

A SOCIALIST ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

Campaign Forum Rally —
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THE WAR AGAINST THE PALESTINIANS

THE ACCOUNTS of the conditions in the Palestine refugee camps of Burj al-Barajneh and Shatila under siege in Lebanon have horrified the world. The press is presenting a picture of Lebanon 'descending into anarchy'. But the truth is that a brutal war is being waged by the United States, Israel, Syria and their allies to try to smash the Palestinian people into submission.

THE siege conditions around the Palestinian camps in Lebanon has existed in its present form for over three months. But essentially a siege at one level or other has existed since last April.

There was a short siege in April 1986 that was formally ended in May. From then on women were allowed to move in and out of the camps. But young men were still afraid to move because of fear of being kidnapped.

Hundreds of young men were kidnapped between these sieges and taken to detention centres in Beirut. They were tortured, maimed and some later released.

Over three months ago the siege of Burj al-Barajneh and Shatila started. They were both swollen by refugees from Sabra camp — which could not be rebuilt after last year's battles. There is also a small Marelyas camp — which is on Christian land and which has grown from 2,000 to more than 15,000.

Conditions in the camps are desperate. Water is the first problem. Although there has not yet a total lack of water that is because it is winter. There are no underground sewers. Drinking water is mixed with sewage.

There is an extremely serious food shortage. People ran out of food supplies about one and a half months after this siege started. One of the main sources of food, up to a few weeks ago, was the wild shrubs and weeds that grow around the camp. Now even these have totally run out.

Some people, mainly women, have been trying to venture out to gather weeds and shrubs around the outskirts of the camps. Many have been kidnapped or killed by Amal snipers.

In Burj-al-Barajneh people have been feeding on cats, dogs, mules and rats for weeks now. Now these have run out.

A report from a Canadian surgeon working in Burj-al-Barajneh told how from last Saturday the people decided to go on voluntary fast to save any remaining food for pregnant women, young children and elderly people, who were starving. Because of these conditions there are a huge number of cases of typhoid, intestinal infections and skin diseases.

In Burj-al-Barajneh most of the water supplies are cut. Only one water point is functioning — for an estimated 20,000 people in this camp. Women have been sniped at while going to this water point.

Burj-al-Barajneh has one hospital. It used to have three floors and a basement but the top floors have been flattened by shelling. Only the underground part of the building is in use. This means there is one small operating theatre and about thirty beds.

In Shatila there is one, small hospital in use, which used to be a small emergency hospital. The main hospital for the people of Shatila cannot be reached any more. In both camps medical supplies have run out completely.

In Burj-al-Barajneh there are no painkillers at all. On Friday one surgeon reported that on that evening alone she did fourteen amputations and is often forced to do amputations because of the lack of basic medical equipment and supplies which make other treatments impossible.

By 26 January this year, according to the figures of the Palestinian Red Crescent, equivalent to the Red Cross, 1924 Palestinians had been killed, 4549 injured and 79,000 made homeless in the siege and bombardment. On Monday in only one camp — Burj-al-Barajneh — 17 people were killed and the shelling of all the camps was so bad that radio contact completely broke down.

RIMA MILHIM,
secretary of the
General Union of
Palestinian Students,
explains the truth of
what is taking place
in Lebanon.



● Behind the attack on the Palestinians — see page 2

Socialist ACTION

Why war on the Palestinians?

The British media is playing one of its usual cynicla games. Attention on Lebanon is being concentrated on the fate of Terry Waite and a handful of western hostages. But the real crime in Lebanon is the assault being carried out against the Palestinians.

On our front page we give space to Rima Milhim, secretary of the General Union of Palestinian Students, to explain the real situation around the Palestinian camps in Lebanon. But we also agree with her analysis of what is behind the assault on the Palestinians — which we reproduce here. As we go to press Nabih Berri, head of the Shi'ite militia Amal, has announced a lifting of the siege of the camps — although the reality of that remains to be seen. Even if true however it is only because other forces in Lebanon have joined in on the side of the Palestinians. The drive of Amal and the Syrians, behind them the United States and Israel, to smash the Palestinians and the PLO remains as firm as ever. That struggle is going to go on. The entire world must be alerted to the real crimes that are going on in Lebanon.

By Rima Milhim

ALTHOUGH the siege is mainly being carried out by Amal it is completely organised by Syria. Syrian troops surround the camps in Beirut and the Syrian army is using T54 and T55 tanks to back up the attack.

Amal is simply doing the dirty work for Syria to bring the PLO and the Palestinians to their knees and to be subservient to Syria. Amal has used questions such as the occupation of the Magdouce village in southern Lebanon as an excuse — saying that if the PLO get out of there Amal will lift the siege. The PLO withdrew but Amal did not lift the siege. The camps are in fact being used as political hostages against the PLO.

The aim is to get the Palestinians out of southern Lebanon.

The population of Burj-al-Barajneh and Shatila are clearly being used as hostages to try to force the PLO to comply with Syrian demands. Amal is attacking the camps because they do not want the PLO back in Lebanon for fear it will reescalate the conflict with Israel. They claim to be hitting at the PLO leadership and those loyal to the PLO leadership.

But there are reports from all political organisations in the camps that Amal is attacking all of them, because they are Palestinians, and not hitting any particular group. Even the groups quite close to Syria politically have said this.

The siege is not going to end quickly. The food that went in a few days ago was the barest minimum. Approximately one kilo of flour and half a kilo of milk per person was sent in. This food is estimated to last at the very most four or five days. No medical equipment was allowed in, and even those badly injured were not allowed to be evacuated.

Syria wants a position to be able to negotiate with the US and Israel on the future of the middle east and wants total control over the PLO as part of this. Syria is clearly in complete contact with the US, and there is some level of secret negotiations. It is clear that Syria does not want the PLO in Lebanon.

The pressure from Israel is that of offering some joint Israeli and Syrian ventures in southern Lebanon. That means pushing for the Palestinians to be driven away from the Israeli borders in return for backing Amal in Lebanon.

Amal has obviously been promised something by the US to do this dirty work. For example help in the reestablishment of the Lebanese state and the reestablishment of Amal's constantly indirect Israeli support. For example on Friday, simultaneously with Amal's bombardment of the camps, the Israelis were shelling the Palestinian areas around the camps in south Lebanon. Moreover, although the camps are being held under siege by Amal, the Israelis have maintained a constant naval blockade of Rashidiyah camp.

What we are seeing in Lebanon is a war against the Palestinian people. We appeal to everyone to come to our aid.

Black Section platform for LPYS

THE LABOUR Party Black Section has announced that it is running STEVE JOMOA for the youth place on the Labour Party NEC. The election will take place at this year's LPYS conference. Jomoa's campaign is also being supported by Labour Left Liaison (LLL). The campaign started with a fringe meeting at the West Midlands LPYS conference last weekend. The Black Section and Jomoa have issued a platform for the campaign which we are printing in full below. Socialist Action urges all its supporters, and those active in the LPYS to support and build Steve Jomoa's campaign in every possible way.

I AM standing as a national Black Section candidate with the support of Labour Left Liaison. I am advocating the Black Section's anti-imperialist and radical perspectives as a positive alternative to Militant's pro-imperialist migrant politics in the LPYS. This is crucial if Labour's politics is to be relevant to youth.

I am standing for an LPYS which gives solidarity to black youth in struggle. We must support campaigns like Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign, the Black People's Campaign for Justice, St Paul's Defence Campaign, and the Trevor Monerville campaign.

We must demand that the LPYS representative on the NEC, Linda Douglas, withdraws from the bantustan Black and Asian Advisory Committee. This committee is unaccountable, unelected and undemocratic and was set up purely to undermine Labour Party Black Sections. LPYS members must campaign against this betrayal of Black youth.

I am totally opposed to the witch hunting of socialists from the Labour Party. Furthermore, we must campaign in defence of the independence of the LPYS against the Sawyer proposals which were railroaded through Labour

Party conference — including the proposal to decapitate the LPYS by reducing the age limit to 21.

I am committed to furthering the Black Section's anti-imperialist intervention in politics. This means stepping up the fight for Black national liberation in Azania (South Africa), support for the demands of the Palestinians and support for British withdrawal from Ireland. Britain must withdraw from NATO. The grip on developing countries of neo-colonialism and big business has to be broken. The Labour Party must replace its patronising approach to international aid and development with policies relevant to Black people at home and abroad. But the most urgent priority is to isolate racist South Africa.

We restate the Black Section's demands for:

1. Immediate disinvestment by unions and Labour authorities;
2. A national Labour Party fund to provide aid for Azania's freedom fighters supported by a national publicity campaign spearheaded by the trade unions and Labour Party;
3. An officially-backed refusal by trade unionists to handle South African goods;



4. The unconditional release of all South African political prisoners;
5. A manifesto commitment that a Labour Government will break off diplomatic relations with Pretoria's racist regime and rescind rights to residency in Britain of the one million White South Africans who currently have this entitlement.

Labour must back up its anti-racist statements made in opposition with bold action in government.

Labour's economic policies must be geared to full employment. Ownership by the workers of the commanding heights of British industry must be swiftly achieved. There must be a national minimum wage. Youth Training Scheme slave wages must be ended.

Trade union rights for all workers must be guaranteed. Positive policies aimed at ending racism — including contracts compliance and employment equality targets — must be implemented.

The health service workers — many of whom are low-paid and Black — must be properly valued and rewarded. The NHS should be adequately resourced.

Education for all means a crusade against racist stereo typing by the British school system. The culture, achievements and history of Black people must be positively portrayed.

Racist immigration laws must be repealed. The police must be freed of racist practices and placed under the democratic control of elected representatives. We fully support



Black Section policy on policing in that the next Labour government must:

1. Repeal the 1984 Police Act, the Public Order Act and the Prevention of Terrorism Act;
2. Enshrine in law the duty of the police to prosecute perpetrators of race attacks;
3. Set up a fully independent police complaints body; democratic control and accountability of the police;
4. Ban the manufacture, stock-piling, and use of firearms, CS gas, plastic bullets, water cannon and other life endangering equipment.

I am fully committed to the gains of those who have fought for greater party democracy and lesbian and gay rights. We support the constitutional demands of the Labour women's conference.

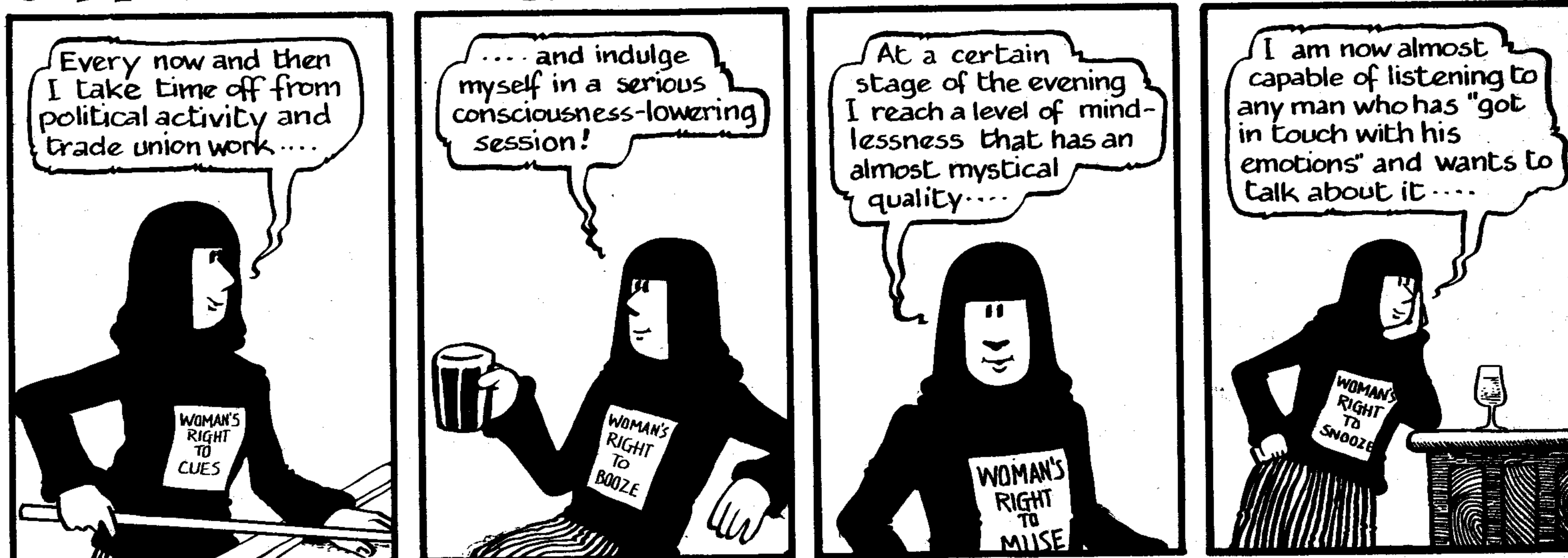
The demands of the national Black Section are part of the struggle of Black people. Black youth have been demonstrating their anger for many years.

The whole history of Black people demanding their rights has been through rallying around specific struggles. Now we are building our own power inside the labour movement — for self-organisation. Black Section is about developing a national framework for those struggles so that all the experience and skill gained is fed in to benefit the whole movement.

To find out how you can support the campaign contact: National youth organiser, Labour Party Black Sections, 46 Summerhouse Avenue, Heston, Middlesex, TW5 9DA (01-577 5057).

a piece of the ACTION

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Huge success of Campaign Group - Black Section Rally

MORE THAN 600 people attended the first Campaign Forum public meeting in Lambeth town hall on 16 January. The main hall was jam packed and an overflow room was booked. Under the title 'Fighting racism, defending Labour councils, campaigning for socialism' the rally, jointly organised by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs and the Labour Party Black Section, brought together Linda Bellos, leader of Lambeth council and vice chair of the Black Section, and Gul Zarina Khan also representing the Black Section, with Arthur Scargill and Campaign Group MPs Tony Benn, Eric Heffer and Jeremy Corbyn. They were joined by speakers from defence campaigns in support of Broadwater Farm, Viraj Mendis, and Trevor Monerville, and by Judith Woodward representing the Labour Women's Action Committee. Bernie Grant, leader of Haringey council, was seriously ill and unable to attend. His message of solidarity to the meeting was read from the platform. CAROL TURNER reports.

of the weather. We came here to do a job of work, dirty under-paid work, and most of us are still trying to do it.

'In other words, we are working class. And I hope the fact will come out from today's meeting and go forward to every platform and every campaign within the labour movement.'



The theme of black people in the Labour Party was taken up by Gina Khan, described by the chair as 'a Black Section front-line fighter, chair of Amir Khan's reinstatement campaign, who took on Roy Hattersley and won'.

Gina explained how she became a Labour Party member. 'I come from a background where the women have no rights. That is the culture they are brought up in.'

