

Socialist Challenge

NEW TORY IMMIGRATION POLICY WHITER THAN WHITE LAWS



What would the attitude of Margaret Thatcher and William White Law have been to the law passed in Nazi Germany which removed German nationality from the Jews? The new laws being proposed by the Tory government are not fundamentally different.

Most of those who will suffer under the new racist nationality laws will not be the rich and powerful. They will be people like Nasira Begum of Stockport, Manchester.

Married

She came to Britain from Pakistan in 1976 to visit her brother. While in this country

she married a British citizen. Three months later her husband deserted her.

Three years later the Home Office declared that it must have been a 'marriage of convenience'. She was given two weeks to leave the country.

The deadline has passed, but she is still in the country.

A local committee, 'Friends of Nasira Begum', has been campaigning since that time and is organising a demonstration on Saturday 17 November. They can be contacted c/o 595 Stockport Road, Longsight, Manchester 12.

The new Tory laws mean

that the fight must be stepped up.

Refused

Said Bibi is an 80 year old widow. She is totally dependent on her family in Rochdale. She is old, infirm, partially deaf and nearly blind.

She came to her family in this country last August. At first she was refused entry, but then granted a short stay. Now she has been told to leave immediately.

The only reason she has not been deported already is because she is too ill to travel.

The new Tory laws will give every immigration officer

renewed confidence to keep blacks out of this country.

All the families that will be kept apart will be non-whites. The hundreds of people locked up under the immigration laws are non-whites. All immigration laws discriminate against black people. There is no such thing as a non-racist immigration law. The Tories have now made this crystal clear. No restrictions on white Rhodesians. No entry for blacks.

Humanity

These laws are an offence to humanity. They must be

fought by all those who claim to be opposed to racism. The demonstration on 25 November must be built for in the labour movement as a whole.

Black people are here to stay.

Axing

The government also announced on Monday that it is axing Britain's special political refugee programme for Latin America. The Chile Solidarity Campaign is calling a picket of 10 Downing Street on Thursday 8 November from noon to 3pm to demand that Britain 'keep the door open'.

**TORIES SAY
POOR MUST
GET POORER**

A quarter of the population of Britain is living in or close to poverty. That is the conclusion to a study of poverty by Peter Townsend, which was published last week.

It does not worry the Tories one little bit.

For instance, last week Dr Rhodes Boyson, the Tory number two at the Education Ministry, was asked how he defended cutting free school meals. 'School meals,' said Boyson, 'are a product of war-time and rationing. Why perpetuate this old fashioned custom?'

For instance, on Monday, Tory Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine said that rises in the next pay round for local government workers — among the lowest paid

workers in the country — would have to be below the existing inflation rate.

Heseltine also threatened that the alternative was yet a further round of sackings.

Holding back the pay of low-paid workers; cutting the welfare state, mean — quite simply — that the poor will get poorer.

The Tory plans need to be fought now.

Protest

One way of fighting is to join the demonstration and rally against the cuts on 7 November. The protest has been called by Lambeth council and is supported by the South-east Regional

Council of the TUC and the South Regional Council of the Labour Party.

Labour-controlled Camden council has given its workers the day off to support the demonstration. Workers in Wandsworth hospitals under the threat of the axe have voted to strike on 7 November, as have workers in the Wandsworth direct works department.

The protest is in solidarity with Lambeth, Lewisham, and Southwark area health authority, which refused to implement the cuts and is in general opposition to cuts in social expenditure.

Join the largest protest so far against the Tory cuts. Assemble at noon, Clapham Common.

SEXUAL POLITICS

28 OCTOBER THE MARCH

ON Sunday 28 October, 40,000 people marched through London to protest against the

9.30am Congress House
STEWARDS arrive for a meeting at the TUC. Official representatives from trade unions and trades councils and many women from the abortion campaign groups receive armbands and badges saying 'TUC steward'.

People remark that these should be sent to a museum of feminist history — to commemorate the TUC calling a demonstration for women's abortion rights. A TUC official starts the meeting by going through the timetable and explaining the order of the march. We are to steward in teams.

We have to line up behind the chief stewards for each section — just like picking teams for games at school. The women mainly opt to steward the women's movement sections for the march, and after a 'Sort yourselves out, girls' or two we pile into a coach taking us to Hyde Park.

11.30am Speakers' Corner
THE Liverpool train has almost reached Euston with hundreds of anti-Corrie demonstrators aboard. Hundreds of coaches are dotting the motorways that encircle London. A few are already at Hyde Park.

In London itself the tubes are full of demonstrators. The mood is defiant. On the journey from Finsbury Park to Marble Arch (not forgetting to change at Oxford Circus) Haringey NAC are doing a brisk sale in badges.

In Hyde Park itself the stage is set. A veteran TUC figure is standing on the lorry testing the equipment. The stewards are hurriedly pinning on their badges...

12 noon
HYDE PARK is coming alive. The cranks and tourist attractions are completely swamped as on all such occasions. Hundreds of trade union banners [mainly white-collar: NALGO, ASTMS, CPSA, NUT] are going up. The TUC person starts making announcements.

They sound weird coming from his mouth: 'Will the sisters of Bury NAC assemble at point X', 'Will the Gays Against Corrie assemble at point Y', and so on.

Thousands of white-collar trade unionists, particularly the public sector [where the far left is strong], a few hundred from the industrial unions, the largest contingent from North of England sections of the GMWU, and again thousands of supporters from the women's movement are there.

The picture that emerges of the demonstration is that it is mainly the women's movement, and those mobilised by the left groups. The TUC may have given the green light for the unions to come out on the demonstration, but for its own part it mobilised no more than a few hundred full-time officials.

Some of us think back to the James White demo and think how far we've come since then.

1pm still in Hyde Park...
ROCK Against Roles and London Zoo are blaring out across the park. Song sheets 'I've got a brand new Private Members' Bill' are being passed to punks and trade unionists alike.

Suddenly the London Women's Liberation banner charges across Hyde Park shouting: 'Women at the front', 'Women lead the march'...the TUC has cocked it up again.

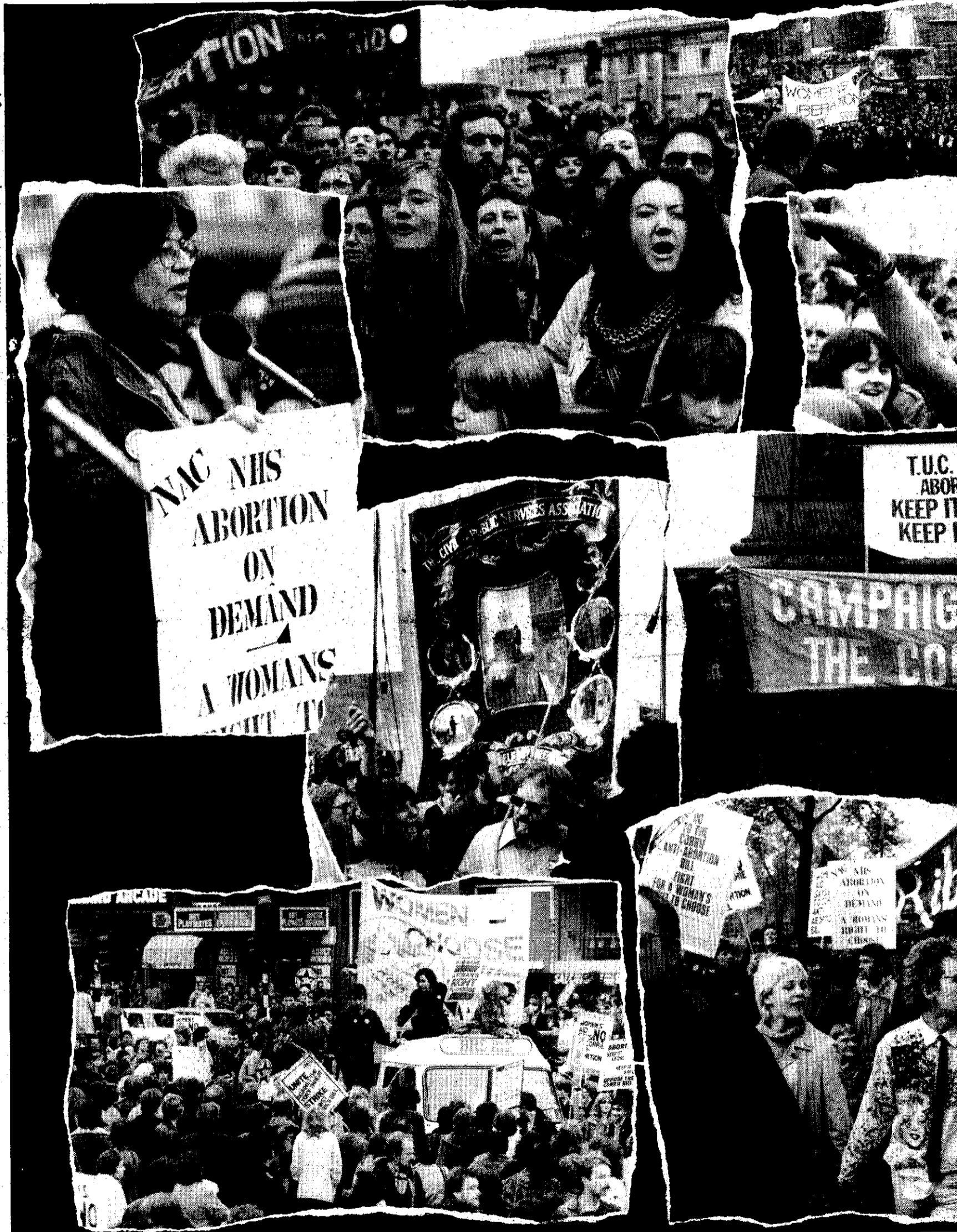
1.30pm
PAM SHEPHERD was in the CPSA contingent directly behind the TUC banner reading: 'Keep it legal, Keep it safe'. 'At first we thought we were stopping because of the traffic, then we saw women rushing by.'

'I wandered up, and heard Len Murray telling the police and press "We're not having these women leading the march. This is our march. If they want to lead the march they can go elsewhere."

'The CPSA contingent of several hundred were soon persuaded to leave Len Murray behind arguing and join the women. We had to fight our way through the police and TUC stewards to get there however.

'We tried to persuade the Society of

Photo: G. M. COOKSON [Socialist Challenge]



Civil and Public Servants to join us but being a management union they wouldn't budge. The women marched off and the TUC followed keeping a gap behind — a gap that Len Murray kept by slowing down the demo every time it narrowed.

'Our assistant general secretary, Alisdair Graham, kept on grabbing the CPSA banner to try and get back with the TUC but our rank and file members

got so angry they physically removed him. All he was worried about was damaging his career with the TUC.'

2pm at last we're off
DOWN Park Lane we pass the Playboy Club. A Bunny sits on the window. If it's a provocation, it works.

Women begin to chant 'Free castration on demand' and 'The women's army is marching' is sung repeatedly. Men who venture into this

contingent get a cool reception.

The banners at the front are London Women's Liberation, Spare Rib, Birmingham Women's Liberation. Women's Aid placards are dotted about.

2.45pm arrival at the Square
WE REACH Trafalgar Square. London Women's Liberation breaks into a trot and tries to take their banner up on to the platform where Len Murray and Marie Patterson are sitting

in state.

The police stop them and a chant breaks out 'Women's banner on platform'. Then some women begin to chant 'Not the unions, not the state women will decide their fate'. The TUC, realising this slogan is not so popular, remains intractable.

3pm... meanwhile back in Hyde Park
BACK IN the park Camden Against Corrie finally moves off.

RICH OF THE 40,000

Corrie anti-abortion Bill. Val Coultas and Tariq Ali were with them.



It is normal for the Special Branch to 'observe' demonstrations. As the abortion march filed into Trafalgar Square at least four SB members studied the faces of the marchers.

But much more interesting, the person indicated in the photograph was actually on the demonstration and was pulled out of it by his colleagues with whom he is pictured.

There are some questions that we would like Labour MPs to ask the Home Secretary: How many Special Branch officers were employed on the demonstration? Why were they there? How much overtime were they paid? What was their report of the demonstration? Where is the report?

mention the Tory cuts in the NBS which make nonsense of abortion rights.

Marie Patterson helped to placate the audience a little by her mention of the pickets that were taking place in Paris, Madrid, Amsterdam, Rome, Brussels and Copenhagen in solidarity.

Angela Phillips, speaking for CAC, addressed the women who had been heckling throughout the speeches. Yes, we should have a women's banner on the platform, she said, and next time there should be. Women — through NAC — had made abortion an issue and the TUC should recognise this.

But, she went on, the women's movement needed the trade unions in fighting such powerful enemies. TUC support meant that the issue of abortion could be raised 'where there had never been a women's group, never been a NAC group'.

She added that it was a shame that the women who were shouting loudest had not been with us campaigning.

She also made it clear that women not doctors should decide about abortion: 'An inherent belief in the stupidity of women is written into the 1967 Act.'

She argued that despite this, the '67 Act had helped to free women from the fear of pregnancy and that they would never return to the old situation.

She ended her speech by thanking people for the tremendous turn out on the demonstration, but urging people to take a day off work again on 5 February. 'Working women would have to lose a lot more than one day's wages if the Corrie Bill passes.'

Len Murray was the last speaker. He told us why the TUC was opposing the act and finished off with the slogan 'Stand by the '67 Act. Keep it legal, keep it safe.'

Assurance

Marie Patterson closed the rally with the assurance that this was the biggest trade union demonstration since the march against the Industrial Relations Act.

That march gave the green light to the kind of mass opposition that defeated Heath and could certainly defeat Corrie. The TUC leaders gave no indication that they're preparing to lead such a fight.

4.10pm
As the platform walks away after their speeches, the demonstration is still entering the square. Surely it would have been better to have the rally at Hyde Park, ending the demonstration with a march to Downing Street.

Anger is obviously mounting against the Tories and the campaign has got off to a good start. The energies of feminists must be harnessed in the next few months to build the kind of campaign the suffragettes launched to win the vote.

We cannot wait for the trade unions to act. We have to combine getting across to the ranks of the trade unions — particularly the female ranks — with a campaign that shows that women can fight and they will not accept such an assault on their rights as human beings. A postscript: Later that night THE TV is switched on to see how our nice, objective media reports the demo. The Beeb is true to form. The size of our demo is not mentioned, but equal time is given to a SPUC demo which has only a thousand people on it.

ITV ignores SPUC, but fails to give the size of the demo either. What happened? Possibly the police hadn't worked out what figure they were going to give till later on. They finally decided on 17,000 which was duly reprinted in most papers the next morning. It makes one sick...

The contact name and telephone number we published last week for Scotland was incorrect. Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

'We leave the park, drowning out three people from SPUC by singing: 'Just you wait Mr Corrie, just you wait. You'll be sorry but your tears will come too late.' We sang all the way to the square. The Big Flame song sheet really came in handy.

'As we passed Piccadilly we saw demonstrators walking back from the rally. When we arrived we joined the women dancing and singing 'We won't

be ruled by men no more'.
3.15pm
MARIE PATTERSON, announcing herself as the 'chairman' of the TUC women's advisory committee, starts off the rally to the continual heckles of a small section of women from the front of the march. She explains how important abortion is for working people.
Jo Richardson, Labour MP, was next. She said she was speaking with the

full authority of the Labour Party, which supported the demo and a woman's right to choose.
She hoped that with the NEC in charge of the party manifesto, the next Labour government would be forced to take more positive action for abortion rights. She particularly paid tribute to the National Abortion Campaign and she finished up with the rousing statement that:

'We must show Parliament, that chauvinist body Parliament, that women are not prepared to put up with these restrictions'. But even this failed to satisfy the women at the front who still heckled.
The next speaker annoyed many in the crowd. Tory MP Anthony Nelson said he was in favour of the 'individual freedom of women to control their own bodies'. He did not

HOMENEWS

Another local authority backs down, but Tories press on with cuts

By Rich Palser and Patrick Sikorski

ANTI-CUTS campaigners in West London scored an important victory last week, when the Ealing, Hammersmith and Hounslow Area Health Authority voted to defy a government instruction to cut £2,126,000 from the area hospital services.

As a result, six hospitals and clinics — part of a list of 23 items for the chop — have been saved from closure. But the reprieve could well be short lived.

When Lambeth AHA took a similar stand recently, the Tories dismantled it and appointed health commissioners to administer the cuts in its place. To avoid a similar fate, the Hounslow authority decided on Wednesday of last week to 'show willing' despite its refusing to tow the government's line. It voted to 'balance the books' by 1981.

