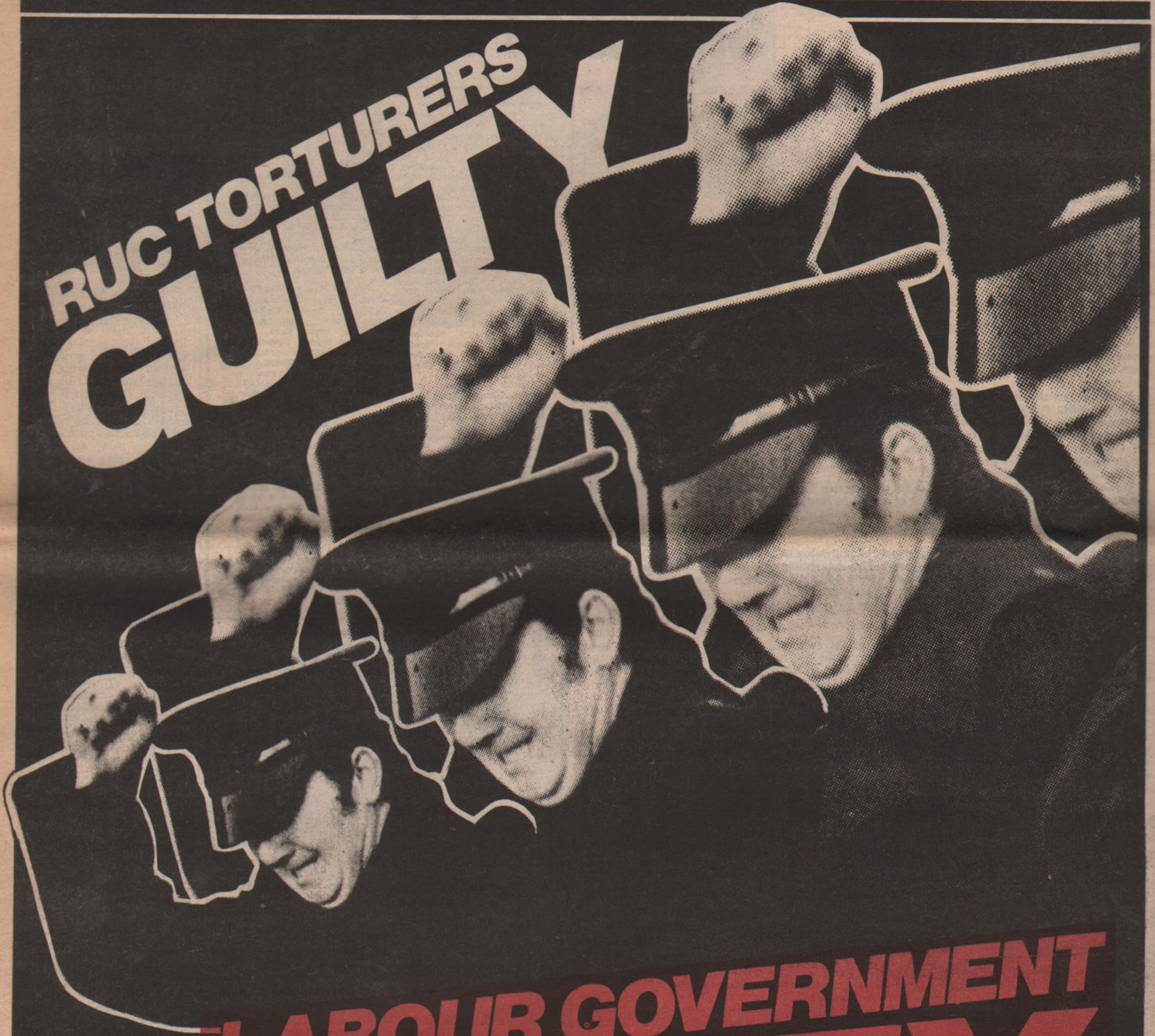


Socialist Challenge

RUC TORTURERS

GUILTY



LABOUR GOVERNMENT

GUILTY

BRITAIN OUT OF IRELAND NOW

EDITORIAL

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But for six counties?

THERE is a point in Robert Bolt's play *A Man For All Seasons* at which Thomas More turns on his former friend Richard Rich. Rich had just given false evidence against More and was rewarded by Henry VIII with the lord lieutenancy of Wales. Says More: 'It may profit a man to sell his soul and gain the whole world — but for Wales, Richard, for Wales?'

The Labour government is presently negotiating with the Ulster Unionists, offering all sorts of deals for their support in Parliament. An indication of the type of diseased mentality these Loyalists have is displayed in their response to the Bennett report. An official statement from the Unionist Party said that Bennett offered 'no evidence of ill-treatment'; while an individual Unionist, Harold McCusker, said that it did — but that he supported 'strong arm methods'.

It could be argued that the response of the Labour government, particularly that of Northern Ireland Secretary Mason, is not all that different. Bennett makes the point in his report that he was specifically restricted under Mason's brief from looking at the wider application of law in the North of Ireland, as well as that in individual case histories.

From the start of the latest round of evidence of 'ill-treatment' by the security forces in the North of Ireland, the Labour government has offered evasions, denials and diversions. The attempted smear on Dr Robert Irwin, drawing attention to the rape of his wife, is just the latest (although probably the most disgusting) piece of black propaganda.

It is also worth remembering that it is not the Loyalist bigots who are responsible for the administration of law in the North of Ireland, or for H Block, or even for the continued denial of the rights of the Irish people. It is the Labour government.

Nevertheless, despite their apparent agreement on repression in the North of Ireland, there is something particularly nauseating about the current spectacle of Callaghan and friends bargaining with the Loyalist bigots. Even the *Daily Mirror* commented that if this is the price to pay for the survival of a Labour government, then it is a price which is too high.

It is too much to expect that at this late hour the Labour government will attempt some liberalising measures in the North of Ireland. It appears that apart from the gimmicks of TV screens in Castlereagh, the only consequence of the Bennett report is the departure of RUC Chief Constable Sir Kenneth Newman. The Northern Ireland Office insist that Newman was due to return to England anyway, but it is obvious that he is being offered as the scapegoat for the Bennett and Irwin revelations.

If there was a socialist government in Westminster much more would leave the North of Ireland than Newman. The troops would leave, the torturers would be booted out, and the entire British presence would go. That remains the only demand socialists should place on whatever government sits at Westminster.

But in the light of the Bennett report, and in the light of the attempted deals with the Loyalists, something else can be said. The one way the Labour government can now gain one grain of self-respect for its North of Ireland policy is to say loudly and unequivocally that the present situation in the North of Ireland, torture and all, is because British governments have made deals with the bigoted minority in Ireland on too many occasions in the past, and that this time, whatever its fate, the Labour government will not repeat this mistake.

Otherwise, let us rewrite Robert Bolt and say that it may indeed profit the Labour government to sell out the millions of voters it has if it gains five more years in power — but for six counties?

THE FIRST WORD

Anti-Concordat gathers momentum

On the way to 2000 signatures

By Jonathan Silberman

'I WONDER why it is that every time the TUC and the Labour government come up with some new agreement, it starts with the letters "con". Do you think they're trying to tell us something?'

With these words Dave Ward, secretary of Horsham branch of the Post Office Engineering Union, agreed to sponsor the Anti-Concordat. Dave and Chris Mullins, Horsham POEU vice-chairperson, are the latest in a growing list of sponsors for the Anti-Concordat document.

It brilliantly exposes many of the half-truths and fabrications contained in the government-TUC text.

Facts and figures are used to unmask the real meaning of the new 'con', the starting point of which is that there is no fundamental clash of interests between workers and bosses.

The Anti-Concordat shows that the proposal for an annual tripartite arrangement between unions, bosses and the government is in reality nothing more than a new wages policy designed, like all the others, to carve into workers' living standards.

The very talk of dividing "the cake" between "consumption, investment and public expenditure", the pamphlet explains, 'rests upon the assumption that the present wealth and privileges of the employing class are in no way going to be challenged.'

It continues: 'What is most revealing about all the talk of "tripartite meetings" is that no one says it should decide the allocation of resources between profit, dividend interest, rent and managerial salaries and perks on the one hand, and wages and social services on the other.'

'No, that would let slip the secret that we live in a class divided society.' The effects of the Social Contract, the previous 'con', were declining living standards, massive cuts in social services and growing dole queues.

The Concordat is a response to the rank and file rebellion which opposed the Social

IN ADDITION to the one hundred signatories listed in the pamphlet, Socialist Challenge has been informed of the following additions:

Roland Sheret, secretary, Stirling Trades Council; John Parkinson, secretary Preston Trades Council; Neil Duffield, secretary Bolton Trades Council; Viv Lacey, CPSA ESD Section Executive; Pat Hickey, Deputy Senior Steward T&G, Rover Solihull; Raghieb Ahsan, T&G steward Rover Solihull; Steve Griffith, branch secretary AUEW, Rover Solihull; Rab Bird, Sheffield AUEW district committee; John Suddaby, secretary, Camden NUPE general branch; Ray Varnes, district secretary, ILEA NUPE; Mark Hackett, Nalco convenor, shop stewards committee, Bury education department.

Stewart McLennan, chairperson, Glasgow North DHSS, CPSA; Mike Anderson, Renfrew EIS association executive; Dave Ward, secretary, Horsham POEU; Chris Mullins, vice-chair, Horsham POEU; Al Walker, vice-chair, Liverpool City NALGO; Walter Maclellan, ass. secretary, Glasgow district NALGO; Dave Burn, NALGO metropolitan district council; Jeff Lever, NALGO metropolitan district council; Julian Atkinson, NATFHE, national council.

Charlie Suddard, Stafford NUPE branch secretary; Pam Shepherd, organiser CPSA Haringey and Islington DHSS; Janet Maguire, secretary, SE London ASTMS medical;

Bernard Regan, secretary, East London NUT; Ken Jones, secretary, Barking NUT; Islay Fullerton, president, Wandsworth NUT.

Hilda Kean, president, Westminster NUT; Carole Regan, ILTA council NUT; Denny Fitzpatrick, ILTA council NUT; Kamlesh Gandhi, chairperson, Grunwick strike committee; Colin Maloney, chairperson, UPW Cricklewood; Archie Sinclair, ass. sec, UPW Cricklewood; Malcolm Bass, branch committee, UPW Cricklewood.

Percy Howitt, national executive committee member, USDAW; Martin Larkham, chairperson LCS branch, USDAW; Bryan Rees, DoE Northern branch committee, SPCS; R. Banks convenor; Don Seaman, shop steward, and John Fitzgerald, shop steward, all Stone Manganese, GMWU; Harold Baeker, convenor, Electro Dynamic AUEW; Colin Keen, FoC Metal Box, NGA; Jeremy Weinstein, shop steward Wandsworth branch NALGO; Norah Carlin, secretary Middx Poly NATFHE; K. Terment, President Newcastle Trades Council; Iain Brown, shop steward Bellings, Enfield TGWU; Eric Brittain, shop steward; Matthew Hall, Enfield EETPU; Yolanda Bystrom, shop steward, and John Parker, shop steward both Thoms Enfield TGWU; Edwina Rowling, Walthamstow & Loughton Chapel, NUJ; John Coates, senior rep. Yorkshire Imperial Metals, Leeds ASTMS.

try to prevent workers from taking action — as in the civil servants' dispute — but its power lies in its ability to persuade, in its ideological content.

This has led some political commentators to argue that the Concordat is little more than a piece of paper and, after all, the refuse workers have shown us where bits of paper can be stuffed!

But this would be to oversimplify matters. Certainly the Concordat has not had the dramatic effect of the early days of the Social Contract, and the Labour government has said that it does not intend to legislate the Concordat.

But the Tories certainly have legislation in mind, and they will ask: 'Why will you accept these policies from Callaghan when you won't accept them from us?' This is what makes it all the more important to fight for an alternative to the policies of the trade union and Labour leaders here and now.

The Anti-Concordat does not contain such a thoroughgoing political alternative. Its job is to generate the maximum resistance to the TUC-government pact and to foster the maximum unity in that task.

The document indicates the need for such an alternative. It calls for 'real efforts...to unite the left around fighting demands that can mobilise rank and file trade unionists to fight for working class interests against those of the employers and class collaborators' — not least because the new pact stands against the policies adopted by almost every labour movement conference.

That's why the campaign to throw out the Concordat needs to be coupled with the demand for the immediate recall of the TUC and Labour Party Conference, to remove the right-wing leaders who overturn the policies these conferences have voted for, and adopt new policies for the fightback.

Order your copies of the *Anti-Concordat* from Socialist Challenge (25p p&p). Join the campaign for 2,000 signatures.



Contract at one union conference after another, and which ultimately led to the massive strike wave of the last six months.

To weaken the means workers have at their disposal to defend and advance their

interests, the Concordat opposes unofficial strikes, puts forward proposals for a code of picketing, and a so-called 'flexible' interpretation of the closed shop.

It has already been used to

OUR POLICIES

Capitalism is in crisis. The leaders of the Labour Party and the trades unions offer solutions that are in the interests, not of the workers, but of the capitalist class.

Socialist Challenge believes that the two vital tasks confronting revolutionary socialists are:

* To build broad-based class struggle tendencies in opposition to class-collaborationism in the labour movement. These should be non-exclusive in character grouping together militants holding a wide range of political views.

* To begin to fight for the creation of a unified and democratic revolutionary socialist organisation which can, through an application of united front tactics, begin to be seen as an alternative by thousands of workers engaged in struggles. Such an organisation should be based on the understanding that:

1 The struggle for socialism seeks to unite the fight of the workers against the bosses with that of other oppressed layers of society — women, black people, gays — struggling for their liberation. This socialism can only be achieved by creating new organs of power and defeating with all necessary means the power of the capitalist state.

2 Our socialism will be infinitely more democratic than what exists in Britain today, with full rights for all political parties and currents that do not take up arms against the socialist state. The Stalinist models of 'socialism' in the USSR and Eastern Europe have discredited socialism in the eyes of the millions of workers throughout the world. We are opposed to them and will offer full support to all those fighting for socialist democracy.

3 The interests of workers and capitalists are irreconcilable on a world scale. Capitalism has not only created a world market, it has created world politics. Thus we fight for working class unity on an international scale. This unity will in the long run be decisive in defeating both the imperialist regimes in the West and the brutal dictatorships they sustain in Latin America, Africa and Asia.

In Britain it implies demanding the immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and letting the Irish people determine their own future.

4 The Communist Parties in Europe are in crisis. Neither the 'Euro-communist' nor the pro-Moscow wings have any meaningful strategy for the overthrow of the capitalist state. New revolutionary socialist parties are more necessary than ever before. Conditions today are more favourable than over the preceding three decades. But such parties can only be built by rejecting sectarianism and seeing internal democracy not as a luxury but as a vital necessity. This means the right to organise factions and tendencies.

If you agree with these principles and want to be involved in activities by Socialist Challenge supporters in your area, fill in the form below and send it to us.

* I am interested in more information about activities in my area.

* I would like additional literature and enclose 50p to cover costs.

[Delete if not applicable]

NAME

ADDRESS

Send to Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper St, London N1.



Women in Iran 'We didn't make a revolution to get a worse situation'

'Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other', says the Koran. But large numbers of women in Iran have mounted a challenge to the Ayatollah Khomeini's attempts to put this medieval line into practice.

AZER TABARI is a militant of the Iranian Socialist Workers Party. She also played an active part in the recent women's demonstrations in Iran and spoke at several rallies and demonstrations.

A leading member of the Women's Rights Defence Groups which are being formed in many localities in Tehran, she describes here how the women organised themselves.

Three weeks before International Women's Day on 8 March, an ad hoc committee for organising a celebration was set up.

250 women representing a wide spectrum — nurses, teachers, office workers, students and some veiled women — were present. There was a lot of enthusiasm for the 8 March celebration.

Other women's groups had been organised by the Communist Party and the Maoists. The ad hoc committee contacted them to organise a united march and rally.

The CP accepted, but no reply was received from the Maoists. Though even the CP withdrew three hours before the rally.

We also contacted inter-

AZAR TABARI, who is in London for a few days, will be speaking on the situation of women in Iran at the Socialist Feminist Conference on Saturday 24 March, at 6pm at Starcross School, Risinghill Street, (off Penton Street), London N1.

national speakers such as Kate Millett from the United States, feminists in France and Italy, and Bernadette Devlin in Ireland.

On 1 March the Ministry of Health reaffirmed the ban on abortions. Birth control pills

began to be removed from chemists' shops. On 3 March the pills were put back on the shelves after a Ministry injunction.

At the same time two letters appeared in the press — one from a judge and addressed to Khomeini — asking for advice on the Family Protection Act.

According to this Act both men and women have to obtain divorce permits from a Family Court, and the Court has to grant permission before a man can marry for the second time. It restricted the polygamy rights of Islam.

Khomeini's reply was published the next day. He said that the Act should be suspended because it was against the laws of Islam.

This created a lot of resentment and anger. The reaction of many women was unambiguous: 'We didn't make a revolution to get a worse situation.'

On 7 March, Khomeini dropped a new bombshell. He declared that the veil was compulsory. Women could work, but they had to wear the veil.

That this statement came on the eve of Women's Day appeared to us as a deliberate provocation.

On the morning of 8 March there was a spontaneous eruption of anger. Meetings took place in several girls high schools. They were angry. They voted to go on strike and join

COMMITTEE AGAINST REPRESSION IN IRAN CONFERENCE

Saturday 31 March, 11am, University College, Gower Street, London WC1

Delegates' credentials £2, observers' £1, from CARI, Box 4, 182 Upper Street, London N1.

the rally at Tehran university.

At the University there were nearly 15,000 women. It was a heartening sight.

The Maoist group ('The League for the Awakening of Women') marched off separately. The rest of us, numbering about 12,000, marched to the HQ of the Imam Committee.

