

A Socialist ACTION

THE DAY of action in support of GCHQ has shown beyond any shadow of doubt there is real support in the working class for mass action to defeat the Tories' attacks on the unions.

The weak and inadequate call from the TUC met with a wide response from the unions across Britain. In docks, transport, engineering, as well as the public sector, workers demonstrated their support for workers at GCHQ.

Despite the lack of confidence in the TUC, and disgust at the betrayal of the NGA, and with hardly any time to prepare, tens of thousands of workers took action to defend trade union rights.

The myth of Tory invincibility is starting to crumble. Now we must build on this success. The labour movement cannot rely on the Tories slipping on the odd banana skins. We must put the skids under them.

The past record of Len Murray proves that he cannot be relied upon to build on this success, and push the issue to the victorious conclusion which is possible. We must press now for a recall of the TUC, to end the rightwards drift of the past period, and to commit the unions to all-out opposition to the Tory attacks.

In particular, the idea that anti-trade union laws must be obeyed has to be reversed. Only mass action will stop the attacks on the unions, as even Len Murray has been forced to admit. And that means defying the law. The call for Tuesday's action was ill-organised and ill-prepared. Now the date must be named for a real day of national strike action. Tebbit's law should be defied.

The 'new realism' course of the TUC has been shown to be utterly useless for dealing with Thatcher. The road from obeying the law in the case of the NGA to the union ban at Cheltenham was short and direct. The whole course of TUC policy must change.

We should now demand that the TUC breaks off all talks with the Tories, and withdraws from all government sponsored bodies. Attention must be directed to mobilising the rank and file for mass action to defend our unions.

**GCHQ -
RECALL TUC!
BREAK LINKS
WITH TORIES!
EXTEND
STRIKE ACTION!**

Socialist ACTION

Defend Liverpool: no retreat

LIVERPOOL, LIKE MANY of Britain's industrial heartlands is a stronghold of anti-Toryism. There is no way in cities like Liverpool that the Tories are ever going to get control by democratic means.

But democracy and the votes of ordinary people are not a big concern to this government. What it can't get by popular support it intends to get by use of its special powers. That is why it is threatening to send in the commissioners and to bankrupt and debar the city councillors.

On this issue socialist should hesitate about where they stand and whose side they are on.

Here is a city that has the worst housing in Europe. One in five of its insured population haven't got a job. The city is decaying and falling apart. If the council accepts the government target, 5000 more jobs will go, more services will disappear and more people will be homeless. If Liverpool goes it will be much harder to defend the Metropolitan councils and to resist rate capping.

People will think that there is no point in trying to resist the Tory juggernaut — and millions will be consigned to poverty and a life without future. Those unions like NUPE and the NUT who have voted against striking on Friday 29 March are wrong. By splitting ranks they have thrown in the towel before the fight starts and meekly accepted that their members can join the growing dole queues.

There is no compromise way out of this mess. Patrick Jenkin has made it obvious the government is not going to put any money into Liverpool and that means thousands of jobs filled by NUT and NUPE members are doomed.

At a time when all the labour movement should be uniting behind the Liverpool council and the people of that city, *Tribune* strikes a rather nasty and discordant note.

Instead of calling for support for the Liverpool council it says: 'There are two basic choices'. It suggests one of these could be that: 'Labour councils can stay in office and try to cut humanely while attempting to place the blame for the cuts on the government'. This is an echo of Neil Kinnock's argument.

It is rather like the hangman saying: 'I am not too keen on hanging but it is my job, so I will top the accused as gently as possible'. With friends like that you don't need enemies. No wonder Robin Day in *Question Time* was able to gloat about the fact *Tribune* was not behind Liverpool. *Tribune* then covers itself by saying: 'If after taking all these points into consideration, Liverpool decides that it has no alternative but to defy the government it is entitled to expect the support of the labour movement'.

That is not good enough. *Tribune* either wants to build the biggest campaign it can to support the Liverpool council and the people of that city which means no hedging or equivocating or it prefers humane cuts which means the Liverpool council climbs down.

This approach divides the movement at a time when unity is more important than ever. The *Tribune* editorial board should get together and decide that fence sitting helps no one but the enemy. It must come out 100 per cent for the Liverpool council against the Tory government.

Along with the rest of the Labour left it should be demanding that the NEC comes out unequivocally behind the council and that the TUC give Liverpool pride of place on Democracy Day on 29 March.

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Chesterfield: Benn heads for victory

AS WE go to press, everything points to a substantial victory for Tony Benn in the Chesterfield by-election. Both the Liberal and Conservative candidates are struggling hard not to come last of the 'big three'. Over 100 Labour MPs have been to Chesterfield, including all the main party leaders. If Benn wins by a substantial majority, it will come as a surprise to many observers.

It is only eight months since Labour's crushing defeat at the General Election and a year since the fiasco at Bermondsey. It seemed at that time that the Tories had a domination of the political climate which was virtually unassailable, and that the Alliance could at will use scare tactics to sabotage the chances of a Labour by-election candidate.

So what has changed? Fundamentally, some of the basic realities of British politics are beginning to establish themselves. The Tories are not delivering the long-heralded economic boom. Their attacks on the trade unions and local government are making them more and more unpopular. The conditions which gave rise to the Tories mammoth general election victory are beginning to evaporate.

By Paul Lawson

The first of these is the so-called 'Falklands factor'. In retrospect the whole Falklands affair was from Labour's viewpoint one of the most tragic events of the last parliament. The failure of Foot and the rest of the parliamentary leadership to oppose the sending of the naval task force handed Thatcher a gigantic political coup on a plate.

Able to pose as the champion of national unity, in a cause supported by all political parties, Thatcher capitalised on the Falklands factor for all it was worth. The lead in

the opinion polls which that gave the Tories did not decline for nearly 20 months.

Secondly, the Labour 1983 election campaign was fought in an atmosphere of dissension and chaotic sabotage. At various times in the campaign, Healey and Callaghan openly attacked Labour's defence policy. Foot was incapable of giving a straight and comprehensible answer as to just what Labour's policy was. In Chesterfield, by contrast, the Labour leadership has gone out of its way to be seen to be doing everything possible not to sabotage Benn's chances — if he lost, they reasoned, then no one could be blamed but him.

The third factor which ensured Labour's defeat at the General Election however has not gone away — the rise of the SDP/Liberal Alliance. Even if the Alliance is badly beaten at Chesterfield it will certainly not mark the beginning of the end for them. The truth is that they have now established a fairly stable basis of support of 20-25 per cent of the electorate.

The SDP/Liberal Alliance is the product of a long term strategy by sections of the ruling class to create a non-Labour governmental alternative to the Tories. It is not a bubble that will quickly burst. If Benn is victorious by a large margin in Chesterfield, it will be

because of a reversal in the level of support between Labour and the Tories, not because of a sudden drop in the national level of support for the Alliance.

Having said that, it is of course true that the Liberal candidate in Chesterfield, Max Payne has given a dismal performance, and thus we could even see the Alliance pushed into third position.

Victory

The General Election defeat was generally interpreted as a defeat for Labour's left wing policies, and by implication for the left wing of the party. A substantial Benn victory at Chesterfield will show that radical policies can win victories in the heartland of the working class. Socialist policies can be made popular provided they are clearly explained and fought for in a consistent way.

The question which now arises is what to do with a Benn victory? What does it mean for Labour and the left in terms of future strategy? The worst possible approach would be for Labour to collectively pat itself on the back and wait for the next General Election. Labour's victory must be turned into an offensive against the Tories; to transform the present defensive struggles being waged over unemployment, union rights and local government into a

powerful offensive to bring down Thatcher.

Mobilise

This means two things. First, even from the narrow viewpoint of electoral success there is no reason whatever to jettison radical and socialist policies. Second, Labour has to do everything in its power to mobilise against the Tories, by for example backing Liverpool Council and by backing strike action over the GCHQ.

The Cheltenham affair has its own lessons which reinforce those from Chesterfield. The union leaderships have done everything possible to let Thatcher off the hook with a shoddy compromise. Thatcher has declined the offer, but met with an intransigent union workforce. As a result the Tories are in trouble. If you back down and hand the Tories easy victories they will appear more 'credible' and hence more popular. If you fight them intransigently in a united fashion then they can be shaken and even forced to back down.

Every time Len Murray and our other labour movement 'realists' sell out a struggle, the Tories gain both in terms of popularity and strength. The only 'realists' are those who want to fight the Tories to the end. A victory for Tony Benn will aid that cause.

MODERN TIMES



Mr Murray said "What do you expect us to do when we're kicked in the teeth? Roll over and ask to have our tummies tickled?" This tactic having been abandoned, the TUC seem set on a course of direct conciliation with the government...

Nicaragua elections scoop Reagan

THE SANDINISTA government in Nicaragua has set the date for the country's first elections since the 1979 revolution for 4 November this year. The date is significant, coming just two days before the presidential election in the United States. If the FSLN wins the elections, which seems overwhelmingly the most probable result, Reagan will not be able to utilise the argument that the Nicaraguan government is a 'dictatorship' to justify an invasion.

The Sandinistas also announced the lowering of the voting age to 16 for the election. This is both an exemplary democratic move and will extend the franchise to the FSLN's most solid base of support in the youth.

Opposition movement leaders are now rapidly moving towards a position of boycotting the elections. Both the Democratic Conservative Party and the Constitutional Liberal Party seem likely to adopt such a position.

Obviously a boycott of the election by these forces would stem from the fear of a crushing political defeat. British observers in Nicaragua, including representatives of the Liberal Party and the SDP, have declared that they are satisfied that the elections will be fair and free.

The same will not be true of the forthcoming presidential elections in El Salvador, scheduled for 25 March. In order to get on the ballot, any candidate has to present the names and addresses of hundreds of supporters to the government. Anyone signing the nomination list of an opposition candidate can expect a night-time visit from the death squads.

In fact, the elections which are being boycotted by the FDR/FMLN and

which will not take place in large parts of the country under their control, are a two-horse race between Christian Democratic former president Napoleon Duarte and Roberto D'Aubuisson, leader of the extreme right ARENA party and death squad supremo.

By Paul Lawson

In the Salvadoran middle classes, petrified by the advances of the FMLN, D'Aubuisson is overwhelmingly more popular than Duarte and likely to win a runaway victory. The United States, although embarrassed by such an outcome, seems reconciled to going along with it. George Schultz, US Secretary of State, indicated after a visit to San Salvador that the US would accept the election verdict.

