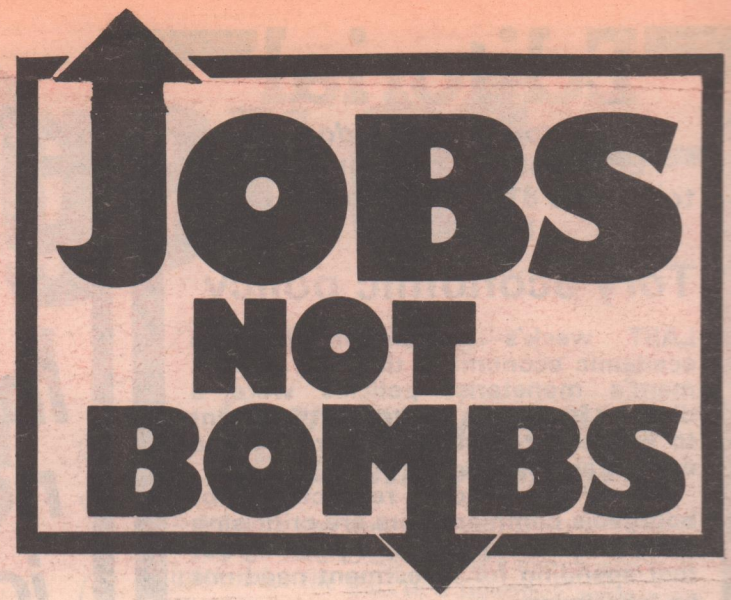


Socialist Challenge



Let the left be heard!

BACK BENN'S CAMPAIGN

TONY Benn's decision to stand for deputy leader of the Labour Party provides an excellent opportunity to consolidate the gains of the left.

Benn has made it absolutely clear that he intends to prioritise the fight for left-wing policies, and the election will be a crucial test of where the party stands.

But what a miserable response has come from the trade union leaders and the parliamentary Labour Party, backed by a deluge of abuse from the media.

Now that an electoral college has been established for the election of the leader and deputy leader, the Labour leadership has discovered that it is 'undemocratic' and 'divisive' to use it!

Elections, it appears, are about bureaucratic stitch-ups between trade union and parliamentary leaders: not about a

discussion of policy and a vote. Particularly disgraceful are the statements by Alan Fisher of the Public Employees, and the letter from Alex Kitson of the Transport Union both urging Benn not to stand.

NUPE and TGWU members should ask their leaders: Will Moss Evans and Alan Fisher really cast their votes for Denis Healey, candidate of the International Monetary Fund, architect of the

austerity plans of the last Labour government and member of the Bildeberg group of bankers?

Even worse is the attitude of many members of the Tribune group in parliament, who are bleating about the need for party unity.

Unity, of course, is a wonderful thing. But in the past the fight for Labour Party 'unity' has meant acceptance of the policies of the right wing, and the abandonment of Labour Party conference policies — in other words, sell-out pure and simple.

So are we going to see members of the Tribune group vote for Healey — Judith Hart, Eric Heffer and all? Their constituency parties should immediately call meetings to demand that all Tribune group members back Tony Benn.

Benn's programme has obvious inadequacies. It doesn't say anything about the fight against unemployment, for a 35-hour week, and the need for a struggle to kick out the Tories, here and now.

Socialist Challenge believes that his programme is far from adequate to mobilise for an ef-



Fisher (above) and Evans and Kitson (left). Will they vote for Healey?

fective right to defeat the Tories. But it does open the way for a real discussion of socialist policies for the next Labour government.

As far as it goes it should be supported. The campaign for Benn provides the best terrain to hammer out an action programme to face the Tory attacks and push forward socialist policies.

If the leaders of the Labour Party and the unions don't want to support Benn, then the rank and file should force them to. Every Labour Party and trade union branch should discuss the deputy leadership election and



decide its policy.

The union executive committees should be bombarded with motions demanding support for Benn. Every union conference must hear Benn speak — and in the best traditions of democracy, let Healey speak as well.

Let's have debates up and down the country, and see who the rank and file supports.

Socialist Challenge calls on all its readers and supporters to urgently take up the campaign for the widest discussion of the

election in the labour movement. In particular we call for support, for tens of thousands of signatures, for the following appeal:

We give full support to the candidacy of Tony Benn for deputy leader of the Labour Party.

We believe that the campaign offers the best opportunity to discuss and organise to win policies which the labour movement needs in the face of the Tory attacks.

We call for every

branch, committee, and conference of the trade unions and Labour Party to discuss their attitude to the election for deputy leader of the Labour Party.

Time is not on our side — union conferences are already underway. If we are to seize this opportunity to inflict a crushing defeat on the right wing, action is needed now.

Without further advances by the left, we shall get not the status quo, but a right-wing come-back and a reversal of the gains of the last two years.

Benn's five-point programme

- Withdrawal from the Common Market.
- A non-nuclear defence strategy, no Cruise, no Trident.
- A return to full employment.
- Full restoration of the social service cuts.
- Extension of democracy, including defence of the democratic rights of women and blacks.



Editorial

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Tory economic policy

LAST week's declaration by 364 academic economists that the government's monetarist policies were a disaster for Britain illustrated the extent to which the monetarist 'hards' in the cabinet are isolated.

Even the most respectable of bourgeois commentators are criticising their deflationary zeal, and pointing out that spending for investment need not be inflationary.

Some of the points made by these commentators can easily be agreed by socialists — that it is ludicrous to have millions unemployed, when the railways need electrification, when modern factories, homes and schools need building.

But many of the government's non-socialist critics are missing the point, as they recoil at the effects of the recession and run for cover. The Tories' deflationary policies aren't just an economic 'experiment', as everyone from Denis Healey to Len Murray would have it but above all a *political strategy*. Thatcher and Howe aren't just using unemployment to 'shake out' unproductive industry, and reduce inflation, but also to deal a massive blow to the labour movement.

They want to force down wages though the insecurity created by unemployment, and hence undermine the militancy and organisational strength of the unions. Critics of this approach say that mass unemployment is incompatible with reducing inflation in a 'modern' state, because of the scale of social security payments.

The Tories have their own answer to this — they understand only too well that the full impact of unemployment won't be felt without attacking social security benefits. The first round of these attacks is now on the way in the shape of the proposals to tax dole money and benefits for strikers' dependants.

This vicious assault on workers' benefits is just the tip of the iceberg — we can be sure that further cuts are on the way. So keeping a job will become more important than gaining a wage increase or fighting for better conditions and shorter hours. Monetarist high priest Milton Friedman nicely caught this mood recently when he commented: 'If a single job has many applicants then it's paid too highly'.

Nobody has any confidence that the present recession will end within the next year. But if the recession, with its accompanying attacks on workers' living standards, can push down the price of labour far enough, then the basis of profitable investment and a partial recovery can be created. Such a development, still some way off, would represent at least a partial success for the Tory strategy.

Samuel Brittan, commenting in the Financial Times, said of the academics' attack on monetarism, 'these academic demos add to the gaiety of life'. But the academic debates, however gay, shouldn't blind us to the fact that monetarist strategy isn't just an 'experiment' but an attempt to crush the lives of real people.

Thatcher, Joseph and Howe accept this as a necessary lubricant in the running their system. No better proof of that system's insanity could exist.

'People's March

Import controls no answer to job loss

By Pat Hickey
Senior shop
steward, Rover
Solihull

AS unemployment climbs steadily, the working class is looking increasingly to the labour leaders at national level to develop a fightback.

There were large turn-outs for the Liverpool and Glasgow demonstrations, and support for the People's March for Jobs is likely to be massive.

In contrast, workers at plant and combine level are reluctant to go into struggle as it becomes apparent that the depth of the crisis demands a national answer.

Unemployment is now seen by the working class as the main problem it faces. Even those in work are being forced to accept speed-up, wage cuts, and attacks on trade union organisation.

Crisis

The Tories and the employers are using unemployment to force the workers to pay for the crisis. The need for a fightback is urgent.

More than 40 years ago Leon Trotsky wrote: 'Under the menace of its own situation the proletariat cannot permit the transformation of an increasing section of the workers living off the slops of a crumbling society.'

'The right to employment is the only serious right left to the worker in a society based on exploitation.'

'Against unemployment, structural as well as conjunctural, the time is ripe to advance along with

the slogan of public works, the slogan of a sliding scale of hours.'

The first step towards that in today's conditions must be for a 35-hour week.

Every major union in Britain has adopted policies in favour of the 35-hour week, but none has led a serious fight for this demand.

Policy

In national negotiations, the officials have blatantly ignored conference policy.

After national strikes in engineering knocked one hour off the week on condition that there would be no loss of productivity, the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, said the question of hours would not be raised again until 1984.

A national fight for the 35-hour week without loss of pay would bind employed and unemployed workers together. It would create 1.5m jobs immediately, and if the demand were linked to a programme of public works, unemployment would be eliminated.

Houses

The unemployed could work using idle plant and equipment to build the houses, schools and hospitals that the working class needs.

Such a policy would mean a head-on confrontation with the government and the employers.

Yet if the massive strength of the 13 million trade unionists in Britain were mobilised by a national campaign, the



working class would be unstoppable.

The Tories are well aware of this. They backed off from the miners because they knew that a fight with the NUM would rapidly develop into a battle with the whole class.

Strength

But instead of seeking to mobilise the strength of the whole class in a fight with the Tories, the TUC is trying to mobilise the CBI.

At a special Transport Union conference on import controls, general secretary Moss Evans stated: 'We take the view that the CBI ought to end its silence and represent the interests of its members properly'.

The key demand of the TUC in its attempts to tie up with the employers is the call for import controls. This policy will do nothing to solve unemployment. At best it would merely export it for a short time.

Recession

The crisis is not just a British crisis. Throughout the industrial world, unemployment is increasing by leaps and bounds. In the nine EEC countries

it is currently at 8 per cent.

Under the impact of the recession, every employer is seeking to grab a share of the market at the expense of every other employer.

If Britain excludes foreign goods other countries would retaliate. When import controls were introduced on a large scale in the 1930s, unemployment jumped from 12 per cent in 1929 to 23 per cent in 1932-3.

Dearer

Import controls would reduce the standard of living of British workers. If cheaper goods are excluded, British workers would have to buy dearer products. Import controls act as an extra tax on the workers in favour of employers.

For example, a direct result of EEC controls on food is that food in Britain is almost 50 per cent dearer than in the rest of the world.

The call for import controls is an openly nationalistic demand, saying to British workers that they have more in common with British bosses than other workers.

It is only a small step to then call for 'British jobs for British workers', which would divide the working class in Britain against itself on racist lines.

Profits

Of course, employers will support import controls where they increase their profits. But they will also want redundancies, speed-up, and attacks on the unions. Only by fighting for policies which make the employers pay for the crisis can the working class make any progress in this period.

The well-fed gentlemen of the TUC (Len Murray's price rise last week gives him an annual salary of over £20,000) are determined to avoid a confrontation with the Tories.

Quangos

Their policies are tailored so as not to alarm the employers and to enable civilised discussion to take place in government committees.

Well-paid seats on quangos are more comfortable than leading the class struggle or a place on the dole queue. We must make them fight.



should show anger of working people'

Open letter to the labour movement

WE are sure everyone in the labour movement is looking forward to the people's march with anticipation for the start of a fightback against this Tory government.

We hope that this march will be used to show the anger that working people are feeling over the highest level of unemployment ever.

Surrounding the march should be calls for concerted industrial action. We hope that the march receives more publicity than the TUC week of action.

The general council of the TUC need to give more active support, all the general council should join the march at some stage (perhaps they should check Len Murray's holiday dates first).

It's all very well calling the march a people's march, but what about the workers that are in dispute at this moment in time.

The organisers of the march should invite them to play a prominent part and lead off the march as it goes through their areas.

We have to support strikers like those at Royal Pride, Mosedale and Anells to name a few. Also it will be a boost if Lee Jeans workers from Scotland were invited to join the march.

If this march is to count for anything to the working class it must not become just an excuse for a get together of union leaders, churchmen and politicians.

It must be a show of working class strength.

From Schreiber shop stewards committee,
Trafford Park, Manchester

The contrast couldn't be greater.

On one hand the 250 women workers at 'Lee Jeans' Greenock are in the eleventh week of occupying their factory in an all-out fight for jobs.

On the other, the main 'event' of the TUC's 'Week of Activities' is the march this Saturday in Bradford called by the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers against unemployment and for import controls — a demand supported by the textile bosses.

One is a real fight against the Tories.

The other represents collaboration between the union leaders and the very industrialists who have put 100,000 textile workers on the dole in the last year alone.

Miners leader Arthur Scargill is due to speak at Bradford. Let's hope he makes it crystal clear just how the

ON THE MARCH AGAINST THE TORIES

Liverpool to London, 1-31 May

miners won the first round to save their jobs — through national strike action.

Let's hope he puts forward the one demand which can unite every worker in the fight for jobs — a 35-hour week and worksharing now with no loss of pay.

Let's hope he calls on the TUC leaders to build on the example of the Scottish TUC and

CSEU who organised a two-hour general strike against the Tories last Wednesday.

The organisers of the People's March For Jobs from Liverpool and Yorkshire to London will also be demanding import controls.

But this march and the Bradford demonstration will at root be angry mobilisations of workers against Tory unemployment.

We should mobilise for both on the basis of a fight for a 35-hour week now and a series of one-day general strikes to kick out the Tories.

A first step will be calling for those workers fighting back now — from 'Lee' jeans, from Plansee, Rotherham, from Royal Pride and Schreiber's in Manchester to lead both the Bradford demonstration and the national demonstration to greet the Jobs March in London on Sunday 31 May.

How to fight a multinational

By Des Tierney

BY courtesy of the Scottish Council of the Labour Party, the workers occupying the Lee Jeans factory in Greenock were recently treated to a showing of *Norma Rae*.

It was a good choice of film. *Norma Rae* tells the story of a heroic struggle by women workers in a factory in the southern states of the USA to unionise their factory and improve their living conditions.

The massive support that the Scottish labour movement has been giving to the Lee Jeans occupation is due to the determination and courage of the mainly women strikers.

As well as women struggling for their rights, there was another aspect of the film which made it particularly suitable.

The southern textile company portrayed in *Norma Rae* could very well have been the VF Corporations, the giant US multi-national which own the Lee Jeans factory in Greenock.

Anti-union

VF has an annual turnover of 700m dollars and 18,500 employees. It owns 34 factories in the United States and another 10 throughout the rest of the world.

The location of its factories in the US is significant. They are almost all situated in the anti-union southern states, where traditionally labour has been cheap.

Abroad, its factories are also in areas where union organisation is weak — Hong Kong, Spain, South Africa, the Philippines and Brazil, although it also has factories in Canada, Australia and West Europe.



Some of the Lee Jeans workers

VF experienced an enormous growth during the 1970s. Sales tripled to \$633m and profits increased by 900 per cent to \$45.9m. The earnings for each share doubled.

Even in 1980, a year in which the recession was hurting most companies, VF had a record year. Last week, VF's shares were valued on the US stock exchange at a higher value than they had held for the last twelve months!

But the contraction in European

sales of leisure wear has hit Lee Jeans. There are several reasons why the Greenock factory may have been selected for closure. The Tories' economic policies, which have resulted in a high exchange rate for the pound, is one of them.

A sharper than average fall in the demand for jeans in Britain could be another, and more importantly, a factory with a high degree of union organisation could have made Greenock the target.

The Greenock workers are out to show the European management of VF that Norma Rae lives!

The workers have occupied the factory to prevent the movement of stock and machinery and they are demanding that the available work is shared among VF's factories in Britain and Ireland.

