

Socialist Challenge

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March & Rally, Sunday October 26th
Assemble 11am Hyde Park/Rally 2.30pm Trafalgar Square

JOBS NOT BOMBS

'£5 billion on Trident, 590 jobs threatened at Gardner's — the real face of Tory priorities,' says Tom Macafee, convener of occupied Gardner's plant, whose strike was made official by the Engineering Union this week



BEHIND the grotesque 'unity', standing ovations, and backslappings of last week's Tory conference, Thatcher's government is in crisis.

Little things show this. Sir Keith 'mad monk' Joseph was deemed to be a bit out of touch and 'theoretical'. He received only lukewarm applause. Angus Maude gave him a slap on the wrist by forthrightly acknowledging that unemployment is *not* the fault of the unemployed themselves.

He has clearly been watching the opinion polls. Despite Tory claims that the key issue is the supposed 'fight against inflation', a clear majority of people think the issue of unemployment is the number one question. According to an opinion poll in the *Daily Mail* a whopping 65 per cent think the Tories are 'doing a bad job in tackling unemployment'.

Deluge

Meanwhile, at the conference, any mention of lowering interest rates received immediate applause. Lord Thorneycroft, party chairman, and Thatcher both stressed that the Tory government will stay 'on course'. Thatcher has had to say this at every opportunity lately; her policy is clearly not working as planned.

Despite this the Thatcher leadership had absolutely nothing positive to offer at the Tory conference. Her only reply to critics was to repeat De Gaulle's famous comment, 'After me, the deluge'. Only the present Tory leadership stood between Britain and a 'marxist dictatorship' under Tony Benn. Benn's standing must have risen in the estimate of serious militants.

But as for Thatcher's standing, the *Guardian* put it rather well in their comment on the vicious beating of a Right to Work demonstrator who breached conference security guards: 'The atmosphere of the Palace of Versailles seemed to have entered the souls of some Conservatives in the hall'. Marie Antoinette contemptuously dismissed the cries of the people for bread with the response, 'Let them eat cake'. Her refusal to make a U-turn cost her her head!

Sacrilege

So, despite appearances, big divisions exist in the Tory Party. From all sides there are calls to 'change course'. Geoffrey Rippon, ex-cabinet minister, and now Ted Heath, have both called for a U-turn. Heath, much more astute than Thatcher, is concerned at the social consequences of the mounting anger of the working class. His sidekick in the Cabinet, Peter Walker, used his talk on 'Agriculture' to launch a thinly disguised attack on government policy.

He told his audience that the key to success of a number of countries had been the

working class a Right to Work supporter who penetrated the conference was beaten unconscious by security guards and dragged from the hall.

The demonstration included miners from South Wales and Scotland, engineers from

The crisis behind the Tory smiles



Tory 'wets' Walker and Prior: tears behind the laughter?

'balanced relation between judicious state intervention and private initiative'. In these days such talk is sacrilege. But all John Biffen, a Thatcherite hard-liner, could do was rage that people with clear differences no longer do the honourable thing and resign!

The slump in Britain is already much deeper than in 1974/5. The Tories have made the recession bite ever deeper. They have simultaneously maintained tight control of

the money supply, high interest rates, low government borrowing, and a high pound.

Everything is dedicated to boosting unemployment high enough and fast enough to break the militancy of the working class. This is what the Tories mean by 'creating a climate of fear'.

Thatcher drew the lesson from the Heath government that the strength and combativity of the working class in the factories and plants could not be broken through mere appeals to

'national unity', or use of legal instruments and direct repression. It needed the material effects of mass unemployment.

The working class was initially stunned by the rapidly mounting unemployment — jumping 20 per cent in August alone. Consequently major groups of workers have been unable to challenge their misleaders and take a stand against cutbacks, closures, and short-time working.

At first the imposition of wage rises only half the inflation rate on important groups of workers gave the idea that Thatcher's policy was working. But evidence is growing that it has been unable to destroy the militancy of the working class. A new mood of resistance is developing.

Since they failed to make a sacrificial lamb out of the steelworkers on the wages' front, the Tories have been forced to avoid a policy of head-on confrontation with powerful unions over wages before the unemployment weapon has done its dirty work. But this policy creates its own problems as there is no artificial divide between the miners and the dockers and the rest of the working class.

Up to now the bosses have been prepared to put up with economic policies against their immediate interests given the prospects of defeating the workers in the long run. But the prospect of the failure of Thatcher's policies is causing them to moan — hence the calls for the lowering of interest rates.

Flagging

But this would give a big boost to inflation unless a corresponding cut was made to public spending. On this front the Tories face a developing movement behind recalcitrant Labour councils. So the Tories have problems in guaranteeing anything to the bosses to shore up their flagging support.

Thatcher will not give up easily. The cost of failure would not just be a crisis inside the Tory Party or an electoral defeat, but the creation of a crisis which could affect the whole political system. The moves to strengthen the House of Lords were not purely inspired by Benn's threat at the Labour Party conference to abolish the Upper Chamber.

The emergence of a left alternative to Callaghan at the Labour Party conference gives a new twist to the crisis of the Thatcher government.

Despite Benn's opposition to the use of 'industrial muscle' against the Tory government, this new mood favours the development of mass action against the government.

The development of such action could bring the calls for a change of course to a crescendo, seriously weakening the government internally. Such a weakening would lay the basis for the collapse of the government under further blows from the working class. This is the meaning of the Tory Party conference.

Tories cornered on 10 Oct

By Patrick Sikorski

OVER 6,000 trade unionists, unemployed youth and pensioners cornered the Tories in Brighton last Friday.

Thatcher's claim to popular support for her policies was exposed by the need for 2,500 police with dogs, horses, and a helicopter to protect the Tory conference against the mass demonstration.

In a small but graphic example of Thatcher's intentions for the whole

Manchester and Belfast, printers from Fleet Street, dockers from Liverpool and London, as well as transport and local government workers.

Right to Work marchers picketed schools in Brighton in the morning and over 100 students from Falmer school joined the march before the authorities could lock the school gates.

Succeed

Lack of co-operation on the day unfortunately led to two demonstrations converging on the conference and a half-hearted attempt by the Transport and General Workers' Union to hold their own meeting some distance from the conference hall.

Meanwhile at the Right to Work campaign rally 1,200 demonstrators heard John Deason appeal for fighting unity between the employed and the unemployed against Thatcher's deliberate creation of unemployment.

The Right to Work campaign registered a big success in gaining sponsorship for the march from 670 bona fide labour movement bodies. The unity achieved with the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions (LCDTU) had resulted in the backing from the executives of the TGWU and the train drivers union, ASLEF.

But the failure to achieve a single demonstration on the day meant that the bankrupt policy of the LCDTU and TGWU of import controls to stop unemployment went virtually unchallenged.

Jobs

It is vital that policies of worksharing with no loss of pay, for a 35-hour week, and for occupations against job loss are fought for at the next major national focus against unemployment — the joint TUC and Labour Party demonstration in Liverpool on 29 November.



Transport union leaders backed the 10 October jobs protest

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By Celia Pugh

On 9 October a British Steel Corporation spokesperson speculated that 25,000 more steel jobs are to be axed. The threatened 'reshaping of the industry' has confirmed fears that the Welsh steel plants at Port Talbot and Llanwern could face further cutbacks.

Unity with steelworkers throughout the country is uppermost in the minds of the Llanwern Action Group, the rank and file steelworkers' organisation. In the last few months they have attended many national meetings and lobbies to put their case. At a fringe meeting at the recent Labour Party conference Ray Davies explained the bitterness of many steelworkers at the failure of the TUC to save jobs. He told the 260 delegates at the meeting that the TUC should be organising action to get a 35-hour week instead of organising talks with the Tories.

Emlyn Williams, President of the South Wales Miners, backed Ray Davies' condemnation of the TUC. 'The South Wales Executive now have a clear mandate to take in-

BSC plan more Welsh closures

dustrial action against pit closures,' he said. 'The unions nationally have to make up their minds whether we are working class trade unions or bodies of worker directors and consultants for the government. The South Wales miners are clear on this, we choose to fight. We will not be bound by constitutions and rule books any longer.'

With Welsh unemployment rising, others have joined the Llanwern Action Group in a call for industrial action. Dafydd Elis Thomas, Plaid Cymru MP for Merioneth, explained to an unemployment rally at Port Talbot last week: 'What is needed is for the working class of Wales to take control of the economy through the physical occupation of threatened plants.'

Labour MP Ray Howell has called for the unions to put pressure on the TUC to call a general strike to save jobs.

The Llanwern Action Committee bulletin

Steel Sheet is distributed around the threatened plant by the thousand. They are campaigning for the official plant unions to begin an immediate overtime ban, and to withdraw from any bodies which imply acceptance of further redundancies. They want national strike action in the event of any plant closures anywhere in the country.

The LAC will be organising a fringe meeting at the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation conference on 22 November. The new LAC pamphlet *Fightback for Jobs* explains: 'The Tories have managed to close major steel plants with little or no leadership from the trades unions. The cold bureaucratic hands of the steel unions have divided the workforce into their individual parts, where, isolated and dispirited, they agree to accept redundancy payments.'

The LAC are convinced that the struggle for policies that can save jobs must begin in



earnest. Unemployment is threatening every worker in Tory Britain. The LAC are giving their full backing to the Labour Coordinating Committee conference in Leeds on 1 November. They call on other steelworkers and active trade unionists to join them.

GARDNER'S SHOW THE WAY

By Paul Smith

MORALE is high at Gardner's, the Manchester engineering factory where workers are occupying to save 590 jobs.

Support for the occupation from the 2,400 workforce is solid. On the staff side, the white collar union, ASTMS, have already declared their members' actions official.

The occupation is led by a general strike committee representing the eleven engineering confederation unions organised on the Gardner's site. The convenor, Tom Macafee, explained the organisation of

As the TUC meets Thatcher on jobs

the occupation: 'We have set up social and publication committees.'

'The social committee is organising a league for games, like five-a-side football, in the plant. We are approaching local businesses, which have survived off us, to donate prizes.'

The publications committee has produced an appeal to the unions and labour movement. It ends with these words: 'In the present climate we are faced with tremendous problems, and only support

of money and food will sustain us. We appeal to you all to be generous.'

Backing

Support for Gardner's stand against unemployment is mounting locally, in part because Gardner's workers have always been quick to respond when other local factories have been in the firing line. Despite a virtual media blackout donations and messages of encouragement arrive hourly from all around the country.

Gardner's banner was at the front of the 10 October anti-unemployment demonstration outside the Tory conference. This will expand awareness of the significance of the stand of the Gardner's workers. The trade union and labour movement should flood Gardner's with backing for their courageous lead in the battle against unemployment.

The occupation leadership have produced a code of conduct. Tom Macafee stresses that: 'the workers are taking full responsibility for maintenance, hygiene, and welfare of the plant.' Along similar lines, and with a similar purpose, the occupation has been designated 'a sit-down strike.'

Responsibility

As Tom Macafee says: 'we are not interested in providing any excuse for Anderson, Manchester's Chief Constable, to get out his grappling hooks and come over the top.'

Gardner's stand is a big test for all those in the leadership of the labour movement. Tony Benn walked arm in arm with the shop stewards at the Upper Clyde shipyards when they fought their battle against job loss. Let him give a message to the trade union and labour movement from inside Gardner's.

This is another platform that Bob Wright (presidential candidate for the engineering union) could share with Tony Benn, following their recent tour of joint rallies. The leadership of the labour movement have a special responsibility. Every union and Labour Party branch should demand they act.

WAY



Gardner's women say — 'Enough is Enough'

GARDNER's workers are now organising local women affected by the strike. Deputy convenor, Margaret Hulme, told Socialist Challenge of two women workers who had sat up all night by their machines at the start of the occupation:

'Nobody was going to take away their living. Despite sacrifices, the women at Gardner's back the action one hundred per cent.'

They have produced a leaflet for local women. The press and management use the isolation of wives in the home to divide and break strikes. Gardner's don't want this to happen. Their leaflet points out:

'We've all watched as factory after factory, hospital after hospital, school after school have cut back, cut down, or closed altogether. And we've all crossed our fingers so it wouldn't happen here. Well now it has.'

'The press talk about redundancies as cold statistics. We know different. These are our husbands, fathers,

brothers, wives, mothers and daughters.

'If the 590 jobs went, that would mean 590 less jobs for our kids. At the moment there are 1,200 unemployed school leavers in the Salford area chasing five jobs.'

'While we sit at home, reading the paper and hearing what the newspapers want us to hear, we'll worry about where the money's going to come from. Why not get involved and find out from the inside what exactly is going on.'

To get women involved they are organising a rally for all Gardner's wives, and will be producing regular leaflets and posters aimed at the local community.

Supporters of the magazine *Women in Action* are holding a Manchester meeting with speakers from Gardner's and King Henry's Pies which has been the scene of recent clashes between police and pickets. For further details of this meeting, ring Rita on 061-224 0498.

Solidarity with Gardner's

Socialist Challenge will be running a regular column to report solidarity actions during the Gardner's occupation. If your Labour Party, trade union or shop stewards committee decide to support the occupation, give us a call and we'll make sure everyone knows about it. You can contact us on 01-359 8180.

Manchester Socialist Challenge meetings

'Jobs not Bombs'

Speakers: Tom Macafee, Convenor, Gardner's, and from Manchester Against the Missiles

See the film 'The War Game', 7.30pm, Sat 18 October, Eccles Library, Church Street, Eccles.

And at 7.30pm, Thurs 23 October, Star and Garter Pub, Fairfield Street, Manchester.

Photo: Kevin Coin

Photo: Kevin Coin



Defeating the 'I will quit, quit, and quit again' brigade

From Tony Banks, Tooting CLP

IT IS too soon after the event to make a full assessment of Labour's 1980 conference, but few can doubt its significance.

Overwhelming support was expressed for unilateral nuclear disarmament; withdrawal from the EEC; abolition of all pay beds, private medicine, and private education, together with a call for a no-cuts policy in local government backed by industrial action if necessary.

The party conference has a good record in recent years of passing socialist resolutions but then seeing them ignored or watered down by a Labour government.

Change

1980 might yet prove to be the year conference began to change the situation. Mandatory re-selection of MPs and the election of the party leader by a franchise wider than the PLP were crucial victories in the sustained campaign to secure accountability of leadership to the rank and file.

It will now be up to activists in the constituencies to ensure that Labour's representatives in parliament adhere to party policies.

For anyone in doubt, conference 1980 clearly demonstrated the ideological gulf separating elements of the right, based mainly in the PLP, from the rest of the movement.

No doubt these basically anti-socialist elements will make further attempts in the run-up to the special conference in January to reverse or frustrate the Blackpool decisions.

The left must continue to campaign, particularly within the trade unions, to build on our fragile victories since the right within the PLP seems determined to stage a last-ditch stand.

The 'I will quit, quit, and quit again' group is still very much with us, although evidently running out of hyperbole.

Stop council house sales

THE Tories' scheme to sell off thousands of council houses comes at a time when council house waiting lists are soaring. In Birmingham, for example, the list will increase by 300 per cent if the Tories don't give the council money to carry out repairs.

It's not just the Poles who need democracy

By Alan Freeman

THE idea of democracy is not so appealing when it is being raised in Britain rather than Poland — for the mass media and other friends of the City, that is.

The decisions of the Labour Party conference, particularly over the extension of the leadership franchise, have filled the political correspondents and Labour's right wing with despair and anger.

Bill Rodgers, the Gang of Three's NATO connection, has come up with his own version of a three-year rule — that Labour Party conferences should be held every three years.

Reform of the House of Lords amounts to 'red dictatorship', according to the Tories.

Yet the arena's of the Labour left aren't so revolutionary. They are a normal part of politics in the United States, for example. What terrifies the rich is the prospect of a victory for Tony Benn, and above all a government led by him.

True, the last thing Benn wants is revolution. But after the experience of the Callaghan government, and if the Tories were to be brought down by industrial action, a new Social Contract wouldn't be so easy. A Labour government could well have to try a much more radical programme of reform.

Terrified

The ruling class is terrified of even the mild reforms in the present draft manifesto.

While it can rely as much as ever on its old friends in the Parliamentary Labour Party

and the TUC leadership, the decisions at Blackpool undermine some of the 'checks and balances' that keep these friends in line and let the rich rest easy even with the Labour Party in office.

The Labour Party has always been two parties in one. The PLP has its own rules and privileges enshrined in its standing orders. As early as 1907 Ben Tillet, the dockers' leader, fought Keir Hardie and lost over the principle that MPs should obey the conference.

When the Labour Party conference declared for women's suffrage, Hardie said he would rather resign than carry out the decision.

As Richard Crossman said, the party's constitution is designed to give the illusion of power to an army of faithfuls.

Cabinet

Within the PLP, the cabinet is an inner party in government. As Tony Benn has been at pains to explain, a Labour cabinet is detached from Labour MPs and the party at large, with its policies shaped by Whitehall and big business.

Behind parliament lurks

Stop the carve-up over party leader

From the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy

THE Campaign for Labour Party Democracy has warned Labour MPs that the party would never unite behind a leader imposed on it by a blatant fix.

CLPD has written to members of the Labour Party national executive urging them to meet forthwith and to spell out the procedures to be followed between now and January when the new electoral college is to be decided on.

Callaghan should remain in office: failing that Foot should take charge on a caretaker basis. Other candidates should not stand.

Any move by Labour MPs to select a new leader before January would be seen as the latest and most destructive in a long list of gestures of contempt for the party and movement they represent.

If Labour MPs wish to regain their lost credibility they must bow to the declared wishes of the conference. They must wait till after January to ballot for the leader.

At an emergency meeting on Saturday, CLPD decided to back a revised electoral college in which 38 per cent would go to the trade unions, 30 per cent to the parliamentarians, 30 per cent to constituency Labour Parties and 2 per cent to socialist societies.

Already councils in Rochdale and Waltham Forest in NE London have refused to implement the Tory Housing Act. Both councils are Labour controlled.

Unfortunately Lambeth council, who are leading the fight against cuts, agreed on the 'slow' implementation of the Act after the four local constituency Labour Parties

refused to mount any fightback.