US cooperation with D'Aubuisson would be another indication of Reagan's decision to seek a military victory in El Salvador. Testifying before a Congress subcommittee on 2 February, former US ambassador to El Salvador Robert White claimed that the United States knew that D'Aubuisson was the effective leader of the death squads, and had personal-



ly given the instructions for the assassination of Archbishop Romero, radical bishop of San Salvador, in February 1980. Washington did nothing with this information, claimed White. The United States also

suffered an embarrassing diplomatic reverse last week with the resignation of Reagan's 'special envoy' to central America, Richard Stone. Stone has been involved in trying to make diplomatic contact with the Salvadorean

revolutionary forces. His resignation, although allegedly for 'personal' reasons, was widely interpreted as signalling disagreement with Reagan's 'military victory or bust' approach. Meanwhile the United



Roberto D'Aubuisson, death squad supremo

States continues to claim that the human rights situation in El Salvador is 'getting better'. But the United Nations Human Rights Commission claimed last week that the number of political killings over the past 12 months was more than 5,000.

of the National Guard and army. The figures given for political murders by the government itself was 968.

While saying that the human rights situation was improving, the State Department recently admitted that the government used electric shock torture against captured members of the FMLN guerrillas. The United States also admits that the guerrillas now control fully one third of the country.

US aid to Guatemala soars



Government troops occupy a peasant village in Guatemala

DURING the late 'seventies, when Jimmy Carter was waging his 'human rights' crusade, United States aid to Guatemala was banned by Congress because of the appalling human rights record. The Congressional ban still applies. But the US embassy in Guatemala City has revealed that next year the United States intends to fund the military regime to the tune of not less than 24 million dollars.

The money will come through various 'back door' routes, and not be listed in US government spending figures as aid to Guatemala.

Although the regime of General Oscar Humberto Mejia — who overthrew evangelical eccentric Rios Montt in a US-sponsored coup last year — is much more secure than its neighbouring regime in El Salvador, it is still fighting war against revolutionary guerrilla armies, of which the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (EGP) and the Guatemala Workers Party (PGT) are the strongest.

According to Western diplomats the number of political murders and 'disappearances' has increased the number of political murders and 'disappearances' has increased from 150 a week

under Rios Montt to 190 a week under Mejia.

There is no doubt that the government has scored some successes against the revolutionary armies. It is moving thousands of Indians into Vietnam-style 'fortified villages'. In this process it is first launching armed attacks on any Indian settlements suspected of having links or contacts with the guerrillas. Thousands of Indians have been tortured and murdered.

Mejias has so far failed to explain the deaths of a number of employees of the US AID programme, murdered by the security forces solely because they were involved in education programmes.

In Guatemala to be an educator is to be a radical — and thus a target for the death squads.

The World Economic Crisis

with Ernest Mandel

Saturday/Sunday March 3/4 1984
10am till 5pm

The Conference takes place at Caxton House, 129 St Johns Way, London N19, which is a couple of minutes walk from Archway Tube (Northern Line).

Snack lunches will be available on both days, and there will also be a bar open at lunchtime. A creche will be provided but it *must* be booked by Monday, February 27. There is good access and facilities for the disabled.

I wish to book places for the weekend conference on the World Economic Crisis.

I enclose £ to cover:

..... places for the weekend at £3 each

..... places for one day only at £2 each

Name:

Address:

Please make cheques payable to 'SEC' and send this form to: Mandel Conference, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP.

For a Reagan-free Europe!

RONALD REAGAN is to visit Britain between 7-9 June for an economic summit of world leaders in Lancaster House, London. This will put the Euro-missiles and United States foreign policy at the centre of the European elections in June. It will bring to a head the deepening anti-US government sentiments among the people of Europe.

In January, CND National Council voted down proposals to organise action during Reagan's visit. Fortunately the grass roots of the movement have now forced a reversal on the CND leadership. The March issue of Campaign (CND's monthly newsletter to its 1500-plus local CND groups) will include the following statement:-
After discussion on

By Dick Withecombe (CND executive, personal capacity)

the Executive and Projects Committees, it is proposed to organise a demonstration in London on Saturday 9 June. This will be in conjunction with London Region CND. Discussions are continuing with in-



terested parties including Action '84, about organising well considered non-violent direct action (NVDA). It is now vital that CND activists turn this demonstration into a truly

national event. CND areas and regions should immediately start to discuss the booking of coaches and trains. Groups should also send resolutions to the CND National Council on 7 April c/o James Hinton,

11 Goodwin St., London N4, calling on CND to build this as a mass demonstration and mobilisation of protest against Cruise, Trident and US bases, for a nuclear-free Europe!

CND demonstration against Reagan

Saturday 9 June, London
National CND in conjunction with London Region CND
Contact London Region CND, 01-387-9295

Anti-Trident convention supports Reagan demo

A CLEAR MAJORITY of delegates at the Anti-Trident Convention in Manchester on 25 February voted to support the call for a national demonstration in protest at Reagan's visit to Britain in June. This vote adds to the growing recognition that the visit must become a focus for the activities of the anti-missiles movements. The one-day convention attracted an audience of some 800, 400 of whom were delegates from local CND and peace groups, trade union branches, and constituency Labour Parties.

The convention was largely an educational event, with workshops on everything from international affairs to building local anti-Trident networks. The purpose of the event was to broaden the campaign from its present base in Glasgow, and capture the attention of people throughout Britain.

Martin Metyard, secretary of the campaign, said the response to the convention was better than the organisers could have hoped for.

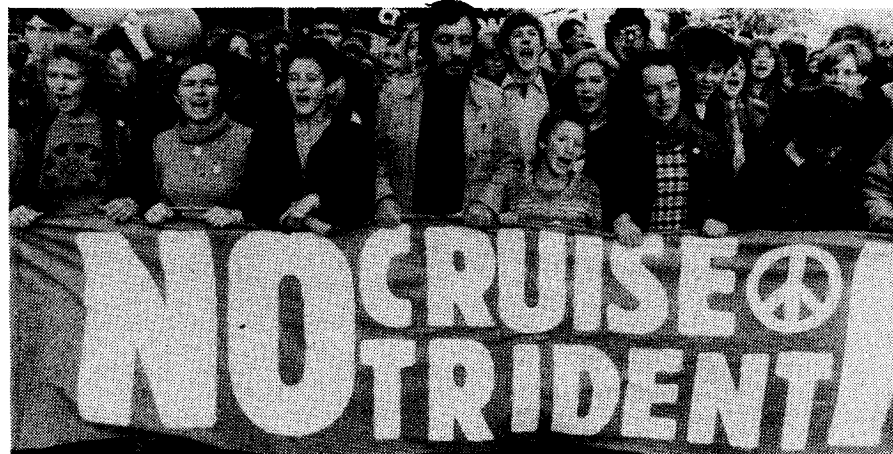
It underlined the possibilities of building a broad-based opposition to Trident, which if linked to wider political issues such

as government spending priorities and Britain's foreign policy, promised to make Trident a major issue in British politics in 1984.

By Gordon Smith (Aberdeen CND)

Cancellation of the Trident programme is a real possibility. Trident is clearly a first-strike weapon. Its deployment shows that NATO strategy now centres around the possibility of fighting and winning a limited nuclear war.

Uncompromising opposition can be built to



such an escalation of the nuclear arms race. And the huge cost, around £10 billion, is causing major divisions in the establishment on the advisability of buying such weapon. These divisions can and must be exploited by the anti-missiles movement.

The fight against Trident offers the possibility of the first major victory in Britain against NATO's war drive. The value of

this in terms of increasing the confidence, strength and influence of the anti-missiles movement should not be underestimated.

• Anti-Trident Campaign can be contacted at 420 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow G2 (phone 041-332 3141).

National CND Day School 'CND and the European elections'

County Hall, London
17 March, 10.30-4.30
Contact Margerie Thompson 01-263 0977

IRELAND UNFREE

Show trial relatives visit Britain



Relatives of remand prisoners held on informer evidence were disappointed by the response to a seven person delegation from Belfast, here to outline their opposition to the system of paid perjury in the no-jury Diplock courts. Despite a sympathetic response from London's black community who instinctively understood the conditions faced in the North, the delegation complained that even the Liberals showed more interest than Labour politicians.

Time after time, the show trials were justified by the argument that terrorism had to be 'kept off the streets'. 'They were asking', said Bernadette McAliskey in her Conway Hall speech, 'that I should tell them what would be a more acceptable way of locking myself away. When terrorism is defined as any opposition to the policies of the British government, we are all guilty. We were born that way.'

Barrister Phil Magee risks losing his job as a result of his out-spoken rejection of the 'supergrass' system. He described some of the most blatant frame-ups that he had confronted in court. In a jury court, the judge has to warn the jury that it is dangerous to convict on the basis of uncorroborated accomplice evidence. In the Diplock courts, where the judge sits alone on the bench, the same procedure is repeated in the most farcical fashion. The judge actually says out loud 'I hereby warn myself that it is dangerous to convict ...' and then reads out the sentence.