Management has refused to discuss the workers' demands in the hope that the occupation would lose support.

Support

The opposite has been the case, despite the lack of official recognition until last week by the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers.

Support is flooding in and the mood of the workers has been hardening. Until now they have allowed Lee products to move freely through British ports, although they knew they could call on the support of the dockers. This line of action is now being reconsidered.

Shipyard workers on the Clyde are among the main contributors to the £5,000 a week that the 250 strikers are receiving.

The workers welcome attempts to start a consumer boycott of Lee Jeans. They have also started a series of meetings and visits throughout Britain to win support and explain their case.

● 14, 15, 16 April — Birmingham
● 27 April to 1 May — South Wales

● week ending 9 May — London, Leicester

For information, donations and messages of support write to: NUTGW, 543 Sauchiehall St, Glasgow.



National march and rally against unemployment

Sunday 31 May

Assemble noon at Speakers Corner, Hyde Park for march to Trafalgar Square

Labour Party

SWP replies on Labour Party

'Such a party cannot be a tool of socialist advance'

MANY readers of Socialist Challenge will be as amazed as I was by some of the arguments appearing, with clear editorial support, in your pages. In particular this will be true of the article by Bob Pennington (12 March).

Socialist Challenge seems to have turned its back completely on what was supposed to be the central plank of its politics when it was founded, endorsed at last year's International Marxist Group conference.

This was, of course, the insistence on the need for the left outside the Labour Party to build a socialist alternative to Labour.

It was in this sense, for instance, that you wrote to us in the Socialist Workers Party demanding unity in July 1978, and again last year, even if the unfortunate tone of your first letter made it impossible for us to meet your demand.

But now, it seems, what is being called for is not the building of a revolutionary socialist alternative to Labour, but entry into the Labour Party on the Labour left's terms.

Pennington presents the struggle by the Labour left around the question of reselection and an electoral college in the most glowing terms. We are told: 'The fight for democracy (within the Labour Party) is an attempt to break the grip of the state... This brings the question of the state to the centre of British politics.'

Scorn is poured on those of us who adhere to the old Marxist view that the Labour left is 'deluded' in its belief that such a thoroughly reformist party can be an agency of socialist advance.

Apparently it is wrong to tell the reformist left it is 'wasting its time' and we are 'crazy' to argue for a par-

ty of a fundamentally different type to that of the organisation of the Labour left.

Pennington ends by urging Marxists to 'relate directly to what is going on in the Labour Party,' instead of 'commentating from the outside'.

It would make for clarity all round if Pennington — and Socialist Challenge — would spell out their answers to a few questions.

Are all readers and supporters of Socialist Challenge being urged to join the Labour Party? If so, when and how was your previous position — that of focussing on revolutionary unity — reversed?

Finally, are Socialist Challenge supporter within the Labour Party expected to argue, honestly, that such a party cannot become a tool of socialist advance without a complete break — which even Pennington would admit is unlikely — with not only the reformist right, but also the leaders of the reformist left?

Or are we going to have a repeat of the pattern of recent weeks, of the words of Benn, or even Foot, being presented as if, perhaps with minor modifications, they could be correct rallying cries for the class?

Yours fraternally,
Chris Harman,
Socialist Review

Socialist Challenge

BOB PENNINGTON replies:

I DO NOT think, nor did I ever suggest, that the Labour Party is 'an agency of socialist advance'.

I do believe, however that the fights on policy and democracy in the Labour Party are an important part of the struggle to build a revolutionary socialist alternative.

The labour bureaucracy mediates between capitalism and the working class, and its ultimate loyalty lies with the capitalist state. This is why the right wing and the media so fervently defend the rights of MPs against their constituency parties.

They want to preserve a situation where the MPs are free of control by the labour movement so they can be accountable to the International Monetary Fund, the Bank of England, the military establishment and the other institutions of the capitalist state.

They want the Labour leader to be elected by a predominantly right-wing Parliamentary Labour Party,

so that its sole right to choose the cabinet and decide the policy of a Labour government remains intact.

Likewise, the state is against the Labour Party adopting a unilateralist policy, coming out of the EEC, abolishing the House of Lords, and extending nationalisations. All these measures would be a serious blow to capitalism.

Because the Labour Party is fighting about democracy and issues of policy that have an anti-capitalist potential, some 800 people a week are joining the Labour Party. Most of them have illusions in reformism, but they also want more radical, anti-capitalist policies.

It is not enough for the far left to preach to them from the sidelines that left social democracy will only betray in the end. The far left has to be where the fight is, and it has to be where the biggest opportunities for winning thousands of new people to socialist ideas are to be found.

If the supporters of Socialist Challenge and Socialist Worker were to join forces in helping to organise the Labour left, we would be able to build a powerful alternative to the right wing.

We would also be in a better position to counter the illusions of left reformism. And we could lay the basis for a real Marxist movement rooted in the working class.

Benn stands and the fight is on

By Paul Smith

A BARRAGE of abuse from the right and the centre of the Labour Party has greeted Tony Benn's decision to stand as deputy leader.

John Silkin, whose ambition obviously exceeds his intelligence, described the decision as 'stupid... a move which will destroy party unity' — and without the slightest hint of a blush went on to discuss the possibility of his own candidature!

Benn's decision to stand against Healey is almost universally condemned in the parliamentary party because it forces the left to fight.

Potentially, the ranks of the party and the unions will be lined up against the parliamentary leadership and important sections of the trade union bureaucracy.

Benn's campaign therefore provides a valuable service to those campaigning in the labour movement for democracy and socialist policies. The left at rank and file level will correctly rally round Benn's candidature.

The right-wing assault does not arise from a backlash in the working class — far from it. It comes from the fear of the right wing that many workers are looking for radical alternatives to the Tory attacks.

Action

Sensing that the Tories are on the run, and fearful of the support for the Social Democrats, the supporters of Labour Solidarity are desperate to prove that Labour can be trusted with the mantle of office, and that they will make no fundamental challenge to the real rulers of Britain.

Unfortunately, until now the Labour left has remained silent in the face of this right-wing offensive. It has relied on extending its gains into the parliamentary party through work in the Tribune group and the reselection of the most obnoxious of Labour's sitting tenants.

It has not faced the fact



Glum Heffer opposes Benn

that an all-out battle inside the trade unions was and remains necessary to secure the left's advance.

It is no accident that the trade union leaders, from Kitson to NUPE's Alan Fisher have weighed in to criticise Benn's candidacy. Like the NUR's Sidney Weighell, they may find that their membership have something to say before their attitude is finally decided.

Moss Evans and his ilk are well aware that the annual election of the Labour leader puts a time bomb under their own feudal fiefdoms. Recent events have shown that the advance of the left can go no further without challenging the barons of the trade union movement.

Unions

Benn's fight for deputy leader has the potential to put the right wing's campaign into reverse.

A vigorous campaign within the unions to bring the block vote directly under the control of the



No smiles now as Benn challenges Healey

membership and for the democratic election of the union leaders would put the bureaucrats on the defensive.

Benn has correctly defended his candidacy on the basis of the struggle for socialist policies. His five-point programme includes support for full employment, expansion of welfare services, getting rid of nuclear weapons, withdrawal from the EEC and the extension of democratic rights.

Most of these points are worthy of support from any socialist. But the

crucial element missing from his programme is any notion of how the workers' movement can achieve these desirable objectives.

Surely the very first task is the fight for mass industrial action to get rid of this hated Tory government which is an obstacle to advance on any front.

Teeth

Establishing full employment and an expansion of social services will only be done in the teeth of the most bitter opposition of the capitalists.

The struggle for a 35-hour week is missing from his programme.

This would reduce unemployment by 1.5m. at a stroke, but it would entail a massive struggle with the deeply rooted interests of the British ruling class and its loyal representatives in the corridors of the TUC's Congress House.

The struggle for new socialist policies for the Labour Party is vital. It will entail an all-out battle to build a movement that drives straight through the fainthearted and feeble-

minded current leadership of the Labour Party and the unions.

The same people who attack Benn for 'disunity' are leading the witch-hunt against left-wingers in the Labour Party.

Sidney Weighell has announced a campaign to expel supporters of *Militant*. And Peter Shore declared that, 'now the splitters have gone,' the key task is 'to get rid of the wreckers'.

Benn's simple reply to charges of 'divisiveness' is that: 'It's very dangerous

to say that elections are divisive'. Discussion on the policies the workers' movement that would genuinely meet their needs is a vital weapon in the fight for workers' unity.

Those who are seriously concerned with unity can only applaud Benn's decision to stand.

Now the campaign for hearts and minds should be taken with all speed into the industrial unions. The battle can only be fought and won in the engine room of the working class.

Stop the missiles

Revolution Youth refutes witch-hunt

FOR OVER a year now, members of Revolution Youth, the socialist youth organisation, have been active in the campaign against Cruise and Trident missiles. In many places they have played a major role in building Youth CND. Unfortunately, Revolution Youth is becoming the victim of a red-baiting witch hunt, orchestrated in part by national officers of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament.

It is extremely regrettable that time and energy of the disarmament movement should be wasted by such antics, but given the fact that democracy is under threat in YCND, Revolution Youth has asked Socialist Challenge to make the facts of this affair known.

Role

At the December conference of YCND, seven members of Revolution were elected to the 17-person national ad-hoc committee of YCND. This reflected the role which we had played in re-building YCND as a mass campaigning body.

The first whiff that 'independent' YCND activists and supporters of the Communist Party were orchestrating a campaign against us emerged at a meeting of London YCND on 4 March, when accusations were made that YCND was being 'dominated' by a non-existent body, the 'International Marxist League'.

By Richard Rozanski (Revolution Youth National Committee)



New issues of Revolution explains Revolution Youth's position on how to build a mass YCND. 10p from PO Box 50, London N1.

This was followed up at the national ad hoc committee meeting of 21 March, where a leading YCND activist, Mario

Borza, complained that Revolution was dominating the campaign. At the same meeting Sally Davidson, CND na-

tional organiser and a member of the Communist Party, produced a copy of a document alleged to be a perspectives resolution passed by the Birmingham branch of Revolution Youth.

The document referred to building YCND and winning supporters of YCND to the ideas of Revolution. Sally Davidson alleged that this meant that we were trying to 'take over' YCND.

Limit

It seems likely that the next National Council meeting of CND will discuss the alleged Revolution Youth 'takeover' of YCND, and give regional CNDs the power to disaffiliate YCND groups.

A second issue has emerged in this affair — that of the character of YCND. National officers of CND have expressed the view that YCND should be limited to those under 21 years of age, despite the fact that the upper age limit of most youth organisations, like the Labour Party Young Socialists and YCL, is around 25.

Priorities

The CND national office wants YCND to be a school student organisation, with relatively little say in the campaign. What it doesn't want is a powerful youth wing, uniting all sections of youth. This corresponds with their view that CND should be a 'people's movement', not one which prioritises the

labour movement and youth — as Revolution have argued.

United

It's part and parcel of the same approach which puts nuns and brigadiers on national platforms, but not a single youth speaker, as happened at last October's demonstration.

Both some non-affiliated members of YCND and the CP/YCL are worried by the influence of Revolution Youth in YCND. Revolution Youth has never made any secret of the fact that while it strives to build the campaign as a united front body, it also attempts to win young people in YCND to socialist ideas. It does this, not through 'manipulation' or underhand tactics, but by selling its publications and arguing for its ideas.

Build

At the YCND national conference on 11 and 12 April, Revolution Youth will argue that YCND should be built as a non-exclusionary united front, involving all sections of youth — young workers, the unemployed, college students and school students.

We pledge ourselves to loyally build YCND, but not at the price of keeping quiet about our politics. Let's hope that this affair can be quickly set aside, and that we can get on with the job of winning hundreds of thousands of young people against the missiles and for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

Easter Against the Missiles

OVER the Easter weekend CND will be conducting a series of activities against nuclear weapons. Below is a partial list of the major activities. Further details of all these activities can be obtained from CND, 11 Goodwin St., London N4 3HQ. Tel: 01-263 4954/8546.

ALDERMASTON: Sat 18 April, southern region CND demonstration outside nuclear research centre.

BRISTOL: Sat 18 April Bristol and south west region CND demonstration to Admiralty HQ. For details ring Bristol 32707.

CAMBRIDGE: Mon

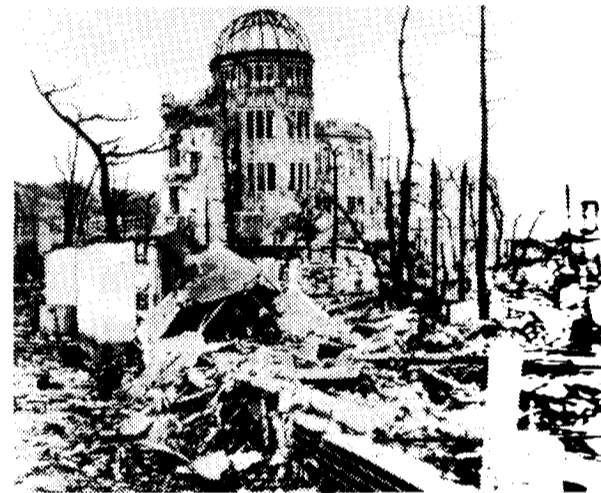
20 April, regional demonstration 11 am from RAF Honington to Thetford. Details ring Cambridge 353804.

LONDON: Five local marches to civil defence bunkers at Cheam, Crystal Palace, Wanstead, Dollis Hill and USAF Uxbridge.

MANCHESTER: Mass demonstration to greet trans-Pennine march.

MIDLANDS: Five prong march on Rugby from Birmingham/Wolverhampton, Derby, Leicester, Milton Keynes, Leamington. Culminate Mon 20 April with march on Rugby. Details Martin Tolman 021-236 9815.

NOTTINGHAM: Sat April 18. 11 a.m. march through town centre. Tel Nottingham 582561.



No 'defence' against the bomb

Why we object to civil 'defence'

By Alan Lenton

AFTER more than 20 years, 'civil defence' is once more becoming an issue of debate.

Anti-nuclear groups have denounced the government's new civil defence manual *Protect & Survive* as a fraud, and demonstrated outside civil defence installations.

But the criticisms of civil defence seem a little contradictory.

It is denounced as a waste of money, since the civil defence measures are totally inadequate to defend the populations against nuclear attack.

But at the same time civil defence programmes are criticised because they only provide shelters for a minority of the military and top civil servants.

These criticisms are true, but they miss the main point.

The reason that the government has revamped its civil defence programme has to do with the new way in which the Western powers are looking at nuclear war.

More and more, defence 'strategists' are beginning to consider the possibility of fighting and winning a limited nuclear war in Europe. Missiles like the Cruise, which have pin-point accuracy, together with the neutron bomb, and the increasing possibility of striking a decisive blow against

Soviet missile silos with a first strike, have all put nuclear war back within the framework of acceptable military options.

That's why civil defence has once more become a government concern. There is no doubt that the measures described in *Protect and Survive* border on the farcical.

When describing how a family can survive a nuclear attack with its own indoor shelter, the manual is careful also to explain what to do with the corpses of those people in your shelter who die.

In fact, the government's own estimate of anything (an underestimate) is that within weeks of a nuclear attack on Britain, 35 million people would be dead.

The government is not making serious preparation to defend the population in the event of nuclear attack — partly because there is no defence against the devastation which would be wrought on Britain during a nuclear bombardment.

Civil defence is a fraud not just because only a small minority of bureaucrats and the military could hope to be really safe, but because it creates the illusion that there is some sort of defence to nuclear attack, when obviously there isn't.