Local government workers have been more determined than Lambeth council. NALGO members in Lambeth, Glasgow, and Newcastle are refusing to handle the sale of council houses. Lambeth NALGO secretary Mike Waller said: 'we decided to take action because we oppose the sales and

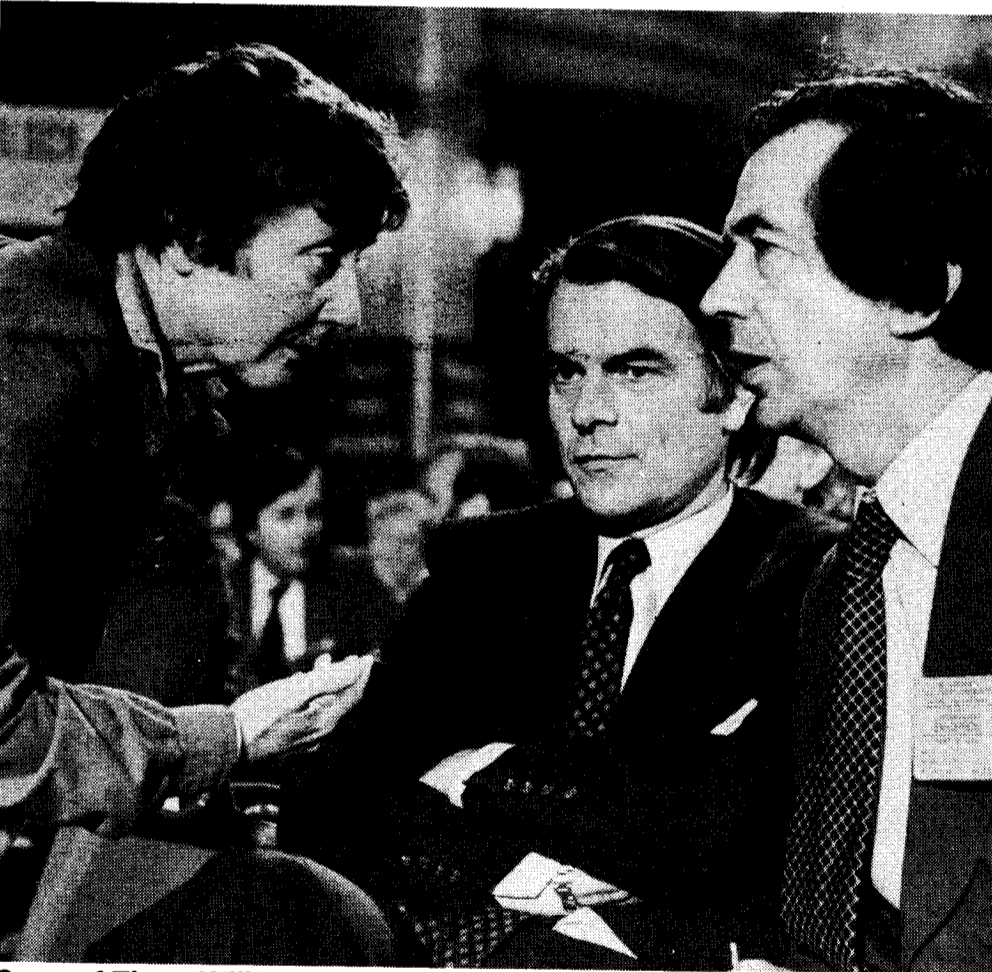
the effective government of the country — the capitalist state which binds the cabinet and PLP through a well-oiled system of threats and corruption.

A party leader who was directly accountable to conference would throw the whole system in confusion. It would be a direct threat to the supremacy of the PLP and Whitehall.

The bourgeoisie would have to open a split between the PLP and the leader to stop conference policy being applied, or even split the PLP itself to destroy Labour's majority.

Mutiny

The blocking powers of the House of Lords could be used to cause a constitutional crisis.



Gang of Three Williams, Owen, and Rodgers.

ANTI - RACISM AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

National conference called by Leamington Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee with the Anti-Nazi League.

Saturday 18 October, 10am-6pm, at the Oddfellows hall, Warwick St, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Details from LARAFC, Box 5, 42 Bath St, Leamington Spa, Worcs.

Eventually we would see economic destabilisation and finally mutiny by the armed forces, as happened earlier this century when the Liberals tried to bring in Home Rule for Ireland.

The Labour Party right wing has to try and restore the supremacy of the PLP, keep open its options for thwarting the conference, and stop Benn.

The first target will be the leader's accountability. The PLP elects the leader annually. Annual election by conference would be a disaster for the right. Basnett has already hinted at a 'permanent' leader.

Their next line of attack is the concentration of power in the leader's hands.

Trade union leaders have floated the idea of 'two leaders' — one for conference and one for the PLP. Guess



Michael Foot

who would be prime minister? Remember who chooses the prime minister — your friend and mine, Her Majesty the Queen.

To keep Benn out, the right can either try now to put Healey in, and hope that he has enough time to consolidate his position before the new procedure operates. Or they could aim for a compromise left candidate, such as Shore or Silkin.

We can be sure that these ostensible champions of the Polish workers will do everything in their power to prevent even the mildest extension of democracy in Britain.

LCC Rank and File Trade Unionists Conference

Leeds University Saturday 1 November 10.30am

Agenda:

11.00am, Unemployment and the Right to Work. Speakers include Bernard Connolly, Roger Griffiths, and Stuart Holland.

2.00pm, Demands and Policies. Speakers include Eddie Loyden and Audrey Wise.

4.00pm, How do we organise in the movement? Speakers include Tony Banks, Peter Hain, and Anne Cesek.

For credentials write to LCC, 9 Poland St, London W1 enclosing £1.25 per person.

By Pat Kane

'WE'VE got to cut, cut, and cut again.' That was Horace Cutler's message to this year's Tory Party conference. The Tory faithful loved it.

Cutler, leader of the Greater London Council, summed up the entire local government policy of the Tories. Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for the Environment, has announced a further package of spending cuts — he has already chopped £200m from this year's budget, and plans to cut a further £1,000m.

The message to Tory councillors was clear: either implement the cuts or Heseltine will do it for you.

The cuts cover every area of local services. Westminster wants to control local spending by reducing direct grants and enforcing cash limits; any council refusing to make cuts is to be penalised. The Tories have already singled out 14 different councils for 'overspending', 13 of which have Labour majorities. High on the list for Tory action is the London borough of Lambeth.

Heseltine wants to penalise Lambeth to the tune of £11m. The local Labour

Tories spell out their policy for local government

Cut, cut, and cut again

group along with the trades council and town hall unions have decided to hold a conference to plan and campaign for national strike action to defend services.

Ted Knight, the leader of Lambeth council's Labour group, has travelled the country to win support and sponsorship, and delegates will be attending from unions and councils from all over the country.

Knight has frightened the Labour leadership by insisting that to fight the cuts you have to fight the government — even if that means industrial action for political ends.

He told Socialist Challenge that industrial action 'is the only answer. You can't reason with the government because their whole strategy is to reduce

public spending and living standards.'

Knight pointed out that both the Labour Party and TUC conferences have passed resolutions opposing future cuts. Labour right wingers like Roy Hattersley, shadow spokesperson on the Environment, are worried that industrial action will lead town hall workers and councillors to refuse to implement Tory cuts.

He has organised an 'official' Labour Party conference on cuts to be held in December. We can be sure there will be no action organised from that conference.

Socialist Challenge supporters will be going to the Lambeth conference to argue that all Tory cuts should be opposed. This is even more urgent since Lambeth Labour group has supported the

sale of council houses, and supporters will be arguing that any steering committee has to organise actively to win support to implement any decisions agreed by the conference.

Local Government in Crisis

National Labour and Trade Union Conference

Camden Town Hall

1 November

For details of registration write to 'Local Government in Crisis Conference', Organising Committee, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RW.

Over 360 delegates are now attending the conference. The latest sponsors include: six more Labour Party CLPs, Labour Groups from London and Bedfordshire, and Rochdale, who have refused to sell council houses, will be attending.

Lothian region, along with five other branches of NALGO are now delegated.

Other sponsors include UCATT branches, and several local government shop stewards committees, as well as many NUPE branches.

The inevitable road to the H Block hunger strike

By Geoff Bell

THE decision of the Republican prisoners in the H Blocks, Long Kesh, to embark on a hunger strike from 27 October was, in the end, inevitable.

The announcement of the hunger strike, made last Friday in a letter smuggled out of Long Kesh, comes after repeated attempts by the prisoners, the Catholic Church in Ireland, and many prominent individuals in Ireland, Britain, and throughout the world to persuade an intransigent British regime to seek a settlement of the H Block issue.

In this context the decision to go on hunger strike was only in the most formal sense taken voluntarily; in reality it was forced on the prisoners by the stubbornness and inhumanity of the present Tory, and the last Labour government.

Status

It was the Labour government which created the H Blocks. Previously, in 1972, the Heath government recognised the exceptional nature of those in prison in the North of Ireland, convicted for 'crimes' connected with the political situation there. It granted those prisoners 'special category status'.

This meant that the prisoners were allowed to wear their own clothes, mix freely, and take orders only from their officers, rather than from prison staff.

Their status was similar to that given to prisoners of war.

This procedure was abolished by the Labour government in 1976. The prisoners refused to accept this arbitrary decision. They declined to wear the prison uniforms now forced on them.

The British reacted to this resistance by denying the prisoners the usual facilities; by constantly harassing and physically assaulting them.

One example was that unless the prisoners wore uniforms they were not allowed to go to the toilet. This led to the 'dirty protest', with the prisoners being obliged to use their own cell as a toilet.

Charge

The British insist that the prisoners are ordinary 'criminals', and a statement from the government's Northern Ireland Office, made after the announcement of the hunger strike, repeated this charge saying: 'murder is murder wherever it is committed.'

Britain is applying a massive double-standard. On a purely factual basis it is by no means the case that all the prisoners are guilty of 'murder'. More importantly,

throughout the judicial process which the prisoners go through they are never treated as 'ordinary criminals'.

As Amnesty International indicated in its 1978 report into 'interrogation' of the prisoners, they are subjected to widespread torture in an attempt to extract 'confessions'.

Serve

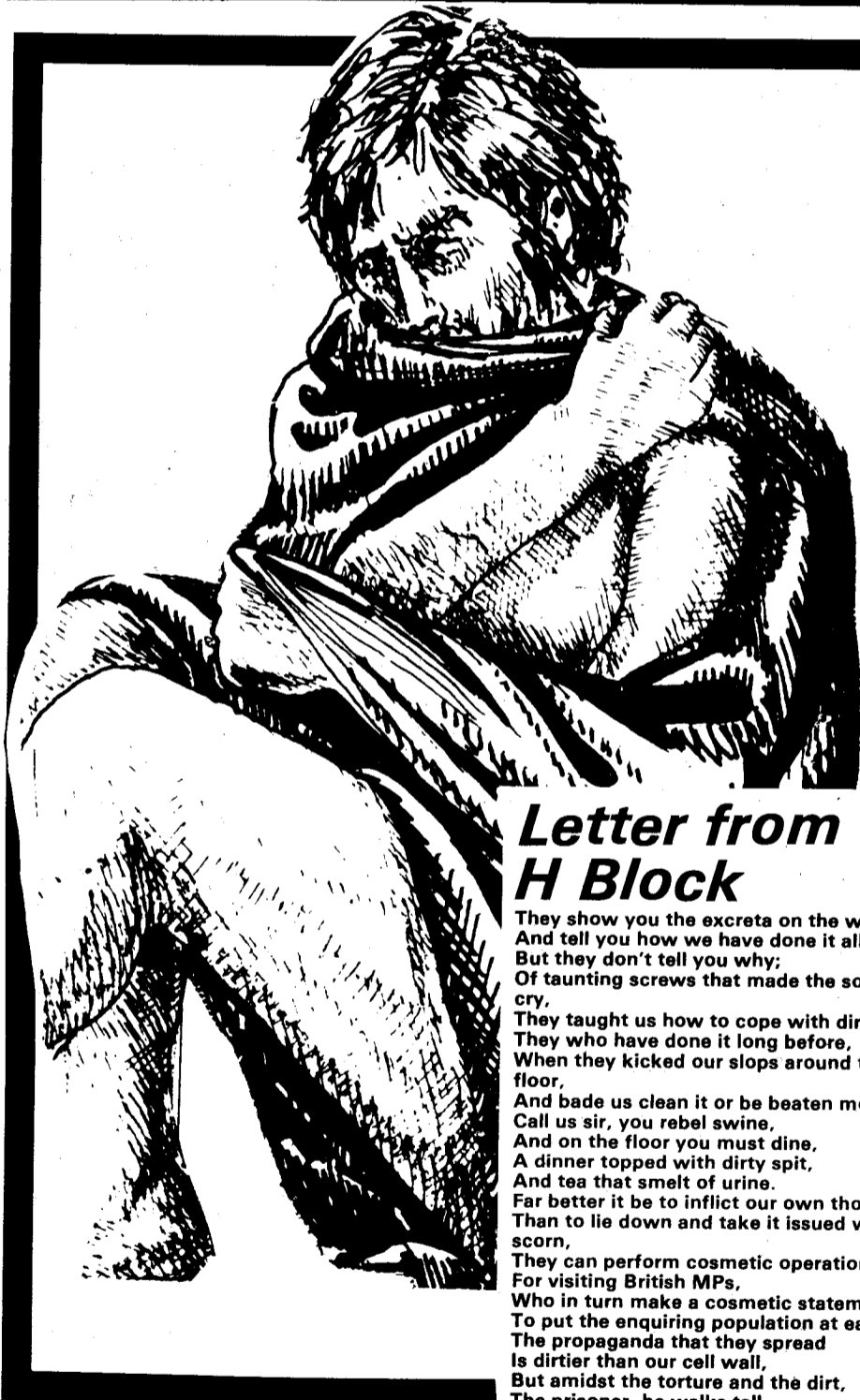
The prisoners are then tried at special non-jury courts, in which the normal laws regulating trials are ignored. For example, witnesses making allegations against the prisoners are not obliged to appear in court, and therefore cannot be cross-examined.

The prisoners in the H Blocks — so-called because the prison compounds are in the shape of an H — are asking that this exceptional treatment be extended to the time they serve in prison.

They want the right to wear their own clothes, mix freely, the right to organise their own recreational facilities, and the normal remission of sentences.

These demands have been supported by many individuals and organisations throughout the world.

In Britain the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party protested against the conditions in H Block, and Tony Benn is among the many Labour MPs who have signed Charter 80,



Letter from H Block

They show you the excreta on the walls,
And tell you how we have done it all.
But they don't tell you why;
Of taunting screws that made the soft ones cry.
They taught us how to cope with dirt,
They who have done it long before,
When they kicked our slops around the cell floor.
And bade us clean it or be beaten more,
Call us sir, you rebel swine,
And on the floor you must dine,
A dinner topped with dirty spit,
And tea that smelt of urine.
Far better it be to inflict our own thorn,
Than to lie down and take it issued with scorn,
They can perform cosmetic operations
For visiting British MPs,
Who in turn make a cosmetic statement,
To put the enquiring population at ease;
The propaganda that they spread
Is dirtier than our cell wall,
But amidst the torture and the dirt,
The prisoner, he walks tall.

the campaign supporting the prisoners' demands.

Appeals for Britain to show some humanity to the prisoners have also been made on an international basis.

Two weeks ago the Massachusetts state legislature in the United States became the latest to back the prisoners when it awarded a visiting former prisoner a leather-bound citation congratulating him on 'his heroic stand in suffering over three years of torture and degradation'.

In Ireland, the Catholic Church has repeatedly pressed Britain to make concessions. It was the recent collapse of the talks on the issue between Tory secretary of state, Humphrey Atkins, and the Catholic Cardinal Tomas O'Fiach which has now forced the prisoners to decide on a hunger strike.

It should be stressed that throughout the H Block campaign the leadership of the Provisional Republican movement have consistently advised their members against

going on hunger strike. But the situation has now reached such a pitch that the prisoners feel they have no option but to make the stand on which they will now embark on 27 October.

All those in Britain who care about what is happening in Ireland, who care about the evils perpetrated in the H Blocks, who care about simple human suffering should, over the coming weeks, do all in their power to ensure that the prisoners do not stand alone.

THE speech on Ireland by Tony Benn, printed below, is one more significant step forward in the building of a movement in this country to help drive the British out of Ireland.

Whatever the precise political details of Benn's call for British withdrawal from Ireland, the fact that the leader of the left wing of the Labour Party has now made such a call is further evidence of the growing support in this country for this cause.

But that withdrawal will not be secured by speeches. It needs action and the determination to build a mass campaign in this country calling on Britain to end its Irish war. In this context it would be difficult to overstate the importance of the London demonstration on 15 November

On the streets on 15 November

called by the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland.

The themes of the demonstration will be 'No Tory Policies on Ireland, End Partition, For a British Withdrawal, For Irish Unity'. Already ten MPs have backed the initiative, as

have a whole host of political organisations including the Labour Committee on Ireland, the Young Communist League and the Young Liberals.

The Troops Out Movement will also be participating and will be

organising a 'Troops Out Now' contingent on the demonstration. Socialist Challenge supporters will be part of this contingent.

Within the month that is left, every effort should be made to turn 15 November into the largest demonstration on Ireland this country has seen for years. All readers of Socialist Challenge are urged to march on 15 November and to win support for the demonstration in their trade unions, Labour Parties, women's and youth organisations.

Leaflets, posters, and further information can be obtained from the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland, c/o Youth Office, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1 (Tel 01-839 2727), or Troops Out Movement, 2a St Paul's Rd, London N1 (Tel 01-267 2004).

Tony Benn on Ireland:

'The sooner we withdraw the better'

ON 2 October, at a fringe meeting held at the Labour Party conference under the auspices of the Labour Committee on Ireland, Tony Benn spelt out his views on Ireland for the first time.

With a few grammatical changes, here is the full transcript of his speech. The hecklers were loyalist-minded members of the Northern Ireland Labour Party. The specific reference to Jock Stallard is explained by Stallard's presence on the platform.