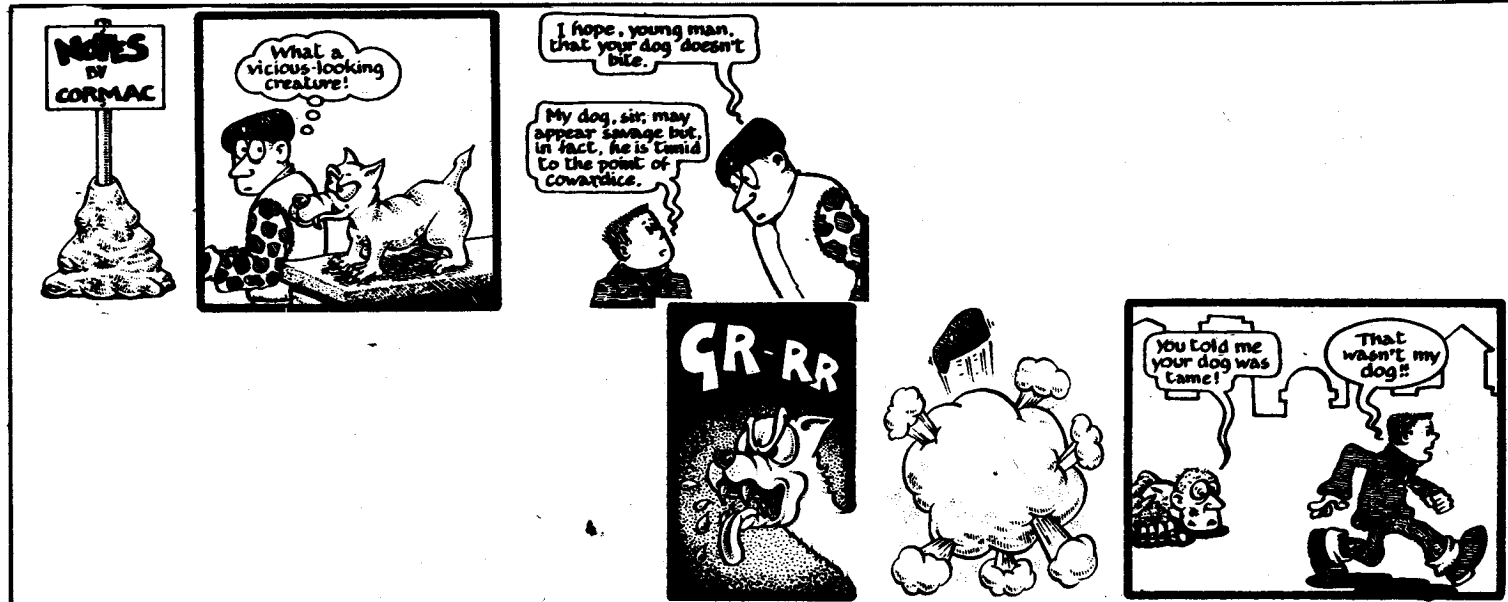
Philip's view was that either you had to have internment without trial, or that there should be a just legal system. At present the whole profession is implicated in providing a legalistic gloss for locking people up, with only a pretence of a fair trial.

The most moving appeal was made from Kathy Tohill, whose husband Robert has been driven to consider a hunger strike if it will get action against the informer system. Released after eight months on remand, Tohill's original accuser retracted all evidence against him saying that he had been blackmailed and bullied into making false statements. Robert was then rearrested; this time with a new informer and completely different charges which Robert says are again complete lies.

To date, over 400 people have been arrested and charged. More than 60 have been sentenced to a total of 1000 years' imprisonment under the 'supergrass' system. Lord Gifford's recent report for the Cobden Trust confirms the prisoners' arguments that fabricated evidence is responsible for jailing innocent people.

The two priests, Fathers Faul and Murray, stated their opinion that 'informers are the victims of intimidation, blackmail, bribery, trickery and inducements.' Informers who later retracted their evidence have alleged that sums as high as £80,000 have been offered as bribes. Brigadier Frank Kitson's prescription that 'the law should be used as just another weapon in the government's arsenal until it becomes little more than a propaganda cover for the disposal of unwanted members of the public' is being applied in Northern Ireland.

Socialists have campaigned in the labour movement to expose the use of the so-called Prevention of Terrorism Act and the supposedly 'harmless' plastic bullets. We must now turn in the same way to demand Labour dissociate itself from the charade they call the legal system in the North.



Labour Party Defend union affiliation

The Labour Coordinating Committee has launched a campaign to win the coming ballots on trade union affiliation to the Labour Party. JOHN ROSS asked PETER HAIN, vice-chairperson of the LCC, to explain the aims of the campaign.

I think the critical political issue for the Labour party over the next few years is to win their ballots on trade union political affiliation under the Tebbit/King laws. And it can only be done by really building at a rank and file level. Simply to rely on the union bureaucracies, or on the national party bureaucracy, will be totally ineffective.

There is also an enormous opportunity to inject socialist argument and debate back into the workplace. Because here is a vehicle to do it. The ballot issue will be live in the workplace after the autumn and we have to prepare for it now.

The ballots can't be won just at a declaratory level — simply by parading around senior figures in the party to spread the message. It requires organisation and intervention by local activists.

We've launched a charter as an initial rallying call with launching sponsors. Our aim is to raise the issue of the ballots at this stage well before the Bill becomes law. We want to prepare the ground, to get more support, to get the discussion going at constituency level and also at trade union branch level as to what action should be taken.

Then when it comes to

the autumn and after we'll be in a position to move. Associated with that, we need the production of leaflets and material which will arm people with arguments and with ways of organising. And we hope to use the period of the next six months or so to build for a major national conference which will focus the campaign and plan for the next stage.

Crucial

I think the crucial area is for every Labour Party general committee, and every ward, to discuss how it will actually reach out to local workplaces including those to which they've never reached out before and which way may not even be affiliated to the party. Discuss how the local parties should campaign at that level. That's the crucial area for debate and discussion.

The arguments have to be won by arguing positively for Labour's policies and for socialist argument rather than hoping to win them by default.

Since the actual question on the ballot paper may be something like 'Do you want your union to retain a political fund' rather than 'Do you want your union affiliated to the Labour Party', there may



Peter Hain

be a desire among some sections of the unions to try and play it safe and stress the advantages of political representation rather than specifically Labour representation for workers. I think that argument, while it may suit some sections of the trade unions will actually lose in the end because the *Sun* and the *Daily Mail* will make it an issue of *Labour Party* affiliation.

I think from the left's point of view that will be an opportunity lost. Battered by recession, battered by the loss of confidence and demoralisation in the labour movement, we have lacked opportunities and mechanisms through which to actually argue a decent socialist case and the ballots presents us with an opportunity.

As for campaigning lets take the miners. It's significant that Arthur Scargill is one of the launching sponsors. I would see the job really being done on a union by union basis. Each constituency

should think about different tactics. It's going to be a different form of intervention in the pits compared to intervention in hospitals. I think all these sorts of differences will have to be argued out.

But these are early days and what's important at the moment is that there is the beginnings of a debate around this issue — but with a clear perspective that it has got to be a rank and file campaign. Because otherwise I just don't think it'll deliver the goods.

We will also be sending people to the Broad Left Organising Committee Conference, leafletting it and hopefully getting an agreement with the organisers to actually support the initiative. I think that broad lefts are going to be in an extremely weak position politically if the Labour connection is cut out of their unions.'



Photo: John Harris

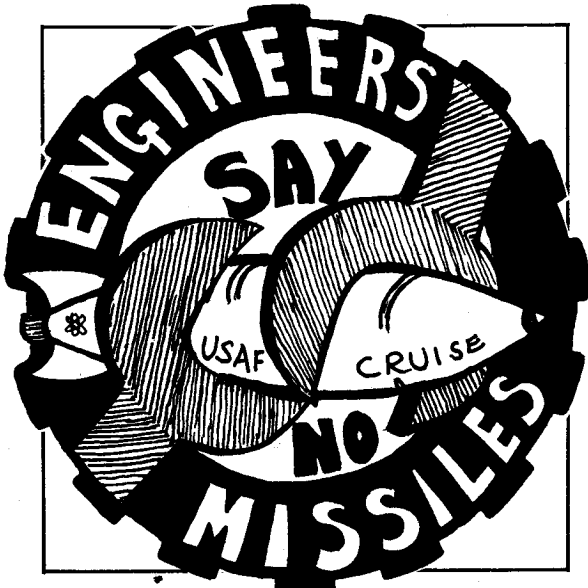
TUCND Grows

'WE ARE unilateralists because we mean business'. This statement summed up the mood of last weekend's Trade Union CND annual conference. A resolution was adopted to run major rallies at this year's union conferences in support of unilateralism.

By Chris Jones (Stockport NUR delegate)

Speakers from the Tobacco Worker's Union, Yorkshire NUM and others emphasised that diluting policies by multilateralism or freeze proposals would only weaken our position. This would enable the right to make major attacks on trade union involvement in the disarmament movement.

The conference marked what progress had been achieved and what still had to be done. Over 160 delegates attended — twice as many as last year. There are now over 500 affiliated organisations, in-



cluding 29 national unions, and national CND has allocated funds and a full time worker.

In-coming chairperson John Chalcott said TUCND had spent much time over the last year fighting to be taken seriously and properly supported by CND. Now it was in a position to go out and build.

Seven regions gave reports. One of TUCND's aims is creating more regional groups to lead and coordinate trade union support.

• If your union branch wishes to affiliate and/or find out more about TUCND's activities, write to Andrew Hewett, 11 Goodwin Street, London N4 (01-263 0977).

We're on the eve of a very important by-election for Labour in Chesterfield. After a disastrous general election result, the press want to write off the Labour Party as an alternative for government.

Nowadays there's a phenomenal amount of media manipulation — witness the Bermondsey by-election last year. It would suit all sorts of people to be able to say that left policies aren't vote winners. Getting Tony Benn back in will disprove this.

In reality, if people know what the issues are — tackling unemployment, defending and improving the health service, building more homes for people to live in — they do win votes. These policies are directly relevant to people's needs.

There isn't the head of steam for the left inside the party now that there was during the deputy leadership election. Benn's return would galvanise the party around policies again.

Over the next few years, we need to improve on them and bring them up to date. Not only is Tony Benn excellent in a personal sense at getting policies across, but he would also act as a stimulus inside the party to improve policy.

The right have always been prepared to use the vote-winner argument against radical policies. Since the general election they have argued the need to 'draw in our horns' because we can't afford to propose anything too adventurous. This pressure pushes Kinnock to the right, he could well

View from



Westminster

Defending unilateralism

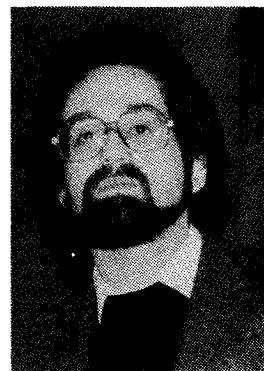
By Harry Cohen (MP for Leyton)

become a prisoner of the right wing.

Benn at Westminster would also sharpen the divide between us and the Tories, and perhaps increase the split that's already beginning to appear in their ranks. I believe that split reflects general pressure on their party because their policies are unpopular.

Benn's return would increase working class confidence and so increase that pressure on the Tories.

Perhaps most importantly, Benn's return will defend Labour's unilateralist policy. Under the weight of Tory propaganda, there's sure to be an attack on unilateral nuclear disarmament at our next annual conference.



moment at our next annual conference.

Look at the pressure being put on the Greenham women. Twelve months' ago the media were relatively sympathetic. Now there's a concerted effort by the Tories, backed up by the press, to discredit and slander the women at the camp.