Civil defence makes nuclear war more thinkable. Its role is ideological. It is part of the war drive preparations.



Youth lead Manchester demo against the missiles

Solidarity leader recalls 1970 riots

'Red crosses had been drawn with the blood of the murdered'

THE latest agreement with the Polish government following the Bydgoszcz affair has led to open differences among the leaders of Solidarity. Karol Modzelewski, the national commission's press spokesperson, resigned over the way the agreement was reached.

Another dispute over union tactics has arisen between the union moderates, who include Walesa, and more radical leaders.

ANNA WALENTYNOWICZ, veteran campaigner for trade union rights, and a crane driver from the Gdansk shipyards, has come under fire for her criticisms of Walesa and the moderates.

Below we reprint from the latest issue of Labour Focus on Eastern Europe her account of the events of 1970 when a similar workers' upsurge was defeated by the Polish police and army.

THERE was an increase in prices on Saturday. On Monday the people went to the head office. There they discovered that the director had no influence over price rises and could only possibly raise the bonus by about 5%.

So, 300 people from the shipyard went to the Regional Committee building to ask for an explanation.

When they didn't come back for a long time, a second group was organised to see what was happening. I was with them.

Students

Afterwards we went to the polytechnic to apologise for not helping the students during their March 1968 demonstrations for bread and freedom. The rector came out and said that the decision to raise prices was correct, but nobody listened to him.

LABOUR FOCUS ON EASTERN EUROPE

POLAND: SOLIDARITY IN ACTION



New issue of *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe*, the most authoritative journal of events in Eastern Europe. Dossier on Polish struggle and building of *Solidarnosc*. £1.50 for 62 packed pages. Write to: LFE, Box 23, 135 Kingsland High St, London E8.



1970 Polish riots

The students talked to us and promised help. But when we went again at 7pm, hardly anybody was there. It turned out that they were shut up in the student hostels. However, many of them jumped through the windows and joined us later.

A cordon of police was standing near the bridge, and now things began. The first police cannister burst, spreading tear gas around. A crowd was massing

near Party headquarters, and there was a call through a loudhailer for the people to go back to work. I remember a shipyard worker climbing on to the roof of a tramcar, ripping off his shirt to bare his breast and shouting: 'Shoot! What have we got to live for?' But at that time there had not yet been any shooting.

On my way back, I met some colleagues who were

coming out of the rows of shipyards, dressed in asbestos overalls and safety-helmets. I raised my hands in the air and called: 'Wait a minute. You've got to think it over.' But nobody heard me. The people shouted, 'The army's here.'

From all sides came the sound of volleys. A helicopter was firing into the shipyard. Policemen disguised as soldiers were

firing at people coming into the shipyard.

The first dead fell. From the hospital hung white sheets on which red crosses had been drawn in the blood of those murdered. There were very many sheets, so many had fallen.

Delegation

And later... I don't know, I was slaving away in the kitchen the whole time. I was there when the shipyard workers capitulated. I often thought afterwards about those who perished. Will their blood be a poisoned seed or a sign of reconciliation?

I found myself on the list of those to be dismissed. However, I was selected for the delegation to go to Warsaw for a meeting with the authorities. This was in January 1971. Three coaches were brought up and off we went — not to Warsaw, however, but only to the nearby offices of the Regional National Council.

At one point the meeting with representatives from the highest authorities entered a very sharp discussion. And this certainly convinced us. Just like the others I shouted to Gierk: 'We will help.'

Tears

Just like the others I believed that they were real tears that ran down the gentleman's cheeks as he spoke: and that while he remained Minister of Internal Affairs there would be no bloodshed in Poland. I felt that I was being recharged with hope and faith like a battery. But disillusion was quick to follow.

A month passed, and the agitation didn't stop. In May 1971 a strike exploded. I ran to the head office where a crowd had already gathered. It turned out that one of the causes of the conflict was a new system of dividing bonuses. People still remembered Jaroszewicz's promise that we ourselves decide how to allocate them.

Why, once again, had nobody asked us our opinion? He was disregarding the December troubles, and a rumour was going round that he was working for the UB (Secret Police).

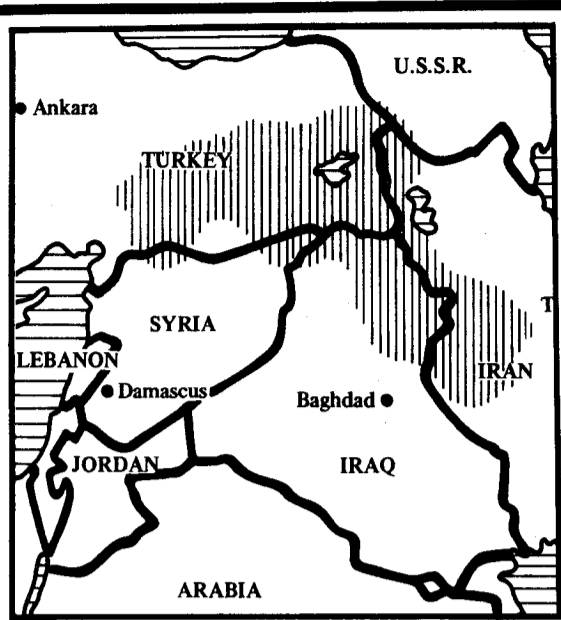
Activities

I went up to the microphone, composed and thoughtful, I managed to convince the staff that they should go back to work, after forcing the management to transmit our demands to the authorities. And the people listened to me.

My speech turned out to be very unfortunate for me. Thereafter there were as many as four foremen who followed my every movement at work. It was also said that I had collected money for the victims of December. At the time this was not true.

My activities in organising the commemoration of December, my persecution by the police and the security police, my activities in the Free Coastal Unions — these all belong to the years that followed.

Who would have thought that this road, so full of suffering, would have led to 'Solidarity'?



Turkey: What the generals are trying to sweep under the carpet

By Nick Robin

THE green light given by the Reagan administration to torturers and dictatorships around the world has been received gratefully by Turkey's military rulers.

There are now an estimated 100,000 political prisoners in Turkey's jails.

There have also been numerous deaths in custody, and four youths — including one 16-year-old boy, Erdal Eren — have been executed following conviction by a military tribunal.

The main target of repression has been the militant and well-organised Turkish labour movement.

Slashed

Various hard won social benefits are being slashed — the minimum wage, pensions, redundancy payments — and the working week has been extended to 56 hours.

This is all part of the 'economic revolution' demanded by the International Monetary Fund. It is a determined attempt to crush the organised workers' movement and to salvage Turkey's paralysed and bankrupt capitalist economy.

The current trial of 2,000 leaders of the DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions) is the focus of this attempt.

Second on the junta's hit-list are the Kurds, who make up about a quarter of the country's population.

Concentrated in the economically backward regions of eastern Turkey, the Kurds have been subject to the most barbaric repression throughout Turkey's history.

Kurds

In 1923 the Turkish Republic was founded, in 1924 the Kurdish language was forbidden from being taught in schools and, following the crushing of three national insurrections in 1925, 1930 and 1935, the Kurds were deprived of all rights and therefore referred to as 'mountain Turks'.

From 1925 to 1965 Turkish Kurdistan was designated a 'military area' and no foreigners were allowed in the region. In the campaign of

1925-26 the Turks massacred 250,000 Kurds.

Slogans such as 'One Turk is worth the whole universe' still adorn the schools and barracks, and are part and parcel of the racist ideology of Ataturkism to which the present junta subscribes.

Shot

It is no surprise that the majority of those shot in the streets by the military since the coup last September have been in the Kurdish region, and that Kurdish nationalists have been indiscriminately rounded up and imprisoned.

For the military's purposes, the singing of a Kurdish folksong is evidence enough of Kurdish nationalism.

The growing resistance to national oppression was one of the major features of Turkey's political and social crisis at the time of the coup. The junta's first declaration referred to 'the threat of secessionism' as the pretext for the coup.

Reports are currently filtering out of Turkey that 92 Kurds are facing execution as a result of 'secessionist activities' — in other words, attempting to speak their own language, wear their own national costume, and organise their people to shake off centuries of oppression and suffering.

NATO

After six months of dictatorship, the junta has proved totally unable to solve even the most elementary economic problems facing Turkey.

The IMF and NATO have a lot at stake in Turkey, which is the only NATO member sharing a border with the Soviet Union. Since the Iranian revolution, its strategic importance in the Middle East is even greater.

The national liberation struggle of the Kurds — not only in Turkey, but in Iran, Syria and Iraq — is a critical factor in the future 'stability' of the Middle East for imperialism.

Active solidarity with the Turkish and Kurdish people can have a real impact in changing the balance of forces in the region in the near future.

The Turkey Solidarity Campaign now has committees in many cities and is campaigning in the labour movement against the dictatorship. It can be contacted c/o BM Box 5965, London W1N 3XX.

Rich pickings in ruined steel industry—but not for the workers

SOCIALISTS are sometimes accused of finding conspiracies where none exist and of pointing to dirty tricks that others put down to paranoia.

By Celia Pugh

There should be no such doubts about the Tories' plans for the steel industry.

With commendable candour the prime minister has revealed the government's intentions in two short sentences.

'One of the purposes of the money being injected into the British Steel Corporation,' Thatcher stated, 'is to get it into a condition and size at which it can be profitable. When it is, we can denationalise it.'

So there it is. All the closures and all the steelworkers who are being sent down the road are serving one purpose — profit — and that surplus, when it materialises, will accrue to the Tories' friends.

Crisis

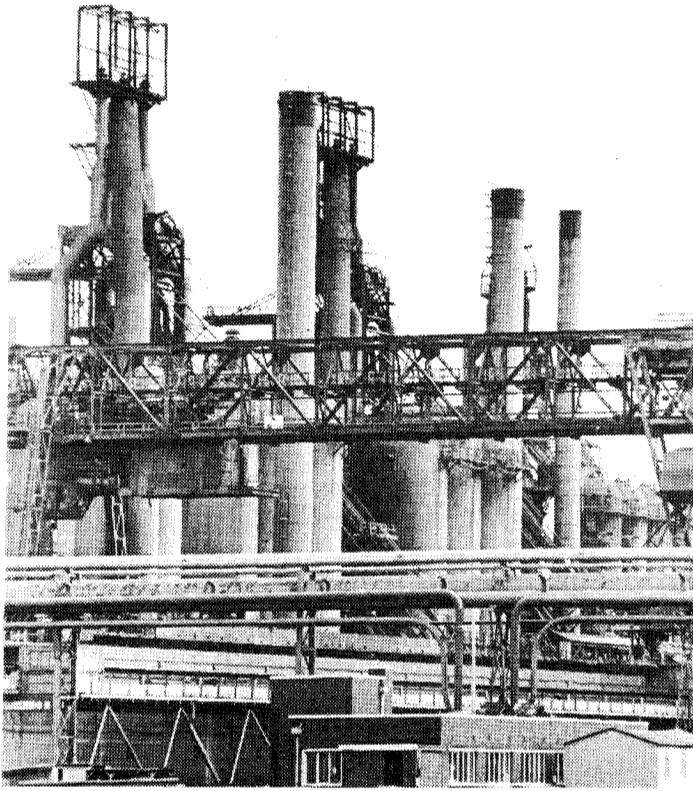
The steel industry is a symbol of both the depth of the crisis affecting the British economy, and of the Tories' anti-working class remedies. It is also, unfortunately, a classic example of the political bankruptcy of the trade union leadership.

A few facts. Since 1970 the number of workers employed by the Steel Corporation has shrunk from 230,000 to 100,000. Ian MacGregor, who was brought in by the Tories to concoct a rescue plan for the industry, is already shedding a further 22,000 jobs.

That the bloodletting is unlikely to stop there can be judged from a remark made by Sir Keith Joseph during the second reading of the Iron and Steel Bill on 19 March.

'By all commercial standards,' the industry secretary said, 'BSC is bankrupt.'

'But under present legislation it cannot be liquidated. This Bill,' he revealed, 'will allow the corporation's activities to be reduced virtually to nil.'



'This Bill will allow BSC's activities to be reduced virtually to nil' — Keith Joseph.

It is an incredible statement, foreshadowing the disappearance of a basic industry — at least as a nationalised enterprise. Joseph added that MacGregor's plan was optimistic, and if that 'optimism is not justified, further closures and redundancies will be necessary.'

Optimism is hardly the order of the day. Steel producers are desperately trying to

undercut each other's prices and markets. With factories and car plants closing and new building shelved, the markets dwindle.

Commercial standards — the rule of competition and profit — spell doom for steelworkers, yet their leaders refuse to recognise what is happening in the capitalist jungle, or at any rate they turn a blind eye to it.

At the Velindre tin-plate works outside Swansea in South Wales, where the MacGregor plan has axed over a thousand jobs, the local union leaders have tried to show that the plant is efficient. They demand 'the right to continue to make profits'.

At Llanwern and Port Talbot, the union leaders are encouraging the workforce to prove the plant is viable. Productivity records are being broken and export orders are at an all-time high. It has meant no small sacrifice — overtime has rocketed and safety regulations have gone by the board.

During the miners' strike, they requested dispensation so that the plant could continue production.

And all this is based on the notion that if the workers work hard enough the plant will be saved.

Denationalisation will come in stages to ease the financial burden on private firms. Joint companies will be set up where

the private and public sectors compete for markets.

Government funds will be injected to rationalise these new firms before the private companies take over completely. Under this scheme — code named Phoenix — private firms like GKN acquire new plants at no cost and receive hidden government subsidies: £40m in the case of GKN.

The Duport private steel company has scrapped its non-profit making plant at Llanelli, with the loss of 1,200 jobs. Its re-rolling plants in Sheffield and the Midlands have been sold to BSC.

These schemes should not be mistaken for nationalisation. BSC ownership is purely transitory.

Asset stripping, interest and redundancy payments will be made with government funds in a tidying-up operation before a new private venture is set up with Hadfields, Tube Investments, and GKN.

And the response of the largest union in the industry, ISTC? In the same week that Joseph made his Commons statement, *ISTC Banner* carried the headline 'Save the private sector!'

The steel leaders have paraded workers from Velindre and Duports through parliamentary lobbies, the High Court, and even hymn-singing sessions in their inspiring attempts to change the Tories' minds.

Overtime

Their knee-bent posture would have as little chance of persuading rivers to run uphill.

Unemployment in the industry accompanies a shake-up of traditional work patterns, with long hours, short holidays, and penalising conditions for early retirement. The bulletin of the Port Talbot Action Group asks:

'How can the union leaders look at fellow members who have just been finished at Port Talbot and tell these people that we are now filling their jobs on an overtime basis?'

'Now is the time to tell management no extra tonnage with overtime unless recruitment starts immediately.'

The demand for recruitment to share the work is vital. Added to it could be the demand for a 35-hour week, longer holidays, and early retirement with no loss of pay.

The rules of the Tories' game are those of private capital, profit and competition. They make no secret of it. And by those rules steelworkers can never win.

The private sector has to be nationalised, not saved. Steel production should be planned to meet social need and not the vagaries of the capitalist market. Above all the bent-knee posture requires urgent treatment.

As Des Dutfield, vice president of South Wales NUM, commented on the miners' strike action: 'You cannot play by the Marquis of Queensbury rules when they are aiming their boot at our guts.'



Dai Francis South Wales miners' leader dies

RESPECTED miners' leader Dai Francis died in Cardiff on 3 March at the age of 70.

Since his retirement as General Secretary of the South Wales area of the National Union of Miners in 1976, Dai remained active in the labour movement.

He will be missed by all who stood shoulder to shoulder with him in the struggle for the liberation of humanity.