In a subsequent issue, Socialist Challenge will discuss how the campaign on Ireland within the Labour Party can now be taken forward.

I WAS brought up to believe, very strongly, from my father that the partition of Ireland was a crime.

And when I look back on the debates in the House of Commons at the time of the Black and Tans, the motions of censure that he moved, and the amendments to the King's Speech, he regarded the work of the Lloyd George government on Ireland as one of the blackest episodes in Britain's imperial history.

My view has never altered on that and I must say quite plainly and quite clearly that although I have never had governmental responsibility

in that field, I have never varied in my view that there was no future for a policy based upon partition; and no future for peace and cooperation in Ireland that did not include a clear presentation of an alternative perspective of re-unification and independence.

If I say no more than that I will have discharged an obligation to my father and to those whom he supported.

But of course it isn't quite as simple as that, because things have happened since then. I sat in the 1969 cabinet at the time that the troops were sent in and I remember very clearly the anguished discussions in that cabinet — and they were anguished — as



Tony Benn speaking at Labour Committee on Ireland fringe meeting

to whether it was right for a British Labour government to get involved in that way.

Although I had no special involvement — I was minister of technology — I remember the anxiety, and I remember the factor that tipped my mind and, I think, the minds of the majority of the cabinet ministers: the feeling that this was actually necessary at the time to save the Catholic population from the excesses of the B Specials and others.

In the event, correct me if I'm wrong, there was some warmth of reception for the British troops from the Catholic community, but then we got into this ever escalating development of violence and the more that I have seen and thought about it, the more I have become persuaded that there is no future for that policy and that that policy must change.

Failure

Now I must pay tribute to Jock Stallard and to others who over this whole period have not been as silent as I and others have been, and who have been campaigning against very unfavourable circumstances on this issue.

That flicker of hope has been kept alive. But I think there are a lot of people now, including those who have never thought about or who have no deep, inherited commitment to Irish independence and unity, who recognise the failure of the policy.

Perhaps I could identify a couple of areas in which that failure has become apparent

to me personally.

One is the nature and character of the repression which is inseparable from the policy which is being pursued: that there are young men, and no doubt some women too, sent over from this country to Ireland who become absorbed in a whole pattern of security operations, which is degrading for all those involved, and which provides for the British security services something that — it is hard not to believe — is, in some sense, a training ground in their minds for what might happen in the United Kingdom.

Security

I don't want to exaggerate and I don't want it to sound as if it is some deep conspiracy, but I shall not forget one occasion when I was with a meeting of British ministers, about three years ago, and we were discussing security provisions relating to nuclear energy, where there are some very important civil liberty issues — you can't have plutonium falling into anyone's hands.

When I outlined all the security arrangements that were necessary — including surveillance, vetting, dogs, and armoured policemen — one minister said, 'Well what's wrong with you, we've done that in Northern Ireland for years'.

All of a sudden I became aware — forgive me if I give an example which may seem insignificant to you — that there is a process of accom-

modation to the idea that the level of surveillance and security in Northern Ireland can naturally be transferred to circumstances in Britain which are of a whole different character.

In that case it was dealing with nuclear matters, but with rising unemployment reaching levels which are even beginning to frighten the government, or at least some members of it, one can visualise circumstances where economic policy in Britain could make Britain into, in economic terms, the Northern Ireland of the Common Market.

The other factor which influenced my mind was that having sat in cabinets from 1966 to 1970 and 1974 to 1979, apart from the one occasion I referred to when the troops went in, and another occasion during the Ulster Workers' strike in 1974, I do not recall, indeed I know, that Northern Ireland was not discussed in the cabinet.

Manifesto

There were committees of the cabinet which discussed Northern Ireland — and I'm not suggesting for one moment that the ministers involved were not engaged, continually, in a collective discussion on a whole range of issues — but here was, and still is in one sense, the major domestic problem of the United Kingdom, and it was not on the agenda of the cabinet in the way that European affairs or trouble in the Middle East or South Africa were.

I did on one occasion write a letter asking that it be discussed, but it wasn't. Here was that idea that this problem which so obviously directly involves so many people and the future of our whole country should not be discussed.

When we came to discuss the manifesto, any suggestion that we should deal with the policy for Northern Ireland outside the confines of the bipartisan policy was immediately denounced as being tremendously irresponsible because a loss of life might occur.

Intent

All these factors lead me to the view that what we have to do, as British socialists, is to make a declaration of intent. That intent must be that we wish to bring about by peaceful means, discussion, and agreement a united Ireland.

I say agreement but I'm not catching myself out on whether there is a veto* or not — I'm talking about the objective, that of a united Ireland in peace. That objective should be what we are

working for.

In saying that, there will be a lot of critics, and it may take a lot of time, but what I'm saying is that nobody should be diverted from that intention. (Heckler: 'Why don't you join the Provos then?') Well, comrade, you must express your own view, but you don't judge people only by their methods but also by their intentions. I think you have to consider what the objective is — in my view that there should be brought about a united Ireland. I can't be diverted by a heckle from that view.

Discussions

If it were possible for the trade unions, North and South, to come together and try and form a socialist and labour representation system, that would be a beginning. But I do not believe the British Labour Party can organise in Northern Ireland. (Heckler: 'Shame, shame') Alright, don't shout at me, I'm giving a British point of view not an Irish point of view. I say that until people credibly answer the question, 'What about the border?', even the trade unions in North and South cannot in reality face up to the problem.

May I say one final word. I said I wasn't directly involved in Northern Ireland, but there was one occasion when I was on a Commission of enquiry which the Labour Party set up, I believe in 1971, and we tried to get some discussions going between the Northern Ireland Labour Party and the others — Gerry Fitt's crowd (the Social Democratic and Labour Party) — and we couldn't get these people to meet in the same room.

Barrier

My job was to dance between one room and another. Then, at the end of the day, those who could not actually meet went off together in a taxi to Heathrow leaving us to work out how we could get them to come together.

I believe that the presence and the continued presence of the British as a political and military force in Northern Ireland is the major barrier that stands in the way of trade union and Labour Party unity and the sooner we withdraw the better.

*The 'veto' mentioned by Tony Benn is that exercised by the Loyalist community, which would give them — the majority in the North of Ireland — the right to 'veto' any solution they do not like. This majority is an artificially created one and stems from the partition of Ireland.

'Impossible to defend Iran'

IT IS particularly unfortunate that the 're-launch' of Socialist Challenge should have coincided with the Gulf War. For the coverage of the conflict is in danger of making the paper a laughing stock among readers old and new.

Brian Grogan has pointed out that 'defence of the Iranian revolution' would be easier if the attacks on, and oppression of, the Kurds, the Arabs, and other minorities stopped. We might add to this list the forced regression in the status of women, the religious persecution — including judicial murder — of the Bahai, Jewish, and Christian communities, the attacks on the left...

As these things are part and parcel of Iran today and not some oversights, 'defence of the Iranian revolution' would seem not merely difficult but impossible for revolutionary socialists.

Iran's biggest weakness is not 'the existence of a military hierarchy', large numbers of whom have been executed or have fled. Its weakness is that it is a capitalist, oppressive state with a sexually and racially chauvinist regime.

To give as reasons for the defence of Iran the fact that some workers have committees and others have actually won pay rises is simply pathetic; practically any country could be defended on those lines — including Britain. For that matter, the standard of living in Iraq has risen under the Ba'athists.

I would not disagree with the paper's analysis of Iraq (one of the most repressive regimes in the world). Socialist Challenge is correct to describe the Ba'athist regime as a 'typical petty-bourgeois regime... starting with a leftist anti-imperialist image... (which has) progressively moved to the right'. But what is the Iranian regime but a petty-bourgeois regime at an earlier stage of evolution? (If SC has some other theory perhaps you

could be explicit?)

It is by no means correct to say that imperialism is only interested in an Iraqi victory. The war has created a situation of instability which imperialism (as well as the Soviet Union) will try to exploit.

It is true that the Iraqi attack has aided US imperialism's war drive in the area. But the West clearly has no interest in the spread of the war, the destruction of the oil installations, or the possible closure of the Straits of Hormuz. The US will try to put pressure on both protagonists. In other words, this aspect of the situation is far too complex to be written off by a one-line analysis.

Socialist Challenge must correct its coverage of this issue, so we can work out a revolutionary approach to the Gulf which will further the interests of the working and peasant classes of all nationalities in the area.

PAUL SAMUELS,
Surbiton

How to improve our paper

IT IS true that we want Socialist Challenge to arm militants so as to reach more people than the paper can yet reach, but there is no artificial divide between a militant and the rest of the world.

Our paper is seen, commented on, and judged in the canteen and on the shopfloor from its appearance, especially its cover. It should not frighten people off. Presentation is vital and we should aim to 'layer' the paper so as to gently draw people in to it (for example we don't want long dense articles on pages 2, 3 and 4).

The cover should get across that it is a serious, militant workers' paper, where discussion, new ideas, and a different type of news will be found. But it should not put people off by being difficult looking, sloganising or sensationalist.

As a general rule

(though not always) you don't need a big slogan, call to action, or 'message for the week' headline as Socialist Worker always does, and as we often do. This comes across just as an 'ultra-left' version of the Daily Mirror (eg. 'Black People win in Bristol', 'British Terror again on Ireland's Streets').

It is exactly about questions like Ireland and racism where we need to provoke discussion and patiently reargue our point of view, and you don't answer the lies of the Tory press by shouting twice as loud.

However we stress that reporting on minority oppression must be a permanent integral part of our propaganda — it's a matter of reaching those whose minds need changing.

So we'd like to see a different front page, with say three major themes

outlined with 'quiet' informative headings backed by perhaps 1 or 2 paragraphs (in largish print) of reasoned comment, and news leading to articles inside where the in-depth comment, on the scene reportage, and political analysis occurs.

There should always be a simple list of contents too. We need a political editorial, giving our overall political opinion and reaction to the past and coming week's events. However this is bound to be 'difficult reading' in some ways, and should be held over to page 4 or 5.

Good luck with the paper.

STEVE GRIMSHAW,
CLIVE HOPKINS,
DAVE PASS-
INGHAM, NORMAN
WEED,
SC readers. Burnley
GPO.

Northern Irish members for Labour Party

WRITING on 'Why Labour must take a stand on Ireland' (25 September), Mick Sullivan says that the Campaign for Labour Representation 'wants the Loyalist-dominated Northern Ireland trade unions to build a Northern Ireland Labour Party'.

This, in fact, is the position of the Militant Tendency within the Labour Party. The Campaign for Labour Representation simply wants a change in the Constitution of the Labour Party to allow residents of Northern Ireland to join the Labour Party as individual members, and for the Labour Party to establish a regional office in Northern Ireland.

In other words, we believe that the people of Northern Ireland should have the opportunity of belonging to and voting for the only real alternative to the Tories in the state in which they live.

If Mick Sullivan is still confused we would be only too pleased to debate the issue with him at a future meeting of his general management committee.

BR COSIN, Chairman, Campaign for Labour Representation London Branch.

Watch out,
there's a red
pencil about

What's
Left

All the letters on this page have been edited...so, please try to keep letters to 300 words.

Northern Ireland: unions not Loyalist dominated

AS support for TOM and other campaigns on Ireland grows, the amount of factual knowledge on the British left about Ireland doesn't seem to grow with it — just to be spread out more thinly.

A case in point is Mick Sullivan's appeal to Labour Party members (25 Sept). This was not only confused but potentially seriously confusing. He says that the 'Campaign for Labour Representation in Northern Ireland... wants the Loyalist-dominated Northern Ireland trade unions to build a Northern Ireland Labour Party'.

In the first place the trade unions in the North of Ireland are not Loyalist dominated; unless, that is, you count everyone who does not support the Provisionals as a Loyalist. A few years ago, after the Ulster Workers Council strike, there was an attempt to rally Loyalists within the TUs to oust the present leadership, but fortunately it came to nothing.

RATES for ads to appear in What's Left. 5p per word or £4 per col. inch. Deadline: noon Sat. prior to publication. Payment in advance.

WOMEN IN ACTION — new issue on sale now, price 30p. Articles on Positive Action, Abortion, Employment Act and more. Orders to Box 2, Sisterwrite Books, 190 Upper St, London N1.

STIRLING and District Chile Solidarity Committee. Day School on Latin America. Speakers: Humberto Arguello, Nicaraguan Embassy; Gabriel Parada, El Salvador Solidarity Committee; Bob Sutcliffe, author and economist. Sun 26 Oct, 10am-5pm. Cowane Centre, Cowane St, Stirling. Adm 50p.

RAA's greatest hits. Tracks include: Clash, Aswad, Costello, Matumbi. Only £2.99 from RAA, Box M, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

THE Media and Northern Ireland. A day event at the New Cinema. The Midlands Group, 24/32 Carlton St, Nottingham. Presentations by Carl Gardner and Half Moon Photography Workshop. Sat 18 Oct, 10.30am. Adm £2. Further details from Steve Neale (Nott 582636). Organised in conjunction with Nottingham Troops Out.

PAUL FOOT: 'The Fight Against the Tories', public meeting. Thur 16 Oct, 7pm. Old Theatre, LSE, Houghton St, Aldwych, London WC2. Organised by LSE SWSO.

SOCIALISTS seek self-contained flat for two. Tel Nick 01-359 8371 (day).

GLASGOW: El Salvador campaign public rally and film show. With a militant from El Salvador. Thur 30 Oct, 7.30pm, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St, Glasgow.

FESTIVAL for Women's rights against Tory attacks. Planning meetings every Monday, 374 Gray's Inn Rd, 6.30pm. New members welcome.

ENERGY POLICY: Seminar organised by British Society for Social Responsibility in Science — Politics of Energy Group. First in a series over winter '80/'81 on Sat 18 Oct, 2pm, Action Space, Cheries St, off Tottenham Ct Rd, WC1. Topic: 'Safety — hidden meanings and current battles'. £1 entrance or 50p unwaged. Social afterwards at Roebuck pub, 108a Tottenham Ct Rd, 8pm. Featuring: 'In the National Interest & others'. 80p, or 50p for seminar attendees.

WOMEN against the Tories: North and East London Women's Voice Day School. Sat 25 Oct, 10.30am-6pm. Trade union centre, 2a Brabant Rd, Wood Green, London N22 (Near Wood Green tube). Workshops, film, refreshments, creche. Registration 75p. Women only. Evening disco £1 (50p for day school attendees) — all welcome.

EDINBURGH: Right to Work campaign conference on Sat 5 Nov, 11am-4pm. Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Pl. A fight against unemployment — a fight against the Tories. Speakers: Dennis Skinner MP; Stuart Thompson, Convenor Parsons Peebles JSSC; and Des Loughney, trades council sec. All personal capacity.

NO NUKES music: continues 'Operation Cruise Endo' with their middlegame at Old Queen's Head, Stockwell Rd, London SW9. Fri 17 Oct — Thompson Twins, Normal Hawaiians; 24 Oct — Realists, Suttel Approach; 31 Oct — Plain Characters. Adm £1 per night.

SCIENCE FOR PEOPLE: 1980 meetings. Sheila McKechnie, Health and Safety Office ASTMS, speaking on Politics of Cancer on Wed 22 Oct, 7.30pm at Roebuck Pub, Tottenham Ct Rd, London WC1.

CRISIS in the Welfare State: Sat 8 Nov, 10.30am. Conference at Queen Mary College, Mile End Rd, London. Organised by new journal, Critical Social Policy. Open to welfare state workers, students, consumers, and teachers. Plenaries, workshops, panels on strategy. Creche, concert, disco. Details: 46 Elfort Rd, London N5.

SPARTICIST LEAGUE: Public meeting on Anti-Soviet War Fever. Sheffield: Tue 21 Oct, 7.30pm at Station Hotel. The Wickler. Birmingham: Wed 22 Oct, 7.30pm. Room 46, Dr Johnson House, Bull St. London: Fri 24 Oct, 7.30pm. Central Library, 68 Holloway Rd, N7. Speaker: Di Parkin, SL/B Central Committee.

Moscow does not equal Washington

GEORGE Kerevan is right when he asserts that socialism will depend upon 'the ability of the American working class to disarm the mad people in the Pentagon' (Letters, 20 Oct.). It is a pity that the rest of his article departs from a class analysis. Nuclear weapons are not neutral but part of an anti-working class war drive — militarism pointing at the USSR and the Third World.

We should, I believe, support the Soviet Union entering into disarmament talks (but not of the SALT type which increased the build up). However, this cannot be a precondition of our support — we have a duty to defend all gains made by the working class, however awful the regimes that emerge.

We cannot fall into the same trap as George of confusing defence against imperialism with the suppression of democratic rights. ('we surely do not support the KGB and censorship which the Stalinists claim is necessary to counter CIA subversion'.)

Ideally, a perfectly democratic workers' state would organise mass defence based on mass international solidarity action of the working class. But the reality now calls for socialists to come to grips with an imperialist war drive in which we cannot be neutral.

Our primary aim must therefore be to disarm our own imperialists, and not to equate Washington with Moscow thus avoiding the central political question.

RAY SIROTKIN, Lambeth IMG

Setting the record straight on Rank and File

THE letter from J Nicholls (9 October) accuses the International Marxist Group of 'sectarianism and confusion in its attitude to Rank & File Groups'. I want to set the record straight as far as the Socialist Teachers Alliance is concerned.

1. There is no 'open invitation' from Rank & File Teacher to the STA to reunite with it. At its last conference, R&F turned down a resolution to begin talks on unity with the STA. All that exists in this respect is a policy that individual members of the STA can join R&F — hardly re-unity.

2. Nevertheless, there is considerable co-operation between the two organisations in union elections, in preparing resolutions for annual conference, and at local level.

3. According to Nicholls, 'the principle of Rank & File organisation is the united front.' I wish this were true. In fact, the issue of the united front is what divides R&F and the STA. As we said to the R&F conference:

see them as a bunch of betrayers who have to be removed as quickly as possible. But they are critical. They do want to take action. And they could be of tremendous importance in building an opposition.

