of previous governments to social security — including the 1974-9 Labour government.

That government's review of Supplementary Benefit, set up in 1976 and concluded in 1978, had the same remit: provision was to be reviewed "within the present overall level of social security expenditure". The review was set up at a time when the Labour government was making massive public expenditure at the behest of the IMF.

In the event the cuts pro-

posed by the 1976-8 review were not implemented until 1979/80 by the newly elected Thatcher government.

The Tories have continued in the same direction ever since. National Insurance benefits, such as unemployment, sickness, and maternity, have been cut with the abolition of the earnings-related supplement.

Housing benefit has been cut on three separate occasions. The value of child benefit has been allowed to fall continuously. Parents on Family Income Supplement no longer receive an automatic increase for inflation. Young people have been denied payment of Supplementary Benefit immediately upon finishing school, and those living at home denied

any rent addition to their benefit.

By planning another £1 billion worth of cuts, the Fowler Reviews have merely continued along the same road, though at an accelerated rate.

The whole social security system is based on the notion that the poor are poor because they are failures. The rich are assumed to be rich because they work hard (rather than because they profit from the labour of others) so too the poor are assumed to be poor because they are inadequate or don't work hard enough (rather than because capitalism denies them the right to work). Such is the Green Paper's philosophy.

# The Poundswick strike



What happens when they don't sit quietly any more?

# Who to support?

Pete Keenlyside's article last week on the Poundswick teachers' dispute has brought in number of letters from Socialist Organiser readers. Teachers have struck over the Labour council's refusal to remove five boys from the school who are accused of scrawling racist and sexist graffiti (the council says the case against the five is not proven). Pete Keenlyside argued that the dispute is reactionary and should not be supported.

Are teachers to be allowed no disciplinary powers when faced with serious provocation from pupils? Of course, we understand (as do many teachers) that the roots of such problems lie in the crisis of capitalism itself — the prospect of unemployment facing pupils, the cuts in education spending, etc., etc. But does that mean that we must always side with pupils against teachers when the lid blows off in a school as it did at Poundswick?

Certainly, the stance of the SO article is healthier than the reactionary rantings of the "Save Our Standards" campaign, or the mindless attitude of the SWP, who see it as a straight forward industrial dispute. But the author's sweeping denunciation of the teachers' action, and the implied opposition to any expulsions under any circumstances, is not an adequate response either.

### Facts

I don't know all the facts of the Poundswick affair. But the determination and militancy of the teachers suggests to me that there is more to be said for the unions' case than the SO article allows. Until I hear a more convincing argument against the teachers, I am inclined to give them the benefit of the doubt.

FRANK NEWTON

Socialist Organiser's report on the Poundswick teachers' strike was most interesting, and confirmed my suspicion that there are, indeed, some very reactionary strands wound up in the unions' campaign. But the article did not prove the case that "the dispute is a wholly reactionary one which should not be supported".

The author of the piece notes (with evident disapproval) that "the disaffection of working class youth is seen as a threat by many teachers". Is that so unreasonable — especially when the "disaffection" takes the form of abuse, intimidation, physical violence or the allegedly sexist and racist graffiti that sparked the Poundswick dispute?

I take it your correspondent is writing about the same group of workers who have been campaigning now for 18 months in a pay and conditions battle with the Tory government.

Whatever the unevenness of consciousness among teachers, there have been substantial advances in terms of support for other groups of workers in struggle, whether in Britain or abroad, of support for the rights of women and gays and on many other progressive issues.

IAN McCALMAN

# I was dismayed

I was dismayed to read the article in Socialist Organiser 248 concerning the dispute at Poundswick High School.

The author creates an amalgam of different groups including teachers' unions, the Socialist Workers Party and the 'hang 'em, and flog 'em brigade'. This is the worst type of slander, blackening people's names by association.

The SWP have been to the fore in campaigning for banning of corporal punishment. This position has been shared by many other activists in the teaching unions who are also

opposed to any intimidation of our colleagues by those who would paint racist and sexist slogans concerning their personal lives on the walls of their workplace.

### Drivel

The other line of "defence" pursued by your correspondent is to allege the evaporation of liberal values amongst teachers determined to see working class youth "beaten down at all costs (sic)". The writer, however, does not produce any evidence to support this drivel.

# A fighter from the dark days

Rosa Selner (Carson) died in London on October 16 at the age of 79.

The daughter of an old Russian Jewish anarchist, she was born in the Argentine and brought to London when her father was deported for trade union activities.

Rosa's marriage to Dave Selner started a political partnership that was to last until Dave died.

Her father had opened a shop in Commercial Road selling tobacco and soft drinks. He took in the 'Militant', the paper of the Militant Group in 1936. When Dave and Rosa took over they added the American SWP publications, the New International and the Militant. Dave continued to earn his living as a barber at the back of the shop while carrying on his trade union activity in the Shop Assistants' Union.

For many young East London workers heavily influenced by stalinism these publications opened up an entirely fresh angle on world events and made many conscious of the counter-revolutionary role of the Communist Party.

The physical fights with the Stalinists, the heated arguments and debates brought all kinds of people there — Derzil Harber, one of the leaders of the Militant Group, Michael Tippett, not yet a world famous musician, an unknown Ted Grant and others who were to play a role in the world Trotskyist movement later

The flat above the shop became a centre for warm comradeship and innumerable cups of tea. Refugees from European fascism and Stalinism found a place to sleep until more permanent accommodation could be found. Pierre Frank spent his first illegal few days in London with the Selners. Rosa, who spoke German fluently, helped the IKD (German Trotskyist) comrades in producing their paper and translating articles.

When the flat and shop were bombed, Rosa moved to Leicester with her two young children where she soon became involved in the Leicester branch of the Militant Group and the IKD. On her return to London she played an active part in the Trotskyist Opposition, a faction in the Militant Group that fought for the fusion of the two organisations that were to become the Revolutionary Communist Party, the British Section of the Fourth International.

With the end of the war Rosa defended the political position of the IKD and later wrote an internal bulletin supporting Max Schachtman. She linked up with the small group of Schachtmanites and broke her organisational and political links with Trotskyism.

Nevertheless, Rosa Selner's efforts in those dark early days to build the world party of socialist revolution should not go unnoticed and unrecorded.

