

Socialist Challenge

Labour in crisis — throw out Callaghan's dirty deals

WHAT WE WANT

1. Kill the Concordat

2. Troops out of Ireland

3. A Scottish Assembly now

4. Full rights for women

5. Smash racism

That's the way to stop the Tories

For an Immediate Assembly, page 2

How the ANL Can Go into the Election, page 3

Troops Out of Ireland, pages 4 and 5

Challenge the TUC-Government

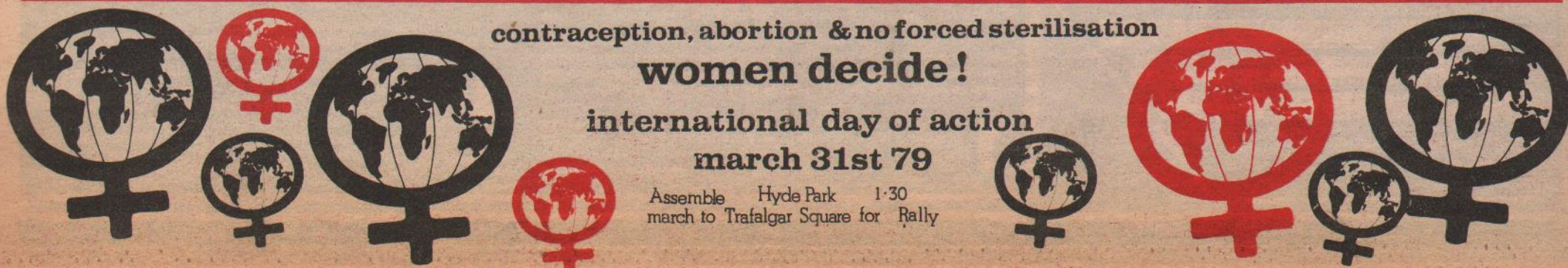
Pact, page 6

Women Decide, pages 8 and 9

contraception, abortion & no forced sterilisation
women decide!

international day of action
march 31st 79

Assemble Hyde Park 1.30
march to Trafalgar Square for Rally



EDITORIAL

Socialist Challenge, 328/9 Upper Street, London N1.
Editorial 01-359 8180/9. Distribution/Advertising
91-359 8371.

Countdown

AFTER FIVE years of office, the Labour government is on the way out. Several major issues are finally breaking its back.

* The 5 per cent pay policy has been broken, and there is little short term prospect of the trade union bureaucracy being able to impose any similar policy.

* The continuing resistance of the Catholic masses to Unionist and imperialist rule has prevented any political solution in Northern Ireland. The Labour government has responded with increased repression.

* Despite a clear working class vote in favour of a Scottish Assembly, the Labour government has refused to go ahead and implement the Scotland Act.

If the Labour government falls, it will be for one reason only — its attacks on the interests of the working class. The working class have seen wages drop under the Social Contract; hospitals, schools, nurseries, and social services slashed; unemployment double; the maintenance and extension of the racist immigration laws; support for butchers like the Shah of Iran.

The way has been paved for Tory policies by the TUC General Council's stamp of approval on the Concordat. The Labour lefts remained scandalously silent on this vital issue, but the potential still exists for a determined resistance, even if the Tories are elected. That much is evident from the fightback seen in recent months.

Nevertheless, we shouldn't dismiss the serious implications of a Tory victory even if the confidence of the working class is maintained. A Tory victory will be a setback for the working class. Furthermore, it will make conditions for building a real class struggle alternative in the working class that much more difficult. It is just not the case that political conditions under a Tory government speed up working class radicalisation. Quite the reverse. The conditions are then laid for all the lefts to attempt to polish up their radical image through anti-Tory demagoguery.

Moreover, although a credible alternative has not emerged during five years of Labour rule, a Labour government still provides the best basis to push forward the fight for an alternative. For in these years we have seen a mass fightback against austerity — strike figures have reached the post-war high years of 1971 and 1972. The potential to build the 'Troops Out' movement has undoubtedly opened up enormously. Youth radicalisation has developed as a new factor in British politics. A real mass movement against racism exists. And the breadth of struggles relating to women's rights has expanded.

This hasn't been translated into a powerful class struggle movement. However, this failure has as much to do with the problems of the left as with objective circumstances. Outside the promising beginnings of the Anti Nazi League, the revolutionary left has not been able to give a clear lead in the fight against the bureaucracy. The recent struggles of the working class have helped to clarify the basis of such a fight and this could accelerate further if Labour was returned.

For all these reasons, socialists should be organising to ensure the return of a Labour government. Socialist Challenge will be calling on all its supporters and readers to vote Labour where a revolutionary alternative is not being presented.

Under no circumstances should such a call be translated into the view that Labour's present policies are any closer to working class interests than those of the Tories. If there is one thing in which Callaghan has excelled, it is his ability to steal Thatcher's clothes. It's true that a victory of the Tories will make it easier to impose right-wing policies. But the reasons for this can be found in the negative effects on the working class that any such victory would reflect, rather than in the incorrect view that Tory policies are inherently more right-wing than Callaghan's.

There is only one guarantee of a Labour victory. That is the continuation and initiation of struggles for policies in the interests of the mass movement. The presentation of a global alternative is a vital element in this. Support for mass action for such alternative policies will be part and parcel of Socialist Unity's electoral campaign. And with the National Front intent on standing in over 300 constituencies, a massive Anti Nazi League campaign is called for. But socialists also have the broader tasks of explaining just who is responsible for the crisis, that it's not the blacks as the Nazis argue.

Presumably the International Marxist Group and the Socialist Workers Party will be fighting alongside each other in the continuing struggles in the pre-election period. We would ask these comrades one simple, yet urgent question. Who will gain from your refusal to make a strong united electoral intervention? The working class, or Callaghan? For us the answer is obvious.

LABOUR IN CRISIS

Devolution - still a live issue

NO MATTER what parliamentary manoeuvres Labour winds its way into in the coming month, one thing is certain: the interests of Scottish working people are not at heart. The devolution issue is settled — working class constituencies have solidly backed an assembly.

Now a broad labour movement campaign throughout Britain needs to organise support for the democratic rights of Scottish people — despite the antics of the Tory and Labour leaders.

By Des Tierney

The referendum and the subsequent denial of democratic rights for working people in Scotland represent a setback for all sections of the British working class.

The antics of the Labour leaders in attempting to prevent the setting up of an Assembly feed British nationalism and will help the Tories in their aim of strengthening the centralised British state. British state.

In Scotland, where two-thirds of working class voters are estimated to have voted for the Assembly, the subsequent decisions of the Labour government and the Labour Party in Scotland are sowing disillusion in the organisations of the labour movement, and at the same time threatening the unity of the British working class.

Not least, a dangerous precedent has been created by the acceptance of the 40 per cent rule.

Would it be surprising if the Tories attempt to legislate for a 40 or 50 per cent vote in favour of strike action from a union's total membership before such action could be taken?

The Scottish working class, in their majority, saw an Assembly as a means to exercise more direct control over the institutions of the British state in Scotland, and to a limited extent to begin to overcome the problems they experience.

This was obviously too explosive for the ruling class, who through the Tories, sections of the mass media, and the Confederation of British Industry weighed in for a No vote.

Now the Tory and Liberal parties — in spite of the latter's long-standing commitment to a federated British state — maintain that devolution is

dead.

They want the link with Westminster to protect them from a united, militant working class.

It was the failure of the Scottish TUC and the Labour Party's Scottish executive to link their Yes campaign with the projection of an Assembly to be used as a launching pad for an offensive against the government's Tory policies which led that campaign to fizzle out.

And while the Labour Party's Scottish conference, held after the referendum, almost unanimously reaffirmed its commitment to devolution, the mood of the conference was to allow Westminster to decide the fate of the Assembly.

The unions which had come with emergency resolutions calling for the Assembly to be set up immediately were easily persuaded to withdraw them in the interests of unity.

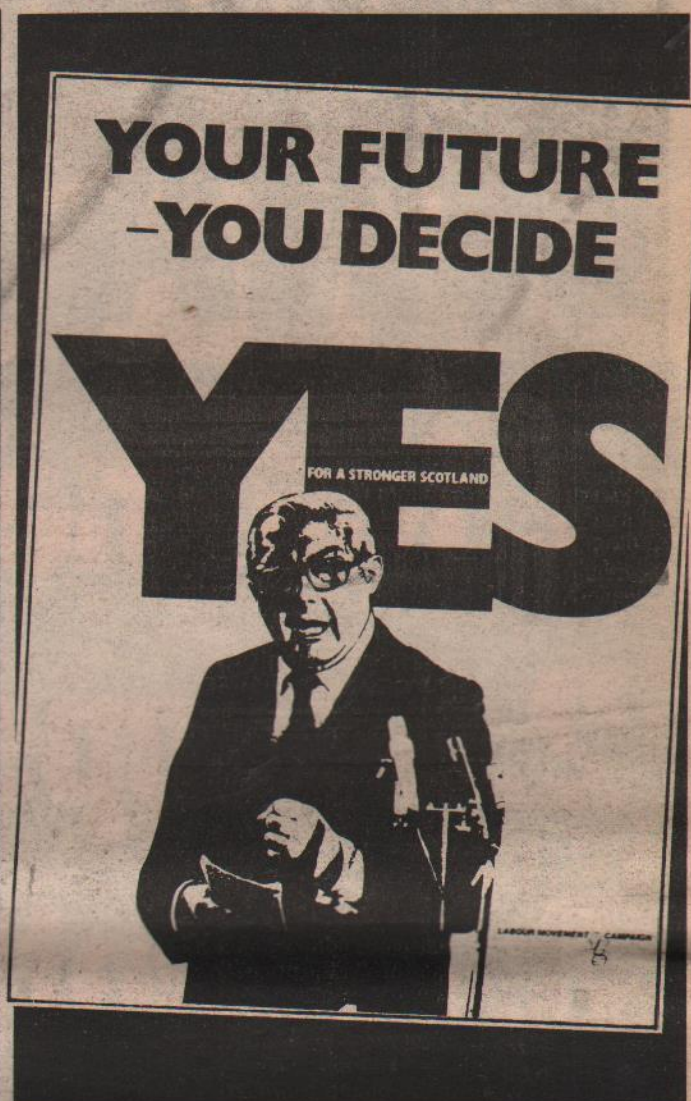
The likelihood, therefore, is that we will see the growth of a populist, nationalist movement in Scotland, with the SNP now energetically re-orienting itself towards the working class.

It is also possible that the Scottish Labour Party will manage to resurrect itself.

The two main planks of its programme after the split from the Labour Party were that the British labour movement is incapable of giving home rule to Scotland, and opposition to the government's right-wing policies.

So the SLP is well placed at the present time. But its 'separatist' socialist solution, dressed in left-wing demagoguery, would create disastrous divisions among the British working class as a whole.

What is needed is a campaign throughout the British labour movement to support the democratic rights of the Scottish people. The 52



In fact he decides — that's the problem!

per cent Yes vote has to be recognised, with the immediate setting up of an Assembly.

Only a directly-elected Assembly would begin to satisfy those rights.

The present talk in Westminster of allowing Parliament's Scottish Grand Committee to meet in Edinburgh is quite simply a denial of democratic rights — and an attempt to head off 'home rule' sentiments.

The committee, which includes English MPs, has its constitution and agenda fixed by the House of Commons, averting any possibility of a challenge to Parliament's authority.

A campaign for an immediate Assembly is the only way

that the strength, unity, and confidence of the British working class can be maintained.

Socialists should take the opportunity of fighting for this demand at the Scottish TUC, which meets next month. We must aim to win the STUC as a champion of the democratic rights of the Scottish working class.

Without being able to expect too much from within the Labour Party, unity between all the forces who support the immediate setting up of an Assembly is all the more vital.

These include Militant and Workers Action supporters in the Labour Party, the Socialist Workers Party, and the International Marxist Group.

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.

OUR POLICIES 2

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.

LABOUR IN CRISIS



Photo: SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

Edge Hill by-election

Promoting the socialist alternative

POLLING in the Edge Hill by-election in Liverpool takes place on 29 March. Socialist Unity does not expect to win, but it has achieved a kind of victory in Edge Hill.

Its campaign has raised issues and pointed to solutions that the major parties have not mentioned and would not consider.

With the prospect of an imminent General Election, the Edge Hill campaign has proved a useful test run for the bigger, national battles ahead.

By Rich Palser

Last week shop stewards at Liverpool's Dunlop plant issued an ultimatum to the Labour Party. They threatened that if the Labour government had not responded to the

campaign to keep the plant open, then the stewards would be urging abstention in the by-election.

Disillusionment with the government's policies surrounds the Labour Party campaign. One sign was at its

campaign meeting with Employment Minister Albert Booth last Friday, where the platform speakers outnumbered the audience.

Outside the meeting was a 60-strong picket called by the Socialist Unity election campaign.

Socialist Unity is having little trouble finding enthusiasm among its supporters — at the first campaign meeting 50 people discussed out how the campaign should be waged, with the collection raising £243.

The reason for this contrasting picture is simple. As Socialist Unity said in its leaflet to a mass meeting at Dunlop, their threat to abstain was a result of the government's own policies.

The Dunlop workers felt betrayed, and justifiably so. But, argued Socialist Unity, abstaining in the election was no alternative, because it was no solution.

Socialist Unity argued that the best way of fighting for a socialist alternative was to launch an immediate occupation for nationalisation under workers control of Dunlop; and in the Edge Hill election to vote for Socialist Unity because its candidate Alan Walker was standing to promote that fightback.

***Over unemployment:** Socialist Unity supporters joined a sit-down demonstration by Dunlop workers on 20 March, which stopped the traffic in Liverpool's Lime Street, and the occupation of the so-called 'Job Centre' on the same day.

Alan Walker has argued that the candidates of the bosses' parties offer no alternative to

Labour's betrayals:

'Liberal candidate David Alton sheds crocodile tears over the redundancies announced at Plessey, at least 800 people, but it is no more than a vote catching exercise given the Liberal council's threats to cut 1,350 of its own council jobs.'

***Over women's rights:** In a campaign leaflet devoted to the fight for women's rights, Socialist Unity is calling for the biggest possible turn-out at a demonstration in Liverpool this Saturday for abortion rights.

The Liverpool march, organised to coincide with the London and international events to demand 'Women

decide!', begins at the Rialto building, Upper Parliament Street, Liverpool 8, at 10.30am.

***Over school students' rights:** Two schools were leafleted last Thursday to encourage students to join the lobby outside the Albert Booth meeting.

When the headmaster of Paddington school condemned the leaflets, Socialist Unity declared it would continue to leaflet the schools as 'school students should have the right to a union at school.'

'Along with prison inmates, and members of the armed forces, they are one of the only sections of society to be denied

the right to participate in politics.'

***Over Britain's presence in Ireland:** David Alton, the Liberal candidate, has backed a call for British withdrawal from Ireland. Alan Evans, secretary of Merseyside branch of the United Troops Out Movement, says:

'Both Tory and Labour governments have been frightened of allowing Northern Ireland to become an election issue because they know that a growing majority of people in this country want a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland.'

Socialist Unity is doing its best to make it an election issue.

Is the ANL ready?

By Dennis Richards

'IN these months before the general election the Nazis will seize on every opportunity to spread their propaganda. During the election itself, National Front candidates will be entitled to equal TV and radio time to the major parties.'

'The British electorate will be exposed to Nazi propaganda on an unprecedented scale. This must not go unopposed.'

These are the words of the founding statement of the Anti Nazi League. A mass propaganda campaign of leaflets and posters during the election was the League's immediate objective.