'The job of the STA and R&F is to push for maximum unity (to extend the action... But we think that R&F has often underestimated the importance of the united front. It has too often suggested that building R&F is building the fightback. It has tended to confuse the rank and file of the union (small letters) with Rank & File itself.'

4. A united front policy will also involve, on particular issues, alliances with Labour and Communist teachers. Thus we are collaborating with Labour Party teachers in an effort to get the union affiliated to the Labour Party. Nicholls' horror of 'blocking' with 'class collaborationists' would seem to rule out this approach.

5. Providing we can agree on a united front policy that puts us in touch with the mass of teachers, the STA is in favour of unity with R&F, which we regard as an organisation that consistently fights for militant policies.

None of this consists of 'sterile splitting and blocking'. J Nicholls' letter reveals little understanding of the problems that face socialists in building oppositions in the unions. Can we have some more enlightened contributions, please?

KEN JONES, London



A US commando: aid for the Third World?

Other THE BOOKSHOP

Andrew Glyn and John Harrison

The British Economic Disaster

Pluto Press, £2.95

The authors trace the development of the current crisis and look at the inadequacies of both Thatcherite monetarism and the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' for dealing with it.

Tony Benn

Arguments for Socialism,

Penguin, £1.50

Benn outlines his approach to the most crucial issues of political life.

Hywel Francis and David Smith

The Fed

Lawrence and Wishart, £4.50

A full history of the South Wales Miners' Federation which focusses particularly on the period from the General Strike to the nationalisation of the mines in 1947.

Women and Russia

Sheba Feminist Publishers, £1.95

The first feminist samizdat with an introduction by the Women in East Europe Group.

Add 15% to cost of all titles if ordering by post.

WHY YOU SHOULD OPPOSE THE

THE Western powers are furiously re-arming. Over the next few years thousands of pounds will be spent on a new generation of nuclear weapons. Many of these mega-ton death deliverers will be stationed in Western Europe, and a large number in Britain.

As a result Britain will become even more of a target for the Soviet Union's arsenal. The following are the main weapons that Carter and Thatcher have in store for us.

Trident

TRIDENT is the American-constructed replacement for the submarine-launched Polaris missiles. Bigger and 'better' than Polaris, it is a MIRVed weapon — one with several independently targeted warheads. This is intended to make it invulnerable to anti-missile missiles.

Britain will have five submarines equipped with Tridents. The cost is escalating all the time, but the latest estimate is a total cost of £6,500m.

Britain's Trident missiles will have the capacity to destroy all the major Soviet cities.

The MX system

THE MX is a monster block-buster intercontinental missile. But that's not its only novelty. The MX ('missile experimental') system will be housed in a huge underground missiles complex covering hundreds of square miles in the Western US desert.

The missiles will be carried along on underground tracks, to emerge through the ground at any point along the route. This will mean that Soviet spy satellites will be unable to detect the position of the missiles at any one time.

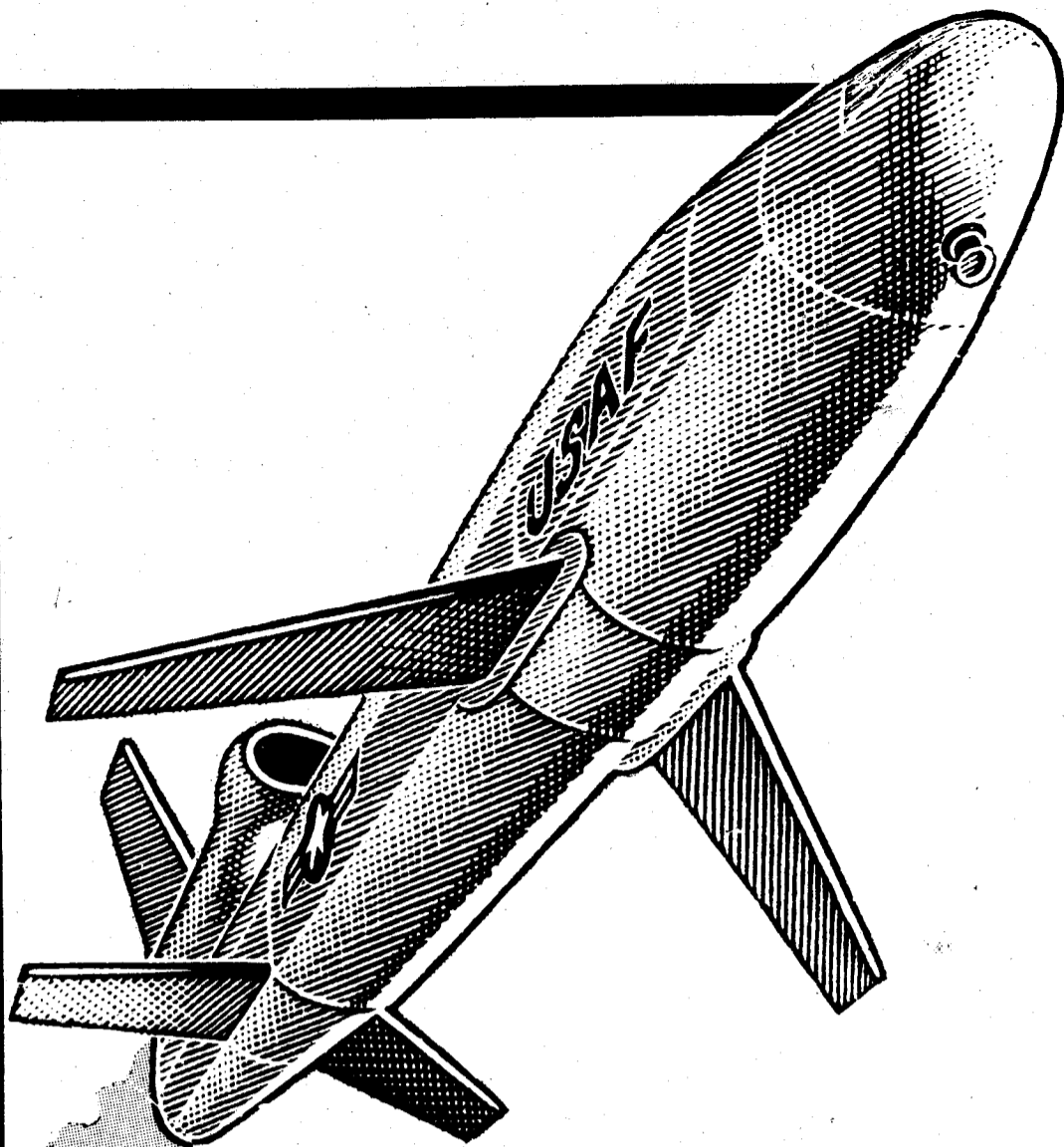
MX will be the biggest con-

struction project in human history — bigger than the pyramids, bigger than the Panama canal.

The cost of MX continually escalates. It is currently estimated to be in the region of \$100,000m.

Cruise

CRUISE, the 'nuclear doodlebug' is based on the war-time V



The Arms Race

'DETENTE' between the United States and the Soviet Union has broken down because the stability of the early '70s has collapsed. American power and prestige coupled with the economic muscle of US imperialism, has been challenged by a tremendous upsurge of revolution in the colonial world.

American-backed dictators have toppled in Iran and Nicaragua. Revolutionary upsurges have triumphed in Angola and Ethiopia.

Washington considers that its vital interests are threatened in the Middle East and Central America.

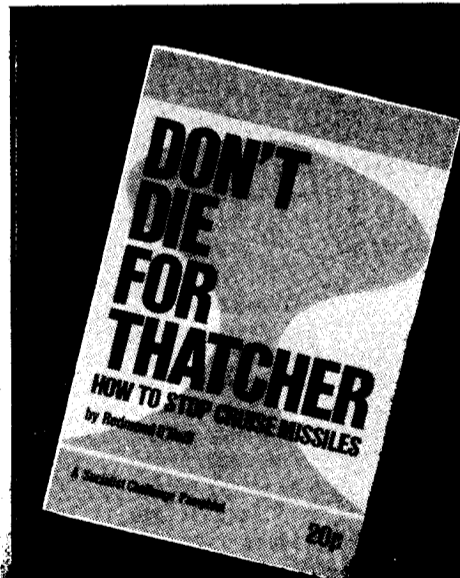
In order to meet this threat, the US has constructed a massive counter-revolutionary mobile force — the Rapid Deployment Force — which can ostensibly arrive anywhere within days.

The US is determined not to lose its oil in the Middle East and to prevent Central America and the Caribbean from becoming a hotbed of revolution.

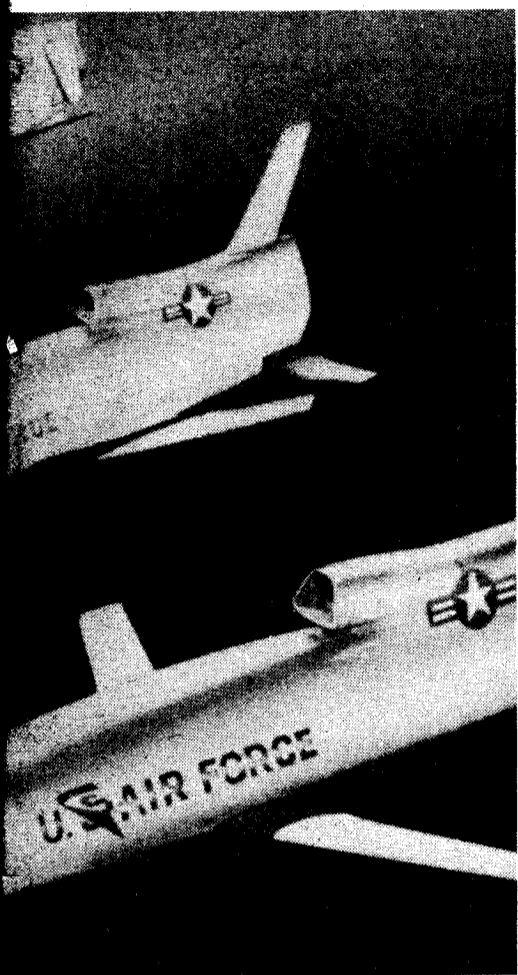
The US leaders see the hand of the Soviet Union behind these revolutionary advances. Increasingly the interests of the US and the USSR are clashing in the colonial world.

In a period of economic crisis a rush to re-armament helps the economies of the West as weapons production expands.

On the other hand, an arms race damages the economy of the Soviet Union, as living standards are sacrificed to arms production. The new arms race puts the Soviet Union under pressure. Nobody gains except imperialism.



WOULD SE MISSILES



German rockets. It flies at a low altitude, using a radar guidance system which matches the terrain below with a map system in the missile. Cruise is thus supposed to be able to land within a few feet of its target.

Only around 20 feet long, the missile has a range of about 2,000 miles. To hit the Soviet Union, Cruise has to be fired from Western Europe.

Britain will take delivery of 160 Cruise missiles; Germany 108, and Italy 96. They will be kept at storage bases until a time of crisis. Then they will be dispersed on launchers the size of a large trailer and fired from the roadside.

These missiles will be completely under United States' control.

In addition to Cruise, the United States is placing in West Germany around a hundred of its short-range Pershing rockets, which have a range of about 1,000 miles.

The precise cost of the missiles and launchers has not been made known, but it is believed to be about £1,000m. Cruise is a 'cheap' weapon.

The United States air force is also paying some £4,000m for air-launched Cruise missiles.

How to Stop It

ULTIMATELY the only way to stop nuclear weapons is to halt the insane world system — imperialism — which gives rise to them. We can begin this task by strengthening the anti-militarist campaign, and giving it an anti-imperialist thrust.

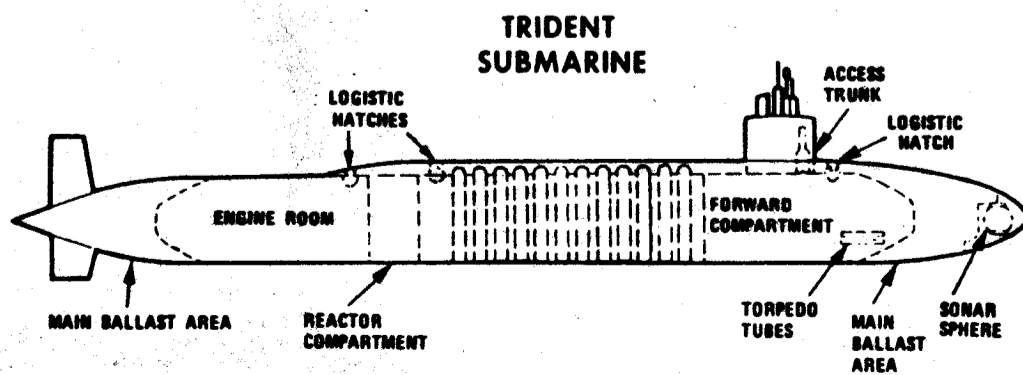
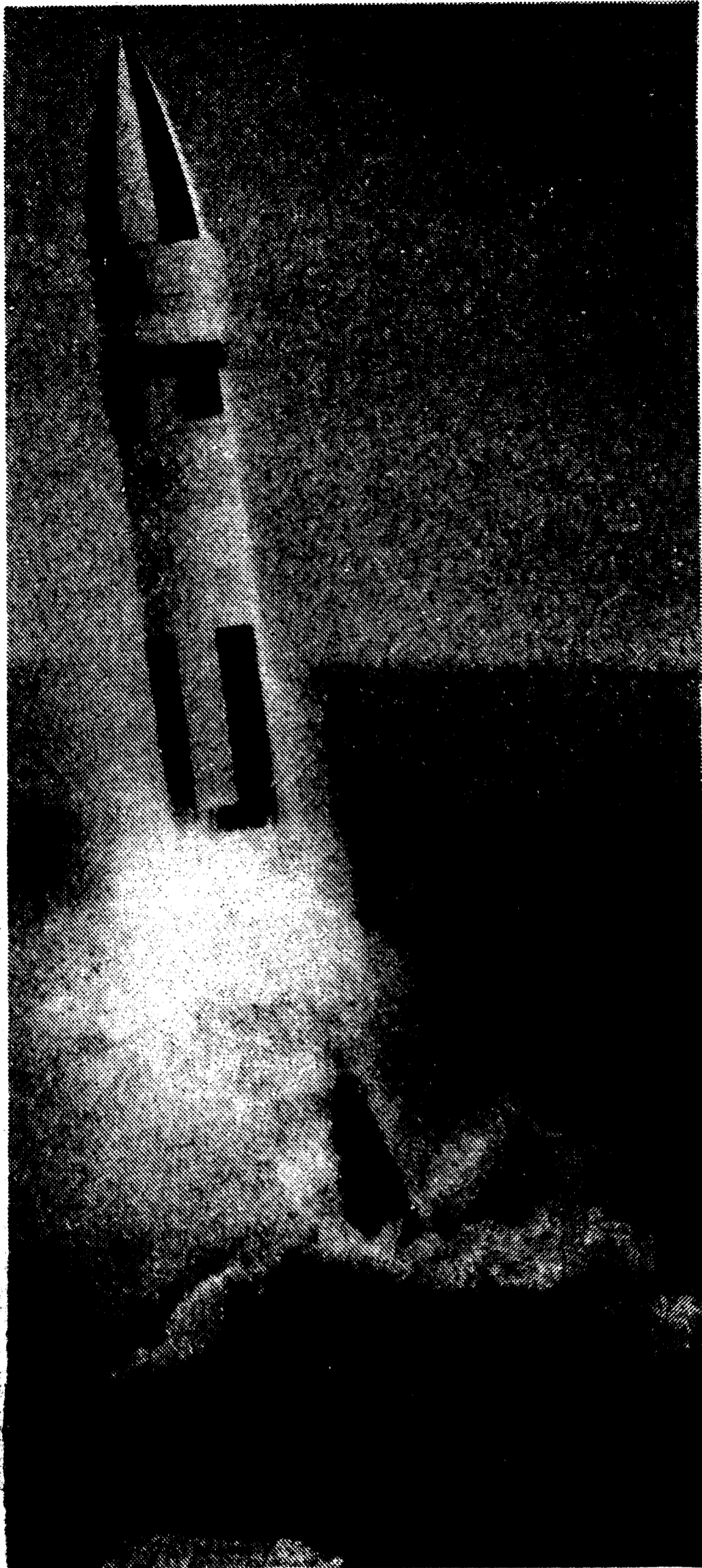
We can deliver a massive blow to all the war-mongers by stopping Cruise and Trident in Britain. Socialist Challenge argues for a campaign which will unite all those who oppose Cruise and Trident, irrespective of their other views.

We will argue within this campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament and for withdrawal from NATO, the imperialists' war alliance.

We also believe it is vital to aid those who are fighting imperialism in the Third World — in Nicaragua, Grenada, El Salvador. They are fighting the same system which builds the war machine.

We have three years before Cruise missiles are stationed in Britain. Already there is a mass movement in opposition to these weapons of mass annihilation. It can only get bigger. A huge turnout for 26 October will make a big contribution to keeping them out.

The information contained in this broadsheet is dangerous to warmongers everywhere — pin it up on the nearest wall in your factory, office, school, or anywhere where people work and meet.



Rocketing sales!

By Yvonne Taylor
SOCIALIST Challenge is aiming for a massive sales drive around next week's issue.

The paper will be essential reading for every anti-Cruise missile campaigner with a special eight-page supplement to coincide with CND's 26 October demonstration.

It will feature:
 * A major interview with Bruce Kent, CND's General Secretary, about the way forward for the anti-nuclear weapons campaign

* An interview with Fred Halliday on the Soviet Union, the new arms race, and the fight against the war

* A rundown on the war policies of the US presidential candidates

* A special report on Central America and the US military manoeuvres in the Caribbean

* An international round-up of the disarmament movement

* *Protest and Survive* — a review of the new book edited by EP Thompson and

Dan Smith.

Every IMG branch and Socialist Challenge seller should be planning now to increase their paper order for this issue. There will be lots of opportunities for extra sales: in the workplaces, colleges, and shopping centres in the build-up to the demonstration and on the trains and coaches bringing people down to London.