'It is all very well for people in this country to say that Asian countries are undemocratic. I tell you one thing we should bear in mind: we inherited this undemocratic system from the British empire.'

Gina told of her pleasure, 16 years ago, at a marriage that brought her: 'to this country where women have rights. I was glad I was going to a democracy. I didn't realise till five years ago that there isn't a democracy.'

She explained that when a resolution condemning Black Sections was moved at her Labour Party branch she hadn't heard of them. Then a speaker from Black Section was invited to put the case. The rest is history.

Amir Khan was out of the party for 14 months for trying to set up a Black Section. 'That is the reason why I can tell you that Black Section is necessary for black people to get equal status within the Labour Party. And that is why we are still fighting for democracy.'

Gul Zarina explained: 'The night Amir and Kevin (Scally) were reinstated at the constituency there was a very emotional speech from Hattersley, pleading with constituency members to accept these members back and saying it was a very bitter pill to swallow. Comrades, what I am saying is that we black people have been swallowing that bitter pill for years and years and years.'

The bitter pill for black people in Britain was graphically described from the platform by Rosie from the Viraj Mendis Defence Campaign. Mendis couldn't address the meeting himself, she said, because he was taking sanctuary in a Manchester church, against a Tory government that wanted to deport him back to Sri Lanka where he would almost certainly be murdered by the regime



Above: Black Section chair Marc Wadsworth with Linda Bellos and Arthur Scargill before the rally began; below: the Lambeth rally platform.

'I BELIEVE that this platform is very important,' said Linda Bellos, addressing the rally in Lambeth town hall, 'because we are in the run up to a general election and the Tories have already begun to play the race card.'

'In every general election in living memory they have played the race card. Let us hope that this platform presents a change. The change is that Labour isn't going to play it as well.'

Addressing the theme of the meeting, Bellos explained: 'One of the key ways in which the elimination of racism must come about is that black people have to have the right to speak for ourselves.' She criticised the Labour Party which had 'consistently marginalised and betrayed black people.'

'But,' she went on, 'there is a change now. That change is witnessed by the kind of attacks on people like me and Bernie and Merle Amoury. The change is that now we have black people in the Labour Party speaking for ourselves. The truth is — and a lot of the media and certainly the Tories don't like it — we are also speaking for working class black people.'

Bellos urged the audience, about one-third of which was black people, 'to be in the Labour Party, notwithstanding my criticisms of the party'.

'Only we can determine what we as black people want and need — and that is why we have to determine our own futures and become actively involved in the Labour Party.'

'The fight against racism must be led by black people. In another situation one would take that as a necessary truth. In the Labour Party it is something that has to be fought for I'm sorry to say.'



Linda Bellos went on to explain that councils which were defending their black communities were most under attack from the Tories. 'There has to be a genuine understanding that the demands and aspirations of the black community are in fact in the forefront of socialism,' she said.

'I'm going to talk about class with its gender perspective and its race perspective. We never hear it, almost as if black people weren't working class.'

'Let us look to the reality of why black people live in this country. We didn't come here because

for his political views and his active commitment to the Tamil struggle.

Police harassment of black youth was taken up by the uncle of Trevor Monerville. Trevor was arrested on 1 January this year, asleep in a car with a broken window. The Stoke Newington police arrested him for criminal damage.

As a result, he almost lost his life. Now he is in hospital and has undergone brain surgery, after a police beating that left him paralysed.

Speaking to the Lambeth meeting, Trevor's uncle explained this was the tip of the iceberg of Stoke Newington police brutality to black people.



Stafford Scott of the Broadwater Farm Youth Association told the audience of the police revenge that has followed the uprising of 6 October 1985. 'We've had over 400 arrested, and out of that we've seen less than half of those people charged,' said Scott. 'Even now in the courts of the Old Bailey there have been 19 cases of affray. Only 12 have been found guilty, five were not found guilty and two are being sent for a retrial.'

He went on: 'We know that the people in the court are not there because of any kind of police evidence. As a matter of fact police evidence proves that some people shouldn't be there.'

'In the case of one of the juveniles charged with murder (whose name I cannot mention) he is supposed to have said in his



statement "and I cut the copper on his legs and chest". The police evidence proves that this police officer had not cuts on his chest or his legs.'

From the National Union of Mineworkers, Arthur Scargill pledged his support for the black communities. 'Just as I wanted help and my people wanted help in 1984 and 1985, and just as you gave it,' he said, addressing black people in the audience, 'we are prepared to give it in 1986 and 1987.'

'One thing that made mineworkers understand the issues and the problems in graphic terms is that in mining villages in South Yorkshire and Not-



tinghamshire we saw police smashing down doors and beating people on the ground. We saw 11,000 arrests. We saw 7000 injured. And we saw 11 of our people dead.'

'So we began to understand, probably more than

we did previously, the fight of those in the black community. It is absolutely imperative that working people — black and white, wherever we come from, whatever we do — understand that we've got a common enemy and that common enemy is capitalism and this Thatcher government.'

The same solidarity was echoed by Judith Woodward on behalf of WAC. Women, like black people, she said, not only had a long history of being marginalised in this society, but also an honourable one of fighting in the forefront of struggles like that of the liberation of Ireland. That tradition was amply demonstrated by the Women Against Pit Closures movement and by the women of Greenham Common.

'WAC is pleased to be on this platform in defence of Lambeth, Haringey and Brent councils,' said Judith. 'These councils are prominent not only in the fight for black communities but also for women's rights. WAC strongly supports Labour Party Black Section because we know that they are also in the forefront of the things that women are fighting for.'

In the closing speech of the rally, Tony Benn sum-

med up the significance of the Labour Party Black Section and Campaign Group rally. 'I think this has been a very important meeting,' he said. 'We have seen something which is quite unusual. Often you have the same old Labour MPs on the platform — and I'm sometimes one of them — talking about other people's struggles. But tonight people have spoken for themselves.'



In the words of Tony Benn: 'What we have seen tonight is the shape of the politics of Britain in the 1990s.'

It was a deeply significant meeting. For the first time ever leaders of the black community were on a platform with leaders of the traditional left of the Labour Party — and with common goals. In what it can mean for the labour movement if it is built on, it was the most important public meeting since the miners strike.

Solidarity message from Bernie Grant:

I am sorry I am unable to be with you tonight due to illness. I would like to extend solidarity greetings to the meeting from the Haringey Labour group and Haringey Labour Parties and in particular from the youth of Broadwater Farm. I am pleased that the Campaign Group and Black Section have organised to defend progressive Labour councils from the unprecedented attack of the Thatcher government, the media and some unrepresentative sections of the labour movement.

These attacks are particularly repugnant because of their racist nature. The Tory attacks prove that Labour councils are currently in the forefront of the struggles against the government, and meetings such as tonight's meeting are therefore essential as we approach the general election.

I wish you all the best. Onwards to socialism!

Palestine, women, Black sections

Key choices for NOLS

THE POLICIES which the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) decides on at its annual conference on 28 February-1 March will not only decisively influence debates facing NUS conference in March. They will also be the policies with which NOLS will face a general election. Given NOLS 14,000 strong membership, and that it holds the leadership of NUS, decisions at NOLS conference will be crucial to the direction given to the 1¼ million members of NUS. It will have an important bearing in the labour movement.

The first challenge facing NOLS conference is to adopt policies necessary to defend the rights of students — to grants, access to education, and similar matters — and to place students on the side of all those struggling against oppression and exploitation today. This means fighting for a strategy of an alliance with the labour movement to best defend the interests of students and the working class.

Policies around which this can be done include the fight against the Tories and for the return of a labour government, the fight against apartheid, for the defence of Central America, against racism and for women's liberation, for the rights of the Palestinian people to return to their homeland and against the murderous policies of the state of Israel.

The Democratic Left leadership of NOLS while supporting some progressive struggles, notably the demand for the withdrawal of Britain from Ireland, subordinate these to its support for the present leadership of the Labour Party and its course in steering the party to the right. This is the background to all the debates at the NOLS conference — the most central of which will be on the Middle East.

In the context of the horrific intensification of

the siege of the refugee camps in Lebanon the main NOLS National Committee motion advocates support for 'two states' in Israel — a Palestinian state and a Zionist state. This motion would overturn NOLS policy, which up to now has been in support of the only possible non-oppressive solu-

By Polly Vittorini

tion to the war in the Middle East — that is support for the right of return of the Palestinian people to the country they were violently expelled from and for a democratic secular Palestine.

For Labour students to retreat from this policy would be a major blow to the democratic demands of the Palestinian people who are literally fighting genocidal attacks. It would mean committing NUS to support for an oppressor state of Israel. It would work against meaningful solidarity with the PLO and make more difficult the fight for all progressive policies in NOLS and NUS.

Since this 'two states' policy is not only supported by the Kinnockite 'Democratic Left', but by the self-styled left alternative in 'Socialist Students in NOLS', it is very likely to become NOLS and, if debated, NUS policy. This would be



Israeli troops in action against Palestinians. Will NOLS vote to accept a Zionist state?

a severe setback for the policies of students and open up the floor for all sorts of reactionary pressures in the future.

It is vital that present NOLS policy is defended, that NOLS continue to support the PLO's demand for a democratic secular state in Palestine where all can live equally. NOLS must oppose any so-called solution which would continue to deprive Palestinians of their rights. This is the most important choice facing the

conference.

The other main issues at conference are women and racism. NOLS is likely to adopt support for the demands of the Labour Women's Action Committee, and to add its name to WAC's appeal for women's conference to elect the women's section of the NEC. NOLS is also likely to adopt support for the right of black self-organisation through the Labour Party Black Section.

These policies stand in

contradiction to the 'Students for a Labour Victory' motions put forward by the Democratic Left crouched in terms of building support for Labour for a general election, these motions call for NOLS to run a 'political education campaign on Labour policies' for use in canvassing. This involves support for Kinnock's politics and electoral strategy — which stands firmly against the demands of WAC and the Black Sections.

An example of this kind of strategy was seen at NOLS council in January, where a canvassers' briefing on 'defence policy' was led by Mike Gapes — arch-proponent of 'non nuclear defence'. This involves NOLS in a campaign of disarmament and withdrawal from NATO.

Rather than a campaign which hides support for Kinnock's politics behind rhetoric in support of the Labour Party,

NOLS must embark upon a course of building support for the politics of Campaign Forum.

Campaign Student supporters will be standing for the NOLS National Committee on a platform of support for the politics of Labour Left Liaison, for a mass campaigning action against cuts in grants and benefits, and for support for the demand of a democratic secular Palestine.

How to conduct the women's review in the party

FOR EIGHT years the Labour Women's Action Committee (LWAC) has been campaigning for fundamental changes in the structure of the Labour Women's Organisation — to establish the principle that women should control their own organisations in the party. At last year's party conference it was voted, for the first time, to undertake a thorough review of the Labour Party's women's organisation. The differences over this review have now culminated in the resignation from the National Labour Women's Committee (NLWC) of Ann Pettifor, the national organiser of LWAC.

The basic issue at stake is whether the review of the party's women's organisation will be carried out in a way that will allow the maximum participation of women, and the rank and file of the party in the process, or whether it will be stitched up behind closed doors by union executives and the NEC. If the latter is the case you can be sure it will take decisions aimed against the interests of women.

Unfortunately at its January meeting the National Labour Women's Committee took a series of decisions which will minimise the involvement of women and the party, and trade union rank and file. It decided not to meet the deadline of the July meeting of the NEC necessary for constitu-

tional amendments to be tabled to this year's party conference. Moreover it decided, in order to try to keep the maximum control of the NLWC over material circulated to the party, to entirely reject the draft consultation docu-

By Jude Woodward, asst secretary LWAC, personal capacity

ment prepared by the party officers and to prepare a new document for discussion by the NEC. The February NLWC meeting duly approved a new document, and it will be discussed by the NEC in March.

The apparent reality of the choice that the NLWC made was to attempt to get more control over the initial documentation, at the expense of moving to the

discussion in the rank and file immediately. It is this choice that is so damaging to women in the party. The issues are best dealt with one by one.

Firstly, and most importantly, the documentation now agreed by the NLWC will go before the NEC in March, where it is highly unlikely that it will be agreed. Therefore a further round of discussion will have to ensue at the level of the national committees. Even if the NEC agrees to the document, the earliest that it will be circulated is the beginning of April. It is probable that there will still be no documentation before the women's section by May.

While it is very important that the authority of the Labour Party women's structures are built up, women cannot rely on the NLWC to achieve their goals. The NLWC is elected regionally and is unrepresentative of women in the party as a whole, and is a relatively powerless body. In a clash of wills between the NEC and the NLWC, it is an elephant versus a mouse.

However, in a clash between the NEC and the organised women in the Party ranks, linked up



Ann Pettifor

with women in the ranks of the unions, the contest is not so unequal. This is where the issue has to be fought out, and the more rapidly and the more openly the better. The more the issue is kept in committees, confined to a few people, knocked back and forth between the NEC and the NLWC, the less pressure women can bring to bear on the outcome.

We must ensure that the issues are taken out of committees and discussed as widely as possible, including in the unions and at women's conference, on the basis of resolutions and positions put by in-

dividuals. It must get into the party ranks as soon as possible. Women must set the agenda for this review and discussion. The more starting it is delayed the more it will be left in the hands of union executives and the right wing on the NEC. That will be a disaster for women and for the party as a whole.

It is also extremely likely that the final documentation that goes out will be more similar to the original draft circulated by the party officers than that drafted by the NLWC. Therefore all that will have been achieved is nearly six months of delay — a

precious six months that could have been occupied by campaigning among women in the party.

Even if there are improvements in the document the price that will have been paid for these initial improvements is far too high.

It means that nothing will be discussed by the women's sections and decided upon by this year's women's conference — and it is the women's organisation itself, not the NLWC which must decide its views on this matter. Even more significant the timetable adopted by the NLWC rules out taking the issue of Labour Party women's organisation to the union conferences this year. The deadlines for resolutions to most union conferences are early in the year. Therefore as each deadline passes it hands more control over into the hands of the union executives and the NEC — who are bound by no such restrictions on their decisions.

In a number of unions this will simply mean that the union executives decide without any reference to the membership at all — and they will

be able to justify this on the grounds that the documentation reached them too late for wider discussion. In other instances it will mean that alternative proposals, which do not take the women's organisation forward, will be circulated and discussed without any reference to the proposals of the labour women's conference.

It is quite likely that APEX will circulate its proposals for introducing a straight bloc vote into women's conference for example. Even more potentially dangerous proposals are apparently circulating within the TGWU for the complete abolition of the reserved places for women on the NEC.

A real danger exists that the July meeting of the NEC will have constitutional amendments before it that set back the women's organisation, in a situation where no head of steam has been built up behind alternative proposals, and where there are no alternative proposals on the table that have the authority of the women's conference. This would be the disastrous consequences of delay by the NLWC.