The events after the first ANL Carnival showed it was capable of making a real impact. Carnival One took place during the local election campaign of May 1978 — and when it came to the poll there was a significant fall in the

National Front's vote.

They slumped from 5 per cent in the GLC elections (May 1977), and 5.7 per cent in the Ladywood by-election, to 3 per cent.

Of course this was not just because of the ANL. The rightward lurch on immigration marked by Thatcher's speeches and the Select Committee Report stole some of the National Front's thunder.

And the resistance of black people to racist violence — symbolised by the struggle to defend Brick Lane — forced many Labour and trade union leaders to speak out against the fascists.

But it was the ANL who successfully labelled the NF as 'Nazi'.

The ANL had a plan of action to beat the NF then, but it is surely lacking one now.

Expecting an election last October, the ANL conference

had planned a major Carnival and demonstration for September. A trade union conference was planned for the autumn.

Every ANL branch and supporter had clear national focuses around which the local leafletting and posterage could take place. There is no such focus now.

A plan of action is needed: * There should be a national mass demonstration on the weekend before the general election.

* We should ask every Labour and working class candidate to allocate some of their election spending entitlement to the ANL to leaflet against the Nazis.

* We should also ask them to join the ANL in sponsoring local rallies involving all labour movement organisations to put the case against the NF's policies.

Time is short — the ANL must be ready!

SOCIALIST UNITY Public Meeting

'Low Pay and Labour in the Election'

Speakers: Janet Maguire (SU candidate, Deptford)
Ray Varnes (NUPE London Div. Council)
Ford worker

Sunday 1 April, 3pm

Toynbee Hall, Commercial Road, London E1

Joint IMG/ISA School

'The Labour Party and the socialist alternative'

Sunday, 22 April 1pm-6pm

Creche facilities if booked in advance

The second in a series of schools based on the appeal for revolutionary unity published in 4 January 1979 issue of Socialist Challenge.

LABOUR IN CRISIS

By their friends —and enemies— shall ye know them

ON the appointment of Roy Mason as Northern Ireland Secretary:

'This is the best bit of news the people of Northern Ireland have had for the past two years.'

— Ian Paisley, 1976.

ON Mason's rule while in office:

'At every level of political activity — from routine day-to-day representations to inter-party discussions — the Northern Ireland Office has shown an arrogant indifference to the real problems facing Northern Ireland.'

— Seamus Mallon, Social Democratic and Labour Party, 3 January 1979.

ON the effects of Labour in office:

'The union with Britain is now in less danger and more secure than at any time since 1968 and probably since further back still.'

— Enoch Powell, April 1976.

'On the basis of the information available to it, Amnesty International believes that maltreatment of suspected terrorists by the RUC has taken place with sufficient frequency to warrant the establishment of a public inquiry to investigate it.'

— Amnesty International, June 1978.

ON H Block:

'A visiting radio journalist from America got in touch with the Northern Ireland Office to see if he could ask Mr Roy Mason about the controversy over conditions in H Block.'

'He was told, quite reasonably, that Mr Mason was too busy to see him. But instead of answering the questions the Northern Ireland Office suggested that the journalist get in touch with Mr Norman Hatton, the chief of the Official Unionists — who, the official said, would be able to put the government view quite adequately.'

— from the Guardian, 14 March 1979.

'The fact that a man refuses to wear prison uniforms or to do prison work should not entail the loss of physical exercise, association with his fellow prisoners, or contact with the outside world.'

'These are basic human needs for physical and mental health, not privileges to be granted or withheld as rewards or punishments.'

'To deprive anyone of them over a long period is surely a grave injustice and cannot be justified in any circumstances.'

— Dr Tomas O Fiaich, Catholic Primate of All Ireland, 1 August 1978.

ON Labour and the Unionists:

'It's like this: Roy Mason is giving us sheer bloody good

government politically, economically and militarily.'

— anonymous Unionist Party official, quoted in Irish Times, 10 September 1977.

'All the lives in Northern Ireland are negotiable for another day in impotent office.'

— Hugh Logue, Social Democratic and Labour Party, September 1977.

ON the passing of the Prevention of Terrorism Act:

'You may rely on our support for the speedy passage of the proposed Bill.'

— William Craig, Ulster Unionist MP, November 1974.

'The only comparison that I know of is the practice in South Africa where citizens can be moved out of areas where they have always lived and sent off by administrative action, 100-200 miles away, or wherever it please the authorities to send them, because they are considered a nuisance...'

'We are introducing legislation which is comparable with the legislation existing in South Africa.'

— Frank Hooley, Labour MP, November 1974.



JACK LYNCH

ON the unification of Ireland: In March 1978 Irish Premier Jack Lynch said:

'I do not believe there can ever be a permanent peace in Ireland while the British presence remains.'

Roy Mason savagely attacked Lynch for this statement, evoking the following praise for Mason:

'The words which fell from the Secretary of State this afternoon were the most impressive which have ever been used from the government front bench on the subject.'

— Enoch Powell, 10 March 1977.

IN summary:

'Direct rule is positive, is compassionate and it cares.'

— Roy Mason, October 1977.

'It's very difficult, but roughly 150-160 prisoners have shown themselves to me with injuries which I would not be satisfied were self-inflicted.'

— Dr Robert Irwin, 11 March 1979.

'Building new prisons seems to be the only growth area in Northern Ireland.'

— Joan Maynard, Labour MP, August 1977.



Labour and Ireland The chickens come home to roost

THE LIFE of the Callaghan government now hangs by the Orange thread of Ulster Unionist MPs in the House of Commons.

If that thread has been snapped by the time these words are read, it will not be because the Labour government has done anything to offend the Unionists, but rather because the Unionists will have decided that they have sucked all the blood available from the rotting corpse of Labour's Irish policy.

By Geoff Bell

A flashback to the eve of the last election, and the appearance of premier Harold Wilson on the 4 August edition of *Weekend World*.

There are rumours then that the Tory Party is negotiating with the Official Unionists. Specifically, it has been suggested that in return for Unionist backing the Tories would increase the number of seats for the North of Ireland at Westminster.

Wilson is asked to comment by the television interviewer. He says:

'If they are dealing with extremists (the Unionist MPs) they would not have been seen dead with when Mr Whitelaw was there — and one of their ex-Ministers said this in the past 48 hours — it would be a grave dereliction of their duty to the country, to Northern Ireland and to the people of Northern Ireland.'

'It would be done to get a few doubtful votes for a future Conservative government.'

How strangely principled those words of Harold Wilson now seem. For today Wilson's fears of 'dealing with extremists' have proved only too true.

But it was not the Tories who delivered up the seats the Unionists demanded way back in August 1974. Rather, it was Wilson's heirs who in their last parliamentary session rushed

through the extra-seats Bill in payment for the Unionists' continued support in Parliament.

There is no disguising this disgusting piece of political wheeler-dealing. The arguments against what in effect will be an increase in Loyalist representation in Westminster have been stated many times before, on occasion by Labour MPs.

For instance, there was Roy Mason on 2 December 1976:

'Northern Ireland is numerically under-represented in this House, but I firmly believe that the most effective way of strengthening democracy in Northern Ireland is for agreement to be reached on a form of developed government that demands widespread acceptance in both parts of the community.'

Or there was Merlyn Rees, on 5 April 1974:

'Many people in Northern Ireland, whatever we may think about it, look to the South and not this country. The problem that we all face is to bring these two communities together...'

'To talk of increased representation in this House in that context is not facing up to the facts of life...I do not see any circumstances in which extra representation of Northern Ireland, with its history, would be a means of bringing the peace that we all want.'

Or Merlyn Rees again, on 12 January 1976:

'The government do not feel

able to recommend re-examination of the question of the number of Northern Ireland constituencies returning Members to the United Kingdom Parliament in advance of an agreement on a system of government commanding the most widespread acceptance.'

But since these sentiments were expressed the Labour Party has lost a few by-elections and the pact with the Liberal Party has ended.

And so it was that Jim Molyneux, leader of the Unionist MPs at Westminster, held a press conference on 6 July 1977 at which he confirmed that the six or seven Unionists under his command had agreed to a parliamentary pact with the government.

They would not vote to bring it down in return for an increase in the number of Northern Ireland seats at Westminster.

The main Unionist behind this deal was Enoch Powell.

The problem for the Unionists was that Powell and Molyneux faced opposition within the Loyalist camp from Ian Paisley and others of his ilk. Accordingly, now that the extra-seats Bill has passed all its parliamentary stages, the pressure is on Powell and Molyneux to ditch the pact with Labour.

Having got the Bill passed, it is also a convenient time for the Official Unionists to return to their voters and boast of what they have achieved.

Even by their own standards of parliamentary opportunism, it is fair to ask what Labour has achieved by the pact.

The second and crucial reading of the House of Commons Redistribution of Seats Bill, as the Unionists' pay-off was called, was held last November — just two

months after Callaghan told his television audience that he intended postponing the election.

Can anyone now suggest that Callaghan would not have been better advised to go to the country in October rather than clinging to power on the coat-tails of the Unionist bigots?

The truth is that the Labour government has even been outmanoeuvred by the Loyalists in the Westminster game of power politics.

There have been few attempts by the Labour government or the Labour Party to justify their pact with the Unionists. But last week *Labour Weekly* attempted such an explanation.

'The new breed of Ulster Unionists are not all Tories. Some of them are working class and strongly interventionist' — that was their reasoning.

In fact there are more 'working class' Loyalists in Paisley's Democratic Unionist Party, which has always refused any deal with Labour.

But leaving that point aside, just how low can the Labour Party get in giving such cover to what Wilson called 'the extremists' of Ulster Loyalism?

Let a final comment go to the Young Conservatives, who recently returned from a fact-finding tour of the North of Ireland.

In the dog days of this Labour government it is fitting that such a body can be quoted against it.

The YCs commented: 'In talking to the Official Unionists...one gets the impression that whatever is suggested to them or whatever is offered they will push for something more.'

LABOUR IN CRISIS

And now - make Ireland an issue

WHENEVER the election occurs, socialists will have a better opportunity to make Ireland an issue than at any other election since 1918. It is an opportunity that needs grasping.

By Tom Marlowe

After 35 MPs showed their opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Act last Wednesday (two acted as tellers, 33 voted against — including one Tory) SDLP member Gerry Fitt was heard to remark, '33 democrats.'

The opposition against the PTA was, in terms of numbers, greater than ever before. Only 143 voted in favour of the PTA, so the majority of Labour MPs either voted against, abstained on purpose, or simply stayed away.

Thus only a minority of the Parliamentary Labour Party voted in favour of the PTA.

In a sense that is encouraging. But Fitt's remark about '33 democrats' is a reminder of how comparatively few were the Labour MPs prepared to make an issue of the renewal of the PTA.

It also stresses the urgent need for socialists outside the cosy confines of Westminster to do what the Labour MPs are refusing to do: kick up hell about Labour's policy in the North of Ireland.

The nature of that policy is best illustrated by a quote from the *Crossman Diaries 1968-70*. Crossman recalls the decision by the Labour government in August 1969 to send in troops to the North of Ireland:

'Callaghan was to work through the Protestant government. The Protestants are the majority and we can't afford to alienate them.'

At the time Callaghan was Home Secretary, and responsible for the government's policy in the North of Ireland.

He was greeted in August 1969 by many Catholics as something of a hero — their saviour from the bigoted intolerance of Unionist rule.

That judgement is one that many would revise today. Indeed, so far as Callaghan being a defender of the rights of Catholics goes, it is also a judgement he has revised.

In a recent interview in the *Observer*, he remarked: 'I think it would be fair to say that I overestimated the Civil Rights aspect.'

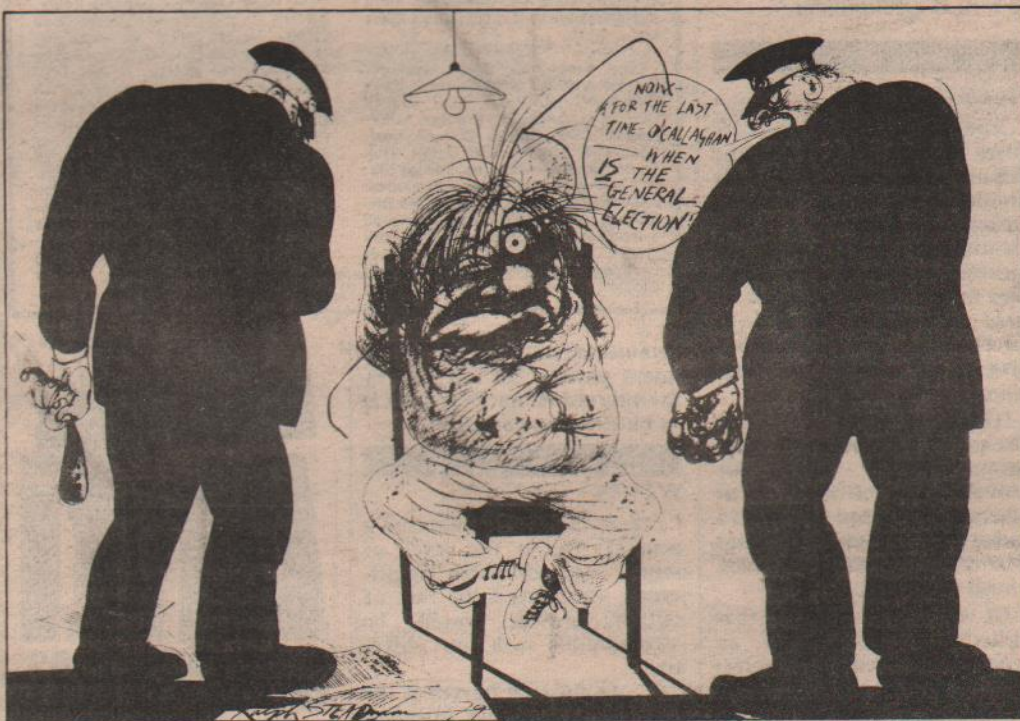
It seems that since then Callaghan and the rest of the Labour government have gone out their way to 'correct' that 'overestimate'.

The introduction of the PTA, the abolition of political status, the official introduction of the SAS into the North of Ireland, the re-arming of the RUC, the increase in membership of the RUC, the growth of the UDR — all are results of the Labour government's last five years in office.

Accordingly, while it is true that some of the Labour government's decisions on Ireland have been motivated by its desire to win the votes of Unionist MPs in Parliament, it is not true that this is what is at the root of its North of Ireland policy.

The introduction of the PTA, the decision to abolish political status, many of the tortures highlighted by Amnesty International — all took place when Labour had a reasonably comfortable majority in Parliament.

And in denying the right of the Irish people to rule themselves, the Labour govern-



ment has always shared a common ideology with the North of Ireland Unionists.

At long last that policy's human costs are beginning to be seen by many in British society who didn't want to, or weren't allowed to, see before.

Castlereagh is now headline news, a number of newspapers have called for the resignation of Mason, a number of American politicians (for their own opportunist reasons) have again called for the unification of Ireland and the withdrawal of Britain.

What all this means is that those in this country who seem to have shouted in the wilderness about Ireland for years are no longer in the wilderness. The potential for a growing movement for British withdrawal is now real and is

discernible.

Whether the election is held in the next few weeks or in the next few months, it offers the best opportunity to make Ireland an issue.

There are many ways to do so. Brendan Gallagher is standing against Roy Mason, Pat Arrowsmith is standing against Callaghan.

Their election campaigns should be a focus for all activists on Ireland, but raising the issue need not be limited to this.

If, for example, the Labour Party dares to have Roy Mason address any election meeting, he should be heckled and hounded. Indeed, every government speaker should be reminded during the election period of the tortures they have sanctioned.