Every cause gained his attention and commitment. He worked in the pits from the age of 14 and was elected to the South Wales miners' Executive in 1943.

As a Welsh speaker, founder member and President of the Wales TUC, he took up the rights of Welsh people.

A fervent internationalist, he fought with the International Brigade in Spain and was a member of the Communist Party until his death. Dai recently participated in CND's opposition to the imperialist war drive.

10 days before he died he took part in a Cardiff CND demonstration for 'Jobs not Bombs'.

One year ago, Dai supported the South Wales Youth March against unemployment. He talked then to Socialist Challenge about life in the '30s and the lessons for us today.

'They were trying days, difficult days, days of struggle in every direction. And the struggle was centred on the fight against the Means Test, the fight against unemployment and for the reestablishing of the union.'

'The future of Wales and every other country depends on its youth. The old people can help. But it's the youth who've got to take the initiative. They've got to awaken the conscience of the Welsh people about what is going to happen in the future.'

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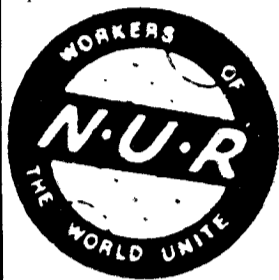
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Free fares, courtesy of rail-workers

TICKET inspectors and collectors in the Manchester and Sheffield areas are refusing to check or collect tickets this week.

They want a public inquiry into the proposed closure of the freight service on the Manchester, Sheffield and Wath line.

The service is due to stop on 1 June. In the meantime, for one week, travel will be completely free. This will be one industrial action that will bring applause from the public!



NUR has women members, too

BRITISH RAIL employs a large number of women, but they are concentrated in the traditionally female sectors — the profitable hotel and catering sectors. HAZEL McPHERSON, a ticket collector and NUR member at Paddington station in London, explains what her work is like.

It is still unusual to see women at a main line station as guards or ticket collectors. Like all women faced with an entirely male workforce I found it took time to fit in.

At first I felt isolated. It's the small things, like the absence of female toilets in the staff canteen.

When I was interviewed for the job I was asked if I would get upset if a passenger was rude to me. They also wanted to know if I wanted to wear such an unbecoming uniform.

There is a lot of pressure on you to do the job well. You feel you have to prove that as a woman you have a right to the job.

But after a while I found I was no longer an object of curiosity. People accept you as you are.

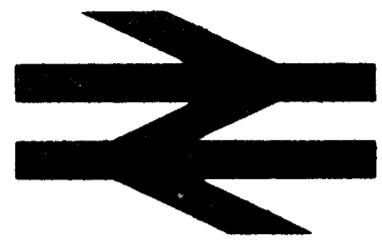
All rail workers are facing massive redundancies and the destruction of the industry. Everyone in the union, women and men, has to make their voice heard to demand that our leaders start the fight back now.

As an elected local representative I can see every day at work that the climate is changing. Management is preparing for cuts in the summer.

It's important that women play a full role in the union. My branch has passed a resolution calling for positive legislation on abortion. It's an important step forward when male trade unionists are prepared to take up the fight for all members, including women.



THIS IS NOT THE A OF THE TRAIN



BRITISH Rail has reached the end of the line — and so will 6,000 railworkers this year.

New recruitment has been frozen for several months, fares have gone sky high, passenger and freight trains have been withdrawn, and the collection and delivery parcels service has been scrapped.

British Rail is selling the house to pay the rent. It is putting up fares and cutting back services, but the more it does that the fewer passengers and freight will be carried by rail.

And so it goes on. Since the railways were nationalised in 1948, they have provided an essential service for manufacturing industry. But the government of the day has always sought to do this at a minimum cost — and now the price has to be paid.

In the 1950s diesel trains were introduced as a stop-gap before electrification, a temporary measure that is still with us today. The private road lobby has had the ear of successive governments and the refusal to invest has resulted in a run-down, out-of-date and potentially unsafe railway system.

Most of BR's diesel fleet is past its 25 year lifespan. Essential renewal of worn-out tracks has not taken place, and over half the track system has wooden sleepers.

Unsafe

At the end of 1979 over 120 miles of track was subject to speed restrictions, because it was unsafe for full speed. BR chairperson Peter Parker has forecast that by the end of the decade 3,000 miles of track will be unusable.

In any rational society a railway network would be run as a service — to carry goods and to transport people, both for work and pleasure. But we don't live in such a society. We live in a totally irrational one.

High fares and bad service have driven away passengers and freight. Yet a train which is empty costs as much to run as one that is full. Where fares have been reduced in other countries, traffic has increased.

British Rail finances more of its costs from its internal funds than any other major European railway. All the others receive a higher proportion of rail costs from government subsidy.

The vast sums which are needed to keep even the present BR equipment and track serviceable, never mind to modernise the system, are not forthcoming.

Cowboys

Instead the Tories support and encourage private enterprise — trunk roads are built and private coaches operate on routes where the railway is the most suitable carrier. While cowboys in the coach and lorry business cream off the profits, bus services in rural areas and in towns are reduced and withdrawn.

In this situation it is nothing short of scandalous that the National Union of Railwaymen accepts the idea that rail must be made to pay, but suggests to management ways in which this may be achieved. 'We're all in it together' is the constant cry of *Transport Review*, the NUR's journal.

Under the guise of improved rates

The present state of BR is the direct result of government policies.

MARTIN EADY, president of the NUR's London district council, London Transport and PETE GRANT, ASLEF, Willesden branch look at why rail is in this situation, what the unions are doing, and what they ought to be doing.

Further cuts Central Wa

USE of its present financial situation, British Rail is deferring the renewal of track on the Central line which was due to complete...

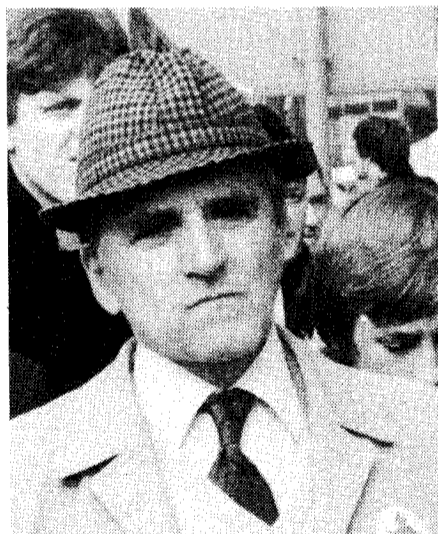
London's down and out transport

IF LABOUR wins the Greater London Council in May, it is proposing to immediately reduce London Transport fares by 25 per cent. The National Union of Railwaymen supports this policy.

- An underground journey in London costs three times more per mile than a Metro journey in Paris.
- In the 1970s, £2bn was spent on public transport in Paris — four times the amount London Transport spent in the same period. Since 1970 more money has been spent on public transport in Paris than in the whole of Britain.
- In real terms, the average journey in Paris on public transport now costs half as much as it did 20 years ago. Public transport in Paris is now carrying a fifth more passengers than it was five years ago. Since 1970 more money has been spent on public transport in Paris than in

the whole of Britain.

- Since 1976 fares on the Underground have increased by over 300 per cent. In the same period, GLC financial support for London Transport has decreased by a third.
- In the last ten years, the number of passengers travelling:
 - by tube, down 15 per cent
 - by bus, down 30 per cent
 - by car, up 17 per cent
- In Sweden last year when rail fares were cut by 30 per cent, passengers increased by 14 per cent. In South Yorkshire the number of passengers has increased following the freezing of fares. And this year not one Metro train will be more than three years old. Last week, the last of London Transport's 1933 stock was withdrawn.



Sidney Weighell offers to make cuts on behalf of the NUR.

Why trains come off the tracks

RAILWORKERS have a tremendous pride in their job. They have always been willing to sacrifice themselves to run a good service.

Their concern has been not so much their own safety, but that of the travelling public.

The Amalgamated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, ASLEF, was formed in Sheffield in 1880, not because of the appalling conditions the drivers faced but because the signalling system was unsafe.

The motto of ASLEF is 'Brothers in unity, the public safety, our own protection'. The employers have been able to take advantage of this to keep wages down and conditions of service poor and out of date.

In recent times, British Rail has not carried out essential track repair, so speed restrictions have to be

imposed. This results in increased running times and hence delayed arrivals.

It also means a reduction in safe working as the Chief Inspector of Railways, Sir Ian McNaughton, exposed in his annual report.

Last year derailments wholly caused by defective track increased from 13 to 17. Nine derailments occurred at places where a renewal of track had been deliberately postponed.

McNaughton's report states: 'Where normal renewal is deferred, the problem is then one of deciding when deterioration of the various components has reached the stage that, for safety, a restriction in the speed of traffic must be imposed.'

'As the number of these circumstances increases, it is inevitable that some of the judgements are wrong.'

Railworkers - low paid and overworked

BRITISH Rail may be broke, but it is not because railworkers are highly paid.

The Low Pay Unit's research into wages paid in rail — which the unit describes as 'a nationalised industry with strong trade unions whose strategic power and influence in the national economy is potentially great' — shows that:

★ In October 1979 (when

the Low Pay Unit's definition of low pay was £60 for a basic week excluding overtime) there were 38,000 railworkers on basic rates of £54 and less.

★ In April 1979, even by working more than twice as many hours in overtime as the average manual worker, the average total earnings of BR workers were still £3 week less than the average for all manual workers.

★ Average hours worked

by BR manual workers increased during the period 1976-1979 by 2.4, from 48.4 to 50.8 hours.

★ In terms of hourly earnings, BR staff have enjoyed no improvement in their relative earnings since the late 1960s (1974-5 excepted).

★ By excluding overtime there are almost three times as many low-paid workers in BR, proportionate to the size of the workforce, as in other industries.

of pay and conditions, the official Railwaymen's Charter proposes to re-introduce compulsory Sunday working, which was eliminated after a long, hard struggle between the wars. This comes not from management but from the NUR!

The unions are asking the government for a big increase in investment and operating subsidy to British Rail,

which is essential if BR is to survive at all.

Yet because they accept the need for rail to pay its way in capitalist terms — make a profit and not run as a service — the unions are offering a long list of cuts. General secretary of the NUR Sid Weighell has issued a letter to the unions' branches making the following proposals:

- Accelerate marshalling yard closures.
- Withdrawal from parcels collection and delivery.
- Five per cent reduction in passenger train mileage.
- Accelerate administrative streamlining.
- Co-operation in 'good house-keeping'.

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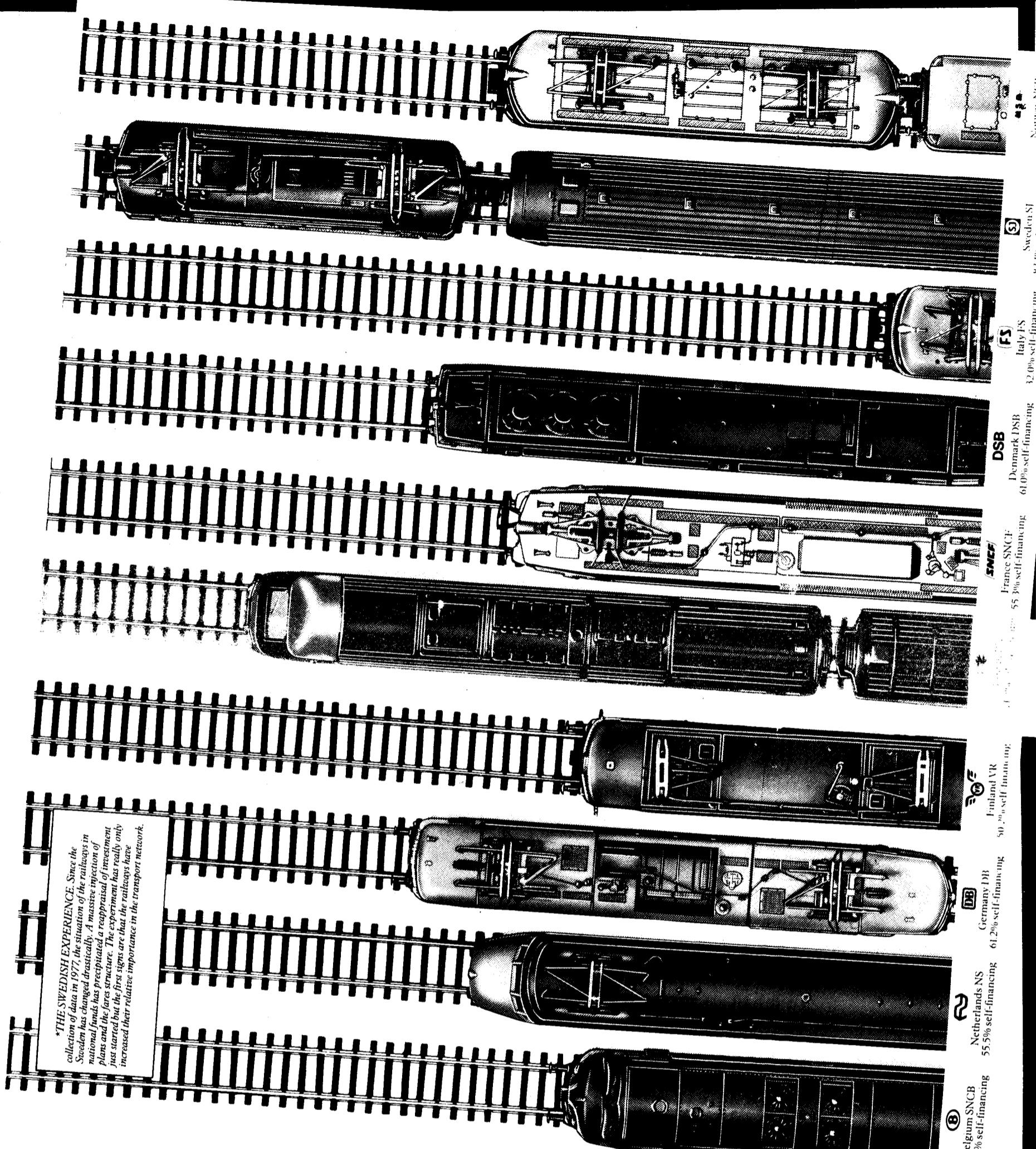
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has to start from the fact that
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social needs — not to provide



*THE SWEDISH EXPERIENCE. Since the collection of data in 1977, the situation of the railways in Sweden has changed drastically. A massive injection of national funds has precipitated a reappraisal of investment plans and the fares structure. The experiment has really only just started but the first signs are that the railways have increased their relative importance in the transport network.

Such a socialist policy would mean that rational decisions could be made. The standard and level of services and fares would be decided in the framework of an overall transport policy that took account of other forms of transport, such as buses and lorries.

All this would need a massive injection of funds to improve the system. But it would result in improved productivity and a service that really was a service for the travelling public.

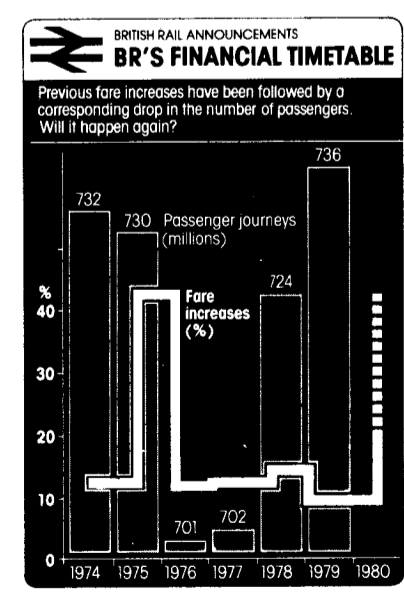
Control over what happens to British Rail should be in the hands of railworkers themselves. If this were the case there would be improved working conditions and hours and a reduction in fares.