'The only party committed to real change'

SINN FEIN MANIFESTO

As we go to press the result of the southern Irish general election are not out. Support for Charles Haughey's Fianna Fail has been falling steadily despite entering the election campaign with a massive lead. Both the British and Irish press have been attempting to minimise the impact of Sinn Fein's campaign in the 26 county elections. The elections have come only three months after the Sinn Fein *Ard Fheis* took its historic decision to alter its electoral policy and take up seats to which it was elected in the southern parliament. The short time scale means that Sinn Fein has not been able to mount a full scale campaign in this general election. As Gerry Adams, Sinn Fein president, had repeatedly pointed out the real test for Sinn Fein will be the next elections in the south. But the party has still produced a full manifesto and is standing 27 candidates in the 24 multi-member seats for the southern parliament. We are printing here, to indicate the scope of Sinn Fein's campaign first the introduction to their manifesto and second Gerry Adams statement at the press conference printed in *An Phoblacht/Republican News* summarising the first two weeks of Sinn Fein's campaign.



Sinn Fein campaigns in action

SINN Fein offers the social and economic policies outlined in this manifesto as being sensible short-term steps needed to alleviate the grave situation facing the people of the 26 Counties.

At the same time, we firmly believe that neither this state nor the Six-County statelet can reach their full economic and social potential separately. This is quite obvious in the case of the Six Counties which has a totally dependent economy, incapable of constituting a viable economic unit. However, the impact of partition is not always so clearly seen in the 26 Counties where, on the surface at least, we appear to have a self-governing economic entity.

But the partition has had a major effect, particularly in the border counties which, cut off from their natural hinterland, have suffered terminal economic decline and depopulation. Then there is the cost of the border in terms of direct spending through collaboration with Britain and lost revenue due to smuggling.

Major

One of the major effects of this artificial border has been to make 26-County domestic economic policy that much harder to enforce.

The British have maintained a strong economic presence in the South. Banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions, and major retail outlets are largely owned by British firms or have strong British links. British manufacturing companies are also fairly well represented in an industrial sector which is dominated by multinationals from the USA and Europe.

This situation makes the Southern establishment, governed as it is by self-interest and a strong desire to maintain the status quo, unwilling to assert any degree of independence in the face of British economic strength and their dependence on it. Increasingly, the 26-County political establishment has identified its economic and political interests with the wider interests of the USA, the EEC and NATO.

For 50 years, nothing

changed in the Six Counties. Over the past 16 years, however, the resistance of the nationalist and republican people has been the catalyst for steady political change. The fall of the Stormont parliament and the continuous experiments introduced by Britain in its attempt to stabilise the situation, testify to the success of that resistance in gradually narrowing British options until only one option remains — withdrawal.

Gains

Sinn Fein is convinced that further gains would have been made had it not been for the actions of successive governments here. Far from confronting the British, they have tried to undermine the resistance campaign. Their willingness to extradite republicans to the discredited Northern judiciary and the fact that they spend £350 million-£400 million each year defending the border contradicts their stated opposition to partition. Indeed, it has now reached the point where the taxpayer in this state is forced to pay more to defend the British-imposed border than the taxpayer in Britain pays.

Britain is clearly not neutral in the Six Counties, yet the main political parties here act as if that were the case. Their support for the latest British experiment, the Hillsborough Agreement, ignores the root cause of the conflict and dooms the people of the Six Counties to more suffering, more repression, more inequality and more division. For the people of this island as a whole it means the continuation of partition and puts off the day of real peace when all of the people of Ireland will be able to determine their own future as a sovereign nation.

The major parties in Leinster House have had over 60 years to sort out the problem of British interference in Ireland. They have had over 60 years to implement the social and democratic principles of the 1916 Proclamation. They have had over 60 years to provide political, social and economic sovereignty for this island. They have had long enough.

Sinn Fein makes no

empty election promises and offers no easy solutions. We stand on our record as the only party which has consistently asserted and worked for the right of the Irish people to national reunification and freedom.

Sinn Fein calls for:

- A declaration of British intent to withdraw from Ireland.
- Self-determination for the Irish people.
- An amnesty for all political prisoners in Ireland and abroad.
- An immediate end to cross-border collaboration.

Sinn Fein regards a united and sovereign Ireland not merely as an aspiration, the realisation of which can be delayed indefinitely, but as a measure vital to the immediate and future social, political and economic development of the Irish people.

All of the main parties in the state declare that they too want to see a united Ireland, that the

resolution of the Northern conflict is a national priority, yet Sinn Fein is the only party contesting this election which is organised substantially throughout the 32 Counties and the only party actively committed to, and working towards, the goal of total Irish independence.

Britain is opposed to Irish independence. The presence in part of Ireland of 10,000 British soldiers, in addition to 8,000 locally-recruited soldiers of the UDR and 12,000 members of the armed and paramilitary RUC, is clear proof of the British government's determination to keep Ireland and the Irish people divided.

British violence guarantees the maintenance of the Six-County statelet where a permanent pro-British majority tramples on the national right to self-determination and uses discrimination and repressive laws to defend its sectarian privileges. Faced with state violence

and injustice, republicans in the Six Counties have been forced to take up armed struggle. Sinn Fein defends that struggle in the same way that we defend the achievement of an earlier generation which fought the British to a standstill during the Tan War. The armed struggle in the Six Counties today is the latest phase in the War of Independence, a war forced on the Irish people by the refusal of the British government to concede Irish freedom peacefully.

It should be remembered that the current phase of armed resistance to British rule began only after a campaign for Civil Rights had been literally beaten off the streets of the Six Counties, after a series of loyalist pogroms had destroyed nationalist homes and lives, and after it became clear that British troops had been sent to Ireland not to protect the beleaguered nationalists but to preserve the status quo.

Sinn Fein's campaign

BECAUSE this election has been, to a large degree, a media election, and because it has been dominated by the shallow politics of personality, the real issues have been obscured. Since the election campaign began, Sinn Fein has been written off by many observers and the potential of our support has been seriously underestimated.

I have said on a number of occasions that our first major test will be in the election after this one. However, in a very widespread tour of most of the constituencies being contested by us, I have been surprised at the degree of disillusionment being expressed by many supporters of the other parties and the warmth and goodwill shown towards Sinn Fein. People are sick and tired of the failed politics of the establishment parties and at the dishonest and superficial efforts of other party leaders to distance themselves from responsibility for the mess this country is in and in particular for the real difficulties facing the citizens of this state.

Neither FitzGerald, Spring, O'Malley or Haughey, individually or collectively, can provide a



Gerry Adams

solution to these difficulties. They cannot even comprehend the enormity of the problem — they are part of it.

All the leaders of the big parties have one thing in common — they do not identify with these problems. How could they? They are only interested in personal power, and they mask their intentions with heavily-subsidised party political propaganda and stage-managed media canvassers of carefully-selected areas. And they even believe their own propaganda.

'Dessie can do it', 'Arise and follow Charlie', 'Garret needs more than your vote'.

In Brief

Yorkshire miners strike

THREE thousand Yorkshire miners in the Selby coalfield have staged a week-long strike in response to Whitemoor pit management's refusal to honour agreements on bonus payments.

The miners are employed at five 'super pits' in the Selby coalfield complex — Wistow, Stillingfleet, Ricall, Gascoigne Wood and Whitemoor.

By Jon Silberman

Mineworkers at Whitemoor walked out for a day when a Coal Board official visited the pit three weeks ago. They were then told that bonus payments for the whole week would be stopped.

The pit management taunted branch officials challenging them to go and get the other pits in the complex out — which, with only 8 votes against, they promptly did!

It is estimated that the dispute will cost the Coal Board £1,500,000.

Striker Mark Duke, who works at Gascoigne Wood, explained that 'the overwhelming response in support of Whitemoor is an expression of the discontent that's been building up since the national strike. There have been a number of one-day stoppages in Selby over the last few months. Every pit has been affected.'

The North Yorkshire panel will be meeting to decide what to do next



on the issue. Yorkshire area secretary Sammy Thompson linked management's provocative action to their attempt to force recognition of the UDM.

Sammy Thompson is the left-wing candidate in the forthcoming union election for NUM vice-president. The vice-president's position is made vacant by the retirement of Mick McGahey.

But in a move aimed in opposition to the record of the leadership of Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield, Scottish NUM general secretary Eric Clarke is also standing. A member of the Labour Party NEC, Clarke has been associated with the union's left-wing in the past. But he has distanced himself from Arthur Scargill, publicly criticising his presidential address at the last NUM conference.

London Irish women's conference

SATURDAY 24 February saw the third conference of the London Irish Women's Centre. The first conference had been organised around the theme of 'Our experience of Emigration'. The second centred on 'Living in England'. This year's focused on the vital question of identity. With over 250 people attending, this year's conference proved as vital as ever.

By Katie Foley

A wide range of Irish women's groups operate in London today, and 25 of them addressed the conference. These were representatives from Irish pensioners groups, Irish women writers, artists and musicians as well as local women's groups and groups campaigning around the situation in the north of Ireland.

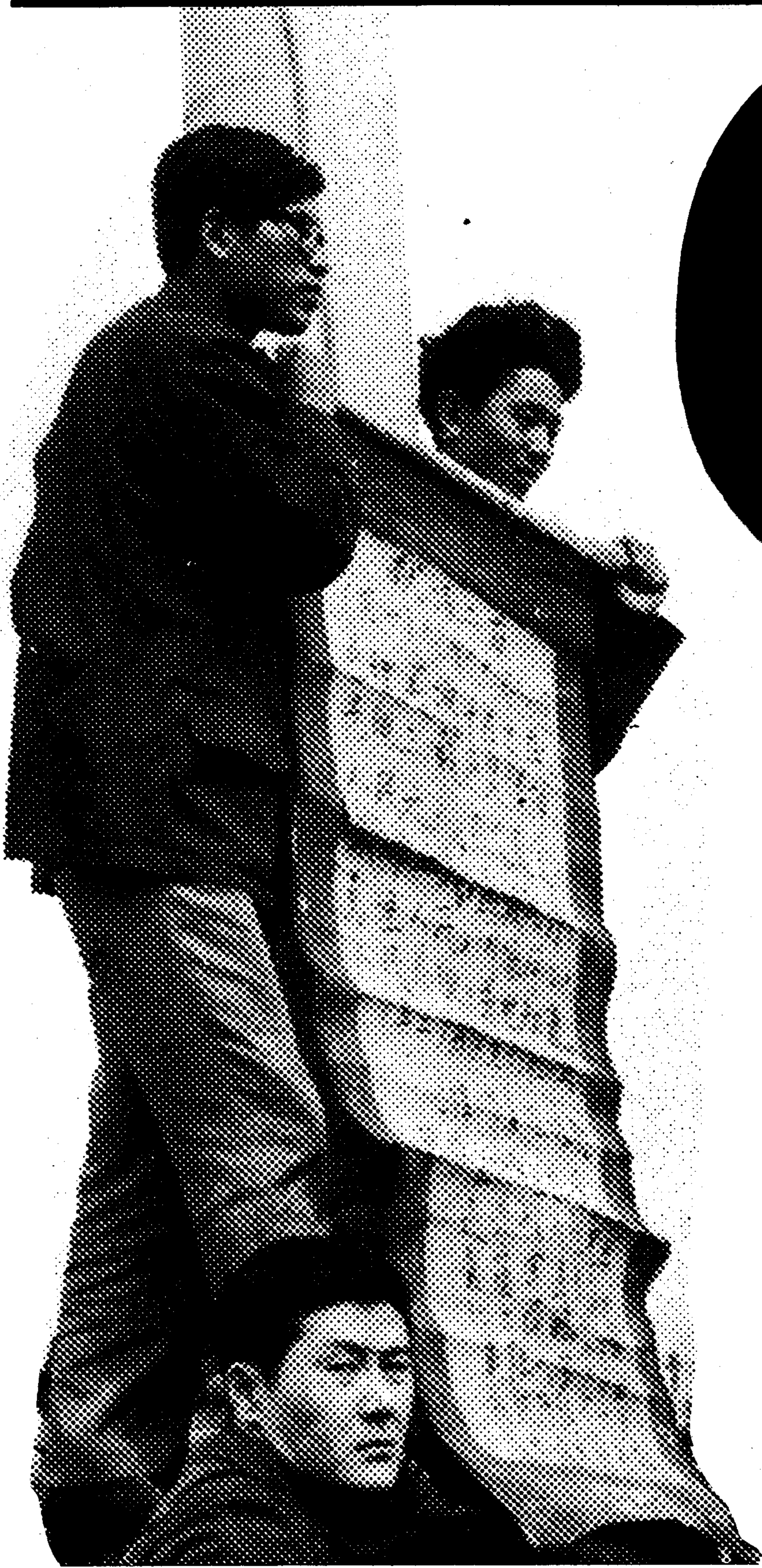
The afternoon was spent in workshops discussing the lives and identities of Irish women living in Britain. A clear recognition was made of the fact that while we may

have cultural, religious, political or class differences, as Irish women we share a basic Irish identity which can be a source of strength and unity. The day finished with the passing of resolutions concerning the welfare of Irish prisoners, opposing strip-searching, and pledging solidarity with the 'Defend the Clinics' campaign — the campaign in solidarity with clinics giving advice on abortion and contraception in the south.

Throughout the day women had talked of their experience of anti-Irish racism and criticisms had also been voiced about the attitudes of the traditional Irish community — as experienced by the refusal of the *Irish Post* to print the words 'Irish' and 'lesbian' together.

The size of the conference and the strength of its message indicated that Irish women living in Britain are not prepared to conform to traditional stereotypes and are increasingly asserting a new and confident identity.

● Contact: London Irish Women's Centre, 59 Stoke Newington Church St, London N16 or telephone 01-249 7318.



FOR SEVEN years, the People's Republic of China has been engaged in a vast process of structural reforms. This is neither simply a continuation of the Maoist course, after corrections, nor a return to capitalism — regardless of what its 'leftist' critics or bourgeois commentators suffering from a surfeit of confidence in their class like to think. This is a 'New Economic Policy' (NEP) similar to, but more deepgoing and prolonged than the one the USSR went through between 1921 and 1928 — the NEP was a system where within the framework of the public ownership of the main means of production and a workers state, a pronounced development of private production in agriculture and of market mechanisms in the economy was permitted.

An interim balance sheet of this experiment serves to point up both the successes of this policy and its contradictions, which are piling up at a faster and faster rate.

The successes are essentially in two areas. The first is increasing production and accelerating growth. The second is raising the standard of living and culture of both the urban and rural population. In these two areas, the achievements have been truly spectacular. Proportionally, given a much lower starting point, they far exceed those in the USSR under the NEP, or even during the entire period that in-

cludes the NEP and the first five-year plan, that is, 1921 to 1932.