SAM BORNSTEIN  
AL RICHARDSON

# Pacifism and Leon Trotsky

Leftists who normally respect Trotsky — if not the bulk of his followers — as a socialist thinker (whatever we may feel about his record in power, his centrist failure to provide any real opposition to Stalinism in the late twenties and the limitations of his analysis of Stalinism for the rest of his life) will have been surprised that you chose to reprint one of Trotsky's less intelligent socialist-theoretical pieces, "Pacifism and War".

Neither Woodrow Wilson nor William Jennings Bryan ever had anything to do with the pacifist movement. The said movement did not support the League of Nations though there was an overlap in the mid- and late Thirties between the League of Nations Union and the less committed fringes of pacifism, just as there is now an overlap between the United Nations Association and the less-committedly-unilateralist fringes of CND.

No pacifist has ever accepted the "deterrence" theory of pacifism — "the general opinion in petit bourgeois circles began gradually to behold in the growth of armies a guarantee of peace" — indeed this attitude attributed to pacifism is the standard basis of establishment anti-pacifist argument, and was so before 1917. Nor has any pacifist accepted the view of imperialism described.



Leon Trotsky

In an article singularly devoid of hard factual evidence, of reference to sources and quotations, of any real Marxist perceptions, both the spokesmen and the attitudes attributed to pacifists are in fact those of their opponents.

The fact that since this Trotsky's epigoni have chosen to define pacifists by the mis-

conceptions of their founder means that they have resorted to a level of debate no less dishonest than that which has characterised Stalinist attacks on Trotskyists.

While Trotskyists use one set of libels they can hardly complain of the other.

Fraternally,  
LAURENS OTTER

# OPEC splits

When the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) quadrupled the price of oil in 1974, the Western capitalist world panicked. OPEC was scapegoated for the world recession, its strength as an exporters' cartel gave rise to speculation that other 'Third World' countries might get together to hold the West to ransom.

The speculation proved misplaced. And since 1979/80, OPEC has itself been in a pretty serious mess.

Now OPEC may have collapsed. At a conference in Vienna recently, the Organisation's pricing system — by which it sets standard prices for different grades of oil — fell apart, with Saudi Arabia selling its oil at levels set by the free market.

### Ecuador

And the representative of Ecuador quit the conference, having failed to persuade it to allow his country to sell more oil — whose revenues it desperately needs.

The collapse of OPEC is a major event. The 'oil cartel' was one of the major features of the economic landscape of the 1970s, and did much to reshape the world economy. Its demise is a symptom of the deep, global crisis the capitalist system is in.

# Nicaragua declares a State of Emergency

BELEAGUERED Nicaragua, facing a renewed build-up of US aggression, has reimposed a State of Emergency.

The government has taken sweeping powers of arbitrary arrest, detention and investigation. The right of habeas corpus has been suspended, along with the right of appeal to the Supreme Court.

So have constitutional rights to freedom of assembly and expression — and the right to organise workers and to strike.

The ruling Sandinistas claim that the State of Emergency is in response to "new and more dangerous acts of aggression" by the US, acting through "agents of imperialism" within Nicaragua. A new offensive by the US-backed 'contras' is being planned.

Agents of imperialism are certainly at work against Nicaragua, in and around the country. And the majority of the country's people are determined to defend the gains of the revolution which overthrew the hideous Somoza dictatorship in 1979.

But the new laws are not aimed only, or mainly, at the 'contras' and their helpers. Undoubtedly progressive oppositionists will suffer too, including working-class militants whose actions may be considered 'damaging to national security'.

Reagan's criticism of the new laws is sheer hypocrisy: and we must redouble our efforts to defend Nicaragua from US imperialism.

But at the same time we should call for a restoration of democratic rights and for full freedoms for Nicaraguan workers.



# Ireland after Britain

Stan Crooke reviews 'Ireland After Britain', edited by Martin Collins (Pluto Press in association with 'Labour and Ireland', £3.95).

'IRELAND After Britain' was publicly launched at the Labour Committee on Ireland fringe meeting at this year's Labour Party conference.

The title suggests that the book might address the real and crucial problem: given the fact that British troops in Northern Ireland have no right to be there and do no good, how to make British withdrawal lead to a united Ireland rather than to disaster — a Protestant drive for an 'independent Ulster', full-scale bloody civil war (which the Orangeists will win), population movements, repartition and the permanent division of Ireland into two states, Orange and Green.

Socialist Organiser has argued that the British and Irish labour movements must fight for a democratic programme including self-determination for the Irish people as a whole (all 32 counties) and regional autonomy within that for the mainly-Protestant areas.

## Alternatives

Alternative suggestions to deal with the problem could be valuable. Unfortunately the book doesn't have any.

Some of the essays in it are valuable but about quite other questions than 'Ireland after Britain'. Sarah Spencer, for example, describes the recent undermining of civil rights in Northern Ireland and Britain, but stresses that she does not intend "to propose political solutions or be identified with any particular approach".

Euro-MP Christine Crawley describes her childhood, her views on the Common Market, and her "strong belief that there must be a united Ireland", but has as little to say about the nature of that united Ireland as Aine nic Murcada in her artic-

le on the Irish cultural revival, or Sylvia Meehan in her piece on women's rights.

"As for the future, it will be sorted out in the future of time", explains Sean Redmond, former Stalinist and now general secretary of the Irish Municipal Employees' Trade Union. Tony Benn (who elsewhere has suggested that UN troops could replace British forces) foresees an "endless scope for skill in constitution-drawing [after British withdrawal] around what the exact relationships would be, whether there would be a federal, bi-polar or unitary legal system and so on".

Danny Morrison of Sinn Fein likewise: "There are people within the movement who say we must be definitive about a blueprint for a future Ireland. I don't think you can predict that, and I would probably be against trying... It is a nonsense to start defining in detail what we want".

(It would indeed be nonsense for people in Britain to start proposing details for a future Ireland. It is a worse nonsense for Sinn Fein/the IRA, who are the centre of Northern Ireland affairs, not to sketch out at least a coherent outline.)

So the book actually says little about 'Ireland After Britain'. It does not even do much to clarify the mechanics of British withdrawal.

Clive Soley, in one of the more serious essays, puts forward a "united Ireland by consent", but gives no indication of how he would ensure that this was any more than a formula for a British Labour government to mouth democratic phrases while continuing — in deference to Orange opinion — to act as jailer and gauleiter over the Six County Catholics.