Instead of that capitalists are being subsidised through penal interest rates and profits for private industry.

To achieve all this an organised left wing needs to be built in the rail unions. Militants are beginning to organise informally against closures and redundancies, and for the democratisation of union structures in the NUR. But it is early days yet.

We need a shop steward system of representation and negotiation.

The Triple Alliance of rail, coal, and steel workers, will only become a



British Rail in 1977 received less government subsidy than any other major European railway except Sweden*

Rail boom in Sweden

IN SEPTEMBER 1979, the Swedish State Railway (SJ) launched a low passenger fares campaign over their entire network. The reduced fares have now been in application for over a year, and SJ regard the experiment as a success in that they have recorded five million additional journeys during the period.

Where you can buy Socialist Challenge

ABERDEEN: SC sold Saturdays outside C&As — for more info ring Col-lin, 574060.
BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 20298 for more details.
BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.40, Sat 10-4. For more info phone 643-0669.
BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.
BRENT: SC supporters sell at Willesden Junction every Thur at 4.30pm.
BRIGHTON: SC sales regularly every Sat outside Open Market, London Road, from 11am-1pm.
BRISTOL: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. More info from Box 2, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Montpellier, Bristol 6.
BURNLEY: SC on sale every Sat morning 11.30-1pm St James St.
CARDIFF: every Sat in Bute Town 10.30-12. Also available 1-0-8 Books, Salisbury Road.
CHESTERFIELD: SC supporters sell outside Boots, Marketplace, Saturdays 11.30am-12.30pm.
COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.
DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4-5.30pm, Friday 4-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.
EALING: SC supporters sell every Thursday, Ealing Broadway tube, 4.30-5.30pm.
EDINBURGH: SC sales every Thurs- day 4.15-5.15pm Bus Station, St. Andrews Square and bottom of Waverly steps 4.30-5.30; Saturday 11.30-2pm East End, Princes St. Also available from 1st May Books, or Better Books, Forrest Rd. More info on local activity from SC c/o Box 6, 1st May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row.
ENFIELD: SC available from Nelsons Newsagents, London Rd, Enfield Town.
GLASGOW: SC sales every Thur/Fri 4.30-5.30pm at Central Station. Also available at Barretts, Byres Rd; Clyde Books, High St; Glasgow Bookshop Collective, Cresswell Lane; Hope Street Book Centre.
HAMILTON: SC on sale 8-11 every Sat outside County Bar Almada Street, every Sat outside Safeway 10-5. For more info contact Paul, 10 Clyde View or John at 54 Elliot St, Hamilton.
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD: SC sales in The Square, Saturdays 11-12.30.
LONDON: SC supporters sell at 10.30-12.30 at Uxbridge every Saturday

10.30-12.00 outside Woolworths, Ux- bridge shopping centre.
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, and Thursday 8.30am at Queens Park tube.
LAMBETH: SC available from Village Books, Streatham; Tetric 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 Percivals Bookshop. Tel: 061-236 4905 for further info.
NEWCASTLE: SC on sale every Sat 11-1pm outside Fenwicks. Also available at Days of Hope bookshop, Westgate Rd. For more info ring Phil or Pete on Newcastle 737507.
NEWHAM: SC sale every Saturday, 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.
NEWPORT: every Sat in town centre 11-12.30.
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 Corn- market.
PADDINGTON: supporters sell at Portobello Rd market every Sat at 12 noon.
STOCKPORT: SC sold every Satur- day, 1pm, Mersey Way. Can be delivered weekly: phone 483 8909 (evening), 236 4905 (day).
SWANSEA: SC sales outside Co-op, Oxford St, 11am-1pm, Saturdays.
SWINDON: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Brunel Centre).
TESSIDE: SC on sale Sat lunchtime in the Cleveland Centre, and in Newsfare, Linthorpe Road, Mid- dlesbrough, and outside Woolworths on Stockton High Street.
WEMBLEY: SC sales Fri 6.45am at North Wembley BR Station.
WOLVERHAMPTON: SC sales on Thur/Fri at Poly Students Union from noon-2pm and British Rail 4.30-6pm; an Saturday near Beatties, town centre from 11am-2pm.

Is your town or city mentioned above? If not, send in details to this sales column.

African music, food and films. Keep the date free!

ROCK against Giscard! Any readers interested in going to the LCR Fête in Paris on the weekend of 11/12 April write for details to SCD (Fête), PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.
CAUCUS for all Socialist Challenge supporters involved in London regional CND activity, Thursday 2 April National Centre 7.30pm.

ed fare. Childcare if there is advance notice, and accommodation. Ring Jamie on 01-637 2249.
WOMEN'S oppression fraction on 25 April in Birmingham. One cde from each branch and fraction.

SC Events

BRENT: 'Queimada', starring Marlon Brando; a feature film about the struggle in the Caribbean. Tues 14 April 7.30pm, Harlesden Library, Claver Park, Harlesden NW10.
SLINGTON: 'US hands off El Salvador', public meeting on Thur 9 April at 7.30pm in Essex Rd library, Slington. Speakers from El Salvador solidarity campaign and Socialist Challenge.
SLINGTON: Sat 25 April evening social, an African evening with

International Marxist Group notices

NATIONAL LESBIAN/GAY Fraction 16 May National centre 11 am. All cdes welcome even if not active around this question. Main item: perspectives document, orientation to labour and womens movement. Pool-

Revolution Youth notices

MEMBERSHIP CARDS: Cards now available for members of Revolution Youth. All branches should place orders with national office.
BRANCH ORGANISERS: meeting on 16 May in London.

What's Left

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

Exclusive John Lennon poster! Now in tasteless dayglo — please specify green or red paper. Just £1. Bulk orders (over 5) are post free, otherwise, send 30p p&p. Orders and money to: The Other Printshop, c/o Po Box 50, London N1 2XP.
TAKE a chance and win £250 or smaller sums of money in the Grand Spring Raffle. Tickets are 50p per book (5 chances) or 10p each. If you want your counter-foils (not necessary as proof of purchase should you win), enclose stamped sae or add 15p for p&p. Cheques/postal orders payable to Hackney Book Group, 24 St Agnes Close, London E9. Draw on 2 May.
NAC/LARC trade union liaison committee. Report back meeting from the 14 Feb conference on abor- tion and positive legislation. Open to delegates and others. Rm 7 and 8, Friends Meeting House, Euston Rd, London WC1. Tues 14 April, 7pm.
IRISH REPUBLICAN Socialist Party. Public meeting — 'The 1916 Ris- ing: its relevance to the present strug- gle'. Speakers invited from IRSP, Provisional Sinn Fein, trade union representatives, the Indian Workers' Association. Tues 14 April, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1.

NATIONAL SCHOOL: open to all Revo members on writing, speaking, etc on 17 May in London.
WOMEN'S LIBERATION: national fraction on 25/26 April in Birm- ingham.

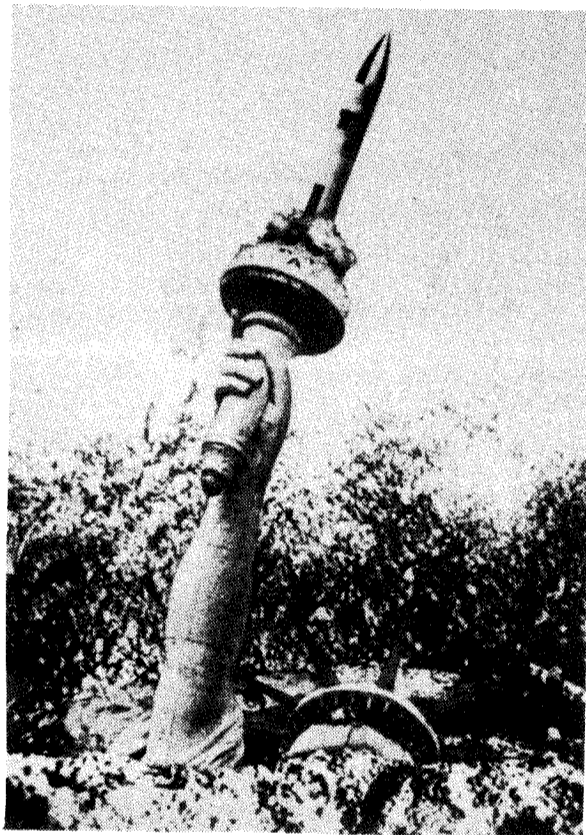
IRSP 1916 Easter Commemoration March, Sun 19 April. Assemble: The Crown, Cricklewood, 3pm. Depart 3.30pm for Kilburn Sq and rally.
LONDON women's co-ordinating group on Armagh. Public meeting 'Armagh, the hunger strike — why political status is an issue for feminists'. Small Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London WC1. Women only.
BOOKS for Southern Africa. Funds urgently needed — cheques/PO's to Books for Southern Africa, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.
COUNTER Information Services is looking for somebody to join our col- lective. Applicants should have jour- nalistic experience and be able to participate fully in decision-making. Constant work is available but finances are difficult. Write enclosing a 750-maximum word critique of a recent CIS report, one suggestion for a future report, cv and sae to CIS, 9 Poland St, London W1 by 30 April.
THE Struggle in Central America and the Caribbean. Socialist Action is holding a dayschool on the nature and importance of the struggles and developments in Cuba, Nicaragua, Grenada and El Salvador. Further in- formation PO Box 65, London SW16 or phone 769 1160.
HOUNSLOW Socialist Forum: 12 April 7pm at George IV pub, 185 Chiswick High Rd. 'The great British economic disaster' with John Har- rison.

National sales week, 30 April—6 May

By Yvonne Taylor, Socialist Challenge pro- motion manager

Socialist Challenge supporters up and down the country should now be finalising their plans for local estate sales and sending in details to the paper. Next week we hope to print a complete list.

International



OUT now! First of a new series of **INTERNATIONAL**, Marxist journal of analysis produced by supporters of the Fourth International in Britain. Price 60p. Bulk orders at 40p each for pre-payment. Subscriptions, before 31 May, £3.50 in- land, £5.50 Europe, \$15 other overseas. Write to: **INTERNATIONAL**, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Socialist Challenge

GALA MAY DAY BANQUET

Pre-dinner drinks/Three-course meal/International speakers, including the Grenadan High Commis- sioner/Draw of £250 Spring Raffle/Disco

Saturday, 2 May
6.30—11.30 pm

Tickets in advance: Hackney Book Group, 24 St Agnes Close, London E9/£3.50 each/Order your tickets early!

NUCLEAR WASTE

A present for our children's children

We spoke to two sup- porters' groups who had already tried selling the paper door to door on housing estates. We spoke to Socialist Challenge supporters in Aberdeen in Scotland and Hackney, London.

Both agreed that they had met with a surprisingly positive response. Colin from Aberdeen told us: 'We were all very nervous at first but we found that people were not surprised to be knocked up by us. They seemed to accept that people who had strong political views should want to come to their homes.'

Paul from Hackney agreed: 'Everybody was nervous about going door to door but after doing one or two floors of the flats people became more confident. Nobody was hostile and we found people were interested in talking politics on their doorstep.'

Both supporters' groups had used the same approach. They simply turned up to the chosen estates without prior warn- ing. On hindsight, Colin thought this hadn't been a good idea: 'It was too sud- den. The best thing in a new area would be to use old back copies of the paper to put through people's doors together with a leaflet saying we'd be back the following week.'

John, the Hackney Socialist Challenge sales organiser, said his group were planning to try this. They also plan to include a tear-off strip in their leaflet explaining how to receive regular copies of the paper. 'It's very quick. You can cover a very large area with a few people.'

A number of Asian and West Indian people had been attracted to the paper by the coverage of the Black People's Day of Action and the centre spread on Anwar Ditta.

In Aberdeen, sup- porters plan to continue their estate sales and will be out selling on the Mastrick estate in the National Sales Week. Colin explained: 'Estate sales are good because you can regularise your contact with people.'

Hackney plan to ex- pand their sales from the Kingsmead estate to the Nightingale estate where residents have been refus- ing to hand over recent in- creases in their council rents. They have been en- couraged that a number of those who bought Socialist Challenge once have decided to buy it regularly.

One Hackney seller told us a story which shows the regular relation- ship we can build up with our housing estate readers.

She had knocked on a door which was answered by a small girl. She ex- plained why she was there. 'Mum,' shouted the girl, 'it's the lady with Socialist Challenge'. Mum replied from within. 'Okay, go and get my purse then.'

ANTI-NUKE postcards from Socialist Challenge! Set of 4 beautifully produced black and white original designs, 50p a set or 15p each. Plus 12p post & packing. One third discount for bulk orders. Payment in advance. Send to: SCD (postcard), PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.



BRITANNIA TO GET NEW TRIDENT!

Other THE BOOKSHOP

Edited by Roy Medvedev
Samizdat Register 2

Merlin Press, £3.60

This book is the second volume of writings of the socialist opposition in the Soviet Union.

Critique 13

£1.95

This special issue on the economics of the left op- position includes an article by Rakovsky on 'The five year plan in crisis' and Richard Day on 'Leon Trotsky and the Smychka'.

Available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Up- per St, London N1 2XP. Tel: 01-226 0571. Please add 15% if ordering by post.

The truth about that coup attempt

JUST before Lord Mountbatten made his last boat trip, he gave an exclusive interview to Lowdown about the threatened coup in 1968. Socialist Challenge now publishes the facts behind the conspiracy.

What made you think about a coup?

Actually it was my nephew's missus that put the idea in our heads. She had been getting all those letters complaining about the Wilson government.

Who from?

Well, ordinary people. Chaps like hereditary peers, army officers, police chiefs, bankers and company directors. Liz takes notice of people like that. She knows very well if they complain, then something is really wrong.

Did she distrust Harold?

Good Lord, no! She always reckoned he was one of her most obedient servants. Set him up for a month, it did, when he was allowed to bow to her and kiss her hand. She just thought he was not tough enough.

So you had a chat with Cudlipp and King about all this?

Well, yes. They thought like Liz, Phil, and me, that those silly bloody voters might go and put another Labour government into office. We didn't want to chance that.

What were the things that worried you?

It was bad enough the Vietcong giving the Yanks the run around in Vietnam, but when people here started supporting them and rioting outside the American embassy things looked damned bad.

You even had Labour MPs supporting the Vietnamese. Harold did not like that. He told Liz as much. But as she said to me: 'There was a day when the monarch could have sent them to the Tower for treason. Now that bloody Wilson can't even kick them out of the Labour Party'. It really upset Liz, that did.

Then you had those blasted students. Things got so bad in Paris that in May there was nearly a revolution. This put all sorts of terrible ideas in our students' heads. Instead of joining the KGB they started joining groups like the SWP and the IMG.

Was anyone else worried?

I should say so. Certainly in MI5. Especially those that work for Russia, they claim they can't live off the wages we pay. Personally I can

never understand why the government does not ask Brezhnev for a contribution to run our secret service.

Anyhow they are not against us on personal grounds and they knew very well that if we ever had one of those terrible socialist revolutions they would lose their jobs and their pensions just like the rest of us.