Similarly, the 'lefts' in the Labour Party who have refused to perform even the most minimal acts of criticism of the government's policy — such as voting against the PTA — need to be reminded of the Irish horrors they have helped to sustain.

Sections of the bourgeois press have said that the Provisionals will launch a bombing campaign during the general election.

In all probability this is another example of 'black propaganda' intended to direct attention away from the real issues of Britain's policy in Ireland.

Certainly the chances are that in the coming election bombs will not be necessary; Ireland will be an issue without them.

On the picket line

Edinburgh

THE mass rally in Edinburgh on 21 March braved the weather to endorse a declaration calling for 'the executives of both our unions to escalate the selective strike action to whatever stage is necessary to stop in its tracks this unprecedented attack on our right to freely withdraw our labour.'

'In particular we pledge to our colleagues in the Scottish courts all physical, financial and moral support necessary to fully maintain the efficacy of their action.'

'We assure our colleagues in the Scottish Office that we stand ready to take all action necessary to force a total withdrawal of all suspensions.'

East London

CLIVE MARTIN, of Newham and Waltham Forest DHSS, told us:

'There are five offices in the branch, and each office has one or two people on the branch committee.'

'The branch committee acts as the campaign leadership, with its members reporting back to their offices and all minutes of meetings being circulated, and we have general meetings to decide on what action to take.'

'Tomorrow, for example, the SCPS is taking action, and two or three of our office will be out with them.'

'The four London area co-ordinating committees are beginning to meet together to develop the action, and there is an unofficial body called the All-London Civil Service Strike Committees which is just getting off the ground — that's an inter-union body.'

'I think this co-ordination is very necessary, but it's difficult because it's all come to a head rather suddenly.'

North London

PAM SHEPHERD, of Haringey and Islington DHSS, told us:

'The NEC has got to be forced to do something now. Forty more suspensions are on their way in Scotland — the government is calling Thomas's bluff of selective action and testing us to see if we are serious.'

'We had a meeting for a 45-minute stoppage, but most of our members wanted to go out for the day. If there was a clear call for escalation from the NEC, for everyone out, they would get the response.'

'All the branch secretaries in North London have been meeting to plan action, and we have to extend that to fully involving all the members in deciding what action to take.'

Civil servants ready for action

By Stewart McLennan
CPSA Chairperson, Glasgow North DHSS

THE 200,000-strong strike by civil servants on 21 March, which followed the 90 per cent solid one-day strike to launch our pay campaign, proves that the membership are willing to take action over pay.

The leadership of the Civil and Public Services Association has always claimed that the membership would rather have others do the work for them. They did think that way, but more and more members are now being convinced that it is their actions which count.

At first they thought pay research — which our last conference endorsed despite the opposition of the left — would allow us to cash in on increases won in the private sector.

Now it is clear that the government intends to limit any immediate increase to something like what the public service workers have won, with

the rest of what's due in stages — perhaps going through to April 1980.

It's becoming clear that we have to act now to force the full increases under pay research with no delay.

Then the union members were told that this could be done by selective action involving only 1,300 well-placed workers — and a few token one-day strikes to show we are with them.

Now, when Lord Peart and the government say that they are going to suspend those who refuse to do the work of those on strike, the membership are realising that the action has to be escalated.

Thirty thousand were out in Scotland last week; and despite the weather 2,000 marched in Edinburgh, while the Glasgow rally was packed out.

In the Department of National Savings here in Glasgow, the number of scabs fell from 80 (out of 5,000) in the first one-day strike to 20 this time.

When the membership found out last Thursday that scabs had been sent home early but still paid, they came out again.

Many members now want to see ongoing action — Newcastle DHSS and Bootle National Giro HQ carried the strike through to the end of the week.

The problem is that the union leadership does not want to involve the whole of the membership in action.

Headquarters supported Edinburgh and Glasgow coming out, but told other branches to have workplace protest meetings.

CPSA members in some branches were instructed to cross picket lines set up by members of the Society of Civil and Public Servants who were coming out in West Scotland, and the NEC last week decided against supporting the regional one-day strikes of SCPS members.

Ken Thomas, our general secretary, is strengthening the government's wages limits by



STEWART McLENNAN

supporting the Concordat, rather than isolating them for denying us a decent wage.

It is vital that control over the campaign is put firmly in the hands of the rank and file.

The union area committees must take the lead in convening area action committees to link

up the strike leaderships in each office and branch.

Most importantly, a national conference of area committees is vital to provide the national lead that can reject any staged deal and escalate action — because that lead will not come from the NEC.

LABOUR IN CRISIS

THE CONCORDAT

In its own words

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

'The nation is facing immense problems... But some things are clear. There is no answer in confrontation. Solutions to our problems have to be found in agreement...'

'...where unofficial action has taken place unions should take energetic steps to get a return to normal work...'

'Strike action should only be taken in the last resort... Unions need to have regard to the viability of the employing establishment, to the effect on employment and earnings, and on other workers and the community...'

'The TUC emphasises the vital necessity of maintaining supplies and services essential to the health and safety of the community; of maintaining plant and equipment, and sustaining livestock during industrial disputes.'

UNION ORGANISATION

'...union rules should provide for strike ballots...'

'...the closed shop need not be a rigid arrangement.'

PICKETING

'...confine picketing to premises of the parties to the dispute... Badges or armbands should be carried or worn by pickets so that they are clearly identifiable as authorised pickets... any request for members of another union not to cross picket lines should be directed to the appropriate official or body of the other union...'

'(Pickets must) act in a disciplined and peaceful manner even if they are provoked by non-unionists or others... any person who joins a picket line must accept instructions from the person who is in charge...'

'It will help to ensure that picketing is peaceful if an experienced member, preferably a union official, is in charge... He (sic) should ensure that the number of pickets is no larger than is necessary...'

'It is also important that

More Anti-Concordat Signatures

THE executive of Hull Trades Council take prime spot in this week's list of sponsors of the Anti-Concordat. Eight members have sent in signatures. They are:

Tony Fee, T&G Docks steward, President, Hull Trades Council; Harry Gurevitch, NUT and Hull Trades Council executive; Jan Brooker, AUEW steward, Hull Trades Council Asst. Sec.; Phil Schulz, NUR Docks, Hull Trades Council executive; George Nix, FTAT, Hull Trades Council executive; Pauline Stanton, delegate ASTMS Div. Council No 1, Hull Trades Council executive; Pete Middleton, NUPE, Hull Trades Council executive; Trevor Leathley, APEX (British Aerospace, Brough), Treasurer, Hull Trades Council.

Council. In addition, we've had in signatures from: Hugh Lowe and Dominic Costa, ASTMS No 8 Divisional Council; Bob Lloyd, ASTMS shop steward, 251 Publishing Branch, Oxford; Bobby McLean, chairperson, CPSA DNS Glasgow; Margaret Barron, CPSA Sec., Glasgow Area Committee; Steve Cardownie, Sec., Scottish Office CPSA; Mark Mellor, EETPU senior steward, Hammond and Champness Lifts; Colin Calder, EETPU shop steward, Swansea Council; Alan Barclay, EIS rep., Fife Local Assn.; Carl Brecker, Chairperson, Hounslow NALGO; Pete Rowlands, Sec., Hounslow TC; Harry Cohen, NATFHE chairperson, Institute of Higher Education Joint Union Cttee.

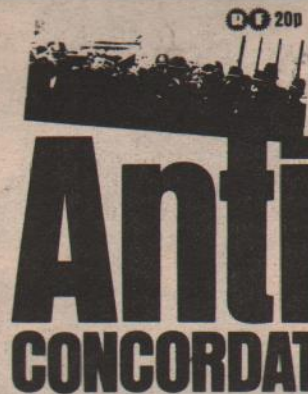
demonstrations of this kind (mass pickets) do not convey the impression that the object is to blockade a workplace...'

WAGES

'...there can be no doubt that a general rise in the level of money incomes which significantly outstripped the rate of output growth would be incompatible with our objective...'

'...we must set ourselves the task... of getting our inflation rate, within three years from now, down below 5 per cent...'

'...each year, before Easter, there should be a national



assessment by Government and both sides of industry of our economic prospects (to determine pay settlements)...

The fightback

THE campaign for the Concordat is taking off. Union headquarters are dispatching the Concordat's message in hundreds of thousands of copies. The latest copy of the TGWU Record carries the Concordat on its front page.

There's no doubt that, come the election, Callaghan, Murray and Co. will be presenting the Concordat as the answer to everything.

Meanwhile the Tories are using the Concordat to further their anti-union aims.

That makes the campaign for the Anti-Concordat all the more urgent. So...

*Put down a resolution in your union branch, shop stewards committee, etc.,

calling for rejection of the Concordat and the immediate recall of the TUC and Labour Party conferences to throw out Tory policies like the Concordat and forge a socialist solution to the crisis.

*Get the branch, stewards committee, etc., to order copies of the Anti-Concordat for distribution.

*Organise Anti-Concordat meetings in your locality involving the widest possible forces.

*Take the campaign for sponsors for the Anti-Concordat into the labour movement. Send names of sponsors, details of resolutions and local activities to Socialist Challenge.

Tories Seize Concordat Opportunity

'In talking about picketing, the closed shop and strike ballots we can no longer be accused of scaremongering or union bashing.'

— Tory employment spokesperson Leon Brittan.

'The Tories will introduce legislation on "the who, the when and where" of picketing. They will encourage through providing government money union secret ballots on strikes, elections and any other important decisions.'

— Tory employment spokesperson James Prior.

Ancillaries' lesson in leaders' 'democracy'

By Rich Palser

HOSPITAL ancillary workers have just been given a bitter lesson in what 'democracy' means to their union leaders.

At Monday's meeting of the Ancillary Council union side, the decision was taken to accept the offer of 9 per cent, plus £1 in advance of comparability.

They did this even though the majority of ancillary workers had voted to reject the deal.

The 123,000 majority against the deal amongst members of the National Union of Public Employees, added to the minority of votes against in each of the other unions, comes to more than half of the total 270,000 ancillary workers.

But although over half of all ancillaries are in NUPE, it only has four of the sixteen seats on the union side of the Ancillary Council.

So the other unions have given the NUPE executive little choice about whether to continue the fight, even though action by NUPE members was escalating.

But the NUPE leadership have hardly done all they could to prevent these manoeuvres. First they went along with the procedure which divided up the water workers from the local government workers, and the local government workers from the ancillaries.

Now, when the other union leaders divide ancillaries in one union from those in another, and use their votes to isolate the action by NUPE members, the NUPE executive is left high and dry.

Although it recommended rejection of the offer, it failed to make a call at the same time



for all-out national action — the only way that members of other unions could be convinced that continuing the struggle could bring further gains.

Nurses equally have cause for concern over their representation on the Nurses and Midwives Council. The 'no strike' Royal College of Nursing, along with other professional bodies, has a majority of votes over NUPE and the health union COHSE.

Whilst NUPE can correctly claim that any offer from the government will be the result of the action by local government

and ancillary workers, rather than the RCN's begging bowl tactics, it is only possible to prevent their sabotage of the pay campaign when all nurses can see an alternative.

One small example of that alternative strategy is being offered by COHSE members in Leamington.

At the local psychiatric hospital nurses have been staging regular strikes, with provision of emergency cover, and then picketing the hospital and leafleting the public.

They now plan to hold a strike and a march through the

town in support of their pay claim, and are approaching workers in the private sector to stage a stoppage at the same time and join the march.

In approaching workers in the private sector they are stressing that their march is not only in support of decent pay for nurses, but also against the cuts which result in understaffing and inadequate facilities.

Unfortunately NUPE is taking no action in that area, but the nurses will be approaching ambulance workers to make it a joint march.

Scottish teachers begin to move

By Mike Anderson and Des Tierney

ALMOST 50,000 teachers throughout Scotland came out on a one day national strike on 22 March in support of their pay demand.

The strike, called by the Educational Institute of Scotland which represents about 75 per cent of the teaching force, caused an almost total shutdown of the education sector.

This showed the anger of Scottish teachers at the insulting offer of eight per cent — the same as has been made to English and Welsh teachers. Their living standards have been cut by 42 per cent since 1974.

The EIS leadership, which has always supported incomes policy, is not waging a serious campaign. They delayed action until two weeks before the holidays, and only propose selective action in a small number of schools.

They have even offered to accept a nine per cent increase if 'cast iron guarantees' of phased increases are given, and have indicated they will accept reference of the claim to the comparability commission.

In contrast Rank and File Teacher in Scotland, which groups together all the far left, independents and members of the Labour Party, have been energetically campaigning for a minimum flat rate increase of £20 for all teachers, and for all out strike action to win the claim.

At rallies throughout Scotland the Rank and File position got broad support, and the executive is under considerable pressure to organise more than the selective action scheduled to begin on 27 March.

Two things are crucial in developing a fight back. Firstly, the actions proposed by the executive must be widened into an all out strike. Secondly, and equally importantly, unless the demands of English and Welsh teachers are pushed forward the Scottish teachers may be isolated and defeated as they were in 1974.

Rank and File and the Socialist Teachers Alliance in England must call for action on their pay claim now, and attempts must be made to co-ordinate north and south of the border.

Garners

DELEGATES from Yarrow shipyard in Glasgow, Liverpool Trades Council, and Rover Solihull were among the 700 who marched past Garners steakhouses in Central London on Saturday after a rally in Hyde Park.

The strike by immigrant workers for union recognition is now in its 15th month, with little practical help from the Transport Union.

The 15 Garners workers who remain on strike — most of those who originally joined the picket lines have now been forced to take jobs elsewhere — are determined to win the right to union representation.

Has your organisation invited a Garners speaker yet? See What's Left for details of daily pickets. A series of film benefits starts this Sunday, with Dread, Beat and Blood and Dark Star at the Gate Cinema, Notting Hill, W11, at 1pm. Tickets £1.

HOME NEWS

Fighting for jobs at Lucas

New stewards' report

THE NAME Lucas Aerospace has become associated in the labour movement both with ruthless multinational management and powerful shop floor organisation.

The initiative of the Lucas Aerospace Combine Shop Stewards Committee (LACSSC) in producing their Corporate Plan to counter the threat of redundancies has evoked widespread support in the labour movement.

Last year the Labour Party conference unanimously endorsed the plan's central message — defending jobs through asserting 'the right to work on socially useful products'. Workers in other plants and industries are now producing their own alternative plans.

Initiatives like these will be the subject of discussion at the second trade union conference organised by Socialist Challenge on Saturday 28 April. Meanwhile the Lucas stewards have produced a further report — 'Turning Industrial Decline Into Expansion: A Trade Union Initiative'.

By Jonathan Silberman

THE Lucas Corporate Plan has won support from an incredibly wide range of people and organisations.

So persuasive is its message — the right to work on socially useful products — that Industry Minister Gerald Kaufman was forced to say in the House of Commons on 12 June last year that 'Ministers have consistently welcomed the initiative of the Lucas Aerospace stewards'.

Yet Kaufman made this remark in the course of announcing government aid of £8m to Lucas Aerospace (LA) — a mere three months after the company had decided to make 2,000 workers redundant.

Since the early 1970s, the workforce in what is now known as the Engine Management Division has been more or less halved. The new proposals, including the closure of the Liverpool factory, would nearly halve this again.

The Labour government's cash hand-out effectively aims to help smoothe the way towards eliminating the jobs of highly skilled and able workers.

This is just one item in a brilliant exposure of Kaufman and the Labour government carried out in the 400-page report produced by the Lucas stewards.

This points out that in the period 1971-77, LA was awarded £10.15m of govern-

ment money through investment grants, regional development grants and so on — during which time the workforce was cut from 18,000 to 13,000.