Danny Morrison clearly wants the British Army to disarm the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment (a local part-time force, almost exclusively Protestant, which is part of the British Army) as it withdraws, but the book's editor Martin Collins contemptuously

dismisses this idea.

"The army, quite frankly, are more likely to mutiny or desert to the side of the Loyalists than disarm them.

Many of the book's contributors stress that Protestants should have nothing to fear from a united Ireland. "They would have the same rights as everyone else", writes Gerry Adams, "a republican government or even Irish nationalist parties would have to be at pains to assure the Loyalists of their civil and religious rights".

## Intentions

The good intentions are not very reassuring, because the 26 County state is a Catholic confessional state in much of its legislation. In line with the teaching of the Catholic Church, it forbids the exercise of such civil rights as divorce and abortion which are now enjoyed in the UK.

Danny Morrison agrees with Adams but explains Sinn Fein's decision to drop the idea of a federal Ireland. From 1972 through to the early '80s they had this policy (in a different form from the way SO would argue it), but Morrison argues that it "began to look like a sop to the Loyalists. It looked too much like something which had been grafted onto the republican programme in order to try and buy the Loyalists off... A school of thought began to grow which opposed making compromises with Loyalism and was in favour of beginning to describe the struggle in different terms".

Morrison argues that Protestants will benefit from a united Ireland but it is a waste of time trying to persuade them of this now. "There is nothing we can do to convince them and I think it is pointless to waste energy in trying... It is only breaking the political will of the British to remain in Ireland that will affect the Loyalist community".

Essentially, the Provisionals' perspective relies on forcing Britain to break the Protestants' will and coerce them into a united Ireland. Once coerced, and deprived forever of British backing, the Protestants will — so the argument runs — become quickly reconciled. They will have equal rights and will benefit from the economic advantages of a united Ireland.

## Provisionals

The Provisionals' perspective makes some sense from the point of view of a nationalism based on the Catholic community — though even from that point of view it must be criticised as underestimating the strength of Protestant communalism. From a working-class socialist point of view it has a worse fault. It writes off Protestant/Catholic workers' unity as utterly impossible, and thus probably also rules out even North-South unity of Catholic workers — for the Southern workers will not join a Catholic workers' united front to coerce the Protestant proletariat.

The editor of the book, Martin



UDA paramilitary: how can socialists win away Protestant workers from the bigots who would turn 'Ireland After Britain' into a scene of bloody civil war and repartition? Photo: Camerawork.

Collins, is a writer for Socialist Action. Yet his contribution does not offer any socialist alternative. On the contrary: he takes the Catholic-community-based nationalism of Adams and Morrison, chops out the seriousness which it has in its own terms — its effort to grasp the real problems and define answers — and presents the gutted remnants, in a sauce of fantasy, as a process of socialist revolution.

All problems, argues Collins, will be swept aside in an irresistible march to a socialist Ireland — made, apparently, not by the actual Irish working class (even Collins must be aware that the Six County Catholics include only about 10% of that working class), but by some Force of History high above us.

Collins cites Fidel Castro as someone who "did not set out with the aim of socialist revolution" but expropriated the capitalists as a pragmatic response to the threats of imperialism and internal counter-revolution.

The same process is even more likely to occur in Ireland: "Gerry Adams and his Sinn Fein comrades do not have to descend from the Sierra Maestra unsure of their reception by urban workers; the roots of the republican movement are deep in the nationalist ghettos. The

demographic profile... creates a unique social dynamism which is the raw material of which such revolutions are made".

The Protestant majority of the Northern workers? Evidently they have disappeared. Meanwhile the 'dynamism' will send mortal shock waves through imperialist Britain. British withdrawal "would have an effect in British politics which will make the 'mould-breaking' formation seem paltry by comparison".

## Nationalist

Expanding upon his theory that "there has been no significant political recomposition of the working class without the stimulating drive of a political crisis caused by Irish rebellion", Collins looks forward to a "re-opening with added vigour of the nationalist dynamic in the working class of Scotland and Wales", and a wholesale transformation of the labour movement.

"The weakening of the integration of Loyalist trade unionists from the north of Ireland — consistently the most ardent supporters of the trade unions' 'John Bull' past — and the alternative social models thrown up in the process of forging a new Ireland will act as a powerful stimulus". The Protestant

workers play a role after all! Their removal from British-based trade unions (how?) will radicalise those unions...

And in place of stodgy Labourism, Collins looks forward to a crackpot version in Britain of Jesse Jackson's 'rainbow coalition': "an alliance around Labour of women, of peace campaigners, of Irish people, of Black people, of trade unionists — an alliance that could recompose the leadership of the working class and present itself as a genuinely new alternative".

The book 'Ireland After Britain' is apparently an attempt at a literary prefiguration of this alliance of social groups.

Around Adams, Morrison and Murcada, Collins seeks to rally women (O'Hare, Meehan, Robinson), peace campaigners (McBride, Sadleir), trade unionists (Redmond, Merrigan), and the Labour Left (Crawley, Benn, and, scraping the barrel, Ken Livingstone). It is a sort of literary version of the Congresses against Imperialism, Fascism and War which the Stalinists used to organise in the 1930s.

In his preface, Collins describes the book as a 'dialogue' with Sinn Fein. More like an interchange between Long John Silver and the parrot perched on his shoulder.

## Socialist FORUM

50p

Number 2 March/April 1985

### Ireland 69-85



SOCIALIST FORUM no.2 contains Socialist Organiser's case for a federal united Ireland. Now reprinting: 50p plus postage from 214 Sicket Court, London N1 2SY.

# Born smokers

By Les Hearn

The evidence on the effects of "passive" smoking continues to mount, particularly in relation to children.

The latest survey, published in the British Medical Journal, found that the children of smokers have high levels of a substance called *cotinine* in their saliva. Cotinine is a product of the breakdown of *nicotine* by the body.

The nicotine gets into the children's bodies from their parents' cigarette smoke. It is estimated that children with both parents smokers breathe the equivalent of 80 cigarettes per year.

This may not seem much to your 20-a-day smoker, but it is *too much*, according to the authors of the report. They conclude "This unsolicited burden may be prolonged throughout childhood and pose a definite risk to health".

This conclusion is supported by more and more evidence.

\*In 1981, a national survey confirmed that children of smokers were up to 1 centimetre shorter than those of non-smokers.