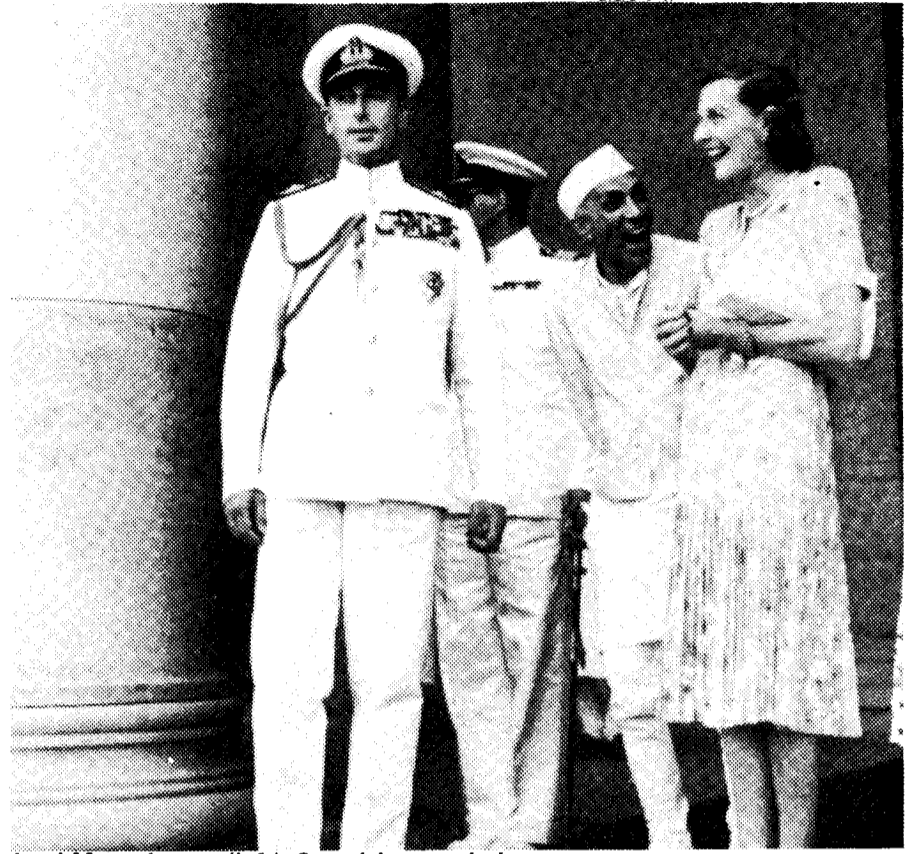
Why did you not go through with the coup?

Well, we decided that if Harold did make a balls of things we could always rely on Denis Healy, Jim Callaghan, Shirley Williams and George Brown — if we could find what pub he was in at the time.

We knew that the troublemakers might grumble but they were not going to do much. In the end I told Liz, let it be.

Do you really think the Queen should interfere in politics like that?

Too bloody right, I do. She isn't just a figurehead. If things ever threaten to get out of hand she intends rallying all right-thinking people to defend democracy. Her and that nephew of mine know what to do. They have no intention of having a lot of unwashed workers running Britain.



Lord Mountbatten (left): Surprising revelations

JENNY Davenport (Letters, 12 March) is wrong to think that my article on rape let individual men off the hook. I have never denied that men — socially, sexually, and in every other sphere — have more access to power than women.

It is the man's and woman's position in the family that gives men that differential access to power. Women must therefore first challenge our own subordination and mobilise for our own demands if male prejudices are to be confronted.

Revolutionary feminists only want to

Wrong on rape

confront male prejudice or 'male power'. They choose to highlight rape as an issue because it fits in with their view of working class men.

All men are reactionary — the oppressors. All women are revolutionary — the oppressed. Why not hang rapists and really punish the oppressor?

Socialist feminists have to do more than confront male prejudice. We need a strategy for eradicating it.

That strategy accords the working class, as a class, the central role in establishing socialism.

It's not possible to argue that the working class is a revolutionary class, because of its historically progressive role, and in the same breath say that working class men have no interest in the struggle for women's liberation.

My article argued that working class men have more to gain from

women's liberation than by defending the status quo.

As individuals, men may have higher pay than women but as a class they will gain from equal pay for women because the class will be stronger. As individuals, men are serviced by women but as a class they would gain from a more communal form of domestic labour.

As individuals, men may gain from the sexual subjugation of women,

but as a class they have no reason to support the social double-standards of the ruling class which treat women as commodities.

For Marxists the term 'material interest' means class interest. I maintain that working-class men have no class interest in the oppression of women, or any other group.

The fact that working class men, particularly Post Office engineers, who are skilled workers, believe that they gain from the oppression of working class women is a popular fallacy that socialist feminists like Jenny would do well to argue against.

VALERIE COULTAS, Birmingham

Poland and the market

THE article on Rural Solidarity by Davy Jones (26 March) was right to emphasise the importance of agriculture in the Polish struggle. Together with the civil rights issue, this was seen by everyone I met on a visit before Xmas as the rocks on which the new union could founder.

Just under half the Polish population live on the land, which is among the most fertile in Europe in spite of the hard winters. Yet for the past three years Poland has been a net importer of food.

The country could face a famine, and Solidarity wants rationing and the abolition of privileges. In the longer run, it calls for the national economic plan to be re-drafted to shift investment from heavy industry to agricultural means of production.

In the medium term

there needs to be a return to some sort of market for agricultural produce. Some on the left would find in this the proof of the new union's anti-socialist nature; others confirmation of 'state capitalism'.

But the re-introduction of limited forms of the market in a planned, nationalised economy only brings up in a more central way the question of democratic rights for political organisation.

At the end of the day the right to form political parties is the key issue facing militants in Solidarity. The Polish Communist Party will not voluntarily give way on this issue, which therefore demands our redoubled support for the developments in Poland.

Keep up the excellent coverage of international events.

RAB BIRD, Sheffield

No privileges on my platform

AS A woman worker in a traditionally male industry — the railway — I was particularly interested in Jenny Davenport's letter (12 March). As the only woman on the platform at my station, my experience has not been one of sexual harassment.

Yes, sexist remarks are made, and I do sense resentment that I should be doing a traditionally male job. Most of my workmates go home to wives who do all the domestic chores, but as a socialist I'm in favour of all workers going home to find the domestic work done. Domestic labour must be socialised.

What worries me about Jenny's letter is her claim that male workers materially benefit from the oppression of women. I assume that she sees these benefits in terms of the right to work as a Post Office engineer, miner, or railworker. In other words, she sees the right to work in certain areas as a privilege and not a right.

I'd like Jenny, as a relatively well-paid and skilled worker, to come to my station and tell my fellow workers that they are privileged to work long hours, under ever more hostile conditions, for £58



Paddington station — 'I'm the only woman working on the platform....'

a week! I don't think that they'd agree with her and I know that I don't.

The right to work is just that — a right and not a privilege.

As socialists we must fight the oppression of women because it weakens and divides our move-

ment. That is why Socialist Challenge has consistently fought for a woman's right to choose on abortion, and why we are taking up the campaign for positive action and a woman's right to work.

If we follow Jenny's arguments to their logical

conclusion, we might as well give up now. If men materially benefit from women's oppression they are unlikely to take up women's rights in the labour movement. And we can effectively dismiss the possibility of male workers ever participating in the

revolutionary socialist movement.

Why should men fight for a socialist society which will eradicate all their material privileges?

HAZEL MACPHERSON, Paddington NUR

Sweep stakes on Irish unity

AILEAN O'Callaghan asks (19 March): 'Which class is to lead the movement to unify Ireland if not the workers organised independently of all other classes in their own mass political party?' The question answers itself, as it has always done in Irish history: the united working class will lead the movement for a unified, independent Ireland.

But big wishes don't catch even small fishes, and we must start from where we are. In Ireland, we have to start from where British imperialism has left us: the nation dismembered, partitioned, and in part occupied; its working class socially and politically divided.

The political division between Unionist and Republican workers, which is the poisonous legacy of British intervention in the affairs of Ireland, is not a basis on which to build Ailean O'Callaghan's vision of Irish workers organising together within 'their own mass political party'. The legacy of imperialism must be swept out of Ireland, and in this revolutionary objective the labour movement in Britain, as well as internationally, has to support the Republican insurrectionists.

In Britain, the working class is of course already 'organised independently in their own mass political party', and this powerful working class does have a duty, as well as a self-interest, towards divided Ireland. This is to bring to power a Labour government committed to the withdrawal of the British state from Ireland.

In this way the labour movement, as is only fitting, will remove from Ireland the chief obstacle to working class unity there. This will be as good for England's labour movement, as for Ireland's.

DENIS KNIGHT, Pier Ward, Brighton CLP



The Sinister face of Spanish fascism

By Michael Tregobov

ONE hundred years ago a Spanish general rode his horse into the Spanish parliament, announced its dissolution, and rode out returning the country to the rule of the landowners.

On Monday 23 February at 6.22pm two hundred motorcycle cops from three companies of the Civil Guard, led by Colonel Tejero, arrived at the parliament building in school buses during the vote for the new president, Calvo Sotelo.

They burst in, fired rounds of bullets from their hips, and ordered the frightened deputies to lie on the floor and wait for the proclamation of General Milans del Bosch.

At 7.15 Milans del Bosch, captain general of the Third Military Region, duly occupied the city of Valencia with tanks and armoured cars. He claimed himself the supreme chief of the country, answering only to the King.

Outlawed

Once decorated by Hitler for his service on the Russian front in the Second World War, Milans del Bosch issued the proclamation promised by Tejero. He outlawed all political parties, trade unions and gatherings of more than four people; announced a nine o'clock curfew; and subjected the population of Valencia to several hours of military music.

At 7.45 an army unit occupied the TV and radio buildings in Madrid. At the same time president Suarez and the leaders of the Socialist and Communist parties, Felipe Gonzalez and Santiago Carrillo, were removed from parliament, leaving behind Manuel Fraga, leader of the rightist Alianza Popular, claimed by Tejero to be the only 'non-traitor' in parliament.

Mutinies

Meanwhile the King met his military chiefs who told him of a plane waiting to fly him out of the country. The King refused to go. Senior army officers, some of whom now figure in the list of those arrested, were busy both negotiating with Tejero and aborting mutinies in their own regions.

The coup attempt has been presented as an isolated incident involving only lunatic fringes of the army and police. But now that two dozen top ranking generals have been charged many Spaniards are wondering what exactly happened in the six hours before the King appeared to put an end to the coup.

Originally the coup was planned for 21 March, codename Operation Almond Trees. But something forced the hand of the conspirators. A notice was placed in the fascist magazine *El Spic* on 23 February reading: 'I'm not sure that I'm going to try and make a coup on Monday 23 February... Además, no sé! (the number of letters in the Spanish words gave the time of the coup — 6.22pm).



Spanish generals en route for parliament: next time might be the real thing

The coup came shortly after Suarez' sudden resignation from the presidency. Speculation is now rife that he was tipped off about the coup attempt, certainly his family was conveniently out of the country at the time.

Suarez was having difficulty in winning approval from parliament for his successor, Calvo Sotelo. The police torture and murder of ETA suspect Arregui in the Carabanchel prison had sparked off mass demos and strikes against the police, leading to the resignation of six top ranking police officials 'in solidarity' with their underlings.

This immediate crisis proved too tempting to the conspirators to pass up.

Other serious problems also convulse the Spanish state: the economic crisis (particularly severe for the unemployed who have no social welfare); the growth of fascist death squads; the continuing crisis over Basque autonomy; the controversy over Spain's relations with NATO and the Common Market; and the campaign against the impending legalisation of divorce.

Despite this background the coup was destined to fail. There was little enthusiasm for the coup from the Spanish or international bourgeoisie. In fact the leading bourgeois and government newspapers, *La Vanguardia* and *Diario 16*, both commented: 'This isn't a banana republic, you know.'

The old landowners and bishops who traditionally dominated Spain have become more integrated into the international finance and power centres. Even the military dictatorship, which so well represented those interests under Franco, was replaced by the *caudillo* himself with a dictator-

ship based on a strengthened police apparatus.

It seems that the plotters were victims of their notions that Spain needed a 'hard man' and their own military aspirations. The coup attempt served both as a blunder tarnishing the military and boosting the domestic and international prestige of the King, as well as a full dress rehearsal for another attempt.

There were massive demonstrations in the wake of the coup, in-

cluding one and a half million people in Madrid, despite four bomb explosions along the route. Yet the Basque country was almost frozen in silence.

The night of the coup found thousands of Basques sleeping at friends' homes for fear of the coup's success. Even the governing PNV leaders ducked out of their office for secret destinations.

While elsewhere wild demonstrations in favour of the King and the

constitution were organised by all the parliamentary parties, the Basque country refused to demonstrate in support of a constitution that has imposed a Castilian King and Civil Guard in their territory.

Like another planet the Basque country continues to make its political orbit twice as fast as the rest of the Spanish state.

Certainly there have been arrests, including of generals who breathe the same air as the King, but hundreds more officials were implicated in the affair.

But only the far left and nationalist contingents on the mass demonstration called for a purging of the armed forces and police. The SP and CP both failed to make such a call or to lead a general strike against the coup attempt.

This leaves the Spanish workers with the sinking feeling that next time, if the coup is better planned and receives the approval of the ruling classes, Franco's chosen King may choose to take that plane and hand over power to the generals.

Plotters

By contrast, the military showed their admiration for the plotters. At the Getafe airforce base full military honours were organised for General Armada before he was taken to prison. And on 1 March before the King addressed the Zaragoza military academy the commander eulogised Franco and complained that the Spanish flag wasn't venerated enough.

According to Miguel Angel Aguilar, writing in *El Pais*, 'the seditious officers have marked out a clear line of defence: that the King knew about and supported the coup, but betrayed them at the final moment.'

Power

Without the King, the job was ultimately impossible. Next time the generals have to be sure of him. Whatever his allegiances past or future the whole affair has highlighted the dark corners of the constitution which endow him with so much power.

In all about 500 people are suspected of involvement in Operation Almond Trees. These include the rightist paper, *El Alcazar*, and civilians like professor Jesus Fueyo, and some bankers who lent the money to Tejero's wife to buy the school buses used in the attack.

The Duke of Montalegre was also involved: he strutted into the Congress on the coup evening wearing his ancient cavalry uniform and paying homage to Tejero.

One retired civil guard exchanged a few words with my local postman. 'So it didn't turn out so well for Tejero,' said the postman, swinging his mail bag around his hip. The old civil guard spat on the ground: 'If it wasn't for that bastard King; he's a bastard, and his father (kicked out of Spain for supporting the Republicans) was a bastard too.'

The meaning of the coup attempt in Spain

The following excerpts are from a statement issued by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International.

THIS was an extremely serious coup attempt to pressure the King into forming a military government, that would do away with democratic rights and repress the workers' movement and nationalist organisations.

The Spanish parliamentary regime was set up on condition the state apparatus inherited from Francoism — especially the military command, the police and the judicial system — be completely preserved.

The Spanish workers' parties — the SP and CP — accepted this blackmail and compelled the workers to accept it. They even ended up voting for an ultrareactionary 'anti-terrorist' law.

What is really quite serious for the future of the workers' movement and the nationalists is that the response to the coup from the trade union and majority workers' parties was to immediately give the King a blank cheque. They explicitly called solely for calm and confidence in the King.

Only the Spanish section of the Fourth International, the LCR, systematically mobilised workers for a general strike, calling for workers' unity, the dissolution of the repres-



King Juan Carlos

sive bodies, a purge of the state apparatus and for defense of democratic rights.

The effect of the coup attempt has been to strengthen the ability of the repressive apparatus to

exert political pressure. The King's powers too have been strengthened.

And there is a greater possibility that Calvo Sotelo's new government will be able to implement its programme — but in a more right wing form than previously planned.

Whatever artificial and temporary atmosphere of 'national unity' may prevail, only a united mobilisation of all the workers' parties, unions, and revolutionary organisations is capable of defending democratic rights and fighting for the dismantling of the state apparatus inherited from Franco.