Compromise

Even the motion rejecting the cuts, put by Alf King who is leader of the Labour group on Hounslow council, compromised by making a £350,000 cut, on the grounds that 'genuine savings' could be made.

Unfortunately Dr Vaughan, the Tories' health secretary, will not be confused by this ruse. In a letter refusing the AHA's request that a broad based delegation be allowed to meet the

minister, Dr Vaughan made it clear that the authority must 'stick to cash limits'.

Under these proposals, 'balance the books' means making cuts in services.

Savings

The people who may be confused by the tactics of the health authority are the potential supporters of the campaign to stop the cuts. The last Labour government also insisted there was room for 'genuine savings', but none of the money saved found its way into improving services. The reality was fewer hospital beds and longer waiting lists.

Without the vigorous campaign co-ordinated by the recently established Hounslow Assembly Against the Cuts, the vote of 15 to 9 for Alf King's motion could well have been very different.

The health workers and other trade unionists mobilised by the campaign made their presence felt throughout the AHA meeting — in the public gallery, on the lobby outside, and in a lightning occupation at the Hounslow Hospital down the road.

That they will continue to oppose any cuts proposed by the AHA was made clear at a meeting of health workers at Middlesex Hospital the next day.

At a meeting originally called by management, mistakenly thinking that the full



Photo: PETE GRANT

NEWS OF the Area Health Authority's decision not to implement the Tory cuts was greeted with cheers and applause by those occupying Hounslow Hospital to protest against any cuts. They heard how one AHA member, P Croft who is a member of the Freedom Association, had had the nerve to blame health workers for overspending, suggesting that they fiddle clock cards. He then went on to say that the problem was with bad management — as if better management could make waiting lists any shorter by cutting the number of hospital beds.

package of cuts would be passed, Carl Brecker from the joint shop stewards committee told the bosses that the unions were refusing to sit down and discuss implementing any cuts — with the AHA or with any commissioners appointed to replace them.

As Carl summed up the situation: 'The first battle has been won, but the war has only just started. This is a national fight against the Tory

government.

'Thatcher doesn't like it when we force an AHA to oppose cuts, because ordinary working people start to think "maybe these cuts are really damaging services". Sending in commissioners shows what the Tories think of so called "democratic control" through the AHA. That will not stop the cuts, however — only a national fightback will.'

ON THE KNIFE EDGE

Your services, your struggles — send us your news



By Hilary Tarr

SINCE Lambeth Council made its decision not to make any cuts in services, the Labour group has launched a campaign to win support. This campaign within the Labour Party is working alongside other campaigns opposing the cuts, such as Lambeth Fightback.

The council has called a demonstration for 7 November, which is being supported by hospital workers in Wandsworth, NUPE members throughout the Inner London Education Authority, and many other workers throughout London.

Most of the council unions in Lambeth have voted to take strike action on the day, and Lambeth National Union of Teachers voted unanimously to ask all teachers to attend the demonstration.

Lambeth Fightback is a broad based campaign formed by Lambeth Trades Council and now supported by NALGO, NUPE, and the NUT as well as tenants' organisations and community groups. Fightback is demanding that services need to be expanded, not cut, and is producing leaflets, posters and a monthly newspaper.

We are holding a public meeting on 1 November at 7.30pm in Lambeth Town Hall to rally support for the demonstration. The demonstration assemblies at Clapham Common, 12.30 pm, 7 November.

Oxford

By Anita Richards

DESPITE last year's cuts, the Oxfordshire Area Health Authority has again been unable to keep within its underfunded budget. For this they blame the VAT increases (£42,000), pay awards (£247,000 to be found locally), EEC directives on nurse training (£29,000), and inflation running at three times the anticipated rate.

We could add the 749 unpaid private patients' bills (at an average cost of nearly £300 per patient per week); the £2,200 spent each week on agency staff (which does not include nurses as there is a nurse 'bank'); the renewed six month contract for the McLachlan firm of management consultants, costing £10,700; and the 190 per cent increase in salary for the chairperson of the AHA.

Here there is genuine room for savings — though the Tories are not quick to make cuts in these quarters. Nor was there any public query when the building contract for the new John Radcliffe No 2 hospital soared from £11 million to £30 million.

Rather than looking in the direction of private profit, the health authority prefers to cut staff. A three month initial freeze in vacancies is intended to 'lose' the equivalent of 200 full-time jobs. A foretaste of the effects came in September when the new hospital closed its doors for 48 hours — through nurse shortages.

Those they thought might survive the ordeal were sent to a hospital 20 miles away; there were no routine admissions, but then that is not uncommon these days.

Fulham

FULHAM BATHS have been occupied for the last three weeks by trade unionists and users, who are trying to prevent its closure by the local Tory council. Paul Kenny, a member of the G&MWU active in the campaign, told us about it.

'Our biggest problem has been buying oil to keep the baths running. The problem isn't money, it's that the



PAUL KENNY

council warned off their usual suppliers. We are asking trade unionists to lend us their skills. We have got a chemist advising us, as well as a structural engineer making a report on the building.

'They tried intimidation to stop us, I got a bill for £750 which they said was for oil we used, but we laughed it off. Other campaigners have received bills for £1400 and more.

'We built up to the occupation by printing a newspaper which went throughout the area, and holding a big public meeting to which we invited the Tory councillors. Over 300 people turned up — we couldn't get them all in — and the councillors got a shock.

'They got up and tried to use arguments like "surely you could buy a washing machine". The Tory leader had to resign shortly after.'

Edinburgh

EDINBURGH and District Trades Council is to hold a conference aimed at establishing a broad-based labour movement campaign against the cuts.

A letter of invitation to the conference, which is being held on Saturday 3 November, points out that 'the whole trade union movement is opposed to the public expenditure cuts, to the resulting loss of jobs either through 'natural wastage' or redundancies. The cuts affect the whole movement, not just the public sector unions... Their jobs and our services must be protected.'

Credentials from the Trade Union Centre, 12/14 Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

Death firm sack steward in safety row

By John Parkinson
Secretary, Preston Trades Council
and steward at GEC.

LAST month two workers were killed and five injured when an explosion demolished Attwater's Riverside plant in Preston. Now the secretary for the Transport and General Workers Union at Attwater's has been sacked.

Bob Leeming was trying to build up the union and get it recognised when the explosion occurred. This seemed to confirm their worst fears over health and safety in the firm. Not only were Attwater's workers in danger — the Riverside plant was right next to a children's playground.

So they got together with the trades council and local residents to campaign against the plant being rebuilt on the same site. Attwater's claim they must build it there because of the insurance.

When Bob was transferred to the other site after the explosion, another accident prompted him to talk to the women there about joining the union. This resulted in a warning from management that they would try to



Bob Leeming.

sack him. Now they have — and the reason given is that his 'attitude to the company since the tragic explosion at Attwater's has not been all that is expected'.

The trades council is producing a pamphlet explaining what conditions were like before the explosion, and at GEC the stewards are discussing boycotting insulation board supplied to them by Attwater's. The local TUC course on health and safety, a day release course attended by stewards throughout the area, voted to picket the Hotwood St site.

We have to make sure the T&G gets recognition, that a new site is found for the plant, and that Bob Leeming gets his job back.

'Education under attack.'

A conference organised jointly by the Socialist Teachers Alliance and Rank and File Teacher

Speakers include Caroline Benn
At: The Starcross School, Risinghill St, London N1
10 & 11 November. Full details from Tony Graham,
13 Bloomfield Rd, N6.

Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement National Conference

- Prepare to force out the Tories
- for mass action against the Tory anti-union laws
- for strikes and occupations against the cuts
- build Councils of Action

Saturday 3 November, 10.30 am - 5pm
Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham

Open to all trade unionists and delegates from labour movement bodies.
Details and credentials £1: from Godfrey Webster, 99 Barclay Rd, Warley, West Midlands.

FIGHTING BACK IN BL

There is another way...

By Pat Kane

NO MATTER which way the vote goes in the bosses' ballot at British Leyland the fight to save our jobs has to go on.

The only thing that British Leyland bosses are interested in is more money, bigger profits. First they dreamt up the Ryder plan — with union participation in management which disarmed Leyland workers — and now it's the Edwardes' plan — for a 'slimmer' British Leyland with 'fewer people' through sacking 25,000 workers.

The union leaders, who've been 'participating' in Leyland, have accepted the Edwardes' plan, just like they've accepted every other lousy idea that Leyland management has come up with for the past few years. They supported the loss of 20,000 jobs over the last 18 months. They supported speed up and productivity deals.

Alternative

Edwardes says there is no alternative to accepting his plan. The union leaderships have gone along with that. But we say there is another way.

*For a fight to nationalise the whole of the car and components industry — including Ford.

*No redundancies or plant closures.

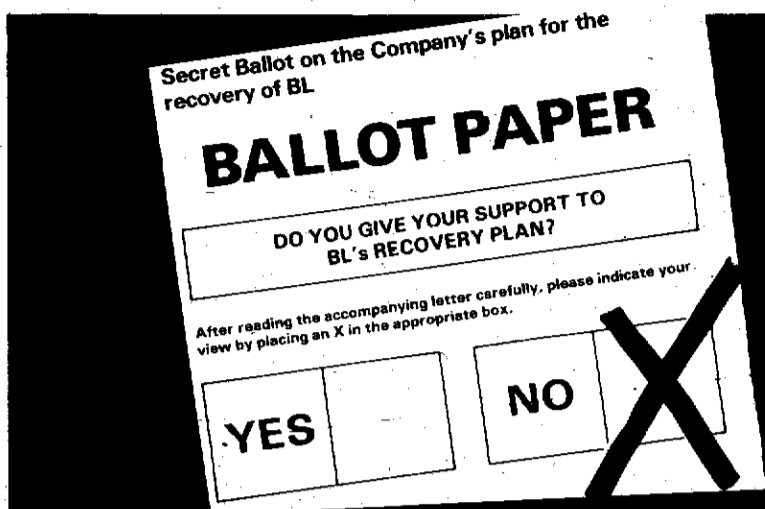
*No transfer of work from other plants.

*No participation in job cutting, strengthen the shop stewards committees.

*No more bosses ballots. Full trade union democracy, with plant meetings to decide on action. Sack the union leaders who voted for the plan.

*Recall the Combine Committee and prepare the fight.

*For a national meeting of all



SIX GOOD REASONS WHY THE BALLOT'S A FRAUD

By Pat Hickey

THE BOSSES' ballot at BL is a fraud and a sham. Here are a number of good reasons why the ballot should be rejected even if management do get the Yes vote they want.

1 The BL bosses spent a lot of money on taking out full page adverts in every car town's local press. Car component firms like Lucas have taken out adverts urging a Yes vote too. The Birmingham Evening Mail gave front page treatment to the Edwardes' letter to BL workers. No such facilities were extended to the opponents of Edwardes' plan.

2 While this barrage of pro-management publicity goes on the individual worker has to make up their own mind, vote and post the ballot form. With the bosses' view presented as the only rational one most workers will not have the confidence to disagree. A democratic decision has to be based on collective discussions and the collective strength of BL workers. Mass meetings are essential for this.

3 The ballot is based on dividing the workforce. In the plants that are staying open the bosses have presented a glowing picture of the future — to encourage the workers at those plants to vote away the jobs of workers in other plants. The aim is simply

to threaten workers and to any fightback in the bud. No worker should vote to do away with another worker's job.

4 The ballot has another sting in it. Everyone from Edwardes himself to supervisors has an equal say with the shop floor. But are they the people really affected?

5 Despite all the publicity campaigns, a lot of information has been kept hidden. Pat Lowry, BL's personnel director, has sent a letter to the unions demanding a free hand to cut further. To step up productivity, increase profits and so on. If the current stage of the Edwardes plan is accepted, how many workers know about that particular letter?

6 Finally, all the union leaders, with the exception of the TASS and TASS, have called for a vote in the ballot, despite the contrary recommendations of senior stewards. They are attempting to put forward an alternative to the plan. The members of the TASS and TASS don't know what the plan is, but they've been asked to support it. They know where the Edwardes' plan leads.

So, that's why we say the ballot is a fraud. We can't accept a Yes vote.

stewards who voted No in the Edwardes' ballot.

Of course there are a great many questions to which we cannot give pat answers. How can Leyland be financed without closures? How do we argue against taking voluntary redundancy? How do we change the unions into organisations that fight to defend jobs and not participate in

redundancy plans?

To answer these questions we have to build a strong and united organisation of militants against the Edwardes' plan. We have to overcome our differences and begin to organise to fight back. In Ford the Ford Workers' Group is just that sort of organisation — one that fights and seeks to answer the political questions

raised in the struggle.

A journal of such an organisation could begin to pose a real workers' solution to the problems of Leyland — not the import controls and streamlining of the so-called Trade Union Alternative. It could develop the fighting spirit and self-confidence of those militants by allowing them

to collectively find political answers to the bosses' tactics.

Leyland, especially after the ballot, needs such a fighting organisation that can organise militants throughout the company. The Leyland Action Committee, now is the time to start building it.



Computer firm opts for apartheid

By Andy Blundell, ASTMS group secretary, ICL West Gorton plant

THE THREATENED closure of the International Computers' plant at Dukinfield, near Manchester, shows once and for all that internationalism is not a moral issue for British workers.

As Dukinfield closes, ICL is negotiating for a new plant in South Africa, where it would doubtless take advantage of non-unionised, low-paid workers. It was only last year that ICL sold massive computers to South Africa specifically for the administration of the pass laws. The threatened closure at ICL is the

price of the failure of British workers, including those within ICL, to really support the campaign against the sale of computers to the apartheid regime.

South Africa is clearly eager to extend its own manufacturing industry, particularly in the key areas of new technology. ICL was an obvious firm to approach because of its history of collaboration with apartheid — after all ICL computers help make South Africa attractive to investors by bolstering the pass law system, guaranteeing a steady supply of cheap labour.

At the time of the campaign against the sale of computers, South African trade unionists came to speak to ICL workers and warned us that

the next step would be for our jobs to go to South Africa. We were sceptical then, but not now.

The present fight against the Dukinfield closure is still going on. Last Thursday, when the ICL management were expecting a cosy chat with union officials at the Employers Federation, they were instead met by a 150-strong picket of Dukinfield workers. It was women workers from the assembly areas who had mobilised most prominently for the picket.

Resistance

Resistance to the closure is spreading across the company, with the call for a national overtime ban already being implemented on several sites. Delegates from Dukinfield are touring the other sites to extend the action, with the aim of forcing a rapid retraction of the closure announcement.

The fight at Dukinfield will be aided by the decision of workers at Fairey's engineering plant in Stockport to resist 100 redundancies announced by their management. There have been a staggering number of redundancies declared in Manchester engineering firms — 2925 in the last month. This has pushed the Manchester Confed to call a stewards' meeting in December.

By building that meeting the Dukinfield workers can not only win support for their struggle but also spread their determination to fight redundancies to the whole district.

Coventry: This strike has been a revelation

By Anna Reese

IT IS not only the workers in the big car plants that are coming under attack in the Midlands. The car components industry is also suffering. One hundred women are on strike to defend their pay structure at the Draftex factory which makes car seats in Coventry.

The strike began on 11 October after a breakdown in negotiations with management which was proposing to cut wages. It is only women workers who are affected by management's proposals — the male workers at the plant have been laid off.

The strikers are still waiting for the Transport Union to recognise the strike so that they can get strike pay — at present they are surviving on donations. Even the married women are not entitled to supplementary benefits, if they were married men they would get some money for their dependents.

The women strikers had not been particularly active union members before the strike, but they are solidly involved in the action. Megan Bull, one of the strikers, explained how they were building confidence and trade union consciousness among the inexperienced strikers.

'We are trying to introduce younger members to union procedures. We take different ones along with us when we have invitations to speak, and then they can go back and talk about it with the others.'

'We have formed a strike committee and we have plans about the branch as more of a women's thing after the strike. In the factory we were in a closed circuit. This strike has been a revelation to us.'

Help on the picket lines is needed. 'We have nothing regular organised because of family commitments, husbands and so on, so we have to organise it as we can. Our husbands have supported us, mine has personally done five nights picketing, and some have brought wood for our fire.'

After so many defeats in the car industry in Coventry it's important that these women win — they are in the front line in the defence of wages and jobs. Workers in car assembly plants should check out the strikers and boycott work on Draftex car seats. The lorry owned by Bourne, registration number VAW 125, that crashed through the picket line should be boycotted too.

Donations to the strike fund can be sent to: Megan Bull, 4 Eastlands Grove, Coundon, Coventry.