In 1983, American studies found that children of smoking mothers were less efficient at breathing, and children of

smokers had lung diseases at twice the rate of children of non-smokers.

\*This year, the US National Institute of Environmental Health Studies reported that people exposed to smoke at home during childhood alone ran a 60% higher risk of cancer.

This confirms US and Japanese research on non-smoking wives of smoking husbands, showing that their cancer rate was increased by 100% in some cases.

\*Research shows that the risks of passive smoking extend even into the womb. Not only do foetuses of *smoking* women suffer. Even the foetuses of *non-smoking* women contain cotinine, the evidence of exposure to nicotine.

Meanwhile, cigarette companies blatantly evade agreements on advertising and get their names mentioned daily in connection with sporting competitions and their symbols exposed even on the non-advertising BBC TV in the background to matches and races.

Thankfully, people are fighting back, through clean air policies at workplaces and in public, and by attacking adverts. The group COUGHIN has brought the methods of the Australian BUGA-UP campaign to Britain.



Cleaning up for the rich

# South Africa in 3D

By Martin Thomas

The South African author Alex La Guma died in Cuba on Friday 11 October, aged 60. He was a political activist — a 100% Stalinist, son of the pioneer Communist and nationalist James La Guma, and a member of the South African Communist Party since his youth — and also a fine writer.

He was prominent in organising the 'Congress of the People' in 1955 which adopted the Freedom Charter, and was jailed and put under house arrest several times. He left South Africa in 1966, moving first to London and then to Cuba.

The most famous South African authors are whites — Naomi Gordimer, Dan Jacobson. They write as committed anti-racists, yet there is (it seems to me) a curious one-dimensionality in their books. The nuances, blindnesses, inhumanities of white South African psychology, both die-hard and liberal, are portrayed in the round; yet the black characters in the fiction tend to be curiously blank.

## Pretence

The authors are well aware of this. They know well that the servile 'Yes baas', the deliberate pretence of naivety and stupidity, or the brutality and crime or wild revolt, are the masks adopted by an oppressed people to protect its humanity against the oppressors; they know that beneath those masks there is thought, anguish, debate about a struggle for a new society and new relations between people.

Yet their social position makes it difficult for them to portray the psychology of black revolt from the inside.

Black South African authors, Alex La Guma foremost among them, do not have the converse one-dimensionality.

They portray 'from the inside' a vast variety of black attitudes — self-destructive or submissive despair; uncontrolled fury; fear and weakness; courage and patient struggle — and their interactions.

La Guma's 'The Stone Country', for example, portrays without idealisation a varied group of prisoners in Cape Town jail. From black South African fiction a reader can also get an impression of different cultures making

up black South African society — the ghettos of Soweto, the black farm labourers' compounds, the desolation of the bantustans, the cosmopolitan society of the 'Cape Coloureds'. But the authors can also depict white attitudes, not as a blank exterior, but as a human response to circumstances.

Take La Guma's 1979 novel 'Time of the Butcherbird'. Shilling Muriel is a young African just out of jail, coldly intent on individual revenge — to assassinate Hannes Meulen, the Afrikaner farmer who killed his brother and got Shilling sent to jail. Hlangeni is the chief of Shilling's clan, about to be forcibly resettled under the white government's bantustan policy: he speaks for submission. Mma-Tau, Hlangeni's sister, is an ANC militant: she rallies the clan to resist collectively. The shepherd Madonele would; left to himself, go along with Hlangeni, but rallies to the majority swayed by Mma-Tau.

But not only these characters and the relations between them are portrayed sensitively. La Guma also shows us the world from the point of view of Edgar Stopes — an English-speaking salesman who feels himself superior to the crudeness of the rural Afrikaners yet is utterly racist — and of his wife Maisie.

## Category

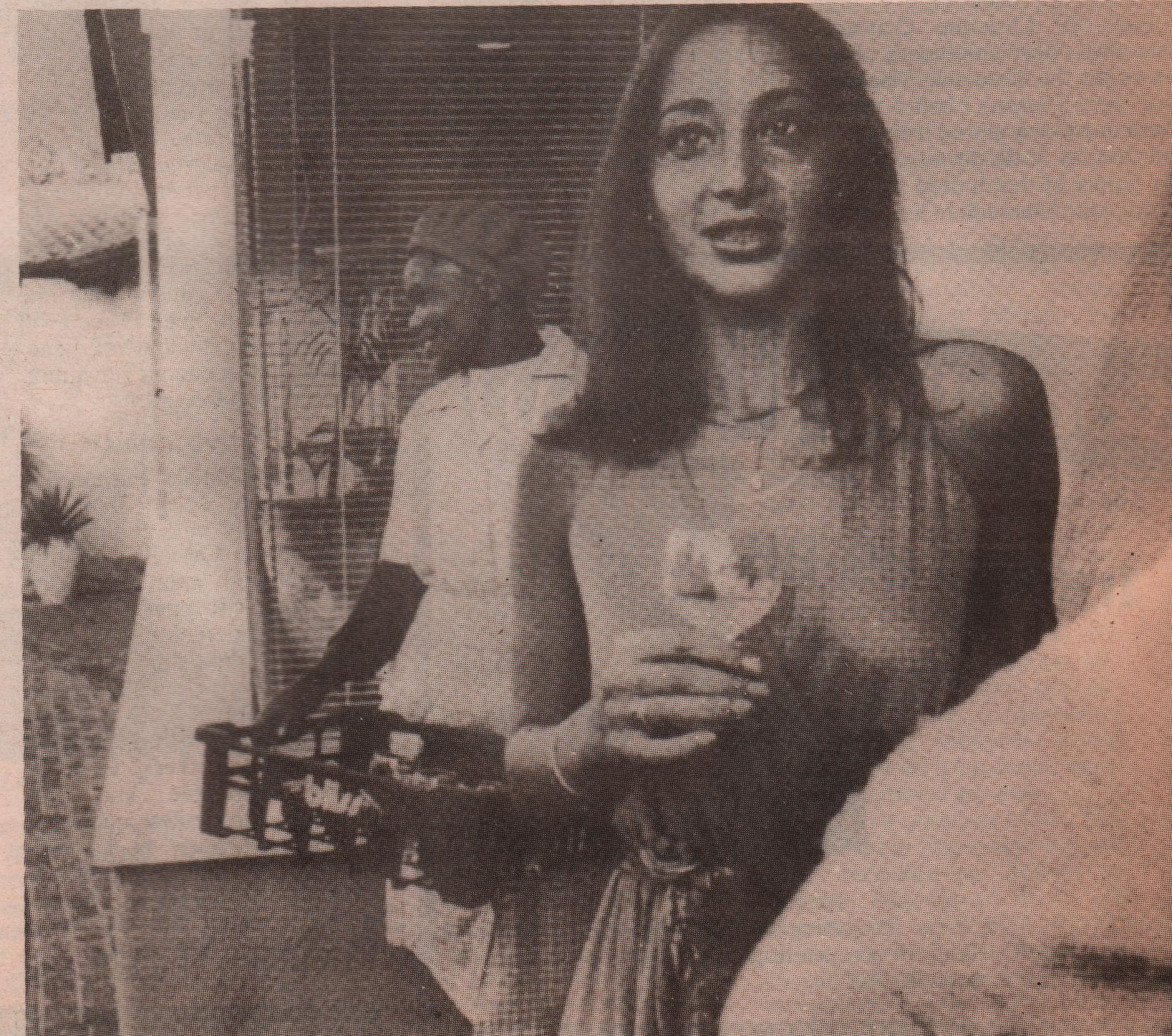
In one passage of 'In the Fog of the Seasons' End' (1972) La Guma even depicts with some vividness the thoughts and interactions of white policemen. The one category whom no-one seems to be able to depict as more than brutes (or maybe it just seems not worth the effort to do so) is the black police and petty officials, who figure in some black South African stories and novels as more immediately feared oppressors than the relatively remote whites.