The ad hoc committee put out a leaflet inviting everyone to a rally at the Sports Stadium at 5pm to discuss what to do next. It was agreed that there would be an occupation of the Ministry of Justice on 10 March.

At the rally in the stadium there were greetings from Kate Millett as well as French and Italian women. An Arab woman drew massive applause as she greeted the women of Iran.

I spoke as well and argued that radical social change was necessary and that we should not sit passively and take all this.

We must fight back and not take the word of any government, least of all an appointed government.

The rally launched Women's Rights Defence Groups and urged the formation of local groups. The groups are fighting for equal pay, child care, equal rights in social, political, economic and judicial spheres.

On 10 March several thousand women gathered at 9am outside the Ministry of Justice. At the same time other women activists went to high schools, hospitals, and offices to bring back contingents to the Ministry.

Several thousand women joined these contingents, but on the way back they were molested and physically attacked by hoodlums chanting, 'Prostitutes' and 'Pahlavi dolls'.

By the time they got to the Ministry the first sit-in was over, for it was 3pm. They immediately started a new sit-in.

A rally was planned for 11 March, but a split opened up between women from the Lawyers Association (reputedly sympathetic to the CP) and the militants.

The former wanted no rally if the government retreated on the question of the veil. The militants disagreed.

Then the women lawyers unilaterally put out a press statement announcing that there would be no rally. But despite this sabotage the rally went ahead with 6,000 women.

I spoke and reiterated our position. Our fight had to continue. We had to organise ourselves independently and build the defence groups.

After the rally we marched to Freedom Square. More and more women joined the march, and by the time it ended there were 15,000 of us.

There was a lot of hostility but no attacks. The Fedayeen provided armed defence guards and their presence prevented a serious deterioration in the situation.

We want solidarity and support from all over the world. For the euphoria has now ended, and there are difficult days ahead.

News from nowhere

Ayatollahs of Clapham High St

DISTURBING reports have reached us from within the ranks of Britain's most bizarre sect, the Workers Revolutionary Party. The WRP, still led by the ageing Ayatollah Gerry Healy, had till last weekend been in continuous conference since 26 February. It is scheduled to reconvene in three months' time.

The reason for the latest crisis? Party chairperson Roy Battersby and Newsline journalist Stephen Johns had raised some moderate criticisms of the isolation of the WRP from the British class struggle. Battersby's cheekiness received an iron-fisted reply: he was suspended for three months. For good measure his wife was suspended as well.

Johns was attacked for regarding the outcome of the Ford strike as a victory despite the productivity deals. He was accused of confusing 'the particular' with 'the general'. Johns was disgusted and walked out. He was thereupon summarily expelled.

Johns had been accused of being a Kantian rather than a Marxist. The WRP's erstwhile Sheffield organiser admitted his own Kantian philosophical deviations, but claimed that the WRP as a whole was Kantian. For this he was expelled — and good Kantian that he is, he voted for his own expulsion.

The Ayatollah Healy and two others were given authority to root out anti-party elements from the WRP. It should be mentioned that the main campaign of the WRP for a period was to accuse the American SWP of being penetrated by KGB and FBI agents, etc.

Its present campaigns are to denounce Iranian women as being pawns of the CIA and to justify the execution of Iraqi communists by the Baathist regime.

Nazi films

LEEDS student union recently gave fascism the biggest boost it has had on the campus for many decades by authorising the showing of three famous Nazi propaganda films in the Devonshire Hall on the campus.

The films? *Labour Camps*, an exhortation to join the Hitler youth; *Ein Volk, Ein Reich, Ein Führer*; and *Nazi Invasion of Russia*, described on the poster as 'the invasion of Russia from a German viewpoint'.

The showing of these films in a totally uncritical context is a disgrace, and the union should be rapped sharply on the knuckles.

Broader left

AT A MEETING in London on 11 March the student Broad Left finally voted to wind itself up. It will be replaced by a still broader alliance which will allow the participation of Liberals and others.

The Broad Left had not originally intended to make the change public until the

National Union of Students conference next month. This would be followed by the inaugural conference of the new alliance in the summer term.

But, possibly prompted by some rather accurate predictions in this column, the Communist Party announced the new development in a Morning Star article on 16 March, breezily headlined 'It's all change for broad left'.

The author of the article, Steve Palmer, argued that the problem with the broad left (which has mysteriously dropped its capital letters) is that, being a coalition of parties rather than individuals, it excluded liberals (also with a small l).

There were no such old-fashioned sentiments of party loyalty at the 'summit' which decided on the change. The Communist Party itself was evidently divided on the issue. The National Organisation of Labour Students delegates voted for the proposal, despite the opposition of their executive.

As the voting was close and confused it was decided not to make the decision binding on regional Broad Lefts, with the result that there is likely to be a patchwork of different Broad Left and 'democratic alliance' structures throughout the regions.

CP and NOLS leaders must be hoping that the present arrangement will carry them through until NUS conference and that the outstanding problems will resolve themselves later.

While they are pondering this, they might still consider sending a polite retraction of their earlier harsh denials that they would ever abandon the Broad Left. This could be accompanied by a contribution to the fund drive of the first paper accurately to predict what they were up to.

Pin down Scargill

ARTHUR SCARGILL, Yorkshire miners' leader, will debate the issue of pin-ups in the press with Anna Coote of the NUJ Equality Working Party. The Trade Union Journalists section of the NUJ set up the debate.

The debate began when Scargill replied to a letter from Jane Petrie in Sheffield published in *Socialist Challenge* which attacked his sexist ideas and the existence of pin-ups on page 3 of the *Yorkshire Miner*.

The *Sun* took up the story, and the *Morning Star* published a long letter from Scargill on the subject.

Samples of what he said: 'The only gain is that of the girls (and their families) who delight at appearing in the paper.'

'Pin-ups are a part of modern day living; they are part of life in some Socialist countries as indeed are beauty competitions.'

'The Pirelli calendars featuring nude and semi-nude women have now been classed as objets d'art by some collectors.'

The motion at the debate is that pin-ups should not be used in the press. It will take place at 7pm on 11 April, NUFTO Hall, Jockeys Fields, London WC1.

Wanted - solidarity with health workers

SOMEONE in the Department of Health, or maybe the press, has a macabre sense of humour.

The weekend reports that nurses have been made an additional pay offer of £1 — bringing the total to £2 on account plus 9 per cent — have been met with an official silence.

The unions say they know nothing about it.
By Geoffrey Sheridan

If, as seems most likely, this supposed new pay offer is an exercise in kite flying, it is a kite well-fashioned to the requirements of the architects of the Concordat.

With the Royal College of Nursing's declaration that it will carry out no industrial action, the government would like to reward the nurses for the RCN's devotion to low pay.

No-strike guarantees in the public sector are foreshadowed in the government-TUC pact, and the press's enthusiasm for the 'angels' in the hospital wards coincides with its assault on the 'criminal' ancillary

workers and ambulance staff who are daring to take action for their £60 — 35 hour claim.

But the kite has run into a storm. After two months militant action, the ancillaries and ambulance staff are furious that their pay offer remains at £1 plus 9 per cent.

This week sees an escalation in their determination to improve that offer. Some five hundred hospitals across Britain have been reduced to emergency cover.

A decision last week at a shop stewards rally held by NUPE's London divisional council for a one-day strike at all London's hospitals on 21 March was expected to bring many out on to the picket lines as we went to press.

The failure of the public sector union leaders to maintain the unity of the struggles in this sector has boosted the government's confidence in declaring all-out war on those who have refused to accept the pay offer.

After the Prime Minister declared his willingness to cross picket lines, Health Minister David Ennals has appealed for 'volunteers' to replace striking ancillary workers.

The NUPE branch at Bolton General Hospital has made it clear to the health authority what it will do if such government-sponsored strike breaking is carried out at the hospital. The branch will bring out the maintenance workers to join the picket line, forcing a rapid shutdown.



Ancillaries on strike at Whiston hospital vote to continue action

There is another ploy that the health authorities are attempting. A ban on overtime by ambulance workers in South Glamorgan and Gloucestershire was countered by lockouts.

But the unity among ambulance staff through their unofficial national stewards committee has forged a militant response. Five thousand ambulance staff are now on strike — against the lockouts and in support of their pay claim.

Unity of the health struggles through action committees is urgently needed, and that is something the union leaders have done nothing to encourage.

In Newcastle, for example,

NUPE stewards representing nurses at St Nicholas Hospital argued from the start of the public sector dispute that the nurses should be involved with the ancillaries.

'We said that this was a low pay campaign, so that we were all involved,' says NUPE steward Elsa Conway, who is a student nurse. 'The full-time official told us in effect that ancillaries were nothing to do with us, so we should mind our own business.'

'We had to win the support of the branch to have nurses and ancillaries represented on the action committee set up after the 22 January day of action.'

That action committee has

voted in principle for all-out strike action with emergency cover, as the only effective means by which the claim could be won, and to counter the argument that health workers couldn't strike.

For nurses that is not an easy decision. St Nicholas is a psychiatric hospital and for many of its elderly patients understaffing ensures that 'emergency cover' is the only treatment they ever receive.

'My normal working day,' says Elsa, 'consists of getting the patients up, feeding them, toileting them, feeding them, toileting them, and then putting them to bed.'

'Their only outing is a trip

to the bathroom once a week,' Elsa adds. 'With proper staffing, we could at least teach the patients to feed and toilet themselves, which would boost their morale.'

Elsa Conway's job could be described as something less than angelic. The state of Britain's hospitals could be said to be approaching a scandal of underfunding and staffing, thanks to the cuts that this government has speeded up.

The defence of the health service and half decent pay for those who struggle to maintain it are sound reasons for the strong sections of the working class to take solidarity action with those now confronting the government.

NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFERENCE



Workers' Plans and Workers' Control

28 April, 11a.m.
Digbeth Civic Hall,
BIRMINGHAM

Organised by 'Socialist Challenge'

How the nurses won in '74

By Jude Woodward

IN 1974 the nurses won a pay award of 30 per cent that smashed right through the new Labour government's plans for pay limits. How did the nurses win this tremendous award?

The first major factor was the militancy and determination to win that the nurses showed. Demonstrations in many cities attracted thousands of nurses — many called for all-out strike action.

When the action began in April '74, it was in the period of the Labour government's honeymoon with the British working class. Five years later Labour's right-wing policies have sapped the fighting spirit of all sections of the labour movement.

After the Heath government's attacks on working class living standards, there were high hopes for what Labour could do.

With Benn in charge of industry, and Castle in charge of health, it was expected that

this would be a really left Labour government, implementing its manifesto.

This militancy forced the unions involved to act.

Even the RCN, which in the present dispute has argued against any industrial action by the nurses, suggested mass resignations from the National Health Service. Not a very constructive suggestion but it was better than suggesting nothing at all.

The COHSE and NUPE leaders were unwilling to be the first to wreck the newly-conceived Social Contract, yet they supported the nurses' claim.

The second major factor was the involvement of the industrial unions.

'How much is your life worth?', the nurses asked the labour movement, and there was a strong response. The Yorkshire miners set the ball rolling when a ballot vote decided on strike action in support of the nurses.

Nurses approached the most strongly organised sections in their localities and frequently

succeeded in winning workers to take solidarity action with their claim.

Engineering workers, other miners, hospital ancillary and semi-medical workers all took action in support of the nurses' claim.

The nurses themselves took strike action in the form of half day or two hour strikes.

Perhaps the most important tactic that the nurses themselves employed was to refuse to service private patients in NHS hospitals.

This not only helped forward the nurses' own claim but took up the question of cuts in the health service and Labour Party policy on abolishing private beds.

Health Minister Barbara Castle was forced to deal with a major campaign against pay beds as a result of this action.

The nurses clearly saw their own pay claim as part and parcel of moves to a better National Health Service. Again the working class still expected the Labour government to be doing just that.

Finally, the problem of

different policies from the unions involved began to be overcome through setting up joint action committees in many areas.

With representatives from all the unions involved — and seeking to involve other unions prepared to take solidarity action — these committees went a long way towards overcoming the divisions sown by the unions nationally.

1974 showed that the nurses can win their wage demands — and they can do so again. The lessons of how it was done in 1974 can be usefully brought to bear in the present dispute.

The added problem now is that no one believes any longer that Labour will improve the health service. Everyone knows that to expect the Labour government to implement socialist policies is to live in a fool's paradise.

The militancy of 1974 will be found again in this dispute if we can argue that the hopes of 1974 were not irrelevant. What was groundless was to expect the Labour government to do it without its hand being forced.



COHSE nurses picket pay talks

CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION IN NUPE

- * No to Comparability — Unite all sections of the union for the National Minimum Wage and a Common Settlement Date
- * Sack Fisher — for full democratic control over our negotiators and full time officials
- * No to the Concordat
- * Organise for the Annual Conference

SATURDAY 7 APRIL,
CONWAY HALL, RED LION SQ. WC1
1.30-5.00 (Nearest Tube: Holborn)

HOME NEWS

Newcastle local authority workers

Did the strike have to collapse?

LOCAL AUTHORITY strikes in Newcastle were among the most effective in the country.

The majority of schools were closed from the day of action on 22 January until shortly before the unions accepted the national pay offer earlier this month, and refuse collections were halted for the same period.

Could these strikes have been prevented from collapsing?

By Geoff Ryan and Paul Davidson, NUPE stewards, Newcastle local authority branch

The action taken by local authority workers in Newcastle during the public sector dispute was strictly in line with the policy advocated by the union leaders.

It was, in short, local and selective, and it made a sharp impact on services in the city.

NUPE school caretakers and refuse incinerator workers went on strike from 22 January and continued their action until early March, shutting down schools and refuse collections.

Yet only two days after a mass meeting of over 800 local authority workers overwhelmingly rejected the national pay offer on 28 February, the caretakers followed the incinerator workers in voting to return to work.

There were problems from the start. The GMWU refused to call its caretakers on strike, and NUPE instructed its members in schools with GMWU caretakers to work normally.

So although over half the city's 160 schools were shut, only some 90 NUPE members were actually on strike. Many members simply sat at home.

Various attempts were made to overcome these problems. A strike committee, open to all interested members, was set up in the first week of the strike.

A strike bulletin was produced every week and distributed to virtually the entire membership. It contained both local and national reports, as well as general political articles on the dispute.

Many members were seen every week to collect their levies for the strike fund, and those on strike had weekly meetings. Most of these decisions came from resolutions from supporters of the Campaign for Action in NUPE.

Important work was started in the Labour Party. The Newcastle North constituency party passed resolutions demanding that the Labour council meet the £60-35 hour claim.

At short notice, a 150-strong

lobby was organised when Callaghan visited the city.

These were valuable steps, but they weren't up to the task of winning the dispute.

The weekly meetings and strike bulletins were still within the framework of selective, local action — although steps were taken to form a united strike committee with health workers, again on the initiative of CAN supporters.

The crunch in the schools came almost immediately after the 28 February vote to reject the national offer. The Labour council met with headteachers, who agreed to re-open the schools with the full backing of the leadership of the National Union of Teachers.

Pressure for this had come from the Newcastle Parent Teachers Association, which is largely based on middle-class areas in the city. A PTA demo scheduled for 3 March went ahead as a 'victory' celebration.

The GMWU had already accepted an offer from the council to pay each refuse worker £100 for five weeks to clear the huge backlog of garbage.

School caretakers in North Tyneside proposed to return to work on 12 March after the council agreed to consider demands such as security allowances.

Faced with all these pressures, the Newcastle caretakers backed down. With almost no experience of industrial action, there was no way they could win in isolation.

NUPE's strike fund was no doubt better off with school meals staff and cleaners laid off on full pay, but it also meant they played a passive role in the dispute.

Virtually everyone believed that the large majority of these school workers would refuse to strike, because they were women.

And even when almost all the women voted to reject the pay offer, only 11 caretakers were in favour of calling a branch meeting to discuss all-out action.

In a union like NUPE, with two-thirds women members, such reactionary male preju-

dices are disastrous.

In the Newcastle hospitals, women were — and continue to be — in the forefront of most of the action, but because of the section by section tactics of the union leaders, it wasn't possible to generalise this experience.

The only way to have won, as CAN supporters consistently

pointed out, was to have had complete confidence in the members and involved them in the dispute by fighting for all-out action locally and nationally.

These are lessons we are seeking to raise with the hospital ancillaries and nurses who are fighting on.



STRIKING in Newcastle: above, mass meeting of local authority workers; below, ambulance staff on the picket line.



CARDIFF

By Alex Webber
NUPE steward, University Hospital of Wales

THE AREA health authority in South Glamorgan faced NUPE members with an ultimatum. We had to return to normal working by midnight last Thursday, 'or else'. This latter phrase meant a lock-out.

Workers at three hospitals replied to this threat on Friday with a one-day all-out strike. Mass meetings are due to be held at other hospitals this week. Ambulance staff are continuing all-out action, and because they have been locked-out, ambulance crews in several parts of the country are also taking all-out action.

Nurses at the UHW, which is a large teaching hospital, meet today to discuss their pay claim, and we hope to set up an action committee. The Campaign for Action in NUPE is holding a public meeting this evening.

BIRMINGHAM

By Kathy Ambrose
NUPE steward, Selly Oak Hospital

THE NUPE branch's plan to close Birmingham General Hospital with an all-out strike was called off last week after vitriolic attacks in the Birmingham Evening Mail and instructions from COHSE headquarters for its members to cross the picket line.

In the run up to the mass picket, pledges of supporting strike action came from other hospital workers, while industrial unions such as those at Rover, Solihull, promised to send delegations.

Many COHSE members were disgusted at the instruction to scab. NUPE branch secretary Dick Hackett says: 'All membership agreements with COHSE are now torn up, and any approaches for membership of NUPE through the Bridlington agreement will be seen favourably'.

The need to build strong joint shop stewards committees is an obvious step towards unity in the pay campaign.