The Times v The Unions

'Chapel power stays', says shopfloor leader

ON 29 November 1978, the day when the lock-out at Thomson newspapers began, William Rees-Mogg, the editor of The Times, wrote on its last editorial page: 'Truth in words can never be justified unless it also meets the test of truth in action.'

This piety was intended to justify what was to be one of the longest-running 'show downs' in British labour history.

Management made its demands - which included cutting its workforce by 10 per cent, the direct input of copy by journalists and clerical staff, and the effective transfer of power from the print union chapels to management and the union head offices - and then threw most of its employees out the door.

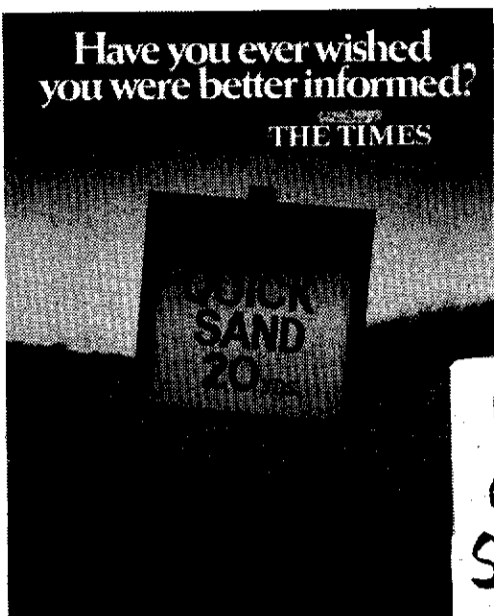
Now that the Thomson newspapers will shortly be landing on the establishment's breakfast table again, Geoffrey Sheridan asked REG BRADY, father of the NATSOPA machine room chapel at the Sunday Times, about the 'truth in action'.

It was this chapel, whose members run the printing machines, which management blamed for a series of stoppages prior to the lock-out, and it is Reg Brady whom much of the press identified as the key trade union figure involved.

In terms of management's achievements, the lock-out certainly wasn't a victory for them. They lost 150 million copies, amounting to £30m, together with the good faith of their employees. It will take them years to overcome the resentment that's built up against them.

Much of what Thomson management tried to do was based on the experience of the United States, where the print unions were slaughtered.

They had Canadian lawyers word all the documentation which meant, for example, that the workforce was



technically "suspended", and this meant that no one could claim unemployment benefit or social security.

A victory for us? I would say the chapel representatives have held their self-respect.

My section goes back with a pay rise of over 50 per cent, but this has to be seen in the context of the rest of Fleet Street. During the preceding four years, Thomson was the only national newspaper management which stuck rigidly to pay restraint. Now we've caught up.

There isn't a clear indication of how many jobs have been lost - the FoCs are keeping the figures close to their chest.

We're losing 90 out of 540 shifts in the machine room. That's the loss of 90 men who come in here on a Saturday night to produce the Sunday Times. If no one volunteers to go, then it will be through attrition - natural wastage.



Above: Reg Brady, father of the machine room chapel at the Sunday Times, on a picket of the BBC held by the Campaign Against Racism in the Media last August

So it could take five years to achieve that. There are a number of men here aged over 64. Thomson's pension scheme is the worst on Fleet Street - it's £2 a week - which is why they stay on. Now, with £2,500, they will take the opportunity to go.

Management wanted a 63 per cent cut in my chapel. They've got 16 per cent.

Chapel power has not been weakened at all. They wanted their overseers to control the work and the intake of labour, with complete flexibility of staff to do any job. They've failed completely on that. I'm still the ganze macher (Yiddish for "big shot") in the machines.

As for direct input, the National Graphical Association is committed to discussing it with NATSOPA and the NUJ in order to introduce new technology into the composing room, where copy is typeset, within 12 months.

That means a reduction of 40 per cent in the composing room, and if it goes to arbitration I think the NGA will end up conceding it. They've got

big problems. With compensation of up to £25,000 a worker - and that's before the new pay rates - that's a very large carrot to dangle in front of anyone.

The NGA ought to sit down with all the unions in the industry and talk seriously about amalgamation. While they've always said that they're the craftsmen in the industry, they are now moving into the semi-skilled and clerical areas in order to make up their numbers - that cuts across all the traditional recruitment areas.

The biggest obstacle to amalgamation between the NGA and NATSOPA is democracy. All our full-time officers have to stand for re-election every three to five years, while the NGA's are elected for life.

Unity is now vital. As far as the present agreement with management goes, I've said it's built on sand. The same problems they've had over the past 11 months will come up again in a year's time when everyone will be seeking to restore their previous position.

The chips are frightening. We

British Oxygen unions stake claim

By Tessa van Gelderen

WORKERS at British Oxygen have decisively rejected the company's pay offer of £7 on the basic wage. And last Friday, shop stewards from all the depots in the southern region unanimously rejected the latest offer - an additional 60p - and will now make the same recommendation to their depots.

In fact the stewards were so incensed by the derisory offer that they wanted to vote for industrial action there and then.

But John Walsh, convenor of Hackney depot, who proposed the motion of rejection, argued that such important questions must be the property of all the workforce; otherwise they would lay themselves open to the union officials taking over.

BOC workers have fought for control of what happens in their union and this control must remain in the hands of the shop floor, Walsh maintained. All BOC depots will meet early this week, and it seems certain that the majority will once again reject the offer.

Management has not moved on any other part of the claim, either. BOC workers want £25 on the basic wage. They want a meal allowance for drivers, as other companies provide, and BOC has offered them nothing on that.

The company has put into its offer time-and-a-half for Saturday work and double-time for Sunday - rates that BOC workers already have! It has changed its offer on shift rates: the new rates would now begin from 5 November, instead of 1 October.

The question that is now posed is what action will the workforce take to implement its demands. BOC could be leading the fight this winter not just against its own employer but against the anti-union policies of the Tory government.

should be demanding a reduction in the working week and longer holidays. I agree with the idea that the media should be expanded, rather than jobs cut. But who will produce more newspapers? I'm afraid I don't hold out much hope for a labour movement daily newspaper.

The Times closure has certainly raised the question of press freedom, which has been taken up at the various meetings and in Times Challenger.

The right of reply needs to be fought for now. If they attack you and you don't get the right of reply, tell us and we'll get it for you.

There was strong condemnation at the TUC of the coverage of last winter's strikes. If Alan Fisher had come to NATSOPA we'd have had got him the space to put his case.

WHAT'S LEFT

'FREE ABORTION on Demand' and 'No means No' badges are again available from The Week, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Singly 25p each, bulk 12p each. Make cheques or POs out to 'The Week'.

REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST Tendency public meeting: The recession: can the Tories win? Speaker: Keith Thompson, Thurs 1 Nov, 7.30pm, Holborn Library, 32 Theobalds Road, London WC1. Holborn tube.

BOOKS for Southern Africa - money is desperately needed for this vital field of internationalist activity. Or send any books you can spare. Books for Southern Africa, Box 102, Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1.

SPECTACULAR bonfire plus Belt and Braces Band! Sunday, 4 November, 7pm at Bow Triangle, Wellington Way, London E3. Adm: free. Firework display, plus bring your own. Organised by the Friends of Blair Peach Committee.

MANCHESTER Revolutionary Communist Group public meeting: 'Fight Racism - Defend Southall'. Thurs 8 Nov, 7.30pm, Birley High School, Chichester Road, Moss Side, Manchester.

TWO DANISH Trotskyists need a room during a study tour of London (24 Nov - 20 Dec 1979). We would prefer a collective or the like. Please write as soon as possible to: Poul-Erik Philbert, Holsteinsgade 7, 3, 2100 Copenhagen, Denmark.

NEIL WILLIAMSON. Died in car crash October 1978, aged 26. 'Optimism of the will; pessimism of the intellect'. Gramsci. Remembered by George, Janice, and Edinburgh IMG.

N. LONDON Health & Safety and Anti-Nuclear groups' joint meeting: 'Transport of nuclear waste through London'. Tues 6 Nov, 7.30pm, Basement, Camden Town Hall, Judd St.



The late Lord Thomson in the Sunday Times machine room in 1961

BBC weighs its workers' conscience

By John Thackara, secretary, Campaign Against Racism in the Media

THE BBC, concerned that its employees may take action over the content of programmes, has begun moves to set up a disciplinary procedure to deal with such cases and to head off the possibility of collective action.

The Corporation's concern no doubt arises from recent instances of writers and producers publicly criticising the BBC's censorship of drama and documentary programmes dealing with Ireland, and from the response to the broadcast last April of a party political broadcast by the National Front.

When TV stations in eight cities were picketed during the broadcast, the BBC took the precaution of staffing key centres exclusively with management personnel.

But it was, ironically, an Asian technician who was asked to start the video-machine at BBC TV Centre that put Martin Webster on the air, and the technician refused to do it. Now the Corporation is trying to get the unions to agree to disciplinary hearings in such cases.

A first meeting was held on 23 July, as a result of which Hugh Pierce, the BBC's assistant controller for employment policy, has sent a confidential letter to the Association of Broadcasting Staffs and to the National Union of Journalists.

This aims to establish a 'Code of conduct on matters of conscience' and puts forward a number of proposals arising from the preliminary discussion, which the letter stresses are only of a tentative nature.

But Pierce makes clear that the BBC has no intention of recognising the right of its employees to object to racist or any other reactionary

content of programmes.

His letter states that the working party on 23 July agreed 'to examine the make-up' of a body whose sole terms of reference would be 'to determine whether his (the BBC employee's) refusal to undertake the duties concerned is justified in all the circumstances or not'.

The concluding paragraph adds: 'The recognised unions for their part agree that in such cases (where the employee is found "guilty"), any action on their part shall be limited exclusively to the advocacy and representation of the individual concerned' - in plain English, that means they won't take industrial action.

That's the BBC's version of what it would like the agreement to say, and so far the discussions have not been communicated to members of the ABS, the main union concerned.

Such an agreement, if it is

reached, would be directly counter to clauses in the NUJ's own code of conduct, which among other things obliges journalists 'not to originate material which encourages discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, or creed...'

Even the right-wing Press Council recognises the right of journalists not to work on material which offends their conscience. This decision arose from the action of NUJ members on the Hornsey Journal in North London, who took strike action over a National Front advert.

With the issue of press freedom now being debated in the labour movement, the BBC has every reason to be worried about its ability to maintain its anti-working class editorial policies. ABS and NUJ members need to ensure that the workers' movement begins to have its own voice on the BBC's television and radio channels.

MARCH ON SUNDAY 25 NOVEMBER

Stop the racist deportations!

By Asha Patel

ON Saturday 19 November there will be a picket of Armley Gaol in Leeds to protest against the imprisonment of blacks under the Immigration Acts. It will start at noon and last for two hours.

Armley is the detention centre for all 'illegal' immigrants in Yorkshire and has become a focal point for initiatives in the area against the immigration laws.

The activity is part of the build-up for the national demonstration which was originally scheduled for 2 December, but has been brought forward by a week to 25 November.

Backed

The demonstration is being backed by every major black organisation in the country, together with the TUC, the Labour Party, and the far-left organisations.

There can be little doubt that it will be the largest working class demonstration against immigration laws. There is also little doubt that the majority of workers on the demonstration will be black.

In all the major cities co-ordinating committees have been established on a broad basis to build for the demonstration.

Differences

However, the old differences between the more traditional organisations and the youth persist. A number of youth leaders are extremely cynical, and see the demo as a one-off affair. They are in favour of more consistent and long-term work against racism in every sphere.

The second fear is that exclusive concentration on propaganda for repealing the 1971 Immigration Act could be counterposed to more immediate and vital campaigns. But there is no reason why this should happen.

A strong contingent on the demonstration focussing on the

Colleges told - kick out overseas students, or else...

By Duncan Edwards, general secretary, Manchester area NUS

THE Department of Education has instructed universities and polytechnics to cut their intake or accept an equivalent cut in income. Overseas students will only be able to continue their education by paying £3,500 a year - supposedly the full cost of their education in Britain.

Even some of the right-wing press is indignant. For them it means that Britain will not be able to influence future leaders of the Third World - Kenyatta, Hastings Banda, Nyerere, Indira Gandhi all studied here!

The president of the National Union of Students, Trevor Phillips, has described the government's action as 'outrageous' and 'unprecedented'. He has called for 24-hour occupations since ministers had consulted neither



VICTORY at Barnet court, at last. Southall defendants (l. to r.) Brard, Johal, Aulakh, Gedhu, Heer, and Mustafa. Gedhu and Heer were fined for assault, but the others were acquitted this week

Stop the racist show trials!

By David Wax

WE informed readers last week that a new stipendiary magistrate, C Burke, had taken his place at Barnet magistrates' court and we wondered whether he could be worse than his predecessors, Canham, Cooke, Badge and McDermott. The answer is a clear and loud NO!

The six defendants who were tried last week were Tarlok Aulakh, Gurmil Brard, Shahid Mustafa, Malkit Heer, Majit Johal and Nirinder Gedhu - all on a variety of charges of assault and threatening behaviour. The trial lasted a whole week and the magistrate retired on Friday to consider his verdict.

The high point of the trial was Richard Harvey's summing up for the defence. He did not mince words.

Harvey implied that it was the police who should be on trial. He pointed out the fake character of police evidence. He explained to,

the magistrate what had actually happened in Southall on 23 April.

There can be little doubt that the previous stipendiaries at Barnet would have either ignored or interrupted Harvey. But Burke played it according to the rules and refused to ignore defence evidence. The result was the first victory for the political prisoners captured by the police at Southall.

Tarlok Aulakh faced three separate charges of assault and threatening behaviour. He was acquitted.

Shahid Mustafa was charged with assaulting three police officers. He was acquitted.

Gurmil Brard was charged with assault as was Majit Johal. Both were acquitted.

Heer and Gedhu were found guilty of assault, and were fined £250 and £150 respectively.

Burke's verdict represents the first serious

rebuff for the lies and distortions which have been the core of the police case at Barnet magistrates' court. But this should not lull anyone into a false sense of security.

It is a fact that the police evidence in these cases (even for the police) was totally inconsistent. It is also a fact that the growing concern by lawyers and the labour movement has meant a bit more attention being paid to the show trials.

The campaign must carry on. Not only are there hundreds more defendants to come, but McDermott and Co. will also return to Barnet.

A number of bonfires to burn the Barnet magistrates have already been organised for 5 November. In Wolverhampton, Oxford, Preston, Southall and Highbury Fields (North London) plans are under way. These should be further generalised. Our demand is simple: The show trials must be stopped!

deportations and the Southall show trials being held in Barnet will be the best way of expressing the anger of black people against state harassment and daily police brutality.

*In the weeks leading up to the demonstration Socialist Challenge will be publishing reports from all the localities where campaigns are taking place. Make sure you send in your report.

staff nor students about these measures.

'We are forced to mount a nation-wide protest, of which next month's occupations will only be a start,' declares Phillips.

Students at UMIST in Manchester face the possible decimation of many of their science and technology courses. Thirty-two per cent of students on these are from overseas. On their own initiative, they have decided to withhold this year's fees.

There have been occupations against the racist measures at North London Poly, Middlesex Poly, Bradford and UMIST.

Unfortunately Phillips' token occupations will not do the trick. A national plan of strikes and occupations against the cuts is what is needed. That is what socialist students will be fighting for in the coming weeks.

Socialist Challenge would like to wish Bob well on behalf of its readers with the hope that he will be out and about again very shortly. In the meantime we know we won't allow himself to get rusty and will use this time to continue writing for the movement. Comrades wishing to send messages to Bob are welcome to send them via Socialist Challenge.

READERS will be sorry to hear that Bob Pennington, long-standing revolutionary and member of the Political Committee of the International Marxist Group, has been hospitalised after being hit by a passing car last Saturday. Bob has leg injuries which until the New Year will prevent him from organising and speaking publicly

More headaches for Callaghan?

By Hugh Richards, Battersea South CLP.

THE HEADACHES for the Callaghan leadership merely started at the Labour Party conference. As the debate on the committee of inquiry heats up, the left in the Labour Party is beginning to organise.

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee, established in 1978 to extend the fight for party democracy and a socialist manifesto, is holding its second regional conference in Manchester this weekend.

A Scottish conference last month attracted over 300 trade union and constituency Labour Party members. The Manchester conference promises to draw similar numbers.

Discussion will centre on the Labour left's response to the party inquiry together with cuts and unemployment. A Saturday night rally offers an opportunity to hear the ideas of Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill and Michael Meacher on these questions.

Time will tell if the LCC can take the lead in the growing opposition in the Labour Party to the Callaghan leadership. Socialist Challenge supporters hope to see the LCC join in support for the increasing campaigns and trade union actions against the Tories.