This is the only way possible to confront and smash the next — and probably more serious — coup attempts.

Big stakes in the quiet countryside

Bobby Sands' election campaign

By Gerry Foley in Enniskillen

THE campaign to elect hunger striker Bobby Sands to fill the Fermanagh and South Tyrone seat in Westminster began dramatically on Tuesday of last week.

Bobby Sands' sister, Marcella, told a meeting of campaign workers in Dungannon: 'We thank the people of South Tyrone and Fermanagh for giving us hope where we had none.'

Before the opportunity offered by this by-election to win broader support, it was generally assumed that Bobby Sands would have to die before the second hunger strike campaign would regain the momentum of the first.

The Sands' family was acutely aware of that. Its sorrow and dignity gave a powerful emotional intensity to the opening rally.

Shadow

Most of the meeting was taken up with detailed description of the various forms of skulduggery and intimidation that the campaign workers could expect to meet, and how that could be dealt with.

In fact the only way to win such an election is to out-mobilise and out-organise your opponent.

What is involved is not just vote-getting but con-

vincing a depressed and beaten-down people that they can win something; that there is hope if they stand up and express their opposition to British oppression.

The by-election is taking place in the shadow of the gigantic machine of military and police repression.

On Saturday I travelled with a ten-hour long Sands' campaign cavalcade, two hours of which was spent undergoing questions and identity checks by the police and military.

Outside Augher the cavalcade was held up for an hour as a result of a Loyalist provocation.

The police waited until the procession was outside the town, then half a dozen police cars cut it off and 25 to 30 cops jumped out waving carbines.

Despite the international publicity focused on her, Bernadette McAliskey has also been harassed by the police. She was held up for 15 minutes before the opening press conference. Her car was picked out for a search.

**NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
Support the Irish
prisoners
Grant their five
demands**

Sunday, 26 April

Assemble for rally at 1.30 pm, Kilburn High Rd, London NW6. Next to Kilburn tube station

Called by H Block/Armagh (London) Committee

Although she has been out of hospital for only a couple of weeks, Bernadette is working 12 hours a day on the campaign, giving interviews, talking to reporters, counselling workers on the details of the electoral law, and even addressing and stuffing envelopes.

She appears everywhere despite the danger to her life. She is the heart and soul of the campaign.

The election campaign has aroused the enthusiasm of the youth. There are groups of young

people posting everywhere. All generations of the Catholic population are being drawn in.

Victory

However, there is a tendency on the part of some Catholic politicians to think that the surest way to victory is to make it a straight Catholic versus Protestant election.

It is likely at the end of the day that the Catholic workers will stick to their habit of voting anti-

Unionist, but just another Catholic v. Protestant campaign would not arouse the necessary enthusiasm.

The crowds at the chapel gates on Sunday seemed to respond best to appeals to strike a blow against British repression and for the dignity and nationhood of the Irish people.

Applause

Such an eminently practical politician as Neil Blaney, the Donegal political boss, understood that. He made strong speeches at the morning masses in Republican Lisnaskea, putting the blame for the violence where it belongs — on the British government.

In the more conservative Enniskillen, Sinn Fein speakers drew loud applause when they reminded their audience of how the Irish people have always supported the nationalist prisoners.

Enniskillen will be the key to the Sands' victory. It is where the largest number of wavering voters



A rally for Sands' campaign was banned when Paisleyites threatened a counter-demonstration. British soldiers have been seen tearing down Sands' posters.

are concentrated.

For such people, I have found, assurances that they have the attention and sympathy of international opinion and in particular of sections of the Catholic clergy who support human rights, are very important.

It is vital to focus as much international attention as possible, and for as many sympathetic observers as possible to come in and come quickly.

The great battle that is now being fought in this quiet countryside and

small towns may be decisive for the future of one of the most intense, powerful and enduring struggles against imperialist and capitalist repression in our time.

**Bobby Sands:
Portrait of a Hunger
Striker**

Single copies 25p plus 15p p&tp. 10 copies, £2 incl. post. Cheques/POs to Information on Ireland. From: Information on Ireland, 1 North End Rd, London W14 8ST.

The government's quaint tale of violence in the north of Ireland

THE British government is sensitive to criticisms made in the United States over Britain's role in the north of Ireland.

The US Socialists Workers Party, co-thinkers of the Fourth International, sent a telegram to the British embassy in Washington in January saying that the attempted assassination of Bernadette and Michael McAliskey 'reveals the full horror of the system that Britain has created and maintained in Northern Ireland.'

Within days the SWP received a lengthy reply from J S Wall, the first secretary at the British embassy. He sought to justify the presence of British troops in the north of Ireland and the record of British imperialism.

The SWP has since replied to each of the points made by the first secretary, and we publish here a summary of the correspondence.

My government condemns without reservation terrorist violence by anyone in Northern Ireland.

The primary instigators and protectors of terrorism in Northern Ireland are the British government and its agents.

British troops have been

responsible for killing numerous unarmed citizens. The Bloody Sunday massacre of 30 January, 1972 slaughtered 13 of them in cold blood.

Civilians are shot without being challenged. Anybody in a pro-Republican area is considered fair game.

And it is not only the British troops who are responsible for torture and murder: the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Ulster Defence Regiment, both operating under the auspices of the British government, also have a lot to answer for.

The government has repeatedly made it clear that it is not prepared to concede the demand for political status. Nobody is imprisoned for his or her political beliefs. All have been convicted in open court.

It is hypocritical to deny that the struggle of the nationalist population against this colonial system is a political struggle; to deny that the Republican prisoners are imprisoned for their political beliefs.

It was the British government which introduced internment without trial in 1971. Those interned were never tried or convicted — they were interned solely on the basis of their political beliefs.

Since the ending of internment, 'suspected terrorists' can be held incommunicado for seven days and then tried in the Diplock courts. There is one judge and no jury.

The SWP's reply lists the methods used against 'suspected terrorists' — methods described in the report



from the European Commission on Human Rights.

Prisoners were forced to stand for 12 hours; they were masked and hooded. They were subjected to loud and continuous noises, beaten and

deprived of sleep and food.

These are methods that are used against any people fighting for its liberty.

My government cannot accept the suggestion that it

'occupies' Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland is part of the UK and will remain so unless the people of Northern Ireland and Parliament at Westminster decide otherwise.

It has been six decades since Britain enforced the partition of Ireland against the wishes of the Irish people. The creation of an artificial statelet in the six counties was an affront to the right of the Irish people to self-determination.

The SWP quotes from the *Sunday Times* Insight Team's book — *Northern Ireland: A Report on the Conflict* — to explain to Wall why his claim that the majority of people in Northern Ireland want to remain part of the United Kingdom is sheer deceit and hypocrisy:

'The border was itself the first and biggest gerrymander: the new province of Ulster had no meaning except as the largest area which the Protestant tribe could hold against the Catholic.'

Rule

'As such the State itself was an immoral concept. It therefore had to be maintained by immoral means... and in the end the Army on the streets, internment, "deep interrogation".'

Terrorism has been used for centuries by the British to maintain its rule in Ireland. The British government cannot condemn the real terrorists in Northern Ireland. To do that it would have to convict itself.

The letter from the SWP concludes with the same demands made in the original telegram:

Immediate prosecution and conviction of those responsible for the attack on Bernadette and Michael McAliskey!

Grant the demands of the H-Block prisoners!

End British occupation and colonial rule of Northern Ireland!

By Judith Arkwright

THE Bill on indecent displays, which its sponsor the Rt Hon Timothy Sainsbury claims will be welcomed by 'women's libbers', comes up for parliamentary debate on 1 May.

It deals with 'indecent' displays on the covers of magazines, posters, and T-shirts outside and inside shops.

The average newsagent will be exempted from prosecution only if the offending material is kept in a backroom which has a warning notice.

The Bill proposes a two-year prison sentence, while repealing the antiquated laws which have much less severe penalties.

Many women regard pornography as exploitative, and feminists consider display of the female body in a commercial setting as antagonistic to the view of women as people and workers.

But does Sainsbury's Bill offer a protection for women against exploitation or humiliation?

Laws which deal with sexual expression have been used in a repressive way — not on the side of freedom of sexual expression or protection against abuse.

Indecent displays — should they be banned?

Under the Obscene Publication Act of 1959, for example, it is a crime to publish an article which is likely to 'deprave or corrupt'. But the law doesn't provide any definition of those words — it is left to male judges and male police who are notoriously unsympathetic to gays, lesbian sexuality, and much else besides.

In the recent paedophile case, defendant Tom O'Carroll was sentenced to two years for conspiracy to corrupt public morals.

He was never charged for any action that was harmful, but with breaking a 200 year-old law which had fallen into disrepute because it is arbitrary and undemocratic.

Many other so-called 'protective' laws on issues such as rape, social security, and employment perpetuate the dependent, second-rate status of women.

Action should be taken against pornography — but by our own organisations.

By taking up this question within the workers' movement as was done with the campaign over the page 3 pin-up in the *Yorkshire Miner* we can explain more clearly why pictures like these oppress women.

Banning only strengthens the powers of the police and the courts; it won't substantially alter the status of women.

Commercial exploitation of women's bodies will only be finished off by women organising to fight for their rights; the right to choose on abortion, the right to work, and to equality.

The liberation of women will eventually mean an end to the distortion of human sexuality that creates the market for pornographic material.



On the road to repatriation

FIVE hundred Filipinos are under threat of expulsion from Britain in what a new pamphlet describes as the beginn-

ing of the 'road to repatriation'.

The Migrants Action Group gives the evidence behind the Thatcher government's campaign against the Filipino community, which has already resulted in some 50 people being thrown out of Britain.

An injury to one...

A CONFERENCE of London Labour Party members last week kicked off a campaign to mobilise Labour Party opposition to the Nationality Bill and the 1971 Immigration Act.

John Tilley, Labour MP for Lambeth Central and front bench opposition spokesperson on Home Affairs, declared that 'there will be no front bench compromise while I am on it'.

He stated that our aim must be to kick out the Nationality Bill altogether and ensure that the next Labour Government repeals the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 Nationality Act (if passed).

For further information phone Charlotte Atkins 01-675 3874, Jane Ansell 01-633 9377 or Bob Swart 01-769 1160.

The racism that killed 'Cartoon' Campbell

RICHARD Campbell was a 19-year-old Rastafarian who died at Ashford remand centre a year ago.

The official inquest decided that Richard had died of 'dehydration due to schizophrenia', and that it was 'death by self neglect'.

The labour movement and black community were dissatisfied with this verdict and the recent series of notorious deaths while in police custody.

Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council initiated a public inquiry which was led by Tom Cox MP and chaired by Maurice Styles of the

The pamphlet shows how the Home Office has for years been closing its eyes to sharp practices by agencies which arrange for mainly domestic labour to come to Britain from the Philippines.

Now that the government is interested in boosting

hostility to immigrants it is manufacturing flimsy pretexts to deport people who have done nothing but work and sacrifice to benefit their children at home.

'On the Road to Repatriation', from the Migrants Action Group c/o 68 Charlton St. London NW1 1JR at 50p plus postage. Tel. 01-388 0241.

THE DEATH OF RICHARD 'CARTOON' CAMPBELL



'The Death of Richard Cartoon Campbell' report by Battersea & Wandsworth Trades Council. Available from The Other Bookshop, 328 Upper St, London N1 2XP. Price 50p.



Don't do it, Di! Spare Rib, the monthly feminist magazine, has produced its comment on the forthcoming Royal Wedding.

Badges available by mail order for 30p (incl p&p) from Spare Rib Extras, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1R 0AT. Bulk and trade orders also available.

Don't let Jaswinder Kaur go!

A NEW campaign is seeking support for Jaswinder Kaur, a 23-year-old Leeds woman who is threatened with deportation.

Jaswinder came to Britain in 1976 and married a man who was later discovered to be here 'illegally'.

In 1979 she left her husband after he had assaulted

her son, putting him in hospital. Her husband was arrested for assault and deported.

Jaswinder has no legal right to stay here, thanks to the racist immigration laws. But if she returns to India her husband has threatened her with violence when she gets there.

The Friends of Jaswinder Kaur is asking for letters to be

sent to the Home Office urging compassion.

It has also organised a national demonstration in Leeds on 16 May, which will end with a rally addressed by the president of the Indian Workers Association and Ken Woolmer MP.

Further details from The Friends of Jaswinder Kaur, LAP Box JK, 29 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds LS2 9HD.

This used to occur at White Hart Lane, but the success of the 'Spurs Against the Nazis' group, not to mention the presence of Ardiles, Villa and Garth Crooks, drove the fascists away.

The other aspect is blatant racist abuse as soon as a black player gets the ball. There is no real NF presence in Middlesbrough, but rhythmic chanting of 'National Front' never fails to greet any black player visiting Ayresome Park — Viv Anderson of Forest, George Berry of Wolves and Brendan Batson of West Brom have all been victims this season.

Usually the better the player the worse the abuse. The effect is contagious: once it starts, older racists who wouldn't normally chant slogans, begin telling anti-black jokes to anyone

prepared to listen.

Ken Knighton and other managers may feel that there is nothing that can be done about it, but the Anti-Nazi League thinks otherwise. It is encouraging local groups to leaflet home games, pointing out the skills and excitement which overseas players and native blacks have brought to the Football League.

If you're going to a match on Saturday, get in touch with your local ANL supporters. The national ANL office may be able to supply samples of locally produced leaflets — phone 01-351 2823.

Hopefully one day every League team will field a black player. I just wish Middlesbrough would hurry up and sign Justin Fashanu.

Racism on the terraces

By Dave Carter
'I HAVEN'T seen any form of racism in football.' These words were spoken by Ken Knighton, manager of Sunderland Football Club in an interview on the BBC TV programme *Decision Makers* on 20 March.

It comes as no surprise to a Middlesbrough supporter like myself that the Sunderland management can be so short-sighted and incompetent. How else do our local rivals never fail to finish below us in the League despite getting bigger crowds?

But Knighton sums up the attitude of soccer's hierarchy to one of the game's ugliest aspects.

Like one of the three wise monkeys, he professed to have seen no evil. But when pressed by a football correspondent of *The Observer*, Knighton did admit to having heard some racist chanting. This he described as 'good-natured banter between two sets of supporters'.

On being asked about the National Front's activities on the terraces, he described them as a 'minority who come to cause problems. We can't do anything about it.' He could almost have been describing the Middlesbrough midfield.

Racism among supporters appears to take two forms. There are certain grounds, especially in London — West Ham and Millwall, for example — where the fascists attempt to recruit.



Photo: JOANNE O'BRIEN

John Tilley MP: 'There will be no front bench compromise while I am on it.'

Squatters SAS hits at Ideal Home exhibition

By Piers Corbyn

SQUATTERS occupied a show house at the Ideal Home exhibition on Saturday.

Members of Squatters Against Sales (SAS) and the London Squatters Union took over the balcony of the Medallion-award show house and hoisted a banner.

It read: 'Homes for all, not just the rich'. The squatters addressed the crowd and handed out leaflets.

A spokesperson explained: 'The exhibition is an insult to the homeless and badly housed', urged support for the squatters

now at the barricades at Sherry's Wharf, Hackney, and the East Hill estate in Wandsworth.

The government's policy of blindly promoting home ownership while selling off council land and housing is a disaster.

The number of homeless families has doubled in the past five years. Decent housing must be a right for everyone. Unemployment and housing cuts and sales are condemning us all to years of misery.

Direct action is the only answer.

Information from SAS, tel 01-701 5691 or 01-237 8277.