Like other major companies, Lucas also receives substantial tax deferrals which amounted to £75m in 1977-78, £54m in 1976-77, and £31m in 1975-76. Benevolent as ever, Dennis Healey announced in his 1978 Budget speech that most or all of these deferrals will be written off!

This is just part of a close relationship between LA and the Labour government which goes beyond the strictly financial field.

Thus John Williams has been seconded for two years from his present post of LA deputy chairperson to be Sir Leslie Murphy's side-kick at the NEB; while Sir Anthony Part, a former Permanent Secretary at the Department of Industry, is now on the LA board of directors.

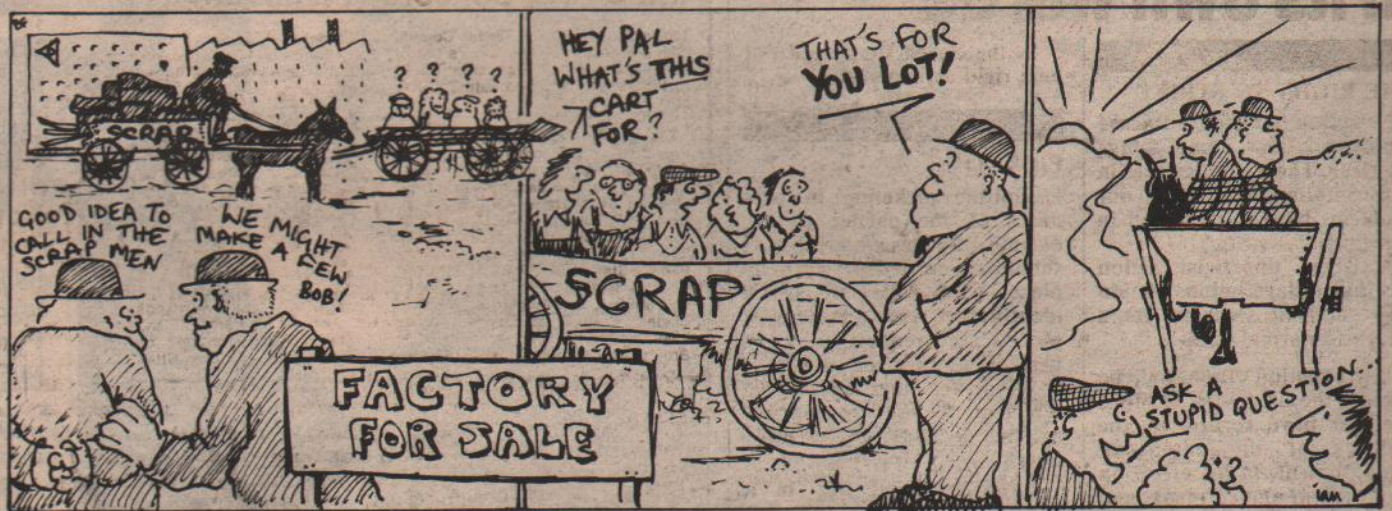
Co-operation does not end here. The National Gas Turbine Research Establishment, a government institution, is now going to take on research work for LA. This job was formerly done entirely at the LA Shipley factory.

For obvious reasons there is also bound to be a significant degree of co-operation between Lucas Defence Systems and the Ministry of Defence, though sadly the stewards have not managed to open these books.

Another aspect of the report is its excellent exposure of LA mismanagement. Reading it, one can only conclude that workers' management would be highly superior to the present outfit.

Furthermore, the contrast between the government's hand-outs to the company and its refusal to give a firm commitment to achieve even the same number of new kidney machines per head of population as in other European capitalist countries underpins the combine's conclusion in the original plan that it represents a 'fundamental challenge to many of the economic and ideological assumptions of our society'.

It is when the report begins to investigate the whole area of alternatives to job loss that it becomes critically weak, paving the way for the rhetoric of people like Kaufman. This is because it takes into account the question of financial viability.



Financial viability under capitalism means only one thing — the ability to make a profit.

At the beginning, for instance, the stewards counter the company's assertion that 'a shrinking market is forcing it to undertake the present rationalisation exercise' by saying that, on the contrary, 'there will be greater business opportunities for Lucas Aerospace, providing, of course, that management has the will and capability to seize them'.

Talking about the heat pump project currently under way at Burnley, the report calls for its acceleration and recommends the establishment of 'a product support, commercial sales and engineering back-up team'.

An immediate problem with such positions is that they tend to play into the hands of the company's original reply to the

Corporate Plan, when LA stated: 'The only way to secure jobs in the market economy is to manufacture the products which the company is best at producing efficiently and profitably'. You end up by arguing what is most efficient and profitable.

A second danger is that this can divide LA workers from those in other companies. The section proposing the production of non-aerospace fuel control systems, for instance, cites the growth of Rolls Royce's share of the market as a justification for LA activity in this field.

But if it's in the interests of Lucas workers for LA to enter the market, isn't it also in the interests of RR workers to safeguard their company's share of the market?

This latest report has therefore moved some way

from the position consistently advanced by the combine in the past, that 'it is certainly not the assumption of this Corporate Plan that Lucas Aerospace can be transformed into a trail-blazer to change this situation in isolation. There can be no islands of responsibility and concern in the sea of irresponsibility and depravity.'

Implicit in this was the need for a national plan which could transform the 'sea'. Hence the demand for the nationalisation of LA without compensation and under workers control, to which the LACSSC is formally committed.

In formulating its demands on the Labour government, however, the report starts from the narrower technical question of how to generate the necessary finance to get production going.

It concludes this section by

pointing out the various sections of the Industry Act, Local Employment Act, temporary employment subsidies and regional development grants through which a 'job security package of aid for a period of up to two years' can be granted.

But ultimately the decisive question is that it is the capitalist system which has created the problems of the Lucas workers. That's the importance of organising the fight for socialist policies in the unions.

*The Lucas stewards' 400-page report is available from CAITS, North East London Polytechnic, Longbridge Road, Dagenham, Essex RM8 2AS, at £4.50 for shop stewards committees and trade union branches, £10 for individuals and £40 for educational and other institutions.

With friends like these...

THE militant rank and file organisation adopted by the Lucas Combine Committee has had a completely raw deal from the trade union leadership.

On 2 September 1976, the combine received a message of support from the deputy general secretary of TASS, the white collar section of the AUEW engineering union. This stated that the 'decision of the Executive Committee was to accept the general concept of the Plan'.

But when the company announced 2,000 redundancies in March last year, with the closure of factories in Liverpool, Bradford and Coventry, TASS general secretary Ken Gill laid it on the line: 'Contrary to statements widely circulated, the "Corporate Plan" is not the official policy of TASS.'

The company had in fact discussed the closure plans with the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, but refused to meet the combine because, as one company representative put it, 'the national officials of the trade unions would rap me very firmly over the knuckles'.

Ernie Scarbrow of the combine commented in a letter to the CSEU last July: 'You will know that for the past five years the Lucas workers have succeeded in preventing the

management from carrying out one single direct sacking. It would be a sad reflection if, now that the CSEU is involved, it is going to undermine that position...'

These fears were well-founded. At a company-wide meeting of the full 72 CSEU stewards a fortnight ago, on 15 March, CSEU leaders Roy Grantham (APEX) and Alex Ferry (TGWU) manoeuvred to water down proposals from the LA committee of the CSEU.

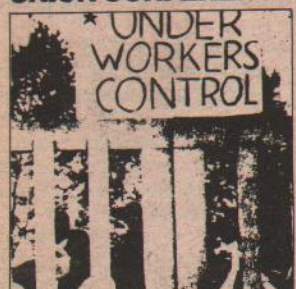
These were to insist on no job loss as a condition for participation in any new working party; that the delegates to this working party be responsible to the committee and subject to instant recall; that the delegates be Mike Cooley and Phil Asquith; and that the CSEU committee be ongoing 'with facilities to monitor every aspect of the company's restructuring activities, including the monitoring of all sub-contract work both internal and external'.

The proposals were eventually endorsed with no-one against, however, despite the antics of Ferry and Grantham. It is this emphasis on militant struggle and organisation and not on the CSEU leaders' desire for collaboration with the employers which has been the basis of all the achievements within Lucas Aerospace.



ROY GRANTHAM, general secretary of APEX: attacked the no-job loss basis of participation in the joint working party.

NATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFERENCE



Workers' Plans and Workers' Control

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

Organised by Socialist Challenge



Abortion, com 31 MAR WOMEN

INTERNATIONALISM is a word that crops up frequently in the textbooks of revolutionaries. But rarely does a march from Hyde Park find itself in solidarity with similar events in 17 countries all raising the same demand.

'Women decide!' is the slogan which is uniting hundreds of thousands of women across the world in the struggle to gain control over their own fertility.

Governments everywhere seek to control women's fertility. Their reasons vary. It may be to boost or cut population; to keep women in the home or draw them into the labour market; or to assert the sanctity of the family as a safeguard against social rebellion.

Whatever the reasons that satisfy the interests of particular regimes, the result for women is the same. The state continues to play a dominant role in defining their place in society.

Being forced to go through with an unwanted pregnancy or forcibly denied the opportunity to have children spells misery for countless women across the world.

And having their bodies used as instruments of some government's policies denies them another fundamental right: to decide how they should conduct their own life.

In Britain, the fight for free abortion on demand has been at the forefront of the campaign for women's right to decide over their fertility. But black women within the campaign posed a different question. That for them, as

well as for white working class women with a large number of children, abortions were often only too readily available.

This race and class bias takes on even more sinister proportions in the neo-colonial world, where forced sterilisation is a common instrument of black population control.

It has been the ability of the International Campaign for Abortion Rights, which has inspired and helped to organise the co-ordination of events in 17 countries this Saturday, to unite the demands for abortion, contraception, and no forced sterilisation that has given the campaign its international dimension.

On 8 March, International Women's Day, there were important developments all over the world.

In Barcelona, 5,000 women held an illegal demonstration and were attacked by the police.

In Iran, it was the withdrawal of birth control pills from chemists shops together with the Khomeini government's confirmation of the ban

The day-care way to abortion

A NEW campaign aimed at making the National Health Service responsible for providing adequate abortion facilities in every area was launched in Britain earlier this week.

The National Abortion Campaign — which set up the campaign — wants health authorities to be required to provide these facilities in the same way that today they must make contraceptives available.

The National Abortion Campaign is already aware of 19 local campaigns for day-care abortion units. Judy Watson, a member of the International Marxist Group on NAC's steering committee, explains that the new campaign will strengthen this local activity by providing a national orientation.

'With one in every ten women having an abortion at some time in their life — and half of them are forced to pay privately — there is an overriding need for safe, early, and easy abortions which day-care units can offer,' says Judy.

'If we are to win a change in the law it will only come about through a vigorous, nationally co-ordinated campaign. But it's not much use changing the law if we then find that facilities aren't forthcoming.'

The need to amend the law has been a point of debate within the pro-choice

movement since its inception.

The movement has had its activity structured by the anti-abortionists since 1975, and while all agreed on the need to resist these attacks,

One idea that was discussed in the Abortion Campaign draft Bill to prevent interference by women's fertility. But thanks to the British constitution doesn't exist impossible to be rights.

Without a constitutional Bill of Rights changes in the amendments to the number of existing which hardly lent campaign seek

INTERNATIONAL DEMONSTRATION
LONDON MARCH 31st
HYDE PARK meet at 1.30pm
to TRAFALGAR SQUARE RA

many consider that the campaign needs to do more than respond to the reactionary efforts of anti-abortion forces such as SPUC and Life.

What is also needed is a positive statement about what is entailed for a woman's right to choose.

support.

The aim of NHS responsibility for providing abortion therefore part of a broader goal of removing legal restrictions on women's control over their own bodies. The day-care

All photos: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Contraception and no sterilisation MARCH WORLDWIDE: WE MUST DECIDE!

Socialist feminists call for delegation to Iran

By Penny Duggan

SUPPORT for women internationally was one of the major themes of the socialist feminist national conference held in London last weekend.

Over 300 women packed into a meeting to hear Azar Tabari, just returned from Iran, recount events there. We decided to send a message of support from the conference to our sisters in Iran and to hold future meetings to organise solidarity actions.

The main aim will be to organise a delegation of British women to gain a first hand experience of the struggle in Iran, so that they can bring back reports — particularly to combat the distortions in the press. Azar stressed that the women in Iran very much need our support as their movement is very new.

In other workshops women argued that next year's conference should concentrate on discussing Britain's role as one of the major imperialist powers and what responsibilities that gave us as British feminists in building the international women's movement.

Some women felt that this would mean that the conference would be seen as a 'specialist' conference, but in many workshops the idea was well received.

It was also argued that International Women's Day has never been properly celebrated in Britain. The focus has been on our own particular struggles, rather than celebrating the multiplicity of women's struggles around the world. This needs to be rectified next year.

The conference, attended by 1,500 women, marked yet another step forward in the development of socialist feminism. The workshops on Saturday included lively discussions on pornography and censorship, and on the development of workers' plans and workers' control, particularly over the development of new technology.

Some women were disappointed that their workshops did not make any big steps forward, and it seemed to be the same old discussion. But the efforts by the planning group to get papers and workshop leaders so that all the workshops were well prepared for the most part seemed to have been well worth it.

Many women were disappointed that there was no plenary session, where we could all come together and have an idea of how far the socialist feminist current had reached in developing its politics. This was taken up in the workshops on Sunday, which all discussed strategy.

We discussed why we wanted plenaries. Could we decide things there that would really change women's activities? Were we trying to develop a consensus, was that even possible? What, in fact, did we mean by socialist feminism, and how much was there a contradiction between the two halves of our label?

None of these questions could be resolved, but the discussions which ranged over many other issues — from what we would do in the General Election to whether it is possible to make a free choice on childbirth under capitalism — seemed to many of us to be a step forward from our previous conferences, despite the unevenness.

★ Follow up meeting to produce a report from this year's socialist feminist conference and begin to organise next year's. Saturday, 21 April 1.30pm-6pm, St Ann's Hall, Venn St, London SW4 (check WIRES for venue).

If you can't come but want to send your comments, please write to: 27 Villa Road, Brixton, London SW11.



concluded that forced sterilisation is being carried out.

France's abortion law comes up for review next January. It gives only limited rights to abortion, and there are few state facilities. Anti-abortionists have recently gone on the offensive in Switzerland, where most cantons only allow abortion when there is 'grave danger to health'.

Between a thousand and 1,500 women die each year in Colombia from backstreet abortions, and the quarter of a million women who obtain these annually are liable to prison sentences of between one and six years. The United States has invested \$3m in the Colombian Family Planning Institutes, which carry out an extensive sterilisation programme.

Eve of Demo Benefit

National Abortion Campaign
International Campaign
for Abortion Rights

Barry Forde, Pam Nestor,
and Liz Christian
Friday, 30 March. 7pm to 11.45.

Tickets £2 at the door, £1.50 in advance
Porchester Hall, Porchester Road,
Bayswater, London W2.

across large sections of the globe this Saturday. Here is a checklist of some of the countries involved:

In Belgium, where abortion is part of the criminal code, women's centres which give advice about abortion and contraception are regularly harassed by the police.

The abortion issue caused a governmental crisis in Italy three years

April 28, Hyde Park ANTI-SPUC PICNIC

The anti-abortionists are holding a rally, so why not celebrate the International Day of the Wanted Child with the National Abortion Campaign.

ago, when the Communist Party initially blocked with the ruling Christian Democrats to ensure that abortion remained illegal.

The Catholic Church and the medical profession fiercely oppose the 1978 law which introduced extremely limited abortion rights, and 94 per cent of doctors refuse to carry it out. Women are occupying hospitals in Turin and Rome to ensure that abortions are carried out.