The NUPE divisional office did precious little to build support for the planned action. Overtime bans and work to rule continue in Birmingham's hospitals, but there is no doubt that closure of the General would have greatly increased the chance of a better offer.

TOWER HAMLETS

By Stewart Madewell
NUPE steward

THE LABOUR council in Tower Hamlets, East London, has some advanced ideas about democracy. It has refused to have a public debate with its manual workers, whose seven-week strike has escalated to all-out action.

It has denied the Tonight TV programme any access to council property. And last week the mayor called in the police to eject strikers from a council meeting when they demanded a local settlement.

Rubbish, which is now heaped across the borough, has become a major battle ground. The council has called in cowboy firms to try to shift the heaps; 24-hour pickets have so far prevented this.

The council's supposed reason for its intransigence is a desire to keep the rates down. A rate of 9 per cent has been fixed, in order to attract commercial property to the borough.

Never mind that what the borough needs is homes, not offices; that having low-paid council workers is only in the bosses' interests, and that the council could cut the rates by refusing to pay the bankers' interest charges.

Support and donations to the Strike Committee, TGWU Offices, West India Dock Road, London E14.

NOTTINGHAM

By Eric Laverick
NUPE steward

THE FIGHT to end low pay will be taken into Nottingham's city centre this Saturday, with a rally called by the trades council, and sponsored by the public sector unions.

There will be a mass leafleting, aimed at winning support for the hospital workers and countering the 'get back to work' message of the media.

The Campaign for Action in NUPE is leafleting hospitals explaining the need for all-out action.

BOLTON

By Chris Jones

ALL-OUT strike action by ancillary workers at Bolton General Hospital began on Monday after an almost unanimous vote. This followed the sacking of NUPE branch secretary Jim Kelly, who has played a leading role in local action over the past weeks.

Victimisation of NUPE activists now seems to be a popular tactic with the employers, as is the introduction of volunteers as strike-breakers.

If the picket at Bolton General fails to persuade volunteers to stay away, maintenance workers will be asked not to cross the picket line, which could bring the hospital to a standstill.

The ancillaries are providing emergency cover, so that cancer, intensive care, and renal dialysis patients are not affected.

CAMDEN

By John Suddaby
NUPE Branch Secretary

LOCAL authority workers in Camden, North London, have coupled their victory in winning £60 and 35 hours with a fight against the TUC-government Concordat.

An amendment to a resolution for NUPE's annual conference, passed by the Camden general branch, calls on the national executive to disassociate the union from the Concordat, and to campaign for its rejection by the Trades Union Congress.

Alan Fisher's support for the Concordat is yet another example of his backing for policies against the interests of NUPE members.

The reference in the Concordat to certain sections not being allowed to strike has major implications for NUPE members, and the suggestion for secret ballots to decide on strike action is entirely against the union's policies.

GARNERS DAY OF ACTION Saturday, 24 March

Support the catering workers' strike that won't go away, and join the battle against the Concordat — Garners strikers are fighting for effective picketing!

Assemble 5pm at Speakers' Corner, Hyde Park, London W2

HOW EFFECTIVE IS THE ANL?

THE anti-fascist mobilisations in Winchester to counter the National Front's campaign in support of Robert Relf have renewed the debate amongst anti-fascist activists over the effectiveness of the Anti Nazi League.

Below we print two letters taking up some of these issues, together with a contribution from the IMG's anti-racist organiser, Rich Palser. Further contributions are welcome.

1. Crisis of leadership

A FEVERISH search through the pages of *Socialist Challenge* (8 March) for information on the NF's demonstration in support of Relf produced one small caption tucked neatly away on the back page, informing us all where to meet and at what time.

It would seem that *Socialist Challenge* now regards anti-fascist mobilisations as being so routine that a mere mention of an assembly point and time to meet will produce *Socialist Challenge* supporters in their hundreds. Unfortunately these hundreds apparently failed to materialise.

Large mobilisations by the NF in the coming months will be a major part of their build-up to the next election. Therefore it is necessary for anti-fascist forces to build the largest possible counter-mobilisations, both to counter racist propaganda and, where necessary, to defend strategic areas (e.g. Brick Lane).

This is obvious. However, no rallying call appeared in the paper. The importance of building the counter-demonstration was not stressed.

While the IMG has consistently opposed state bans and a reliance on the state machine to destroy fascism, its failure to recognise the national importance of Winchester seriously weakened our ability to rectify the confused approach of the ANL, and brought into question the credibility of the IMG in the eyes of many anti-fascist militants.

In failing to play a leading role, the IMG missed an important opportunity to point out a way forward for the anti-fascist movement, including the need for a national ANL conference to discuss our strategy against the NF in the coming elections.

If similar mistakes are to be avoided in future, *Socialist Challenge* and the IMG leadership must pump greater resources into the fight to counter the NF, both to help resolve the crisis of leadership in the ANL and also to recover



'United action requires a political fight with left reformist leaders'

some of the IMG's credibility as a serious force within the anti-fascist movement.

DAVID SMALES,
STEVE FERRIS
(Southampton)

2. ANL has failed to mobilise

WE write this letter in response to the Anti Nazi League's handling of the Robert Relf demo in Winchester on 10 March. As a result of our experiences on that day we feel that there is an urgent need for a re-assessment of the support given to the ANL by both ourselves and the Socialist Workers Party and International Marxist Group.

Winchester has surely served to underline the fact that the ANL has not only failed to mobilise effective opposition to NF marches but has also served to obstruct those who seek to confront racists and not march

off in the opposite direction to the NF.

This has clearly been illustrated by the NF May Day march last year, Brick Lane in September, and now Winchester.

Collaboration with the law has become the prime concern of ANL organisers, whilst the opinions of those who seek effective action are not merely ignored but derided as being 'ultra-leftist', 'class-struggle heroics', or generally disruptive, although they are clearly none of these.

Nowhere was this better illustrated than at Winchester, when those marchers seeking to confront the fascists rather than wander aimlessly around the deserted residential areas of town were denounced by ANL stewards, not least Paul Holborow, and denied access to the PA system and use of the megaphones.

Marchers were encouraged to ignore the sizeable number of dissenters and it was clear that those attempting to make a stand against both fascists and police were to be isolated and abandoned at all costs.

It is our opinion that this attitude is unacceptable as a realistic policy against racism and fascism. In addition, we feel that the problems of accountability and general criticisms of the leadership can no longer be swept under the carpet in the hope that they will eventually sort themselves out.

Winchester this week

By Mike Tucker

THE NATIONAL Front held an overnight vigil on Saturday night outside the jail where Robert Relf is on hunger strike.

This was followed by a demonstration.

A counter demonstration was organised by the ANL and supported by Portsmouth, Brighton, Winchester and Southampton ANLs.

It was also supported by

Consequently, we have decided that we can no longer give our support for those activities dominated by ANL and have cancelled our plans to affiliate to them and withdrawn our delegate from Leicester ANL.

However, whilst none of our members are members of either SWP or IMG, we feel that those who would support ANL as an active, campaigning body against racism and fascism, namely SWP and IMG, must re-consider that support as a matter of urgency.

We call upon both groups to take effective action to remedy the existing situation if, indeed, it is possible at this late stage.

We hope that that consideration will begin by the



publication of this letter, in full, in both *Socialist Worker* and *Socialist Challenge* at the earliest opportunity.

DAVE ROBERTS,
STUART CASHMORE,
COLIN CLEWS,
MICHELE DEWHURST,
PETE COPLEY
[for Leicester Polytechnic Student Campaign Against Racism and Fascism]

Lymington anti-fascist committee and Southampton trades council.

At one stage the NF tried to break through the police cordon to get at the counter demonstrators.

After a rally lasting one and a half hours the police dispersed the ANL by sending in 300 cops. The NF were then allowed to march through Winchester.

3. More to it than labelling the NF

By Rich Palser

WHAT was the purpose of the counter-demonstration at Winchester?

At Lewisham the message was clear to tens of thousands of people. The NF were marching to 'drive the muggers (by which they meant black people) off the streets'.

They were in fact encouraging white racists to terrorise the black people of Lewisham, through their show of force.

Our reply was that it was necessary for the labour movement to act with black people in self-defence — and where necessary to do this ourselves, to drive the fascists off the streets.

Was this the point we needed to make in Winchester? On this occasion the NF were parading as the 'defenders of free speech', the defenders of Relf who 'merely speaks the truth'.

The point we needed to make here was — don't be conned, remember the racist murders, and remember that the labour movement has to defend its democratic rights against the fascists.

Confronting the fascists would only confuse the political point we wanted to make, by giving the impression that we were the ones out to deny people's rights.

We may know that in the last analysis it will prove necessary to suppress the fascists in order to defend the democratic rights of the Labour movement and the oppressed.

But the knowledge of historic

tasks of the working class cannot define immediate tactics, particularly when the mass of workers are not Marxists.

In this regard the Leicester comrades do have an ultra-left position — this can be said while recognising that many of us have made similar mistakes in the past.

So if the tactics of the ANL at Winchester were basically correct, does this mean that all is well with the ANL? No.

There is more to anti-fascist activity than labelling the NF as Nazis and making that label stick. First, there is the need to begin to challenge the racist, chauvinist and sexist ideas dominant in the labour movement by showing how the Nazis are the biggest champions of these ideas.

The ANL must turn itself towards anti-racist activity rather than just responding to the NF.

Another reason for prioritising activity against the fascists is to draw out the threat they represent to democratic rights and the means by which democratic rights must be defended in general.

A campaign against the use of bans on demonstrations, is the first task here. Equally the ANL should be participating in actions against the arbitrary search and arrest under the 'sus' laws, against the denial of democratic rights under the immigration laws.

But the biggest problem facing the ANL is that united action is being seriously hampered by the lack of democratic debate and decision-making nationally within it.

The failure to debate seriously the issues at Winchester with those opposed to the national ANL's tactics threatened the united action on that day.

Another more serious warning should be the absence of any national initiatives around which all ANL groups can organise at present.

Indeed the ANL has no plan of action for countering the NF in the general election — the very purpose for which it was originally set up.

This is particularly disturbing when the lack of democratic decision-making is justified by leading SWP members in the ANL.

At the ANL trade union conference last year, Paul Holborow argued that resolutions would not be taken since the ANL was for 'united action'.

The turn to united action involving the broadest forces possible is welcome. But winning united action requires a political fight with those left reformist leaders who wish to limit the demands and objectives of that united action.

Without democratic debate and decision-making it is not possible to push that united action forward to its limits.

That is why the comrades from Southampton are correct to say that now is the time to fight for an ANL conference — and why the comrades from Leicester Poly are wrong to turn their backs on the ANL.

Militant entertainment tour MARCH

Thur 22 **Sheffield Poly:** Barry Forde Band, Leyton Buzzards, Piranas and local band. Fri 23 **Leeds Poly:** Barry Forde, Leyton Buzzards, Piranas and Sheeny and the Goys. Sat 24 **Middlesbrough Teesside Poly:** Leyton Buzzards, Barry Forde, Piranas and local band. Sun 25 **Lancaster Uni:** Leyton Buzzards, Barry Forde, The Only Ones and Interference. Tue 27 **Edinburgh Clouds:** Stiff Little Fingers, Mekons, 15.16.17 and Carol Grimes. Wed 28 **Stirling Uni:** Stiff Little Fingers, Mekons, 15.16.17 and Carol Grimes. Thur 29 **Aberdeen Music Hall:** Stiff Little Fingers, Mekons, 15.16.17 and Carol Grimes. Fri 30 **Bradford Poly:** Stiff Little Fingers, Mekons, 15.16.17 and local band.

APRIL
Mon 2 **Liverpool Uni:** Angelic Upstarts, Aswad, The Only Ones and Tontrix. Tues 3 **Manchester Poly:** Angelic

Upstarts, Aswad, The Only Ones and Exodus. Wed 4 **Birmingham Regal Cinema:** Angelic Upstarts, Aswad, Crisis and Iganda. Fri 6 **Nottingham Malibu:** Angelic Upstarts, Aswad, Crisis and Slip Hazard. Sat 7 **Cardiff Sophia Gardens:** Angelic Upstarts, Aswad, Crisis and local band. Sun 8 **Llanelli Glen Ballroom:** John Cooper Clarke, Cimmarons, Sunsets and Belt 'n' Braces. Mon 9 **Exeter Routes:** John Cooper Clarke, Cimmarons, Bent 'n' Braces and Fans. Tue 10 **Plymouth Woods:** John Cooper Clarke, Cimmarons, Belt 'n' Braces and My Willie. Wed 11 **Newport Stowaway:** John Cooper Clarke, Cimmarons, UK Subs and local band. Thur 12 **Bristol Uni:** John Cooper Clarke, Cimmarons, UK Subs and X-Certs. Sat 14 **London Ally Pally:** Six bands (details to be confirmed) — tickets £1.95 on the door or £1.70 in advance, only from: Rough Trade (Notting Hill), Honky Tonk Records (Kentish Town), Ace Records (Islington), Small Wonder Records (Walthamstow).

Not quite a cop-out

The Bennett Report



Report of
The Committee of Inquiry

into
Police Interrogation Procedures
In Northern Ireland

THE Bennett Report into 'Police Interrogation Procedures in Northern Ireland' is not really about the latest acknowledged brutalities of the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

Judge Bennett and the other two members of the inquiry may think it is, but on a careful reading it is a clear indictment of everything concerned with the British presence in Ireland.

Interpreted correctly, it is one of the best arguments for immediate British withdrawal to have been published.

By Geoff Bell

The RUC chief constable, Sir Kenneth Newman, somewhat cynically put his finger on Bennett's failures when he was asked at a press conference whether the report's recommendations would ensure that brutality would not occur again.

Replied Newman: 'I find it impossible to give that guarantee.'

And this is not because Bennett attempts some sophisticated whitewash. He admits — or at least heavily hints at — all sorts of 'ill-treatment'.

In paragraphs 180-181 of the report, Bennett lists a series of practices which should be banned.

Clearly the report team would not compile such a list unless it was pretty sure that what it was recommending to be banned was already taking place. Such practices as:

*requiring a prisoner to strip or expose himself or herself';

*requiring a prisoner to adopt or maintain any unnatural or humiliating position';

*requiring a prisoner to carry out unnecessarily and physically exhausting or demanding action';

*the use of obscenities, insults or insulting language';

*the use of threats of physical force';

*the use of threats of sexual assault or misbehaviour'.

How, then, does the Bennett report suggest that a code of conduct outlawing such methods should be enforced? The most headline-capturing suggestion was the use of television cameras in interrogation rooms.

It was suggested to the inquiry team that 'relatives and solicitors should have access to

the screens', but this was rejected because 'such an arrangement could not happily co-exist with the system we have in mind'.

Accordingly the only people permitted to actually watch these screens will be members of the RUC — that is, the 'Divisional Commander or sub-Divisional Commander... senior uniformed officer... up to the level of chief superintendent... assistant chief constables... officers relieving the chief superintendent or superintendent'.

Thus the assumption is that the more senior members of the RUC can be relied upon to protect prisoners from abuse.

The same assumption is present in another of Bennett's recommendations, involving the right of access by solicitors to prisoners after 48 hours. This recommendation, cutting the access period from 72 hours, remains contrary to the Judges Rules as applied in this country.

But the point about the Bennett recommendation is, once again, who will ensure it will be followed? 'The officer in charge' is the reply.

If all this sounds like the old tired formula of the police policing the police, that is not quite the case; or, rather, the Bennett recommendations do not only amount to the RUC policing the RUC.

For instance, in the case of the investigation of complaints against the RUC, there is a recommendation that, 'in the case of every such complaint which has caused public disquiet, or where there is an allegation of serious assault and medical evidence consistent with the complaint, or where the Chief Constable has any other grounds for special disquiet...he should request the chief officer of another police force in the United Kingdom to make available a senior officer to investigate the complaint'.

That recommendation is, in effect, quite a significant indictment of the complaints

investigation procedure of the RUC.

This is hardly surprising, as Bennett notes that not one single member of the RUC has been convicted of any criminal offence as a result of the complaints procedure.

But who exactly is responsible for the existing complaints procedure? On one level Bennett says that it is 'senior officers' of the RUC.

Ultimately, 'We understand that complaints against the RUC are brought to the attention of the Senior Deputy Chief Constable'.

So the fact that no criminal prosecutions have been successful against the RUC is, by Bennett's own evidence, the responsibility of senior, sometimes very senior, officers of the RUC.

These are the self-same officers whom Bennett elsewhere recommends should be entrusted with watching the television screens recording interrogations to ensure that nothing untoward happens.

A further example of such inconsistency concerns the Director of Public Prosecutions, who is largely responsible for deciding whether members of the RUC will be sent for trial.

Bennett recommends that 'all allegations of criminal conduct...should continue to be sent to the Director'.

Yet once more, in his very own report, Bennett implies heavy criticism of the same Director, saying on one occasion that he 'should give fuller explanations' of why he hasn't prosecuted RUC members.

Bennett's contradictions are summed up in one further aspect of his report. He notes



Castlereagh interrogation centre, Belfast

that usually detective sergeants or constables are involved in the interrogation methods he complains of, and the general theme of his recommendation is closer supervision by their superiors.

But where do these junior officers learn their trade? 'From their colleagues... a more experienced officer.'

The Bennett report cannot hide — indeed it doesn't

particularly try to hide — the fact that the abuses complained of cannot have passed unnoticed by those in authority.

Rules, or at least normal practices such as a woman officer being present when the suspect is female, have been broken with abandon.

The most senior officers have seen and ignored the volume of complaints; the state's own

representative — the DPP — has failed to act.

Accordingly, what is indicted in the Bennett report is the entire legal and judicial system operated by Britain in the North of Ireland.

Bennett cannot draw that conclusion. His recommendations will do nothing to change this situation. But the evidence is there all the same.

International Tribunal backers slam Mason

By Steve Potter

TOM Litterick MP, speaking at a press conference following the publication of the Bennett report, called for the resignation of Northern Ireland Secretary Roy Mason.