La Guma's politics do colour

his novels, those I've read at least, 'In the Fog of the Seasons' End' is about a militant, Beukes, moving among the 'Coloured' community of Cape Town (from which La Guma himself came) to organise illegal leafleting to coincide with ANC sabotage attacks. Beukes risks his life and freedom to get leaflets distributed in factories hailing the military actions of the exile ANC, but apparently does not think of doing leaflets about workers' conditions and demands.

Yet here again La Guma portrays human responses vividly — the heroic (but not plaster-idol) Beukes and his comrade Elias, the scared Bennett, the sympathetic but cheerfully non-political Tommy, the worn-out Flotman.

'A Walk in the Night', 'And a threefold Cord', 'The Stone in Country', 'In the Fog of the Seasons' End', 'In the Time of the Butcherbird' are available in Heinemann paperback (the African Writers series).



Cleaning up for the very rich

## Songs of liberty and rebellion

This song, 'La Semaine Sanglante' ('The Bloody Week') was written by Jean-Baptiste Clement in the midst of the terrible massacre that followed the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871. After nine weeks of workers' power in the city, the army of the French bourgeoisie reconquered Paris, slaughtering thousands. Karl Marx wrote: "Working men's Paris, with its Commune, will be for ever celebrated as the glorious harbinger of a new society. Its martyrs are enshrined in the great heart of the working class. Its exterminators history has already nailed to that eternal pillory from which all the prayers of their priests will not avail to redeem them".

Sauf des mouchards et des gendarmes  
On ne voit plus par les chemins  
Que des vieillards tristes en larmes  
Des veuves and des orphelins.  
Paris sainte la misere,  
Les heureux memes sont tremblants  
La mode est au conseil de guerre  
Et les paves sont tout sanglants.

Oui, mais...  
Ca branle dans le manche  
Et gare a la revanche

Quand tous les pauvres s'y mettront!

Les journaux de l'ex-prefecture  
Les flibustiers, les gens tares,  
Les parvenus par aventure,  
Les complaisants, les decores,  
Gens de bourse et de coin de rues  
Grouillent comme un tas de verrues  
Sur les cadavres de vaincus.

On traque, on enchaîne, on fusille

Tout ce qu'on ramasse par hasard  
La mere a cote de sa fille,  
L'enfant dans les bras du veillard  
Les chatiments du drapeau rouge  
Sont remplaces par la terreur  
De tous les chenapans de bouge,  
Valets de rois et d'empereurs.

Besides police spies and gendarmes  
There is no-one in the streets  
But old men weeping sad tears  
Widows and orphans.  
Paris oozes misery,  
Even the fortunate are trembling

High society is in council of war  
And the pavements are wet with blood.

Yes, but...  
Things are stirring down below  
And watch out for our revenge  
When all the poor people set to it!

The newspapers of authority  
The swindlers, the shady characters,  
The men on the make,  
The collaborators, the medal-winners,  
People of the wallet and the street corner  
Swarm like a plague of boils

On the corpses of the vanquished.

They pursue, they enchain, they shoot down  
Anyone they pick up by chance:  
The mother with her child  
The baby in the old man's arms.  
The punishments of the red flag  
Are replaced by the terror  
Of all the scum of the slums,  
The valets of kings and emperors.

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# KEEP UP THE PRESSURE

By Cheung Siu Ming,  
Lambeth NUT  
(personal capacity)

Last week NUT members waited anxiously to see if our leaders would stand firm and not sell us short on our £1200 pay claim.

When the Labour-dominated management panel made an "informal" offer of 6.9% to the teachers, all the other unions were prepared to "discuss", but the NUT leaders quickly rejected it. AMA leader Nikki Harrison then went on Wednesday 16th to ask Keith Joseph at the DES for more cash and got the usual "no".

As a result, the pay dispute remains deadlocked, and management has since withdrawn the "informal" 6.9% offer.

NUT General Secretary Fred Jarvis was quoted as saying that "about 10% will do it". This is quite a strong stance from a non-militant leadership, and can only mean that Hamilton House, the NUT's headquarters, is being bombarded by resolutions and ballot returns overwhelmingly supporting the action.

10% is quite close to the £1200 claim (worth about 12%) and can only be won if the Tories

are forced to hand out more cash to the local authorities. Many authorities have already cut the education service to the bone and therefore unable to make the further cuts needed to pay off the teachers without massive repercussions.

NUT members have voted to take the equivalent of three half-day strikes in the months October to December. The NEC has given local associations the autonomy to decide when and how these strike days are to be used.