At present, the LCC paper, Labour Activist, concentrates too much on reactionary proposals for import controls and participation in industry.

A debate on these policies needs to be had at the conference. Do they really offer solutions for workers in the public sector and basic industry fighting cuts, redundancies, and speed-up or are more radical measures needed?

Contentious issues like abortion rights and the British army's role in



the North of Ireland are completely ignored by the LCC.

The open debate at the conference in Scotland was a step in the right direction. Now we need a national conference to discuss policy more fully.

Socialist Challenge welcomes contributions from Labour Party supporters on the kind of policies they consider are necessary to lead a successful fightback.

*The Labour Co-ordinating Committee's conference is to be held at Manchester Town Hall on 3-4 November. Labour Party members only. The fee is £2.

Socialist Challenge events

We are trying to resist this summer which stopped during the summer because of the limitations of the 12-page paper. Listings are free. Phone or write to arrive by Friday lunchtime the week before publication.

ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As - for more info phone Colin, 574068.

BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.

BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.30, Sat. 10-4. For more info phone 643-9209.

BRIGHTON: For more info phone Nick, 605052.

BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. For more info contact Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Montpellier, Bristol 6.

BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.

COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activists phone 461138.

EDINBURGH: SC on sale every Sat, Princes Street, 12.30-2.00. For more info phone 554-1096 or write: Box 6, 1st May Bookshop, 45 Niddry Street.

LIVERPOOL: SC group has recently obtained premises for SC centre on Merseyside. Donations towards cost of rent, rates, security, etc., gratefully received - send to Socialist Challenge (Box 64), PO Box 50, London N7 2XP.

OXFORD: SC sold Fri, Kings Arms, 12-2, Sat. Cornmarket, 10-2. For more info phone 47624.

S.W. LONDON: SC on sale at Oval tube station, Herne Hill BR kiosk, Tetric Books (Captains High St.). Also on sale Sat 11-1, and Thur F: mornings at Brixton tube.

IMG TRADE UNION Fractions: 3 4 New, NALGO; 10 Nov, CPSA; 17 Nov, Rail. For details write to Centre or phone 01-359 8577.

LIVERPOOL: SC forums every fortnight on Thursday, 8 Nov: Trotsky, 22 Nov: Zamboni, 6 Dec: The Cuts, 20 Dec: Immigration Laws. All at 7.30pm at 15A Richmond St (off Williamson Sq).

'Fight the racist immigration laws'

Meeting on Tuesday, 20 November, at 7.30pm, Central Hall, Oldham St, Manchester. Speakers from IWA, Nasera Begum and Said Bibi Defence Committees.

THE CRASH

AND '79?

By Alan Freeman

TEN YEARS ago they were still saying it couldn't happen again. Slumps were a thing of the past. Marx was a has-been with nothing to say about today's conditions.

Nobel Prize winner Paul Samuelson wrote: 'By means of appropriately reinforcing monetary and fiscal policies, our mixed enterprise system can avoid the excesses of boom and slump and can look forward to healthy progressive growth.'

No one believes this now.

Two weeks ago, the *Guardian* carried a report from ITEM, a group of economists using the Treasury's own computer model. It forecast an unemployment level of 2.5 million by mid-1981, and double figure inflation until 1982.

ITEM considered: 'Four months ago... the outlook looked bleak enough. But we now know that the situation in the first half of 1979 was already worse than we then supposed... The slump has begun.'

The first steps back to the 1930s were taken in the slump of 1974. This is what took place then and in the following years:

*Mass unemployment is back. It rose to 17m in the West, and has never dropped below 15m since 1974.

*Permanent surplus capacity is rising. With millions starving in the Third World, over a third of industry in the USA and the UK lies idle.

*The recession hit the whole world economy. Even in 'miracle' Japan production fell 20 per cent in 1974.

*The imperialists are falling out. America is no longer trusted as a world banker — this is what lies behind the collapse of the dollar and the flight to gold. Each national capital now tries to solve its problems at the expense of the others.

Summit

The ITEM economists wrote: 'The Tokyo summit (in 1979) hardly bothered to discuss co-ordinated reflation or balance of payments strategies... The result has been an outbreak of international economic warfare which the world has not seen since the 1920s and 1930s.'

Have Keynesian policies stopped working? The fact is they never did. They followed a quarter century of war, fascism and counter-revolution, backed up by a new technological revolution.

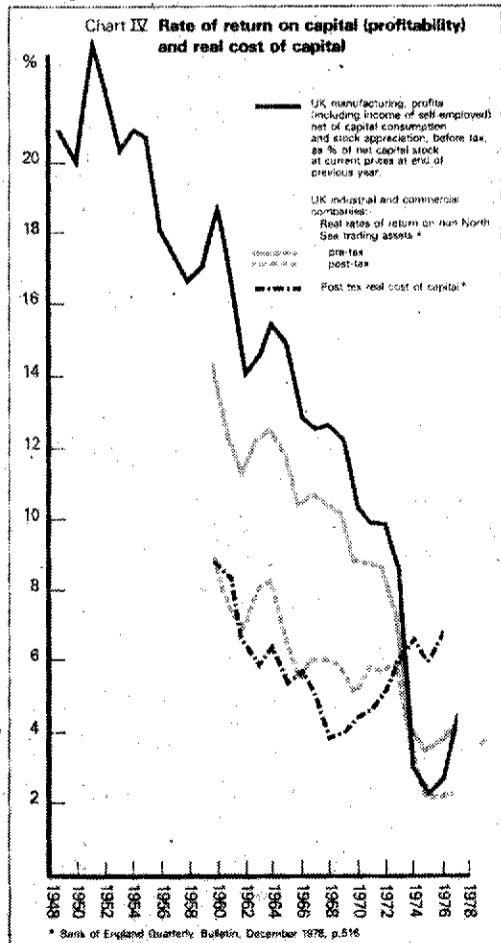
They were used to 'manage' the boom that resulted. But they did not cause it.

Now the boom is over. Profit rates are sinking. The world monetary system is in ruins. Production, trade, and investment are faltering or stagnant. These problems cannot be overcome

with 'another dose of Keynes'. They call for another dose of the '30s.

Not everything is the same. Keynesian policies do let governments change the timing and depth of slumps. In 1974, Western governments printed \$175 billion and bought their way out of the recession. This has not stopped a crisis but changed its form.

Capitalism needs slumps. They shake out inefficient capital. They bring share prices into line with real assets and they restore profit rates. State intervention blocked this process to buy social peace.



As a result, a tremendous backlog of overvalued capital has built up. For example, Chrysler, the third largest US corporation, is only kept alive by giant transfusions from the government, and its profits run at only 1.5 per cent of turnover.

Furthermore, credit and debt have built up to a fantastic degree. By 1974 private debt in the US stood at \$2 thousand billion — more than 1.5 times total annual production. The capitalist

THE Wall Street Crash of 1929 has been celebrated by long features in the ruling class press, television programmes, and the asking of 'could it happen again?' Much of the views offered by the media have consisted of stories of how poor bankers had to sell their yachts, or how 1929 was an 'accident' which had nothing really to do with the capitalist system. Socialist Challenge offers its own interpretation. GEOFF BELL tells what really did happen — and why — in 1929, ALAN FREEMAN writes of a possible repeat performance and JUDE WOODWARD tells of how to break out of the whole cycle of slump/boom.

By Geoff Bell

BY THE summer of 1929 the United America was being hailed as paradise for the American dream of prosperity for all was to be a matter of a few short years, months away. In December 1928 the President Coolidge reflected the optimism when he said:

'No Congress of the United States with a more pleasing prospect than that appears at the present time. In the domain there is tranquillity and contentment, the highest record for years of prosperity.'

The good times were ascribed to the system. It was thanks to this that during industrial production doubled, profits rising and money seemed to be in abundance. More than anywhere else the good times were present at New York's Wall Street Exchange. The New York Times share rose 86 points in 1928 and that was only a start of what was to follow in the first nine months of 1929. It meant that those who bought shares could expect higher dividends the following year. Shares rose and that those who speculatively bought shares could buy, sit back and sell again in a few months with a vast profit.

Money was easy made, all that was needed was a bit to invest. Even that was not for bank loans were easy to come by. In the summer of 1929 the amount of loans was increased at 400 million dollars a month. That found its way to Wall Street. As long as shares stayed high, or kept rising, the market was good business for the bankers and those

class is desperately mortgaging its future to pay for the present.

Keynesian policies fuel this. They are financed by government borrowing, adding public to private debt. And big speculators like Slater Walker count on the fact that the government is too frightened to allow a collapse and will therefore bail them out if they overstep the mark.

But putting off the day of reckoning only increases the final bill. There is an explosive risk of a world-shattering chain of bankruptcies — another 'Great Crash'.

If a giant like Chrysler goes down, dragging its bankers with it, no one's credit would be safe.

There is a price that has to be paid now for every new dose of Keynesianism — inflation. The less debts are backed by real assets, the higher goes inflation. This, and not greedy workers, is what lies behind the double-digit figures of the last decade. How else could inflation be shooting up after four years of working class restraint?

Switched

Karl Brunner puts it bluntly: 'If we want to eliminate inflation there will be a price to pay, and that price is unemployment... And don't come and tell me there's another way out, because it's not true.'

This is why leading capitalists have switched to the 'monetarist' ideas of the 1976 Nobel prizewinner, Milton Friedman.

But monetarism is not a real alternative. The capitalists do not dare abandon state intervention because of the severity of the catastrophe that this would lead to. They want to restore profitability by shifting income from workers to capitalists. The welfare state is being dismantled so that the money which finances social services can line capitalist pockets and bail out ailing giants. Thus Chrysler received £37m from the last Labour government — in the middle of the crisis.

This is a political attack. It isn't inevitable. Our economy does have the resources to house the needy, educate the youth, give us all decent health services and keep us all in work. It is capitalism that is at fault because it cannot use these resources.

There is a way out, Mr Brunner. It's called socialist revolution. Last time round both the capitalists and our own leaders chose the horrors of slump, fascism and war, rather than accept this way out. The new generation has to see that the bankers and the rest don't get away with it again — there may not be a next time.



F'29



the loans were assured of a profit on the money they invested.

Another observer suggested the whole nation was involved in this real life playing of Monopoly:

'The rich man's chauffeur drives with his ears laid back to catch the news of the impending move in Bethlehem Steel: he held 50 shares himself on a 20 point margin. The window cleaner at the broker's office paused to watch the ticker, for he was thinking of converting his accumulated savings into a few shares.'

The window cleaner may not have been too skilled in knowing where to invest but that did not matter. By 1928 an estimated 182 investment trusts were in operation in which supposed financial geniuses would invest the money of others. The system grew and grew; investment trusts were established to invest in other investment trusts which in turn invested in other investment trusts. The advocate of one trust wrote, 'everybody ought to be rich' and promised that for £200 dollars initial investment riches could come in no time.

The inventor of this scheme was John J Raskob one of the leading industrialists in the country. In 1928 he was appointed to the national committee of the Democratic party. Commented one newspaper, 'today the worldly-wise candidate of one of the great political parties chooses one of the outstanding operators in the stock market'.

That was not just an indication of the link-up between politics and big business, the business leaders themselves became folk heroes, with their pictures appearing on the front cover of Time magazine. The system seemed to be so much an answer to everyone's prayer that the capitalist giants were given unfettered authority. The Federal Reserve Bank permitted the money to be lent out and lent out, the politicians hailed the new dawn and refused to intervene.

And then came the crash. On 'black Thursday', 24 October 1929, 12 million shares changed hands in the rush to sell. Inevitably prices fell. The capitalist giants who had profited so much from it all made one last effort to intervene. A representative of one of the most famous, John P Morgan bought shares on the floor of the stock exchange in an attempt to boost confidence. A few other bankers followed suit and on 29 October the Wall Street Journal pleaded, 'heed the words of America's greatest bankers'.

It was to no avail. Within a couple of weeks share prices had dropped by 50 per cent. The decline continued and three years later the shares were a sixth of what they were in September 1929.

For the American people — and indeed for people elsewhere, for the US was the lynchpin of the world capitalist system — the promise of Utopia turned to depression, mass unemployment and in some instances fascism.

In fact the ordinary people never shared in the boom in the first place. The image of the window cleaner profiting from the stock market was a figment of the imagination. By the summer of 1929 only one and a half million people had any dealing with the stock market. That out of a population of 120 million. The vast majority of the American people suffered greatly from the consequences of the crash of 1929 but very few of them benefitted from the orgy of speculative profit which preceded it.

In that there is a clue to the crash. All historians now agree that sooner or later the boom was bound to collapse and that the higher the boom went the greater the fall would be. In that sense the precise events which triggered off 'black Thursday' are largely irrelevant; if it hadn't been that Thursday it would have been some other Thursday. The problem was the system; a system whose god was profit and to which everything else was secondary. Money which could have been invested in new plant and machinery found its way to the stock market. The lack of control over the stock market, banking institutions and the industrial giants meant in the final analysis it was sustained by nothing but confidence in that system itself. American capitalism of the '20s has been described thus by the bourgeois economist J K Galbraith:

'The fact was that the American enterprise in the twenties had opened its hospitable arms to an exceptional number of promoters, grafters, swindlers, imposters and frauds'.

And such is the nature of the system, for Galbraith has argued that the number one cause of the crash of 1929 was:

'The bad distribution of income. In 1929 the rich were indubitably rich...five per cent of the population received one-third of all personal income...The highly unequal income distribution meant that the economy was dependent on a high level of investment or a high level of luxury consumer spending or both. The rich cannot buy great quantities of bread. If they are to dispose of what they receive it must be on luxuries or by way of investment in new plants and new projects.'

But instead in the late '20s the rich simply used their money to chase other money; and in the end the money dried up.

The consequence was the depression which followed. At the start of 1929 the United States was portrayed as the greatest advertisement for free-enterprise capitalism, by the end of the year it was well on the way to becoming the greatest indictment of capitalism.



Socialism's answer

By Jude Woodward

WE ALL know that capitalism causes the misery and deprivation that people suffer in their daily lives. Capitalism operates not on the basis of providing people with what they need; on the contrary, it doesn't care about needs.

Its only motivation is profit — more capital to invest to make more capital to invest to make more capital.

It's not even about making a small group of people very, very rich and giving them everything that they need at the expense of everyone else. Capitalism does have the effect of creating such a group of people — the bosses, the bankers, the landlords, the speculators, and the superstars.

But capitalism isn't loyal to individuals, or groups of individuals. It is loyal to one thing alone, and that is more profits.

Fancy

One of the worst things that capitalism does is put millions of people out of work altogether, so that they don't have the means to support themselves at all. And they certainly can't buy the fancy commodities that capitalism is producing to tempt the consumer.

If there's another slump of 1929 proportions then even more people will be unemployed and living on the breadline. There won't be holidays abroad, or even in Cornwall, for most people in this country.

We won't see more and more working class families with cars, washing machines, and comfortable council housing. Instead there will be less of everything for everybody.

The capitalist crisis is a crisis of overproduction and is characterised by declining

income, increasing unemployment, the appearance of desperate poverty (and even famine).

Of course, famines have always happened. But the difference about pre-capitalist crises is that they arose out of scarcity. Capitalism is particularly horrific precisely because this is not the case; poverty arises because production has grown excessively.

The equipment is there to make products so that everyone can live well, but they cannot be sold. We don't have money to buy them. The money is there for investment, but the profits are not big enough to tempt investors.

There is enough of most things for everybody, but capitalism won't allow us to just share it all out. We have to pay for it. But capitalism doesn't give us enough money to pay for it either, because that cuts into profits too sharply.

So what kind of answers can socialists offer to the crisis?

We start from the interests of the poor and the oppressed, so the first thing that is required is an immediate increase in wages, pensions, and unemployment pay.

Circulate

This will also ensure that more money circulates in the economy, leading to greater commodity sales and hence an increase in economic activity.

Secondly, rather than allow people to languish on the dole, their productive capacity should be turned towards useful public works. This means reversing the cuts and embarking on a crash programme of public works, in health, education, housing and so on, under workers' control.

To help share out resources more equitably we should call for the reduction of prices of essential commodities, coupled with releasing extra resources for investment by radical taxing

of the rich and cutting defence expenditure.

Other elements which pose a workers' solution to the crisis, include the sliding scale of wages and social expenditure, to ensure that people's standard of living at least keeps pace with inflation and rising prices.

We need a state monopoly of foreign trade coupled with workers' control of industry and the direction of investment so that it is in the interests of the working class.

Sense

These demands all point in the direction of a workers' solution to the crisis, which means breaking out of the upturn, boom, crisis, and depression cycle once and for all.