BOC DEPOT SHOWDOWN



DRIVERS at the British Oxygen plant in Wembley, NW London, have been on strike since Monday of last week following the sacking of a driver.

The driver, Brian Watson, who has worked at BOC for 15 years, returned from a delivery with a cylinder short.

Without any evidence, the plant manager arbitrarily decided Watson was on the fiddle and dismissed him. Industrial action by the drivers was immediate.

The only cryogenic liquids

leaving the plant are those needed for hospitals and blood banks. Even so-called 'hazard liquids' have been boycotted because, as one steward told Socialist Challenge: 'Last time more liquid went out for hazards than went on normal deliveries'.

BOC has had to look as far as Sheffield for depot drivers willing to carry these liquids, and it has still not found anyone. The daily liquid gas trains to North Wembley from the BOC production plant at Widnes will soon have to be cancelled.

The pressure the Wembley management has been putting on the drivers has finally backfired, and the company stands to lose valuable customers in a prolonged strike.

To avoid this it has now agreed regional level talks with the Transport Union and reduced Watson's 'sentence' to suspension while this procedure is gone through.

The drivers have so far rejected the manoeuvre and they have made it plain that they are out the gate until Brian Watson can come through it to go back to work with them.

Back the Lambeth teachers!

By Hilary Tarr, Suspended Lambeth teacher

THE executive of the National Union of Teachers decided last Thursday to uphold the decisions of the union's national disciplinary committee concerning the suspended Lambeth officers.

The six NUT members have been suspended from the union for six months, and we are banned from holding union office for a further 18 months.

The priority of the union leaders is thus to victimise members who fight the cuts, rather than to lead a campaign against the Tories' education axe.

Support for our reinstatement is growing. On Saturday, the NUT executive was picketed by over 200 teachers angry at the decision to uphold the suspensions.

A protest letter has been signed by prominent

members of the union in the north of England, including presidents and secretaries of NUT associations. A further three MPs, including Joan Maynard, have pledged their support.

Lambeth NUT is not allowing the suspensions to intimidate us. We are continuing to organise for the same policies, building a campaign against Tory attacks.

We need support within the NUT and throughout the labour movement.

We want to be able to show the executive at this year's union conference that it's they and not the membership who have chosen to isolate themselves from the labour movement.

Copies of petitions, bulletins etc from: ILTA Defence Campaign, 27 Wheathill Rd, London SE20.

BENEFIT

Reinstate the Lambeth 6

Fight the cuts!

Friday 10 April,

7 to 11pm

Steel'n'Skin,

Red Rinse,

Flowers & Frolics

At City University,

Northampton Sq.,

London EC1

Gains for the left at student conference

By Ann Henderson

THE National Union of Students conference in Blackpool last week voted down every resolution on priorities for the union. That sums up the crisis of leadership among students.

After a year of low-key campaigning by the union on 'student issues', only the Left Alliance-dominated executive proposed more of the same.

The alliance is a motley crew of Communist Party members, Liberals and a handful of Labour Party careerists.

But at this conference the National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS) began to break away from the Left Alliance, proposing its own motions and nominating candidates for some of the key union posts.

The NOLS resolution on union priorities

recognised that students can not be separated from the rest of society in the fight against the Tories. Unfortunately NOLS put forward no proposals on how to carry out that fight.

The Socialist Students Alliance motion called for the union to lead political campaigns on all the issues affecting students. But every priorities resolution was defeated. Policy will therefore be decided by the new executive.

The Left Alliance

presidential candidate, Dave Aaronovitch, was re-elected — thanks to Tory transfer votes. The same thing happened with all the Left Alliance executive candidates.

No doubt the alliance will now use the two Tories on the new executive to retain its slender majority over the increased strength of NOLS and the far left.

The leftward shift of the conference was registered when the Socialist Students Alliance resolution on further education

colleges was passed. This called for priority to be given to mobilising students at these colleges against the Tories' education cuts.

Shift

The political shift was also evident in the increased votes for the SSA, which polled 120 to 130 first preference votes in all the executive elections, as compared to 190 to 200 votes for the Left Alliance, and 75 for Socialist Workers Student Organisation (SWSO).

There was considerable interest in Ireland at the conference. A letter from a student on hunger strike in the H Blocks was read to conference. Aidan Donaldson, an SSA supporter from Queens University, Belfast, successfully stood on an anti-imperialist platform to be one of three NUS delegates to a European summit of student unions.

Moves

Right-wing moves to overturn the union's policy of allowing women-only meetings were defeated.

There were guest speakers from the New Cross Massacre Action Committee, the National H Block/Armagh Committee, the Lee Jeans strike in Greenock, and the El Salvadoran FDR.

The conference refused to be greeted by the local Tory mayor, insisting instead on a speaker from Blackpool Trades Council.

With education cuts mounting and further moves by some Tory students to break up the NUS, it is not surprising that the Left Alliance's compromise politics are under pressure from the left.

The Socialist Students Alliance will be fighting for the maximum left unity, especially with NOLS and SWSO supporters, to make NUS a union that campaigns in the interests of students and the labour movement against the Tory government.

Strike against the Bill, say Post Office workers

TOM Jackson of the Union of Communication Workers and Bryan Stanley of the Post Office Engineering Union must be a little worried after the 1 April mass rally and lobby of parliament.

The action was taken by the Post Office unions against the Tories' Post and Telecommunications Bill.

The union leaders were hoping for a peaceful afternoon of speechifying from MPs followed by decorous lobbying.

Instead they faced demands from over 4,000 angry and militant members for action 'up to and including strike action' to kill the Bill.

They had to listen to four sponsored MPs tell them in great detail what they already knew — that the Bill would allow private enterprise to profit from Post Office operations, while cutting unprofitable services such as rural postal deliveries.

The post and telcoms workers knew — and hecklers began to say — that this was the latest in a long line of de-nationalisations, and that it would lead to large job losses and worsening conditions of service.

When Stan Orme, opposition spokesperson for industry, gave an undertaking from the shadow cabinet that the next Labour government would revoke the legislation and restore the monopoly, he was massively applauded.

But no one on the platform answered the question of how to fight the Bill, which will inevitably get onto the statute book.

When Ian Mikardo said that it was necessary to wait until there was a Labour majority at Westminster, the cry from the floor was: 'Tell that to the miners.'

Bryan Stanley, the POEU general secretary, asked his members whether they wanted action when the Bill was before the House. The whole audience answered: 'Yes, Strike.'

Aware of the link between democratising the unions and getting a fighting leadership, militants challenged Tom Jackson to stand for election at the next UCU conference.

This will be a vital part of the fight against the Bill in all the Post Office unions.

Supporters of the POEU Broad Left were out in strength at the lobby and sold over 500 copies of their magazine *Spark*. More than 250 copies of Socialist Challenge were sold. It contained a 4-page supplement on how to fight the Telecoms Bill.

Should there be gun laws?

By Bob Pennington

THE shooting of Reagan and his aides has once again unleashed a debate on whether or not the USA needs new laws governing the right to carry a gun.

The most vociferous defenders of the present regulations are the arms' manufacturers and their lobbyists on Capitol Hill.

Those who are for regulations restricting the right to carry a gun are concerned about death and injury; both liberals and reactionaries appear to be equal victims.

But the violence that stalks American society is not impartial. Violence is the ultimate weapon of the white establishment against the working class and the racial minorities.

To restrict the right of people to carry a gun would not reduce violence but would lead to more murders and wounding. In every US city there is a ghetto where one or other racial minority lives, either black or hispanic. Their inhabitants are the worst paid, the most underprivileged and under-employed citizens in American society.



The assassination of Malcolm X in 1965. Among the aims of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity, which he was building, was: 'In areas where the US government has shown itself unable and/or unwilling to bring to justice the racist oppressors, murderers, who kill innocent children and adults, the OAAU advocates that the Afro-American people insure ourselves that justice is done — whatever the price and by any means necessary.'

The state is never short of arms. It has a mammoth annual budget to arm its police, its national guard and its army. Whenever it thinks it is necessary, it unleashes that armoury against workers and minorities.

In the 1930s the steel bosses and Henry Ford could rely on the national guard and their own paid scabs to shoot down unarmed strikers. In 1970 the national guard gunned down the young students of Kent state university for daring to protest against the war in Vietnam.

When the fruit pickers were organising the poorly paid farm-workers in California, they were shot at by the thugs of the Teamsters' Union whilst the cops looked on.

In many of the southern states when the state trooper takes off his uniform at the end of his shift he

replaces it with the tunic of the Klu Klux Klan, but he still takes with him his state-issued weapons plus a few more for any Klansmen who may need them.

Restricting the right to bear weapons would not affect any of these people. In fact it would concentrate the guns in their hands. The state would have a monopoly of arms against a disarmed working class.

It would be folly to expect the state to protect workers and racial minorities against violence. This is why we are against any law which restricts the right of the working class and its black and hispanic allies to arm themselves.

Readers are asked to send in details of news, events, etc that they think could be used in *Lowdown*. Forward to Bob Pennington, *Lowdown*, Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Ghetto

Every day they are the targets of racial violence, inspired by the state, enforced by the armed police who are all too often supported by backward white workers. The history of the ghetto is a history of white pogroms.

In the early 1920s the USA was swept by a series of terrible riots as whites swept into the black ghettos killing and maiming. What stops that happening today is the fact that the ghetto is armed and ready to defend itself.

Socialist Challenge

'Come what may, we're here to stay!'

By Davy Jones

FOR the second time in a month black people have taken to the streets of London to defend their rights. Last Sunday more than 15,000 people, almost all of them black, protested against the Tories' racist Nationality Bill.

The mood of the demonstration was militant and defiant. Hundreds of coaches, particularly from the Midlands, had brought the protestors to London, just two weeks after Anwar Ditta had won her appeal to bring her children into the country.

Tony Haque from the Bangladeshi Workers' Association summed up the mood of the

demonstration when he spoke: 'We've shown today that with unity and solidarity among ourselves we can fight this racist Bill to the very end.'

'This is not so much a Nationality Bill,' he continued, 'as an Immigration Bill. The Tories are trying to blame black people for the problems caused by the recession.'

Avtar Jouhl of the In-

dian Workers' Association commented that there were more than one hundred black community banners on the march but few from the official labour movement: 'The trade union and Labour party leaders should be here with us marching shoulder to shoulder against racist laws and against unemployment.'

Removal

And a call for the removal through the new democratic re-selection procedure of those Labour MPs responsible for the Green paper on nationality came from Rudi Narayan from the West Indian Standing conference.

A high point of the rally after the march was a statement read to the crowd from the H Block prisoners. It said: 'It is totally unacceptable to us, political prisoners in H Blocks, that more racist laws should be brought into existence. Fellow second-class citizens, now is the time to cement the bonds of unity. Please help save lives in H Blocks.'

And the speaker from the Kashmiri Workers' Association, noting that much of the Tories' racist legislation on immigration and nationality stemmed from Labour government white and green papers, warned: 'If the next Labour government does not repeal this Bill, we'll be back again in this square.'

New edition of HERE TO STAY, official newsletter of the Campaign Against Racist Laws. Just 10p. Write to CARL, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5.

HANDS OFF POLISH WORKERS

THE Polish workers' struggle for power is in serious danger.

The Stalinist rulers in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe are openly discussing armed intervention to crush the independent union movement, Solidarity.

They claim that Solidarity is engaged in a 'direct struggle against the socialist system'.

This is a lie. It is the Soviet bureaucrats who defend an anti-socialist system where the workers have no say in running the country.

They claim that Solidarity represents a 'serious threat to the foundations of socialism in Poland'.

This is a lie. Solidarity has never called for a return to the capitalist system. It has only threatened the privileged rule of the bureaucrats.

Real workers' power is incompatible with the system of bureaucratic rule in East Europe. Every time the Soviet rulers have thought their system was under threat they have used military force to brutally suppress the workers.

They invaded Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968. They must not be allowed to invade Poland in 1981.

Reagan and Thatcher have warned the Soviet leaders to stay out of Poland, but they are no friends of the Polish workers.

The labour movement in this country should act immediately in defence of their Polish sisters and brothers. Direct links with Solidarity should be made by national and local labour movement bodies.



Hands off Polish workers!

Demonstrate Sunday 12 April, 1.30pm Speakers Corner to Soviet Embassy

Sponsors include Tony Benn, Eric Heffer, Jo Richardson, Bernard Dix (NUPE), Labour Focus on Eastern Europe, and others

Speakers include Tariq Ali, Reg Race MP, Frank Dobson MP, Philip Whitehead MP

In particular socialists should be on the march this Sunday in London. As Tony Benn says:

'All democratic socialists should support the efforts of the Polish trade union Solidarity to introduce real democratic accountability into Poland. Socialism can only be established by consent.'

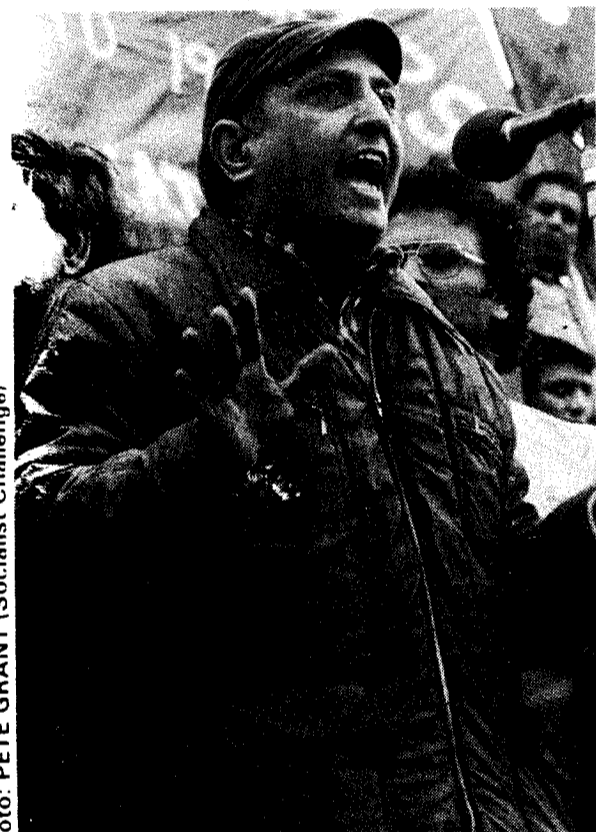


Photo: PETE GRANT (Socialist Challenge)

AVTAR JOUHL (above) insisted that labour movement leaders should have been at last Sunday's march. The platform at the rally against the Nationality Bill included every major ethnic organisation



Photo: PETE GRANT (Socialist Challenge)

Ride for Revolution

BRISTOL supporters have found a good way to raise money.

Two healthy comrades will be cycling the 130 miles to London next month to raise money for Revolution Youth and Socialist Challenge.

We want sponsors to guarantee a few pence a mile to raise the cash. If 50 people will come up with 2p we'll raise £250.

Can you sponsor them or get your friends to do it. Write for sponsorship forms to: 'Bikes', PO Box 50, London N1.

This week brought £231. Our thanks to:

Yves Thebault	£8.00
US supporter	£88.64
Middlesboro	£28.00
Newcastle	£70.00
Thomas Todd	£10.00
Ed Mahood	£10.00
Standing orders	£14.00
Jim Avery	£3.00

TOTAL £231.64

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE BANKER'S ORDER FORM

Your Bank

Name of Account to be debited

Account Number

Our Bank..... Socialist Challenge.....

..... Lloyd's Bank, 19 Upper St, London N1.....

Account No 0179678

Sorting Code..... 30-94-57

Amount to be paid..... Monthly

First Payment due..... And on the same date in the month thereafter.

Signed