Industrial production has more than doubled, above all owing to the flourishing of small and medium enterprises in the countryside. State industry has increased its production by about 90 per cent, and the private sector has also undergone a certain expansion. Since 1978, agricultural production has doubled. Some 300,000 peasants currently own tractors. About 11 million private bosses employ 15 million wage workers, the latter however representing only 4.5 per cent of the total workforce outside agriculture.

The cooperative sector, which exists mainly in the countryside, employs 100 million people. But a total of 85,000 state enterprises account for more than 80 per cent of industrial production and more than half of the national income, higher proportions than those in the USSR under the NEP.

Grown

The rise in the standard of living has been no less impressive. It is estimated that peasants' incomes have grown by more than 50 per cent. The situation is summed up well today by the statistics on life expectancy in the People's Republic of China — 65 years for men and 68 for women, comparable to the figures for the USSR and higher than those for Romania and Turkey.

However, the picture is not without its dark spots, far from it. Deng Xiaoping's course is giving rise to more and more economic, social and political

contradictions. The fact that these contradictions on the whole repeat those of the NEP between 1921 and 1928 confirms the clear-sightedness of the Left Opposition, led by Trotsky and Zinoviev, at the time and the historical validity of its analyses, its criticisms and its concrete constructive proposals against Stalin.

Economy

In the economy, what is most striking is the difference between the almost continual progress in the countryside, at least as regards production and per capita income, and the much more fitful advances in industry and in the urban areas. In the latter, we see spurts of inflation and unemployment that periodically dim the picture of the NEP in the eyes of vast strata of workers.

The reasons for this contrast are manifold. But I do not think that we would be wrong in saying that one of the main causes for this lies in the fact that the obstacles to the self-interest of the peasants in production and the initiative of the peasants have been largely removed. And the Chinese peasantry is one of the world's most skilled in intensive agriculture, despite the modest equipment it possesses.

On the other hand, the obstacles to the workers taking an interest in production and expressing their initiative have not essentially been removed, inasmuch as industry continues to be run by the bureaucracy, and there is no workers' self-management, however this concept may be defined.

In the area of agricultural produc-

tion and rural society, however, there are two striking contradictions. A tempestuous expansion in commodity production is provoking a shift from cereals toward products whose sales bring in more, a dangerous tendency for a country as populous as China so long as there is no sharper increase in the productivity of cereal crops as a result of investment — which for the moment is lacking.

Family

Moreover, demographic growth, even though curbed by brutal limitations on family growth ('negative family allowances' after the third child) and the increase in productivity are swelling the overpopulation of the villages, for which the expansion of rural industry is not offering a sufficient outlet. In the short or even medium term this problem threatens to become explosive.

In industry and the national economy as a whole, growing imbalances are appearing, at once between the volume of investment and that of end products, between imports (especially of modern technologies) and exports, between the money income of the population and the production of consumer goods, between growth of production and productivity. A big gap remains between the average income of the peasants and that of the workers.

To get an idea of the progress this represents, you need only look at the pictures in TV and movie films of the big cities — mainly of Peking, Shanghai, Tiensin, Wuhan Shenyang (Mukden), Harbin, Canton, Chongqing — showing millions of bicycles replacing the millions of rickshaws, the pictures of villages with well-nourished children in place of millions of starvings and beggars; tens of millions of women without deformed feet, free from servile subordination to patriarchs and mothers-in-law.

This progress is a belated but real product of the victorious socialist revolution of 1949. That can never be repeated enough, in the face of all the shortsighted and sceptical, including in the ranks of the Chinese CP, and their acolytes in the West and elsewhere.

Rate

Can the 'Four Modernisations' — the 'modernisations' advocated in the economic, scientific, technical and military fields by Deng — go on at the average rate of these last seven years? Deng Xiaoping's team hopes so. It promises that by the year 2000, the per capita income will have reached \$1,000, that is the present level in Turkey and double that in Egypt. In the years 2010-2015, it is supposed to reach \$2000, that is, the present level of Mexico and Portugal. China would then become a semi-industrialised country.

Specific promises of this sort are

risky, as shown by the precedent of the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union when in 1961 Khrushchev, in a vain boast, claimed that the Soviet Union would catch up with and surpass the per capita production and income of the United States in 1980. External constraints and internal social contradictions may put a brake on growth before this goal is attained. Nonetheless, on the basis of the present data, it is not as devoid of realism as Khrushchev's boasting 25 years ago. Even if the goal is not achieved, the gap between the reality and the promises will not be catastrophic.

In the area of raising the level of education, skills and culture, the advances have been no less spectacular. China has been opened up to world culture, stupidly called bourgeois by the Maoists, on a scale out of all proportion to what occurred there before 1949 or what has taken place in India since independence.

Lead

As regards more specialised and privileged layers, India undoubtedly has acquired a lead. But as regards the masses, or at least the majority of them — because some rural areas and even provinces remain very poor and backward — China is way out ahead of the capitalist countries of the so-called third world that started off from a level comparable to it in 1937, or 1949, in literacy, book and magazine publishing, the number of new titles published annually, hospital beds, access to technical education and the number of students finishing secondary education. India's illiteracy rate is more than 50 per cent higher than China's. China's per capita daily calorie consumption and life expectancy are 25-30 per cent lower.

These imbalances are being reflected by periodic surges of inflation, balance-of-payments deficits (and falling exchange reserves) and unemployment in the cities. Deng's reforms have not yet been able to offer a remedy. This leads to successive 'rectifications'. Abrupt cutbacks in investment and imports, marked by slowdowns in the growth of urban incomes come every two or three years in the wake of veritable phases of 'overheating' in growth. At present, we are seeing a rapid drop in the growth rate in industry.

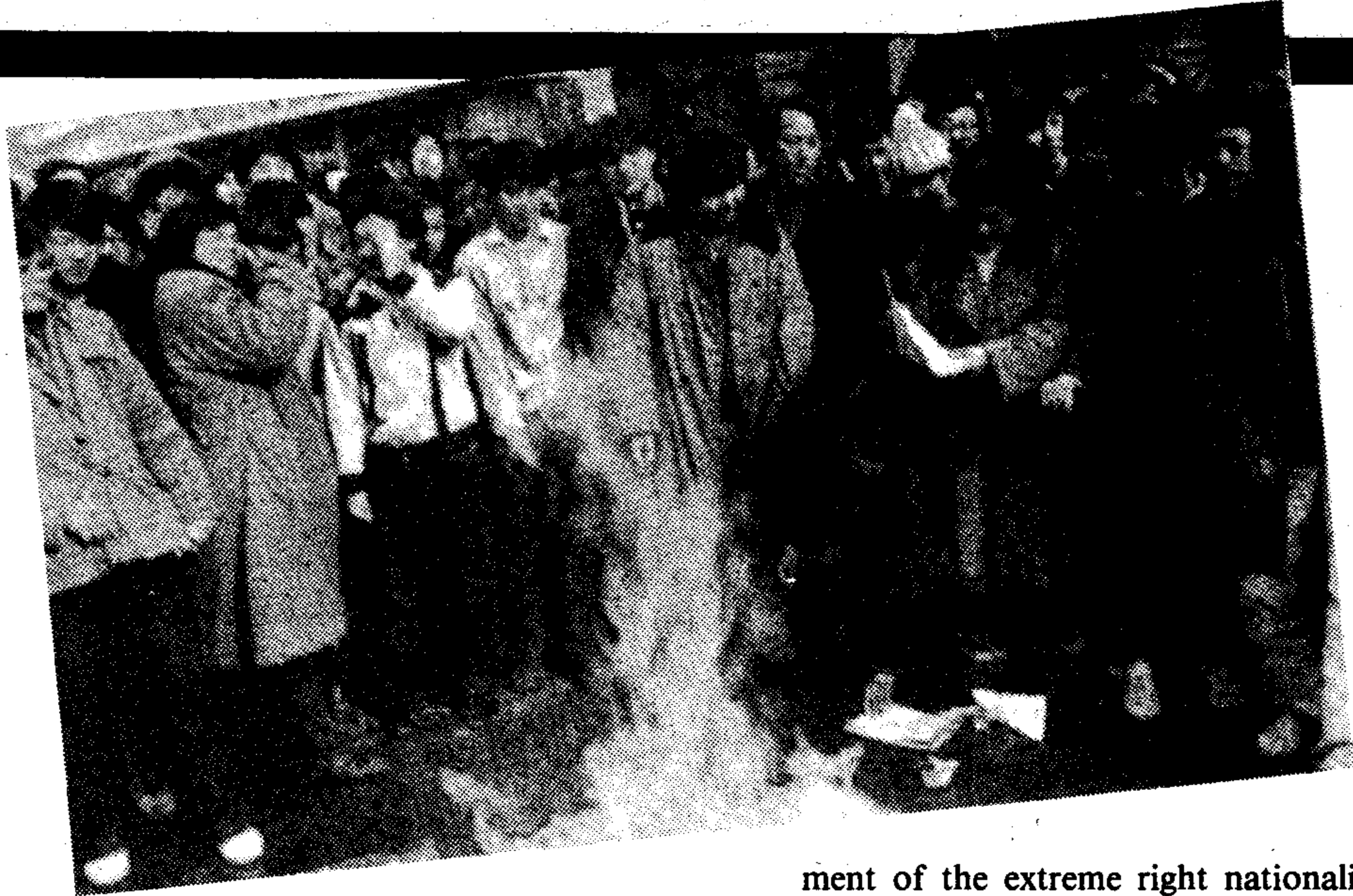
The economic contradictions of the Chinese NEP lead inevitably to social and political contradictions. Social inequality is becoming sharply accentuated both in the countryside and in urban areas. In the countryside, the new course has been and continues to be carried out under the watchword of 'enrich yourself' — a slogan coined by Bukharin in the 1920s. It is no accident that Deng has rehabilitated Bukharin, totally, and even enthusiastically, while Trotsky's rehabilitation remains purely

CHINA

- BEHIND THE POLIT

MAO

ICAL CRISIS



a matter of clearing him of criminal charges and not of clearing him politically (or at least only very partially). Trotsky's policies which called for the strengthening of the position of the working class rather than the market, is rejected by Deng.

This policy of the Chinese leadership is producing a layer of much richer and much more enterprising peasants than the Kulaks (rich peasants) were in the USSR under the NEP, with a very marked tendency to create capitalist businesses (that is, by exploiting wage labour), even if this is still on a very limited scale for China as a whole.

Alongside this, poverty survives, mainly localised, to be sure, in underdeveloped regions. But it exists also in the rich agricultural provinces and in the cities. This is the origin of what the Deng faction's ideologues delicately term 'envy and jealousy' by the poor of the rich. Marxists would call this phenomenon more bluntly class antagonisms between the rich and the poor. It will be hard to keep this hostility from leading to more extensive class struggles.

In the urban environment, along with social inequality, mercantile relations are widening, tendencies to private enrichment at any cost — that is, speculation, corruption and the black marketeering, especially in the area adjacent to Hong Kong and in the so-called Special Economic Zones open to foreign investment (mixed enterprises). Of course, the impact of these investments is still minimal, below even what the Chinese leaders foresaw and wanted. But the modification of manners and motivations within the bureaucracy and among the traders and speculators (the Chinese equivalent of the Soviet nepmen of the 1920s) is quite marked.

Answer

The regime's answer to all this has so far been essentially repressive — death sentences and public executions to throw a scare into 'enemy infiltrators'. Needless to say, such responses are not very effective in the context of the moral climate (would it not be better to say 'immoral climate?') created by the watchword of 'enrich yourselves'.

The most effective counterweight to this surge of primitive accumulation of private capital would obviously be mobilisation and conscious commitment by the working class, which already numbers 120 million waged and salaried workers. However, such commitment cannot be obtained unless, besides real incomes growing, the workers get growing rights and powers. But despite some timid steps in the direction of electing managers within the plants by 'workers' congresses', the essential course of the Deng faction has followed rather the opposite logic. It is creating the impression that the

guarantee of a job (the famous iron rice bowl) is being put in question.

Even though so far this involves only very limited experiments, such as allowing an enterprise, the Explosion Proof Equipment Factory in Shenyang, to go bankrupt in 1986 (it should be remembered that 40 per cent of state enterprises operate at a deficit), this line can only create disquiet among the workers and increase the impression that the present course is changing the social relationship of forces to their detriment. The massive unemployment in the cities, especially among the youth, has the same effect.

The regime's attempt to soak up this unemployment by developing a vast cooperative, semi-private and private service sector has perceptibly improved the living conditions of the urban population. But in turn it has also increased social inequality and the tendency to division and disarray within the working class.

These social contradictions are not failing to have ideological and political effects. A general scepticism has spread among the youth, among the workers and among the lower and middle cadres of the Communist Party. These people literally no longer know what to believe in.

Course

The de-Maoisation is continuing its course. Although the extremes of the Stalinist 'ideological purges' were avoided, Mao no longer has the demigod's status that he did toward the end of the 1970s. Stalin has been knocked off his pedestal altogether. Lenin has lost a good deal of his prestige. Even Marx's stock has gone down seriously.

The Deng faction is labouriously trying to work out a new ideological and theoretical identity from a painfully stitched together and hardly convincing amalgam of ideas by Lenin, Bukharin, Yugoslav theoreticians, East German theoreticians, vestiges of Maoism, and even elements borrowed from Trotskyism, anarcho-syndicalism and moderate syndicalism.

Even left social democratic influences are raising their heads, coming for example from British Labourism and Austro-Marxism. This whole mess has done little to inspire enthusiasm among the youth. Its only redeeming feature is to encourage critical thinking and to permit some steps forward toward freer public and above all semi-public discussion.

However, at the same time, there is still sharp repression of the more determined oppositionist tendencies. Despite declarations in favour of political pluralism — professions that mainly favour right wing tendencies — a lot of oppositionists remain in position.

In recent times, social conflicts have taken a public form on several occasions and in several areas. There have been about 30 strikes, including one by

the bus drivers in Peking. There have also been actions of demobilised soldiers, and before that former prisoners demanding rehabilitation. But the most spectacular actions have been by the students.

The students' tactical sense and high political level should be pointed out. According to the Paris daily *Liberation* of 19 December 1986, the Shenzhen students said that they were inspired by the student movement in France, having seen pictures of it on television. In fact, the students' initial demands concerned their own working conditions: reduction of registration charges, democratic election of student representatives and of the university authorities.

On the basis of these demands, the students soon went on to raise broader democratic issues — democratic election of municipal and provincial councils, freedom of the press and association, freedom to demonstrate, abolition of censorship, release of the political prisoners. In Peking, the students forced the release of their arrested comrades. In Shenzhen, they won a reduction in registration charges.

According to the *New York Times* of 27 December 1986, the Communist Party leadership in Peking promised that in the next municipal elections multiple candidacies for each post would be permitted. But it did not specify who would choose the candidates.

The spirit of the demonstration was distinctly socialist, egalitarian and anti-capitalist. In several demonstrations the students sang the Internationale and chanted the slogan 'No socialism without democracy!'