Litterick made his call at a conference organised by the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland. The Tribunal organisers have just published their own pamphlet summarising 'the case for the prosecution'.

This new pamphlet follows the Tribunal's preliminary hearings on 27/28 January in Paris, at which the distinguished judges found 'that the Tribunal has made out a sufficient case for a thorough investigation of Britain's presence in Ireland and consider it essential that a full hearing...take place'.

At the press conference Tom Litterick was heavily critical of the manner in which Mason had handled both the Bennett report and the attempted smear campaign against Dr Robert Irwin.

Irwin is the police doctor who recently claimed to have

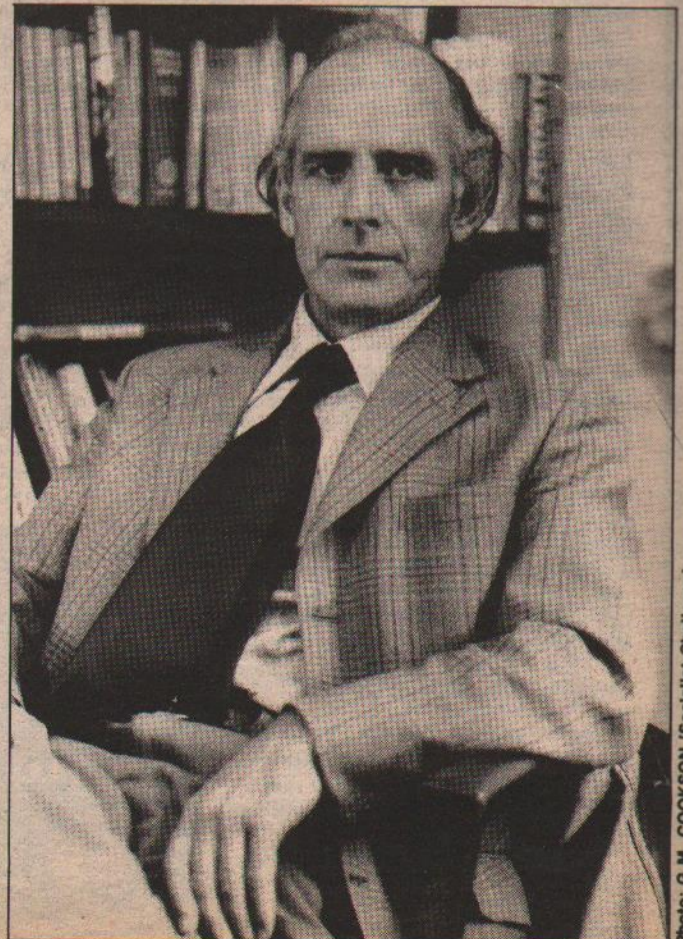
seen 100-150 'maltreated' prisoners in the North of Ireland.

The authorities sought to discredit his evidence by leaking a story that Irwin's wife had been raped by members of the SAS, and that the doctor was 'bitter' because the culprits hadn't been brought to trial.

Litterick also complained that Mason had not released the Bennett report until after his statement in Parliament on it, and that this meant that MPs had little chance to react to the report or to quiz Mason on its implications.

The Tribunal organisers also announced more details of their plans at the press conference. Open hearings will take place on 7/8 July in London and the evidence will be placed before a panel of international judges.

The Planning Committee for the Tribunal is an open, democratic body comprising delegates and observers from sponsoring organisations. It meets regularly on every second Tuesday of the month at 7.30pm at the London School of Economics (Student Union).



TOM LITTERICK, MP

Glasgow protest

DESPITE driving snow, 40 members of Glasgow UTOM took part in a blanket protest and open air meeting in Glasgow city centre last Saturday, St Patrick's Day.

Altogether 2,000 leaflets were handed out, and every copy of *Troops Out* and *Republican News/An Phoblacht* was sold.

The blanket protest, the first to be held in Scotland, followed a series of pickets held on the main army recruitment centre in Glasgow on a Saturday morning. These succeeded in

dissuading a number of unemployed youth from joining the British army.

An open letter is now being circulated amongst prominent trade unionists demanding that the Labour-controlled Strathclyde regional council stop the army from visiting schools in search of new cannon fodder.

On 21 April Glasgow UTOM is holding a demonstration in support of political status and troops out now. It will be the first march since 1971 to go into the city centre, and is being jointly organised with Sinn Fein.



'Fighting' the system and the government that is running it'

BY THE USUAL standards of political behaviour the Edge Hill constituency of Liverpool should be a rock solid Labour seat.

An overwhelmingly working class area, a classic example of inner city decay, a safe Labour constituency for years.

But in the Edge Hill by-election the bookies favour Liberal candidate David Alton to overturn the current Labour majority of 6,171. The Liberals already have control of Liverpool council, including wards in the Edge Hill constituency.

The rise of the Liberals in Liverpool has been explained by countless sociologists, political commentators and 'investigative' journalists. The 'community politics', the 'whizz kid' image and the emphasis on local issues provide the usual explanations.

Liberal candidate Alton maintains this approach: 'Think small' is one of his slogans.

But the Liberals' success in Merseyside is as much to do with Labour's failures as it is to do with their own image.

The final report of the Liverpool Inner Area Study, *Change or Decay*, published 18 months ago, tells part of the story: 'In total the Liverpool Employment Exchange Areas lost more than 50,000 jobs in the decade 1961-1971... there was a net loss of 31,000 manufacturing jobs in the city during the decade...

'Between 1966 and 1971 the number of unskilled manual jobs dropped by 25 per cent, of semi-skilled by 24 per cent, and of personal service jobs by 41 per cent.'

The decline continues. A total of 14,300 people lost their jobs in Merseyside last year. Dunlops, which employs 3,200, has recently announced a total closure. Plesseys in Edge Hill is rumoured to be going the same way and has already announced 800 redundancies. And on 15 March, Akzo Chemie on the Kirkby industrial estate announced closure with the loss of 115 jobs.

The result is a Liverpool unemployment rate of over 12 per cent and an inner city unemployment rate — which includes Edge Hill — of between 25 and 30 per cent.

So it is not surprising that Liverpool voters are not too keen on the Labour Party, particularly when it is the policies of the Labour government which are directly responsible for many

of the recent closures.

For instance, the government has backed and encouraged British Leyland boss Michael Edwardes in forcing through mass redundancies. For Liverpool Edwardes' cuts have brought the loss of 3,250 jobs at Leyland's closed Speke plant, and a further 400 redundancies at Leyland's No. 1 plant.

Just a couple of words from the government in Michael Edwardes' ear would have saved these jobs. Instead Labour defended the sackings.

Coupled with the high unemployment rate are the wretched housing conditions. There are more outside toilets in Edge Hill than anywhere else in the country, and a recent report in Liverpool's *Daily Post* summed up the general housing conditions in the constituency:

'The first thing which strikes you about the area is just how much of it is no longer there. All over the constituency, there are enormous bald patches... Most of the houses are old. Decayed terraces of pitted brick alternate with great tracts of empty space, and the area is riddled with narrow cobbled back alleys.'

But the Liberal Party finds it difficult to argue that Edge Hill's housing is all the fault of national government.

The cuts in public spending, which have been particularly heavy in housing, have had their effect. Yet Liverpool's Liberal council was not

satisfied with the national cuts and implemented some of its own.

A total of £3 million has been cut from the housing budget in the past two years by the Liberals. Consequently there are 50,000 outstanding repairs and 9,000 Liverpool building workers on the dole.

For the Edge Hill voters, the other aspect of the Liberal council's policy — the selling off of council homes — is at best a sick joke. Only 19 per cent of Edge Hill's housing is council owned, compared with 40 per cent in Liverpool as a whole; so even if Edge Hill residents had the money to buy a council home, which most of them don't, they would be hard pressed to buy one in their own area.

All things considered it is, to say the least, rather insensitive of the Liberals to put up David Alton as their Edge Hill candidate. Alton happens to be the chairperson of the council's housing committee.

The social and economic conditions of Liverpool and of Edge Hill in particular say a lot about the policies of Labour and the Liberals.

One further statistic locates the root of the problem: 18p of every £1 Liverpool tenants pay in council rent is spent on repair and maintenance; 65p of every £1 goes on interest payments.

In other words, queues of unemployed might get longer in Edge Hill, the housing conditions might deteriorate, but the banks thrive. Or to put it another way, the banks thrive because of the unemployed and the wretched housing.

Capitalism has long since served its time in Edge Hill.

SOCIALISM IN EDGE HILL

STORY: GEOFF BELL P

SU's alternative

ALAN WALKER is the Socialist Unity candidate in the Edge Hill by-election. He lives in the area and works for Housing Aid.

He is an active trade unionist, chairperson of NALGO housing department stewards committee, trades council delegate, and a former member of the Labour Party. He has been active in the campaign against the sale of council housing.

His boss is David Alton, the Liberal candidate, who presides over some of Britain's worst housing.

Socialist Unity's election address spells out the policies of the socialist alternative.

“ Socialist Unity supports the fight against Labour's incomes policy by workers like those in the public sector. We are for an end to low pay and call for a national minimum wage of £60 per week.

This should also be paid to unemployed, pensioners, single parents, the disabled and the sick. So many people in this area depend on social security benefits which every year are whittled away by inflation.

Wages, benefits and social spending should be defended against inflation. Automatic rises every time the cost of living goes up.

Wage restraint doesn't stop rising prices, it only cuts workers' living standards and boosts profit. We call for an immediate freeze on rents and rates and prices of all essential goods.

*We are against racism and discrimination. Hitler supporters like the National Front should not be allowed to spread their racist poison. We support the right of black and Asian people to defend themselves against racists and police harassment. The immigration laws must be scrapped.

*We support women's liberation, the independent organisation of women and all women fighting for equal pay, equal job opportunities and the right to choose whether they have children or not.

This means free contraception and abortion on demand, free 24-hour nurseries and positive discrimination in favour of women to overcome years of inequality.

There must be an end to violence against women, in or out of the home. We support the setting up of battered women's centres and rape crisis centres.

*Men and women must be free



Hindu centre was recently firebombed and daubed with racist slogans



ST UNITY E HILL

PICTURES: GEOFF CARROLL

Liverpool on the edge of a hill

A PECULIAR sight met the Right Honourable Tony Benn as he approached Newsham Junior School in Boaler Street, Liverpool, on Tuesday.

The cabinet minister had arrived to speak on behalf of Labour candidate Bob Wareing in the Edge Hill by-election campaign.

He had come to tell of Labour's 'achievements' after five years in power. But the sight that met Benn was concerned with something he did not wish to speak about.

There were about 20 people on the demonstration, wearing blankets and holding placards. 'Kick Out the Torturers', 'Free the Prisoners', and 'Troops Out Now' were the slogans. The blankets symbolised the prisoners in H Block, Long Kesh; Britain's policy in Ireland was the subject Benn wanted to evade; Socialist Unity campaigners had organised the protest.

In the wake of the new evidence of torture by the British administration in the North of Ireland, the protest was timely.

But it was also appropriate because both the Labour government and its 'left' representatives like Benn want — at all costs — to avoid the issue of Ireland at Edge Hill, or for that matter in any other election.

And that is one reason why Socialist Unity greeted Benn as they did, and one reason why they are standing in Edge Hill.

Ireland is not the only issue around, and it is by no means the only issue Socialist Unity candidate Alan Walker is campaigning on.

Within the first few days of the campaign Socialist Unity's headquarters at 217 Wavertree Road had printed and dispatched leaflets on why they were standing, on unemployment, on pensioners and on women's rights.

Alan Walker visited a mass meeting of social workers, a conference on youth unemployment, a picket line of

striking ambulance workers.

The necessity for such activity and the importance of Socialist Unity standing in Edge Hill was underlined by two separate occurrences last Friday.

One concerned the publication of a regional redundancy report which showed 14,300 jobs had been lost in Merseyside the previous year; the other was a statement issued by Labour's Bob Wareing.

Wareing proclaimed: 'Despite the tough going of the past five years, the Labour government has stood by its pledges to families, pensioners, the sick, the disabled and others in difficulty.'

Such brazen attempts to defend the indefensible record of Labour might suggest that Wareing is just another run of the mill advocate of the government's right wing policies. But that is not quite the case.

Wareing is trying to put a left face on his electioneering antics. He has attacked the Common Market, saying 'I am not for a Europe of the bankers and the multi-national companies'.

And he has invited, as well as Benn, other 'left' Labourites to speak at his election meetings. These include Eric Heffer and the most pathetic 'left' of them all, Michael Foot.

Socialist Unity's Alan Walker sweeps aside the left credentials Labour's by-election campaign in Edge Hill is trying to claim.

'On those few areas where they do claim to have left wing positions', says Walker, 'they are only paper policies. By contrast we go out and work for striking ambulance workers, for public sector workers.'

'We will do all we can to support all those struggling against the sordid policies of this Labour government. Our Labour opponent publicly defends the government and he invites on to his platform the very people whom the low paid in this country are fighting against.'

There is much more to such remarks than just by-election speech making. Socialist Unity's campaign in Edge Hill is involved with the central argument of how to fight for socialist policies.

For example, when Labour candidate Bob Wareing was chosen a

wild rumour swept the Liverpool left that his election address was going to be written by the left inclined general management committee of Edge Hill's constituency party. A rumour is all it has turned out to be.

The election address is a Transport House production from London and contains none of Wareing's alleged 'socialist' policies.

Whenever, at Wareing's press conferences, the candidate begins to suggest that perhaps the government has not delivered utopia to the working class, a smoothie Labour press agent from London intervenes to shut Wareing up.

As Alan Walker puts it: 'He hasn't even been elected yet, but already he's performing like a typical Callaghan poodle.'

For Socialist Unity, fighting for left-wing policies means supporting campaigns such as the Merseyside Alliance Against Racism, the Anti-Nazi League, the Merseyside Campaign Against Youth Unemployment, the United Troops Out Movement and a local campaign on day-care abortion.

If the by-election campaign helps to promote these causes, Alan Walker will be satisfied, no matter how many votes he gets.

That is not Wareing's approach. Despite the evidence of a considerable racist presence in the constituency — or maybe because of it — Wareing has yet to make any public statement on racism.

'We are for an end to all immigration controls', says Walker. 'We are for black self-defence, and a recent attack on a Hindu centre in the area explains why.'

'But we don't know where Wareing stands on immigration controls and self-defence. It's silence, all along the line.'

Silence is not what's expected when, as part of Labour's campaign, Albert Booth visits Edge Hill on Friday of this week. To send the 'Minister for Unemployment' to Liverpool is just about the most courageous thing Labour will do in this by-election.

But for Merseyside's unemployed it is also the most insulting. 'We won't take that insult lying down', said one Socialist Unity election worker, and much fun is expected at Booth's meeting.

Yet fun is not what the Edge Hill by-election is about. As Socialist Unity's election address puts it, they are for 'the fight against the present system and the government that is running it'.

Alan Walker's campaign in Edge Hill will ensure that this fight will be well and truly joined — up to and beyond polling day on 29 March.

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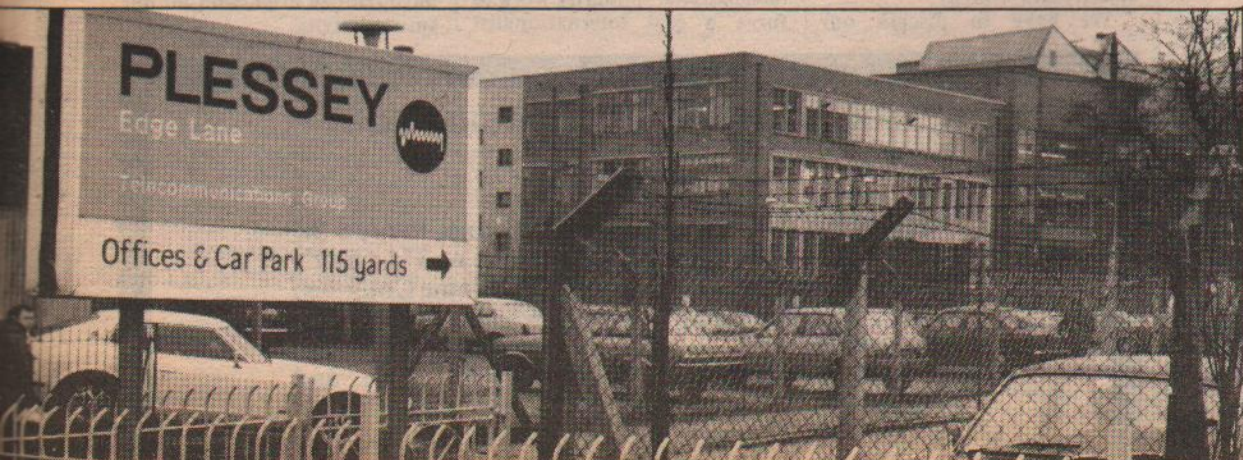
determine their own sexuality. We call for an end to the discrimination against gays.

'Britain's policy of repression and torture in Ireland stands condemned the world over. Socialist Unity believes there can be no peace in Ireland until the troops are withdrawn and the Irish people as a whole have the right to self-determination.'

'Britain must break all imperialist links abroad. The Labour government's support of the Shah of Iran, the mass murderer, was outrageous but typical. In Africa we say that Callaghan and Carter should keep their hands off, and we support the Patriotic guerrillas in their armed struggle against the Ian Smith regime in Zimbabwe.'



ALAN WALKER



Plessey has already announced 800 redundancies.

International Campaign on Abortion Rights

End the age limit on having a choice

A WEST Indian school student, last term, kept her pregnancy secret from everyone. She eventually gave birth at home, alone, while her father was at work. The baby did not survive. She was found out and successfully prosecuted for murder.

*Ten years after the 1967 Abortion Act, young women at school can still talk of friends, if not themselves, who have tried to self-abort. 'They use knitting needles and things — it's not that unusual.'