It means clearly turning our backs on the bosses' solutions to their crisis — solutions which have taken the form of fascism or outright war for foreign fields of investment, and which always take the form of imposing austerity and declining living standards on the working class.

However, these demands simply point in the right direction. If the working class was actually in a position to take over and run things itself, then we could go a great deal further. With five-year plans and an integrated approach to the whole economy, based on need and usefulness rather than profits, then eventually we could all enjoy the full fruits of our labour.

We could produce even more than the capitalists do; we could do it more efficiently, and we could share out the produce out equitably among those who need it.

And we wouldn't stagger from one crisis to another. Instead of anarchy in control, society would be run on the basis of what makes sense. And that's called socialism.

exchange rate;
D parity = 100

1974 1975 1976 1977 1978 1979

Neither Maggie nor Mao...

HUA GUOFENG visited Britain this week as the third stop on a tour of Western Europe aimed at buttressing the Peking bureaucracy's ties with imperialism.

While Hua toured Europe, however, one of the leaders of the 'democratic movement' in China, Wei Jinsheng, was sentenced to 15 years in jail. He was one of the editors of an unofficial journal, Exploration, which insisted that in China today the majority of people are 'deprived of power'.

PIERRE ROUSSET explains below how the growth of the dissident movement reflects the crisis of the regime.

The present situation of the Chinese leadership is particularly delicate in that the crisis of the regime is expressed at all levels of authority and society.

The economic and social situation is extremely grave, and this feeds a permanent mass challenge and repeated sectoral mobilisations. In the last few weeks there have been demonstrations by peasants, students, railway workers, artists, unemployed former soldiers, and young people who have secretly returned from the countryside.

The apparatus itself is divided and disoriented. Although Deng's faction rules the roost in the leading bodies and holds the initiative, it is quite probably a minority in the immense provincial and local bureaucracy, which is marked by its conservatism.

More serious still, the masses have lost confidence in the bureaucracy. The regime



faces a generalised crisis of the dominant ideology, the ideology of the bureaucracy. It is in this context that the 'democratic movement' should be understood.

The Western press does its best to identify the movement with the values of bourgeois democracy, and it certainly has illusions in the

West. But equally the majority of the Chinese 'dissidents' identify much more strongly with the Marxist tradition, are much more drawn from popular layers, are able to develop more militant currents and operate in a much more dynamic social context than exists in the USSR today.

The movement is primarily made up of members of the skilled professions, factory workers, and local party cadres. The influence of teachers and intellectuals seems rather limited.

It directly involves militant layers estimated at some thousands in the case of Peking and hundreds in Shanghai or Canton. Its critique is oriented in the first place towards the sole problem of 'democratising' the regime, but the debates within it increasingly take up fundamental questions.

These include the position and role of parties, structures of socialist democracy, conception of the state, contradictions of the transition to socialism. Yesterday Mao and sometimes Stalin were quoted; today it is increasingly Lenin or Marx.

Link-up

A link-up seems to be developing between sections of the 'democratic movement' and the social protest movements. Fu Yuehua, a militant of the 'democratic movement', was arrested in January after physically demonstrating his solidarity with the peasant demonstrations.

Each Sunday now, several thousand people gather in front of the famous 'democracy wall' to read the latest wall-posters and buy the 'popular publications' produced by the dissidents.

The regime treats them with a mixture of tolerance and repression. The situation as a whole is still under its control. But since 1976 it has had to take account of an anti-bureaucratic current which, though confused, cannot simply be eliminated through repression.

Who holds power in Nicaragua?

By C A Udry

TWO MONTHS after the overthrow of Somoza, the Sandinista daily paper, Barricada [23 September], published a declaration entitled: 'What are the CDSes? — the eyes and ears of the revolution'.

The Sandinista defence committees [CDSes] are the extension of the civil defence committees which appeared after September 1978 and took on a range of functions during the course of the popular insurrection.

This movement towards mass organisation is one of the distinctive features of the revolutionary upsurge in Nicaragua. The FSLN is today encouraging the strengthening of the CDSes, which is in line with the increasing stress on the slogan 'workers and peasants to power' in trade union assemblies, demonstrations, and CDS wall newspapers.

Tasks

Four important tasks are assigned to the CDSes: to defend the revolution by ensuring the mobilisation of the masses; to combat sabotage, Somozaist attacks, etc.; to assist in resolving the most pressing social and economic problems [sanitation, food distribution, community health measures, organisation of voluntary labour, etc.]; 'to consolidate the mass organisations... to achieve the aims of the revolution, to move towards popular power'.



A CDS is organised for every few blocks. CDSes of a neighbourhood form a coordinating committee — with democratically elected members — and constitute a Sandinista neighbourhood committee [CSB].

In major centres there is also coordination of the CSBs through a zone council; with these again coordinated through a municipal council. The capital, Managua, is currently divided into four zones.

The mass of the population continuously turn to the CDSes to resolve their immediate problems of employment, food and housing. 'They're the ones in charge', people say, which reflects the power they have.

But at the moment they can only act on the municipal level. Choices and decisions on the big economic, social and political questions — which will largely determine the future of the unfolding revolution — are posed outside their structures.

Their coordination and centralisation on a national scale would therefore be a major assurance of the advance of the revolution.

Faced with this strengthening of mass organisation, the bourgeoisie is looking to its weapons.

It has important economic power, in a bourgeois state which still gives legal protection to private property. Organised in employers' associations, in the chamber of commerce and industry, it is seeking direct aid from the banks, imperialist governments, and various international financial institutions.

In so doing the capitalists aim to

recoup their strength and negotiate their participation in 'reconstruction' in such a way that private property is maintained and the state sector is turned in the medium term towards servicing the private sector.

In this struggle the bourgeoisie is supported by the bosses' associations of Central America [which met recently], by the bourgeoisies of Latin America, and by imperialism. It is also seeking to forge links with the petty bourgeoisie, notably the better-off sections of the peasantry. Some imperialist aid has been directed towards strengthening this social sector.

The bourgeoisie controls the most important paper in Nicaragua, La Prensa, and has the support of the Catholic hierarchy. It has launched a political party, the Social Democratic Party, with the backing of German social democracy [and some deutschmarks!].

The bourgeoisie has important posts in the coalition government. The Economist [29 September] rightly comments: 'The economic portfolios are mostly held by reassuringly moderate industrialists and bankers.' The central bank is headed by Arturo Cruz, whose links with the big imperialist financial institutions are well known.

Certainly, at the moment, the strategic decisions of this government are subordinate to those of the FSLN leadership. The bourgeoisie, having lost all control over the army, is in a very weak position for organising a counter-offensive.

The relation of social forces

arising out of the popular insurrection, like the degree of self-organisation of the masses, means that the bourgeoisie has its back to the wall. This is the particular expression of dual power in Nicaragua today.

Counter-attack

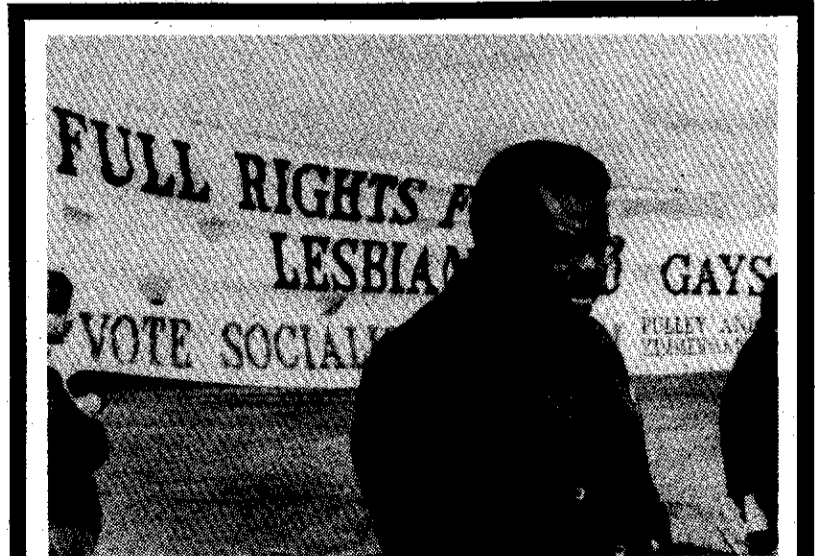
The bourgeoisie is in no position, therefore, to make any rapid moves. It has to rely on its economic power, its international support, and its presence in the government in order to try to hold back radical measures and gain a breathing space to recompose its forces.

In a context of growing crisis, the bourgeoisie believes that it can extend its social base and mount a counter-attack directed towards reducing the role of the organs of popular power and replacing them with bourgeois parliamentary institutions.

The economic and social crisis, the reluctance of the capitalists to invest without guarantees [of their profits], the sabotage and speculation, the urgent and unsatisfied demands of the masses can only stimulate anti-capitalist mobilisations. This is what is happening in any case: numerous conflicts are breaking out in the factories and private farms.

Any advance of the revolution must lead to a confrontation between the bourgeoisie and its allies and the working masses who fight under the leadership of the FSLN; and an inevitable split inside the coalition government between the contradictory social forces which make it up.

Any advance of the revolution will also place on the agenda, still more forcefully, the danger of an imperialist intervention, a threat against which the whole workers movement of the imperialist countries and Latin America must be mobilised.



ON 14 October 75,000 people marched in Washington demanding an end to discrimination against lesbians and gay people.

Eleanor Smeal, President of the National Organisation of Women, explained why feminists in America were backing civil rights for lesbians and gays. 'Those who preach ignorance and fear will not win... Those of us who march for equality will be the overwhelming majority of humanity.'

The demonstrators demanded the repeal of all anti-gay laws as well as laws that oppress and harass gay youth and an end to discrimination in lesbian mother and gay father custody cases.

Andrew Pulley, Socialist Workers Party presidential candidate and a steelworker, was among marchers from the East Coast. He was the only presidential candidate on the march.

Photo: THE MILITANT

Intercontinental Press
combined with IMPRECOR

THE full text of the Barricada article outlining the role of the Sandinista defence committees is reprinted in the latest issue of the weekly Intercontinental Press/Imprecor (Vol 17, No 39). Other articles include an analysis of the rising mass movement in Brazil and an interview with a Fiat worker in Turin.

Individual copies cost 30p plus 10p post, but subscriptions work out much cheaper at £11 for a year (48 issues), £6 for six months (24 issues), or £3 for 10 weeks. Cheques/POs should be made out to 'Intercontinental Press' and sent to: IP/I, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Soldiers of world unite?

By Tom Jordan

MEETINGS of generals — allied or even enemies — are quite common. But soldiers from different countries are usually supposed just to shoot at each other.

Things may be about to change, however. This week soldiers from nine countries will be meeting for the second time this year without their 'chains of command' to exchange experiences, discuss their problems and, cautiously, feel their way towards permanent international cooperation.

'ECCO 2', the second European Conference of Conscript Organisations, will be held in Putten, near Utrecht in Holland. According to a Dutch spokesperson for the conference:

GI unions

'We know the countries represented at our first conference in Malmo last March will all be coming — Finland, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Belgium have recognised official GI unions or elected conscript organisations. There'll be people from West Germany again, and — of course — the more or less illegal French and Spanish groups. But this time we hope there will be more...'

Among those absent up to now have been the American soldiers stationed in West Germany and any representatives of the 'unorganised' British soldiers.

Both the Americans and British are theoretically volunteers, though in practice many are 'economic conscripts' — lured by false promises into the army from the dole queues and the slums. One of the questions discussed at the conference will be whether or not to limit participation in the movement to actual conscripts — which would also leave half of the French and German armies outside.

In the late 1960s and early '70s, American GIs were ready to 'join up' with a union or any group which would protect them from 'the machine', the 'green monster', the army. That was Vietnam.

Pentagon

But even now the Pentagon fears the possibility, and last year pushed through the 'Thurmond Bill', which makes any attempt to form a GI union punishable by five years in jail. 'You are here to protect democracy, not to practise it', GIs are told. Today they turn to drugs, but tomorrow...?

British soldiers still remain cut off from contact with most civilians, who in turn ignore them. But a structured international organisation could make a difference. Says a member of the illegal Spanish UDS:

'Since Malmo not only the establishment press but also the political parties have been obliged to face up to the soldiers movement, the lack of rights [and pay] we have compared to the — almost heavenly — conditions of Dutch or Danish soldiers.'

If Putten lays the basis for an international soldiers movement, a confederation of soldiers trade unions, the news will spread. And — soldiers read today...

*For further details contact ECCO Steering Committee, c/o VVDM, Hojel Caserne, Utrecht, Holland.

Charter 77 jailings

Labour backs fact-finding mission to Czechoslovakia

THE TRIAL of six Charter 77 leaders in Prague closed on Tuesday last week, the day after it began. Five of the six were jailed: Petr Uhl got 5 years, Vaclav Havel 4½ years, Vaclav Benda 4 years, and Otka Bednarova and Jiri Dienstbier 3 years each. A sixth defendant, Dana Nemcova, received a 2 year sentence suspended for 5 years.

The Communist Party daily, Rude Pravo, declared with unconscious irony that the accused were being punished for 'harming Czechoslovakia's image abroad'. If so, the organisers of last week's trial were a thousand times more guilty. Ten years of painstaking PR work abroad by the Soviet-installed Husak regime was obliterated by a couple of days of trial publicity.

The police seemed to believe that if they kept what went on in the court-room secret, damaging publicity could be minimised. So they barred entry to a Canadian socialist lawyer, Gordon Wright, who had already been granted a visa to attend the trial; then the jittery chief judge, Antonin Kaspar, had Petr Uhl's wife, Anna Sabatova, dragged from the court for taking a few notes; meanwhile outside the court hundreds of police were involved in picking up and hauling off the crowd of onlookers.

Script

In response to the torrent of protests being channelled to Prague from embassies abroad, the trial organisers scrapped the four day schedule for the trial. After lunch on the first day, the managers started racing through the script with a Tuesday deadline. This broke the trial's last shred of credibility.

All six defendants pleaded not guilty. Four of them had refused to give any testimony to the police during their five months of pre-trial detention. (The two who did, Jiri Dienstbier and Dana Nemcova, refused to testify against any of the other accused.)

In court, Otka Bednarova refused to take any part in the proceedings except to make one short statement: she explained that she had been active in VONS to compensate for her naivete and silence when, as a Communist Party member in the 1950s, she had not spoken out against the Stalinist monster trials of that period. She added that she did not consider that the present court had any moral or political authority to judge her.

Petr Uhl and Vaclav Benda took a similar position. And Vaclav Havel pointed out that the regime had offered him a year's trip to the USA a couple of weeks before the trial, but he had rejected it because he was innocent of any crime. (The offer was a cynical attempt to brand Havel inside Czechoslovakia as a lackey of the Americans, while avoiding the bad publicity involved in jailing such a well-known playwright.)

Frenzy

The most extraordinary fact about the whole affair has been the complete failure of the massive police operation to find a single fact about any of the accused which could discredit them in the eyes of any Western socialist or communist.

The frenzied search for such evidence produced some ridiculous results. One proof of Uhl's subversion was an informational document he was supposed to have written about a body called the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. The prosecutors seized on this, perhaps because its declared aims sounded similar to those of Amnesty International. They



Top Row (left to right): Vaclav Havel, Otka Bednarova, Petr Uhl, Jarmila Belkova, Jiri Nemecek. Bottom Row (left to right): Ladislav Lis, Jiri Dienstbier, Dana Nemcova, Vaclav Benda, Vaclav Malý.

FREE THE PRAGUE TEN

apparently didn't know that the IADL is a Soviet-sponsored organisation, embracing lawyers in the USSR, Hungary, and East Germany and including the Chief Justice of Romania!

The trial was a complete non-event from a legal point of view. Of more lasting concern to the regime is the fact that it has also proved to be a political non-starter: its purpose was to break the VONS and the Charter, however high the political price might be.

It has now paid the price but the trial has not delivered the goods: the very next day, leaders of Charter 77 and VONS made it perfectly clear that the civil rights movement would continue.

Investigation

The most vigorous reactions to the Prague trial have come from the labour movements of Western Europe and Canada. Labour movement Charter 77 defence committees have been active since the arrests, carrying out activities on the same lines as the British Charter 77 Defence Committee: stimulating protests and appeals from labour movement organisations for the immediate release of the Chartists, organising financial aid for the families of the accused, and helping to alert socialist lawyers to the affair. An important part in all this activity has been played by members of the Fourth International.

With the encouragement of a resolution from Eric Heffer that was passed unanimously by the Labour Party NEC at the end of July, a Charter 77 Defence Fund has been set

up to help the families of political prisoners in Czechoslovakia. Already it has raised over £400.