Special sales are being organised at Park Lane where the coaches unload and at the beginning and end of the demo route.

Socialist Challenge is well known as the socialist paper with the best coverage of the anti-Cruise missiles campaign. Every IMG branch and Socialist Challenge supporter is urged to make sure that hundreds of extra copies of this issue are sold.

Already the new-look Socialist Challenge is selling an extra 500 copies. We aim to notch up another 1,000 sales for next week's issue.

Socialist Challenge meetings

WOLVERHAMPTON: SC supporters meeting on 'Cuba's role in world politics'. 20 Oct, 7.30pm, Coach and Horses pub, Cannock Rd.

Socialist Challenge sales

BRIGHTON: SC sales regularly every Sat outside Open Market, London Road, from 11am-1pm.

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

CARDIFF: SC sales Newport Town Centre outside Woolworths 11-12.30; Cardiff British Home Stores 11-12.30. Also available from 108 Books, Salisbury Road, Cardiff.

COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 0674 36.

DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.

ENFIELD: SC available from Nelsons newsgents, London Rd, Enfield Town.

HACKNEY: supporters sell SC every Saturday morning at Ridley Road market E8.

HAMILTON: SC on sale 8-11 every Sat, outside County Bar Almada Street, every Sat outside Safeway 1.30-5. For more info contact Paul, 17 Clyde View or John at 54 Eliot St, Hamilton.

HUDDERSFIELD: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Peaceworks.

KILBURN: SC sales every Sat, 10am in Kilburn Square.

LAMBETH: SC available from Village Books, Streatham; Tethric Books, Clapham; Paperback Centre, Brixton; Oval tube kiosk. Also sold Thur and Fri evenings and Thur mornings outside Brixton tube.

MANCHESTER: SC supporters sell 11-1pm Sat at OLDHAM outside the Yorkshire Bank, High St; at BURY in the shopping precinct and at Metro Books; at BOLTON in the town centre; and in MANCHESTER outside the central reference library in St Peter's Square and at Grassroots and Perival's Bookshop. Tel: 061-236 4905 for further info.

NEWHAM: SC sale every Saturday, 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.

OLDHAM: SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities. Tel. 061-682 5151.

OXFORD: SC supporters sell every Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.

STOCKPORT: SC sold every Saturday, 1pm, Mersey Way. Can be

delivered weekly: phone 483 8909 (evening), 236 4905 (day).

SWINDON: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Brunel Centre).
TEESSIDE: SC on sale Sat lunchtime in the Cleveland Centre, and in Newfare, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and outside Woolworths on Stockton High Street

Is your town or city mentioned above? If not, why not send in details to the Socialist Challenge sales column.

International Marxist Group notices

NALGO FRACTION Sun 16 Nov 12-5pm, National Centre. Agenda: the turn; perspectives; Cruise; women's liberation.

POEU FRACTION: Sat and Sun 15/16 Nov. Leeds. Agenda: perspectives; Labour Party; women's liberation. Details of venue later.

CPSA FRACTION Sat 22 Nov, 12.30-5pm National Centre. Agenda: the turn; perspectives; Cruise; women's liberation.

RAIL FRACTION: Sat 13 Dec, 1-5pm at national centre.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION FRACTION: 22/23 Nov — venue to be announced. Also a 'Women and the Turn' day school the same weekend. Cdes involved in the work and from the TU fractions to attend.

IRISH WORK FRACTION: Sat 18 Oct, 7-9pm at Birmingham IMG centre, Digbeth. Very important meeting for all cdes in Irish work and those attending national liaison meeting of TOM.

SOCIALIST FEMINIST CONFERENCE CAUCUS: Fri 24 Oct at national centre. Open to all cdes and sympathisers attending the conference.

IMG — WOMEN'S LIBERATION NOTES: Is your branch receiving them every week? If not write to women's organiser at the centre. And why not send in a report for inclusion in the bulletin? All contributions in by Monday each week. Ring Judith on 01-359 8371 to discuss a visit from the IMG women's organiser this autumn.

OFFICE EQUIPMENT NEEDED: Both IMG and Socialist Challenge offices need all types of office equipment and furniture. Particularly needed are metal waste paper bins and 30 stacking chairs. Can collect if necessary. Contact Penny on 01-359 8371.

LAMBETH CUTS CONFERENCE CAUCUS: All SC supporters attending conference urged to come. Sat 25 Oct, 2pm. For venue and material contact Dave Hudson or Alan Ball at national centre on 01-359 8371.

People's Democracy in conference

By Penny Duggan

BUILD the National Smash H-Block Committee campaign. That was the central task agreed at the conference of People's Democracy, the Irish revolutionary socialist organisation, held on the 27/28 September.

Speaker after speaker argued the importance of this struggle and noted the vital role PD has played in building it as a mass broad-based campaign. They have also ensured that the plight of women prisoners in Armagh has been taken up by the Republican and women's movements.

Throughout the 32 Counties the economic and political crisis is intensifying. In the North, British imperialism continues its delicate process of handing over its policing role to the local defence regiments and police, while retaining its overall political control.

In the South, the recent elections saw mass abstention by the working class supporters of Fianna Fail. Increasingly the political and economic crisis, North and South, opens up big opportunities to drive political campaigns into the labour movement.

Imperialism

Sections of the anti-imperialist movement can be won to combining the fight against British imperialism with the defence of the rights and living standards of the working class as a whole. People's Democracy is ready to seize every opportunity for this; their conference showed they are well placed to do so. PD as an organisation



News from the Fourth International

tion is the result of the fusion of the old People's Democracy and the Movement for a Socialist Republic (former Irish section of the Fourth International). It may be a small organisation but its influence has been considerable, particularly on the campaigns around the prisoners and contraception rights.

Youth

A constant theme of the conference was to build PD as a national political organisation across the 32 Counties. It was also agreed to step up work among young people, who have been hit hardest by the recession.

Out from under (the table)!

SO YOU don't want to be killed by the Bomb? What can you do about it? Well, you could make sure you have plenty of whitewash handy, a bucket to use as a lavatory, and a table to crawl under. This, according to our civil defence experts, is the poor person's answer to nuclear fallout shelters.

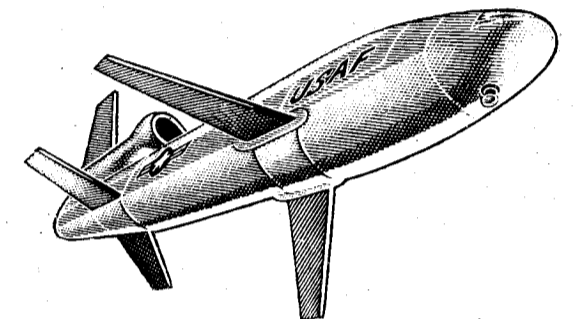
Don't fancy your chances? Well, there is something else you could do. You could become part of the ever-growing movement against nuclear weapons, against Britain having any nuclear weapons or being part of NATO.

You could also organise solidarity with the unfolding revolutions in the Third World. The overthrow of the regimes in Iran, Nicaragua and

Grenada has struck a mighty blow against imperialism. Only socialist revolution internationally can prevent the warmongers starting the first (and last) nuclear war.

So, we won't crawl under any table. We want to stay alive. The best way to do that is to come out on to the streets and organise inside the labour movement for mass actions against nuclear weapons in Britain and in solidarity with the struggles for national liberation.

Come along to the International Marxist Group's rally in London on Thursday 23 October with speakers from the Fourth International around these themes. We won't give you a load of old whitewash....



RALLY AGAINST THE MISSILES!

Thursday 23 October, 7.30pm

Speakers:

- SAKAI (Revolutionary Communist League, Japan)
- DOUG JENNESS (Socialist Workers Party, USA)
- TARIQ ALI (International Marxist Group)
- DICK WITHECOMBE (Manchester Against Missiles) Representative of REVOLUTION YOUTH

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Adm. 75p (50p unwaged)

Organised by International Marxist Group, British section of the Fourth International

Intercontinental Press combined with Imprecor

DETAILED coverage of the events in the Iran/Iraq war, Poland, and the Caribbean in the latest issue of IP/1. Just 40p. Sub rates are: £5 for 12 weeks, £9 for six months, or £18 for a year. Orders to: Intercontinental Press, Po Box 50, London N1 2XP.

ing support, in the publishing of our newsheet, and the arranging of fightback meetings. All of this did much to boost the morale of the pickets. 'The IMG has a great role to play in democratising our trade union and labour movement. It has an indispensable role to play in influencing the movement as the best and only way to advance socialism for our people. 'May I wish you well in all you do'.

Socialist Challenge is in the forefront now of building solidarity with the Gardner's occupation. And next week we have a special eight-page supplement on the fight against the Cruise missiles. We need your money to build these campaigns. Our thanks to Ray Davies and our other contributors this week:

Bolton SC supporters	£5.00
J Hammond	2.00
A Najmi	2.50
A Oskarsson	0.50
Liz Cantell	1.00
Ealing/Southall IMG	3.00
B Ebbatson	2.50
E Mahood	10.00
P Bellis	5.00
R Davies	10.00
P Lindgren	2.00
Total	£43.50
Total so far:	£144.69

Thank you, Socialist Challenge — steelworker

RAY Davies, chairperson of the steelworkers' Llanwern Action Group, cheered us up this week by sending us a £10 donation and the following note:

'I ask you to accept this small amount as my way of saying a small thank you for the way in which IMG members unselfishly committed themselves to our struggles on the picket lines earlier this year.'

'Despite what others may say our militancy bubbled to the top because of our abhorrence of the desolation and misery we know comes from mass unemployment.'

'In our fightback to save our communities from the obscenities of Tory policy it is Socialist Challenge supporters who have given us much help in organis-



Tory Future — No Thanks

ISSUE number 13, 10p. Missiles, Poland, Women's Liberation, NUSS, Asian Youth, and much more!
 Rush your orders to: Revolution Youth, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

REVOLUTION

FOR A UNITED REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH ORGANISATION

Revolution Youth Notices

GAY LIBERATION FRACTION: Sunday 19 October at national centre. All gay members of Revolution Youth are invited to attend this meeting to discuss position of gays inside RY and how to take up gay liberation among youth.

IRISH SUBCOMMITTEE: Sunday 26 October, 7pm at national centre. All members of Irish subcommittee and any other RY members involved in Irish work to attend.

BLACK LIBERATION FRACTION: Sunday 2 November, 2-6pm in Highfields Community Centre,

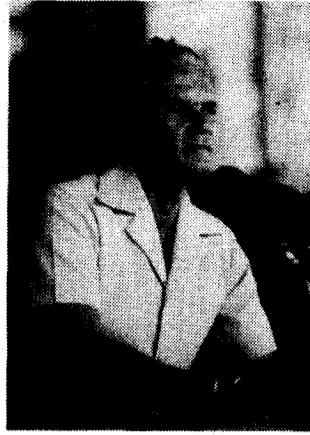
Leicester. All RY comrades interested in working on black liberation invited to attend. Write to Alix, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP for details.

NATIONAL STUDENT FRACTION: Sun 30 Nov in the North West — exact venue to be decided. For all student comrades.

COLLEGE MEETINGS: Cruise missiles and Charter '80 meetings should be arranged as soon as possible. Speakers and dates arranged by Ann (01-359 8371) or Stephanie (021-359 5921).

Jamaican elections called for 30 October

CIA tries to topple Manley



By Pat Kane

JAMAICA's government has set the date for the next general election, made necessary by the destabilisation campaign carried out by the Carter administration and the Central Intelligence Agency.

This has been aimed against the government of Michael Manley, the left-wing leader of Jamaica's People's National Party.

Since coming to power in 1973, the party has raised the hopes of many Jamaicans that their country can break out of the poverty and unemployment so familiar in other Caribbean countries.

In the 1973 election the PNP defeated the right-wing Jamaican Labour Party, which has since become Manley's main opponent. Economic sabotage, individual killings, arson attacks on left-wing papers, and widespread intimidation are now common place in Jamaica.

Reforms

The British and American governments don't want Manley to win this election and they are willing to take Chilean-style measures to prevent a PNP victory.

The Jamaican economy has contracted over the past six years under pressure from the International Monetary Fund, which objects to the 'democratic socialism' that the PNP has tried to implement.

After the '73 election, there was a massive growth in the left wing of the PNP. It demanded that the government act to improve the standard of living of ordinary Jamaicans.

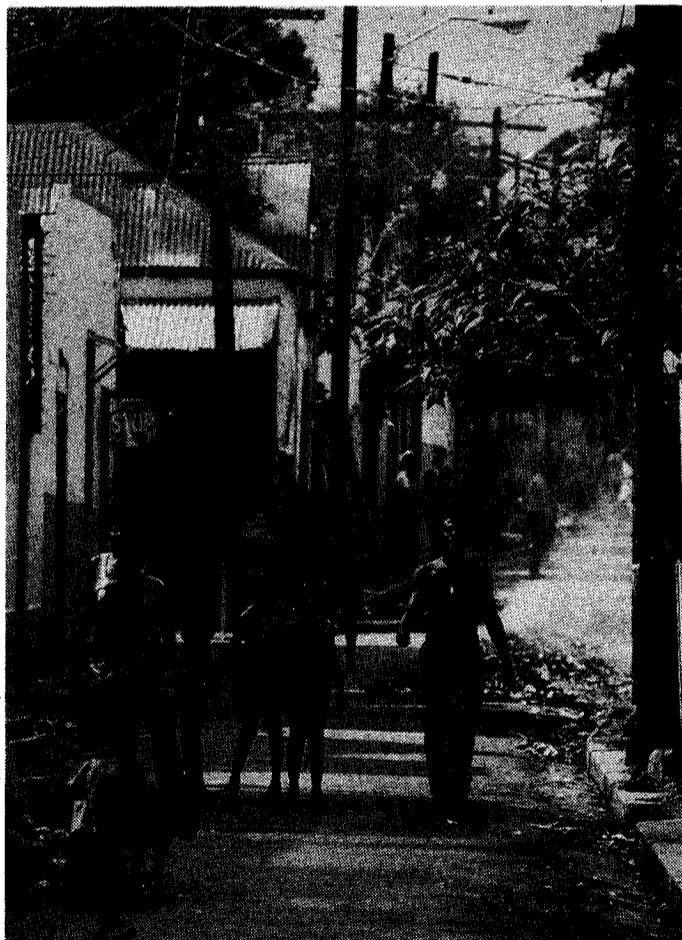
The PNP began to partially nationalise foreign-owned bauxite mining companies, increased the taxation of overseas business interests, started public works to reduce unemployment and increased social services and assistance to small farmers. Even these limited reforms brought disapproval from Washington and London.

Bankers

Whenever the interests of American big business are threatened by overseas governments, the CIA is called in to sort things out. It has been carrying out a typical destabilisation project since Manley was elected.

The CIA's Jamaican station is now the third largest in Latin America. The agency's aim is to undermine the PNP by creating panic through economic sabotage and terrorist actions.

Recent articles in the US press have disclosed that the National Security Council, headed by Carter, has advised investors to stop 'supplying



JAMAICA: poverty stays while IMF leaves

assistance or capital' to Manley's government.

In April this year, the IMF demanded massive spending cuts, which would have caused 10,000 redundancies in local government, before it would provide further loans. The PNP refused to carry out these cuts and the economic effects were immediate.

Without credit, Jamaica is obliged to pay for all imports with cash in foreign currency. There are widespread shortages of oil and consumer goods. After the split with the IMF, Thatcher also stopped credit guarantees for British exports to Jamaica.

As in Chile, they will not stop short of a military coup. The main supporter of the JLP is the right-wing Jamaican newspaper the *Gleaner*, which declared in June: 'In many

other countries, somebody with a disciplined force of men behind him would have long ago taken the government away from them...

'In most Third World countries, our ministers, among others, would now be in forced exile or buried in common graves.'

American interests are being threatened throughout the Caribbean. The successful revolutions in Grenada and Nicaragua have forced the White House to take desperate measures to ensure that Jamaica does not go the same way.

As the international bankers abandoned Jamaica, the Cuban government stepped up its aid. The Cubans have despatched teams of volunteer workers to aid Jamaica. Cuban aid and the

pro-Cuban stance of the PNP has speeded up the destabilisation programme.

On 8 October last year Ulises Estrada, the Cuban ambassador in Kingston, attacked the links between the JLP and the CIA and the attempts to overthrow the Manley regime. He explained that the Cuban government would defend Jamaica against attack.

'It is in the spirit of the Cuban revolution,' he announced, 'that if war is declared by anyone, the Cuban revolution will accept the challenge.'

Solidarity

It is still possible for Manley to win the election. All the opinion polls show that Manley remains popular, but the PNP has to mobilise political support to counter the destabilisation programme. Allende's failure to mobilise in Chile led to the success of the Pinochet coup.

Active solidarity in Britain and the United States, and the aid and support from Cuba and Grenada, will only be successful if the PNP organises working people to overcome the economic sabotage and right-wing violence.

The policies of the PNP are similar to those of the Labour Party lefts in Britain. If Tony Benn wants to abolish the House of Lords and extend nationalisation and public services, he will face the same problems as Michael Manley.

Unlike the Labour government, Manley refused to bow to the IMF, and he has been hounded ever since. All that Britain and America have brought to Jamaica is misery and deprivation.

'We came to Jamaica,' said ambassador Estrada, 'to build, to improve the people's health and educational level, providing them with basic materials. Our relations are truly internationalist, and based on mutual respect and mutual aid.'

Solidarity is urgent to ensure that Jamaica doesn't become another Chile.



Around the World

United States

THE T-shirts bore the slogans 'Pray for War' and 'Happiness is a Confirmed Kill'. The occasion was a recent convention held in Columbia, Montana, under the auspices of the magazine *Soldier of Fortune*, which describes itself as 'The Journal of Professional Adventurers'.

An estimated 400 people attended the affair, which lasted for three days and included lectures on how to 'hit 'em in the pelvic area' as well as practical exercises in similar endeavours. *Soldiers of Fortune* boasts that it is 'anti-communist, pro-military and pro-police'. The willingness of those participating in the convention to demonstrate these aims was evident in the large number of guns being carried around.