*Five years after being instructed to provide free contraceptive advice and appliances, the Family Planning Association is rarely used by school students. 'A lot of school students feel that family planning clinics aren't really for them. It's only those with "liberal" parents who know about these things.'

By Barbara, South London Revolution Group and Sarah Roeloffs, National Abortion Campaign

Representatives from Revolution groups all around the country met in Birmingham on Saturday 10 March and discussed the youth contingent on the International Campaign for Abortion Rights demonstration on 31 March.

The meeting decided to support the demonstration and to carry a banner with the slogans 'Free abortion and contraception for youth. Abolish the age of consent.'

Why did we decide to raise this slogan?

It is clear that nowhere in the world do women have the right to fully control their fertility or their sexuality.

Repressive laws make contraception and abortion diffi-

cult to obtain. Even our own 'liberal' law depends upon the goodwill of doctors who can decide it's against their conscience to allow an abortion.

The problems are bad for all women — but for the youth they are ten times worse:

The youth are denied sex education — or receive very inadequate contraceptive advice, because it might encourage 'promiscuity'.

The contraceptive facilities are not geared to our needs — they are off-putting and formal. And doctors often insist on parental consent or knowledge, because women do not reach the 'age of consent' until they are 16.

The discussion led us to one overwhelming conclusion. Abortion and contraception rights were meaningless for the



youth without the abolition of the idea of an 'age of consent'.

We think that it is young people themselves who must decide about their sexuality and not the law or the state.

Until young people have the final word on whether they want a sexual relationship or not any rights regarding contraception and abortion will not be equally applied to them.

We can imagine the gasps of horror from some people. We were a little nervous ourselves to start with.

But how many of those gasps of horror come from people who don't think the youth can decide about anything — sexuality, politics, education, the lot.

And before you start thinking about protection — remember that most repressive legislation has a rationale that it is 'protecting' something. Protecting society from extremists, protecting government from the trade unions, protecting 'normal' people from 'perverts', protecting women from having to work like men, protecting youth from adults — or in this case, from each other.

You see, we don't think that the 'age of consent' protects anyone.

It doesn't protect women from rape. If a rape has taken place then the man is prosecuted under the laws governing sexual assault.

Under the 'age of consent' laws the man has a defence if he can claim he thought the young woman was over 16. And most judges are lenient with men who have sexual relations with women who have reached puberty.

They are not so lenient with male gays, who cannot consent to sexual relationships until they are 21.

These laws are used when there is a consenting relationship. That's almost the rationale for their existence.

If the young women won't get up in court and say she was raped, if she refuses to give any evidence other than that she wanted the relationship, then they say, 'but she's under 16 and couldn't consent'.

Actually, the law is rarely used. Recently, Anderton, Manchester's chief constable, famous for his moral clean-up campaign, has used the law. Against the youth.

A young woman of 14 became pregnant, and had an illegal abortion. She was caught and done for murder. Her lover, a year or two older, was done for 'statutory' rape.

That's what it's called. Why? Because it's not really rape — both male and female wanted the relationship.

If it was rape then it would be a rape case — not a 'statutory rape' case, whatever the age of the people involved.

Of course we think the youth should have much better sex education as well — from the moment that we go to school.

So that the youth can make an informed choice about whether we want to have a sexual relationship or not.

But we won't get that as long as we are told that we can't decide about our sexuality at all.

Lowering the 'age of consent' is no solution either.

We could all argue for hours about what age precisely to lower it to, and even those who say lower it to puberty can't decide when that is.

And lowering it to puberty just emphasises that's when sexuality 'starts'. This helps those people who want to maintain — to women especially — that we can only have sex or sexual feelings once we have started producing eggs and can have babies.

It's just the old stuff of tying women's sexuality to reproduction.

So we say that we'll decide about our sexuality and abolish the age of consent.

The demonstration on the 31 March, has been called to demand the right of women all over the world to control their own fertility. Other demonstrations will be taking place on the same day in other parts of the world.

Revolution will be supporting the demonstration with its own banner. Revolution has also organised a tour of the National Abortion Campaign film **Whose Choice?**, with speakers from NAC and ICAR.

ICAR has produced a youth leaflet for distribution at schools and youth clubs. Transport to the demo (especially youth only buses) is also being organised.

Revolution hopes that the youth contingent will have a big impact on the demonstration with music, banners, placards and streamers.

For details of the film tour contact: Jude on 01-228 2223. For posters, leaflets, badges contact: NAC, 374 Gray's Inn Rd, London. 01-278 0153.

Socialist Feminist national conference

FIFTEEN hundred women are expected at the Socialist Feminist national conference this weekend. These numbers illustrate the strength of the current within the women's liberation movement, which drew three thousand to the national conference last April in Birmingham.

But has the socialist feminist current made a big impact on the activities of the WLM?

Over the last few years the movement has been less active than in the early seventies when women's groups were involved in supporting a whole series of struggles — the nightcleaners,

the miners, the nurses, Trico and Grunwick.

Or when they joined together with other women in nursery campaigns in different localities.

Of course we have been out on the streets, declaring our intention to reclaim the night for women, to protest against harassment and degradation.

But the initiative for these actions originally came from the revolutionary feminist current.

Within the movement we have often been forced to respond to theories put forward by other currents within the movement rather than de-

veloping our own.

This has even been the case in our own journal, *Scarlet Women*, where the editorial collective have found it impossible to gather enough material to produce it regularly.

However, more positively, the discussions and debates going on in socialist feminist groups are very important. The contributions sent in for the conference show the wide range of activity and discussion that individual women have been involved in.

While we haven't been active collectively as socialist feminists, we are involved in our trades unions. We've set up women's groups, re-activated women's rights committees and have built mixed campaigns on certain questions, particularly abortion — as the attendance at the NAC trade union conference last autumn showed.

We have also been active in the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement.

We have taken part in a whole number of activities and discussions around imperialism.

We've discussed how it

affects women, and have taken part in solidarity activity with struggles in Ireland, India, Southern Africa, Latin America and elsewhere.

But the difficulty we have faced is not that no-one wants to do anything but that no-one is sure what socialist feminists in particular should be doing.

This is the problem that this conference will tackle. Through assessing and discussing our activities we will try to draw out some general principles for socialist feminist activity and strategy.

We have to discuss our

failure to respond to the recent public sector struggles, where possibly the largest number of women ever have been involved in industrial action.

We missed a real opportunity to show that the women's movement is committed to furthering the interests of working class women.

We need to discuss how to build on the basis of the International Campaign on Abortion Rights, the Women and Imperialism workshops and the groups taking up international solidarity work to forge a real internationalist

consciousness within the WLM.

And particularly we should work out our role within the women's liberation movement as a whole. How can we ensure that we continue the discussion of different strategies for women's liberation without hampering our ability to act in unity?

We hope that women from many different areas of activity will come to the conference — from the trades unions, the student movement, different left groups — so that we can have fruitful discussion on our future activity.

SOCIALIST FEMINIST CONFERENCE

24-25 March

At Starcross School, Rising Hill Street, Penton St, London N1. Registration Friday night at 374 Gray's Inn Road London WC1. London and Home Counties: waged £3, unwaged £2. Elsewhere: waged £2, unwaged £1.

Social — 24 March, 8pm — with disco and Spoilsports. At Colombo St Community Centre, Colombo St, off Blackfriars Rd. Waterloo tube.

Note change of venue

The politics of Islam

IS THERE such a thing as a progressive religion, one that can take forward a struggle for emancipation? The question must sound strange to any revolutionary socialist. It would not even arise were it not for the resurgence, as a result of the upheaval in Iran, of a dubious identification long upheld by Arab nationalists.

The international left has generally interpreted Islam's ability to mobilise masses as positive in and of itself. In doing so it has disregarded the reactionary dangers of Islamic ideology for the masses and their struggles.

By Majida Salman

Islam differs from most other religions in that it has fulfilled an essentially political function from its very origin. Most of the Koran consists of prescriptions for legal and social behaviour — it is much more a body of law than a body of theology.

In the years immediately following the death of Muhammed in 632 the Koran served as the codification of the legal system of a state power established first in the Arabian peninsula and later over a territory ranging from Spain to India.

From the outset, then, Islam has never played a purely 'religious' role. Its theology has always been identified, in the minds of believers, with the state power itself.

As Hisham Sharabi observed in his *Nationalism and Revolution in the Arab World*, 'it is important to note that the Koran and Muhammed's teachings emphasise external behaviour, the performance of social duty, rather than intention or inner life. Recognising no distinction between the secular and spiritual, Islam transferred to political and social organisation the basically externalistic character of Muslim dogma.'

How can we explain the authority and attraction of 'Islamic values' for the Muslim masses today? Because of its political character, Islam was well-placed to thrust forward the mobilisation of the masses in anti-colonial struggles.

In the Middle East, the desire for an independent state, hallmark of the maturing of newly developing national formations, was permeated by this yearning for a state that would be the property of the 'Islamic people' (ummah).

The weakness of the workers movement was to contribute further to the tendency of the masses to view the national struggle as Islamic.

'It must be noted', the Marxist scholar Maxime Rodinson wrote in the 6 December 1978 issue of the Paris daily *Le Monde*, 'that the masses reinterpreted these ideas in their own way.'

'It so happened that foreign domination was the domination of infidels or of compatriots in the pay of infidels. This fact did not go unnoticed by broad social layers amongst which fidelity to Islam had never been shaken.'

'Experienced and perspicacious leaders could not resist adding this singularly effective element to the national and social factors of mobilisation.'

By its nature, however, this mobilising capacity of Islam can act only within the narrow confines of nationalism, at best. Once nationalist leaderships come to power, the mobilisation of the Islamic masses against the foreign infidel is transformed by the new ruling groups into the mobilisation of these same masses against their infidel compatriots, the misguided co-nationals who have fallen under the domination of other versions of foreign (i.e. non-Islamic) heresy.

In most cases this has meant the workers movement — identified with 'communism' and therefore 'atheism', a foreign, anti-national ideology as deplorable as the previously dominant form of foreign heresy, imperialism.

This has happened in case after case. In Egypt and Syria the working

class has come under physical attack from the Muslim Brotherhood, a proto-fascist grouping based on Islamic obscurantism and funded largely by the governments of Saudi Arabia and Libya. Nasser's anti-communist purges were sold to the masses in the name of Islam.

The Algerian guerillas of the Fifties and Sixties raised the cry of *allahu akbar* (god is most great) in their attacks on the French occupation forces. But the same cry later served as the ideological basis for the counter-revolutionary measures of the Boumedienne government: the sweeping purge of the left, the dismantling of the self-management committees, the 'defence' of the 'Algerian family' (code word for the most extreme forms of the oppression of women).

In Lebanon, the mobilisation against the Phalangists, a political

torture, degenerated — in part

and/or state.

If Islam has been an instrument of counter-revolution in the Arab countries ever since decolonisation, that same risk has arisen all the more rapidly in Iran, for Islam has been the essence and goal preached by Khomeini.

It does not speak well for the analytical clarity of the left that there was — and in some cases still is — great reluctance to recognise this fact.

On more than one occasion Khomeini has declared that his conception of the Islamic republic takes as its model none of the so-called Islamic states in the world today, but the original Islamic state under the rule of the first four caliphs, whose reigns lasted from 632 to 661.

Government, he wrote in his work *Islamic Government* (published in Iraq in 1970 during his exile there), is properly the business of the mullahs (religious leaders), since any

separation whatever between religious institutions and state institutions is itself contrary to Islam.

Hence his opposition to the placing of the adjective 'democratic' before his watchword 'Islamic republic', since democracy — in the literal sense of rule by the people — is a 'European' concept thoroughly alien to Islam.

He has likewise called for the removal of all 'European criteria' from the judicial system. Among such

in all modesty; our women know that their liberation has been defined in the Koran and the struggle against the Western oppressor; it is this that guarantees their happiness.

In fact, it is in regard to practices concerning women that the Muslim states have been strictest in applying the *shari'a*, source of Islamic law. In all Arab states except Lebanon, Islam is inscribed in the constitution as the state religion.

And in most cases, in accordance with Islamic law, it is explicitly stated that every woman, regardless of age, social status, or other factors, is subject to a male 'tutor' — be it her father, husband, brother, or some other relative — who controls all decisions concerning her fate.

Ultimately, this means control over life and death itself. In most states in the Middle East, the 'crime of honour' — the execution by a male family member of an unmarried woman suspected of not being a virgin — is officially considered a case of legitimate self-defence on the part of the man, whose honour has been attacked by the behaviour of the woman.

Any man can divorce at will, but the grounds for divorce at the request of women are so stringent as to be virtually unrealisable. Any man has the absolute right to take his children from their mother once they reach the age of seven (for girls) or nine (for boys).

'Our women are the guarantors and protectors of our Arab-Muslim values.' 'Our socialism rests on the five pillars of Islam and not on the emancipation of women, with their make-up, etc.' Thus the columns of *Moujahid*, official newspaper of the Algerian government.

Here as elsewhere, the measures demanded by Khomeini — universal re-institution of the veil, abolition of co-educational institutions, stoning to death of women convicted of adultery, abolition of a 1975 law restricting polygamy — conform with both the letter of the Koran and the practice of the state of the first four caliphs.

And the women mobilising against the implementation of those measures were denounced by the ayatollah's supporters in the usual terms: whores, American agents, Pahlavi dolls.

Unity of all classes of Muslims against the infidels and their foreign ideologies, of whatever variety; sanctity of private property; opposition to democracy in the sense of popular control over the fundamental decisions of political life; institutionalised male supremacy and the consequent extreme oppression of women — such are the most basic elements of the programme advocated by Khomeini, a programme which is indeed consistent with both the letter and the historical practice of Islam.

One thing should be clear. The fact that Khomeini and his supporters uphold this programme and intend to impose it on Iranian society does not mean that they will be successful in doing so. That depends on many factors, among which mobilisations like those of the thousands of women who have demonstrated in Tehran in the past few days will be decisive.

But let there be no illusion that the ayatollah and his backers have the establishment of some other regime in mind.

It is by no means certain that the Islamic obscurantists will win victory. But to stop them requires that they be recognised for what they are — advocates of counter-revolution — and combated as such.

And that, in turn, requires recognition that their ideology — the return to Islamic values — is an effective weapon against the working class and the aspirations for emancipation of the oppressed layers of society.



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WHAT'S LEFT

5p per word. Display £2 per column inch. Deadline: 3pm Saturday before publication. Payment in advance.

PICKET GARNERS: Main pickets every day, noon to 3pm and 5.30 to 11 pm at 399 Oxford St., London W1 (opp. Selfridges); 243 Oxford St. (Oxford Circus); 40-41 Haymarket; 56 Whitcombe St. (Leicester Sq.). Mass picket every Saturday at noon, 399 Oxford St. Donations urgently needed as strike pay is only £6. All donations to Garners Strike Fund, c/o TGWU, Rm 84, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-240 1056.

FRANK KELLY Defence Fund: Word is Out film benefit. Conversations with 26 gay women and men. 8pm, Sat 24 March, Hemingford Arms, 158 Hemingford Rd, London N1. (Caledonian Rd tube). Adm: £1.

FLEET STREET Branch of the Anti Nazi League — new badge in three colours: Print Workers Against the Nazis/The NF is Bad News. 20p plus s.a.e. Bulk orders — 20 for £3. All money in advance to S Yanowitz, 116 Fortune Green Rd, London NW6.

TWO IMG members desperately need accommodation in Central London from 1 April. Two rooms in shared house? Anything considered. Please ring Sue, Oxford 722371 ex245 (work), 721954 (home).

FRENCH comrade (LCR) looking for double room for 3 months in London area from the beginning of April. Contact Dave 01-229 1750.

KILBURN UTOM will show Home Soldier Home — a film about the British Army in Ireland — on Thurs 29 March, 8pm, Quex Rd Methodist Hall. Discussion afterwards. All welcome.

CARI desperately needs funds. Please send anything you can afford to CARI, c/o Steve Potter, PO Box 50, London N1.

BRITXON RAR club — founding meeting in Brixton at the Right to Work centre, 21 Mayall Rd on Sun 25 March at 3pm.

INTERNATIONAL Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland — Irish night with Belt and Braces and Newtown Neurotics, plus bar and disco. North London Poly, Kentish Town Site, Prince of Wales Rd, London NW5. Fri 23 March, 8pm. Adm: £1 (75p unwaged).

HOUSE to let in North London to 3/4 clean people. 1 year agreement, possible extension. £70 a week (flexible). Phone 01-985 6942.

NATIONAL Campaign Against the Supplementary Benefit Review picket of DHSS HQ, Alexander Fleming House, Elephant and Castle on Monday 26 March, 11am-2pm. Against the proposals to cut and alter supplementary benefits. Please bring banners. Details: Tel: 01-965 2590/580 4576.

LOS OLIMARENOS, Uruguay's leading folk duo, appearing Camden Centre, London, 21 March; Spa Centre, Leamington Spa, 26 March. Booking 01-387 6293 (London), Coventry 70752 (Leamington).

BRITISH Argentina Campaign: meeting to mark three years since vicious right-wing military coup, Monday 26 March, 7pm, Friends Meeting House (small hall), Euston Road (Euston Sq or Euston tube). Labour MP, trade unionist, and Argentinian speakers, plus premiere of new film on Argentina.

MAY DAY GREETINGS: would your trades council, shop stewards committee or trade union branch put its May Day greetings in Socialist Challenge? If so, just send us the name and address of the secretary and we will send details so that it can be raised at the April meeting. Contact D. Weppeler, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP (tel. 01-359 8371).

CHARTIST (incorporating Chartist International) new bi-monthly magazine. First issue contains articles on the Labour Left, Socialist/feminism, Immigration Controls, Bolshevism, Rosa Luxemburg, the Economy, Local Government. Price 35p + 15p p&p. Four issues for £1.50. Also: **Roots of the Middle East Conflict** a collection of articles exploring the origins of the Arab-Israeli conflict. 30p + 10p p&p. Available from Chartist Publications (SC), 60 Loughborough Road, London SW9.