## Disruption

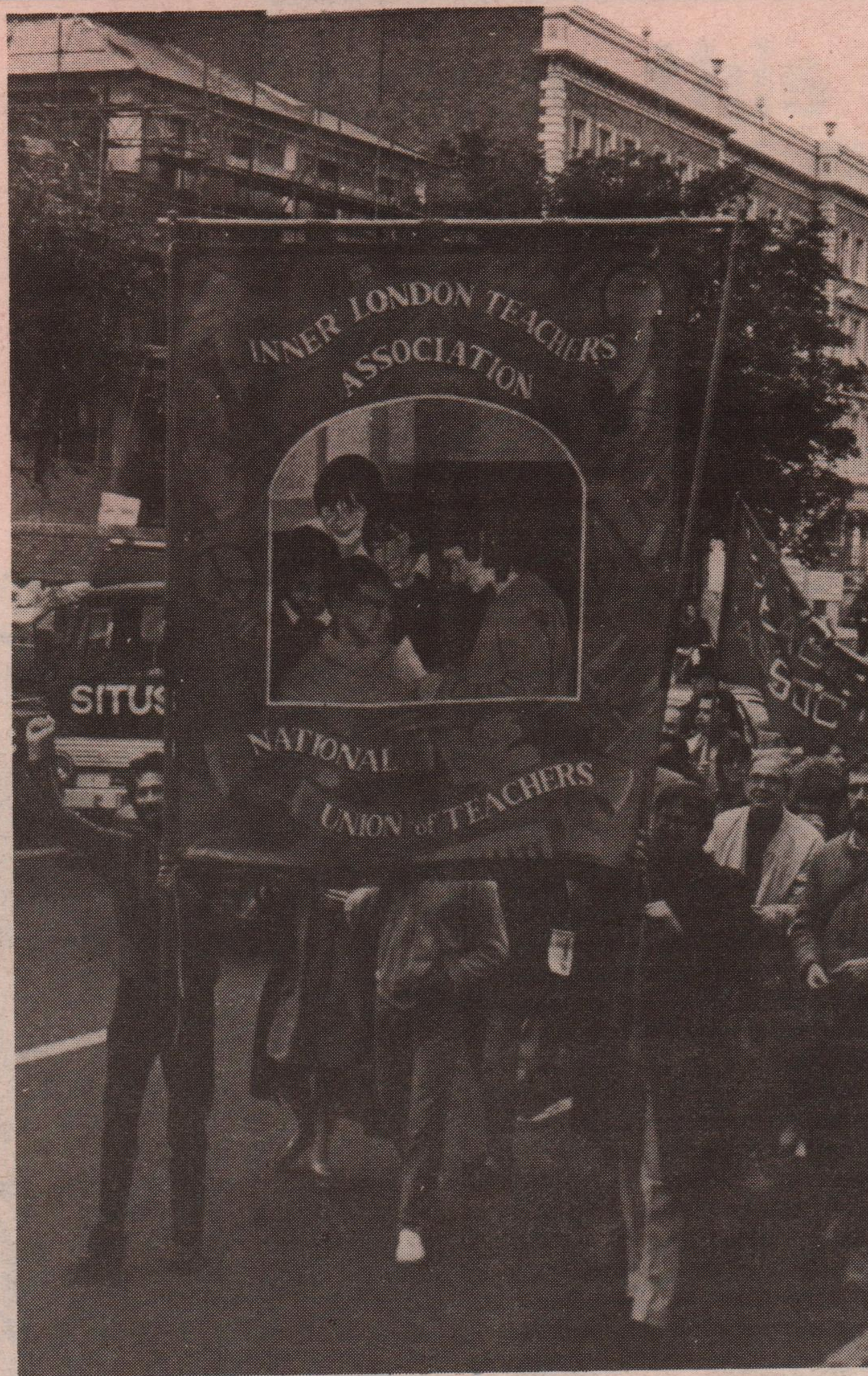
Some have called out the entire association on a half day; Lambeth Association spread the action over three days of last week in order to mount a continuous picket outside the DES and to enable members who wanted to march in support of Lambeth Council on 16 October to do so. Other associations have called out a few members here and there to cause greater disruption.

There are resolutions going

into Hamilton House from several associations urging the NEC to make November 7 a one-day national strike in order that members can march and lobby Parliament alongside the Scottish teachers' union, EIS.

East London and Hackney NUT associations chose their October action days to coincide with support for Daneford School NUT and the Bangladeshi community, who are campaigning against racist attacks and demanding that the ILEA take positive action in accordance with their stated "anti-racist" policy. (See separate article).

The Inner London Teachers Association, the NUT's most militant Division, has called on the NEC to step up the action, start a levy and call a special conference. It is vital that members maintain the pressure on our leadership at this crucial stage, otherwise all the effort and sacrifice of the action will be wasted, and a unique opportunity to improve our pay and dent the Tory government's political will will be squandered.



Teachers march in London, 16 October

gaining purposes by the NUJ.

The problem still remains that the union leaders do not want to fight. The NGA leaders, with the strongest union behind them, are scared after their mauling by the courts over Warrington, and want to keep their funds safe from new legal action. So there has been no action at the Sun over Murdoch recruiting scabs at the EETPU. There is no talk of trade union boycotts on Shah's new paper — according to the Financial Times "in fact Mr Dubbins hopes that indirectly — through colour printing — Mr Shah will provide several jobs for NGA colour printing experts". Maxwell was able to win his lock-out.

And the union leaders also will not fight for unity. There have been sporadic talks for years about a NUJ/NGA, or NGA/SOGAT merger, but at present all such mergers are off. The NGA leaders are talking instead about a merger with ACTT, the film technicians' union.

The drive for unity and for a fighting policy will have to come from the rank and file.

## Victory at Swan Hunters

Workers at Swan Hunter shipyard on Tyneside won victory after a seven-week long unofficial strike. Management backed down on all three of the issues that caused the strike.

\*A yard threatened with closure is to be kept open, at least until Spring 1986.

\*A new disciplinary procedure has been withdrawn.

\*Workers will be allowed to leave the job for teabreaks.

The victory was despite a failure by the union to make the strike official and despite attempts by the GMWU officials to get the yard stewards to capitulate at ACAS.

It provides a good basis from which to prepare resistance to future privatisation proposals.

## CPSA Broad Left conference

Saturday/Monday 9-11 November, at the University of Manchester, Institute of Science and Technology, Sackville St, Manchester. Open to all Broad Left members. All SO comrades in the CPSA should attend.