Israel's abortion law reform was passed in 1977. Women have to go before government committees to obtain permission for an abortion, and the present government has been

attempting to rule out abortions granted on social and economic grounds.

Abortion in Peru is outlawed by both the civil and criminal codes. Many women die as a result of backstreet abortions, estimated at 140,000 a year.

Although abortion is a crime in Holland, it has been tolerated for the past 10 years because of a militant campaign by the women's movement. Events on Saturday will include a cycle demonstration passing the embassies of countries with particularly restrictive abortion laws. A stall selling contraceptives will be set up outside the Irish embassy in The Hague.

In Australia, sterilisation is practised on Aboriginal women without their full knowledge, and in all but one state — South Australia — abortion is illegal.

The only birth control clinics in Spain are run by the women's movement in Barcelona and Madrid. Contraception was recently legalised, but is not widely available. Abortion remains a crime, and 3,000 women a year are estimated to die from back street abortions.

Although abortion is legal in West Germany, women must give prior consent to the removal of their uterus where 'complications' arise. With such 'complications' occurring in 20 to 30 per cent of abortions at a number of hospitals, the women's movement has



BANTHE JAB! That's the slogan of the campaign against Depo-Provera, a birth control drug containing massive doses of a synthetic hormone associated with cancer risks and other severe health disorders.

Internationally, the majority of the three to five million women on Depo — frequently without their knowledge or consent — live in neo-colonial countries. In Britain it is used mainly on black and working class women.

Contact the campaign c/o ICAR, 374 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1.

What next for the international campaign

TONI GORTON, the national convenor of the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, has attended most of the international meetings which have planned this Saturday's events. She spoke to Socialist Challenge about how the collaboration come about and what happens next.

How did the international coordination reach its present impressive level?

The beginnings were tentative, but the need was obvious. Everywhere the state is trying to exert its control over women's fertility, and the anti-abortion forces are highly organised internationally.

The Church, population control agencies, the Right to Lifers, international drug companies — all have taken practical measures to mount a united offensive against women's interests. So women have to respond in kind.

The need for collaboration was also evident at the practical level in cases where women are unable to obtain abortions in their own country because of restrictive laws.

In Britain, abortions have been easier to obtain than in Spain or Italy, so links were often first established through these channels.

And once abortion campaigns got off the ground in different countries, there was a need to exchange information and experiences.

Will the internationalist co-ordination extend beyond 31 March?

Most definitely. One major proposal to be further discussed at the next planning meeting to be held in Amsterdam next month, for example, is an appeal for an international conference on fertility control.

abortions and its declarations that veils were compulsory, which brought many thousands of women onto the streets on 8 March and the following days.

They declared: 'We didn't make a revolution to get a worse situation.'

The growth of women's movements in numerous countries over the past 10 years has undoubtedly helped to forge and strengthen the determination of Iranian women to make the fight for their liberation part of the revolutionary struggle.

The forces ranged against these revolutionary developments — the same forces whose material interests dictate that women must not take control of their fertility — are well practised in international organisation.

One of the most sensational examples of this co-ordination has been uncovered in the course of the Muldergate revelations. The South African Department of Information last year financed a campaign to remove the liberal US Senator, Dick Clark, chairperson of the Senate Africa Committee.

It did this not by openly challenging Clark's positions on apartheid but by pouring money into the 'Right to Life' campaigners who challenged Clark's pro-choice stand! He was defeated.

This further underlines the significance of the demonstrations and meetings which will be taking place

has mapped out its work for the next year. It wants to work closely with other pro-choice activists in the feminist and labour movements, including women and health groups, anti-cuts campaigns, and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign.

Regional meetings will help prepare for events such as the Fight Back conference scheduled for May to discuss cuts and closures in the health service. The idea of a Women and Health Tribunal, raised at the recent Women and Health Conference, is also being discussed.

It is hoped to hold a national trade union conference on abortion facilities by spring 1980.

More immediately, campaigners will be confronting prospective candidates in the General Election to demand that they actively fight for changes in legislation, as well as for more facilities now.

NAC will be holding a meeting for people willing to support the day-care campaign at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital in London — itself at the centre of a struggle for women's health rights — on 27 April.

WHAT'S LEFT

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

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Tendency. Last in a series of four public forums. No. 4: 'Crisis: Workers versus the State'. Keith Tompson. Friday 30 March, 7.30pm. The Roebuck, 108A Tottenham Court Road. Goodge St and Warren St tubes.

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Tendency public meeting: 'The Labour Party and Racism - Smash All Immigration Controls'. Speaker Gareth Evans. Britannia Pub, Mare St, E8. (Near Hackney Town Hall). Friday 6 April 8pm.

REVOLUTIONARY Communist Papers No. 4. (Theoretical journal of the Revolutionary Communist Tendency). Critique of Eurocommunism and the revisionist theory of the state, by Frank Richards. Other articles on CPGB and incomes policy; the Irish republican movement. 50p plus 15p postage. Make cheques payable to RCT Association, BM RCT(4), London WC1V 6XX.

WILL Socialist Unity social, Friday 6 April. Further details from any SU supporters.

BRITAIN out of Ireland. Prisoners Aid Committee and Revolutionary Communist Group joint London Forum no. 7. H Block, Torture and the Bennett Report. Speaker Terry Marlowe. 2 April. Conway Hall, Red Lion, W1. 7.30pm. Admission 20p. Holborn tube.

PEOPLES News Service benefit: film by Red Sisters Collective, *Take it like a man, ma'am.* 1 April, 1pm Scala Cinema, Tottenham St W1. £1.50 at door or PNS, 739 9093 x7.

RAPE: Facts and fantasies, politics and experience - a major theme. Plus: Agee - Spies in Italy; Geoff Hodgson - Alternative Economic Strategy; Ten years of squatting; Men Against Sexism; Crass; Le Carra; ANL's future, and lots more in the new *Leveller*. 40p single copy, £6 annual sub. 57 Caledonian Rd, London N1.

NALGO Campaign Against Low Pay conference - called by NALGO Action, Sat 7 April, 11.30am to 4pm. Hamilton Hse, Mabledon Place, London WC1. All NALGO members welcome.

RAR GIG with Crisis and Hard Core. Dame Ciel House, Ben Jonson Rd, London E1. 8.00pm Friday 30 March. Bar and disco.

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 54, 12-13 Henrietta St., London WC2. 01-240 1056.

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 see each. Bulk orders - 20 for £3. All money in advance to S Yanowitz, 116 Fortune Green Rd, London NW6.

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

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

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. Weppler, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP (tel. 01-359 8371).

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

HOME NEWS

Oldham marches against detentions

By Pete Clifford

THREE HUNDRED people marched through Oldham on Saturday calling for the withdrawal of the deportation order on Oldham youth Abdul Azad, and the scrapping of the racist immigration laws.

Bengalis and other Asians from Oldham led the march. They were followed by contingents from the Bradford Asian Youth Movement, Manchester overseas students, the Anti Nazi League, Socialist Challenge, and the Socialist Workers Party, as well as people from Rochdale, Huddersfield and Tameside.

Over half the demonstrators then went on to picket the Risley detention centre in Cheshire, to be joined there by Sheffield Bengalis and the Edge Hill Socialist Unity Campaign. The demonstration went ahead despite the fact that Abdul Azad had been temporarily released the previous Monday - the third time he had been released since his

original detention in October. The Home Office, obviously worried by the pickets of Risley on Saturday 17 March, temporarily lifted the deportation order, and released some of their forensic evidence through which they claim Azad is not the son of his father and his mother.

The response of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, and the Bangladeshi High Commission, has been to say that this evidence is not sufficient grounds for deportation. Therefore they are conducting their own inquiries and tests to ascertain his parentage.

In other words they are not openly challenging the brutality Azad faced for ten days in Oldham police station, or indeed the use of the undemocratic and racist immigration laws.

In contrast the majority of the demonstrators at Risley warmly applauded speakers who called for continued action to secure his release on the basis



Asians on the march in Wolverhampton against racist attacks and police harassment, 11 March 1978.

of opposition to the immigration laws.

Since the 1971 Immigration Act became law, over five thousand people have been held for deportation, denied the right to trial by jury or an appeal, held for several months on end, and subjected to intimidation by the police.

Indeed six other people are at present being held in Risley, pending deportation. This led to calls at the picket for all 'prisoners of race' to be freed.

At the Risley rally speakers from Socialist Challenge and the Black Socialist Alliance

called for an inquiry organised by black and labour movement bodies into the evidence of police brutality against Azad and all other cases of harassment by the police and racists in Oldham.

This could help encourage permanent organisation of self-defence by the black community. The Abdul Azad Defence Committee will now be going out to build more support in the black community and labour movement.

The absence of the Allied Textile Workers Union [Azad himself is a textile worker],

Oldham Trades Council and the Labour Party from the march needs to be challenged, in particular by rank and file textile workers.

The Bradford Asian Youth Movement has called for a national conference on immigration. This can provide a focus for the campaign to defend Abdul Azad and all the other struggles against detentions.

Messages of support and further details from the Abdul Azad Defence Committee, c/o 63 Sylvan St, Chadderton, Oldham. 061 624 8421.

'My acquittal proves what we said about police' - Stevens



Demonstrators picket Risley detention centre on 17 March

IS there any defence for victims of state harassment? DAVE STEVENS, recently acquitted on charges of assaulting police officers during a demonstration against racism, is living proof that there is.

In this interview, he says why he thinks the campaign in his defence succeeded.

What did you think about the way the trial itself was conducted?

The need for a well organised legal defence was taken seriously from the beginning.

But the defence campaign outside the legal arena also had its effect.

The lobbying of the Home Secretary, especially by MPs, meant that we got a judge who was going to make sure that there could be no complaints from us about the conduct of the trial. This is what happened.

'Support the Wolverhampton anti-racists' has been one of the most successful defence campaigns in recent years. How is this?

I agree with that in two senses. First, in that we won very broad support, ranging from MPs, trade union leaders, and black and immigrant organisations to anti-racist committees and ANLs.

But it's also been seen in terms of the outcome in court. Of the twelve charges brought against the five people arrested on the 11 March demonstration, only two have so far resulted in conviction - both on minor charges. Not a high success rate.

It's important to view this against the background of the growth of the anti-fascist movement, especially the Anti Nazi League. This made it much easier for us to take up the issue in trade unions, and with MPs.

Part of this, of course, has to do with the growing concern with defence against racist attacks and police harassment.

It should not be forgotten that my arrest occurred because the Anti-Racist Committee was in the forefront of a campaign against police harassment.

The arrests on 11 March very seriously affected our campaign on police harassment.

The demonstration was intended to call attention to a dossier of complaints against the police, and the demand for an investigation into the police was growing stronger. But the arrests almost completely demobilised this campaign.

My acquittal proves that what we were saying about police behaviour is true. As my defence lawyer put it in court, the police concocted the charges against me.

What is this if not

harassment? We intend to use my acquittal to revitalise the issue of police harassment in general in the town.

How will this be done?

We intend to use the video used in my defence to make a film of police harassment in Wolverhampton for showing locally and nationally.

Renée Short MP has already agreed to arrange a showing of this film in the House of Commons, as part of her campaign to get a Home Office inquiry into the police evidence concocted against me.

We are also considering organising a further labour movement inquiry into police harassment using my case and many complaints we've received in the last year. As part of this we are considering legal action against the police.

Would you like to say anything else?

Only to thank everybody who supported the campaign, especially the Indian Workers Association of Great Britain and its president, N.S. Noor. Without this support I might be sitting in prison today.

Can I also add that the defence campaign has not finished. Dave Hines still has to be tried, and we must not let him become a scapegoat for the police.

Immigration Act forces abortion

By Alan Theasby

SHEMIN Mohammed is pregnant and wants to have her baby. But she has arranged to have an abortion because her Pakistani husband Asfal is to be deported in a few weeks time.

'My family will be broken up' and my children will have no father', Shemin explained.

'Worse is that my unborn child will not have any fatherly love. I do not think I could bear that' - which is why she wants an abortion.

Asfal has overstayed a visitor's entry permit and has not been allowed to become a permanent British resident like Shemin, who lives in Sleights, near Whitby, in North Yorkshire.

CAIL Newsletter

THE anti-racist movement has always needed good publications to put information at its finger-tips.

One well known example is Searchlight, which keeps us up to date on the activities of the fascists.

A new and scarcely known example is the Newsletter of the Campaign Against the Immigration Laws [CAIL].

The first issue now out contains reports on how the 1971 Immigration Act results in 'prisoners of race', the government's Green Paper on nationality law, and how the immigration laws affect political refugees, as well as campaign activities against the laws - such as the call for a conference by the Bradford Asian Youth Movement.

CAIL told us: 'We want the newsletter to not only explain what's wrong with the immigration laws. We also want to show how these laws are being challenged in action by different campaigns and organisations up and down the country.'

'To do this effectively we need our affiliates, and any organisation or individual

active on this issue, to send us reports and spread their experience.'

Why not get your ANL branch, anti-racist committee, union branch or Labour Party ward to take copies? Better still affiliate to CAIL.

The Newsletter costs 5p and is available from: CAIL, Box 133, Rising Free Bookshop, 182 Upper St, London N1.

How Labour fuels apartheid

SOLIDARITY all too often seems like a pious hope rather than a practical possibility. But trade unionists in North West England are proving that assistance to the trade unionists and liberation movements of southern Africa is eminently practical.

The have uncovered the route used by the British government to import uranium mined by South Africa in occupied Namibia. The decision of a Labour government to buy Namibian uranium as long ago as 1970 has been an important factor in allowing South Africa to develop nuclear weapons.

By Richard Carver

CO-OPERATION between trade unionists and anti-apartheid campaigners in the North West has uncovered the route by which uranium from South African-occupied Namibia reaches the British government's nuclear fuels agency.

Secrecy has surrounded the traffic in the past because it is in violation of the United Nations' decisions on the protection of Namibian natural resources. The uranium could theoretically be seized and the British government would find itself liable to pay damages to a



SWAPO leader Sam Nujoma

future independent Namibian government.

More practically the government is worried that the exposure of the trade will make it vulnerable to action by trade unionists who see the deal as a tacit recognition of the South African occupation of Namibia.

But research and solidarity activity has now established that:

*The uranium ore leaves Namibia by air from Walvis Bay and arrives in Europe at the Charles de Gaulle airport, Paris;

*Edmundson's of Morecambe transport the ore via Liverpool to the British Nuclear Fuels Limited (BNFL) plant at Springfields, Preston, for extraction;

*Edmundson's then take the uranium to Almelo in the Netherlands (for commercial purposes) or Capenhurst in Britain (for military use) for purification and thence back to BNFL;

*Haulage companies take the fully processed uranium to the nuclear plants where it is to be used. Two companies involved in this are Pacific Nuclear Transport and Nuclear Transport Ltd, both of which are largely owned by the BNFL.

The uranium starts its life in the Rossing mine in Namibia, one of the largest in the world. The mine is partly owned by Rio Tinto Zinc (RTZ), the

British-based multinational. But the Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), wholly owned by the South African government, also has a large stake.

At first glance the equity holding reveals that RTZ has about a half share in Rossing — easily a controlling interest. But in fact there are two categories of shares with disproportionate voting powers. It seems that IDC holds most of the more potent shares, giving it effective control.

Certainly the South African Atomic Energy Act of 1967 gives the South African government sole powers to direct or restrict the mining and export of uranium.

Thus the pattern is that South Africa controls policy-making, while international mining companies like RTZ provide respectability, expertise and, most importantly, the ability to sell uranium overseas.

The South West Africa People's Organisation, Namibia's main liberation movement, explains: 'It is our view that foreign investment in Namibia is one of the major factors contributing to the continuing presence of South Africa's illegal occupying forces...