Indeed, a number of police officers attended the event, and one, from Oklahoma Highway Patrol, was quoted as saying: 'Up 'til now we didn't dare come out and do something like this. I guess now it's OK. With the way things are going, people are starting to think about war again.'

To quote the old outlaw Clyde Barron, 'Ain't life grand?'

Brazil

THE Brazilian city of Cubato was once nicknamed 'the valley of death'. A horrifying set of statistics issued last week shows why.

Forty out of every 1,000 babies born in Cubato are dead at birth. Another 40 perish within a week. And the majority of the survivors are deformed.

The cause? Every day Cubato is bombarded by 473 tons of carbon monoxide, 182 tons of sulphur dioxide, 41 tons of nitrogen oxide, and 31 tons of hydrocarbons.

These chemical pollutants are emitted by various Brazilian and foreign-owned factories which surround the boggy slum area in which most of Cubato's workers are condemned to live.

In the 'valley of death' there are no birds, butterflies or insects, and the rivers are empty of fish. The mayor of Cubato refuses to live there.

Said the director of an Italian-owned multinational company operating in the under-developed world:

'Foundry work is unavoidably polluting... and is no longer accepted by highly unionised workers in the developed countries... the iron foundry is an activity more suitable to Third World countries.'

United States

SECRETARY of Defence Harold Brown has admitted that senior Pentagon aides have 'exaggerated', that is lied, about the vulnerability of the US Navy's submarines in an attempt to build support for the proposed MX mobile missile.

Previously this missile had been sold to the US public by the argument that unless it is developed, submarines will be sitting ducks for anything the Soviet Union should choose to throw at them. But now the Pentagon has been forced to admit that 'a Soviet anti-submarine breakthrough was not likely in this decade'.

The MX missile is costing the US public \$34 billion.

Poland

THE Polish events seem to be having a snowball effect; or, in this case a football effect.

First, came the reports that factory workers were demanding that footballers and other sports people who were on the factory payroll but did not work should be sacked or should actually do some labour in the factory.

Women workers in the cotton mills at Lodz and workers at the nitrogen plant in Tarnow, southern Poland, were among those making these demands.

Now the football coaches and managers have come forward with their demands — for their own trade unions, free of state control. We've heard of left-wingers, but this is ridiculous.

North Korea

KIM Jong Il has been appointed to a committee to draft a report on the central committee of the North Korean Communist Party. The appointment, Korean watchers say, makes Kim the favourite to succeed the exiting president when he finally shuffles off.

By a remarkable coincidence, that president, Kim Il Sung, just happens to be the father of Kim Jong Il.

POLISH LEADERS SEARCH FOR SCAPEGOATS

By Martin Meteyard

THE POLISH regime is running scared. The idea was that the new trade union movement which began with the August strike wave would start to fizzle out by now. Instead it is growing stronger by the day.

Estimates of the membership of the new union, called Solidarnosc (Solidarity), go as high as seven million — out of a workforce of only 12m. In plants like the massive Nowa Huta steelworks, something like 90 per cent of the workers have joined up.

And their example is spreading. Recently a peasant union was set up at a meeting in Drownica. Student meetings in Cracow, Warsaw, Gdansk, and Wroclaw have been held to prepare for the launching of an independent union at national level.

'We showed we know how to start and end a strike.'

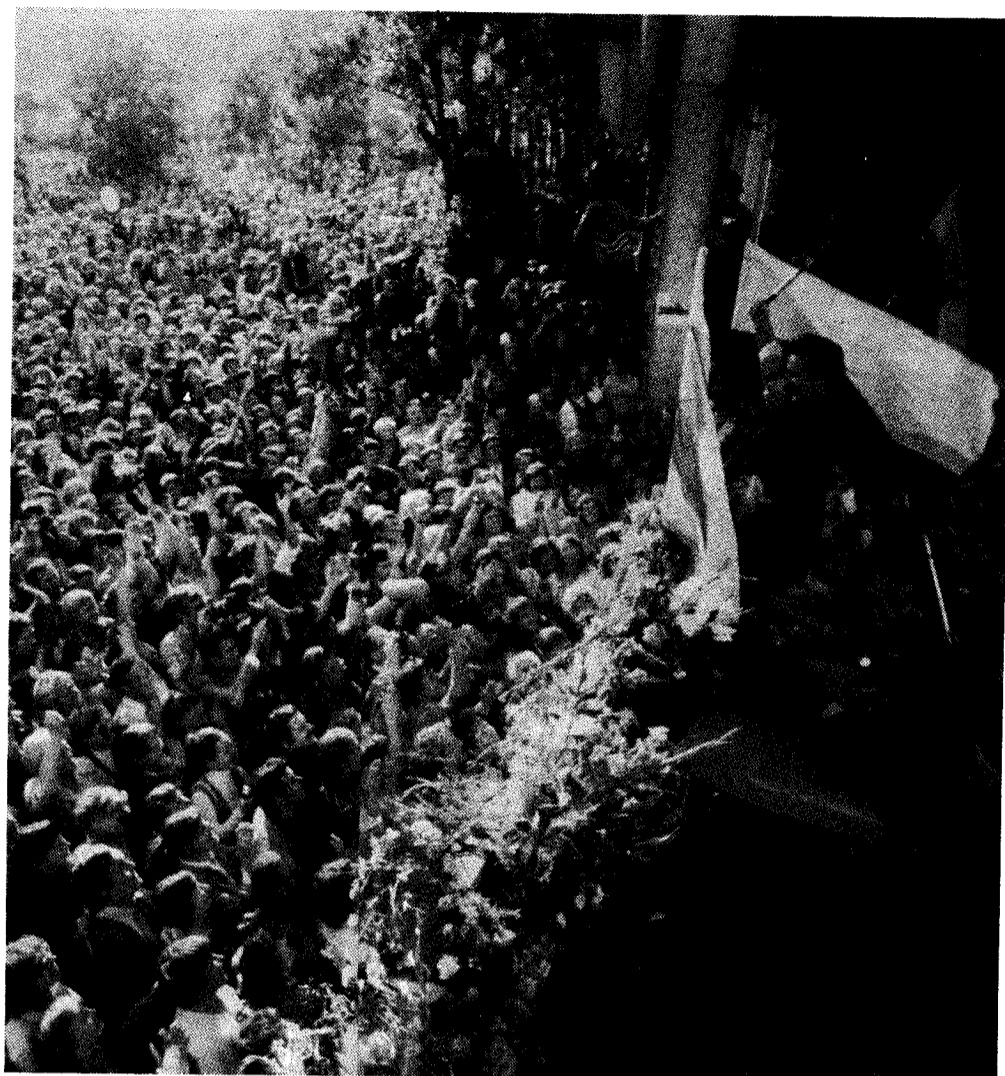
The successful one-hour strike on 3 October demanding that the agreement signed by the government at the end of August be fully carried out, showed the growing confidence and discipline of the movement.

Strike leader Lech Walesa commented afterwards: 'We showed we know how to start a strike and how to end a strike. That's what we needed to prove.'

Further strikes cannot be ruled out. Several points in the new union's statutes, submitted to a Warsaw court for ratification on 24 September, have been rejected by the authorities for what Solidarnosc spokesperson Lech Badkowski described as 'political and not legal' reasons.

The objections centre on the absence of any mention of the leading role of the Polish United Workers Party (as the Community Party is called); the fact that a national rather than regional structure is proposed for the unions; and that party officials would be banned from holding posts in the new union.

These are real issues. The problem for the party chiefs is that the leading role in society they claim for themselves is actually being played by the unions.



Solidarnosc has won that role because it fights for the interests of the working class. The PUWP — a creation of Moscow during the Second World War after the previous CP had been forcibly liquidated by Stalin in 1938 — has completely lost face.

This was spelt out by a prominent party journalist, Stefan Bratkowski, at a meeting of the Polish Writers' Union on 5 September. Defending the Social Self-Defence Committee (KOR) against a slander campaign in the party press, Bratkowski pointed out:

'The fact is that not we but the KOR defended the workers in 1976. That is its merit and it's too bad we did not do the

same. It wasn't the KOR that directed official propaganda. It wasn't the KOR that disorganised our economy and got us so deep in debt that the state is threatened with bankruptcy; that promoted wastrels and criminals.'

More and more of these 'criminals and wastrels' are coming to light every day. Each new case of corruption is blamed on the individual. But it is the system itself — based on secrecy and repression — which encourages such behaviour.

Reshuffle after reshuffle is occurring in the leadership as scapegoats are sought. But every bureaucrat has something to hide. All are scared stiff of what would happen if the workers' democracy of the new union movement

were applied to society as a whole.

'We don't need their money so much as printing presses, and their advice and experience.'

Yet that is what is posed. The movement has to go forward if it is not to be pushed back. And the strike leaders themselves recognise that to do this they need the international working class behind them as a counterweight to the Kremlin.

Walesa said last week about such help: 'We don't need their money so much as printing presses and their advice and experience.' British workers should not remain silent in the face of such appeals.

Forums on Poland

SOCIALIST Challenge forums on Poland featuring Steve Griffiths and Richard Rozanski (recently returned from Poland) and Oliver MacDonald (editor of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe).

Tues 14 October
WOLVERHAMPTON. Polytechnic 1pm.
With Richard Rozanski.

Wed 15 October
BRENT. Tessa van Gelderen (IMG) debates Graham Taylor (CP, personal capacity).
7.30pm Anson Hall, Anson Rd, NW2.

Thur 16 October
WOLVERHAMPTON. Posada pub, Lichfield St, Wolverhampton. 7.30pm with Richard Rozanski and Oliver MacDonald.

Wed 29 October
YORK. 1pm University Soc Soc meeting and 7.30pm in Labour and Co-op rooms, 57 Micklegate. Both with Richard Rozanski.

Fri 31 October
PLYMOUTH. Polytechnic meeting with Richard Rozanski.

AS press reports daily suggest further imperialist involvement in the Middle East war on the sides of the Iraqis, Brian Grogan replies in detail to recent letters in Socialist Challenge.

Dave Bailey declared (Letters, 9 Oct) that the Iran/Iraq war 'is a war between two bourgeois governments'. LF Holley (Letters, 9 Oct) agrees: 'socially both Iran and Iraq are at present essentially identical'.

One can almost hear the sigh of relief. Now that's out of the way there's no need to take sides. But politics is a bit more complicated than that. The character of the war can't be reduced to the class nature of the states involved unless this is put in an overall political context.

If Iraq wins, it will mean bloody terror against the Iranian masses. It will be a major step in restabilising imperialism in the region, and a discouragement to the masses in the Arab East from taking on imperialism like the 'upstart' Iranians.

The victory of Iran on the other hand would be a further blow to the hold of imperialism. It would undermine the Baathist domination

The Iraqi invasion of Iran

A reply to our critics

of the Iraqi masses, massively boost the Kurdish fight, and in general extend the Iranian revolution to other sectors of the region.

Anyone but the wilfully blind can immediately see

Kurds fight back

FOLLOWING disclosures that the Kurdish guerillas in Iran had ceased hostilities against Tehran in order to fight against the Iraqi invaders, 'Le Monde' has now revealed the actions of the Iraqi Kurds. Taking advantage of Baghdad's invasion of Iran they have launched a new offensive of their own against the Baathist regime.

this. Yet we are told that socialists must say 'a plague on both your houses'.

It's no use trying to avoid the problem by promising: 'If the US or other forces invade Iran (or Iraq - sic) marxists would fight against them, because they would only reinforce the present society and strengthen the hold of reactionary chauvinism on the masses' (LF Holley, 9 Oct).

What, pray, will happen if Hussein wins? Will the Arabs and Kurds of Iran be set free?

Imperialism is more clear-sighted. Jimmy Carter has warned King Hussein of Jordan not to get involved in the war as it could lead to the King's overthrow. US imperialism has beefed up the military capacity to Saudi Arabia, sent in several hundred advisers and warned Iran not to attack Saudi Arabia or the other Gulf states or face

American military involvement.

The US fleet has been massively reinforced since the conflict began — with Britain providing a carrier 'to protect British shipping'. Unless you believe this imperialist hypocrisy, you must agree with Socialist Challenge that this is an imperialist backed invasion to smash the gains of the Iranian revolution.

The current Iranian regime, led by Khomeini and Bani Sadr, is also a threat to the Iranian revolution. But in a choice between immediate death at the hands of Iraq and imperialism or the slow poisoning offered by Khomeini and Bani Sadr it makes sense to choose the latter. It gives time to organise against the poisoners.

The religious bigotry of the mullahs means something

quite different from the Islam of the Iranian masses, just as Catholicism means something different to the Polish workers or the H-Block prisoners than it does to the Catholic hierarchy.

It is a tiny bit chauvinist to pretend that Islam is 'worse' than Catholicism or that British workers are free from religious prejudices.

Finally, historical analogies have to have a passing similarity with each other to be illuminating. Dave Bailey's invocation of the attitude of the Bolsheviks under Lenin to the German invasion of Russia in mid 1917 is totally spurious.

Lenin called on the masses to fight both the Provisional government and the German invaders equally because the war was an *inter-imperialist war*. Russia was still an imperialist country with an im-

perialist Empire enslaving millions.

The war aims of the bourgeois government installed in the February revolution were still imperialist and tied the allies. They still called for annexations and indemnities

The left re-emerges

IN Iran itself contradictions are opening up for the Khomeini regime. The fedayeen guerillas and left-wing organisations, recently driven underground by the clergy, have now publicly resurfaced. They have their own offices and arsenals and are participating in the struggle against the Iraqi invasion, according to the 'Sunday Times' (12 October).

to subjugate further millions. Iran is a semi-colonial country!

We recommend socialists to fight alongside the Khomeini and Bani Sadr regime to oppose the Iraqi invasion. That is the best position from which to fight for the interests of the masses throughout the Middle East.

Time for the French connection?

HOW did you get hold of this copy of *Socialist Challenge*? Are you a regular seller supplied direct from the office? Did you buy it in your factory or when you were out shopping in the market? Perhaps you've got a subscription?

However you bought the paper, one thing is certain: you didn't pop round to your local WH Smith or Menzies for a copy, or if you did it was a wasted journey — they don't sell it. In fact *Socialist Challenge* isn't sold in any newagents unless supporters take the paper round there themselves.

By Colin Robinson

The reason for this glaring gap among the soft porn and the skateboarding mags on the shelves of your local paper shop can be summed up in a single word: 'distribution'. And as *The Other Secret Service* (Minority Press Group, 60p) shows, 'distribution' can be a very dirty word indeed.

The market for wholesaling magazines and newspapers to local shops is heavily monopolised by three major companies. Smith, Menzies, and Surridge Dawson control 57 per cent of daily paper sales and 69 per cent of weekly and magazine sales. Menzies alone hold a staggering 93 per cent of the magazine wholesaling market in Scotland.

The managements of these three firms, accountable only to their shareholders, wield absolute power in deciding what will and won't appear in some 30,000 of Britain's 39,000 newagents.

Predictably enough, this power is used to prevent the widespread distribution of publications that are critical of an economic and political system in which WH Smiths do very nicely thank you.

Of course, the above is never given as the reason for refusing to handle such

papers — that would be admitting censorship wouldn't it? No, more subtle justifications are called for: 'sorry, your circulation is too small', or 'your magazine may be libellous'.

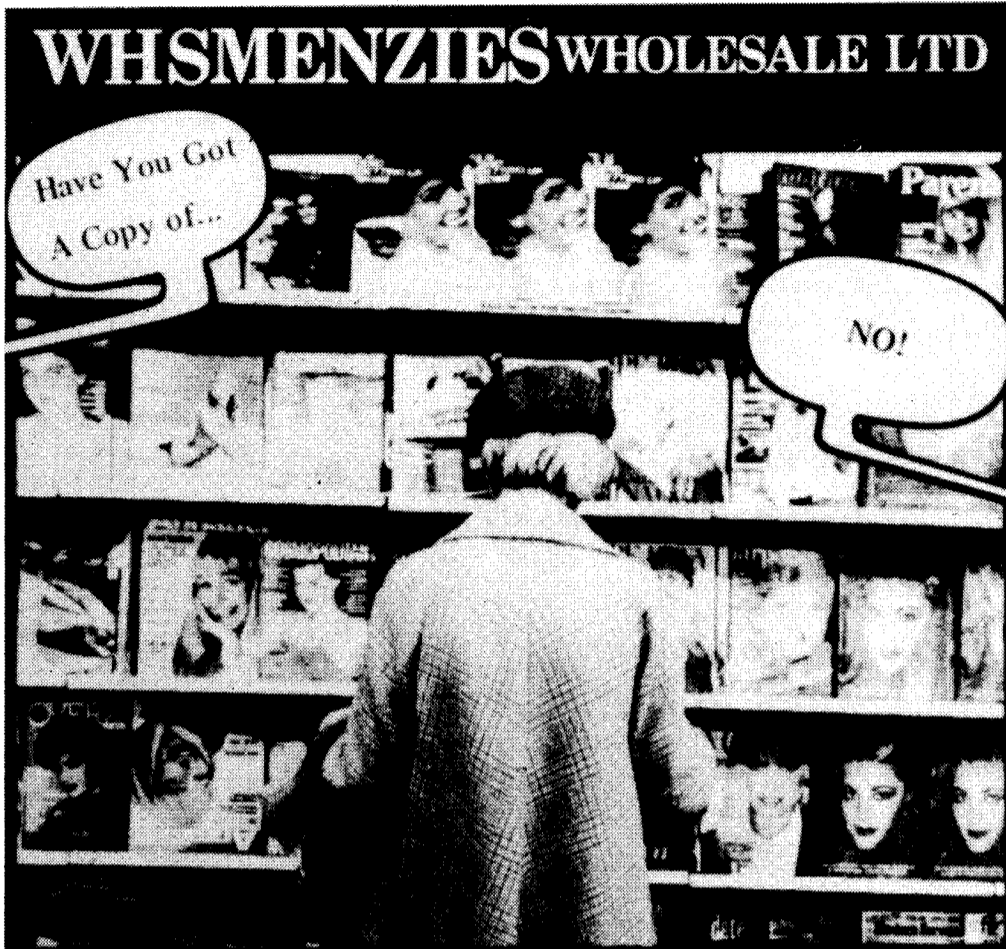
Libel

Leaving aside the circularity of the first of these explanations, neither stands up to scrutiny. Smith distributes many magazines with circulations well below that of *Socialist Challenge*. For instance, you could buy one of the 3,000 copies of this month's *Dental Technician* at any Smith's branch you cared to walk into. *Private Eye* (circulation 100,000+) and *Gay News* (26,000) are excluded by both Smith and Menzies.