ISABEL Letelier will speak at the premiere of the film **The Dead Are Not Silent** describing the assassination of her husband Orlando. 27 March, 6.45 pm, Sudbury House, St Pauls, London. Adm: £1.50. Tickets from Chile Solidarity Campaign, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7. Also showing Sheffield 28 March, Glasgow 29 March, Edinburgh 30 March. Film only Leeds 15 March.

DESIGNER required to work for Socialist Challenge/FI Litho. Apply in writing to FI Litho, 328/9 Upper St, London N1

INTERNATIONAL

New jewel in the Caribbean

THE only people to mourn the passing of the Gairy regime in Grenada will be the international capitalists.

Sir Eric Gairy may have been presented as a rather comic figure — he is best known internationally for his championship of UFOs — but for the people of Grenada he was no joke.

His Grenada United Labour Party only held power in the 1976 general election because of widespread intimidation and electoral malpractice. The state-controlled media were put at the government's disposal and the opposition excluded.

The movement against the regime, which culminated in a virtual general strike in January 1974, was repressed by Gairy's Mongoose Gang, a private para-police force similar to the Ton Tons Macoutes in Haiti.

In recent weeks the Gairy regime actively helped the management of Barclay's Bank in an attempt to defeat a struggle for union recognition and improved wages and conditions. The social-democratic New Jewel Movement used its parliamentary status to campaign for the workers. The tensions caused by this strike may well have



been an immediate cause of the NJM's seizure of power.

The unpopularity and repressive record of the Gairy regime explains the ease with which the NJM has been able to establish its rule. But it would be well advised to organise new and democratic elections immediately and not to revert to its former alliance with right-wing anti-Gairy forces.

This will be the most effective way of organising popular support against imperialism. Gairy is in New York trying to organise arms and mercenaries to put him back in power. He is allied with the

most reactionary regimes in South America, including the Chilean.

British military expeditions to Anguilla and Belize show that imperialism still thinks that the Caribbean is its back yard and that it is free to re-establish its control as it pleases. Solidarity with the people of Grenada may yet become a priority for the British labour movement.

*Caribbean Labour Solidarity is holding a meeting on Grenada on Sunday 1 April, 11am, Abeng Centre, Brixton.

Argentina—solidarity still needed

By Dave Kellaway
British Argentina Campaign Steering Committee

24 March is the third anniversary of the military coup in Argentina. In November 1975 future coup leader General Videla promised: 'We shall kill as many as necessary to restore order.'

He has been true to his word: a whole generation of trade union and revolutionary militants has been wiped out. In three years at least 8,000 have been killed, between 8,000 and 10,000 remain in prison and a staggering 25,000 have 'disappeared' — kidnapped by right-wing terrorists and now either dead or held in secret government camps.

This is not just the work of a few demented generals but has had the backing of imperialism.

integral part of the world workers movement, solidarity with Argentina remains at a much lower level.

The Argentinian military took power against a corrupt Peronist government which was already repressing the working class and massacring revolutionaries. The rise in working class struggle had already exhausted itself and many revolutionaries had turned away from the working class movement to build 'popular armies'.

When the coup came some trade union leaders actually supported it. The Communist Party too supported Videla in order to stop an Argentinian 'Pinochet'.

These peculiarities meant that the world workers' movement didn't automatically respond. This attitude was

resistance in Argentina, fight for the isolation of the regime in every field and prioritise the defence of democratic rights.

The conference also recognised that the campaign would not be built by the simple growth of BAC committees, but by local Latin American and Chile committees and other local labour movement bodies affiliating to the national campaign.

Support is growing. We now have about 165 adoptions of political prisoners by labour movement organisations and fairly regular invitations to speak at trades councils and student unions. We feel that there is enough potential for a large labour movement solidarity conference later this year.

On 22 March a delegation from the campaign will be visiting the Argentinian embassy. It will be composed of the MPs Joan Maynard, Norman Buchan and Tom Litterick, Lord Avebury, a member of the executive of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation, and the National Union of Students.

They will present a petition on democratic rights and will be pushing for our adopted prisoners to be released. Among others the petition has been signed by the general secretaries of all the unions on the TUC general council.

On 26 March at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London, there will be a public meeting featuring the premiere of a new film on repression in Argentina called **The Triple A ARE the Armed Forces**.

The film can be hired for local meetings from The Other Cinema, 12 Little Newport Street, London WC2.

BAC can be contacted at 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1.



Night life in Buenos Aires

Ford took out full page adverts welcoming the order and stability that Videla had brought.

Argentina was part of a strategy begun with the Brazil coup in 1964 and carried on relentlessly in Bolivia, Uruguay and Chile.

There isn't much to choose between these regimes for sheer brutality, but it is an uncomfortable fact that whereas solidarity with Chile is an

actively encouraged by the Soviet Union, which has continually traded with and granted financial aid to the Videla regime.

In Britain the interest in solidarity provoked by the World Cup has been sustained by the efforts of the British Argentina Campaign. The BAC held its first conference last December, where it agreed to give general support to the



Argentinian generals Menendez and Bussi during an operation

Chile conferences

STEWARDS from Merseyside docks and Rolls Royce Scotland will be addressing over 100 delegates to the Chile Solidarity Campaign Trade Union conference at the NUR's London headquarters this Saturday.

The delegates, many of whom will stay on for the campaign's Annual General Meeting the following day, will also hear representatives of the NUM, NATSOPA, CPSA, NALGO and the Chilean CUT.

Prominent on the agenda of both meetings will be discussions on trade union boycotts, on direct links with Chilean trade unionists and with the resistance in general, and on the Labour government's record and policy on Chile.

The AGM will discuss resolutions on extending the work of campaign activists to other Latin American countries, including those like Argentina where there is very severe repression and a pressing

need for energetic defence to win prisoner releases.

It will also discuss resolutions, including one from the International Marxist Group, dealing with the educational and information role of the campaign, arguing for it to ensure that the labour movement is kept in touch with developments in Chile, and informed of the full range of opinions and activities now developing in the Chilean resistance — many of which are highly critical of the Popular Unity government's record and are moving towards a revolutionary alternative.

During the following week there is to be a tour by Isabel Letelier, widow of Allende's Defence Minister Orlando Letelier, assassinated in the USA by agents of the Chilean junta.

Details of the AGM, Trade Union Conference, and tour appear in the 'What's Left' column.

Intercontinental Press

combined with **Inprecor**
THE latest issue of Intercontinental Press/Inprecor (Vol 17, No 10) includes an 'Appeal to Society' by the Polish oppositionists of the Committee for Social Self-Defence/Committee to Defend the Workers (KSS/KOR).

Single copies are 30p. Subscriptions are £9 for one year, £5 for six months or £2.50 for an introductory offer of 10 issues. Write now to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to Intercontinental Press/Inprecor.

South African tour

REPRESENTATIVES of southern African trade unions and liberation movements will be speaking at factory and public meetings sponsored by the North West TUC and Lancashire Association of Trades Councils over the next three weeks.

The tour is an example of fruitful co-operation between trade unionists and anti-apartheid activists in the North West.

The speakers represent the South African Congress of Trade Unions, Zimbabwe African National Union, Zimbabwe People's Union and

South West African People's Organisation. There will also be trade union speakers from companies dealing with South Africa.

The dates for the tour are as follows:

29 March, 7.30pm, Basement Theatre, Manchester. 31 March, Blackpool for APEX conference. 2 April GEC Traction Preston and Trafford Park shop stewards meeting. 3 April, Tameside Trades Council. 6 April, Accrington Trades Council. 7 April, Blackburn Action Against Racism and Blackburn Trades Council. 8 April Preston Trades Council, Preston Poly Students Union at 7pm. 10 April, Liverpool, AUEW Hall, Mountpleasant Street. 12 April, St Helens Trades Council. 14 April, LPYS conference, Blackpool.

Einstein the Revolutionary

THE DISSOLUTION of the Newtonian world-view, which started around the middle of the 19th century and accelerated towards its end, had left physics stranded in a series of disconnected and apparently contradictory theories of the nature of the physical world which we inhabit.

Einstein was the great innovator and synthesiser who, more than anybody else, helped the process of the integration of these theories into a new science that today stretches from the elementary particles of matter to the birth and construction of the universe. He thus did for modern science what Galileo and Newton had done for the whole preceding period.

Moreover, this was not simply a 'theoretical' achievement: Einstein's discoveries opened the door to an avalanche of new ideas which are already transforming the productive forces at our disposal.

Genetic engineering and computers, laser technology and superconductivity, nuclear power and solar cells, television and plastics technology — all these in one way or another trace their lineage to Einstein's scientific work.

It is no wonder, therefore, that the whole world has been joining in the celebration of the centenary of his birth. The Americans have launched a satellite named after him, to monitor and record X-ray radiation from outer space. Proud of his US citizenship, they are erecting statues and printing commemorative stamps.

Will they mention his horror on hearing the news of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Guilt for the role he played in the production of the American A-bomb haunted Einstein for the rest of his life.

The Chinese are now publishing a two-volume collection of his work. Like the Russians, they have no doubt conveniently forgotten that Einstein's theories were not so long ago being proclaimed a product of bourgeois decadence.

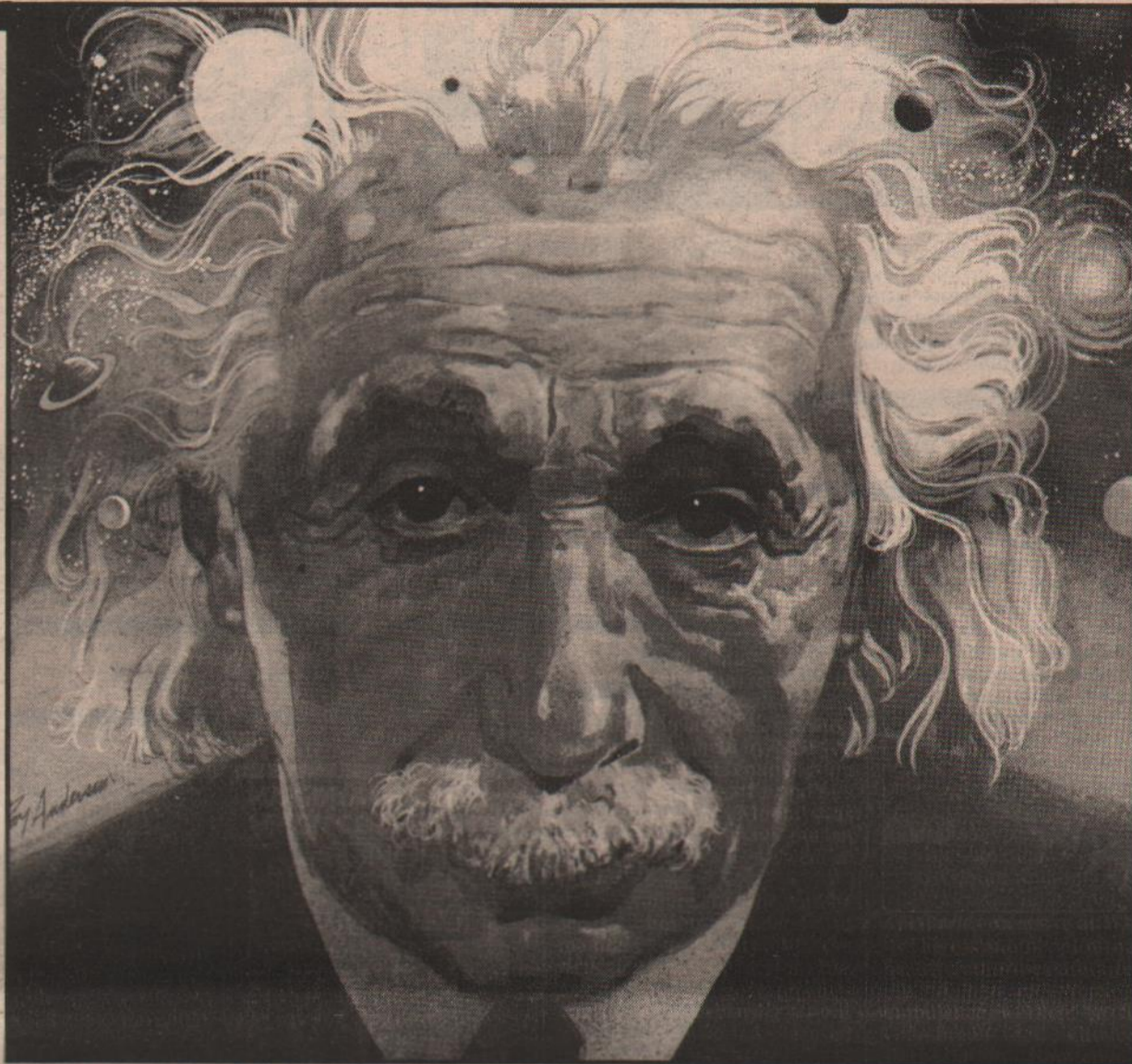
The West German authorities are issuing their own stamps, and tidying up the streets and houses in Ulm in preparation for the pilgrims who will be visiting the new shrine. Will they mention that the Nazis called the theory of relativity a Jewish science designed to corrupt the Aryan mind? Hardly. All is forgotten in the current atmosphere of festivity.

But there is a powerful additional reason why Einstein is being given this very special hero treatment today. His *magnum opus*, the General Theory of Relativity, which for the first half century of its existence occupied a kind of intellectual limbo, is now staging a magnificent comeback.

Its difficult mathematics, coupled with even greater difficulties in testing its premises, formerly made it the province of only a handful of scientists, so that until even a few years ago the General Theory commanded only a dozen or so scientific papers a year. This number has now risen to some six or seven hundred!

Helped by powerful and sophisticated technology — such as giant radio antennae, orbiting satellites, atomic clocks, inter-solar navigation and, last but not least, computers — experimental confirmation and further corroboration is coming through thick and fast, such as the discovery of quasars and pulsars, interstellar radiation, and black holes. It is really only today that the world is becoming aware of the full import of Einstein's scientific heritage.

When Einstein was a student Newtonian physics was lying in fragments. Out of these a new, awesome and above all contradictory picture of the physical world was emerging.



By Branka Magaš

Albert Einstein, who was born 100 years ago last week in Ulm, in what is now West Germany, revolutionised our notion of space and time within just a decade and a half at the beginning of this century.

He founded a novel and astonishing theory of the universe and its formation; proclaimed the identity of energy and matter; helped to establish quantum mechanics; made a decisive contribution to solid-state physics — and much else besides.

Matter was decidedly atomic and obeyed Newton's laws; yet electromagnetic radiation — which includes light — followed quite different mechanical laws, those of Maxwell, which proclaimed it a wave phenomenon.

Atoms themselves turned out to have been mis-named: rather than being the smallest particles of matter, they were found to have a complex internal structure, which obeyed yet another set of mechanical laws (later known as quantum mechanics).

Atomic fission was discovered, and this raised again the idea of transmutation of matter. In addition, the work of Max Planck indicated that light was emitted in discrete packets (quanta) and not continuously as demanded by Maxwell's wave theory; this implied that light at its origin obeyed quite different rules from the same light some distance from its source.

The decisive blow came from the experiments of Michelson and Morley, and the theoretical follow-up by Fitzgerald and Lorenz; these showed that light travelled at a constant speed in space, that moving bodies contracted in the direction of motion, and that moving clocks slowed down.

Since the laws which govern motion — that is the relationship between matter, space and time — are at the very centre of any physical system, these discoveries destroyed the foundation of Newtonian mechanics, and thereby of Newtonian

physics as well. Such then, at the turn of the century, was Einstein's conjuncture.

In 1905 — the year of the Soviets in Petrograd — the 26-year-old Einstein published three papers in the German scientific journal *Der Annalen der Physik*. These three together announced the beginning of a new synthesis of physics, a synthesis on which Einstein continued to work until his death in 1955.

Thus the grand design of a new physics came from an obscure young scientist working at the Swiss Patent Office in Bern. Like Copernicus 350 years before, Einstein began the re-arrangement of the universe from the very fringes of established science.

And just as in 1666, in rural Lancashire, the equally young Newton laid the foundation of classical science with his theories of light and gravitation, so two and a half centuries later Einstein was to construct the new science precisely by re-thinking the nature of light and gravity.

In his first paper, Einstein tackled Brownian motion — the apparently random motion of liquid molecules — in a way that reconciled two key areas of classical physics: thermodynamics and the molecular theory of heat. His second paper dealt with the emission of electrons from illuminated metallic surfaces (the photo-electric effect); reviving the thoroughly discredited corpuscular theory of light, Einstein explained the phenomenon in terms of light

particles knocking electrons from the surface of the metal.

This theory won Einstein his Nobel prize nine years later, since it was in fact a vital step towards the theory of particle/wave duality of matter which is the cornerstone of quantum mechanics.

As it happened, Einstein never received a Nobel prize for his greatest single contribution, his theory of relativity, which was inaugurated in the third paper he published that year.

The Special Theory of Relativity — as it was subsequently called — started by dismissing ether (a postulated but undetected carrier of electromagnetic radiation) from the universe. It went on to proclaim the constancy of the speed of light in free space, irrespective of the speed of its course.

The speed of light became the ultimate barrier which no body can go beyond, since the faster a body moves the heavier it becomes. In this way, time and space were tied into an indissoluble unity, whose behaviour is conditional upon the observer's frame of reference.

A new mechanics was thus born. The famous equation $E=mc^2$ also made its first appearance in this paper: when fully articulated two years later, it proclaimed the equivalence of matter and energy. With the clue to the energy of the universe discovered, the atomic age had truly begun.

In 1916 Einstein incorporated the Special Theory into the General

Theory of Relativity, which replaced the cold and harmonious Newtonian universe with an unstable space-time continuum dominated by matter. Euclidean three-dimensional space was replaced by the curved four-dimensional space of Riemannian geometry.