Oppositional political groups have appeared and have been repressed. But they remain small and localised.

Conflicts

Conflicts in the official power structures, in part reflected by the press, have also been important. The most important conflicts have been between factory managers and party committees. Such disputes have been resolved finally in favour of the factory managers, who have won greater autonomy in decision making. There have also been conflicts between the unions (or should we say, the union leaderships?) and factory managers, with the unions demanding greater autonomy (right to bargain).

In a certain number of cases, still quite limited, to be sure, the unions have also demanded a right of veto over decisions on hiring and firing. In

general, with respect to workers, managers have more extensive rights in the rural cooperative sector and in rural industry than in state industry in the cities.

The Deng team is trying to arbitrate these conflicts in order to avert social explosions. It is counting above all on the attraction of 'consumer society', that is 'material incentives' for the workers. A system of contract labour, linking wages to productivity, is supposed to assure the success of this policy.

However, it is precisely to the extent that these contracts spread that this solution, which can be valid in exceptional cases, becomes unrealistic. A general increase in wages is obviously limited by the average growth of production and the volume of investment. The enormities of the 'three worlds' policy of the 1970s, and the judgement that the 'Soviet superpower' was 'more dangerous' than the United States, led Peking's unfortunate acolytes in Europe and elsewhere into a pro-imperialist orientation, impelling them to support the rearmament of the other imperialist powers besides the United States.

In Asia, Peking's rapprochement with the South East Asian capitalist states and Pakistan dealt grave blows to the left in these countries and especially to the local Communist Parties. The Deng faction later prudently retreated to a position of so-called equidistance between the 'two superpowers'.

Rise

However, the new rise of the colonial revolution (Central America, the Philippines), new aggressions by imperialism (Grenada, Nicaragua, Libya), the South African crisis, the emergence of the powerful anti-war movement in capitalist Europe and Australia have little led Peking to adjust its aim in a more anti-imperialist direction. For the moment, this is no more than the initial outlines of a new rectification, but it is worth taking note of.

This rectification fits into the context of a deeper-going re-examination of the reciprocal relations between Washington and Moscow. It is largely a response to a new development in international relations in Asia — the spectacular growth in the strength of Japanese imperialism.

Tokyo's increased technological, financial and industrial power inevitably has military implications. In fact, for the moment, Washington is encouraging an accelerated rearmament by Japan for essentially financial reasons, as a way to reduce its own burden for 'defending' this region of Asia.

Joint military manoeuvres by the US, Japan and South Korea at the end of October 1986 pointed to a virtual new military pact. Japan has taken the pretext of a purported Soviet arms build up in the far east to justify increasing its military spending, which now exceeds the 1 per cent of GNP permitted by the country's constitution. Moreover, Japan's enormous technological potential means that its lag in aviation and in the space industry (that is, in making missiles) can be rapidly surmounted. In the nuclear field, the obstacles are in fact more political and psychological than technological.

Japan's accelerated remilitarisation is being accompanied by a reinforce-

ment of the extreme right nationalist tendencies within premier Nakasone's Liberal Democratic Party. This resurgence of militarism is going hand in hand with rehabilitation of the war criminals and even of the whole political course that led to the outbreak of the war against China in the 1930s. In schoolbooks, the Japanese militarists' crimes against the Chinese people, notably the sinister plundering of Nanking in 1937, are being minimised or denied.

This entire evolution cannot but worry the leaders of the Chinese People's Republic. Pragmatists and realists that they are, they are not unaware that while Washington might *in extremis* protect them against military aggression by the Kremlin (in the past such aggression, even involving nuclear weapons, was a real threat, and that in part explained Mao's turn towards the Americans), US imperialism will never ally with China against Japan.

Thus, the necessity arises for a readjustment of China's foreign policy, for a normalisation of relations with Moscow (without this meaning that we can already speak of a re-establishment of the Sino-Soviet alliance). Gorbachev has understood the change in climate in Peking. He has taken the first steps, to save Deng from losing face, notably in his speech in Vladivostok on 22 July 1986. Subsequently, this course has been pursued through re-establishment of fraternal relations between the Chinese CP and the East German and Polish Communist Parties.

About the secret negotiations underway, we know only the three conditions that Deng has posed for normalisation. They are first, lifting the Soviet military threat by withdrawing the 600,000 Soviet soldiers from Mongolia and southern Siberia and the Soviet missiles aimed at Chinese cities, or at least reducing them sufficiently so that Peking would no longer feel threatened, as well as adjustments of the border along the Amur river; second, withdrawal of the Vietnamese army from Cambodia which is supposed to be 'encircling' China; and third, withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.

It is a safe bet that of these three conditions, the third is the least important. The second is negotiable (and may be reinterpreted). The first remains in fact the only substantial one. Meeting this demand would perceptibly change the strategic and diplomatic situation in Asia and the Pacific, that is, on the world scale.

This demand has already partially altered the content of East-West negotiation, since it involves a revision of the conditions for withdrawing the Soviet missiles from Europe behind the Urals.

Thus, Deng Xiaoping's NEP is not only a tactical retreat on the economic front. It also has profound implications for the relationship of class forces on a world scale. Despite the hopes of Nixon and Kissinger in the first instance and the appearances later at the end of the 1970s, neither the China of Mao's death agony nor Deng's China has really become integrated in the imperialist game.

The Chinese bureaucracy remains a non-capitalist force that has its own, specific interests to defend. And in this game, the Chinese proletariat is an actor that has remained in the background. If it steps forward, the entire scenario could well be changed.

The imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1981 was followed by a rapid political differentiation among the forces which had been organised in *Solidarnosc*. Every political current from right-wing nationalist, through reformist, to revolutionary socialist emerged. This differentiation has continued to develop in the years since. In this article ZBIGNIEW KOWALEWSKI, a leader of *Solidarnosc* in Lodz during the union's period of legality, outlines the differences which have emerged — and in particular looks at the revolutionary socialist developments coming out of *Solidarnosc*.

THE defeat of the revolution following the declaration of the state of siege in Poland did not lead to the destruction of the social movement, a first in the Soviet bloc. *Solidarnosc*, in 1980-81, not only led a revolution of greater mass participation and longer duration than any other in the Eastern bloc, but now, following the December 1981 coup, it has generated a prolonged social resistance.

Nevertheless, in innumerable enterprises, particularly in the larger factories and in some centres of intellectual work such as the research institutes, cells of *Solidarnosc* militants continue to operate. Other cells are organised as inter-enterprise committees of coordination or as regional leaderships.

There is still a clandestine national leadership. Despite the growing list of its members who have fallen into the hands of the police, the security forces have not been able to break it up, not even with the recent capture of Zbigniew Bujak, who was underground for four and a half years. It is estimated that approximately 10 per cent of wage earners continue to pay union dues to *Solidarnosc's* enterprise committees.

The legal workers' councils — the faint residue of the workers' self-management bodies that arose during the last revolution — are composed, in their great majority, of old militants of *Solidarnosc* in practically all the enterprises in which workers have been able to force a democratic election. In the big industrial centres, the underground press is distributed in all large and medium-sized enterprises among circles, some of which are larger, some smaller. The monopoly of information, one of the fundamental tools by which the totalitarian bureaucracy rules, has been broken.

The most spectacular expression of the vitality of this resistance is the distribution of more than five hundred — according to some estimates, almost one thousand — independent newspapers, some with impressive circulations, such as *Tygodnik Mazowski* (*Mazowski Weekly*) which has a circulation of several thousand copies each week and is edited by the Warsaw Regional Executive Committee of *Solidarnosc*.

According to conservative estimates, the underground editors have already published at least 1,200 books. The network of illegal presses is so vast that the regime has been unable to wipe them out, even though they are a primary target of the police.

A process of differentiation and polarisation is inevitable in a social movement. 'Politicised' currents or political groups of differing orientations have formed within or around *Solidarnosc*. These groups range from (1) the Fighting *Solidarnosc* Organisation, the oldest such group (having already formed by the spring of 1982), which covers its ideological haziness with an elevated level of activism; (2) political groups formed around the journals *Wola* (*Will*) and *Robotnik* (*Worker*), which vacillate in their frame of reference between social democracy and the 'alternative' movements of East and West; to (3) the revolutionary left, which has appeared more recently. The Workers' Opposition Alliance is presided over from the underground by a 27-year-old Silesian worker, Damian Dziubelski.

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS IN

SOLIDARNOSĆ

In 1985, the national leadership of *Solidarnosc* initiated two big campaigns: (1) for the boycott of the elections to the Diet; and (2) against the price increases. Zbigniew Bujak and Jacek Kuron justified these campaigns as a means of pressure on the government to accept elections that would be a little more democratic and be forced to carry out an economic reform of a fairly hazy character.

These campaigns were not conceived as a means of building the strength of the workers, elevating their level of organisation and preparing a new wave of mass movements, even though this would be a logical step. Instead, the programmatic conquests of *Solidarnosc* were diluted. The old project of workers' self-management and of a system of economic management that — as defined by *Solidarnosc's* National Congress in Autumn of 1981 — would 'combine the plan, self-management, and the market', gave way to the discourse of intellectual experts in the leadership of *Solidarnosc* over the supposed merits of the market economy.

Weakened

The aspirations of the working class, meanwhile, have enormous difficulties in being expressed due, among other reasons, to the fact that the clandestine leadership of *Solidarnosc* has weakened its ties with the working class base and has begun to rely primarily on dissident intellectual sectors.

At the end of 1984, a team of sociologists from the University of Poznan took a poll among a sample of personnel, primarily blue collar workers, from four large factories in heavy industry situated in different regions of the country. Questions about what ideal social system workers would support elicited a 78 per cent response in favour of truly democratic parliamentary elections involving several voting lists; 65 per cent in favour of several concurrent political parties; 80 per cent in favour of free speech for all people, including both supporters and opponents of the political system. 58 per cent were in favour of social ownership of the means of production and a planned economy, while 87 per cent favoured full workers' self-management! One of the underground newspapers that published the results of the poll pointed, in its analysis, to the clear aspiration of Polish workers for a 'different system of humane, democratic socialism'.

But this poll reveals a serious contradiction as well: a very strong working class loyalty to the democratic and self-management traditions of *Solidarnosc* is accompanied by the support of barely 20 to 25 per cent of workers for the underground activities of *Solidarnosc*. A similar percentage of workers, in the same poll, are partisans of the regime. This means that half of the workers, more or less,

while hostile to the regime, do not identify with the structures and the actions of the social movement as it presents itself today.

Already by the end of 1983 an organisation had been formed, at the time limited to a single region, that marked the beginning of the regroupment of a revolutionary workers wing of the social movement. It was the Union of Workers' Councils of the Polish Resistance (ZRP-PRO) of Upper Silesia, situated in one of the larger industrial centres in the country.

The leaders of this organisation, blue-collar workers, say that in particular three experiences influenced their process of political definition. The first two go back to 1982. Following Jaruzelki's coup, a defence committee for the jailed and persecuted members of *Solidarnosc*, initiated by the future leaders of the ZRP-PRO, was formed in Upper Silesia. The committee collaborated with the parishes of the Catholic Church, which delivered humanitarian aid from the outside. Some priests refused to aid the common-law wife and 'illegitimate' son of an imprisoned militant, and wanted, in general, to impose their own criteria on the distribution of material aid. The committee reacted by separating itself from the Church.

Critical

At the end of 1984 and the beginning of 1985, two events happened that led the ZRP-PRO to adopt an openly critical attitude toward and to act completely independently of the leadership of *Solidarnosc*, without thereby renouncing the united front. Under the pressure of the Western trade-union bureaucracies, the national leadership of *Solidarnosc* refrained from solidarising itself with the strike of the British miners. Further, in Upper Silesia, the leadership unleashed sharp attacks against the *Solidarnosc* miners' committee, which, in its clandestine radio programme and in its messages to the British miners' union NUM, had proclaimed its support for this strike and denounced the Polish bureaucratic regime for having increased its coal shipments to the Thatcher regime. The argument they advanced was that, through this strike, the Stalinists were trying to destabilise a democratically-elected regime. In this debate, the ZRP-PRO placed itself on the side of the British miners and opposed the attitude of the *Solidarnosc* leadership.

In the same period, the latter launched a call for a national strike of 15 minutes to protest the price increases. At the last minute, believing that the government was willing to rescind the increases, which turned out not to be true, Lech Walesa and Zbigniew Bujak called off the strike. This produced disorientation and demoralisation among the workers. Further, the ZRP-PRO, which called themselves

underground workers' councils, existed, according to data from the end of 1985, in more than twenty large factories, mines, forges, transport enterprises, etc. In a report of its leadership, it was stated that 'this organisation is now the largest workers' organisation in Upper Silesia, solidly implanted in important enterprises of several cities, as well as better prepared than others for the general strike and for the seizure of factories by the workers.' It had led numerous mass actions — for the boycott of the regime's unions, for the withdrawal from the legal workers' councils obedient to the administration, for wages and benefit increases, against poor working conditions (organising, among other things, health and safety strikes).

Report

According to a report from the leadership of the ZRP-PRO at the end of 1985, 70 per cent of the members of this organisation were blue-collar workers, almost 90 per cent had a technical or secondary education, and more than 80 per cent were younger than 30. More than a third had not belonged to *Solidarnosc* before December 1981 because they were too young. It is interesting to note that not one intellectual was part of the leadership. This data says a lot about the sectors that are coming forward today, the composition of the workers' vanguard of the social movement, and its capacities for renewal.

The political positions of the ZRP-PRO were, from the beginning, very different from the *Solidarnosc* leadership: its objective was to build clandestine cells that, with a new rise of the mass movement, would be able to assure a leadership of a mass strike with occupations, establish workers' power in the enterprises, and, on this basis, follow the road of the revolutionary overthrow of the bureaucratic regime. The central strategic end was definitely clear: *the conversion of the fundamental means of production into truly social property, that is to say, the collective democratic management of the means of production.*

'The ZRP-PRO', we read in its 1983 declaration, 'adheres to the following five points: the factories to the workers, the land to the peasants, power to the self-managed society, science to free thinkers, the state for an independent nation. To achieve these objectives, it is essential that society organise itself and assure freedom of action for political parties, that trade union pluralism be established, that a free parliament be elected through free elections and that it exercise control over the state apparatus ... In its work ZRP-PRO takes inspiration from the best traditions of the workers' struggle and their revolutionary assaults on power. It supports the struggle of the working class to win social identity and national independence in the countries

under the domination of the totalitarian bureaucracy, especially the working class of the sister peoples of the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia and Ukraine. It upholds proletarian internationalism in all its dimensions ... It regards as enemies and hostile to the interests of the working class any organisation that opposes the right of the working class to ownership of the enterprises and will treat them in the same way that it treats the totalitarian bureaucracy ... It does not recognise the right of non-working class organisations of a general social character to represent the interests of the working class.'