Nuclear defence is an important aspect of the Tories' policies — they are running a military economy for the wealthy, and making the working class pay. Heavy spending on defence and law and order is being paid for by unemployment and cuts in public services.

Labour must argue its case for unilateralism. First, a nuclear policy is no defence. The new generation of nukes are first-strike weapons. It's no good saying they're intended as a defence, when their capability is offensive.

Only a unilateralist, non-nuclear policy is tenable. On purely economic grounds, we just can't afford the massive costs of this weaponry.

This argument must be made central to Labour's campaigning policies. Tony Benn in parliament will add weight to this fight.

The labour m De

LAST MAY Labour won control of Liverpool city council with a slender majority of three, ending a decade of Liberal-Tory rule. In five weeks' time, when the council sets its budget for the coming year, Liverpool is likely to be the first council confronting the Tories over their ceiling on local government spending.

Liverpool's dilemma is stark. It can stay within the law by axing jobs and services to the tune of £30 million. This means 5000 jobs — one sixth of the council's total workforce — would go within 12 months, with a resultant crisis in local services. To meet Labour's manifesto commitments would require a rate increase of anywhere between 120-200 per cent. Even implementing the promises of the Liberal manifesto, which include privatising some council services, would require a rate increase in the region of 50 per cent.

By Carol Turner

Liverpool's *only* option is an illegal budget. This raises the threat of government appointed commissioners — who would take the administration out of the hands of the democratically elected representatives — and of surcharge, bankruptcy, or even imprisonment for individual councillors who support such a budget.

The view has been put forward, even by some on the left, that Liverpool Labour Group *chooses* to confront the government because of 'cranky' ideological dogmatism, rather than seeking a legal way out. A cursory glance at the circumstances behind Liverpool's plight is sufficient to demolish this argument. Is it the case that the Labour manifesto sets utopian targets outside the range of reforms which can reasonably be expected from a 'progressive' council? No.

Poverty

Last year Labour inherited an administration which has been systematically run down over a long number of years. The city of Liverpool has one of the highest rates of unemployment in the whole country. In some areas real unemployment is as high as 55-60 per cent. It has the most expensive housing outside London. And it suffers from some of the worst urban and environmental decay in the country.

Labour's promises were extremely modest. It pledged a house-building programme of 6000 new homes over five years, in a city where 15,000 homes are seriously decayed and 22,000 people are on the council waiting list. It promised to create 1000 new jobs with no redundancies or privatisation of council services, in a city where 60,000 people are out of work. More than 34,000 jobs have been lost in Liverpool in the last five years, of which 4500 have been council jobs. Fifty per cent of under-25 year olds are without permanent employment.

And it promised, in the words of Councillor John Hamilton, 'to mount a coordinated attack upon the decay and dereliction in which so many people are forced to live their lives'. The city council has established 17 priority areas as part of a five-year plan to improve the social, physical and economic environment.

Fighting back

In short, the Labour manifesto promised to defend and improve jobs and services. These pledges are not the wide-eyed ravings of Marxist fanatics — as the opponents of *Militant* would have us believe. They represent a minimum programme of social reform which any half-way progressive council would be forced to support in similar circumstances. Labour won control precisely because these proposals hold popular appeal for local people whose standard of living has been seriously and systematically eroded by local and central government policies for several decades.

Pete Cresswell, secretary Liverpool Stewards Committee, and Liverpool

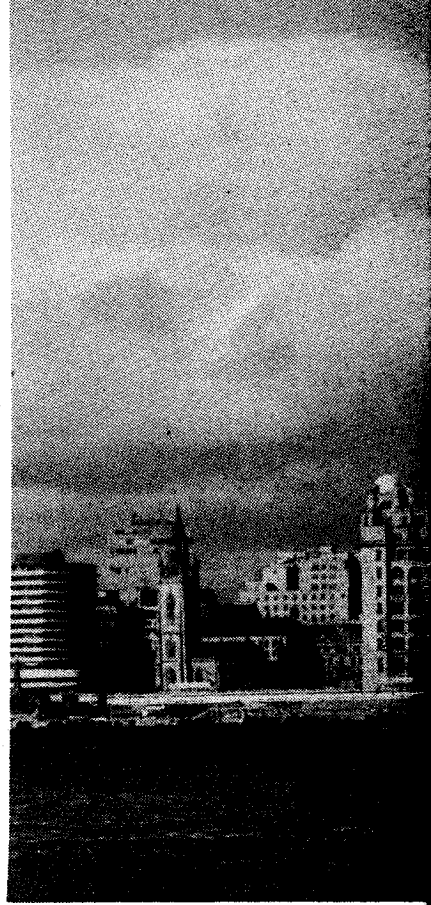
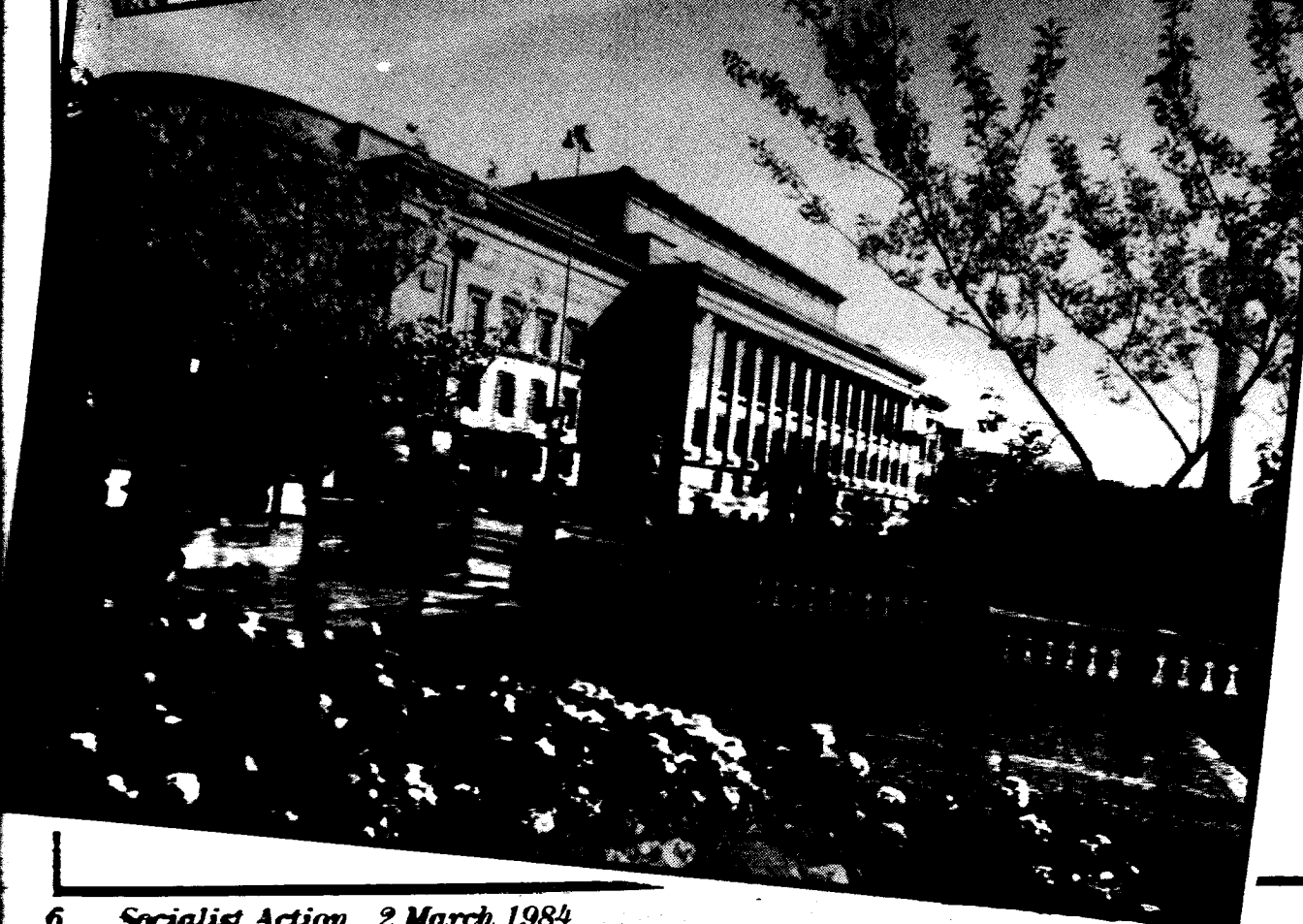
The fight to save jobs and services targets are met, one in six council cuts has never been contemplated, it would only save our jobs if goes bankrupt we won't be paid.

An illegal budget is the only option. Liverpool Stewards Committee is fully supported. Meeting voted 117 to three for the NUPE's who only have 2000 members. Welfare services where any action they'll be so ready to pull out of the council's position.

The JSSC is calling for a one day workforce on Democracy Day, 29th March. This is an up-hill struggle against massive action by the workforce in our city.



Photos: courtesy LIVERPOOL CITY COUNCIL



movement must...

Defend Liverpool!

On 29 March — designated by the TUC as a day of national action against the Tory attack on local democracy — Liverpool council will decide its budget. The council is calling for a one-day general strike on Merseyside in support of their action. This demand is backed by the Joint Shop Stewards Committee of Liverpool's local government unions. At the same time, there will be a national demonstration in London.

Through no fault of its own, Liverpool is first in line to take on the Tories. The best support the British labour movement can offer is to show the Tories where to get off by building the biggest possible demonstration against their onslaught on Democracy Day, 29 March.

**OUR CITY-
OUR FIGHT
LIVERPOOL
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the same fight. If government
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the government. This means
the people of Liverpool to save



Labour's late start

YOU CAN STILL find Dock Road pubs that stay open all afternoon — a hangover (in both senses) from the days when a docker got a day's work by talking to the foreman-ganger in the bar. Casual work, and the poverty which went with it, was the norm on the Liverpool docks right up to the 1960s.

The city never developed as a major manufacturing centre. A labour movement rooted in the early experiences of factory, mine and mill did not exist.

Religious sectarianism was a further barrier to working class solidarity. Catholics looked for work on the North Docks, Protestants on the South. The Scotland-Exchange constituency returned an Irish Nationalist to parliament right up to 1928. But the Protestant-dominated Conservative Working Men's Association — no Catholics were admitted — ensured that many working class districts returned Tory or Orange councillors until the 1950s.