But the most important single step has been the decision of the Labour Party NEC last week to approach the French, Italian and Spanish Communist parties, along with European Socialist parties, to establish a fact-finding commission to go to Czechoslovakia to investigate the civil rights situation there.

Cold War

This resolution is an unprecedented effort to achieve collaboration with West European Communist parties. As a positive initiative to gain an objective picture of the facts, undistorted by the propaganda of the Cold War lobbies, and to present these facts to workers in Western Europe, the fact-finding commission could be a major factor in pushing the Czechoslovak regime to either make concessions or expose its anti-working class character.

The immediate focus of the solidarity movement will be to demand the dropping of the charges

against the other five VONS members still awaiting trial, and to focus labour movement protests on the forthcoming appeal by those jailed last week.

Beyond that, it is of the utmost importance that labour movement organisations give public solidarity to the continuing work of VONS. In this connection, all trade union delegations visiting Czechoslovakia could contact VONS to inform its members of the attitude of both the Labour Party and the CPGB to its attempted suppression.

The CPGB has a permanent representative in Prague on the editorial board of *World Marxist Review*. This person could be asked by the party here to meet VONS and convey the views of the British labour movement on the current crackdown.

Those wishing to participate in the defence campaign should contact: The Charter 77 Defence Committee, 14 Elgin Court, 16 Montpelier Road, London W5; contributions to the Defence Fund should be sent to: Reg Race MP, House of Commons, London SW1.

DAY SCHOOL ON IRAN AND KURDISTAN

Saturday 10 November
10am to 6pm

Conway Hall,
Red Lion Sq, WCI

Speakers include: Stuart Holland MP, Martin von Bruissen, Kurdish and Iranian speakers, and a speaker from the Iranian Women's Solidarity Group.

Films, Kurdish food

Entrance £1 (75p unwaged)

Organised by Committee to Defend Democratic Rights in Iran

Are the unions Ireland's only hope?

By Geoff Bell

DURING the occasional debates at major conferences of the British labour movement on Ireland one argument is heard time and time again. This concerns the role of trade unions in the North of Ireland, how they are a force for unity among working people, and how they have a brave record in opposing discrimination and repression.

Such opinions come under scrutiny in a new study of the trade unions in the North of Ireland published by the Belfast Workers Research Unit*. The unit's latest bulletin traces the history of unions in Ireland and examines the record of leadership of the North Irish unions on civil rights and sectarianism, as well as on the 'bread and butter' issues of employment, wages and conditions.

The image of the 'non-sectarian' unions has its roots in the Belfast shipyards in August 1969, when shop stewards held a meeting in an attempt to prevent any recurrence of the type of anti-Catholic pogroms which took place in the 1920s. In August 1969 the efforts of the stewards were largely successful.

Resolution

The Workers Research Unit have done well to dig up the resolution which was passed then. It called for the 'restoration of peace throughout the community' and the need 'to break the cycle of mutual recrimination'. But it ended with the 'demand' that 'the force of law and order take stronger measures to maintain the peace'.

At the time that resolution was passed the 'forces of law and order' had just finished playing their part in the assault on the Catholic ghettos of Derry and in the killing of eleven Catholics during the anti-Catholic pogrom in Belfast.

To say that the shipyards' resolution was an outstanding example of 'non-sectarianism' is to say that this should include encouragement for a police force which has consistently acted as the main physical instrument of Protestant sectarianism. Peace may have been secured in the Belfast shipyards in August 1969, but it was secured at a price.

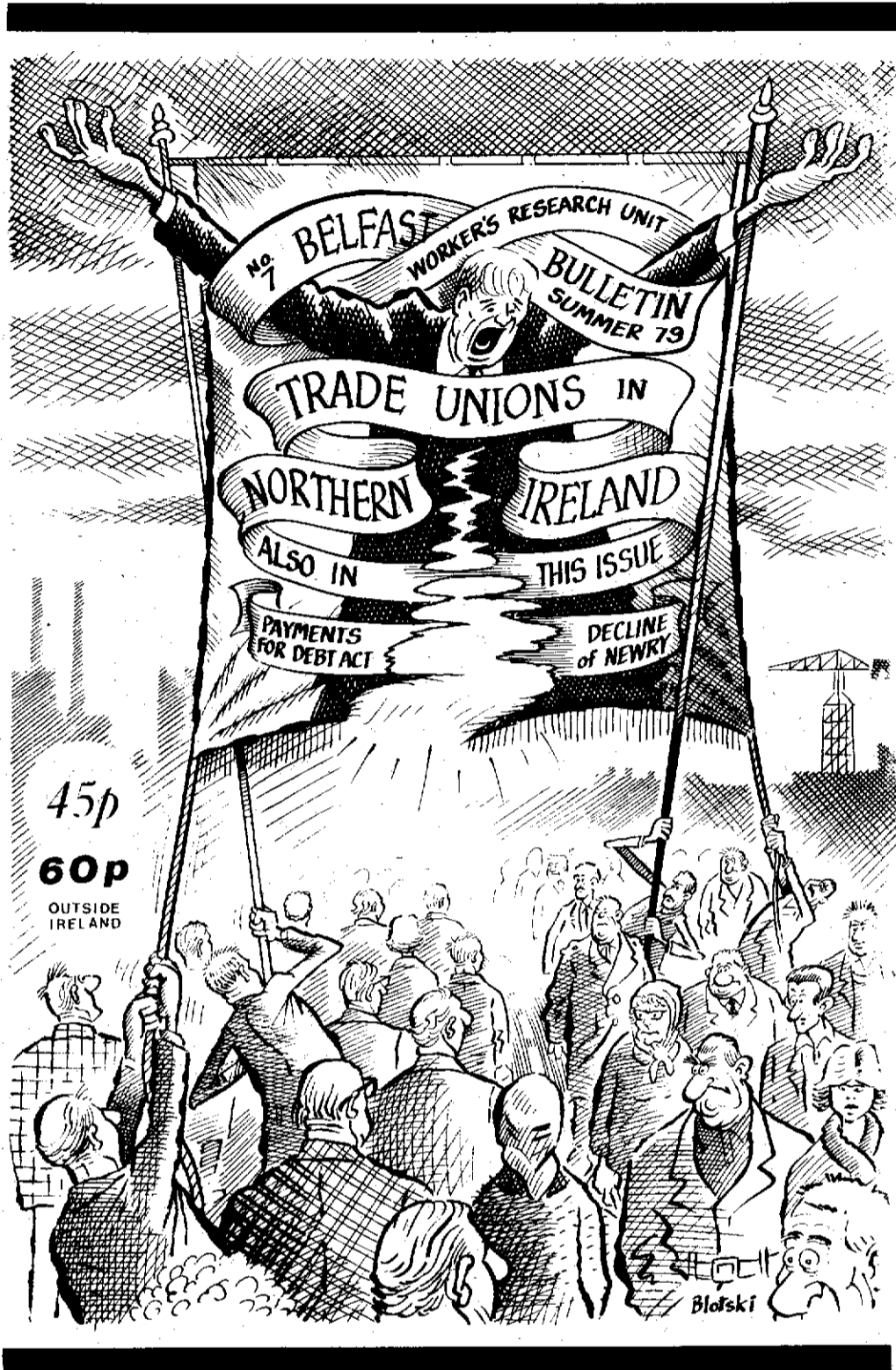
Price Paid

A similar price is being paid by the trade union leadership today. Terry Carlin, who as Northern Ireland officer of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions is the leading union bureaucrat in the North, currently serves as a member of the Northern Ireland Police Authority, whose brief is 'to maintain an adequate and efficient police force'.

When his membership of the police authority has conflicted with his position as trade union representative, Carlin has come down on the side of the former. Thus he did nothing when the 1978 conference of the ICTU decided, against Carlin's wishes, to demand a public inquiry into the death of trade unionist Brian Maguire at Castlereagh interrogation centre and charge him as Northern Ireland Officer to press the matter.

In refusing to take up the issue of Brian Maguire, Carlin was following one brand of 'non-sectarianism'. For Maguire's death was indeed a 'sectarian' issue, in that those protesting loudest over his death were from the Catholic working class community.

But explained in this way 'non-sectarian' is



a useless concept — for if sectarianism is opposition to the RUC, then the trade unions in The North of Ireland could do with a good dose of it.

As well as paying special attention to the Maguire case, the Belfast Workers Research Unit also investigates the attitude of the trade unions to the attempted Loyalist strike of 1977. The leadership of the unions opposed the strike, but again they did so in a 'non-sectarian' way.

The first statement the Northern Ireland Committee of the ICTU issued on the strike was in conjunction with the Confederation of British Industry. Its grounds for opposing the strike was that it damaged 'progress towards industrial stability'.

But no condemnation of the strike's aim was forthcoming from the Northern Ireland Committee. Indeed — although this isn't mentioned in the bulletin — Carlin went on television during the strike and backed Paisley's demand for greater 'security'.

The dilemma the trade union leaders have faced is summed up in their support of the Better Life For All Campaign. Launched in 1977, this campaign called for 'the right to live free from violence... the right to associate freely... the right to well paid work... the right to adequate social services'.

Paramilitaries

As the Workers Research Unit point out, such demands 'contained little that anyone could disagree with... They did not comprise a political programme but rather a statement of how life would be if it were — by anyone's standards — better.'

This was not how the sponsors of 'Better Life' saw it. Leading trade unionist Andy Barr argued that 'the choice for Northern Ireland people is therefore to resign themselves to the paramilitaries to fill the vacuum, or to do as trade unionists have done — support a constructive set of proposals which hold out the prospect of peace and prosperity for the people'.

What such sentiments overlooked, and what the general mythology concerning trade unionism in the North of Ireland overlooks, was pointed out in one reply to Barr from another trade unionist: 'The paramilitaries are members of all the affiliated unions'.

Indeed, the Loyalist 'paramilitaries' are more liable to be in trade unions than the Republicans, for the simple reason that Loyalists are more liable to be in employment.

Consequently, as the Workers Research Unit says, 'the unity to which union officials refer is therefore a shallow one. It might be more accurate to say that the Loyalist workers tolerate the trade union movement as long as it is concerned with bread and butter issues.'

Partition

'For their part the trade union officials have been content not to shatter this fragile state of affairs. They have remained inactive, or have sought compromises. Their non-sectarianism is passive, not the result of concerned action against sectarianism'.

Even on the 'bread and butter issues' the trade unions have a poor record, with wages lower in the North of Ireland than in Britain.

Such failures cannot simply be explained as the result of 'sell-outs' by the trade union bureaucrats. They are inherent in the context in which the unions work. The conclusion offered by the Workers Research Unit insists: 'The partition of Ireland divided not only the country, but also the workers of the country, northerners from southerners.'

'The continuation of that partition leads not only to repression and sectarianism, but to the further division of workers in the North, Protestants from Catholics. Given that, it should not be surprising that the trade union movement in the North, working within that double schism, should be impotent.'

The full argument which leads to this conclusion cannot be detailed here. But not for the first time the Workers Research Unit has produced a bulletin which is both informative and very good value. It is the best introduction to trade unionism in the North of Ireland available.

*Belfast Workers Research Unit. Bulletin No 7: Trade Unions in Northern Ireland. Price 60p. Available from WRU, c/o 52 Broadway, Belfast 10. Add 15p for p&p.

Atkins' initiative doomed

THE latest Tory initiative on Ireland is doomed. The only question is whether it will be dead by the time these words are read or whether it will last a few more weeks.

The plan was announced by Tory secretary of state Humphrey Atkins last Thursday. It involved a four party conference to discuss restoring to 'locally-elected representatives some at least of the powers of government at present exercised from Westminster'.

The first response of the Official Unionists was to announce that they would boycott the conference. Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionists laid down a number of conditions which he said would have to be met for him to attend.

The Social Democratic and



Party also expressed scepticism. Only the fourth party involved — Alliance — promised to turn up. Alliance have no MPs at Westminster and did very badly at the European elections.

Atkins may yet cobble together some conference, but this latest British initiative looks like having an even shorter life than previous ones.

When Atkins' White Paper on his proposals is published, Socialist Challenge will give a full analysis of the Tory Government's Irish policy — or non-policy, as the case may be.

Victimisation threat

By Duncan Smith

A TRADE union activist in Edinburgh was threatened with the sack because she organised a workplace meeting on Ireland.

The woman involved is Lyn Turner, publicity officer of the Edinburgh Gas branch of the National and Local Government Officers Association. The meeting arranged by Lyn was addressed by Mary Nelis of the Derry Relatives Action Committee, an organisation which campaigns for prisoner-of-war status for political prisoners in the North of Ireland.

After the meeting, management threatened Lyn with the sack, locked out the union branch from its office at the headquarters of Scottish Gas, and disciplined the branch's assistant secretary, Donald Mackenzie.

Two charges were levelled at Lyn — that she brought an 'unauthorised person' into the building and that she

held an 'unauthorised meeting'.

Lyn told Socialist Challenge: 'Although Donald and I have been singled out for punishment, this action really amounts to an attack on the whole branch. In the past we have supported the Anti Nazi League and held collections for workers in struggle.'

'But what annoys Scottish Gas the most is that in 1978 we went on strike in defence of 14 of our members who had been sacked. We got them reinstated and ever since that victory our bosses have been watching for an opportunity to weaken branch organisation.'

Lyn also noted some particularly sinister aspects of the affair: 'Many of the people who attended the meeting have been grilled as to what was actually said during it. Management appear to know so much about its political content that I suspect they were either briefed by the Special Branch or have been bugging the

union room.'

Donald Mackenzie explained how the situation had developed: 'We immediately put out a special edition of the branch news-sheet. This seems to have rattled management a bit. They have withdrawn their threat of instant dismissal. Instead both Lyn and myself have been issued with final written warnings.'

But the union branch is still locked out of its room. The obvious lesson is that it is a terrible mistake to separate 'economic' struggles in the workplace from more 'political' campaigns like 'troops out'.

Those who want to attack trade union rights share the aims and values of those who strive to maintain the silence on the British presence in Ireland. One result of the victimisation of Lyn and Duncan is that many workers at Scottish Gas now realise the connection between Ireland and trade union rights.

BATTLE OF IDEAS

From Martin Shaw

I COME not to praise revolutionary unity, but to bury it. Or, as its one-time 'patron saint', perhaps I should offer to conduct its funeral service.

Revolutionary unity was a good idea. Indeed it is a good idea. But there is no real prospect of it happening. Of those who were interested in a broad-based unity a year or so ago, Big Flame now rejects any practical moves at the present time.

The International Socialist Alliance, which I helped to launch, has faded due to lack of enthusiasm both on its own part and that of others for the unity perspective which was its foundation.

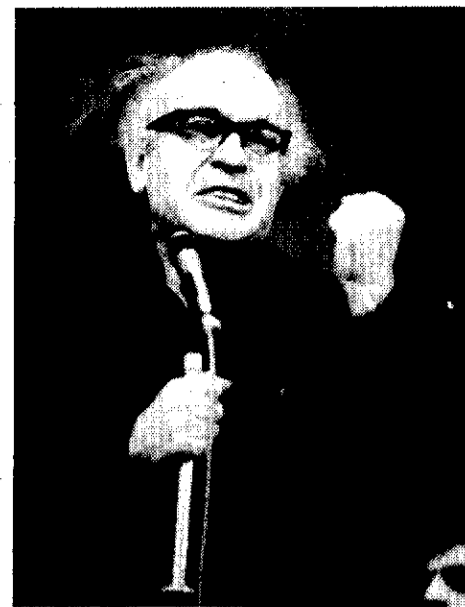
The International Marxist Group, still formally committed, has turned its attentions — more in despair, one imagines, than from conviction — back to the Socialist Workers Party, which in turn remains an unwilling partner.

Fragments

The problems revolutionary unity was designed to solve are surfacing in new forms. Much of the far left is discussing Beyond the Fragments, a useful book but one which should be renamed 'Beyond Leninism — Back to the Fragments', if the title were to reflect the contents.

The discussion has, in any case, a largely timelessness quality. The real problem is that there is no prospect of the far left with any strategy — Leninist, quasi-Leninist, non-Leninist or anti-Leninist — making a serious breakthrough in the foreseeable future.

Let's face the facts. The best opportunity



From Tony Cliff to Tony Benn?

since the war for a new party or movement to the left of the Labour Party — the late '60s and early '70s — produced no more than one modest-sized sect (the SWP) and a couple of organisations of small or tiny size but some seriousness (IMG, BF).

The latter have now proved their inability to take any serious steps towards unity. The irrelevance of the organised far left is highlighted by the advance of a new left in the Labour Party.