In the course of its evolution, the ZRP-PRO established its collaboration with revolutionary socialist militants grouped around the underground publications *Front Robotniczy* (*Workers Front*) and *Sprawa Robotnicza* (*Workers Cause*). It was on this basis that, in June 1985, the Alliance of the Workers Opposition (POR) arose, which rapidly surpassed its initial framework. With the joining of new groups, its cells appeared in dozens of cities. The name chosen underscored its political identity with respect not only to the 'independentist opposition' (nationalist currents, 'Catholic-Nationalists' and 'democratic liberals' who, in general, had abandoned the ranks of *Solidarnosc* in the last few years, breaking with the workers' movement), but also the democratic opposition. Stating that the political struggle developing in Poland is, above all, a class struggle, the POR explains its platform:

'It is essentially a struggle between the working class, which is subjected to economic exploitation and deprived of all political or economic power, and the bureaucratic state power ... Only the working class has the capacity to overthrow the bureaucracy, and it is only thanks to it that the social groups can liberate themselves from the yoke of the bureaucracy ... The transformation of the working class from an object into a subject is only possible through revolutionary changes. The belief in the possibility of a compromise with the bureaucracy is a dangerous illusion that could prove fatal.'

Power

In its predictions about how the bureaucratic power can be overthrown, the POR places special importance on three factors: First, a general revolutionary strike, which has a tendency to become an 'active strike', that is to say, a work-in strike (such was the project of the radical *Solidarnosc* leadership in Lodz at the end of 1981); second, the formation of workers' guards, whose principal task consists of assuring the active defence of the factories seized by the workers; third, it states that 'it is only under such revolutionary conditions that we could expect a part of the army, primarily ordinary soldiers, when they see that the workers' forces have a chance of success, to join in the uprising of the working class.'

The strategic objective of the future Polish revolution, which the POR characterises as a democratic workers' revolution, is the establishment of a Self-Managed Republic. 'The indispensable precondition for the liberation of the working class is for it to lay the economic foundations of liberty, that is, socialisation, outside of the state and in the framework of workers' self-management of the means of production that are today stashed.' Outside of the state means not through the bureaucratic apparatus of the state, which must be destroyed in the course of the revolution, but rather through the power of workers' councils in the enterprises 'linked together by horizontal and vertical structures on the regional and national scale, as well as institutions of self-management organised on a territorial basis ... Self-management can only function in conditions of unrestricted political pluralism.'

This article is abridged from *Against the Current*, October 1986.

Central America solidarity conference

'No one here will surrender!'

NICARAGUA'S NATIONAL slogan for 1987 is that 'Here, no one will ever surrender!' It is a challenge by the country's small population to the threatening challenge of US military might.

US president Ronald Reagan has already indicated that he intends to seek more aid for the contra forces. General Humberto Ortega, head of the Sandinista People's Army responded 'Reagan is reaffirming his policy of war. We are reaffirming our policy of dignity, of struggle, of no surrender; our policy of peace.'

Ortega was addressing 2500 Nicaraguan union officials, community activists and women and youth leaders in Managua on 28 January. Reporting the speech for the US socialist newsweekly, *The Militant*, Cindy Jacquith writes of the 'irreversible defeat being suffered by the contras at the hands of the armed Nicaraguan people.'

'Already in the first 28 days of 1987, Sandinista troops have killed 300 contras and wounded 200. Meanwhile pressure is increasing on Washington from Latin American governments to negotiate with Nicaragua.'

'Nevertheless, Ortega continued, "we should be clear that the military situation remains serious". The Reagan administration still hopes "to destroy the Nicaraguan revolution".'

Last weekend a meeting took place in San Jose, Costa Rica with this very much in mind. The presidents of El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala were hosted by the Costa Rican president, Oscar Arias to discuss a 'peace plan' for the region. No invitation was extended to the Nicaraguans.

President Arias' plan holds Managua as the principal cause of the problems facing Central America. The 'plan' calls for negotiations between the Sandinistas and the contras leading to a ceasefire and fresh elections in Nicaragua. Arias has the overt support of President Duarte of El Salvador and President Azcona of Honduras.

Plan

Writing in the 14 February issue of *The Guardian* Paul Ellman says that the plan 'hands the US administration a powerful new weapon in its campaign against the Sandinistas'. Ellman draws a parallel with 'the preparations that allowed the US to invade Grenada in 1983' when a number of governments in the Caribbean played a similar pro-US role.

But whereas the US was handed the opportunity to invade Grenada on a plate when the New Jewel government was overthrown and Maurice Bishop killed by forces within the country led by Bernard Coard, no such opening exists in regards to Nicaragua.

Moreover El Salvador itself has been in the throes of civil war for the past six years, during which time 50,000 civilians have been murdered by the death squads and the Salvadorean army. 'All the conditions now exist for a regional war' commented Ricardo Acevedo, the country's foreign minister.

The Duarte government has stepped up repression but has been unable to stem the tide of the mass movement in El Salvador. Last

year saw a particularly significant strengthening of the mass movement with the formation of the UNTS, the National Unity of Salvadorean Workers — an independent trade union federation representing 300,000 workers.

By Nick Adams

In its first year of existence, the UNTS has organised demonstrations of tens of thousands of Salvadorean workers and a general stoppage of work.

A 12,000-strong UNTS affiliate, the Committee of Fired and Laid-Off Workers, CODYDES, is playing a major role in organising earthquake relief, as have neighbourhood committees representing over 100,000 people.

Deal

Failure to deal with the earthquake either effectively or equitably has deepened the crisis of the Duarte government which went so far as rejecting humanitarian aid on the grounds that the offer was from Cuba. A ceasefire proposal made by the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front, FMLN, was scuppered by the government forces who instead intensified repression against the trade unions and other mass organisations. Nonetheless hundreds of thousands of workers were involved in strike action last year and mobilisations in the countryside have continued to deepen.

The British government has opted for a definite role alongside the US in any conflict in the region. It has provided financial aid for the Duarte regime and is training officers of the El Salvadorean army at Sandhurst.

Military equipment in the form of scorpion light tanks, ideal for 'counter-insurgency' operations, have been sent to Honduras.

Aid

In contrast, Britain gives aid to Nicaragua through an eye-dropper, at the rate of 2p per person. In 1977, when Nicaragua was still under the dictator Somoza, Britain sent aid at the rate of 16p per person.

Britain refused to send observers to the 1984 Nicaraguan elections, preferring instead to denounce the regime from afar for being undemocratic. Britain's official policy toward the country was underlined two weeks ago when Geoffrey Howe absented himself from a meeting called to discuss peace proposals for the region by the 'Conatadora' group of countries and EEC foreign ministers.

Unofficially, the Tories have made their position even clearer. A representative of the British embassy in Costa Rica attended a conference in Costa



Rica last year aimed at establishing a 'provisional government' in opposition to the Sandinistas. A foreign office official also attended the pro-contra conference in London which was addressed by leading contra figure, Arturo Cruz.

Against this background, the need for a real solidarity movement in this country is overwhelming. At stake are the enormous achievements of the Nicaraguan revolution which, despite the effects of the war, is progressing.

Negative economic growth of -4 per cent in 1985 was reduced to -0.14 per cent last year. The government predicts an economic growth of two per cent for 1987.

Gains

Gains continue to be made against illiteracy and disease. Infant mortality has been cut by a third. The 'autonomy process' has ensured the involvement of Nicaragua's indigenous peoples in the country's political life for the very

first time. As a result, the Rio Coco region in the north-east — a scene of serious contra activity not long ago — is now firmly pro-government.

Land distribution has continued apace. Nearly five million acres have now been distributed to 100,000 families — substantially more than all other Central American countries put together over the same period.

Last year the country organised a wide discussion over a draft constitution, which was finally adopted by a majority vote in the Council of State. Meetings were held in 72 towns involving hundreds of thousands of Nicaraguans, as a result of which 1500 amendments to the draft were drawn up.

The idea that this small country is a threat to the security of the United States would be laughable if its consequences weren't so serious. What the Reagan administration fears is not any threat to its security but the likelihood of other countries following the same road.

As Nicaraguan leader, Tomas Borge put it 'you can't export revolution but great examples have no frontiers'.

● The labour movement conference in London on 28 February will hear representatives from the region and discuss solidarity activity. Delegate credentials may still be obtained from the organisers at 13-16 Borough Road, London SE1.

Tom Gustafsson

TOM GUSTAFSSON died 7 February after a short period of illness at the age of 40. Tom was a leading member of Socialistiska Partiet (Socialist Party) in Sweden.

Tom will be remembered as one of the most outstanding leaders of Socialistiska Partiet. Thanks to his ability to educate new members the Socialistiska Partiet will be able to survive this big loss.

Tom began to study at the university of Lund in the mid-60s. In 1966-67 he began to get involved in the solidarity work with the Vietnamese revolution and soon became a leading member of the NLF movement, the Swedish anti-war organisation.

It was also in the years 1967-71 that Tom threw himself into what became 'the battle of history'. In writing Tom presented an alternative to the reformists and Stalinists' interpretation of the history of the Swedish and international workers movement.

As a member of the editorial board of Socialistiska Partiet's weekly paper "Internationalen" (The International) Tom contributed to a paper that could be sold by the party's many trade unionists and activists in the mass movements.

As a true revolutionary class fighter Tom also

wrote a lot of articles about the international class struggle both in *Internationalen* and in *International Viewpoint*. His internationalist outlook made him travel to many countries to exchange experiences among class struggle fighters. His last trip to Britain was in mid-December 1985.

The death of Tom Gustafsson is not only a heavy loss for Socialistiska Partiet but for the whole Fourth International. He was a member of the United Secretariat for the last six years of his life and part of the daily leadership in the United Secretariat's bureau in 1981-83. He will be remembered as a comrade with many political skills, with a great ability to organise collective work.

One of the tasks to which he devoted so much of his energy was to point out the need for revolu-



tionaries to have deep roots in the mass organisations of the working class. Here he could use a lot of positive examples from Socialistiska Partiet in Sweden.

Those of us who knew Tom personally not only appreciated his political skills but also his friendly and cheerful behaviour. We will remember him as a humanist and internationalist in the real sense of the word.

Socialist Action sends its condolences to Tom Gustafsson's family and friends and to the Socialistiska Partiet.

World in action

Greece

■ Prime minister Papandreou is facing a severe 'winter of discontent' with the general strike staged by the Socialist-led General Confederation of Greek Workers. The 24-hour stoppage — the latest in a trend that has been building up since last year and which shows no sign of abating — was widely supported by workers, especially those from the public sector. The strike was called to support wage increases for the low paid, protest against rising unemployment, abolish a law freezing wages, and for the reintroduction of an indexation system. The Pasok government is riding an austerity package introduced as the condition for the extension of an EEC loan. More strikes are being announced for next week.

Philippines

■ As the news about the counting of Imelda Marcos' pairs of shoes is still fresh in the minds of Filipinos — she is reported to have had 3,060 pairs! — they also learned that father Rustico Tan was assassinated by government agents. Imelda, as is well known, was piously devoted to the defence of the Christian values and capitalist 'freedom'. Father Tan was an active member of the National Democratic Front; he was a guerrilla fighter who joined the maquis to fight gun in hand for the rights of peasants and workers after concluding there was no other way. There are other priests and nuns who are NDF guerrilla fighters, some organise in the CNL, Christians for National Liberation, others organise in Volunteers for Popular Democracy.

USA

■ Led by Coretta King, thousands marched through Forsyth county in protest against the attack by angry white racists on an earlier march for inter-racial brotherhood in Cumming. The Ku Klux Klan were out in strength to shout abuse, wave placards with racist slogans and confederate flags. The white racists attacked the march. Fourteen were arrested. Forsyth county has a long history of racial hatred against blacks and it is an all-white enclave, no black lives in it and many of its inhabitants have seldom seen a black.

Spain

■ Several weeks of students demonstrations have shaken Spain. The demonstrations started as protests against austerity, demanding of the government that more money is put into education, increases in the number of grants as well as their size, and reduction of university fees. But very soon they developed into wild-cat demonstrations of anger by students many of whom have no certainty of after-university employment. (Unemployment is 20 per cent at present in Spain.) Secondary students and trade unions joined the demonstrations, which became a focus of active political opposition to the socialist government. More student demonstrations have taken place and there have been violent clashes with the police, who have acted with the usual brutal zest to maintain law and order.

Israeli state

■ The Zionist state of Israel is stepping up repression against supporters of Palestinian rights within the country. In a raid on Monday 16 February, the Israeli police confiscated equipment and materials belonging to the Alternative Information Centre. The centre produces a publication called *News from Within*, which reports on the situation confronting the Palestinians, particularly in the post 1967 occupied territories.

Alongside confiscating everything to be found in the Alternative Information Centre's offices, the police arrested three people, who have been imprisoned. Among them were Michel Vaska, a member of the LCR of the state of Israel, an Israeli trotskyst organisation. The others were Rony Hyman and Ghardda Jaber, two independent Israeli socialists. They have not yet been formally charged, although at present they remain imprisoned on grounds of collaborating with 'terrorist' organisations ie the PLO, within the post 1967 borders of the state of Israel.

Letters

West German elections

AS A West German socialist I'd like to comment on your article on the West German general elections (Socialist Action, 6 February). Unlike Carol Turner, I cannot see a swing to the left in West Germany.

The CDU-CSU (Christian Democrats) were using ultra-nationalist propaganda in their election campaigns, the CSU even proclaiming to stop any kind of detente policies with the Soviet Union and the East European states. This is probably the reason why the CDU-CSU lost relatively many votes, whereas the Free Democratic Party (FPD), their coalition partner, could gain 2.1 per cent.

But you're totally wrong to believe that the FPD is generally left of the CDU-CSU. In fact, concerning economic policies, the FPD is much more right wing than the CDU-CSU. They are in favour of limiting even more the right to strike and of legalising lock-outs in any form.

And don't forget that the neo-fascist National Democratic Party (NPD) could treble their votes cast. They gained about 230,000 votes (0.6) despite the ultra-right wing propaganda of the Christian Democrats.

Because of winning more than 0.5 per cent, the West German state



now has to pay the NPD a compensation for their costs in the election campaign which is about £500,000.

With regard to the SPD, you're right that now a faction fight within the party will take place. Right winger Rau, whose real aim in this election was to kick the Greens out of parliament, now has a weaker position after his strategy completely failed. But even if the so-called left in the SPD now should succeed in increasing their influence, there won't be a real change in SPD policies, but only verbal radicalisms so as to minimise and weaken the Greens.

The Greens were in this election the only party which really wanted to topple the right wing government. They represented a lot of the demands which are raised by the peace movement, anti-nuclear movement, etc.

But as socialists we have to state that the

Greens are no anti-capitalist force. There are socialists involved in the party, but only representing a small minority. The right wing of the party arguing for a cooperation with the SPD is likely to become stronger.