## London Miners' Support Groups month of action

Saturday 16 November — special showing of videos about mining women throughout the coalfields, with guest speakers. 11am to 3.30pm at the Ritzy Cinema, Brixton. Tickets £2.50, £1 UB40s, students, OAPs. Creche. Social in the evening. Contact Liz 278 2814 or Sylvie 607 0283. All proceeds to Women Against Pit Closures.

## Action against racism

Eleven people, ten of them teachers, were arrested at a peaceful picket outside Tower Hamlets Divisional Educational Office on Wednesday 16 October.

The picket was to protest at the division's lack of action at implementing the ILEA's anti-racist policy at Daneford School. It took place during one of the National Union of Teacher's three half-day strikes over pay, and was supported by over 100 teachers from Hackney and Tower Hamlets.

Both overt physical racism and institutionalised racism appear to be rampant in Daneford School. Bangladeshis — the majority of the students — have been physically attacked.

Divisional Office have ignored all NUT requests for teachers who can speak Bengali. This year language classes in Bengali have been removed from the curriculum and instead religious education from an almost exclusively Christian point of view has been made part of the core curriculum.

Trouble has been brewing at the school for some time, and earlier this year a large body of students and staff picketed a careers evening, called outside normal school hours at a time of NUT action and prominently featuring the police and the army!

At that picket several people were arrested, including the school NUT representative. She has now been arrested again.

After the most recent arrests, several hundred East London teachers demonstrated outside Leman Street Police Station. All those arrested were released after a few hours and are to appear in court this week on charges of obstruction.

The whole episode was provoked by the police who demanded that the demonstration and

picket outside the divisional office should disperse, ten to fifteen minutes before it was due to end.

Given that the demonstration was peaceful and permission had been given by the police, nobody moved. The police then radioed for reinforcements. Two vanloads of police then arrived and waded into the demonstration.

At one point three of the boys in blue could be seen dragging the crippled President of Hackney Teachers' Association, Richard Rieser, along the road.

The Inner London Teachers Association, the local NUT organisation, called a half day strike in Tower Hamlets on Thursday 17 October in protest against the arrests.

The affair has several lessons for teachers, one of which is that ILEA's anti-racist policy needs strong trade union action to implement it if it is to be worth more than the admittedly expensive paper it is written on.

Secondly it gives teachers extra evidence to argue the case for keeping police out of schools.

It was probably no coincidence that the police action coincided with the publication of the Hackney teachers' pamphlet 'Police Out of Schools'.

Message of support should be sent to Daneford Schol, Gosset Rd., London E2. Speakers are available for union meetings.

MIKE REILLY

## Print: unity needed

By Pat Longman

Since Eddie Shah — with the help of the police and the law courts — successfully established his non-union printworks in Warrington in 1983, the employers have been out to demolish the print unions.

The print unions go back centuries, longer than any other unions. Over that time they have built up considerable strength, and in the central area of Fleet Street, pay and staffing levels

are more favourable than any other union.

New developments in print technology over recent decades have, however, undermined a position built up on the basis of traditional, slow-changing craft skills. In other countries like the US print unions have already been torn to shreds.

The NGA has faced the fiercest attacks because it is the strongest union. But employers have also tried — with some success so far — to play off all the three print unions against each other.

The NGA has a pre-entry closed shop in typesetting and machine rooms right across the industry, with the exception of Shah's works in Warrington and T. Bailey Forman in Nottingham. The NGA's control of the machine rooms, especially, is the lynchpin of all trade union strength.

Typesetting used to be a highly-skilled craft, with seven years' apprenticeship. With modern phototypesetting, a few weeks' training is enough. As the Financial Times puts it, "Employers have long been thinking why pay a compositor £12,000 a year for a job that can be done by a secretary on £8,500". They hope to telescope three areas — journalists, teleads, and typesetting — into each other, with major job cuts. Reporters can typeset their own articles, sub-editors can process them on a VDU, tele-ad workers can typeset the ads directly.

The union's policy is to accept new technology, but to demand safeguards for jobs and conditions. In practice, however, this policy has often foundered on craft traditionalism and sectional rivalries.

The unions' main strength in winning favourable terms for the technological change is the NGA's control over printing, where the job is still highly skilled. In Fleet Street — a small but central section of the unions' membership — control of distribution by SOGAT (and the rail unions) is also important.

SOGAT (distribution, machine minders, clerical) is however generally much weaker than the nga, and so is the NUJ (journalists).

The employers' success has been to get the three unions all stabbing each other in the back

to grab what few jobs will be left. Tony Dubbins of the NGA initially proposed that the jobs in editorial departments and typesetting be divided one-third each between the three unions, but this was rejected both by the employers and by the other unions.

In July the NGA did a deal with Portsmouth and Sunderland Newspapers to phase out typesetting jobs and have NGA members retrained and given new jobs as sub-editors working directly onto phototypesetters. The NUJ was furious. Over the following months there were further disputes in the provincial press with all the unions crossing each others' picket lines.

## Shah

In July also, Eddie Shah announced that he had done a single-union deal with the EETPU for his new daily paper, to be printed in East London from next March. The same month, SOGAT leader Brenda Dean said that she was ready to do a single-union deal with Rupert Murdoch for his new works in Wapping.

In August Robert Maxwell staged a lock-out at the Mirror, and moved printing of the 'Sporting Life' out of Fleet Street.

Most major national newspapers are now planning moves out of Fleet Street. Murdoch's Sun and News of the World are going to Wapping. Maxwell is going to Docklands or Waterloo. The Telegraph is going to the Isle of Dogs and so is the Guardian.

In September it was revealed that the EETPU was recruiting labour for Murdoch's Wapping works through its office in Southampton. Murdoch has also talked of employing an alternative non-union distribution system to get round SOGAT and the rail unions.

This slide to disaster galvanised the relatively weak left in the print unions. The NUJ has a fair number of left-wing members but no real organised left grouping. SOGAT has no organised left grouping. The NGA has a Broad Left, but for a long time it was a grouping of the traditional Communist Party type — secretive, low-profile, focused mainly on union elections.