The left's presence seems more and more to boil down to that of a fragmented mass of both political sects and socio-political-cultural movements, existing alongside and interpenetrating with — because unable to challenge — the mass organisations of the labour movement.

I don't know what the political organisations of the left should do, but for individuals (like myself) deeply dissatisfied with each of them as they are, there is no longer

much reason to hope for positive developments from that sector.

Option

Of course, we can still be active in the movements of the left; in that sense vive the fragments! But what are the political options?

I have fought for the last 13 years for an independent socialist alternative to Labour. But, however necessary this may still be in the long run, I cannot see any good reason for socialists to hold aloof from the Labour Party at the present time; and by that I mean, at least for the period of this Tory government.

The failure of the far left (and the CP) means that the popular opposition to Tory policies — in so far as it finds political as opposed to sectoral or trade union expression — is bound to be reflected in the growth of Labour and its left.

Or to put it another way: a revolutionary left that could not pull itself together to grow under the last, appalling Labour government is not likely to prosper when the Tories offer the Labour left its present golden opportunity.

The recent record of the far left is dismally different from that of the late '60s and early '70s. There is no point looking for a repetition of that period, when the situation is different and the means are not to hand.

The real questions of the present time, as I see them, are how to develop and advance the politics of internationalist socialism — in the many movements of the left, yes, but also within the rising left in the Labour Party.

And how socialists like us, who have been through the experiences of the late '60s and '70s, should organise ourselves for such a new perspective in the first half of the 1980s.

FORGET REVOLUTIONARY UNITY?

Requiem for the ISA

From the former International Socialist Alliance

AT A day conference on 29-30 September the International Socialist Alliance decided to dissolve itself. Two caucuses were formed to continue the discussions in progress with Big Flame and the International Marxist Group, and plans for the production of an independent journal are being actively pursued.

The conference was small but enthusiastic. It was recognised that the re-groupment on the left which the ISA was set up to promote was no longer immediately on the agenda. While the objective need for it was as great as ever, there was no longer a tide running in its favour.

The Socialist Workers Party remains sectarian and BF no longer sees a unity with the IMG as feasible in the short term. The IMG's open invitation to others on the left is appreciated as a valuable gesture, but one which clearly would not now have any short term results.

It was also clear that ISA members felt there was an identifiable political tradition which they were associated with, not expressed by any other grouping on the left.

Doubts as to the possibility of developing it within any other existing grouping were universally expressed, so no grouping of ISA supporters, whatever their personal inclinations, was ready to push for joining BF or the IMG at the present moment (let alone going into the SWP).

Equally we recognised that the impasse we found ourselves in was one shared by many others on the left, including a large number of ex-International Socialist members who were still in touch with on a formal or informal level. The network nature



Stephen Marks, ISA.

of the ISA was valued, but it wasn't felt it could be maintained in its present form.

What was felt possible was, first, to pursue the notion of an independent revolutionary journal. Previous initiatives had got bogged down in discussions between three organisations trying to reach a greater measure of agreement than was perhaps necessary merely for the production of a discussion journal.

Secondly, it was resolved to continue discussions with Big Flame and the IMG with more informal caucuses than had hitherto existed. Individuals may have already decided that the best solution for them personally was to join one or another of these organisations, but it was accepted that these would just be individual acts.

Everyone was agreed on the desirability of seeking more collective solutions and the representatives from BF and the IMG at the conference were extremely encouraging in this regard.



Socialist Unity election campaign.

We stick to our guns!

By Phil Hearse of the International Marxist Group

AT ITS recent conference, attended by 20 people, the International Socialist Alliance decided to shut up the shop and form two caucuses. One of these would discuss fusion with Big Flame and the other with the International Marxist Group.

The ISA was born out of a regroupment of former members of the International Socialists (now SWP) most of whom had left or been expelled in 1974-5. These included over a hundred supporters of the Workers League, a group which included some of the founder members of IS and some important trade union cadres.

At the first ISA conference, attended by 150 people, Martin Shaw argued for participating in Socialist Challenge and ultimate regroupment with the IMG. This proposal was considerably modified. It was clear that the ISA would become a talking shop unless it had a clear political

project.

The fact that its funeral assembly was attended by only 20 people reflected its inability to exist as an independent force. And now Martin Shaw, one of the founding members of the ISA, has decided that life is politically easier in the Labour Party under the Tories.

The ISA had come to the conclusion that it would join a broader regroupment involving Big Flame and ultimately the SWP. BF backed out of any regroupment with the IMG. In our opinion this is not unrelated to a refusal to come to grips with the question of building a Leninist party in the conditions of late capitalism.

The ISA, too, lost its nerve. The SWP had set its face against any short-term regroupment.

Since the ISA was never a properly structured organisation with its own programme but only a network of militants working towards regroupment, there was never any structured political activity on a national basis.

Indecision led the ISA to virtual paralysis.

Even the very modest proposal of the IMG for a joint discussion journal got no response in practice. Demoralisation set in, and militants dropped out of activity.

In our view, all this was the disastrous consequence of adopting a position of waiting for the 'perfect' regroupment to come about rather than taking immediate steps to regroup with those forces which were prepared to engage in common activity in a joint democratic centralist organisation, which could have acted as a springboard for a wider regroupment.

A section of the ISA membership has begun to move towards anti-Leninist, libertarian positions. This coincided with the unprincipled manoeuvres of Big Flame which despite describing itself as a 'Leninist vanguard' organisation — is attempting to build itself by becoming cheer leaders for the anti-Leninist ideas in Beyond the Fragments.

Defeatism

The introspection and defeatism of some members of the ISA fits in neatly with Big Flame's self-portrait as an 'open' and 'non-dogmatic' organisation. 'Open', that is, to everyone but the dreaded IMG. 'Non-dogmatic' on every question but regroupment with the IMG.

As for us, we are naturally disappointed. We do not regard this outcome as inevitable. We believe that if Martin Shaw's orientation had been adopted and the ISA had fused with the IMG, a tiny step forward would have been taken towards a broader regroupment.

Martin Shaw joins the Labour Party as an individual. We think he is wrong (and we are the ones who are always accused of being 'soft entrists'). While an orientation to the Labour Party and debates with the Bennites are vital, the constituency Labour parties are not the arena where these debates are being resolved at the moment.

We still maintain that it is possible in this period to build a large revolutionary organisation, based on democratic discussion and open debate which could challenge the Communist Party as the major force on the left of the Labour Party. It is on these and related themes that we will be discussing prior to the next conference of the IMG scheduled for February.

Apologies

IN last week's issue the poem 'Pigs' and Potatoes' was by N. Racine-Jaques. In the same issue we also published another poem by the same author entitled 'Jean Seberg': in the third line the word should have been dirt, not dirty. Both poems were copyrighted when presented to our editorial offices, and we agreed that the author should retain his copyright on their publication in Socialist Challenge.

Constitutional wrangles?

THE 1977 Labour Party conference overwhelmingly supported the abolition of the House of Lords. Not one NEC or Cabinet member spoke against it. Yet the 1979 election manifesto merely contained a promise to 'reform' the Lords. How did this happen?

Almost everyone knows that this is only one case representative of the general attitude of the party leadership. Callaghan was simply not having it.

Indeed he even threatened to resign if this policy was incorporated in the manifesto. He preferred pre-election chaos to bowing to the democratically decided views of conference.

Of course, having got his way on this and other policy issues the election was still lost — something which we should not let him or the Labour right forget.

So if the party is not to accept the status of a rather weak pressure group then the leader must be elected by an electoral college.

Despite the severe limitations of any constitutional changes, I would argue that no other reform is individually more important than attempting to make the leader more responsive to the party as a whole.

In the coming period this 'constitutional wrangle' remains of fundamental importance. In the long run the Labour left must produce a new leadership. In the short term we have to do all we can to stop the rot.

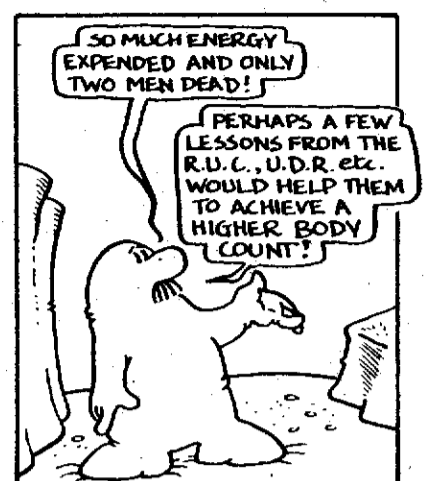
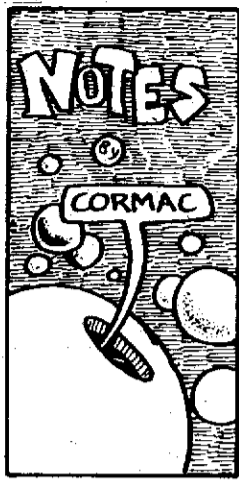
The fight for party democracy must not stop at this conference. The basis of our democratic socialist perspective rests on accountability to the rank and file by all those who hold office on behalf of the party.

We cannot risk being sidetracked by Callaghan's spurious argument that we should instead be fighting the Tories.

Decision making and control must be the prerogative of party members, the notion of public primaries is an effort to sidestep party control.

A democratic say for all the membership provides the only sound basis from which the left can fight for change. Our concept of democracy is not tactical but one that seeks to build the party on the basis of participation.

At the end of the day it must be acknowledged that whatever constitutional reforms are gained they



can in themselves never guarantee a leadership that is responsive to the party's socialist aspirations. They may stop the rot in the short term, but in the longer term, the left has to grow stronger and create an alternative leadership.

Reforms of the party structure need to conform to the perspective of creating a powerful Labour left with a responsive leadership committed to socialism. In short, automatic reselection is not automatic socialism. **GARY KENT, Brighton ILP**

A number of errors

THERE WERE a number of errors in my article on the Ford pay claim as it appeared in *Socialist Challenge* 25 October.

Firstly no 'B' shift shop meeting took place at Dagenham on 27 September. If it had, around 10,000 night shift workers would have been present and unanimously endorsed the Ford Workers Group proposals for a £125 basic and a Coventry stewards conference to decide the claim! If that had happened we would be on strike by now.

There was a meeting of around 100 workers on the Press Shop B shift who endorsed the FWG claim. The Press Shop is a section of the Body Plant which is one of five plants at Dagenham.

Secondly, one, not 'various' shop stewards committees, has called for reconvening the Coventry shop stewards conference — the Dagenham Body Plant.

These points are not small — the officials and full-time convenors are firmly in the saddle on the Ford claim this year. It is this complete absence of

democracy, discussion and preparation for a fight in drawing up the claim which makes a Vauxhall type deal possible — not necessarily the inadequacy of the individual demands in the claim.

Finally the article said that Ford workers 'found out' what the claim was four days before it was submitted on Friday 26 October. In fact a steward at Langley who supports the FWG hassled his convenor till he spilt the beans. A few hundred of us were the wiser — something like 57,000 hourly paid workers may have found out in the news on Friday night.

The main points of my original article were the difficulty of confronting the bureaucracy even in a well-organised place like Ford, the centrality of trade union democracy and of mass participation in deciding even the smallest economic demands — a problem your Leyland correspondent is also painfully aware of. This was not clear in the article as it appeared.

Ford Dagenham correspondent

A deeply worried socialist

IN AN article on Dylan two brief references are made to Dylan's connections with Zionism. For Dave Rosenberg (Letters 18 October) this is sufficient to accuse *Socialist Challenge* of 'vile and base anti-semitism'.

Now, Dave doesn't say Nigel Hamilton's article is factually wrong. That's just as well because Nigel could have said more on this score — for example that Dylan contributed to the Jewish Defence League, at the time the most racist right-wing Zionist

group. I also remember Mrs Zimmerman (Dylan's mother) being interviewed on Galei Zahal (Israel Army radio) about her son's support for Israel.

So as *Socialist Challenge* is openly anti-Zionist why does Dave consider that stating the fact of Dylan's Zionism is anti-semitic? If Dave really believes that all anti-Zionism is veiled anti-semitism, why bother to write to a paper staffed and read mostly by anti-semites?

I hope it's because Dave believes he is a socialist, but is deeply worried by the fact that so many other socialists feel this is incompatible with Zionism.

PAUL SAMUELS, Surbiton

Our watchword

IT IS clear that the growing offensive of the working class against Thatcher's attacks will mean greater use of the police and other repressive bodies of the state. For example, the events in Southall, hospitalisation of Vauxhall pickets at Harwich, the Kelly and Cavanagh campaigns on Merseyside. Blair Peach's death wasn't the first and certainly won't be the last.

An important point of principle has been raised in this situation especially over the events of 23 April in Southall. The article in *Socialist Challenge* of 18 October said 'we should be considering a writ in the High Court to demand that (magistrates) Badge, Cook, Canham and McDermott are biased and that they should be removed from the

bench'. Accompanying the article was a photograph of posters reading 'Public Enquiry Now' — a slogan which was also mentioned many times in the reports of the Blair Peach pickets.

Both of these demands go against our principle of **class independence**. What does it mean to call for a public enquiry? Is it like the one Lord Widgery headed which whitewashed the Paratroop Regiment's murder of 14 unarmed people in Derry in 1972? Or Lord Scarman's enquiry into the police-murder of Kevin Gately in Red Lion Square, which blamed the IMG for his death?

Or does it mean Tariq Ali, Len Murray, Home Secretary Willie Whitelaw and John Mervin of the CBI, heading a jury elected from the so-called 'general public'?

Revolutionary socialists call for none of these. We call for a trade union/labour movement enquiry. Why?

Phrases like the 'general public' and 'national interest' are constantly used by the media to **hide** the fact that the 'public' is divided up into two classes. The capitalist class uses everything in its power to divide and beat back the working class.

Another important reason why we call for labour movement enquiries is to encourage the self-activity and confidence of the working-class. Only working people have any interest in finding out the truth about Blair Peach's death, not his killers.

Our watchword is class independence! Our slogan is labour movement enquiry!
MARK TURNBULL, Liverpool

HOMENEWS

SOCIALIST TEACHERS face a big challenge this winter. The drastic cutbacks the Tories have made in public spending threaten jobs, school meals, teaching materials and nursery education.

Many classroom teachers also feel angry about the sell out over the last pay claim where the heads, mainly men, received a packet and the lowest paid, often women, got a pittance. We asked Wanda Maciuszko, a teacher in Waltham Forest, to see how two journals, *Socialist Teacher* and *Rank and File Teacher*, shaped up to this challenge.

“The fact there are two socialist journals in teaching that both cover similar ground is I think a sad reflection of the lack of unity that exists among the left in teaching and this needs to be tackled urgently.

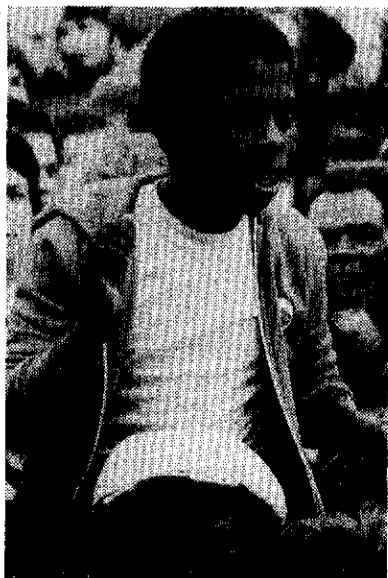
Rank and File Teacher provides many useful facts and guidelines about the cuts and the current salary situation. Its policy of campaigning for £15 a week rise for all teachers seems much fairer than the NUT executive's position which seeks to increase differentials.

Spenders

The centre spread on Tory cuts puts paid to the myth of Britain being one of the biggest welfare spenders in the EEC or that the spending cuts will save money.

In conclusion it states 'So cuts in the education services are short-sighted and reactionary. As such they should be opposed by all trade unionists. It is in their interests and in the interests of the country'.

Socialist teachers: the search for unity



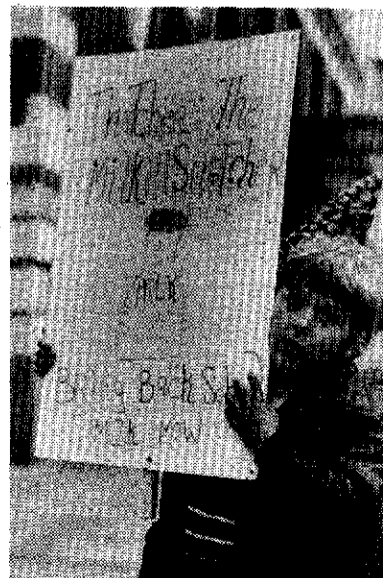
Socialist Teacher attempts to answer some more basic questions about the cuts. The editorial argues that 'the Tories now intend a re-shaping not just a scaling down of education'. Not only do we need to fight the cuts but we also need to look at the philosophy behind them.