By John Nolan

Casual labour and religious sectarianism retarded the development of the Liverpool Labour Party, which grew up as a Catholic-dominated, minority current inside the Liverpool working class. After the Second World War, this was replaced by the right wing, cold-war, boss politics of Bessie and Bob Bradock, who ruthlessly witch-hunted socialists from the party.

It was an electoral shell when Labour first won the city council in 1955. This complacency did little to change the conditions in which the people of Liverpool lived. And Labour lost the council several times in the 1960s. In the early '70s, the Liberals gained control, supported by the Tories.

Campaigning to win

BOB QUICK is a Liverpool city councillor for Dingle ward, which includes Toxteth, the scene of Liverpool's black rebellions in 1981. He is chairperson of the council's Libraries committee and Social Services Development sub-committee. Like the rest of Liverpool's Labour councillors, he stands first in line against the Tories, when Liverpool makes its new rate on 29 March. He told Socialist Action how Labour won the council last May, and what

future the Labour administration faces.

Big dissatisfaction with the Liberal-Tory rule at City Hall meant more Labour voters turned out last year to elect the new Liverpool city council, which is now under Labour control for the first time in 10 years. In my ward, the turn-out was 45 per cent compared to the usual 30. We won Liverpool by campaigning hard amongst local groups and the labour movement.

We fought the election on three issues: the need for council house building — the Liberals hadn't built a single one in five years; no cuts in jobs or services; and opposition to the privatisation plans of the Liberals — refuse collection was threatened if the Liberals got back. The response to the new council, especially from the local government unions — who turned out their members to canvass for us during the election — has been very enthusiastic. But now Liverpool is facing the crunch.

We make the 1984-5 budget on 29 March. And we have two — unacceptable — legal options: a rate increase of between 120-200 per cent, or slashing 5000 jobs. The budget will be in line with Labour's manifesto promises. It will contain a minimal rate increase — probably in line with inflation — and a commitment to maintaining jobs and services. This means a shortfall of £30 million — an 'illegal' budget, leaving the Labour Group open to surcharge, disqualification, bankruptcy and imprisonment.

We don't know how Thatcher's government will respond yet. They could send in the commissioners right away, or they could wait till a rate-payer complains which would compel the auditor to inspect the books and declare the council bankrupt. I don't think the first is an attractive prospect for the Tories. It could cause chaos in Liverpool while the Queen is opening the International Garden Festival here, at the beginning of May.

With a Labour majority of three,

we're in a sticky situation, but I'm sure the Liberals don't relish proposing a legal budget which they could be forced to implement. They'll have to put one forward to protect themselves from surcharge. Rumours are circulating that if this happens they'll do a deal with Thatcher who will remove the penalties because of the crisis in Liverpool.

The important thing is that Liverpool mustn't be left to take a stand alone. Everyone recognises we're a special case. But it doesn't help us when other Labour councils, like Wakefield and Newcastle, are making cuts in their services.

Liverpool needs the full support of Labour's national leadership. So far this hasn't been forthcoming. Neil Kinnock has said councils should stay within the law. But how can we? No socialist could vote for the options we're faced with. All Labour councils and constituency parties should pledge their support to Liverpool, and send contingents to our demonstration on 29 March.

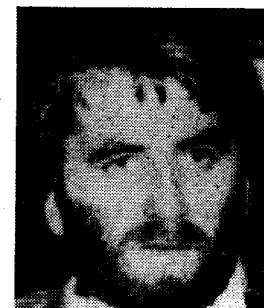
The council is calling for a general strike on Merseyside on this day, and the local government unions are supporting us. Everyone must be clear that Liverpool has no choice, no option but to take the Tories on now. We need the support of the whole labour movement to make this a success.

Changes

But things have been changing in the party over the last ten years. Left MPs have been elected. And a younger, more enthusiastic membership has progressively replaced right wing councillors. Militant supporters have been most prominent in this development.

Liverpool workers are no longer divided. They have rejected the right wing inside and outside the Labour Party. But they are threatened by one of the worst levels of unemployment in this country, and by the Tories' attacks on local government. Nowadays, Liverpool is at the centre of the fight for socialism and democracy in Britain.

Keva Coombes, Leader of Merseyside County Council



When the crunch comes, you have to bat with your own side. The city council has no alternative but to refuse to comply with the government's requirements. The county council will do everything in its power to support Liverpool city. There is no way in which we would sabotage their fight. We support our own workforce taking sympathy action on 29 March.



Scarface



FOR MOVIE buffs, the 1932 Paul Muni version of *Scarface* is a must when it makes its regular appearance in the Saturday night late film spot.

A mini classic of its time it was a comment on the rise, of what after the armaments industry, was to become America's biggest growth point — organised crime.

The Brian De Palma 1984 update uses Miami, now the US drugs capital, for Chicago the booze capital. Yesterday's Italian mobsters are replaced by Cuban drug runners and dealers.

Reviewed by
Bob Pennington

This could have made an interesting film showing how the drug bosses need the police, the courts, the politicians and the bankers to fix their protection, keep them out of jail, and launder their huge take. Besides lifting the lid on the links between organised crime and the state it could have been an exciting and compelling piece of cinema.

But surprise, surprise, commercialism wins out. OK it does appear to say and show most of the right things. Tony Montana, played by Al Pacino, despite his claims that he is a political refugee from communism, is shown to be a two-bit gangster who Castro is only too happy to dump into the 'American way of life'.

In Miami he can join up with Batista's former pumps and extortionists who founded the city's

Cuban crime colony. In tracing Pacino's way to the top he is revealed as a dirty little psychopath interested only in violence and money and the power they bring.

The only cop in the film is a crook. The politicians — a man from Washington, the Bolivian Minister for the Interior and a top Bolivian general are shown to be a bunch of swindlers and assassins.

Scarface's view of the family is shown to be one that men are top dogs and women should know their place. His 'protectiveness' towards his sister masks an incestuous sexual desire. His nemesis comes in a final surrealistic shoot out with another gang that owes more than a little to Ken Russell. As he gets his lot it's obvious that he has become a victim of cocaine which has weakened his former animal-like

awareness.

So why am I beefing? The film shows him to be a nasty piece of work, the cops are crooks, politicians are bastards and it delivers a few knocks at the family. Well, the trouble is that De Palma has not used the violence, racism, sexism and corruption inherent in the drug dealing world, and which any serious film would have to show, to expose its rottenness. Instead he has used them as a spectacle in and of themselves. Therefore *Scarface* becomes a figure for the audience to identify with.

That's why when we were leaving the cinema this young bloke said to his friend: 'Brilliant film eh?'. 'Superb' replied his mate: 'But a really sad ending'. That says it all. They knew what Mr De Palma is selling and enjoyed it.



Lianna

Reviewed by Sue MacDonald

Lianna is a married woman with two kids who falls in love with her night class lecturer who happens to be another woman. The film documents their relationship with all its problems and shows how white, middle class suburbia deals with it.

There are good things about the film. It is a pleasant change to watch a film in which the film subtly exposes the ridiculous attitudes of most heterosexual people, no matter how supposedly 'sympathetic'. Her closest friend's husband says to Lianna 'I do understand what's wrong with you!'

The difficulties and frustration of the two women at being unable to openly express their feelings in public is sometimes poignant, and there is the odd moment when women's relationships with each other are genuinely celebrated. When a lover says to Lianna 'we don't have much in common', she replies 'we have enough'.

But this is the exception in a film that is generally so careful that it is at times painful! Although the film is about a lesbian relationship, there is nothing in it that challenges the *status quo*. The main theme of the film seems to be that les-

bian lovers will get into the same emotional tangles as 'straight' ones ... so why bother?

Although it is not quite as crude as that, the final scenes are explicit in their message. Lianna watches a dance routine on stage with a man and woman expressing love, anger and depression. The scene is intercut with memories of Lianna and Ruth's nights together!

There is one glaring omission in this film, the oppression of women is absent. There is a total lack of understanding that a relationship between women will *always* be different to that between women and men — so long as women suffer as they do in our society. There can be a sense of solidarity in a lesbian relationship that women cannot experience in relationships with men.

The 'love scenes' are soft focus stuff. Two conveniently 'attractive' women make love to a background of whispering in French. Really corny stuff and more reminiscent of soft porn than a radical film.

It is very obvious that *Lianna* is edited, directed and written by a man — how somebody who can never have a lesbian relationship expects to write a film about how it feels I'll never know! 'Compassionate and caring' said the *Daily Mail* which made me sceptical to start with and some may think it is. But inspiring and challenging it is not.

DIARY

These listings are free for all major labour movement and campaign activities — up to maximum of 50 words. Semi-display advertisements cost 5p per word and must be paid in advance. Send to: *Diary*, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP to arrive not later than Thursday, one week prior to publication.

Labour Movement

● **Broad Left Organising Conference** Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield, Sat 24 March 11-5.30. Credentials from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place London E9 6EH.

Anti-cuts campaigns

● **London Health Service Campaign**, 34 Dalston Lane,

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● **Save Islington services** London's burning bonfire at Highbury Fields, N5 1.30pm-3pm 7 March.

Disarmament

● **Labour and NATO** Labour Briefing discussion conference. Sat 24 March, 10.30-5pm County Hall, London.

● **Greenham Common cabaret and benefit**. Chats Palace, Brooksby Walk, London E9. Fri 2 March. With The Exocettes, Sensible Footwear, The Wild Girls. £2.50/£1.50 unwaged.
● **London Labour CND** fringe meeting at London LP conference. Sat 3 March lunchtime. The Dolphin pub, Tonbridge St, opposite Camden Town Hall.

Ireland

● **Labour and Ireland** day school for budding writers, workshops with trained journalists. London, Feb or March, £1. Write to Labour and Ireland, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.
● **International Womens Day** delegation to Belfast. March 9-12, women only delegation and mixed picket of Armagh Jail. Information from London Armagh Group, 374 Gray's Inn Rd WC1.

International

● **Sri Lankan Research & Information Group** will provide speakers on the current situation there for meetings. Write to 9 Grays Inn Buildings, London EC1.

● **Victor Jara festival** Royal Festival Hall, Fri 2 March, 7.30, featuring Inti Illimiani, Isabel Parra, Angel Parra, Santiago Del Nuevo Extremo from Chile. Tickets from Chile Solidarity, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7, tel. 272 4298.

