

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

For Workers' Liberty East and West

STOP HEALTH CUTS TUC National demonstration March 5

Assemble: 11am, Victoria Embankment

March: 12 noon, via Parliament Square

Rally: 2pm Hyde Park

DEFEND THE NHS, BACK THE HEALTHWORKERS

Strike on March 14!



Photo: Ian Swindale

The massive support for the one-day strike in the NHS in Scotland last Wednesday gave the healthworkers' campaign in defence of the NHS a big boost.

Up to 40,000 healthworkers went on strike for the day. They were supported by postal workers, civil servants and other workers who struck in solidarity.

The Scottish action and the big turnout expected for this Saturday's TUC demonstrations in London and Stirling show the depth of feeling that exists within the labour movement and the working class in general about the health service.

If only the TUC gave a bold lead, and called a one-day general strike in support of the healthworkers, then the limited solidarity that the healthworkers have received so far could be transformed into a mighty movement.

But even without formal TUC backing, solidarity action can be organised. The all-London strike co-ordinating committee has issued tens of thousands of leaflets for the TUC demonstration this Saturday calling on trades unionists to strike on 14 March. Already workers at Camberwell Bus Garage in South London have voted to strike on the 14th.

Union activists organised a ballot and had healthworkers present for the day at the garage to get over the arguments for solidarity. This example must be followed elsewhere.

We can build massive industrial action to coincide with the Budget.

The fact that over 500 workers at Thorn-EMI were prepared to strike

TUC must call a one-day general strike!

in solidarity with the healthworkers in Manchester despite legal threats against the stewards shows the potential for building solidarity.

The lack of national coordination is still a basic problem of the current action in the NHS.

On the ground stewards' committees and strike committees have seen the need to link up on a city-wide basis.

A national stewards' conference is also needed. Stewards' committees in Manchester and London have both backed the idea. Other stewards' committees must do so.

A national stewards' conference would provide the framework which would allow rank and file activists to work out a strategy for the dispute and a policy to unite the present struggles. In particular a stewards' conference could discuss how to start arguing for more sustained action after 14 March.

The Tories have shown that they are contemplating a climbdown on nurses' pay. Now is the time for the labour movement to go on the offensive.

We can beat the Tories!

PRESS GANG

No Truth in Pravda

Stan Crooke on the Moscow press

Soviet press coverage of the recent unrest in Armenia and Azerbaijan should have put at ease any Stalinist traditionalists who feared that the Gorbachev era might have ushered in a genuine liberalisation of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet public's first news of the unrest in Azerbaijan was gleaned from a five-paragraph article on page two of Pravda (24 February).

The article merely referred to "demonstrations" (no figures) "in recent days" (no dates) by Armenians demanding incorporation of Nagorny Karabakh into Armenia. "Public disorder" was "provoked" by "irresponsible appeals" by various "extremists".

The Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, the article continues, was opposed to the transfer of Nagorny Karabakh from Azerbaijan to Armenia as "contrary to the interests of the workers...and harmful to international relations", and called on the local CPs to restore order, guided by Leninist principles on the national question.

The following day Pravda managed an entire column on the unrest, but none of it clarified what had been happening in the area.

Instead, the article repeated the references to "provocations" and "extremist elements" and reported that meetings of CP activists in Baku and Yerevan had loyally endorsed the decision of the previous day by the Central Committee — so loyally, in fact, that they all adopted identical resolutions.

The dismissal of the secretary of the Nagorny Karabakh regional CP was mentioned, the nearest thing to an explanation was that there were "shortcomings in his work".

"The necessary measures are being taken" read the headline in Pravda's article the next day (26th).

"The rights of the workers are being properly safeguarded," concluded the article.

On the 27th Pravda struck a distinctly ideologically sound note: "Socialist internationalism — the source of our strength". It quoted a comrade Arutyunoba who pointed to her Armenian nationality and her membership of the Azerbaijan CP central committee as proof of the "equal rights and prospects" for all people in the Soviet Union.

In her workplace, she said, there is only one criterion by which people are judged: not by nationality, but by how hard they work.

Her workmates were not concerned with where Nagorny Karabakh belongs. They were concerned only with "one great cause — the cause of Perestroika, on the success of which depends the fate of every nation, every people of our country, every family, every individual."

A member of the Armenian Central Committee, "looking at events from the point of view of a simple worker," was alarmed by the strikes.

"Such spontaneity can lead to lamentable results."