The convenient peg of libel exists because the law states that distributors, as well as publishers, can be prosecuted for defamation. But the excuse is applied selectively.

For example, *Private Eye* had eight libel cases outstanding against it in 1972. *The Times*, whose distribution has never been in doubt, had 16. National dailies often have massive libel cases hanging over their heads, but they're always there on the newagents' counters.

The past few years have seen a massive explosion in



the number of radical and alternative publications. The Minority Press Group list nearly 100, ranging from *Red Cabbage* (towards a politics of radical gardening!) through to *Labour Weekly*, and they admit that this is 'by no means comprehensive'.

The frustrations experienced by this swelling group in trying to get a wider audience for their press has opened up a discussion on alternatives to the highly

restrictive private monopoly which exists at the moment. As *The Other Secret Service* points out, the French distribution system is an interestingly different example.

The impetus for change in France came from the requisitioning by the Nazis of Hachette, the major French wholesaler, during the Second World War. After the Liberation, Hachette was too closely identified with the fascist invasion to be left in its former

role. A new company, *Nouvelles Messageries de la Presse* (NMPP), was set up on the principle, dictated by law, of 'unrestricted distribution of the printed word'.

The same law made it compulsory for newagents to take any publication (except those inciting violence) and display it. NMPP was to have a complete monopoly of distribution and was to be run, not by commercial wholesalers, but by the

publishers themselves, organised into five co-operatives depending on size and type of publication.

As the company has developed over the years, radical publishers have congregated in one co-operative thereby increasing their weight collectively. All distribution by NMPP is on a sale-or-return basis (rarely used in Britain) and though publishers have to pay a levy on the handling of returns, this means that, if they can afford it, they can appear on every news-stand in the country.

Indeed, the number and variety of magazines on sale in France is far greater than here. A one-off Minority Press Group survey discovered 850 publications on sale in the kiosks of the Boulevard St Michel alone!

This much freer distribution has undoubtedly helped in the establishment of a healthy left press: there are four viable left dailies with circulations ranging from 40,000 to 150,000 and *Le Canard Enchaîné*, a weekly satirical paper, sells 500,000 copies.

Discriminates

The French distribution system is by no means perfect. Its operations are carried out (as opposed to being controlled) by commercial firms who can bring undemocratic pressures to bear. The sale-or-return system, with the massive print runs and returns' levies it involves, still discriminates against smaller publications.

Socialist Challenge's sister paper *Rouge* found this out the hard way when it went daily.

But if a system based on the same principles was introduced here, then those who spend all of Saturday looking for a copy of *Socialist Challenge*, and those who spend all Saturday selling it, would both have easier lives.

By Mike Simpson

WATCHING the BBC's *Rock Week* you may well have wondered what all the fuss was about. Where was the anger, the energy, the havoc? What happened to all that unbridled sexuality, what of the drugs, the deaths, the riots? And, dare one ask, the FUN?

Rock Week displayed all the verve, originality, and freshness of 'Sale of the Century'.

Saturday kicked off with a couple of old movies, followed in the evening by 'Heroes of Rock 'n' Roll', an exercise in nostalgia picked for its high sight content. But, er, weren't there just a few heroines of rock 'n' roll too?

Boring

Sure, Janis Joplin got the obligatory mention, but it seems that Grace Slick, Diana Ross, Bette Midler, Patti Smith, Debbie Harry, etc, etc, weren't deemed worthy of a place in rock history. Well, there was Joni Mitchell on the Monday; music for pruning the privet hedge to.

Sunday gave us, surprise, surprise, some more old films, chief of which was *American Graffiti*. Strictly Snore City, man; I mean like BORING. Mind you, I must admit that my

Where was the FUN?

own teenage years were even more boring, spent alternating between chip-shop (it had a GREAT juke-box) and bus-station (no juke-box but lots of dark corners).

Poseur

Graffiti is an invitation to worship at the feet of the almighty Yankee Dollar, the deity which enables snotty little rich-kids to zoom around in fucking great hot-rods which cost two years' wages.

Tuesday saw Kate Bush and The Kinks doing their stuff. The former showed a surprising versatility, not apparent in her whimsical singles. If only she'd fire that lousy band she might yet be one of the more interesting performers of the '80s.

The Kinks may have been interesting in the '60s, but they were plenty boring in the '70s and look like being excruciating in the '80s. A predictable set from a very predictable band.

Wednesday: XTC and The Cream. The Cream, brought to you courtesy of ace poseur and entrepreneur Tony Palmer, grimaced a lot and mainly featured Ginger Baker looking wrecked (real hip, huh?) and Eric Clapton

playing guitar Very Fast Indeed. Wow! In the same league as pre-war newsreels.

XTC potted happily about in The Manor studios, and gave us a vastly disappointing programme, more like a 'Man Alive' documentary than anything to do with rock music.

What it *did* show, though, is that it's mugs like you and me that enable millionaire skunks like Virgin boss Richard Branson to stock his lake with 500 imported trout whenever he feels like a little fishing. Does this make home-taping a revolutionary act? Maybe not, but it's certainly a sensible one.

Reactionary

Thursday gave us Van Morrison. It could have been Elvis Costello or Bruce Springsteen, but then they're liable to get a bit angry, and say nasty, ungrateful things about the media and the record companies. They could also blow self-pitying wimps like Van Morrison off the stage with the greatest of ease.

Rainbow, on the same night, were thrown in as a sop to the current heavy-metal 'revival'. Rainbow

are over-amplified, reactionary, banal and hugely successful.

Perfection

Police, Friday's offering, are one band that truly deserve their success (if not their enormous pay-packets). Sting's lyrics are usually sharp and witty, and the white-reggae rhythms of the band are by now polished to near perfection.

Their famed world tour, taking in Japan, Hong Kong, India, and Egypt was seen by manager Stewart Copeland as an exercise in cultural imperialism. His theory is that if those funny foreign folks identify with Western music then they will come to accept that capitalism is a superior way of life.

Shame

This strategy could, it occurs to me, be easily undermined by the Soviet Union flooding the market with cheap blank cassettes, thus demonstrating the superiority of sheer opportunism.....

Well, I've never really expected Rock 'n' Roll to change the world. It's a crying shame that it hasn't even managed to change the BBC, though.



Rock Week on BBC2 — no fun, drugs, death or riots

Dying to write?

In future issues, *Under Review* will be carrying a regular column on TV viewing and another on recently published books.

Under Review welcomes contributions from *Socialist Challenge*

readers. So if there's something you would like to write about, or if you have an idea for *Under Review*, drop us a line!

To kick off our new columns, Mike Simpson takes a personal look at BBC's *Rock Week*, and Colin Robinson reviews the Minority Press Group's report on the newspaper distribution business.

Anthony Whiteside

IT IS with deep regret that comrades learned of the death of Anthony Whiteside on Sunday 5 October.

Anthony was well known in the Hemel Hempstead and North West areas. More recently he was in Wales as a full-time student on a WEA course at Coleg

Harlech where he died.

He was a long-standing member and later a sympathiser of the International Marxist Group.

He will be remembered for his vigorous and generous nature and for the enthusiasm with which he conducted his struggle for socialist principles and ideas.

He will be sadly missed in the labour and student movement.

Tandy dispute — three more pickets arrested

By Pia Feig

THREE supporters of striking Tandy warehouse workers were arrested in

Wolverhampton last Saturday.

They were part of a 15-strong picket which effectively closed one of Tandy's shops. The police were called in and despite complaints from passersby about their heavy handed tactics, they made three arrests 'at random', as the local *Express and Star* put it. The three — Socialist Challenge supporters — have been charged with obstruction.

The thirty Tandy strikers, mainly women and young workers, are members of the Transport

and General Workers Union. The central Tandy warehouse in Wednesbury near Wolverhampton dispatches goods to Tandy Hi-Fi shops all around the country. When Tandy refused to recognise the Union in May of this year, T&G members went on strike — and were promptly sacked.

Strike

They have been picketing the Wednesbury

warehouse for the last 20 weeks.

Although they have received no strike pay, the strikers decided last week to continue the fight for recognition and reinstatement, and to step up the strike. Support for them is growing in the West Midlands.

Last Saturday supporters of the strike began to picket Tandy shops in Wolverhampton and Dudley. Shoppers were urged not to buy goods and most didn't.

Saturday's arrests are only part of the police harassment of the strikers in

this dispute. At a recent mass picket outside the central warehouse, five people were arrested, and fined £200. But this has only made the strikers more determined; picketing of the central warehouse is being maintained, and, with support growing, it is hoped to be able to picket Tandy shops in all major towns throughout the West Midlands.

Money is essential to keep the strike going and to pay fines. All donations should be sent to Janet Marsh, 3 Park Street, Wednesbury, West Midlands.

NAMIBIA — HOW WE CAN HELP

JOHN YA OTTO, labour secretary of the South West African People's Organisation and chief spokesperson abroad for the National Union of Namibian Workers, was recently in Britain to seek trade union support for the struggle in Namibia.

ERICA FLEGG interviewed him

JOHN ya Otto is presently living in exile in Angola, having been hounded out of Namibia by the South African authorities in their attempts to repress the expanding, militant black trade union movement there.

When he came to Paris for the international conference in solidarity with the struggle of the people of Namibia in September, ya Otto made use of the opportunity to visit trade unions in several European countries to rally support.

He spoke enthusiastically about his experiences with trades unionists in Sweden, Finland, and Holland. The NUNW has had a long-standing relationship with LOTCO in Sweden, which has given financial as well as moral support.

'The trade unions in Scandinavia are a source which most liberation movements in southern Africa have benefited from,' ya Otto observed. 'When I go there, it is not so much to campaign, as to renew contacts.'

Seminar

He told me that LOTCO has set up machinery to monitor events in Namibia. SAK in Finland has financed a seminar for 23 trade union officials and students; they also helped to pay for ya Otto's trip to attend the Paris conference.

In Britain, the picture is different. Ya Otto said that this was the first time that he had spoken with British trades unionists, who generally knew little or nothing about Namibia. Securing support from the British trade unions, however, was the major objective of his European tour.

'Such support is particularly important to us,' ya Otto explained, 'given the UK's large economic interests in Namibia. These include banking, construction, and other interests, but above all is the exploitation of

level of awareness on Namibia in the British labour movement. He said that he planned to propose this to the NUM. There are thousands of miners in Namibia, living and working in appalling material and safety conditions.

Donor

I asked ya Otto what his experience was of support from the the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, to which the TUC is affiliated and to which it is also a major financial donor.

Ya Otto gave another of his wry smiles. 'The ICFTU used to give us some financial support, but now that has stopped... What kind of solidarity is that? We are the only organisation which fights to represent the interests of Namibian workers, and it is our members who are being tortured and imprisoned there ...'

I told ya Otto about the attempt in Britain to launch a campaign to end the collaboration between the TUC and the Foreign Office, and for an international programme which is accountable to the membership of the TUC. He expressed his full support.

Friends

'We attach great significance to solidarity from the labour movement,' John ya Otto said. 'We believe that there are progressive forces in imperialist countries which will support our struggle... The recognition of the NUNW is very important,' he went on, 'because tomorrow other unions from the DTA (Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, South Africa's internal collaborators in Namibia) will come and seek support abroad. Britain workers should know their real friends in Namibia.'

Apart from the forms of solidarity already mentioned, John ya Otto asked for support for the trade union schools which are being established in Angola and Zambia. There are 50,000 Namibian refugees in both countries, and qualified instructors have been holding

Black union leader appeals to British unions

uranium. This involves not only Rio Tinto Zinc but the British government itself ...' ya Otto paused. 'As you know, Lord Carrington was a director of RTZ,' he added with a grim smile that underlined the point.

When I spoke to him, ya Otto was due to see the National Union of Seamen (NUS), the Transport and General Workers Union, and the National Union of Mineworkers. Recently the NUS played a major role in the attempt by workers in France and Britain to stop the import of Namibian uranium. Ya Otto told me that the NUS had ratified the United Nations Decree no. 1, which bans the extraction and export of Namibia's mineral resources.

'We were very encouraged by this decision of the NUS,' ya Otto said. 'If other unions were also to give such support, I would return a happy man.'

Ya Otto also expressed the hope that a fact-finding mission of British trades unionists could be sent, so as to improve contacts between workers in Namibia and the UK and also to improve the

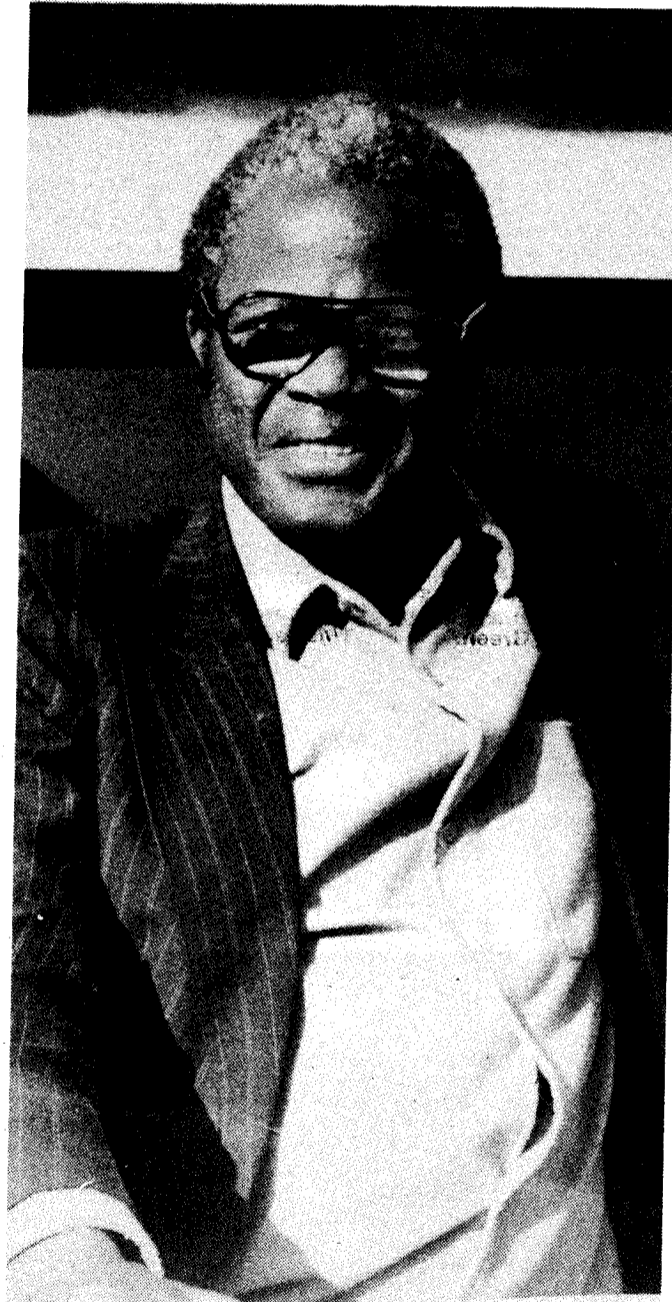


Photo: Erica Flegg

SWAPO's labour secretary, John ya Otto: 'Given the UK's large economic interests in Namibia, support from British unions is particularly important.'

courses for workers.

'We have Namibian instructors, but we lack facilities. We need school materials — books, pens, duplicating machines, blackboards. We have trade union libraries, but we need literature on trade unionism and labour issues. We need

building materials for classrooms ... we'd like them prefabricated so that we can dismantle them and take them home to Namibia one day.'

I asked ya Otto what he thought about the possibility of twinning British and Namibian trade union branches in

the same sectors of industry. 'Yes — direct links — we really want this kind of thing,' he replied, with enthusiasm. 'We'd also like Namibian workers to be invited to study at trade union leadership courses in different industrial sectors.'

'We have workers who've studied in different countries with different systems and they all put their ideas together to draw up a curriculum for the schools.'

Front

Finally, I asked Comrade ya Otto about how he saw the relationship between the NUNW, a workers' organisation, and SWAPO, a front for national liberation which represents an alliance of different class forces. I took post-independence Zimbabwe as an example, where the boundaries between party, state, and trade unions are not clearly defined, and where the Minister of Labour, Kangai, still enforces the industrial labour legislation of the Smith regime.

'The NUNW is an autonomous organisation and is completely independent of SWAPO,' ya Otto stated. He explained that SWAPO itself had been born out of labour struggles to end the colonial labour recruitment and contract system. During the massive strikes of 1971/2, militant youth in Namibia turned to the workers as the major power centre of the struggle, he said.

Yoke

'SWAPO and the NUNW are very close now,' ya Otto observed, 'since they both represent the oppressed people of Namibia — workers being the most oppressed. During the struggle to rid the country of the colonial yoke, we will maintain very close relations, but at the time of Independence, NUNW will want to retain its independence. The NUNW will then want to see workers participating in the government of their affairs.'

The most immediate task for us is to build solidarity with Namibian workers and the NUNW, here in the labour movement in Britain.

Journalists' leaders aim to block right of reply

A BLOW-up looks set to rock the journalists' union over whether its members can take industrial action over editorial issues, including action to secure the right of

those attacked by the media to answer back.

The NUJ put forward the motion on the media carried unanimously at the TUC in September. Among the proposals was a request to the General Council to 'examine ways... to ensure the

right of reply for victims of bias or distortion in the press'.

In proposing the motion, Aidan White referred to the possible need to take direct action to obtain this right. This greatly vexed the NUJ president, Frances Beckett — not to mention the Fleet Street editors.