'Foreign companies are taking advantage of the immediate political situation in Namibia and it is necessary to emphasise that all mining titles and temporary prospecting rights granted after 1966 are illegal, and constitute moreover, a criminal exploitation of irreplaceable natural resources, which rightfully belong to the people of Namibia.'

It is in this context that the contract between RTZ and BNFL should be seen. The deal was made as long ago as 1968 and this advance contract was an important factor in allowing RTZ to go ahead with the development of Rossing and hence the regular supply of uranium to South Africa.

Uranium, of course, is an essential ingredient in the production of nuclear weapons.

The UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA), under the jurisdiction of the then Ministry of Technology, signed a contract with RTZ's Canadian subsidiary for the supply of uranium in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The deal, which specified that the uranium would come from Canada, was approved at Cabinet level. It was also agreed that if the contract had to be switched to South Africa the Cabinet should be informed.

In 1970 it was accidentally discovered that the UKAEA was about to sign contracts for the supply of uranium from

Has Benn learned his lesson?

ONE of the shafts in the Rossing uranium mine is known as the Wedgwood Benn shaft. It is a fitting tribute to the Labour Minister who has done most to promote British support for the South African nuclear project.

Tony Benn was the Minister of Technology in the late 1960s who originally approved the contract between the Atomic Energy Authority and RTZ.

But that was before he acquired his present left-wing credentials. In opposition in 1973 he admitted he had been wrong to approve the deal, in a letter to the Guardian:

'We have already decided to terminate the AEA-RTZ contract. That particular case, in which neither the AEA nor RTZ were altogether candid with the last Labour Government, points to the need for even greater vigilance than has been shown in the past. As the Minister responsible at the time, I certainly learned that lesson.'

But did he? The argument that the government was deceived in 1970 will only last for so long. In five years of Labour government since 1974 the contract has still not been cancelled.

In a letter to the Namibia Support Committee in January Benn admits: 'The 1974 Government decided not to change the arrangements and although proposals were made



BENN: thinks he knows best

for the cancellation of the contract they were not accepted.'

He continues: 'Since then we have been working in the belief that the best course was to get independence (sic) for Namibia and I still believe that is probably the best thing we can do in the circumstances.'

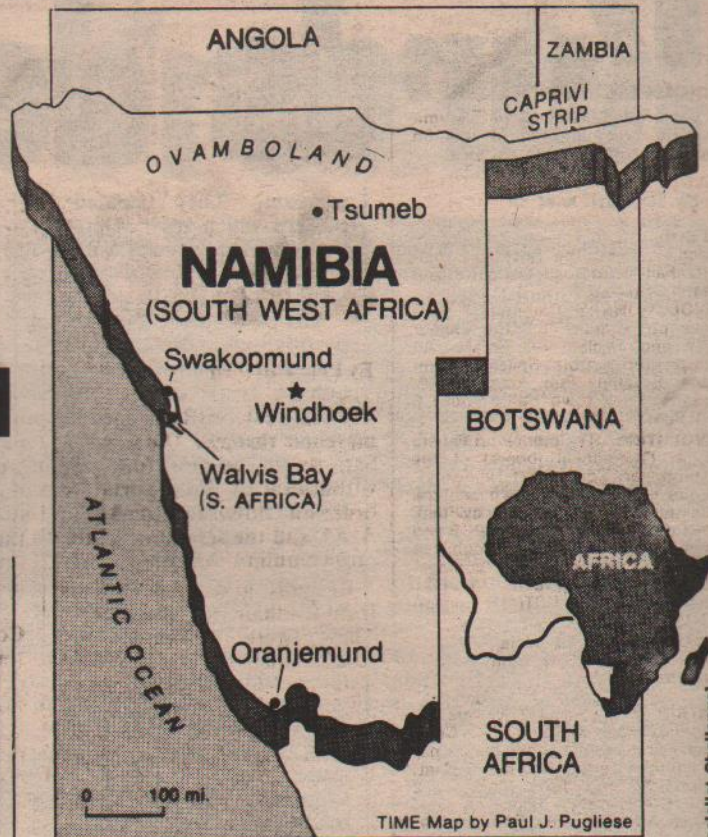
This is regardless of the fact that countless statements from the Namibian liberation movements have demanded an end to imperialist investment and mining in the country.

But perhaps Benn believes that the British government knows what's best for the Namibian people.



Rossing. Civil servants at the Ministry of Technology evidently made no distinction between South Africa and Namibia, and anyway appeared to have no intention of telling the Cabinet.

They need not have worried. When the Cabinet did come to discuss the contract it ignored a memorandum from the Attorney General saying that there was a *force majeure* clause which allowed either party to



Joint action can stop uranium

By John Parkinson
Secretary, Preston Trades Council

AT its annual general meeting last month the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils agreed to investigate the import of Rossing uranium through Edmundson's of Morecambe.

At the same time it endorsed the decision of the North West Anti-Apartheid trade union conference last November to sponsor a tour of the region by representatives of southern African trade unions and liberation movements.

It was at that conference that the campaign against the uranium imports got underway in the North West. The Anti-Apartheid Movement nationally had previously been aware that the traffic had been taking place but nothing had happened.

Collaboration between Preston Trades Council and North West Anti-Apartheid Movement established that the uranium was going to Springfields and that Edmundson's were transporting it.

At the Lancashire Association of Trades Councils meeting we were able to make contact with stewards from British Nuclear Fuels Limited. They had been under the impression that the uranium was from Australia!

withdraw.

Despite this — and despite the fact that there were plenty of other sources of uranium oxide — the Labour Cabinet decided to go ahead with the deal.

There is a massive divergence between Britain's stated policy over Namibia and its real attitude.

On paper the Labour government supports the United Nations in its condemnation of the South African occupation as 'illegal'. This position is far from adequate, but the uranium deal shows that it is still too radical for Whitehall.

At the same time as Foreign Secretary David Owen condemns South Africa's 'internal

What we need now is to translate the information we have gained into action to stop the traffic. This means building a campaign inside the unions involved, such as the TGWU and AUEW, to stop the handling of the uranium and to isolate and black Edmundson's or any other firm carrying the stuff.

Out of last November's conference was set up a Trade Union Liaison Committee which has organised the current tour of the North West by speakers from the South African Congress of Trade Unions, Zimbabwe African National Union, Zimbabwe African People's Union and South West African People's Organisation.

The tour, sponsored by the North West TUC, is an excellent way of taking the issue of southern African solidarity into workplaces and trade unions throughout the area.

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.

settlement' elections in Namibia, his government is in fact giving material aid to the South African mining industry in the country.

This holds a salutary lesson for Zimbabwe too. 'Internal settlement' elections are to be held there next month. There are those in the British labour movement who call on the government to carry out its 'colonial responsibilities' in dealing with the 'illegal' Smith regime.

If we are to learn anything from the Namibian experience it is that British governments — Labour or Tory — can do nothing in Africa except serve imperialist interests.

We only demand that they do one thing. Get out!

Photo: G.M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

Kurds defy 'Red Mullah'

By Richard Carver

THE ceasefire agreed between the Iranian government and Kurdish nationalist leaders at the weekend will only be temporary.

The most accurate gauge of Kurdish sentiment came from the two thousand pesh mergas (militia fighters) gathered outside the negotiations.

They shouted: 'We want an autonomous Kurdistan and a democratic Iran. We are not afraid of dying.' And then, in a play on the Kurdish word for cemetery: 'Kurdistan or kabrestan!'

The pesh mergas in the Kurdish capital of Sanandaj had been laying siege to the army garrison for the best part of a week. The Kurdish nationalist movement played a central (and largely unreported) role in the movement which brought down the Shah's regime.

As troops were moved from outlying provinces to deal with the upsurge in Tehran the Kurdish militias took advantage of the enemy's weaknesses to attack the occupying army.

The part played by the oppressed nationalities — half Iran's total population — went unrecognised by the religious leaders. Instead since the fall of the Shah the Kurds have had to put up with Khomeini's statements in favour of the unity of the Iranian state and the reinforcement of the hated garrisons.

A group of pesh mergas commented ironically on this last week, the Iranian New Year, as they wandered among a supply of mortar shells destined for the Sanandaj

garrison. They carried a placard which said: 'Here are the New Year presents offered by the revolutionary government to the Kurdish people.'

The pesh mergas outside the negotiations directed their comments against the 'anti-popular army, which must be destroyed and replaced by a people's army.'

As the negotiations were in progress an Iranian air force Phantom flew low over the city. A militia spokesperson went to the Interior Minister: 'Even if you bomb half Kurdistan, we won't give up the struggle for our legitimate rights.'

The government's representative in Sanandaj at the moment is the Ayatollah Taleghani — chosen, no doubt, both because he is a religious leader and because he supposedly has a left-wing record (he used to be known as the Red Mullah!).

But any radical pretensions had gone by the time he came to address the Kurdish crowd in Sanandaj. He recognised the Kurds' 'right to determine their own future' but went on: 'If I order General Gharani to recall his soldiers would you be able to govern your country on your own? No, I don't think so.'

Immediately the cry went up: 'Yes, yes we can! We don't want the army here! It should be destroyed!'

A Kurdish militant got hold of a megaphone and interrupted the Ayatollah's speech: 'We are adults. We want to make our own decisions; we want to elect our own leaders and form a democratic federation; we want freedom of the press, radio and television and the right to free expression.



Kurdish pesh mergas (militia fighters)

'We have suffered heavily for freedom, but what we have now is not the freedom we wanted. We want a federal state and a federal government for Iran.'

These seem to be the sentiments of most Kurdish militants and probably the bulk of the Kurdish population too: autonomy within a federal, multinational state.

But the crucial point is that the Kurds, along with all the other oppressed nationalities, should be freely able to determine their relation to the central state.

It also raises the question of freedom of worship for

minority religions. Most Kurds are Sunni Muslims, as opposed to the Shi'a majority in Iran, led by Khomeini. The 'Islamic republic' has so far offered them little.

The Kurds have tended to be the best organised of the minorities, primarily because of their close contact with the Kurdish national movements in Iraq, Turkey and Syria.

But the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI) has no formal links with the other Kurdish movements — an independence that is jealously guarded since the leaders of the Iraq-based Kurdish Democratic Party did a deal with the

Shah and collaborated with Tehran in hunting down those KDPI militants who carried on the armed struggle.

With the fall of the old regime the Kurds have been joined by a clamour of national demands.

In the oil province of Khuzestan 10,000 members of the Arab majority demonstrated on 10 March. They were demanding a larger share in oil revenues for the province, preferential hiring of Arabs and the adoption of Arabic as the main language.

The following day in Gonbad-e Qabus Turkmeni workers carried out a general

strike. Turkmenis too demand increased status for their language and greater finance for their region.

And on 12 March 4,000 Baluchis rallied in Zahedan. There were similar meetings in other Baluchi cities.

The situation in Baluchistan is more complicated, since the population has traditionally been sympathetic to the Pahlavi regime. But the nationalist movement now seems to be gaining ground.

The impact on the substantial Baluchi minorities in neighbouring Pakistan and Afghanistan could be explosive.

Iran conference can build links

By Steve Potter

IRANIAN women, Kurdish militants and Liverpool dockers will be among the speakers at a delegate conference on Iran this weekend in London. And there will be discussion on a proposal to support a women's delegation from Britain to Iran.

The Committee Against

Repression in Iran has called the conference. For years CARI fought inside the British labour and student movements to give a voice to those fighting against the Shah's empire of repression.

This fight won the sponsorship of Labour MPs, over 60 labour movement bodies and the National Union of

Students. Now, happily, the tasks of the solidarity movement are different.

The first theme of the conference will be 'Imperialist Hands Off Iran'.

The Western press is full of propaganda against Iran's 'retreat into the Middle Ages'. But this is not what concerns Carter and Callaghan. They are

worried about the mass movement which threatens to overturn capitalism in Iran.

The best way to stop imperialism derailing that movement is to take mass action in the imperialist countries to show that they would pay a big domestic political price for such sabotage.

Thousands of people lost their lives in the fight to bring down the Pahlavi regime. Now we should lend the Iranian people our full support to consolidate their freedom.

This means supporting the fight for complete freedom of expression and organisation for political parties, trade union rights, equality for women, self determination for national

minorities, and full rights for religious minorities.

The conference will be asked to give full support to the sending of a women's delegation to Iran. The proposal was raised at the 1500-strong socialist feminist conference last weekend.

Six women Labour MPs put down an early day motion in the House of Commons last week. Expressing its support for Iranian women in their courageous struggle for equality, it commanded the signatures of over 40 back-bench MPs.

This approach needs to be extended to the struggle for workers' rights in Iran, and a resolution to the conference will be calling for a labour

movement delegation to visit Iran.

It would see how the fight for trade union and political rights is being waged in Iran and how the British labour movement can help in overcoming the current obstacles to working class organisation.

Finally the CARI executive will ask the conference to adopt a new name to reflect its new tasks — the Campaign for Solidarity with Iran.

Afghani rebels threaten government

By Tariq Ali

RIGHT-WING Muslim rebels have seized parts of the city of Herat in Afghanistan and reaction has accelerated its propaganda campaign against the Taraki government.

Even if they survive the rebellion Mohammed Noor Taraki and his colleagues will have some crucial decisions to make in the coming months.

Afghanistan did not pass through a revolution. There were no major mass mobilisations leading to a seizure of power by a party committed to fundamental social change.

What took place was a radical coup which disintegrated important sections of the state apparatus, but did not destroy it.

The regime that followed the overthrow of the Daud dictatorship was a curious hybrid. The old state was not destroyed, but a pro-Moscow Communist Party exercised total governmental power.

It instituted a wide-ranging set of social and economic reforms and the basis existed for an all-out offensive against reactionary social forces.

But this could only have been carried through by an audacious policy of mass mobilisations and the formation of mass democratic bodies.

Taraki did the exact opposite. He instituted a classic Stalinist-type police state. He purged his old factional opponents and the Minister of Defence, Abdul Qadir, was one

of many who 'confessed' to their 'crimes'.

At the same time the press became even more monolithic than under the previous regime and the cult of 'comrade Taraki' dominated the media.


Mass enthusiasm for the regime began to decline and the Hizb-e-Islam [Party of Islam] backed by friends in Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia launched a counter-offensive.

The only way to resist this offensive is to embark on a full-scale social and political revolution. But Taraki and Moscow Radio are instead appealing to the masses in the name of the Koran.

The problem here is that the genuine believers are more adept at that particular tactic!

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.

AFRICAN STUDY GROUP
VOL. 1 NO. 3



CONTENTS PAGE
 INTRODUCTION 1
 AFRICAN FEUDALISM 2
 EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE AND GHANA 12
 CINEMA IN THE NEOCOLONIAL STATE 25
 IDEOLOGY 32
 IMAGES OF AFRICAN WOMEN 39
 NKURUMAH-CLASS STRUGGLE IN AFRICA 42

NEW issue of African Study Group bulletin now out. Available from most socialist bookshops or ASG, c/o Housmans Bookshop, 5 Caledonian Road, London N1. 40p + 20p.

Major test faces French CP dissidents

FRANCE has a new growth industry: the production of articles, pamphlets, books, even TV programmes by Communist Party members who oppose the leadership's line but have no means of expressing their disagreements within the party.

With a party congress less than two months off, things are now coming to a head in the opposition which has simmered since the left's election defeat a year ago.

By Martin Meteyard

The growth of major opposition inside the French Communist Party (PCF) dates from the split in the Union of the Left in September 1977, with the PCF on one side and the Socialist Party (PS) and bourgeois Left Radicals on the other.