Only in the small regions of this universe, small enough to appear flat, does Newtonian mechanics still apply. Far from matter being an accidental creation in otherwise empty space and time, Einstein showed that it was matter which created time and space. As he used to put it himself, God had no choice about how to construct the universe.

While in the Special Theory it is the behaviour of light which links space and time, in General Relativity it is the particular behaviour of matter. Matter curves the surrounding space-time by means of gravitational force, and when agitated causes this warped continuum to ripple with gravitational waves.

But the gravitational force is relatively weak, so that only very violent disturbance of a large quantity of matter can produce waves sufficiently strong to be detected by existing instruments. By a happy coincidence, it was this year that the gravitational waves postulated by Einstein in 1916 were detected for the first time — even if only indirectly.

The General Theory of Relativity is the theory of how the universe is; it therefore also indicates how it came to be. It supports the view that the universe came into existence with a big explosion of some primeval 'atom' of matter about twenty billion years ago, and that it has been expanding ever since. Indeed, the echo of the original bang can perhaps still be heard in the weak but universally present background radiation that arrives from outer space.

With the help of atomic physics, the theory can lay out the likely sequence of events which led to the construction of the universe of today. However, it must then also explain the historic and actual relationship of the basic forces that hold the world together, since these must have been created from a common original force in the process of evolution of the universe.

Science has made considerable ground in this direction, reducing all natural forces to four fundamental ones: the weak force, which governs the interplay of elementary particles; the strong or nuclear force, which binds the nuclei of atoms together and is responsible for the release of energy from the sun; the electromagnetic force, which creates the atoms and molecules of which the familiar world is made; and the gravitational force which holds the universe together.

It was Einstein's lifelong ambition to integrate the laws governing the behaviour of these four forces into a single 'unified field' theory. This he failed to accomplish.

Nevertheless, there is a striking similarity between Maxwell's equations for the electromagnetic force and Einstein's gravitational field equations (though the latter are far more complicated). It also now appears that the weak and electromagnetic forces can be united in an experimentally demonstrable fashion.

There is still a long way to go before the quantum physics of the subatomic level can be fused with the continuous equations of Einsteinian space-time.

Here the study of black holes may provide the necessary break, since these greedy monsters of outer space are centres of extremely strong gravitational force which, because of their small size, must also be commanded by the laws of quantum mechanics.

At the present rate of scientific progress, perhaps Einstein's dreamed-of unification is not all that far away.

LETTERS

Camden — a special case?

CHRIS Adamson (8 March) talks of 'fairly left-wing full-time officials recruited from universities and colleges' without saying whether he is of that category, presumably because it is a useless and meaningless description of his previous fellow-workers.

As a Communist full-time official of NUPE who was not recruited from a university or college, I reject his statement that 'a fair number of people who belong to a left-wing organisation and work for a union may be good industrial militants, but are not particularly useful political cadres'. I believe that Chris is generalising too much from his own experiences and method of operating.

However, I would like to deal with the question of the Camden settlement and join with the other criticisms of your reporting. Whilst socialist newspapers may feel the need to propagandise rather than educate, it becomes very dangerous if facts are hidden in order to justify a certain political position.

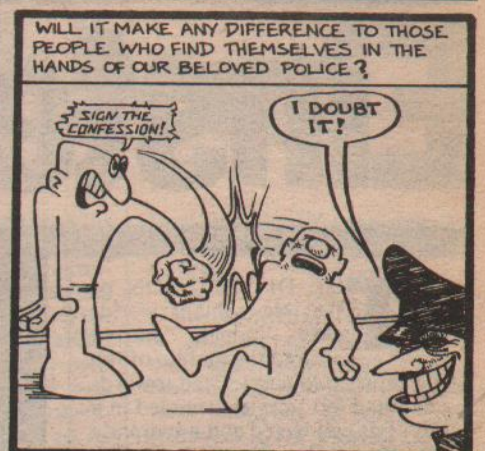
I believe the Camden settlement is a very important and useful propaganda weapon in the public services wage negotiations. It is, however, harmful and incorrect to draw the conclusion that all we needed to do in other local authorities or nationally was to adopt the same strategy as NUPE members in Camden to secure victory.

Tower Hamlets local authority manual workers have been, and are remaining, on all-out strike action from the beginning of the dispute, before Camden, and have not yet secured a local settlement. The same is true of Hackney council manual workers, who have been on strike since 22 January.

What pearls of wisdom do we have from you about their inability so far to secure a local settlement? Does it not suggest that the Camden settlement was not based on industrial strength, but political and historical circumstances?

The London Borough of Camden has been an unusual employer for many years. It implemented full equal pay for women manual workers contrary to a national agreement which provided for a five year phasing. In 1974 it implemented a 37½-hour week for manual workers in contradiction to the national agreement of a 40-hour week, and agreed in principle at that time to a 35-hour week.

Its political example has been very helpful in getting some local authority manual workers to take industrial action of a stronger nature or longer



duration. But it doesn't prove that all-out strike action would have achieved a satisfactory settlement in one or all other local authorities.

JIM CORNELIUS (in personal capacity) (London SE4)

'Gang of Four' view

WHILE being an old-time 'Gang of Four' Maoist with no sympathy for the current political leadership in China today, I feel compelled to defend the Chinese against some of Tariq Ali's more outrageous remarks (11 January and 22 February) on the political/military struggles concerning China, Vietnam, and Kampuchea.

Tariq argues that the Chinese invasion of Vietnam is a crime against socialism. On the other hand, for those of us who jump to the conclusion 'What about the Vietnamese invasion of Kampuchea?', Tariq covers his tracks by saying that there is no comparison between the Chinese invasion and Vietnamese 'intervention'.

'It would have been much better', Tariq tells us, 'if the Kampuchean people themselves had been able to remove Pol Pot and his cohorts. In the event they could not do so without Vietnamese help.'

Very significant help indeed, approximately 100,000 troops. Nevertheless this 'intervention' was progressive according to Tariq, so my qualms about Kampuchea's right to self-determination are groundless fears.

Tariq calls on the Vietnamese to withdraw now that their job of work is done. Well, why don't they? Could it be that the Kampuchean United Front for National Salvation wouldn't last five minutes without Vietnamese guns to back it up? Could it be that the Vietnamese want Kampuchea for themselves?

Tariq castigated the Chinese (11 January) for not extending their

solidarity to the Khmer Rouge beyond 'brave words'. Now they have done so, Tariq gets all hot under the collar.

However, the hardest thing for me to understand is how, when the Vietnamese have 40,000 troops in Laos coupled with 100,000 in Kampuchea, Tariq can completely ignore the growth of Vietnamese expansionism in Indochina. It seems that Tariq is blind to Vietnamese intentions and only sees red when the Chinese decide to give the Vietnamese a kick up the arse for their un-socialist expansionism.

RON SKINNER (London NW6)

Art crisis

I THOUGHT Peter Fuller's article on fine art (1 March) was misleading in its implication that there is a recent crisis in 'modernism'. It seems to ignore important points about art and its practice which have been debated within Marxist aesthetics for years.

Of course any 'crisis' must be related to the appropriation of art as commodity within capitalism, but I don't think it helps to discuss 19th century realism, or 'philistinism'; and to dismiss statements and currents within the fine arts as 'madness' displays nothing but the moral outrage of the bourgeois critic.

Manzoni sold shit to the bourgeoisie as 'art', Yves Klein managed to extract money from financiers for his 'concepts' — these statements are threatening to the bourgeois definition of art, but can easily be accommodated and defused within the capitalist art world.

For revolutionary socialists (and Carl André of the Tate bricks is a confessed Marxist!) the most important question in terms of praxis seems to be not whether 'modernism has become indefensible' (when/how was it defensible? — when did this happen? — avant garde and modernist gestures have always been condemned by the popular press), but

how does one contradict a ruling ideology within the terms it imposes?

Is there an autonomous working class culture? Does it reflect the demands of the working class within capitalism? What is important is the redundancy of statements of rebellion against a culture and ideology from within its own limits; the realisation that the isolated gesturing of the avant garde — statements from a 'socially inactive sector' — can have no real impact as long as it is not articulated within the demands of the exploited class for socialism.

KEVIN HALLIWELL (Herne Bay)

Kick out the right!

I AM writing to express concern about the timidity of Socialist Challenge's central political thrust throughout this extraordinary winter of wage struggles. This can be summed up as calls for the recall of the TUC and Labour Party conferences.

Recalled conferences may have their place, but only as part of a more urgent and audacious counter-offensive. As it is, in the best of circumstances, such conferences would only reiterate past policy and the government would ignore them as blithely as it has in the past.

Socialist Challenge has supported all workers who have struck for higher wages than those offered through the incomes policy.

These workers have different political affiliations, though in their majority they (a) belong to trade unions, (b) would vote, grudgingly, for Labour. But in their recent activity they have been fighting this Labour government and those in the trade unions who support its policies.

Objectively, a divide has opened up within the labour movement. Our job is to do everything to deepen this divide, to isolate the government and its supporters. For the working class

the fight has to be to throw the right wing out of the Labour Party and to demote all officials in the unions who have gone along with the government in the present wages round.

Such a fight now, starting from the real needs of the working class, basing itself on its recent and present willingness to struggle for some of those needs, would most uncomfortably limit the room for manoeuvre of the 'lefts'. For, as they uneasily look over their shoulders, they will see the makings of a movement which, who knows, could oust them as well if they compromise with the right.

JOHN WEAL (London N6)

Police ban

Hands Off Ireland!, the quarterly anti-imperialist bulletin which is sold to British workers, has been banned by the police in four towns in South-west England and South Wales. Over the past few weeks the police in Bristol, Bath, Newport and Cardiff have told sellers of **Hands Off Ireland!** that they must stop or be arrested. Only **Hands Off Ireland!** has been singled out for this treatment — other left-wing paper sellers have been left untouched.

Hands Off Ireland! has always taken the side of the Irish people against the British state. It has always exposed the torture of the British state. It has always tried to tell British workers the truth about British imperialism's rule in Ireland.

The banning of **Hands Off Ireland!** is yet another blatant case of the forces of the British state trying to cover up their oppression of the Six Counties. No socialist can allow the British state to get away with this. We intend to mount a campaign against this harassment. We are sure your readers will support us in this campaign to restore our right to sell **Hands Off Ireland!** in these four towns and any others, and we ask you to print this letter.

PAUL WILSON (Bristol RCG)

SOCIALIST CHALLENGE EVENTS

THE DEADLINE for this column is midday on the Saturday before publication.

NORTH WEST

WARRINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets regularly. Ring Manchester Socialist Challenge offices for details. 061-236 2352.

GREATER MANCHESTER Socialist Challenge. School students who support the paper and would like to get involved in anti-fascist activity, please contact Chris (273 5947, day) or Steve (228 4287, evening), or write to Manchester SC Centre, 14 Piccadilly.

SALFORD Socialist Challenge supporters can be contacted at the Manchester Socialist Challenge Centre c/o 14 Piccadilly, Manchester with a view to forming a Salford SC group.

OLDHAM Socialist Challenge group meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month. Future meetings on: Culture and Society, the Labour Party, Socialist Unity. For details phone 061-236 2352 or write to Manchester SC Centre, 14 Piccadilly. Paper sales every Saturday 11-1 outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street.

MOSS SIDE Socialist Challenge supporters sell the paper at Moss Side Centre, Saturday, 11-1.

NORTH EAST

NEWCASTLE Socialist Challenge local supporters are active! If you want to join them, phone Pete on (0632) 29057.

DURHAM Socialist Challenge Supporters Group. For details contact: Dave Brown, 2 Pioneer Cottages, Low Pitlington, Durham.

MIDDLESBROUGH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturday lunchtime near the lottery stand at Cleveland Centre. Also available from Newsfare in Linthorpe Road.

MIDDLESBROUGH Socialist Challenge meeting: 'The role of trades councils in the labour movement', with speaker from local trades council. Thur 22 March, 8pm, AUEW Hall.

STOCKTON-ON-TEES readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Green Books, upstairs in the Spencer Hall shopping centre.

SCOTLAND

For information about the paper or its supporters' activities throughout Scotland please contact Socialist Challenge Books, 64 Queen St, Glasgow. Open Wed, Thurs, Fri and Sat afternoons. Phone for alternative arrangement (221 7481). Wide range of Fourth International publications.

EDINBURGH Socialist Challenge supporters group meets regularly. Phone George at 031-346 0466 for details.

DUNDEE Information about Socialist Challenge activities from 64 Queen St.

Glasgow. Join in SC sales outside Boots (corner of Reform St) each Saturday 11am-2pm.

HAMILTON supporters sell Socialist Challenge every Saturday in the Hamilton shopping centre, 1-5pm. For details of local activities contact John Ford, 553 Elliot Crescent, Hamilton.

ABERDEEN Socialist Challenge meeting: 'Population control and the Third World', Wed 4 April, 7.30pm, Aberdeen Trades Council, Adelphi (off Union Street).

YORKSHIRE

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge sales regularly/Saturdays 11am-1pm in the Piazza.

HUDDERSFIELD Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at the Friendly & Trades Club, Northumberland St, 1 March: speaker on Eastern Europe.

DEWSBURY Socialist Challenge sales regularly on Saturday mornings in Westgate at the Nat. Westminster Bank, 12.30-2.00pm.

YORK Socialist Challenge is on sale at the York Community Bookshop, 73 Walmgate or from sellers on Thursdays (12.30-1.45) at York University, Vanbrugh College; Saturdays (11.30-3.30) at Coney Street.

LEEDS Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday at City Centre Precinct, 11am-1.30pm. And at Elland Road — when Leeds Utd are playing at home!

MIDLANDS

COVENTRY Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Tuesdays at 8pm

in the Wedge cafe/bookshop, High St. **NOTTINGHAM** readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly at Mushroom Books, Heathcote St.

LEAMINGTON Socialist Challenge group meets every other Sunday. Contact 311772.

COVENTRY Socialist Challenge group: 'Report from Tehran', with Brian Grogan. 7.30pm, Wed 28 March, Elastic Inn, Cox Street.

SOUTH WEST

BATH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 2-3.30pm, outside Macfisheries. Ring Bath 20298 for further details.

SOUTHAMPTON Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday from 10am-1pm above bar, Post Office, Bargate.

ISLE OF WIGHT readers can buy Socialist Challenge from the Oz Shop, 44 Union St, Ryde.

PORTSMOUTH Socialist Challenge sales, Saturdays, 11.30pm-1pm, Commercial Road Precinct.

SWINDON supporters sell Socialist Challenge 11am-1pm Saturdays, Regent St (Brunel Centre).

FOR INFORMATION on activities in the South-West, write to Box 002, c/o Fullmarks, 110 Cheltenham Road, Bristol 6.

BRISTOL Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm in the 'Hole in the Ground', Haymarket.

SOUTH EAST

NORWICH Socialist Challenge sales every Saturday in Davey Place (opp.

market) and bookstall Thursdays at University of East Anglia.

BRIGHTON SC forums fortnightly on Tuesdays. Contact Micky on 605052 for details.

COLCHESTER Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly. For details phone Steve on Wivenhoe 2949.

LONDON

SW LONDON sales every Saturday, 11am-1pm, at Clapham Junction (Northcote Rd), Brixton tube, Clapham Common tube, Balham tube. Also on bookstalls outside Oval tube, Herne Hill BR.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge supporters sell every weekend: Saturdays meet 10.30am, Whitechapel tube; Sundays meet 10am, Brick Lane (corner of Buxton St).

WALTHAM FOREST paper sales every Saturday, 11am-noon outside the post office, Hoe St, Walthamstow, London E17.

TOWER HAMLETS Socialist Challenge Group meets every fortnight (phone 247 2717 for details). **BRENT** supporters sell every Saturday, 2.30pm, at Kilburn Sq., Kilburn High Rd, London NW6.

PADDINGTON/N. Kensington Socialist Challenge group meeting: 'The international struggle for women's rights', with speaker Toni Gorton (ICAR and LARC). Wed 28 March, 8pm, in meeting room of the 'Tabernacle', Talbot Rd. (Powis Sq.), W11.

BRENT Socialist Challenge open forums: first Thursday of every month at Anson Hall (Kent Room), Chichele

Road, NW2, 7.30pm. Everyone welcome.

BRENT Socialist Challenge open forums are held on the first Tuesday of every month at York Room, Anson Hall, Chichele Road, NW2, 7.30pm. Everyone welcome. Next meeting, 3 April: Clive Turnbull on the situation in China and Vietnam.

HACKNEY supporters sell every Saturday, 12-2pm, in Kingsland High St, Dalston — meet outside Sainsbury's.

HARINGEY Paper sales at Finsbury Park and Seven Sisters tubes. Thurs evenings, Muswell Hill and Crouch End Broadways. Saturday morning. Also available at Muswell Hill Bookshop, Muswell Hill Broadway; Vares newsagent, Middle Lane, N8; and Bookmarks, Finsbury Park.

HACKNEY Socialist Challenge group meets fortnightly on Thursdays at 7.30pm in the Britannia pub, Mare Street, E8. 29 March: 'The international campaign for abortion rights', with speakers invited from Campaign to Stop the Use of Depo Provera and NAC.

LEYTON readers can buy Socialist Challenge from Patel's Newsagents, 326 Lea Bridge Road, E10.

WALTHAMSTOW readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly from Sheridan's Newsagents, 86 Hoe St, E17.

HARROW Socialist Challenge supporters meet regularly, details from Box 50 London N1 2XP.

UNDER REVIEW



Working class pens at work

Writings
Federation of Writers and Community Publishers, £1.

ANYONE who has been intimidated by a blank sheet of paper knows how difficult it is to cover it with words that someone else might find worth reading. All too often the blankness of the paper comes to reflect the blankness in the mind. At least this is what I am finding more and more.