● **Women in Nicaragua** meeting with Magda Enriques, Nicaraguan Womens Association rep in Council of State. Followed by film premiere of 'Women in Nicaragua'. Council Chambers, County Hall, Mon 5 March 8pm, Women only.

Civil Rights

● **Action Group on Immigration and Nationality** Conference on the case for reform of the law. Sat 24 March, 10-4.30, AUEW House, 43 The Crescent, Salford.

● **Immigration Widows Kit** information and advice on organising against the immigration attacks on women. From Women Immigration and Nationality Group, c/o 44 Theobalds Rd, London WC1. 85p (inc p&p).

Lesbian & Gay Liberation

● **Labour Movement Lesbians** is a new organisation of lesbians in the labour movement to support each other and organise initiatives on issues that affect lesbians. Further information from Sarah c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embk, London WC2.

New pamphlet: Politics in the 1980's — The British Crisis.

Articles reprinted from *Socialist Action* and *International* — John Ross, British politics in the 1980's; Alan Freeman, How Labour Can Win; Steve Marks, the 1983 Election; John Ross, Facing 1984; Alan Freeman, Rebuilding the Labour Party. Available from PO Box 50 London N1, price 35p, (plus 16p, p/p).



INTERNATIONAL November-December issue Price 75p

In this issue:
Andrew Gamble on the 'special relationship' between Britain and the States
Ken Livingstone, on a strategy for the Labour left
John Ross, on why the left must reject unity with European imperialism against America
Chris Palmer on Grenada
Jude Woodward on sectarianism towards women plus reviews

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Five years of the Iranian revolution

By Phil Hearse

ALMOST EXACTLY five years ago the Shah of Iran was deposed in one of the most gigantic revolutionary upheavals since the Second World War. The Iranian revolution was greeted with tremendous enthusiasm by the left everywhere, which celebrated the downfall of the reactionary despot without qualification.

While the mass leadership of the anti-Shah movement was Islamic in inspiration, the left looked to the massive participation of the working class in the movement, and hoped that the Islamic leadership would be rapidly outflanked.

Five years later these hopes have been dashed. The Khomeini regime has ruthlessly carried through its objective of creating an 'Islamic Republic', crushing all opposition in its wake. But the course of the Iranian revolution was not merely an 'unfortunate' development, a 'disappointing' turn of events. Khomeini may have disappointed the hopes of large sections of the oppressed, but he has not betrayed the goals which he himself put forward. For the leadership of the movement which was at the heart of the anti-Shah forces was Islamic from the beginning. While the working class and poor peasantry often mobilised for anti-capitalist demands, nonetheless Khomeini's movement mobilised millions for explicitly reactionary objectives. The left's failure to understand that a movement which fights some aspects of imperialist oppression can also be a reactionary movement was the source of its hopelessly optimistic illusions.

The protest movement against the Shah, initiated mainly by the middle class and intellectuals in 1977, was joined by the working class and the poor in the summer of 1978. It was met with ferocious repression, leading to a series of massacres and new outbursts of protest, based on the 40-day cycle of mourning for the victims.

Between October and December 1978 huge sections of the working class, led by the oil workers, took strike action against the repression.

But by December the Islamic character of the movement was obvious. The marches on 10 and 11 December, which involved millions of people, confirmed beyond any doubt the immense popularity and the hegemony of Islam. The organisational backbone of the movement were the thousands of Islamic mullahs, tightly organised and controlling the movement. In fact, at the time of the December marches, Khomeini commanded an army of 90,000 mullahs and thousands of theological students and other clerics.

Behind the Khomeini leadership was a coalition of forces including not only the plebeian masses and the mosque, but also a section of the bourgeoisie which had lost out under the Shah, together with the petty bourgeoisie based on the bazaar.

Order

The far left organisations, the Fedayeen and the Mujahadin, played a role in the final insurrection against the Shah, but were never mass forces. Politically they were ambiguous and confused vis-a-vis the Islamic leadership of the revolution, and in no position to provide an alternative.

During the insurrection at the beginning of 1979 the ruling class repressive apparatus — the army — almost completely collapsed. The only force of stability and 'order' which emerged was the Khomeini movement itself.

In January 1979 Khomeini set up the 'Council of the Revolution', a coalition of religious dignitaries and capitalist politicians, including Bani Sadr, Bazargan and Ghotzbadah. Bakhtiar was nominated prime minister. The National Front, the main bourgeois political force, and the Stalinist Tudeh party supported the government. The inclusion of capitalist figures in the first Khomeini government was a sure sign of the direction in which Khomeini was going.

First he was going to establish a capitalist state, and tactically needed to court and neutralise that section of the bourgeoisie which had supported the revolution. On the other hand, he intended to secure the establishment



of an Islamic capitalist state, with the ultimate power of the Shi'ite clergy, and thus behind the scenes was preparing for their eventual complete take over of the state.

But before dealing with his capitalist allies Khomeini had to deal with the elements in the revolution which had escaped the control of the clergy. The collapse of the old dictatorship had given rise to a multitude of political parties and associations. There was a flood of papers, organisations being formed and mass meetings. Workers strike committees, and then the factory *shoras* came into existence. Armed units of every political party kept their weapons. Trade unions revived in many industries. During 1979 and into 1980 strikes developed around demands for better wages and working conditions.

The various national minorities thrust forward their demands for autonomy. In hundreds of villages peasants occupied the land. And women began to organise for their demands.

In other words, from the fall of the Shah in February 1979 through into 1980, sections of the workers and peasants began to make demands which went well beyond the programme of Khomeini. The anti-Shah struggle was beginning to show signs of growing over into a social struggle against the capitalist class.

Khomeini now moved to utilise the mass Islamic movement to crush

this aspect of the struggle and to outmanoeuvre his capitalist 'allies'. In March 1979 the government organised an undemocratic 'referendum' on the establishment of an Islamic Republic. The referendum was won overwhelmingly by Khomeini, outflanking the call for a Constituent Assembly, and establishing instead an 'assembly of experts' dominated by the clergy.

As early as February 1979 Khomeini utilised Islamic thugs, the Hesbollahis, against the left and against the women's movement. A systematic attack on women's rights has been one of the most important features of the Islamic regime. The demonstration of International Womens Day in 1979 was viciously attacked. Thousands of women who defied the new regulations on wearing the veil were thrown out of their jobs or into prison.

One of the failures of the far left in Iran was to go along with the curtailment of women's rights, often on the grounds that Islamic dress etc represented an element of 'anti-imperialist' consciousness — rather than a central element of the deeply reactionary Islamic social code.

While crushing oppositional social and political movements Khomeini sought mechanisms to mobilise the masses around the objective of an Islamic Republic. The opportunity to pursue this project came with the occupation of the US embassy by students at the end of 1979, and the

taking of the US hostages. By supporting this side-show to identify anti-imperialist feelings with himself Khomeini whipped up support for the regime. By turning attention against the 'Great Satan' — the United States — attention was diverted from the social struggles at home and in particular the rising struggle of the Kurds and other oppressed nationalities.

The domination of the clergy was further consolidated by the launching of the Islamic Republic Party (IRP) which gave a powerful political framework for the clergy. The building of the *pasdarans*, the 'revolutionary' guards, as a parallel force of state repression helped to consolidate the clergy's grip. *The regime thus established represented a specific form of capitalist dictatorship, one mediated through Islamic theocracy.*

Conflict

Nominal sovereignty in Iran rests entirely with the *faghih* (Khomeini) — God's representative on earth. All institutions are subordinate to him. 'Upholding Islam' is the justification of any repression, any act of barbarity, in particular the oppression of women and the upholding of the Islamic social code.

To secure its own political domination the IRP was thrown into conflict with the sections of the bourgeoisie which has supported the anti-Shah movement. Thus in 1981 the IRP moved against Bani Sadr, by

now president, removing him as commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Bani Sadr responded by denouncing clerical 'tyranny' and calling for mass resistance. He was backed by the Mujahidin, the 'Islamic-Marxist' organisation, which had thousands of supporters and now began a campaign of terror against the regime. The IRP responded with an even more random violent terror against all opposition.

The war launched against Iran by the Saddam Hussein dictatorship in Iraq in September 1980 was a war of one capitalist dictatorship against another. While the imperialist powers tended to welcome the attack, it was not organised by the United States or its allies. At the beginning of the war, there was in Iran an independent mobilisation of the working class against the Iraqi attack. In some of the Iranian border towns elections to the shoras, in which the left were challenging the grip of the Islamic movement, took place on the very day of the Iraqi attack. Even Arab workers took up arms to defend themselves against the Iraqi attack.

At first most of the left organisations supported the line of an independent mobilisation against Iraq, with armed detachments fighting independently of the Khomeini regime, utilising this project both to fight Hussein's attempts to liquidate the gains of the revolution and to fight for the overthrow of Khomeini. But very soon the independent mobilisation was crushed by the Khomeini regime.

Huge pressure came on the left organisations to support the government. For example, the Mujahadin first supported an independent workers self-defence mobilisation, but then changed its line to supporting the regime. Once the independent mobilisation of the Iranian workers had been crushed the war became simply that of a struggle between two reactionary capitalist dictatorships, in which neither side could be supported. Moreover, the IRP and Khomeini used the war effort to strengthen the army, militarise society and reimpose the domination of a reactionary state apparatus.

Sombre

Today there are no 'gains' of the revolution left to defend. The factory shoras have either been crushed or co-opted by the regime. The economic gains of the workers have largely been wiped out. The position of women has drastically deteriorated and the national minorities are under vicious attack. Khomeini has turned the war into one of Shi'ite expansionism. There is no reason whatever to support either side in this reactionary war which has caused over 250,000 deaths.

Five years after the overthrow of the Shah the balance sheet is a very sombre one. While the overthrow of the Shah was an immensely progressive and positive step, he has been replaced by a regime just as hostile to the working class, if less reliable for imperialism.

The course of the Iranian revolution was determined at a very early stage during the struggle to bring down the Shah in 1978-9. Whereas many sections of the working class and the oppressed mobilised for progressive and democratic objectives, given the weakness and virtual non-existence of an organised labour movement, these democratic and radical objectives never became the dominant or unifying themes of the revolution.

On the contrary, the only nationally organised mass movement which numbered millions and had explicitly reactionary objectives, was the Islamic Shi'ite movement of Khomeini. The left and the labour movement were never strong enough to promote really mass mobilisations against the Shah independent of the mosque.