The apparent reason for the split was the PS's refusal to accept the PCF's proposals on nationalisation. But it also reflected the fact that the PCF, which has always claimed to be the party of the working class, was rapidly being overtaken by the PS in electoral terms.

In this situation the party leadership had a choice: to break fundamentally with its past practices, launching a political fight for unity based on the struggles of the working class rather than simply negotiations between party apparatuses; or to try to stabilise its own forces through a retreat into sectarianism.

Not surprisingly, in view of its whole history, it chose the latter.

Hence the PCF leadership placed the entire responsibility for the election defeat on the PS, even though its refusal to pledge in advance that it would withdraw in favour of better-placed PS candidates in the second round was a major factor in breaking working class unity.

Since then its repeated attacks on the PS have reached such a pitch that they are beginning to echo the 'Third Period' denunciations of the social-democratic parties as 'social-fascist' in the 1930s.

There is a small problem with

this, however: half its members joined the party after 1972, during the time when the PCF placed almost its entire emphasis on the need for the Union of the Left with the PS. The rapid switch by the leadership has left them confused, angry and demoralised.

So the retreat into total sectarianism has been coupled with an internal crackdown on all who question this policy. Oppositionists have been ousted from positions of responsibility, and denied the possibility of discussion through party channels.

The 23rd congress of the PCF, to be held from 9 to 13 May, is intended to mark a further stage in this process of consolidating the apparatus and leadership at all levels, and weeding out the dissidents.

The way that the congress is being organised by the leadership means that the outcome is a foregone conclusion.

One main text has been submitted for discussion — by the leadership. No other texts are allowed, although the Pablo-Picasso cell in Normandy had the temerity to put one forward.

Gaston Plissonnier from the party secretariat wrote to them to explain why it would not be distributed to the membership:

'The method which consists of preparing a congress on the basis of several texts is a blow to the right of each member to participate separately in determining the policy of the party.'

What does this 'right' actually amount to? Grahame Lock described in the August

1978 issue of the British CP monthly *Marxism Today* how the policy of the PCF was determined at its 22nd congress — which voted, among other things, to drop all references to the dictatorship of the proletariat:

'Plissonnier tells us [in *l'Humanité*, 31 May 1978]: "4,968 amendments were presented by the sections to the federal conferences, of which 828 were transmitted to the National Congress"...

'He forgets to add, however, a small but not insignificant point: that not one of these amendments was adopted! The final Resolution accepted by the Congress was precisely the Draft Resolution, word for word, comma for comma. And it was of course adopted unanimously.'

The rigid control over the pre-congress discussion has put the dissidents in a quandary. Not only do they have a variety of different viewpoints, but many are not prepared to mount an open challenge to the leadership.

This came out clearly at a dissident meeting on 24 February called by supporters of Louis Althusser to discuss Eastern Europe.

Discussion inevitably spilled over onto the broader questions involved in the party debate. The Althusserian chairperson urged caution: 'We aren't here either to prepare the 23rd congress or to form a tendency.'

But as Hélène Parmelin, a member of the PCF for 35 years and a former journalist on *l'Humanité*, pointed out: 'You don't have the courage of your logic, to offer an alternative, a reason why all those in the party who are ready to leave it should remain as militants within it.'

Parmelin is among those who have signed a motion circulated by a new opposition journal, *Luttes et débats* (Struggles and Debates), which puts forward an alternative to the leadership text's 'globally positive' balance-sheet on Eastern Europe by proposing a series of immediate actions to be taken by the party (see box).

Luttes et débats has also published a further text signed by 15 worker militants which challenges the overall orientation of the party, calling for a plan of action based on workers' struggles with the perspective of a general strike leading to the establishment of a PCF/PS government.

The leadership has equally refused to publish this text, claiming that it is 'manifestly factional' because it is signed by militants from different sections and federations!

This only shows how necessary it is to organise openly against the divide-and-rule tactics of the leadership, with the right of tendencies so that the differences can find a clear political expression before the whole membership.

Such a struggle may in the long run be unable to change the bureaucratised PCF in any significant way, but it can play an important part in transforming the left as a whole.



Revolutionary youth group launched in France

By Redmond O'Neill

THE International Marxist Group was represented by five delegates to the founding conference of the Jeunes Communistes Revolutionnaires [Revolutionary Communist Youth] in Paris over the weekend of 17-18 March.

The conference followed a year of organising supporters around the youth paper *Barricades*, launched by the Revolutionary Communist League [LCR].

The new organisation starts with a membership of over 1,000, representing all sections of French youth — workers and school, technical college and university students.

Its declared aim is to unite all sections of youth with the working class for socialist revolution.

This will involve the JCR fighting to organise unions which independently organise the different sections of youth, and central political campaigns.

The conference decided on two campaigns to establish the JCR as a national organisation: an International March Against Youth Unemployment and a campaign to win abortion and contraception rights for youth.

Delegates also voted to campaign in defence of youth prosecuted under the French

age of consent laws and to send a telegram demanding that the United States government give political asylum to Hector Marroquin, a Mexican Trotskyist who faces the threat of deportation and imprisonment in Mexico.

The main debate at the conference concerned the attitude of the JCR to the Fourth International. At the vote, it was overwhelmingly agreed that the JCR, itself an independent organisation, should affiliate to the Fourth International.

As one speaker put it: 'The youth are not a class, we choose a class to fight with: the

working class. In choosing a class we must also choose a programme and a banner. We choose the programme of socialist revolution and world socialism. We choose to build an organisation which practically embodies that programme — the Fourth International.'

Revolutionary youth organisations from Portugal to the USA were represented at the conference, and we left feeling that an important step had been taken not simply in building a revolutionary organisation of French youth, but also towards re-building a Revolutionary Youth International.

Resolution on Eastern Europe

THE following is the text of a resolution on Eastern Europe which is being circulated in the PCF by the journal *Luttes et débats*.

'Numerous struggles for democratic rights are presently developing in the countries which call themselves socialist. The 23rd congress decides to give them active support. In consequence, it declares itself for:

'1. The withdrawal of Warsaw Pact troops from Czechoslovakia, as demanded at the time of their intervention in August 1968 by the commune of our political bureau.

'2. The breaking of ties and relations with the Czechoslovak CP.

'3. Active solidarity and the establishment of fraternal

relations with the KOR [in Poland], Charter 77 [in Czechoslovakia], and the free trade unions of Eastern Europe.

'4. The release of all political prisoners in the countries calling themselves socialist.

'5. The rehabilitation of all the victims of Stalinism and, among others, of Bukharin and Trotsky.

'6. The rehabilitation of Marty, of Tillon, and of numerous comrades who have been victims of Stalinism in France.

'We call on all militants who think that our 23rd congress should adopt such a text to sign it. We call on all the cells, all the section and federation conferences to adopt it and submit it to the congress.'

Intercontinental Press
combined with IMPRECOR

Washington's New Midwest War Pact
Imperialism's 'Détente War' Against Liaison Regime

THE struggle against cutbacks in the French steel industry is the lead story in this week's Intercontinental Press/Imprecor (Vol 17, No 11). Also featured are articles on the Middle East 'peace plan' and, in the weeks leading up to the European elections, the European Monetary System.

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/Imprecor, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques payable to Intercontinental Press.

LETTERS

RAR bows to sectarianism?

IT is with bitter disappointment that many in Belfast read the adverts for the 'RAR Militant Entertainment tour'. The tour is not coming to Belfast because Rock Against Racism has given in to the sectarianism of one of its groups, Stiff Little Fingers.

RAR supporters attempted to get a city centre venue for the tour in spite of the fact that RAR insisted on bringing the Stiffs, who publicly refuse to endorse RAR's 'troops out' policy. When no city centre venue was available, RAR booked a leisure centre in a West Belfast working class area. In this entertainment starved area (particularly for punk and rock), the hall would have been packed out in spite of the Stiffs' politics!

But the Stiffs said no, the area wasn't 'mixed enough'. So another venue was found, on the edge of East Belfast, next to the central station. But it's also next to Catholic Short Strand, and once again the Stiffs said no, 'it's not safe enough'. And RAR cancelled the whole tour.

We can only wonder how RAR can claim to be fighting racism when it gives into sectarianism within its own group. And we must question those socialists who support RAR, but won't do much to fight racialism and repression when it comes to Northern Ireland.

JOAN KELLY (Belfast)

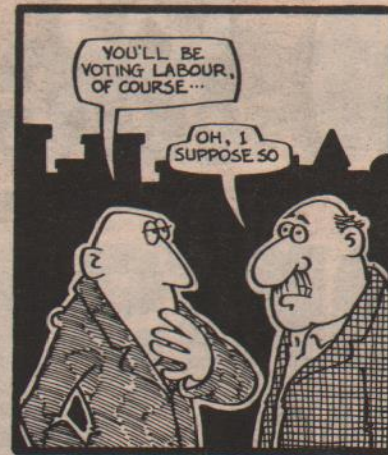
Socialist Unity suggestions

AS A regular reader of Socialist Challenge I fully support Socialist Unity candidates standing at the general election. But in view of the small numbers that are likely to stand among the 635 seats in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, may I make the following suggestions?

(a) Avoid the situation where several candidates putting forward socialist alternatives (SU, CP, SPGB, WRP) contest the same seat — this does nothing to further socialism.

(b) Launch an SU Election Appeal as soon as possible and publish those seats where a candidate has already been selected.

(c) Fight seats where the present MP is a Tory with a large majority — in this type of area (such as Sussex, the South Coast, etc.) there must be many Labour voters who are looking for an alternative and in no way would they be handing the seat to the Tory — a



charge that is likely to be heard many times!
D W EVANS (Eastbourne)

Women in Iran

YOUR editorial on 'Solidarity with Iranian women' (15 March) smacks of tokenism. You support Iranian women demonstrating for their democratic rights; yet you argue that 'in retrospect they made a mistake when they donned veils to join the mass mobilisations which toppled the Pahlavi regime'.

You have failed to grasp both the dynamic and contradictory aspects in such a revolutionary situation, particularly with respect to any oppressed section involved in such struggles. You also seem unaware that many women at that time donned the veil specifically to demonstrate their opposition to the Shah's regime.

They clearly understood that the existence of the Pahlavi regime was an obstacle to their freedom. You were full of praise when they were in the front line of fire; would you also have had them fired on from the rear by their fellow demonstrators? Or perhaps you would rather they had spent their energies arguing why they should go unveiled instead of on the streets?

Your reply to the obscurantists should not be that they are right, 'all those women on those marches wore veils', but that through the struggle they have waged they have obviously come to see the necessity of fighting their oppression on all fronts. That is the dynamic of a revolutionary situation: those involved begin to see the possibilities for society as a whole and for themselves in particular.

Finally, the position of women in Iran is an acid test for the development of the struggle in Iran. You obviously fail to understand

that, hence your call for women in this country to solidarise with their sisters in Iran on the ICAR demonstration. Do you call only for gays or blacks to solidarise with other gays or blacks fighting their oppression?

Perhaps the women in this country could solidarise with their sisters the world over better by fighting to overcome the sexism and paternalism that still exists in the left press.
TESSA VAN GELDEREN (London NW10)

Media racism

MALE feminists, if they are clear-headed, recognise that to be opposed to sexism is not the same thing as to rid themselves of sexism.

Mike Phillips' comments on CARM (8 March) are valuable for spelling out the analogous message for white anti-racists. To be an anti-racist does not free one from racism. Because racism is not primarily a set of attitudes. It is an objective network of social relations which we cannot escape until we destroy it in the real world, and not merely in our wishes or imagination.

So no amount of reading the right books, joining the right organisation, going to powerful socialist plays, or insightful discussion meetings, can wash whites free of their objective involvement in racism this side of socialism.

However I don't think Phillips proved all his criticisms of CARM. The question surely is whether or not CARM, in addition to tackling attitudes in their Open Door programme, are also fighting against job discrimination in the media. Whether or not they are dealing with objective racist relations within media organisations, as well as with subjective racist contents in media output.

Neither Phillips nor John Thackara gave any information as to whether or not CARM has been active in this field. I wait to hear more.

RIP BULKELEY
(Chairperson, Oxford ANL)

Exiles in their own land

UPON what evidence does Colin Smith base his biased view that 'no British poet could write like this' when referring to Erich Fried's work (22 February)?

Furthermore, to suggest that it 'almost seems that it needs repression or one of its results — exile — to produce good imaginative writing' is like seeing through rotten fish eyes floating in a sewer and believing that you're seeing straight.

There is enough repression here to make a nation of geniuses and also a population of exiles. In fact the British working class are exiles in their own land. All their creative talents are suppressed, bullied and beaten out of them at an early age.

What chance do socialist writers ever have of getting work published in this country when we all know it's dominated by the capitalist press and publishing houses? But there are many, many poets and writers in this country whose work is strong and talent growing and efforts unceasing, and they need encouragement from comrades.

D. HOWE (Chester-le-Street)

Almost all imperialist

LIVIO Maitan (15 March) follows the tortuous route dictated by Trotskyist ideology to arrive at the obvious point that behind the current conflicts of

'Communist' powers in Asia lies 'the logic of competing interests... the defence or extension of spheres of interest, the maintenance of control by one country over another... etc.'

But still he fails to call a spade a spade. The imposition by military means of one competing 'national' interest — i.e. interest of a ruling national bureaucracy — on another is a most naked form of imperialism. Among the 'Communist' powers we find a hierarchy of greater and lesser imperialisms, increasingly interconnected with that which exists in the West.

Of course, writers in Socialist Challenge habitually refer to 'imperialism' as though it were a single, unified enemy. This is theoretically false (the very existence of imperialism presupposes antagonistic national capitalisms and competition of states) and historically ludicrous (every phase of capitalist imperialism has involved sharp, eventually armed conflicts between rival powers).

Today we no longer see a small number of great imperialisms dominating the rest of the world. Instead, every state but the weakest seeks to become a mini- or mid-imperialism, dominating lesser states in its immediate or wider region, while itself under the domination of larger imperialisms.

The Warsaw Pact states, China, Vietnam, etc., in fighting for their competing interests, are utterly involved in this system. It is therefore pious nonsense to call, as the Fourth International does, for them to 'return to the principles of proletarian internationalism'. But it is not good enough to call a plague on all their houses.

What we need is a 'sliding scale' of anti-imperialist demands — Vietnam out of Kampuchea, China out of Vietnam, and, in the not improbable event of Russian action against China, Russia out of China!

MARTIN SHAW (Hull)

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 (226 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.

ULHAM 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 Pittington, Durham.

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

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 Eliot 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.

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 meets fortnightly. Next meeting: 'General election — should socialists support Labour?' Tue 10 April, 8pm, Wedge cafe/bookshop, High St.

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

BRENT Socialist Challenge open forums are held on the first Tuesday of every month at York Room, Anson Hall, Chichester 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 evening; 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.