Mass education has done very little to genuinely encourage the great majority of people to express their experiences and ideas in writing (although there are still those hacks who will put pen to paper at the slightest tickle between their ears).

The needs of capitalism would condemn the majority of working class people to be semi-articulate. The creativity of the working class is still largely verbal; the printed word is still, with a few exceptions, the preserve of the ruling class and those who work happily under its shadow.

It is the aim of the recently formed Federation of Writers and Community Publishers to promote and encourage working class writing. Their first venture is an anthology of writings (modestly called *Writings*) from many of their constituent groups. The collection consists mainly of poems, short stories, extracts from novels and autobiographical fragments.

There is much to read with benefit

and interest. There are no budding Joyces, Audens or Austens in this book — it is pure sentimental dreaming to expect those who have been denied the opportunity to experience and study the best of bourgeois culture and imaginative writing to achieve the techniques and sophistication of such writers.

In any case there are other virtues — those of the clear forthright statement — to cultivate.

The aim of the publishers is to enable working class people to acquire the skills and experience for all kinds of writing. This is an excellent counter to ideas that writers are either just born, the result of unhappy childhoods in large houses or of some unmentionable communion with something called a 'muse' (or is it expensive booze?).

Good writing is, of course, the achievement of hard work; it's no accident that most so-called popular 'lives' of artists focus on their 'time off' rather than the work.

However, in this anthology (and in the Afterword by Ken Worpole) there is an ambiguity about the general aims and what 'working class writing' is. It is perhaps inevitable that the encouragement of working people to write leads to a certain overestimation of the writings themselves, or at least a shyness to criticise among sections of the left.

In a way this can taken a healthy response to the pretensions of much bourgeois culture — traditional and avant-garde, full of existential crises. But particularly in cultural matters, it is not so simple as 'if it's working class, great; if bourgeois, forget it'. One might as well say that a whelk is better than an oyster because it is eaten by someone with dirt on their hands.

To overthrow capitalism the working class has to digest, counter and master the politics of the bourgeoisie; to build socialism the working class will have to digest and go beyond the cultural products of bourgeois rule to build not a 'working class culture' but a socialist (classless) one.

To attempt to build now a 'working class culture' is not only an immense undertaking, it is wrong.

What I understand by 'working class writing' in the present context is writing that is on the side of the working class and the oppressed in the class struggle. A literature that honestly and powerfully can articulate the experiences — the achievements and the disappointments — and the revolutionary aspirations of the working class.

These writers will come from all classes, perhaps not largely from the working class. We need the Brechts, Serges and Reissners for today's and tomorrow's movement. The writers in this book are not them, but this 'writers' workshop' movement can

help to produce them.

After all the literary life of the left, and particularly that of the far left, is not exactly luxuriant, as this article shows. Can one live by internal documents and cheap thrillers alone?
COLIN SMITH

Gramsci without gaps

Antonio Gramsci: Selections from the Political Writings 1921-6
Translated and edited by Quintin Hoare
Lawrence and Wishart, £3.50

THE IMPORTANCE of this book for a study of Gramsci's ideas can be seen from the way in which the writings of Gramsci which were previously available in English have biased an understanding of his politics.

The first articles of Gramsci's to become widely circulated in Britain were those of the Turin period in the early post-First World War years. In September 1968 *New Left Review* published a series of articles under the title 'Soviets in Italy', which can perhaps be said to mark the real beginning of the Gramsci 'boom' in Britain.

It is these Turin writings, with their stress on soviets and workers councils, which continue to attract libertarian currents to Gramsci.

The reasons are clear. By his own admission, Gramsci in 1919-20 had not grasped the significance of the nature and role of the Communist Party. The isolation and defeat of the Turin workers was in part a consequence of this, and Gramsci corrected his error from the experience of that defeat.

The most influential of Gramsci's writings to be made available in English were the *Prison Notebooks*, the first comprehensive selections of which were published in 1971.

In one sense the stress on the *Prison Notebooks* is quite correct. They are beyond compare the most important and brilliant writings by any West European Marxist this century. But they were written under circumstances which greatly affected their form and interpretation.

Gramsci was subject to a fascist censor, which meant that a range of issues could not be dealt with at all, and others merely hinted at. Moreover, his inability to be involved in determining the CP's concrete tactical and organisational positions, through lack of day to day contact, meant that Gramsci could not adequately draw the consequences of the practical application of his ideas.

Relying on the *Prison Notebooks* to interpret Gramsci's ideas leaves an enormous potential ambiguity, as evidenced by the fact that the Gramsci of the *Prison Notebooks* has been claimed by virtually every current from economism through ultra-leftism to reformism.

The publication of this new volume of *Political Writings* allows English-speakers for the first time to gain a systematic view of Gramsci's ideas. It is impossible on the basis of this volume to present a libertarian 'councillist' view of Gramsci.

The thrust of its articles shows their author's own critique of his earlier weaknesses on the question of the Communist Party, and his practical involvement and leadership in building the PCI.

This volume also greatly clarified the background and interpretation of many sections of the *Prison Notebooks*. Many of the basic ideas in the later writings are already developed here, and because the ideas are tied to practical directives for the Communist Party — without interference from a censor — their significance is clearly spelt out.

To take Gramsci's most decisive political statements, those of the period of the 'Lyons Theses', it is evident that the alliances he urges are not with the bourgeoisie in Popular Fronts or 'historic compromises', but are directed against the capitalist

class. All forms of 'stages' theory of revolution in Italy are rejected, and far from seeking a strategic unity with bourgeois forces to fight Mussolini, Gramsci held that the so-called 'democratic' fractions of the ruling class were totally incapable and unwilling to fight fascism.

His fundamental orientation was to the creation of soviets and workers' councils, that is organs of dual power, and rather than the struggle against fascism being confined to bourgeois democratic demands, Gramsci saw it as totally interconnected with the struggle against capitalism itself.

Gramsci's 'intermediate demands' — which were later to coincide with those of Trotsky on such issues as the importance in fascist Italy of the slogan of the Constituent Assembly — are therefore posed not as limits on the struggle within capitalism but, as with Trotsky's sense of 'transitional slogans', as demands for the mobilisation of the masses against capitalism.

This volume places Gramsci on the same revolutionary terrain as the tradition of Lenin and the Communist International, yet it does much more than merely promote this tradition.

His concentration on the analysis of the specific conditions of revolution in Western Europe, which was Gramsci's greatest contribution to Marxism, is already systematised here to a point which develops beyond the particular statements of genius of Lenin.

The only comparable analyses are those of Trotsky on Germany, France and Spain.

Edited with the usual thoroughness of the volumes in this series, the book is indispensable reading for anyone who wants to understand Gramsci or the major problems of revolutionary strategy in Western Europe.

JOHN ROSS



The mystery of the empty rooms

Round About A Pound A Week
Maud Pember Reeves
Virago, £1.95

IN 1909, well-meaning middle class women didn't often try to understand working class life; they were more likely to try to convert working class people to superior middle class habits. But the Fabian Women's Group had a sociological rather than a moral approach.

They regularly visited the homes of the genteel poor, observing the families of bus conductors, street sweepers, fish fryers and plumber's mates, between 1909-1912. They observed and recorded, and found out that the choices made by poor people were not irrational.

To a well-fed and well-educated

onlooker, it was the stupidity of the workers which made families choose to live in one room rather than two, eat carbohydrate instead of fresh milk, fish and vegetables, and waste one shilling out of a weekly income of 20 shillings on burial insurance.

Instead of preaching, the Fabian women found out that one well-lit and ventilated room was healthier than two damp ones; that when you can afford to eat very little, you choose what is filling and tasty to stop you from feeling hungry, not what is most nutritious; and that with frequent infant deaths, burial insurance was a necessity and probably saved money in the long run.

This middle class concern about the health of the working class had increased after the Boer War had revealed that young army recruits were not physically up to scratch. Perhaps this was why the war was lost, why the Empire was crumbling? It must be the fault of working class mothers, who couldn't manage their money and didn't look after their children properly.

The Fabian Women's Group was formed partly under the stimulus of the feminism of the suffragette movement, but their decision to investigate working class motherhood was influenced by the fervid new mood of blame against working class mothers.

As the Fabian Women's Group was not convinced by this particular crusade, they approached their subject with an open mind, and discovered that the problem was not 'mismanagement' but lack of money. This conclusion has never been popular with the ruling class.

Even today, social workers spend time trying to teach people how to 'manage', and social security offices arbitrarily deduct amounts for fuel bills and rent arrears so that the claimants can't 'fritter' their money away on inessentials.

The Fabian women's proposals for reform have still not been implemented. We still have no national minimum wage, social security rates are abysmally low, and above all, women are still not economically independent. This was the cornerstone of the Fabian Women's Group's proposals. Instead of the obsolete 'family wage', they wanted to see women and men earning equal wages.

Secondly, they wanted the 'endowment of motherhood' — a state pension for mothers. Seventy years later, we're not much further on. The idea of the family wage still persists in women's low earnings at work and the lack of any income at all for childrearing.

The Fabian Women's Group understood the one thing that unifies all women, regardless of class — their lack of economic independence. Unfortunately, their reliance on the benevolent 'socialist' state to bring about women's independence through gradual reforms was misplaced and misguided.
SUE ASPINALL

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

ONES
By Hugo Dewar

Theoretically, one equals one
Yet all ones form a pyramid
And the one at the top is a mystery
Having far greater value than any one
And the ones immediately below
The top one are also mysterious ones
Having greater value than one.

Descending the pyramid however
The value of one approaches
Ever closer to the value of one
Till all the ones of the great base
Of the pyramid sink below the value of one
And become zero.

From above, the varying values of one
Look down upon those at the great base
And say — they are nothing.

But the base ones are also a mystery
For they are able to add themselves up
Saying — One for all and all for one
And then the value of all these 'nothings'
is seen to be
Infinite.

WOMEN'S LIBERATION

By Pat Arrowsmith

She is somebody
I know,
tunnelled with desires,
longings.

There was nothing I could do
to embody these,
give them shape
and limbs
whereby her needs,
desires,
could be fulfilled.

The channels of her body
gave birth only
to flesh turned strange;

not the child
she had wanted all her life,
clearly formed,
carefully designed,
but a cluster
of redundant cells
gone wild.

The surgeon's scalpel
cut away this deadly turmoil
lodged within her womb;
stopped its stranglehold
upon her vital organs.

She lay prone,
imprisoned in the tiny world,
her ward,
shackled,
kept in place
by catheter,
nose-tube,
drip-feed needle.

So are many women
flattened out,
fastened down,
our bodies,
heads,
encumbered with distorting tumours,
stunting growth,
draining vitality,
hindering activity.

But then they took away the tubes.
She left the bed
and went about her business
freed from pain and feebleness.

Perhaps we all need surgery
to get up on our feet
and set to work.
Perhaps the surgeon's skill
can heal us all.

Socialist Challenge

Occupations against quotas

STUDENTS have occupied the main building at the Barking precinct of North East London Polytechnic in opposition to quotas intended to reduce the number of overseas students.

The question of how to extend the campaign in the absence of any lead from the Broad Left on the national executive of the National Union of Students will be discussed at a meeting this Friday called by Sussex University students union, who are also occupying against quotas.

The items put forward for discussion include local reports, the strategy put forward by the national executive, and what policy the forthcoming NUS conference should adopt.

*Overseas students and quotas national activists meeting, Friday 23 March, 1.45pm, Room 3a, University of London Union, Malet Street, WC1.

OUR FUND DRIVE

A SLIM, wraith-like figure edged his way into the Socialist Challenge office. After a few polite hellos the clatter of typewriters started again. We all assumed he had come to see someone else.

But no, our emaciated visitor was clutching £278. It was Bernard Regan, once a nationally-recognised teachers' leader, now a shadow of his former self.

The money — six times as much as the other contributions this week put together — is the proceeds of Bernard's sponsored diet for Socialist Challenge.

Despite all the drawbacks (severe personality disorders, friends looking straight through you, loss of weight in the NUT) Bernard is a far happier person. And the loss from his waist-line has been our gain.

Slimming is only one of the masochistic activities you can engage in for the fund drive. Giving up smoking is another popular and profitable way of raising money. Even non-political friends will be so staggered at your moral fortitude that they will be prepared to hand over a few bob.

Roy Winn from Middlesbrough is collecting sponsors for the 40-mile Lyke Wake walk across the North Yorkshire moors at Easter. Our supporters, being a sedentary lot, don't seem to be rushing to emulate him, but we are sure you can think of other, less strenuous ways of raising money.

And if you don't feel up to engaging in some noble activity yourself you can always be a sponsor. Bernard Regan's £278 need not be a final total and Roy Winn is still looking for sponsors.

We only have another week to reach this quarter's £2,500 target. With your money we can do it!

Our thanks again to Bernard and the following:

Anon	5.00
NUJ member	5.00
Oldham supporters	2.25
P. Hunt	5.00
Camden SC party	20.00
Rover workers, Solihull	5.00
Bernard Regan, sponsored diet	278.00
WEEKLY TOTAL	£320.25
CUMULATIVE TOTAL	£2171.55

SUBSCRIBE!

Domestic: 6 months, £5; 12 months, £10
Abroad: Airmail, £16.50. Surface, £10 per annum.
Multi-reader institutions: double individual rate

Name _____
Address _____

I enclose a donation for the Fighting Fund of £ _____

Cheques, POs and Money Orders should be made payable to 'Socialist Challenge'. Complete and return to: Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.

STOP THIS RACIST HARASSMENT!

Police torture Oldham youth

'I WANT my son, I want you to fight for him.' That was the plea last Saturday from the father of Abdul Azad to 80 picketers at Risley Remand Centre in Cheshire, where Abdul is being held.

By Pete Clifford

Abdul, a 17-year-old Oldham youth, was first detained late on Wednesday 7 October 1978.

Two policemen came to his workplace, Ash Mill in Oldham. They told him that his

mother had been murdered and that they had to ask him some questions at the police station.

He was held all Thursday with nothing to eat, called a 'black bastard', and searched over and over again. That night he was released, but next morning the police came round for him again.

This time they alleged that his father and mother were not his real parents. As Abdul later put it in a signed statement:

'They said I was a black bastard — "you're telling lies". They pulled my hair, pushed me around, and then threw me in the cell.

'On Saturday night for the first time they brought me some chips. I had no water or tea to drink. They tore my hair, handfuls of hair.

'I was very scared. I wept. I

asked them: "Why are you hitting me?" They made no answer, just kept hitting me. I felt sick, my stomach hurt with pain.'

Finally they forced a confession out of him:

'At about 1 o'clock in the night three of them came. One looked like a police boss. He said "Kill him". I was hit so much, then they took me upstairs and made me sign the paper.'

After ten days he was transferred to Risley Remand Centre. And eventually, more than three months later, he was released under pressure from the local Bangladeshi Association and Michael Meacher, MP.

Everyone thought that was that — Abdul would be allowed to stay in the country. But on 9 March the police pulled him in again.

Abdul was told that the Home Office forensic blood tests on his mother, father, and

himself showed that he couldn't be their son. On this basis Merlyn Rees signed an order for his deportation on 16 March.

This has now been deferred under pressure. Michael Meacher is calling for compassionate treatment and an independent testing of the evidence.

But Abdul Mannan, secretary of the Oldham Bangladeshi Association, points out that these are not the real issues. A defence campaign must start from the fact that Abdul Azad is a victim of the racist immigration laws, which are being used to harass the Asian community.

On this basis the Bangladeshi Association has launched an open defence committee with the support of the Council for Racial Equality and the Anti Nazi League.

The labour movement has been slow to react. Abdul's union, the Allied Textile

Workers, and Oldham Trades Council have both said that they'll send letters of protest — but little more.

However, the textile mills and engineering factories in Oldham are now being leafleted to win support for a march through Oldham this Saturday, to be followed by a picket of Risley Remand Centre.

It is hoped to win support for this mobilisation from all over the North-West.

Free Abdul Azad! Release all immigrants held under these racist laws! Abolish the Immigration Acts!

* March assembles 10.30am, Saturday 24 March, at Elevenways Car Park, Featherstall Road North, Chadderton, Oldham, to march to rally in Union Street. Coaches leave at noon for Risley.

* Picket Risley Remand Centre, near Warrington, 1pm.

Defend Brick Lane

By Joe Abrahams
Chairperson,
Hackney and Tower Hamlets
Defence Committee

ON Saturday 25 March, the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee is calling on all anti-racists in London to demonstrate at the top of Brick Lane (junction with Bethnal Green Road) at 10.30am.

Since the events of last summer — the murder of Altab Ali, Ishaque Ali, Kenneth Singh and numerous racist attacks which led to the mass demonstrations of July, August and September — Brick Lane has been out of the news.

This does not mean that the problem of racist violence, police harassment or the National Front has gone away.

On the contrary, on 10 December, Michael Ferreira was brutally stabbed to death on the streets of Hackney by two racist thugs.

Since his murder his family and their supporters have been continually harassed by the police. Four friends now face trumped up charges, but the thugs have received police protection.

The National Front continue to sell their fascist propaganda in Brick Lane. Over recent weeks they have grown in number.

On two occasions recently, young thugs have been seen preparing to attack, and only the swift intervention of local anti-racists has forced the police to disperse them.

The battle against racism and racial violence is not over. As the election approaches we can expect the National Front to increase their activity since Martin Webster is standing in the Bethnal Green and Bow constituency.

The 25 March action is the first of a series of mobilisations designed to show that the fight against racist violence, police harassment, and the NF remains a paramount task for the working class.

Join us on 25 March, 10.30am at the top of Brick Lane.

PUBLIC MEETING
Friday 23 March, 7.30pm
Montefiore Centre,
Deal Street, E1
Speaker: B.K. Chatterjee

DEMONSTRATION
Sunday 25 March, 10.30am
Assemble junction of Brick Lane and Bethnal Green Road



Photo: ANDREW WARD (Report)