Beckett has subsequently gone to such lengths to discredit White's speech that seven senior members

of the union have signed a half-page statement in the current issue of the NUJ journal arguing that the president has 'abused his high office'.

But last weekend the union executive endorsed by 15 votes to 8 Beckett's interpretation of union policies. He argues that the NUJ has no policy about media workers taking strike action over ethical issues.

This is in spite of an

agreement between the NUJ and the print union NGA on the reporting of racial issues, a clause of which states that the unions 'recognise the right of members to withhold labour on the grounds of conscience because employers are providing a platform for racist propaganda.'

A number of the clauses in the NUJ's code of conduct lay down the responsibilities of journalists in

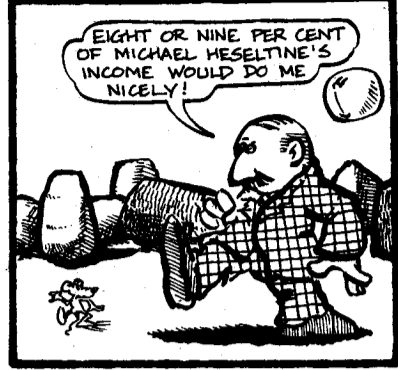
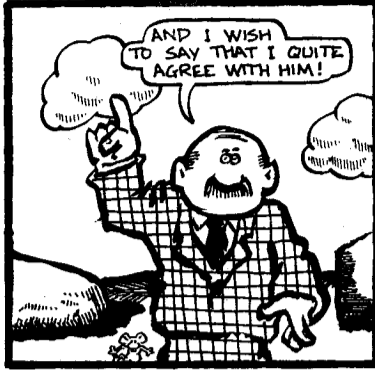
reporting, over which industrial action could well be necessary if the code is to be upheld.

After the media coverage of the TUC's Day of Action and the trashing of the Labour Party conference, it is certain that support for action on editorial content will be a major issue at the NUJ conference next March.

★ Press freedom is

one of the themes of a one-day open conference for the left in the NUJ, sponsored by Journalists Charter, to be held in London on Sat 1 Nov.

Other issues to be discussed are: print unity, job security, the closed shop, new technology, and women in the NUJ. Details from: Scarlett McCgwire, 31 Castellan Rd, London W9.



Socialist teachers gear up for the cuts

By Ken Jones

THIS winter the cuts in education will really start to bite. Teachers all over the country face the threat of massive job loss.

The executive of the National Union of Teachers takes the view that only the most extreme attacks on

education should be resisted. It has discussed — but not released — new guidelines for action.

It wants to make the main issue the fight against redundancies, while playing down the major ways in which jobs will be lost — through redeployment, early retirement, and 'natural wastage'. The NUT is in favour of schemes which shed jobs while avoiding redundancy.

Second, the executive indicates that official backing for strikes will be restricted to cases that involve the worst cuts. Teachers in the cities will be told to be thankful that their acts are not as bad as in the rural

areas. It was against this background that the AGM of the Socialist Teachers Alliance took place last Saturday. Teachers from 30 areas discussed a strategy for building an opposition to the executive's line.

Many teachers are dissatisfied with the executive's policy — its refusal to call national action, its evasion of links with other trade unions.

A basis exists for a broad opposition to such policies, based on the demands for public sector solidarity and for national

action. The STA voted to make this issue its priority over the next year.

The STA also voted to be continuing its campaign for left unity, especially in relation to Rank & File Teacher. It decided to seek joint action with teachers in the Labour Party organisation, the SEA, and to win support for the 1 November conference against the cuts.

The meeting voted to continue the STA's efforts to develop a socialist politics of education, which is now more important than ever as an alternative to the Tories' ideological attacks.

Rail — the big hive-off begins

By Pete Grant, ASLEF Willesden branch

THE British Railways Board announced last Thursday their intention to close down the collection and distribution section of their parcels operation.

The shutdown will mean the immediate loss of 6,000 jobs, mainly of road carrier drivers and parcel depot sorters. Another 2,000 jobs will be lost in National Carriers Limited.

British Rail chairperson Peter Parker warned that redundancies would affect train crews — a traditionally 'safe' occupation.

These announcements came shortly after the Board had told Southern Region union representatives of substantial cuts in services

All this amounts to British Rail completely pulling out of parcels and freight carrying, leaving the field open to private hauliers.

Rail bosses blame the private collection services' creaming off of the most profitable business for last year's official £38m loss on the parcels business.

In fact the real problems of the parcels service, as with the whole of British Rail, are the compensation payments to the former owners and the consistent imposition of cash limits preventing the necessary investment taking place.

Railworkers should organise to force the leadership into action against further job losses. Demands for worksharing and a 35-hour week with no loss of pay should be coupled with a complete boycott of further productivity discussions.

Racist Cover-up in Nottingham

By Roy Kirk

NOTTINGHAM's black community has been hit by an explosion of racist violence.

★ July — attack by National Front supporters on a young black in Broxtowe. He is left with a fractured arm and leg.

★ August — deliberate attempt to run down a young black girl in Hyson Green.

★ September — two attempts to run down blacks, one in the city and one in Hyson Green. Black youngster deliberately run down and in a coma for three weeks.

★ September — after receiving threats and being painted with NF slogans, a black church in the Meadows is burnt down.

The most important incident occurred on 13 August when five young whites cruised around the Hyson Green area where many black families live. A series of assaults took place leaving an elderly man with a fractured knee.

As news of the attacks spread, black youths gathered outside a pub. The racists were recognised in a passing car and a brick was thrown. The white youths complained to the

police, who rushed into action — against the blacks! In the subsequent melee petrol bombs were thrown at Hyson Green police station and police reinforcements were called in.

Over the following eight days, arrests were made. In most cases charges were dropped but seven blacks have now been charged with conspiracy to commit criminal damage. This carries a sentence of up to 15 years in prison.

The police claimed they had not arrested the racists as no formal complaints had been laid. On 15 August one of those arrested, Mr Harris, went to Hyson Green police station to remedy this situation. Initially he was turned away. When he returned the police were better prepared. Alleging he had not paid a fine he was bundled off to Lincoln jail!

Senior police officers regarded this as slightly excessive and an inquiry — internal of course — may follow. Since then police have charged six whites with conspiracy to commit assault, and the streets of Hyson Green are thick with community police offering 'dialogue' with any young black who will listen.

The local radio and press have buried the events or total-



GM COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

ly distorted them. One local radio station reported a demonstration against police harassment as calling for more community police!

This censorship complies with the police's attempted cover-up. But a defence campaign for the arrested young blacks aims to break this silence.

A picket will be held on 5 November at the Guildhall where other charges are to be heard. Money is required and should be sent to: Defence Fund, c/o ACNA Centre, Hungerhill Rd, Nottingham.

Squatters occupy against sale of flats

By Piers Corbyn

HOMELESS people struck a blow against Tory plans to sell off council housing in a mass squat against the cuts on 3 October, the day the new law came into force.

5 Kilner House near the Oval in South London — a block of 60 modernised GLC flats awaiting sale — was taken over by the London Squatters Union. A spokesperson for the 130 people now living in the block said that the occupation marks the beginning of a series of mass squats against the Tories' housing policy.

Kilner House is the first modernised inter-war block the GLC has tried to sell. Tenants who moved out two years ago were promised that they could return after modernisation.

This promise was broken, so the Squatters Union reserved places for local tenants and distributed leaflets explaining their action. A number of local families

have joined the squat. Among those supporting the action are: the London Tenants Organisation, Lambeth Trades Council, UCATT building workers, Stuart Holland MP, and Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth council.

The squatters are calling on Lambeth council to take over the block from the GLC in order to stop it vanishing into the private sector. They are asking people to join them in physical resistance to any eviction.

The squatters have been summoned to the High Court in the Strand on Friday 17 Oct where a demonstration will be held from 11am. A rally and festival will take place on 19 Oct at 2pm, Kilner House, Clayton Street, SE11. Information, tel 01-701 5691.

STILL AVAILABLE: the badge that shows where you stand on Thatcher's warmongering. 20p plus 10p p&p.



All orders must be pre-paid to Hackney Socialist Education Group, c/o PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Horrible!

THE Chamber of Horrors at Madame Tussaud's is now almost complete. Lord Carrington, the wealthy Foreign Secretary, went along last week for the unveiling of his counterpart, this time in wax.

Carrington, who owns much of Buckinghamshire, joins effigies of Thatcher and Keith Joseph, so that tourists can frighten their children with a glimpse of Tory Britain.

The waxworks now needs to update some of the apparatus that's on display. The axe and block, together with the guillotine, are limited to one-at-a-time decapitations.

This is hardly in keeping with the government's programme of death by a thousand cuts. A mega-ton Cruise splattered with our blood would be a more appropriate symbol of Thatcherland.

Bolton rallies against the missiles

By Pete Middleton

ONE hundred and fifty people attended the first meeting of Bolton against the Missiles held on 9 October.

The meeting was addressed by Frank Allaun MP and a local priest, the Rev Jonathan Clatworthy.

Frank Allaun spoke at length against the real aggressors, US imperialism. He also outlined the Labour conference's recent decision to close down US bases in Britain as a step towards unilateral nuclear disarmament.

He argued that a future Labour government should cancel the Cruise and Trident agreements, and stressed the necessity of an accountable party leadership to ensure that these decisions were carried out.

Young people in the audience responded enthusiastically to the proposal for a Youth against the Missiles campaign.

Frank Allaun said that the campaign against the missiles was bigger than CND twenty years ago — he hoped campaigns would be set up in every Lancashire town.

Short-life housing threatened

By Dave Rimmer

CHRIS PRYCE, Labour chairperson of the London borough of Islington's housing committee — and incredibly a member of the board of SHELTER, the housing charity — is threatening to evict hundreds of 'short-life' occupants in the Islington area. The reason? Their refusal to pay a £3 a week council levy.

The short-life group Islington Community Housing explain: 'We take on houses in such bad condition that Islington can't use them itself... We repair them... We have to move every six months or so... and we already pay £4.50 per person weekly for our slum homes. So why the hell should we pay the levy too?'

Islington's housing is a sad but typical tale. 9,000 houses, over half of them publicly owned, are being left to rot while 12,000 families wait for re-housing. The short-life housing groups already house 1,000 adults and 150 children.

Many of these would not otherwise be housed by the council.

Moreover, short-term housing provides the council with £50,000 in rates it would not receive if the houses were left empty — and they do hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of repairs each year that would not otherwise get done.

Islington community housing have called a demonstration to protest against the council's action. Assemble Madras Place, N7, 5pm, Sat 16 Oct. March to picket town hall, 6-8pm, followed by benefit social.

And now for that bastion of male power, the Labour Party

By Jude Arkwright

'THERE has to be a hard struggle against male privilege inside the party in order that we can strengthen it for the fight against male privilege in society as a whole.'

These were the opening remarks by Frances Morrell at the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's conference on women's rights within the party last weekend.

That privilege is not insignificant when you consider that a mere 19 MPs out of 635 are women. Fifty-five Labour MPs — all men — voted for Corrie's anti-abortion Bill, assuming it their right to decide on women's lives and flout the decisions of the Labour Party conference.

At this year's conference women's rights were debated for the first time in ages, and had 15 minutes on the agenda.

Demands

Some 60 women from across the country attended the CLPD conference to debate a consultative document presented by the campaign's women's committee. Among the points raised was that women should make up half those on shortlists as parliamentary candidates. This is presently the case in Norway.

Women in Action supporters and others argued that the consultative document put forward tended to concentrate on getting women into the higher echelons of the party, rather than emphasising the need to organise women at the base of the party to fight for their own demands.

Split

Ann Pettifor, a shop steward in the Transport Union, and Berry Beaumont, of Holborn and St Pancras North CLP, put forward amendments to the consultative document on the need to take the fight for positive discrimination for women into the unions, otherwise the fight within the party would never succeed.

This issue split the conference. Eventually the amendments were carried.

The conference supported amendments from Women in Action supporters which stressed the need to strengthen the women's sections of the Labour Party by giving them a campaigning orientation and linking them to organisations outside the party over common objectives.

Commit

Anna Coote from the National Council for Civil Liberties addressed the conference on what positive discrimination in all areas of women's lives would mean: an end to job segregation, for non-discriminatory layoffs, for positive measures like crèches, and positive legislation on abortion to enable women to determine their own lives.

Denny Fitzpatrick, a Women in Action supporter, argued for a fight to commit the next Labour government to such policies.

Women in Action supported by Women's Fightback put forward several proposals for action now on a woman's right to work but these were not voted on.

Socialist Challenge

Right-wing MPs move to block Labour left

'THE BITTER CLIMAX OF DEATH'

'WE, the Republican Prisoners of War in H-Block, Long Kesh, demand as of right political recognition and that we be accorded the status of political prisoners. We claim this right as captured combatants in the continuing struggle for national liberation and self-determination.

'We refute most strongly the tag of criminal with which the British have attempted to label us and our struggle, and we point to the divisive, partitionist institutions of the Six Counties as the sole criminal aspect of the present struggle.

'All of us were arrested under repressive laws, interrogated and often tortured in RUC barracks, and processed through special non-jury courts where we were sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment.

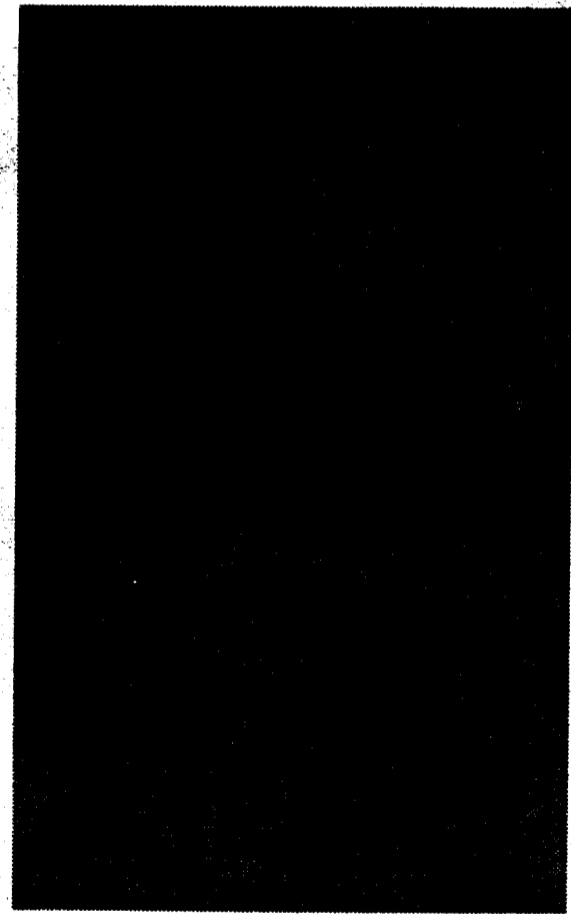
'After this, men were put in the H-Blocks and were expected to bow the knee before the British administration and wear their criminal uniform. Attempts to criminalise us were designed to depoliticise the Irish national struggle.

'We don't have to recite again the widespread, almost total forms of punishment, degradation and deprivation we have been subjected to. All have failed to break our resistance.

'For the past four years we have endured their brutality in deplorable conditions — we have been stripped naked and robbed of our individuality, yet we refused to be broken. Further repression only serves to strengthen our resolve and that of our female comrades enduring the same hardships in Armagh Jail.

'During this period many individuals, religious figures, political organisations and sections of the media have condemned the way in which we have been treated.

'Yet despite appeals for a resolution of the H-Block protest, the British government has remained intransigent and displayed vindictive arrogance in dealing with the problem. It refused to treat this issue in a realistic manner, which is



just another reflection of its attitude to the entire Irish question.

'Bearing in mind the serious implications of our final step, not only for us but for our people, we wish to make it clear that every channel has now been exhausted and — not wishing to break faith with those from whom we have inherited our principles — we now commit ourselves to a hunger strike.

'We call on the Irish people to lend us their support for our just demands and we are confident that this will be very much in evidence in the coming days.

'We call on all solidarity and support groups to intensify their efforts, and we also look forward with full confidence to the support of our exiled countrymen in America, Australia and throughout the world.

'We declare that political status is ours of right and we declare that from Monday, 27 October 1980 a hunger strike by a number of men representing H-Blocks 3, 4, and 5 will commence.

'Our widely recognised resistance has carried us through four years of immense suffering, and it shall carry us through to the bitter climax of death if necessary.'

Signed:
H-Block Blanketmen,
Long Kesh Camp,
10 October



CIARAN NUGENT — the first prisoner to go on the blanket in 1976. He has recently been released after serving his full sentence.

Picket: Downing Street, 18 October, noon.

Demonstrate: For British Withdrawal from Ireland, 15 November, London.

Demonstrate: Solidarity with the hunger strikers, 7 December, London.

AS WE go to press, Labour leader Jim Callaghan is about to declare whether he stays on as Labour leader. Despite appearances, Callaghan does not have the interests of the labour movement at heart.

Instead he has aimed to shorten the odds on introducing a right-wing figure like Denis Healey to replace him. He is trying to sabotage the tremendous victory won by the left at the Labour Party conference this month.

Flout

Since then the right wing has put the heat on Callaghan to openly flout the decisions of the conference by planting a right winger in the leadership.

David Owen has gone further and demanded that the next leader of the Labour Party should be elected by MPs alone, ignoring the conference decision to extend the vote on the leader to the trade unions and the party rank and file. This is what democracy means for the Gang of Three.

These manoeuvres by the parliamentary clique could be crushed if trade union leaders such as Moss Evans and David Bassnet were to exert the tremendous strength of the unions inside the party and compel the Labour leadership to submit to the most democratic form of election currently proposed — the party conference.

Worried

But they won't. Like Callaghan they are worried by the consequences of workers' democracy in the party and the effects in their own unions.

Trade union militants can demand that there be a democratic decision in their own union on the method of electing the Labour Party leader.

Likewise the proposal of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy for MPs to discuss with their parties on the matter is a good one. Labour Party members should be proposing resolutions that the conference should be able to decide the leader — not Jim Callaghan.

It's not just the Poles who need democracy — page 4