Socialist Teacher is available from Archie Faulds, 52 Langley Rd, Harrow, Middx. Rank and File can be obtained from 265a Seven Sisters Rd, London N4.

In attacking comprehensive education, re-introducing direct grant schools, and discouraging progressive developments in education, the Tories are attacking the principle of equal opportunity that was the hallmark of the sixties.

Socialist teachers need to be able to explain the kind of education we want, not just defend what exists. As Tony Graham states: 'Increasingly over the last five years the organised left has had to face up to the fact that a line on education (euphemism for a strategic analysis) is not an optional luxury'.

I think there needs to be more discussion on tactics. Is the unofficial action that *Rank and File* puts



forward always feasible? It's vital to oppose the right wing domination of the union by challenging them in elections but that requires a minimal unity between *Rank and File* and the *Socialist Teachers Alliance*.

The Midlands conference on Education Under Attack points

towards the right sort of approach to unity. Hopefully we'll be able to build on that in London this month.

The issue of racism is tackled by both journals. *Rank and File Teacher* takes up the case of a Birmingham teacher who is being victimised because she was convicted of an assault on an anti-racist picket. *Socialist Teacher* publishes a profile of Anita Bhalla, which is a powerful indictment of the racist education system we as teachers perpetuate.

Less blatant racism is also a cause for concern. Why is so much money being spent on disruptive units to control the large numbers of black kids that inhabit them? Why are so many black children being suspended from school in areas like Haringey just before exams?

Dinners

In campaigning to defend school dinners, socialist teachers need to point out the effects on working mothers. Women in and outside-teaching need to be on the attack as well as defending existing rights. *Rank and File* provides an excellent example of how to do this in the article on maternity rights. It's vital that the issues of racism and sexism become a central part of anti-cuts campaigns.

There are many other informative and thought provoking articles in both journals. For me the most optimistic was 'Power sharing in a Spanish School, which gives an account of a school where a lot of the ideas of socialist teachers have actually been put into practice.' ”

BOOK REVIEWS

Britain and The Jews of Europe 1939-45

By Bernard Wasserstein
Clarendon Press, £7.95

WHICH country had civil servants and politicians who stated the following during the last world war?... 'The Jews have done nothing but add to our difficulties by propaganda and deeds since the war began'. 'I am convinced that in their hearts they hate us and have always hated us; they hate all Gentiles... they cannot even keep their hands off illegal immigration'. 'In my opinion a disproportionate amount of the time of this office (the Foreign Office) is wasted with dealing with these wailing Jews'.

No, the answer isn't Germany. In fact it was Britain. Bernard Wasserstein's book shows that for whatever reason the British government declared war, it certainly was not to fight the horrors of anti-semitism. Just the opposite — throughout the entire war Britain refused to give any assistance to the Jews of Europe.

The main emphasis of the government's policy towards the Jews was to block off all escape routes. They prevented Jews entering

British complicity in the holocaust

Palestine — which at that time was under British control. Throughout the war, ships with Jewish survivors were regularly refused admission to Palestine. After one ship (the Salvador) sank with over 200 people drowning, the head of the Foreign Office Refugee Section said: 'There could have been no more opportune disaster from the point of view of stopping the traffic.'

They controlled all Jewish refugees to Britain itself. For instance in 1942 the Vichy regime in France agreed to hand over 19,000 Jews to the Germans to be deported to Poland. This meant certain murder. Appeals to the British were refused on the grounds that 'We cannot turn our country into a sponge for Europe'.

Wasserstein produces evidence to show that for the first 18 months of the war, the Germans had a policy of expulsion and not extermination of the Jews. However, the British refused to take any expelled Jews on the grounds that they were not 'War refugees in the sense that they are in danger because they have fought against the Germans but simply racial refugees'. Most were eventually exterminated.

Jews who had managed to get to Britain before the war were put in 'internment camps' on the grounds that they were potential 'enemy aliens'. Thousands of these Jews were then forcibly deported to various parts of the British empire. In July 1940 a ship-load of deported Jews were killed when the Arandora Star was torpedoed.

Combined with this was the utterly cynical attitude of the government towards the information they had about the concentration camps. The true facts were known from at least April 1940.

They were greeted with remarks (from the Foreign Office) like: 'As a general rule Jews are inclined to magnify their persecutions', and 'I remember the exaggerated stories of Jewish pogroms in Poland after the last war which were found to have little substance'.

Though a public declaration was made in December 1942 this was mainly for anti-German propaganda. Even as late as 1945 an official of the Refugee Section of the Foreign Office wrote that 'One notable tendency in Jewish

reports on this problem is to exaggerate the numbers of deportations and deaths.'

Throughout the war, Jewish organisations made requests to the government to bomb the gas chambers and incinerators at Auschwitz. They were told that such pin-point bombing was technically impossible. However in September 1944 the US airforce was able to bomb the IG Farben industrial complex which was immediately adjacent to Auschwitz.

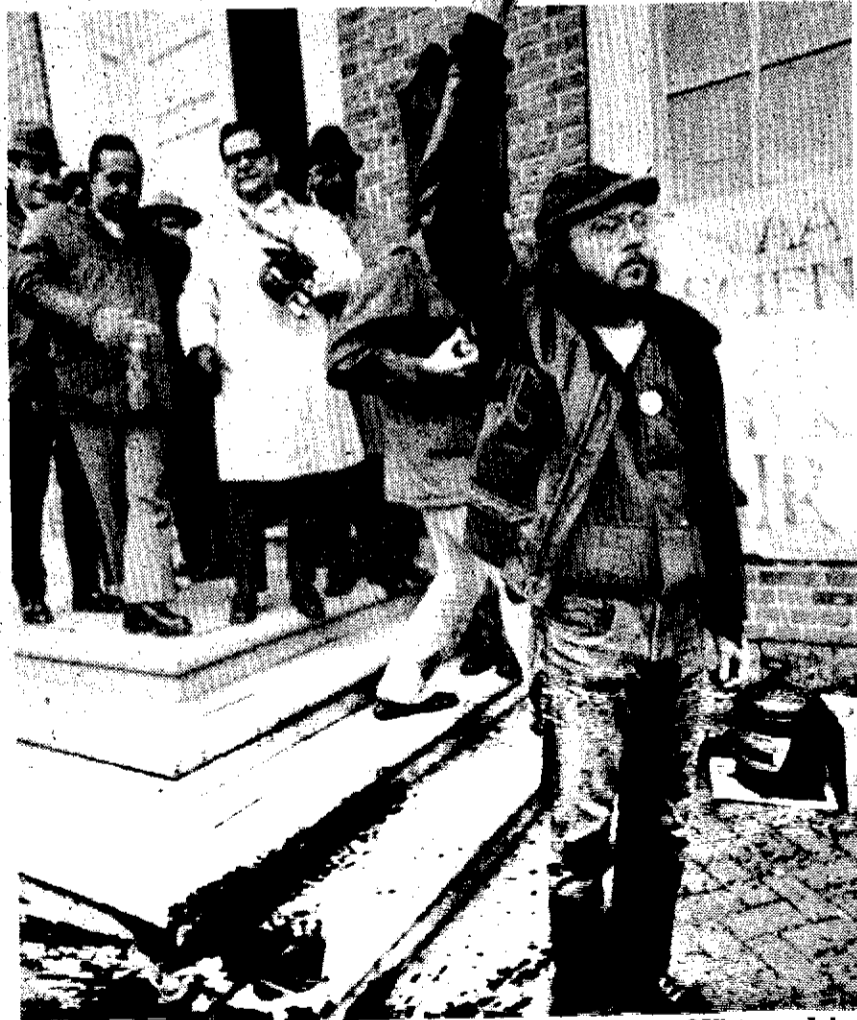
There is no other explanation of all this than deep-rooted anti-semitism. For instance during the war the popular press regularly featured anti-Jewish articles, accusing Jews in this country of profiteering, food hoarding and pacifism.

As one Polish Jew wrote shortly before his own suicide:

'Let my death be an energetic cry of protest against the indifference of the world which witnesses the extermination of the Jewish people without taking any steps to prevent it'.

STEVE COHEN

STYMYING US IMPERIALISM



ONE of the actions which helped to pull the United States out of Vietnam. John Birch, of the Vietnam Vets Against the War, throws a jar of his own blood on the steps of Independence Hall in Philadelphia in 1972.

The NHS - in sickness and in health?

Health in Danger — The Crisis in the National Health Service
By David Widgery
Macmillan Press, £2.95

ONE OF the great strengths of this book is its assessment of the inadequacy in concept and the failures in practice of the NHS. It traces the history of medical services in Britain from the atrocities of the Poor Law to the failure of the NHS 'thirty years on' and outlines a socialist

critique. This encompasses the cheapness of the service to capitalism, the failure to improve social class differences in ill-health, the undemocratic structure of the NHS, its sexism towards women, the alienation of the patient, and so on.

The book includes a gripping account of the rise of militancy among health workers in the first half of the seventies. Drawing on action sheets and rank and file papers from the period, David Widgery, who is a member of the SWP, gives the first really comprehensive history of these important struggles to date.

The seriousness of the Tories' present axing demands that health service militants be armed with a detailed understanding of the size and scope of the NHS; its social and political history, and the scale of the cuts, and their likely actual effects on the service. While the book is a mine of

Out Now

By Fred Halstead
Monad Press, distributed by Pathfinder, £4.50

THE apparent limitation of this book — the fact that it's written for activists — is its strength. In detail, Fred Halstead documents the movement in the United States against the wars in Indo-China, and in the best Marxist tradition the book is a polemic. Its relevance will be immediately recognisable to militants in Britain attempting to build campaigns against British imperialism's colonial policies.

Halstead's argument is that the greatest aid revolutionaries in an imperialist country can offer to struggles in oppressed nations is to build a mass movement which can check and finally stymie the imperialist intervention.

Halstead illustrates how this political line was able to prove the most effective in the USA despite considerable support for alternatives from the right and the left. The Socialist Workers Party and Young Socialist Alliance [American co-thinkers of the Fourth International] fought to maintain the mass character of the movement, even when there was no mass support.

They insisted on a concentration on the issue of the war. Their method was to build an open, democratic campaign which would express itself through united actions within which all political forces would be able to raise their particular opposition to the war. The mass character of the campaign could then be weighed against those seeking an accommodation with imperialism; and those aiming to turn the anti-war movement into a 'third party'.

The inability of US imperialism to defeat the Indo-Chinese people combined with a process of social radicalisation in America which found its outlet in the largest anti-war movement in an imperialist country since Russia in 1917. The breadth of this movement is startling. In May 1970, after the invasion of Cambodia, over four million out of a total of seven million students took part in strikes and demonstrations. In April 1971, on the same day, demonstrations of 750,000 took place in Washington; 300,000 in San Francisco; plus myriad other actions throughout the country.

All areas of American society were affected. There were even instances of organised opposition in the CIA. Halstead's material on the crumbling of morale in the American army and the organisation of the GIs against the war is political writing of a high order.

The book makes it clear how such a movement contributes to a more permanent change in society. The principle of non-exclusion which the anti-war movement adhered to meant that socialists were able to work openly once again after the long era of McCarthy, and despite the fact that America was at war with 'communists'.

The oppressed nationalities, the women's liberation, gay, student, and the workers' movements were also able to make common cause against the US government. Such an experience is bound to be repeated. Activists in the United Troops Out Movement and Anti-Apartheid will probably gain the most from this book, but it's recommended for all socialists as a genuinely inspiring contribution.

STEPHEN BELL

useful information on all these questions it is marred by a political shyness which limits its usefulness.

Though Widgery frequently castigates social democracy for compromising over private practice, for cynically turning tail on the cuts, and for having a gradualist conception of progress towards socialism, at no stage does he even outline a possible alternative strategy. The reader is left with no clue as to what might have been done about these outrageous defeats and betrayals.

By describing but failing to politically challenge the fundamental

economic rationalisations for cuts offered by successive Labour and Tory administrations and the return of what he calls 'a harsher, less caring Britain, for the return of the Poor Law mentality', the author swamps us with a seeming historical inevitability. But **Health in Danger** remains essential reading for health workers and users of the NHS.

PATRICK BYRNE

THE books reviewed here are available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper Street, London N1. Add 10% if ordering by mail.

1979 Socialist Bookfair

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Oppose Tory plans on Zimbabwe

ALL OUT 11 NOV

By Roy Alexander

THE TALKS over the future of Zimbabwe could be rapidly moving towards a conclusion — and one that will hold out no benefits for the oppressed majority.

Having rammed a constitution down the throat of the Patriotic Front that guarantees the interests of the exploiting white minority, the Tory government is now trying to impose a scheme for the 'transfer of power' that will give maximum advantage to the present coalition of white racists and black collaborators.

Pressures from international opinion and the black African states mean that the Smith/Muzorewa regime must make at least a show of stepping down for new elections to be held before any recognition or lifting of sanctions is granted. The crucial question is: under what conditions will the new elections be held?

Untouched

If the structures of white wealth and power — control of the land, the mines and factories, the top posts of the military and state machines — are left untouched, then there will be huge possibilities for arm-twisting by the whites. This may not be blatant ballot-rigging of the sort that Commonwealth observers would see, but an equally undemocratic behind-the-scenes manipulation.

What is 'free' about a vote in which every black elector is made to know that his or her boss or landlord has a definite idea about how they should vote and that this view is backed up by the government administrators, the police, the army? What is democratic about an election in which the opposition has to carry on its campaign under the guns of those it has been fighting for years?

The formal resignation of the Smith/Muzorewa government and its replacement by a British governor will make no difference at all to the basic structures of power. The voice giving the orders may have changed, but the same people will be interpreting them, deciding which to follow and which to ignore, and carrying them out. That fact will be understood by every black voter in Zimbabwe.

Willing

It is hardly surprising that Muzorewa has indicated the willingness of his government to step down. His supporters will continue to occupy key positions under any British governor. And if they were to fare badly in the election, there would be nothing to stop them staging a coup and sending the governor packing, just as Ian Smith did in 1965.

Muzorewa and Smith have nothing to lose by going along with Carrington. And they know that the reward for cooperation is big — British recognition, lifting of sanctions, and British aid to smash the Patriotic Front's resistance.

Moreover, the British scheme is such a transparent manoeuvre that the Patriotic Front is quite likely to

reject it. Then Muzorewa and Smith will collect their bonus absolutely free — the prize for being the good fellows who would go along with the Tories' scheme.

Through the Lancaster House talks the Tory government is gearing up for an attack on the Zimbabwe people that will make what they are doing in this country look like a garden party.

Building an effective struggle against the Tories means linking up in solidarity with those fighting them overseas — and there is no better opportunity than the demonstration called by the Zimbabwe Emergency Coordinating Committee on 11 November. The labour movement should be there in force.

AA BACKS TU ACTION

By Max Holz

TRADE union action on Zimbabwe and South Africa — that was the call from last Sunday's annual general meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

After a vigorous debate, a resolution from the Manchester AA group was carried pledging the movement — as a major priority — to give support to shop stewards committees and AA members campaigning for the implementation of sanctions in the workplace.

Manchester AA members explained that trade union support for sanctions could only be made effective through direct action by trade unionists themselves.

In order to assist such moves, AA will be organising a network of trade unionists involved in the sanctions campaign, and calling regional working conferences on the implementation of sanctions.



Photo: STEVE MORGAN

THE South African Barbarians rugby team has left Britain, and according to manager Chick Henderson 'everything went smoothly'.

So smoothly that the South African team — made up of eight whites, eight coloureds, and eight blacks — was forced to play its matches in small out-of-the-way places surrounded by thousands of police at enormous public expense. So smoothly that demonstrators picketed every match — the 700-strong picket at Llanelli last week (above) was the biggest demonstration in the town since the General Strike.

So smoothly that some black members of the team were acutely embarrassed when a Llanelli delegation which was allowed to meet them asked why it was that the South African Rugby Union, the 50,000-strong non-racial organisation, has condemned the tour as a sham.

In South Wales the Barbarians were even forced to cancel one fixture for lack of opponents. And the Welsh Rugby Union has already had to pay a price for its support of the tour — the withdrawal of rate relief on its Cardiff ground by the Labour council.

DEMONSTRATE

SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER
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Support the Zimbabwe liberation struggle
Victory to the Patriotic Front

No sell-out in Zimbabwe
Hands off Zimbabwe

No collaboration with the Muzorewa-Smith regime
Sanctions must stay

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MARCH TO RALLY IN TRAFALGAR SQUARE