Radicals in the NGA Broad

Left finally persuaded it to go public with a broadsheet and a public meeting called jointly with individual left-wingers in SOGAT and the NUJ, on 27 September. 100 people attended, and the NGA Broad Left put forward the following platform:

A) All new technology deals to be negotiated jointly by all affected chapels on the principle of only union fingers on the equipment and based on the following prerequisites:

i) No loss of jobs.  
ii) All new technology to be operated by union members only. This to be the base for building 100% trade union membership in editorial, advertising, clerical, composing and in machine rooms, distribution and maintenance.

iii) Common rates and conditions built on the best in any production area.

B) To campaign amongst our members at chapel, branch and national level for:

i) Joint chapels in new technology areas.

ii) No crossing of picket lines of chapels in dispute.

iii) No preparation of copy for non-union companies and no processing or distribution of non-union originated material.

iv) Amalgamation of all unions in the industry based on 100% trade unionism. Positive moves also came from the leaders of the NUJ and the NGA in early October. They worked out a joint approach on new technology for provincial newspapers. NGA members will be allowed to transfer to sub-editor jobs, but will then hold dual NGA/NUJ membership, paying union dues to the NGA, but being represented for bar-

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# Socialist Organiser



## Britain out of NATO!



Marching in 1983. Photo: John Harris.

# Make sure Labour scraps the bomb!

Neil Kinnock is preparing a fudge on unilateralism. At a meeting of the so-called Socialist International, in Vienna last week, Kinnock called for a policy of freeze on nuclear weapon production, as the 'first step' towards disarmament.

The real 'first step' seems to be Kinnock's — towards a policy of nuclear freeze rather than a unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Kinnock must not be permitted to fudge. Labour must go into the next

election firmly committed to getting rid of nuclear weapons. And the disarmament movement should campaign to make sure that they do.

Meg Beresford, Bruce Kent's replacement as CND General Secretary, is arguing for CND not to interfere in the next general election. The lesson of 1983, she says, is that CND's voice is drowned out in the noise of the election.

The opposite lesson is the real one. CND's problem in 1983 was its failure

to put its weight behind Labour's campaign. It should not repeat that mistake now.

The Labour Party is committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament. The only way disarmament will come about is if it is implemented by a government. The disarmament movement must fight to bring about the election of a Labour government and hold it to its commitment.

Closer collaboration between the labour and disarmament movements is needed. A joint labour movement/CND demonstration has been in the pipeline for years, but never been organised: it should be. And we need renewed efforts to build Labour CND and Trade Union CND.

Such partisanship will split the disarmament movement, many will protest. In one sense, of course, they are right: it may alienate the tiny few Tories and Liberals in CND.

But CND desperately needs a new direction, and any direction it takes will run the risk of alienating somebody. The question is: how can the campaign to scrap the bomb be effective?

Will the Tories scrap the bomb? Will

the Liberals and the SDP? The answer is obvious.

But will Labour under Kinnock scrap the bomb? Only if we build a massive campaign to make sure that it does.

**Demonstrate  
26 October**  
March organised  
by the Campaign  
for Nuclear  
Disarmament.  
Assemble 11am  
at Hyde Park for  
march linking US  
and USSR  
embassies.

There is a big contradiction in Labour Party disarmament policy: it wants unilateral nuclear disarmament without leaving NATO.

Continued NATO membership would certainly endanger a sincere commitment to disarmament. The Labour right would join hands with the NATO generals to block moves towards disarmament.

In Greece, for example, the PASOK government won power in 1981 with a promise to remove NATO bases — but NATO bases remain.

And Britain is a more powerful NATO member than Greece — or than Norway, for example, which is a NATO member but has no nuclear weapons.

British disarmament would be seen as a serious threat to overall NATO policy, and a threat that would have to be defeated.

But in any case, a policy of non-nuclear NATO Britain is not practical.

NATO's strategy is based upon integrating conventional and nuclear weapons systems. And NATO strategy has particular objectives — which are based upon the development of 'first-strike' capacity to protect the interests, as NATO defines them, of NATO members.

To be a member of NATO means to participate in the strategy, and to share in the objectives. It is nonsensical to believe that a non-nuclear Britain with Kinnock in Number 10 could opt out just at the moment of pressing the button. It would necessarily have to be involved in all the military manoeuvres leading up to nuclear confrontation.

So nuclear weapons cannot be separated off from the strategy that NATO adopts.

And the strategy flows from the nature of NATO, as an alliance of imperialist powers.

It accounts for 45% of all world military spending and has consistently led the nuclear arms race.

Although NATO's main forces are lined up against the USSR it also threatens other areas. The Cruise missiles at Comiso in Sicily could easily be used against the Middle East.

NATO helped Portugal's reactionary wars to hold onto its African colonies.

NATO threatens the people in the countries in which it operates. It was NATO armed forces that imposed dictatorships in Greece in 1967 and Turkey in 1980.

In 1975 NATO forces held operations around Portugal as a warning to the workers when the country was in the throws of revolution.

Anybody that thinks NATO will go along with unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain is living on another planet.

A serious commitment to unilateralism must mean a challenge to the military top brass in NATO and *therefore in Britain as well*.

A government that scrapped nuclear weapons would immediately meet the resistance of the generals. It would have to withdraw from NATO as part of a policy of defeating that resistance.

It would have to destroy the power of the military hierarchy.

So it would not be possible to have a policy of 'alternative' or 'non-nuclear' defence that did not challenge the actual military objectives, and military power, of the British and NATO armies.

The working class would have to defend itself *against* the British army and *against* NATO in alliance with the international working class and oppressed peoples. The whole military establishment would have to be dismantled, and a new state power — a genuinely democratic working-class state — put in their place.

So either the labour movement takes its unilateralist policy seriously, and integrates it into an overall anti-militarist, anti-imperialist, socialist policy committed to destroying the power of the capitalist class; or it will have to, in practice, water down and then abandon unilateralism.

## FUND DRIVE

According to our solicitor, the lease for our new premises should be typed up ready for signing today (Tuesday) or tomorrow (Wednesday). Work to get the premises into shape is already being organised: the first job, removal of asbestos, is scheduled to be done in the next week or so.

Then follows rewiring; plastering; carpentry; painting and minor repairs; and replacement of a floor severely affected by rot. We're compiling, bit by bit, a full estimate of the total cost of the move; but for sure rapid fund-raising is an urgent task. Thanks this week to Jack Reilly, £3; Jo Thwaites £99; Rosie Sibley, £2.50; Nottingham SO, £3; and Steve Battlemuch, £6. Send donations to 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.