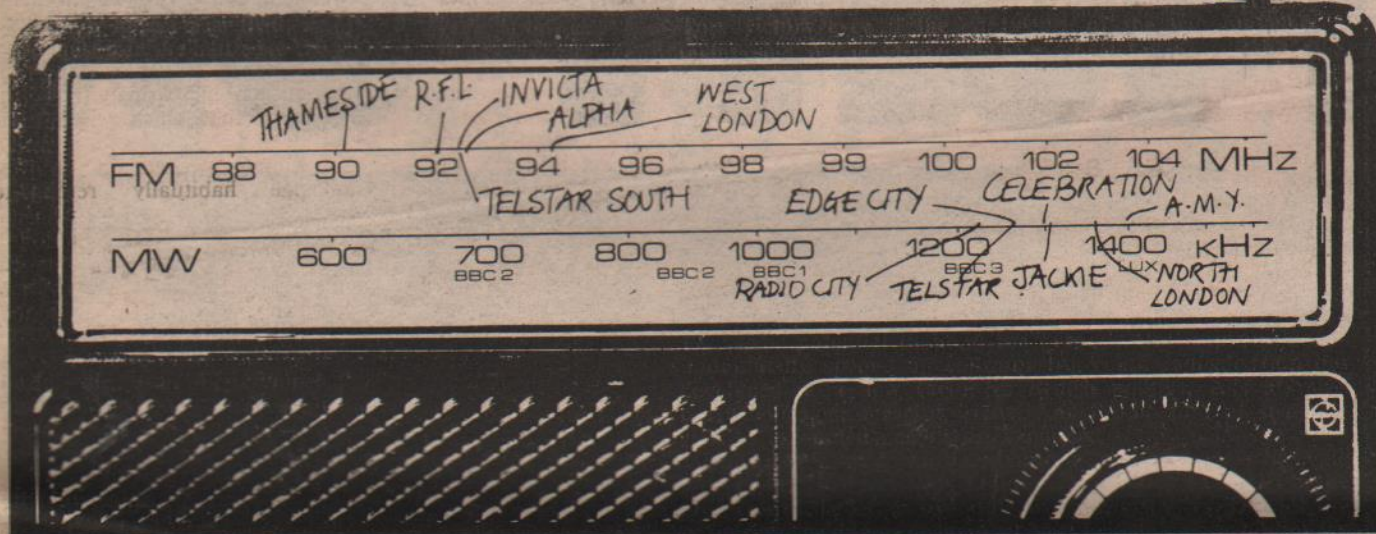
WALTHAMSTOW readers can buy Socialist Challenge regularly from Sheridan's Newsagents, 86 Hoe St, E17.

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

UNDER REVIEW

Workers' radio

Are we overlooking the airwaves?



'THE RADIO is a factor of extraordinary importance... It explains, teaches, fires, and fixes the future positions of both friends and enemies' — Che Guevara.

Are socialists in Britain sufficiently tuned in to the use and potential of the airwaves? CARL GARDNER, who writes on TV and radio for the London magazine *Time Out*, argues that we are missing out.

Since just before Christmas, a pirate radio station with a difference has been transmitting spasmodically in the Midlands. No 'easy listening' here. Radio Enoch is the first overtly right-wing, racist pirate station to appear in Britain.

Run by an organisation called People Against Marxism, Radio Enoch transmits for an hour on Sundays on the 41 metre band, and because, it is

using a transmitter of 1 kilowatt, is potentially receivable all over Britain. This event — the breakthrough of extra-parliamentary politics into the airwaves (albeit politics of the wrong sort) — ought to bring the organised left sharply up against a glaring inadequacy in its programme.

It also ought to give the first trade union sponsored conference on the media, organised

by the Institute for Workers' Control this weekend — 'Democratic Accountability and the Media' — a real debating point.

How to deal with this development? The obvious answer of social democracy will be to use the state and the law to suppress Radio Enoch, in the same way that other pirate stations are periodically closed down.

But this is no solution for revolutionary socialists. We should be in favour of breaking the state-licensed BBC/IBA duopoly on broadcasting, and such legalistic demands only strengthen it.

As we've learnt in other contexts, reliance on the state to deal with the right almost inevitably rebounds on the left. The only answer for the left —

and sadly very belated — is to fight to reply in kind.

Some people have suggested that — as there are now countless apolitical pirate music stations — left-wing stations should be the order of the day.

The main problem isn't technical, but political. The left doesn't seem to have a clear position on radio and TV, and appears *de facto* to accept the current position. The only discussion revolves about the ideal forms of media in a post-capitalist society.

Certainly, none of the left's programmes — Socialist Unity's included — incorporate any demands, transitional or otherwise, for radio and TV here and now and as stepping-stones to socialism. The working class movement

is still fixated by the printed word, with a nominal use of films as 'sugar on the pill' at political meetings.

This is a sadly significant silence as the mass media are one of the most important resources for the ruling class, to, as Guevara put it, 'fix' the positions of the working class — or as Enzensberger phrases it 'sell the existing order'.

The mass media today are a crucial means by which 'the reproduction of the relations of production' is secured.

Even some small-scale control of these media could be an equally crucial resource for the working class, affecting the whole style and content of the class struggle.

As a means of organising trade union struggles, short-wave radio could be a stunning innovation, for example for co-ordinating and directing flying pickets during strikes.

During the fire fighters' strike in late 1977, strikers in South London began to use the radios in their engines for precisely this purpose, until they were jammed by the Post Office.

But possibly more importantly, radio in particular could be a local or national means of political discussion and education — a mass educator, a means of maximising trade union democracy, and a way of linking together isolated groups of workers.

Unlike a newspaper, the audience isn't self-selecting and limited by the commodity nature of the newspaper. Potentially everyone can spin the dial, and tune in.

It is not surprising then that the state defends its duopoly jealously, even keeping information about the exact allocation of bits of the frequency-spectrum guarded from the public by the Official Secrets Act!

Its ostensible reasons are technical — to allow a rational allocation of a limited 'national' resource — the airwaves.

True, the airwaves are finite, but an open discussion of broadcasting needs, on a local basis at least, would be a much more democratic way of resolving the problems, rather than behind the closed doors of Whitehall.

Besides, saturation point has nowhere been reached. Spin the dial in New York City and you'll pick up something in the region of 40 stations, satisfying a wide range of social needs, compared with London's measly seven and fewer elsewhere.

'Free radio' in Italy operates about 50 stations in a city the size of Rome. Recently the BBC, as well as experimenting with mobile 'neighbourhood radio' in South Wales, commissioned a 'feasibility study' for community radio in London.

This secret, unpublished document tentatively explores the idea of 25 such stations for the capital alone!

These moves by the BBC are clearly a response to both a widespread dissatisfaction with the large, unwieldy, alien local stations and the 'second wave' of land-based pirates which have emerged recently — described by some as 'electronic squatting'!

Spasmodic, mostly operating on Sundays and still mainly the preserve of wide-eyed radio-hams or frustrated, would-be deejays, they are still an important development.

Only Corsair and Skypoint in the south-west are vaguely left-wing, between the records. And if outfits like Radio Enoch are not to have a clear field, we too must join the battle for the airwaves.

Initial costs are low — as little as £50 for a transmitter with a radius of several miles. And unlike newspapers, overheads are virtually nil. A costly 'hobby' for the present pirates could be a cheap investment for any national or community organisation.

While some sections of the labour movement are still vainly discussing the re-launch of a labour movement newspaper costing millions, a network of radio stations would probably cost a tenth of that for decent coverage.

But individual, illegal gestures are not enough. They should be linked to a national campaign to defend and extend the pirates and to break the present oppressive, undemocratic restrictions on control and ownership of the electronic media.

Trade unions should demand their own stations and help open the airwaves for the rest of society.

Socialists should join the Community Communications Group (ComCom) — for all its political weaknesses still the only nationally organised body which has begun to research and tackle the present restrictive system.

Their knowledge and experience could be invaluable in the struggle for the left and trade unions to enter the 'electronic age'.

Put your money into print

By Bob Pennington

EVERY TIME a revolutionary organisation wants to produce a leaflet, do a poster, or turn out a pamphlet it can run into a lot of trouble. Unless it has its own equipment and trained staff, plans and deadlines are liable to confront a blank wall.

Unsympathetic print managers — concerned about money and politics — screw you up.

They decide when you get the final copy. They decide how much they will charge you. They even decide whether or not your material is 'acceptable'.

Shortly after its launch, Socialist Challenge decided it would re-print the so-called blasphemous poem from Gay News. When the paper came back from the printers there

was a blank space on the back page.

The Editorial Board was told that the workers were 'offended' and had therefore refused to print it.

Capitalist firms will always be like that. They have a deep-seated — and perfectly understandable — objection to doing well produced jobs on papers or leaflets that advocate ending a system on which they depend for their existence.

That is why the International Marxist Group is devoting part of its development fund drive to building our printing apparatus.

We have to be independent of capitalist firms. We have to make sure that we have equipment that can service strikes and international struggles; and help to build the

anti-racist movement and the autonomous women's movement.

We also have to make sure that the typesetters, designers, and printers are enthusiastic about the work that they are doing.

The only people who will be keen to do such work are the ones who have decided that they are in favour of the socialist revolution. They are the ones who will put in the time beyond the hours of 'normal duty'.

They are the ones who will put their energies into doing the best and most creative work. They are also the ones who will look after the equipment, because they know that it is, like their skills, a weapon in the fight to overthrow capitalism.

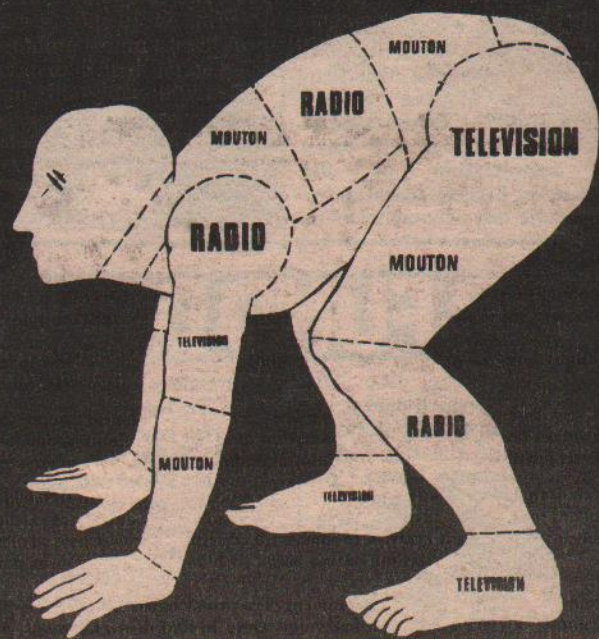
You can back up their work — and make sure that your class interests are served — by digging into your pockets to get us typesetters, cameras, design equipment, and so on.

You will not only be spending your money well. You will also be freeing us from the whims of some capitalist print boss, as well as saving us thousands of pounds in the next few years.

Remember our last buy — an A2 press — made it possible to publish Brian Grogan's pamphlet *Insurrection in Tehran*. We did this in two days. That shows what is possible. So let us build on that.

Send your donations to: IMG Development Fund Drive, PO Box 50, London N1.

ON VOUS INTOXIQUE!



A poster from May '68 announces 'They are brainwashing you' and suggests that the capitalist-controlled TV and radio are turning us into sheep (mouton).

Socialist Challenge

RETURN LABOUR: BUT FIGHT ON

TWO SETS of statistics issued in the past few days spelt out what attitude socialists should adopt in the general election — whenever it is called.

Statistic one was the Financial Times share index for Friday 23 March. How did the bowler-hatted parasites respond to the prospect of an early general election and a probable Tory victory? The FT index jumped 20 points, the biggest single day rise since July 1975.

Statistic two was figures issued on Monday by the Child Poverty Action Group. They showed that between 1974 and 1976 the number of children living in families below the officially recognised poverty line grew from 260,000 to 500,000.

The rise in the FT index showed just how important the

leading capitalists in this country judge a defeat for the Labour Party in the coming election. Accordingly, it also shows how important for the working class a victory for Labour would be.

But the figures issued by the Child Poverty Action Group take the argument about what working class militants should do in a general election one stage further. They indicate that it is not enough just to act as Labour Party coat-tailers during the election campaign.

The message can be summed up in the slogan, 'For a Labour Government — Build the socialist alternative'.

In practical terms this means: **★For a Labour Government.** There is no disguising the

fact that the 1974/9 Labour Government has a disgraceful record. On the economic front unemployment has doubled since 1974, real wages have fallen, and the low paid have been hit especially hard.

On the social front, hundreds of hospitals and schools have been or are being threatened with closure. As far as women are concerned, since 1975 the gap between their gross weekly earnings and men's has risen from £13.70 to £32.70.

Of all those hit by Labour's social and economic policies it is probably young black workers who have suffered most; but adding insult to injury the racist Immigration Acts remain on the statute book.

On the international front Labour has supported right-wing repression wherever it can find it, from its own policies in Ireland to those of the Shah of Iran.

If elected, the Tories would continue with these policies. And because their election would reflect a certain demoralisation in the working class they would be able to go further. Thatcher has promised legal attacks on the rights of trade unions, yet more massive public spending cuts and the withdrawal of grants and subsidies which have had at least a small effect on unemployment figures.

Various Tory leaders have threatened to re-introduce internment in the North of Ireland, there would be a strong chance of renewed attacks on abortion rights, the racist proposals of the Select Committee on Immigration — identity cards and all — would stand a good chance of becoming law.

There is no doubt that many militants will feel like



Number of families below poverty line doubles — share index jumps 20 points!

abstaining in an election because of Labour's right-wing policies. Those who are thinking that way should remember they would also be abstaining on a potential Tory Government which threatens to launch the most vicious attack on working people since the 1930s.

More importantly, it should not be forgotten that under a Labour Government the leaders of the labour movement are continuously tested and put on the spot. Accordingly, the opportunities for raising a political alternative to Labourism become greater —

something which can only be in the interests of the working class.

★**Build the Socialist Alternative.** The election period gives socialists a real opportunity to intervene in national politics. This means fighting for real socialist policies on the door-steps, at factory gates, in election meetings. The election can be used for campaigning against the concordat, against closures, against all the right-wing policies of Labour.

The election also means a chance to build the various movements and campaigns which already have in them the

seeds of a socialist opposition — the Anti Nazi League, the Anti-Concordat Campaign, the United Troops Out Movement, are just three examples.

In some instances, in safe Labour seats, Socialist Unity will be standing on a programme that unites these various strands of opposition. It is vital that working class militants are offered at least in a few areas a chance to reject Labour's anti-working class policies in favour of a total alternative.

Sum it all up this way — vote Labour, but continue the fight for socialist policies.

Evelyn Reed

IT was with deep regret that we heard this week of the death of Evelyn Reed, well-known feminist anthropologist. She died of cancer in New York on Thursday 22 March.

Her major work — *Woman's Evolution* — will probably be best known to British readers. It was to mark its publication that Evelyn Reed toured Britain just one year ago.

Evelyn was a long-standing member of the Socialist Workers' Party, the American co-thinkers of the Fourth International. A future issue of Socialist Challenge will carry an appreciation of the pioneering Marxist research for which she has become known.



Photo: G. M. COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

OUR FUND DRIVE

THERE'S nothing like an impending General Election to boost newspaper circulation, on the left and the right, and there's no better way of gauging Fleet Street's bias.

In the February 1974 election, Labour and the Tories took an almost equal share of the poll: 37 and 38 per cent respectively.

But the line up of the 'popular' daily and Sunday papers reveals more about press freedom than dozens of Royal

Commissions.

The Tories had the support of 71 per cent of the popular press in terms of circulation, while only 29 per cent called for a Labour vote.

If anything, we will see a further shift to the right in the next General Election, and we can be certain that any backing for Labour that comes from Fleet Street will be strictly for Callaghan-Healey policies.

We don't think that Socialist Challenge will make a large

dent in that barrage of pro-Tory propaganda, but we do consider that our coverage of Socialist Unity's election campaign will help to concentrate some thousands of minds on how the working class can fight back.

Which brings us to money. A fight back requires hard cash rather than hot air, and our mailbag for the fund drive has had a surfeit of the latter over the past week.

Next week sees the close of

this financial quarter, with over £300 to go in order to meet the £2,500 target. So take a deep breath, pick up a pen, and make out a cheque.

STOP PRESS: The fund drive figure for this week has just been checked — we didn't believe it to begin with — but the fact of the matter is that you've sent in a total of £4.

We don't think we need to spell out to our readers what that means.

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.