The fate of the Iranian revolution shows that there can be no compromise with Islamic fundamentalism, even if fundamentalist movements struggle against capitalist dictatorships of a traditional bourgeois or petty-bourgeois character. For fundamentalist Islam merely prepares its own form of capitalist dictatorship — one decked out with an extreme reactionary social code derived from the seventh century.

Victory for Labour women

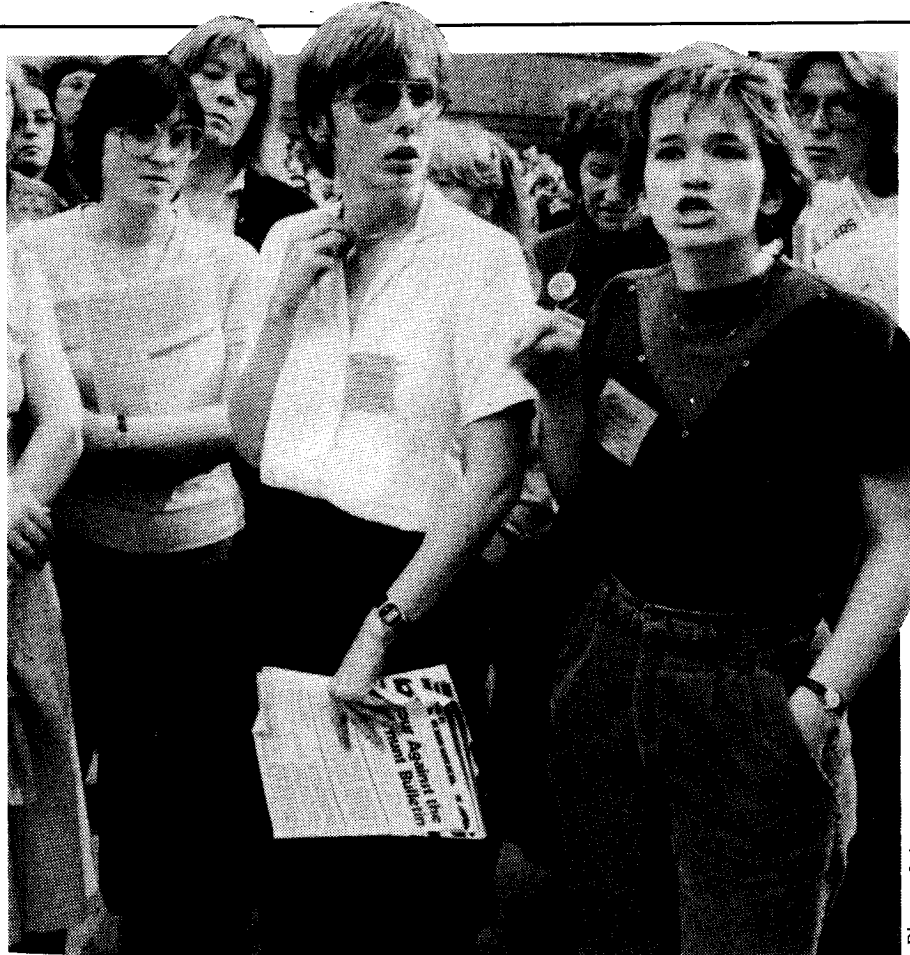
JOSIE EDWARDS is the Women's Action Committee press officer, and a delegate to London Region Labour Party conference from Chipping Barnet women's section. Last year London Region conference agreed that women should be directly represented on the regional executive. This has not been implemented. A spate of resolutions to this year's meeting demand that it is. On the eve of the London Conference, the National Executive Committee has agreed that regional conferences can elect women directly to their executives. Josie told Socialist Action what this good news meant for Labour Party women.

The London and Scottish regional meetings of the Labour Party resolved last year to improve women's representation on their executives. But this has not been carried out. The constitutional changes were not put before the NEC for over 10 months. Just when we thought the NEC was fudging the issue, the proposal has been agreed. The two regions can put these changes into effect immediately. For London, this means eight women elected to the executive, directly accountable to the regional women's conference.

This is a major breakthrough. WAC has battled long and hard for

these changes. We hope that regions who aren't already pursuing this will now do so.

WAC's aim is to have the national women's section of the NEC directly elected by women's conference. We believe such constitutional changes — just a means to an end — will assist women in the party. Our aim is not to get a lot of lady solicitors elected to parliament, but we recognise that history has shown the current system doesn't represent the interests of women, especially working class women. In the short term WAC will continue to have constitutional aims at the forefront of its campaign.



Women protesting at the exclusion of women's delegates at 1983 Labour Party annual conference.

One of the reasons WAC has been so successful is that women are angry at the way we're treated in the Labour Party. Compare the practice inside the party to the 1976 legislation by the then-Labour government.

The Equal Opportunities Commission guidelines for employers are full of pious recommendations — for instance, monitoring the number of women at various levels of the organisation and taking remedial action to correct the imbalance. If the party were an employer, it would be a lousy one!

Not nearly enough is done to encourage women to be party activists. Now, it's not so much that women are expected to make the tea, but they are expected to do all the slog: knocking on doors and stuffing envelopes.

Once upon a time we said that softly, softly catches the monkey. Now we're fed up with being nice. That's why the WAC campaign has been so successful. Women are turning to their trade unions and to the Labour Party to make their demands felt.

The work done by campaigns like WAC is not very glamorous, but it is necessary. We organised in the face of women being wiped out year after year at annual conference. It's not too good to walk down the aisle to say your bit at the rostrum knowing there's a solid block of people ritually voting against you. And, finally that's changing.

We're getting into the conference season again. WAC has no model resolutions yet for annual conference, but they'll be based on the ones we pro-

duced previously. We're taking three models to women's conference: improvements for women's representation on parliamentary shortlists; a call for a special rules conference to draw up and approve a constitution for all levels of women's organisations in the party; our standing demand that five resolutions from women's conference to annual conference.

We're going to London Regional conference on a cheery note this year. We'll be fighting just as hard for a fair deal for women in the Labour Party.

● Representatives from WAC will be speaking at lunch-time fringe meetings at London Regional conference. Sat 3 March: Jane Stockton, at the Labour Briefing meeting; Sun 4 March: Frances Morrell, at the Tribune meeting.

Photo: John Harris

MALE ORDER

Labour women and feminism

LABOUR National Briefing is planning to hold a day school on Labour Women and Feminism on 15 September around the suggested themes of 'How should the Labour Party fight for women's liberation?' and 'Making the Party accessible to women'.

There will also be a debate between women from Briefing and from the Labour Coordinating Committee on 'What strategy for Labour women?'

For further information contact Jane Stockton, 110 Agar Grove, London NW1.

FAMOUS BOZOS N°3 CATHY'S CLOWN



Cathy's Clown produced by Trojan Posters (01-249 5771), 65p, and available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Sack needed

IN A RADIO 4 discussion programme which went out live, a lonely hearts dating agency for the disabled was mentioned.

Kenneth Robinson, the presenter of the show and well-known broadcaster, responded with

the incredible remark: 'you can hear the wheelchairs banging together all night in some parts of the country.'

Robinson has been told off by his BBC bosses. He should be sacked.

Women ahead

THE latest Marplan poll showed Labour one point ahead of the Tories for the first time in years. Even more interesting was the news that it was women who were leading the swing to Labour, with 37 per cent com-

pared to 35 per cent of Labour supporters.

COMPILED by Hilary Driver. Send contributions to Male Order to reach us one week prior to publication to: Male Order, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP.

NAC goes on the offensive

WOMEN ATTENDING the National Abortion Campaign's conference last weekend took away hundreds of new leaflets to distribute in their organisation — a sign of their determination to build the struggles for abortion rights for all women. Speakers at the opening session took up the question of NHS cuts, time limits, problems faced by young black women, and fighting for facilities in the labour movement.

Joanna Chambers, the co-ordinator of the Coordinating Committee in Defence of the '67 Act, told the Conference that the possibility of a reduction in the legal time limit for abortion (at present 28 weeks) could come in a variety of ways.

Whilst only a very small number of women had abortions after 20 weeks, they included women with the most severe problems. Most could be prevented by improved facilities, better sex education (over 50 per cent of late abortions are women under 20) and easier access.

In the workshops women discussed how to turn this attack into an offensive campaign for better facilities. The feeling was overwhelmingly positive — the recent report on late abortions

makes it crystal clear that there is plenty of room for improvement!

By Leonora Lloyd and Ann Potter

Ester Golding spoke of the problems facing young black women. She said she wanted to dispel the myth that black women do not have abortions, but they do need support and she had never yet met a black counsellor.

The reporter from the workshop that discussed the problems of black women pointed out that NAC — like most other white-dominated organisations — produced nothing in languages other than English, and offered to help produce material accessible to ethnic minority women.

Ann Holmes, from the Labour Party, showed the way in which the government is cutting the health service and attacking women in particular. The discussions around facilities took up the question of linking with other cuts campaigns, health service unions, etc.

Two trade union speakers, Judy Mallaber from NUPE and Pat Waterman from the London National Association of Probation Officers, explained the way the unions could be involved in the fight for better abortion rights and facilities.

The anti-abortionists are stepping-up their activities, so it is not enough just to get unions affiliated, a constant campaign has to be carried on to ensure 'your union acts on its policies'. The way sponsored MPs vote should also be taken up.

Over 100 women attended the conference and over 45 organisations were represented. Their enthusiasm and determination to fight mean that the National Abortion Campaign can now start a campaign that will take us forward to our aims of ensur-



ing that all women have the right to choose, and hence that all women will have more control over their own lives.

A full conference report will be available in the next NAC newsletter — available from 47 Waldram Park Road London SE23.

Oxford Labour Committee on Ireland Public Meeting

WHICH WAY FORWARD FOR THE LABOUR MOVEMENT?

Tuesday 6 March
7.45pm at Buxton Hall
Ruskin College, Walton Street

speakers:

- Jeremy Corbyn MP ● Andrew Smith, Oxford East Labour Party ● Alan Thornett, President Oxford Trades Council ● Anita Richards, Treasurer LCI and Sinn Fein speaker(s)

Build the BLOC conference

SUPPORT FOR THE Broad Left Organising Committee Conference in Sheffield 29 March is growing rapidly. Up to 1000 delegates are now expected to attend, making it the biggest meeting of the rank and file of the trade union movement since the decline of the LCDTU.