The Green Party is beginning to adapt to the 'democratic' procedures of the state.

The pressure to accept unconditionally the given social order becomes stronger and stronger. The Greens are fatally lacking a strategy against that.

With the economic crisis soon worsening again, a further strengthening of extreme right wing forces has to be expected. I think these elections suggested rather a move to the right than to the left. Neither the SPD nor the Greens have strategies to counteract this development.

Markus Widera,
Nottingham

The Irish in Britain

REDMOND O'Neill's letter (Socialist Action, 6 February) is a welcome contribution to what I hope will be a start on the part of Socialist Action to rectify past omissions when dealing with the analysis of class, race and gender in British society. When we're not being portrayed as troublesome leftists or psychopaths, we Irish are ignored by bourgeois historians.

The employment figures for those born in Ireland are not hard to collate, but even these do not give an overall analysis as presumably they do not include the six counties, which as Redmond O'Neill pointed out has the highest level of unemployment in 'Britain' — the worst-hit area being

predominantly Catholic Tyrone where 50 per cent of all men are unemployed. What is harder to determine and therefore more controversial is how the historic by-product (ie anti-Irish racism) of Ireland's fight for sovereignty affects the 'second' or 'third' generation Irish in this country, and how in turn this relates to the grouping's status in Britain.

Racism, as the comrades from the Labour Party Black Section understand, is not about how one individual relates to another, but is about power and will not disappear overnight even under socialism. One of the weapons Britain has used to oppress Ireland has been racism. This weapon has

been used for centuries to politically justify Britain's role in Ireland.

Inevitably this centuries-old institutionalised racism has left its mark not only in all areas of society's structures — courts, industries, the labour movement, laws such as the PTA, and educational establishments — but has also left its mark on the Irish themselves whether born in Ireland or Britain.

A slave mentality has political implications also, such as the process of assimilation amongst 'second' and 'third' generation: assimilation, here meaning adapting to and adopting the ways of the conqueror socially, culturally and politically.

However, those 'second' and 'third' generation Irish who fight against assimilation and who assert their Irishness in various ways are far more likely to be a much more potent political force in British society than the assimilated Irish. This is no more narrow or racist than Malcolm X was when he rightly polemicised against 'house blacks'. On the contrary, when the Irish in Britain make their presence felt in such a way it should be recognised as politically more progressive and particularly relevant for Socialist Action's 'building an alliance for socialism' strategy.

Terence Patrick
Luke,
Islington



Labour women's organisation

JUDE WOODWARD'S article in Socialist Action (23 January) entitled 'Attempt to Block Review of Labour Women's Organisation' is a tissue of lies and actually libellous.

Lie 1: That 'supporters of the right wing, Militant and Briefing combined forces at the National Labour Women's Committee (NLWC) to sabotage the consultation'.

No such 'combination of forces' took place. The consultation is going ahead and work is already taking place to draw up a consultation document.

Lie 2: That following a proposal from me, the NLWC 'decided that it should make no recommendations at this stage' concerning 'proposals for strengthening the women's organisation'.

No such decision was made. It was agreed that we did not want to discuss details of a paper produced by party officers at our joint meeting with the NEC women's committee as we felt the paper did not represent the views of the NLWC in a large number of respects and we hadn't had time to amend it. We felt we wanted to produce our own document.

Lie 3: That I agreed to 'support Militant's long held position against the election of the NLWC by the women's conference' as a 'quid pro quo' for their support for putting

off the whole consultation.

No such collusion took place, indeed suggesting that it did is libellous. I did not support opposition to the election of the NLWC by women's conference. I am a long-standing supporter of this policy.

Lie 4: That I am an 'erstwhile supporter of the Labour Women's Action Committee (WAC) involving myself with this bloc (ie Militant)'.

I was a founder member of WAC and I have just been re-elected to the EC. To suggest that I do not support WAC is a lie. I am not involved in any 'blocs'.

Lie 5: That 'the decision of the NLWC ensured WAC's proposals would not be circulated in official form'.

The NLWC is drawing up the first draft of a consultation document which will include many options including those supported by WAC.

Lie 6: That 'National Labour Women's Conference has policy on all the major issues being dealt with in the review'.

No such detailed policy exists. Women's conference has policy on principled positions not on such issues as what the division of votes should be between trade unions, socialist societies and party women's organisations, or what the structure of the conference arrangements

committee should be etc. These issues need options drafted on them and the implications thought through.

Lie 7: That I need time to 'develop arguments as to why the recommendations of the women's conference should be ignored' and that I have already 'proposed ignoring women's conference on the election of the NLWC'.

I have always fought for the implementation of conference decisions. It was me that proposed major amendments to the 'Positive Discrimination' document prepared by the NLWC to make it more reflective of women's conference decisions. It was me that prepared the documentation for the shadow elections for the NLWC. What I proposed at the NLWC was that women's conference policy should appear in the consultation paper and that the results of a consultation carried out by the NLWC with regional women's organisations which conflicted with national policy should also appear and that the dilemma be pointed out. This is not opposing policy, it is being open about a problem.

Lie 8: That 'the NLWC has handed them (the NEC and Party Officers) the perfect opportunity to get off the hook'.

The consultation is

going ahead. The NLWC sought and got agreement to involvement at all stages of the review and there is no intention at all on the part of the NLWC to allow anyone 'off the hook'.

Lie 9: That 'the delaying of the NLWC could give APEX and the rest of the right the ideal opportunity to bring in their proposal for a weighted vote for the unions without any of the other changes'.

The opportunity for this exists because the resolution was carried by conference not because of any action by the NLWC. Indeed the very reason the NLWC wants to see a proper consultation period of 3 months and has sought assurances about its involvement at all stages of the review has been to ensure that there are no 'stitch ups' behind the scenes and that full involvement of rank and file women is safeguarded.

Lie 10: That I have 'no serious proposals to put forward'. But that I found myself 'in a bloc with the right wing and Militant'.

Since becoming a member of the NLWC I have been one of its most active members putting forward proposals to advance women's policy on a whole range of fronts. I have many serious proposals to put forward during the review process, including WAC policy, for which I will

fight as hard as I can. I have never been in a 'bloc' with anyone on the NLWC — I act to represent the women who elected me and the views of women's conference.

Lie 11: That I, along with 'Militant and the right wing, set back the position of women in the labour movement at the last NLWC'.

On the contrary, I believe that I and the majority of the NLWC made our decisions because we believed that if fundamental changes were to be made to the women's organisation they should be made on the basis of maximum participation and agreement not only in the party generally, but more importantly the women's organisation itself.

The National Labour Women's Organisation agreed it wanted to see a three month consultation period — is this a crime?

We agreed we wanted to draw up our own consultation paper of options and not use the one by party officers — is this a crime? We agreed that we wanted to spend a little time ensuring that the options drawn up were properly thought through and gave women a good choice — is this a crime?

Jude Woodward was not present at the NLWC meeting and her informant has provided a distorted and jaundiced view of what went on. Her personal attacks on me are libellous. As

someone who has written for Socialist Action many times (as I have for many left papers without sharing all their views) I am disgusted that Socialist Action is prepared to stoop this low. I don't think I will be writing for you again.

Mandy Moore
LWAC Executive,
NLWC member
(personal capacity)

Jude Woodward replies

Mandy Moore's reply to my article completely confuses questions of fact with issues of political judgement on the likely effect of the decisions made by the NLWC.

While Mandy's statement that there was no prior agreement or discussion with Militant must be accepted, this does not change the fact that the decisions taken at the meeting were wrong and damaging.

Perhaps Larry Whitty himself has presented the best arguments for this view. Interviewed by Melissa Benn in the current issue of Everywoman he says: '... I think we could well tear ourselves apart on constitutional issues within an election year. After the election I think it needs to be looked at, but

meanwhile I think we should try to counter the representational imbalance by having some public relations balance.'

In this light it is not surprising that Mandy Moore could report to the last meeting of the LWAC executive that the party officers and members of the NEC women's committee had agreed with the NLWC's proposals on the conduct of the review.

It is quite clear that the right wing has its own proposals to change the structure of the women's organisation in a completely reactionary direction. The only way that can be dealt with is by women, and the left, putting forward their own proposals in the party and to the union conferences. The possibility to do this is substantially cut down by the delay in the National Labour Women's Committee acting. And that strengthens the right.

This remains my view, and was the view of the article to which Mandy so strongly objected — although it should be made clear that it was my personal view and had not been discussed at an LWAC executive.

Lessons of Wapping

ON 4 FEBRUARY the SOGAT executive unilateral called off the Wapping dispute using as the justification Murdoch's legal actions against the union. They were followed 24 hours later by the NGA. Faced with a total sell out by the union leaderships the print branches had no option but to recommend that sacked News International workers apply for the 'compensation' payments offered by Murdoch. It was a total and complete climb down by the print union leaderships in which Brenda Dean, general secretary of SOGAT '82, played the decisive role. It was the culmination of a year in which Dean and the SOGAT leadership had systematically demobilised the dispute. Socialist Action spoke to CAROL HALL and GEORGE HALL, SOGAT members involved in the dispute, for their balance sheet of the lessons of the strike. In this issue they look at the role of Murdoch and the SOGAT leadership. In our next issue they look at lessons for developing the left out of the dispute.

THE way the dispute ended had become a foregone conclusion — that the NEC would take the decision without going to the membership. The treachery of Dean could be seen throughout the course of the 13-month dispute. At no time was she happy with the dispute. In May last year she tried very hard to get us to call the dispute off with the first ballot. She tried again after the SOGAT '82 Biennial Delegate Conference (BDC) in September and October — when they recommended a second compensatory deal to us.

When you weigh all that up, it was difficult to expect other trade unionists to take the dispute as seriously as they should. They were very big factors in why the dispute ended the way it did.

Many people still don't know the full facts on how the decision to end the dispute was taken. An emergency executive council meeting was called. The News International dispute was the only item on the agenda.

Brenda Dean put it to the NEC that the dispute had to end because of the threat of sequestration. She made it clear that they could really only vote one way.

The BDC, the union's governing body, had already taken the decision that under no circumstances would SOGAT's funds be re-sequestered. Dean said the governing body had decided.

Although there was a bit of rearguard action from the London delegates to the NEC, they couldn't really argue against because, along with the rest of the country, they had voted at the BDC not to be sequestered again.

The build up to the sell-out was that there wasn't enough mobilisation within our own union, SOGAT. We gave the leadership tremendous opportunities to weaken the dispute. One thing that was never fought for, and which would have been a major advantage to us all, would have been the action in Fleet Street.

Throughout a dispute you can't ask other unions to give you support when the overwhelming majority of your own members are still working. We know of NUPE workers giving 50p a week to our strike but our own membership

was not really being mobilised. People quite rightly were asking questions of us. Those questions were never satisfactorily answered by the national leadership, or indeed by the London leadership.

If we'd fought to get Fleet Street out, or even Fleet Street blacking of Murdoch products, it would have had a tremendous effect on the rest of the trade union movement. They could have seen that we were absolutely serious and resolute in our struggle. But News International (NI) was instead separated by the union leadership from the rest of Fleet Street and the rest of the printing industry.

Although Wapping was called a national dispute, in no way could it be compared to the miners dispute or any other strike when they are all out. In SOGAT, we had 4000 members on strike and 200,000 members working. That speaks volumes.

We needed to fight first in Fleet Street and then go to the rest of the country to explain what the dispute was about. Unless you do that you cannot expect to get the support to other trade unionists.

In SOGAT, we've got a leader in Brenda Dean who is very much one of the architects of the 'new realism'. She is quite aware of what Murdoch was up to. But she was also fully confident of extracting a deal from Murdoch.

Dean was quite willing to offer Murdoch job cuts of 50 per cent and more — perhaps not as much as the 80 per cent he was asking. She was quite willing to offer new agreements. She would have gone a long way down the road to a no-strike deal. She would have gone some way down the road to giving legally binding agreements. She would have gone a long way down the road to total management rights clauses. She would have gone perhaps the whole way down the road to giving up the closed shop.

Dean was very confident to getting a deal. In the course of 1985 she was giving the NGA a lot of criticism and was talking to the SOGAT officials about concluding a one-party agreement with Murdoch. She's very much in the category of Hammond — but Hammond got there first.

Just prior to the start of the dispute at Wapping, Dean gave Robert Maxwell 2000 job cuts, a third of the workforce, and new terms and conditions. She thought that Murdoch would give SOGAT a similar sort of agreement. But Murdoch is made of sterner stuff. He had collaborated with Hammond's union, leaving Dean in the dark about just how far they'd gone.

When they called the strike after the ballot, Dean didn't think Murdoch would be ready. She thought Murdoch would be unable to print from Wapping for at least three to four weeks. Knowing that *The Sun* is the jewel in the crown of Murdoch's globe-trotting enterprises, she thought a short strike would force Murdoch round the negotiating table and she could get a deal at whatever cost. She expected a 'respectable' dispute and not the battle it turned out to be. Murdoch was ready and brushed her aside.

During the News International dispute the SOGAT leadership concluded agreements with other proprietors. First of all on the *Express* they virtually got a no-strike deal and 2000 jobs went — along with changes in the terms and conditions, the management's right to manage, and everything else that goes along with it. That has progressed through to the *Telegraph*. The latest deal that's been done at the *Guardian* is in the same mould.

Dean was sure that she's get a deal from Murdoch too. She was offering him a so-called 'revolutionary' package that, in Willis's words, he was a fool not to accept. But as we all know now, that wasn't what Murdoch wanted. He wanted the ultimate, which unfortunately he seems to have achieved.

One thing the movement has got to learn is about accountability. If you are a general secretary and elected for life, there's a strong feeling in the back of your mind that you're not going to have to face the members again and you can do whatever you want.

There's a class character which bodes very badly for us with the new leadership. They seem to have capitulated in their ideas to the Tory government. They're looking for new alternatives to try to continue with trade unionism, if that's the right word.

The reality is that there is no 'new reality', the trade union movement is forged on solidarity. Unless you take that up, then we're going to be in rather big trouble.

The big dent in the dispute came very early on. That was when the London leadership totally capitulated to the Dean philosophy of the 'low profile', the idea that we could defeat Murdoch through the boycott campaign. They acquiesced to Dean's view that the miners strike was defeated because of the scenes of violence seen on people's



The Wapping anniversary demonstration on 24 January

television screens. This view was never challenged by the London leadership.

In fact some of the people who by the end of the dispute had become very committed to mass demonstrations were at the beginning of the dispute holding back the militant rank and file from taking the fight forward.

At the early stage Murdoch wasn't completely ready. Although he could get his papers into the lorries, they weren't really familiar with the local area — and the police weren't familiar either. Mass picketing at that stage, a call to the trade union movement, and a fight for mobilisation within Fleet Street, could have turned the strike right at the beginning.