The conference comes at a time when the right wing in the trade unions is tightening its grip, and the Tories are stepping up their attacks. The softly softly line of Murray and company aimed at peaceful coexistence with the Tories has only encouraged Thatcher to step up the pressure. The sell-out of the NGA led directly to the ban on unions at GCHQ.

It is obvious that only mass action will stop the Tories. Murray's call for a half-day strike will help to strengthen the left in the unions, and will increase its determination to fight

for an adequate leadership.

By Pat Hickey

As Phil Holt, POEU NEC Broad left member told Socialist Action 'Undoubtedly the call from Len Murray for a half-day general strike will give an added impetus to the conference, precisely because it shows that the right is at sixes and sevens on how to respond to the Tory attacks on the trade union movement

'It has been the left

which has continually pointed out that it is only possible to resist by being prepared to break the law, if necessary to defend the trade union movement.'

The BLOC conference will therefore be a great opportunity to draw the lessons and to organise the left in the unions to take up the challenge of the Tory attacks. The meeting must be a real working conference, not a rally or a sounding board for anti-Tory rhetoric.

The challenges facing the left in the unions need proper discussion. BLOC needs to set itself clear targets for campaigning in coming months against the main attacks on the labour movement.

Links

Only by linking itself firmly to a major issue and working all out on that can it put itself on the map and act as focus for organising the left across the unions. A campaign, linking up with Labour Party activists to defend the political level and political funds would be such an opportunity.

The campaign launched by the LCC, backed by Benn, Scargill and others, around the Labour Party and Trade Unions Charter should be given the backing of the conference. BLOC should approach the LCC for a joint campaign on this issue and build the conference proposed for July.

Socialists in the unions should not miss this opportunity to discuss the way forward for the left. Everybody who can should build this conference and get delegations from all possible trade union bodies.



Broad Left Organising Committee National Delegate Conference

**Saturday 24 March
Octagon Centre,
Western Bank Sheffield
10**

Any bona-fide trade union organisation is welcome to send up to five delegates. For credentials and further information contact George Williamson, Organising Secretary, 11 Sutton Place, London, E9 6EH.

MOLES EYE VIEW



Batting for Britain

MARGARET THATCHER is a proud mum so she obviously doesn't want people to get the idea that her boy needed any help landing that nice juicy contract on Oman. So when nosy MPs raised the matter she told them: 'I bat for Britain'.

As I have reliable evidence that Mark holds a British passport there does not seem a conflict of interest there. Mind you she forgot to tell parliament that not only Cementation — her Mark's outfit — wanted to play ball in Oman. Sat waiting in the pavilion were Robert Matthew-Johnson Marshall and Partners, James Cubitt and Partners along with Taylor Woodrow just dying to get in the game. But Mark's firm grabbed the contract and

no tenders ever went out. Now don't you go and think that his mum's visit to Oman had anything to do with that.

As she says Cementation was 'the only British company' interested in the contract. So clearly the other three British firms who did make bids were not interested in getting the contract, they just did the work to give their estimating and costing departments something to do.



'He did it all on his own Geoffrey.'

Moles Eye View is compiled by BOB PENNINGTON. Contributions should be sent to arrive by Thursday am.

Silent Night strike

OVER 300 workers at the Silent Night Mattress factory in Baroldswick, Lancs are striking to stop a wage cut and to defend the right to join a union.

Last year there were less than 30 union members. An organising drive by Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades led to a large growth in union membership. The company hit back by cutting piece rates by 20 per cent and refused negotiation or arbitration with ACAS.

On 16 February when the cut was implemented union members walked out and were joined by a majority of non-union members who then signed

up in the union, despite pleas by management to return to work. Since then there has been a 24-hour, seven-day a week picket.

The union made the strike official within 24 hours of the walk out. There is unlikely to be a quick solution. The workforce reckon they have put up with too much too long. Management is equally determined — they admitted to a local paper that the issue was about the right to join a union. As far as they are concerned the piece work rate is only secondary.

Messages of support and donations to: FTAT, 37 Anson Road, Victoria Park, Manchester M14 SDB.

Phillips Rubber picket

One hundred TGWU strikers at Phillips Rubber, Manchester, out since 3 January for a rise in the basic rate from its present £48 per week are digging in for a siege.

They know that the firm's stocks are low. The final dozen workers not on strike are to be laid off this week, solidarity from the docks and other rubber workers has choked the company's supplies. Extra pickets and help always welcome.

Contact Tom Watkin, TGWU branch secretary, 16 Barker Street, Heywood, OL10 3DU.



Singh brothers acquitted

ON MONDAY 19 February Birmingham Magistrates Court acquitted the Singh brothers, Davidner and Bikar, appearing on charges of threatening behaviour and possessing offensive weapons.

The two brothers were attacked by 20 racist thugs outside their home in April last year, and Davidner hit in the face with a broken bottle. With their usual impartiality, the police, arrested the two brothers

and only one of the thugs, who was allegedly too drunk to run away. The brothers were beaten by the police, kept in the cells overnight and refused access to a solicitor. Subsequently, the police offered a 'deal': accept binding-over and forget the case.

By Bob Smith

The Singhs refused to be intimidated and defended themselves in the court. During the trial a

police officer admitted to fabricating evidence and telling lies.

The prosecution's 'star witness' claimed she saw 'a black maniac in a turban attack some peace-abiding joggers' — neither Davinder nor Bikar ever wear a turban.

The victory is a serious blow for the West Midlands police and the racist gangs terrorising Birmingham's black community. Inquiries are currently underway into other cases of police brutality and false evidence.

Socialist ACTION

US policy in shambles as marines depart

THE SIGHT of American marines withdrawing from Beirut with their tails between their legs shows one thing beyond all doubt: the United States, and world imperialism in general, has suffered a severe setback. Its protege, Gemayel, is completely discredited and his state is in a shambles.

The main local instrument of the imperialists, the Israeli army, is more unable and more reluctant to intervene than ever before. The only possible way to reverse the smashing defeat which Gemayel and the Christian Phalangists have suffered is to intervene massively with US troops — and now this is politically impossible.

Rather than go for a wider intervention in the Lebanese conflict, large sections of the US establishment are openly advocating abandoning Lebanon completely — after all no vital US interests are directly involved in the country itself. The significance of the US defeat in Lebanon is not just the failure to establish a strong central government loyal to the West, but the lessening of the United States' political weight in the whole Middle East.

In particular the de facto abrogation of the Lebanon-Israel 'troop withdrawal' peace treaty is

a bitter blow. The main thrust of US policy has been towards trying to isolate Syria, both by means of the 'troop withdrawal' agreement and by promoting the idea of a Jordanian (and Palestinian) peace treaty with Israel.

By Paul Lawson

This latter project is encapsulated in the so-called 'Reagan Plan' for the Middle East which could give the Palestinians a 'mini-state' in confederation with Jordan (a Palestinian 'bantustan'), in exchange for the PLO recognising the state of Israel.

Reagan's plan has been facilitated by the direction of the policy pursued by Yasser Arafat, who by conducting talks with King Hussein of Jordan and with Egyptian President Mubarak has signalled his desire to go along with the mini-state solution.

The whole US project for the region now faces two crucial obstacles. First, now that Gemayel is defeated and pro-Syrian forces hold the whip-hand in Lebanon, there can be no lasting peace in the region without involving Syria in the 'peace process'. But Syria will demand major concessions, for example the return of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, in exchange for a peace with Israel. This the Israelis will never agree to.

Moreover, Arafat faces growing resistance to his diplomatic plans. His former supporters among the Palestinians on the West Bank of the Jordan are deserting him, and he will face a full-scale revolt at the upcoming PLO National Council, with organisations like the Democratic Front and the Popular Front opposing him.

For these reasons a US-sponsored 'peace' in the Middle East, at the expense of the Palestinian people, is not at hand. In the long term the United States can only impose such a peace by reversing the military relationship of forces on the ground. And that would mean a major new intervention.



Greenham women face eviction

BERKSHIRE County Council has voted to throw the Greenham women off Ministry of Transport land. This decision will mean that bailiffs could arrive at any time and evict the women from all four camps. This decision, taken on Saturday, involves an instruction to the County Council officers to 'remove nuisances and unlawful obstruction from any county highway in the vicinity of RAF Greenham Common on which encampments may be found'.

Unlike previous evictions at Greenham this one applies to the Department of Transport land, not just the land owned by Newbury Council. It will mean that the women's tents will be smashed up and they will only be able to continue their protest under even worse conditions than at present.

By Valerie Coultas

The women already have to undergo the hardship of the cold and the rain soaking their clothes through. But they remain committed to keep their protest alive. 'We shall not go. They can take our tents if they must but we shall sleep out in the open. They cannot get rid of us.' They are appealing for survival bags made out of Gortex which allows condensation out but does not allow damp in to protect them from the cold and damp if the evictions should be successful.

One hundred women are still at the camp but because the courts are toughening up on sentencing and many Greenham women are facing long sentences more support is needed at this time.

The women's peace movement is a very broad

based and militant part of the peace movement and the women must not be left to fight alone at this crucial time. Labour Party women and trade union women, in particular, the women's right to protest.

Missile Circus Protest

TECHNICAL Marketing Society of America are holding a conference in London on March 8/9th under the name of 'New trends in missiles systems and technologies'.

Delegates have to pay £380 for hearing about profits to be made out of the nuclear war drive. When this travelling missiles circus arrived in Boston feminists mounted a protest.

Women in CND plan to mount a similar protest on 8 March, International Women's Day, at the BAFTA Lecture Theatre, 195, Picadilly, W1. Be there in Black if you want to join in and you're female.

For further information ring CND on 01-263-0977.



Pat gets her job back

PAT COXON, sent to jail for five days by Newbury magistrates after her arrest at Greenham Common, has been reinstated in her job at Gateshead council. After her imprisonment she was dismissed for being in 'breach of contract', despite the fact that Gateshead is a Labour-controlled council and a 'nuclear free zone'!

Following her dismissal there was a large lobby of a council meeting on 10 February, backed by NALGO, NUPE and CND. On 17 February the Council Appeals Committee, composed of Labour councillors, found that the council management had acted correctly in dismissing her, but found in favour of her appeal anyway!

Council deputy leader James Foster said: 'We are full of admiration for the ladies demonstrating at Greenham Common'. Better late than never.

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