We fought against the low profile campaign and won over certain elements of the London leadership that the strike was flagging and that Murdoch had an early victory in his sights. We got mass picketing, proper picketing in strategic places along the highway. But just as the momentum was building up through March, April and May — we'd won the argument over mass meetings, we were getting to the crucial issue of mobilising in Fleet Street and for the boycott of all Murdoch's products, we had turned over the first ballot when Grays Inn Road was offered as compensations — the BDC in June set us back. The London leadership capitulated totally to the national leadership. They gave the strike to Dean.

There was a certain apprehension about the motion that was put forward by the national executive which talked of not putting SOGAT funds in jeopardy, making it clear that the strike would be under the sole charge of the NEC and that everything had to be done in accordance with the

SOGAT rule book. Anything unconstitutional was ruled out.

As soon as the conference was finished, the mass meetings were given the cold shoulder. They had no real impact after that. The NEC very much directed the course of the strike. The boycott campaign became the main focus — away from the mass demonstrations and picketing outside the Wapping plant.

Then came the court case. This had a major impact on the course of the dispute. Murdoch sought damages against us. Although certain progressive organisations claimed it had been a victory, it had in fact been a tremendous defeat for us. Picketing was ruled out. It meant that we were restricted to demonstrations. It gave Dean a tremendous opportunity to wind down the dispute. From July, the NEC effectively kept the dispute at a very low ebb.

Those decisions — at the beginning of the strike where they gave Dean her head and at the BDC where they handed the initiative back after they'd taken it away — were enormous mistakes.

Although I've been very critical of the London leadership they did show a lot of courage during the time between March and May in backing the more radical demands and also in fighting for the rejection of Murdoch's first offer. This was a reflection of the rank and file build up getting over their point of view. When they handed it back to Dean at the BDC it really shook a lot of us in London. People claimed that Brenda Dean was back with us, that 'the head is now back with the body'. That wasn't true then, and it's still not true. It ended when Dean led the NEC in calling off the dispute.

Silentnight strike ends

THE 20-MONTH long dispute at Silentnight is over. A crisis meeting held on Monday 9 February decided to end the strike following the decision of the FTAT executive just before Christmas to withdraw official backing. Since then the union leadership has suppressed the strikers' appeal against the general executive council's decision.

Bitterness and a sense of betrayal at FTAT's actions were expressed by one of the strike leaders, Terry Bennett when he said 'We have been fighting for trade union rights for this long time,

now FTAT won't support us. They won't have anything to do with us'.

By Paul Perkins

The political lessons learned during the strike will not be lost on the strikers. One of them, Ann King, explained that 'we have developed two motives during the strike. One is "we still have principles" and the other is "we won't go away".'

'Most of the hard core, the people that have been most active in the strike, will take their fight into the Labour Party. We have all learnt a lot about what is going on in this country and abroad. We will now be fighting for these people.'

Caterpillar occupation

DESPITE THE withdrawal of support of the white collar unions, over 800 workers continue to occupy the Caterpillar plant at Uddingston in Lanarkshire.

By Ann Henderson

The occupation has achieved widespread support throughout Scotland and the Scottish labour movement gave a firm commitment of solidarity at a special STUC shop stewards rally in Glasgow two weeks ago.

Many workers have promised regular donations — £1000 a week is coming in from Govan shipyard, themselves facing short-time with only a few weeks' work left on the order books.

Motherwell district council have pledged cash. Street collections are being taken all around the west of Scotland, so far £40,000 has been raised for the strikers.

AEU convener at the plant, John Brannon, made a special appeal for industrial solidarity as well as financial support. His call has been answered as dockers at Greenock agreed to stop loading any parts which the company was attempting to divert to their factory at Leicester. Then on Monday, dockers at every Scottish port agreed not to move any Caterpillar containers.

A delegation from Uddingston travelled to Brussels last week to meet with stewards from the French, Belgian and English Caterpillar plants.

Caterpillar workers have also been visiting Manchester and the West Midlands in their campaign to win wide labour movement support. They are planning a local demonstration from Uddingston town centre to the factory on 26 February and a massive lobby of Parliament is scheduled for 5 March.

Senior Colman

THE STRIKE by a hundred engineers at the firm of Senior Colman in Sale near Manchester is becoming a significant local fight in defence of union organisation.

By Martin Marriott

Last Saturday 500 people marched in solidarity with the strikers. In addition to contingents from the strikers' own union, the AEU, there were banners from the FBU, TGWU, GMBATU and ASTMS.

Labour MP and leader of the AEU parliamentary group, Stan Orme, was one of the speakers at the demonstration. He pledged support to the strike and said he would be raising the matter in the House of Commons.

Local miners from Agecroft colliery have been among the people to visit the picket line.

The strike is attracting such support because of the seriousness of the company's attack on the union. The strike was precipitated

by the company dismissing four workers who refused to fill out new time-sheets, in line with union policy. The company then dismissed all the strikers for breach of contract.

They have recruited a scab workforce and on the basis that they consider the dispute to be 'over', the company has now issued writs against nine prominent strike activists seeking an injunction to prevent them from stopping the normal functioning of the company! The strikers will be attending the High Court in London on Thursday 19 February, but as striker Tony Lowe told us 'we'll continue until we win'.

An emergency meeting of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions is being planned to consider the proposal for a ½-day of action in solidarity. Convener Graham Wyatt pointed to the importance of the Confed's involvement especially given the national engineering negotiations on productivity.

A Socialist ACTION

NCU-undefeated but sold out

NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS UNION



NUT call action against Baker

THE FIGHT against Kenneth Baker's Bill to abolish the negotiating rights of 400,000 teachers received an important boost with the decision of the two TUC-affiliated unions to ballot members on strike action for the beginning of March. The National Union of Teachers (NUT) and the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers (NAS/UWT) have begun a ballot for 1/2 day strikes in the weeks beginning 9 March and 16 March. There will be one ballot paper for all members and both general secretaries have co-signed the paper calling on all their members to give the proposal full backing.

The two unions represent around 80 per cent of all teachers and this will be the first joint action they have taken for over a year. It will be a real morale booster to teachers in their fight against the Tory moves to impose worsened conditions of employment which will include lengthening the working year by 5 days and increasing the working week.

The 1/2 day strikes will not stop the Bill becoming law but they will make Baker think seriously about what pay and conditions he will impose on teachers. More importantly it will help prepare a massive campaign of resistance to the conditions that he will try to impose and for ultimate repeal of the legislation.

The union leaders have been forced to move following growing calls from the membership for action. Up and down the

country NUT branches in particular have been passing resolutions supporting the demand for strike action launched by the Inner London Teachers' Association.

By Bernard Regan

This campaign was greatly strengthened by the decision of the NUT's National Disciplinary Committee on 7 February to reinstate the 50 ILTA-Council members who had been suspended from the Union for supporting strike action on 13 January. The strike call which the employers now concede in fact had the backing of 8000 of the 13,500 ILTA members demonstrated that given a clear lead teachers are prepared to take on the Government's attack.

Although the ILTA of-

ficers were reprimanded and all 50 were found technically guilty of a breach of the union rules, they are now back in the union ready to continue the fight against Baker.

Messages of support for ILTA have come in from the Campaign Group of Labour MPs, Durham Area of the National Union of Mineworkers, Durham Mechanics, Nottingham Women Against Pit Closures and a host of labour movement bodies and activists including Peter Heathfield, NUM general secretary.

It is on the basis of precisely that kind of support that teachers will be working to win mass backing for their fight. Rather than wait for the next general election and the possible return of a Labour government teachers have to take on the fight now.

An important role in the fight has been that of the Socialist Teachers' Alliance whose members led the ILTA strike action. On Saturday 4 April an open discussion conference will be called by the STA which will focus on the campaign ahead and on the need to build a united campaigning left within the NUT which aims to carry the fight against the Tories forward.



UNDEFEATED BUT sold out, that was the general response in the NCU to the two to one vote to accept British Telecom's offer and end the first indefinite strike in the union's history. In itself the strike was a massive gain. Not only did the resolve and solidarity of the members catch the BT bosses and government by surprise but it shattered the myth of Thatcher's share owning democracy. BT's attempt to beat the union was rudely thwarted both by the ballot to strike and by a 98 per cent vote in meetings up and down the country on the Sunday before the action ended to continue the strike.



But the contrast between the determination of the membership and the weak will of the leadership starkly revealed the fact that this strike had been led by the members from day one — dragging along the executive and Golding kicking and screaming. In the end we were sold out by a general secretary desperate to get us back to work on conditions not dissimilar to those which triggered the action.

Although BT management climbed down in their insistence that no pay offer would be made without agreement to alterations in attendance patterns, promotions procedures, and direct recruitment the Golding leadership recommended acceptance of a deal which still included many strings. These include flexibility and the threat of 30,000 job losses by BT management. The formula of a two year deal had originally been proposed by BT. The argument of Goldings supporters was that 'we would be out until Christmas for just another quarter of a per cent'. But in reality the company had never anticipated the solidity and unanimity of the strike.

The background to the dispute is a privatised company attempting to lay the basis for an assault on the jobs and conditions of a workforce they believe unprepared and unwilling to take strike action. This attitude was accepted by Golding as he continued to press forward his project of swapping jobs for conditions and pay.

Even the right wing executive, with their sights trained on the forthcoming ballots to elect the leadership found cause to temporarily halt Goldings impatience to settle the dispute at any cost — hence their refusal to

By Andy Hollas
Leeds internal NCU

recommend the deal negotiated on the Sunday before the return to work. The executive were pushed by the membership every inch of the way.

It is however hardly surprising that the membership eventually succumbed to accepting the offer when it became apparent that Golding was unprepared to hold out for the full claim — despite the fact that the strike was beginning to send shivers down the spine of BT management who were under pressure to settle.

Golding's claim to have secured industrial peace for two years is about as reliable as Neville Chamberlain's 1938 claim to have achieved peace in our time. Not only have we conceded a massive regrading and reorganisation package, for a rise little different to that we originally took action over, but we also face an onslaught on jobs from management over the next three years. They have already made it clear that they aim to shed at least 30,000 jobs.

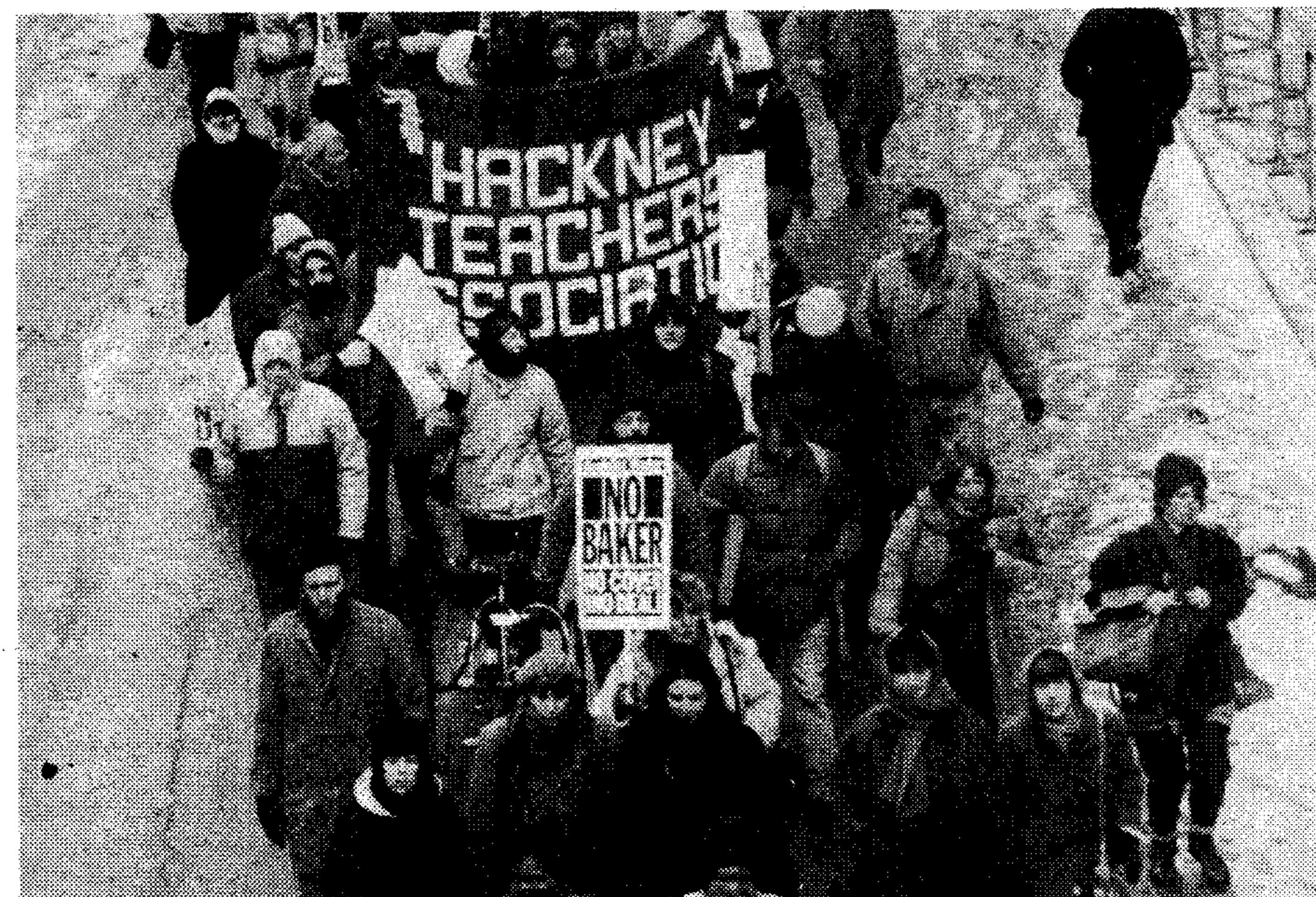
The task for us now is to build on the strength and confidence shown by the membership during the

strike and to construct a serious left inside the union committed to a campaigning rank and file strategy — as opposed to merely the electoralist one presently proposed by the Broad Left. This is the best way to ensure that we furnish ourselves with a leadership capable of a determined fight against BT's designs — and to construct a challenge to the authority of the right wing in those branches dominated by Golding's supporters.

It is no accident that the bulk of the 81 branches that recommended rejection of the deal were Broad Left led, nor the fact that it was the Broad Left activists who successfully organised the majority of the solidarity and financial support for our members. The material put out by

Broad Left militants was variable, very good in some areas and bad in others, but it unequivocally opposed the sell out and it is still to the Broad Left that the majority of militants opposed to Golding look and there that the fight must take place over the direction of the left in the union.

There is no denying the 'Mainstream' Golding wing still has majority support but the experience of this dispute has radicalised a whole layer of workers whose understanding of the role of the NCU leadership has laid the best basis for the growth of a committed socialist leadership of the union at local and national level. It is to this that those active in the union's Broad Left must look.



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