Such "reporting" may go down well in the corridors of the Kremlin, but won't win any rewards for journalistic excellence — or tell Soviet workers what's really going on.

Why Vauxhall workers are angry

Last week Vauxhall bosses offered to use the accumulated surplus on the company's pension fund to finance an early retirement scheme.

Previously, they had proposed to hand out £58 million of the money to

their own shareholders, with the other £159 million going to finance a temporary 'contributions holiday' for the workers.

Vauxhall workers at the company's main plant at Ellesmere Port have angrily rejected both ideas. It's their money and they want any surplus used to finance higher pensions on retirement.

They are particularly angry at the latest proposal to use the money to finance early retirement — in other words, to provide money to bribe workers to leave the factory early and help the company's drive to cut down the number of jobs, leaving those workers who stay still on a terrible pension.

The situation at the company's Luton plant is still not clear, because the union has still not held a ballot on the issue there. At Ellesmere Port, however, the workers are likely to take action within the next week unless the company backs down.

Students

NOLS at the crossroads

The conference this weekend (5-6 March) of the National Organisation of Labour Students comes at a time when political debate and democratic control of the organisation never looked less likely.

Carving out has dominated once again. 'Socialist Student', for example, will not be able to put its

positions in many debates because the college Labour Clubs who put them in have been ruled out. It has also lost about 30 delegates.

And that's not counting the

delegates who won't be there from students in the Further Education sector, who should be allowed to join NOLS but aren't, or the Further Education college Labour Clubs which *could* have been set up this year but have found that NOLS refused to inaugurate them.

Working in NOLS presents anyone serious about organising student activists for Labour with a vicious circle. The people who run

NOLS don't want to change it. Anyone who does want to change it is kept out. As the constitutional and political arguments put forward by 'Socialist Student' continue to win support, NOLS is destined to become an even smaller and more exclusive club than it is now.

The 'Democratic Left' leaders of NOLS have become so used to simply getting rid of any opposition that they can't handle it when anyone challenges them on territory they don't control. 'Socialist Student' is standing a slate against the 'Democratic Left' in this year's National Union of Students elections.

Rather than answer the political questions about why 'Socialist Student' has won every major domestic policy debate in NUS for the last four years, or why only 'Socialist Student' has put forward any innovative campaign ideas for NUS, or why 'Socialist Student' has won support from left activists across all sectors of the student movement, the 'Democratic Left' respond by shouting 'Scab!' and trying to get 'Socialist Student' expelled from the Labour party.

Labour students, and the Party, have to ask themselves: do they wish to continue being represented by a rump organisation which is clearly corrupt, unrepresentative of Labour students, and incapable of organising students to fight the Tories?

USA

No choice elections

By Tim Anderson

A high powered media campaign is deciding who the main candidates for President of the United States are going to be in next November's election.

The many hopeful candidates from the two main parties are being whittled down to one candidate for each party.

Watching and listening to the ballyhoo, you could be forgiven for thinking that huge questions of political principle will be decided in the election. They won't!

The truth is that it is difficult to tell the political differences between the various candidates. Party labels don't help either. The candidates' distinguishing features are usually more personal than political.

Mention Gary Hart and people think not of what he stands for politically but of what — they assume — he stands for in bed, in other words his much-publicised adultery.

Pat Robertson is a former preacher and a chat show host. Because he is an ultra-reactionary Christian bigot, Robertson does stand out a bit on the right of the political spectrum, as Jesse Jackson does on the populist left.

Even the incumbent President Reagan is a third rate B movie actor.

Is it really so surprising that at the 1984 election when Ronald Reagan was returned, less than 50% of the electorate voted?

Some on the left see Jesse Jackson as the candidate to be supported. But only the independent political organisations of the American working class, based on their enormous industrial power can break out of the sterile hypocrisy of American politics.



Last Saturday's NUS protest. Photo: Ian Swindale.

Armenia

The facts about Karabakh

The Armenian people have almost always been ruled over by big empires — Roman, Byzantine, Turkish, Persian, Russian. Before World War 1, Armenia was divided between the Russian and Turkish Empires.

The Turks almost wiped out the Turkish Armenians with a great massacre in 1915.

After the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Armenia briefly became part of an independent bourgeois Transcaucasian Republic covering Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia. The Bolsheviks held power only in the city of Baku (in Azerbaijan), where there was a sizeable industrial working class.

The Transcaucasian Republic soon fell apart, and in May 1918 Turkey seized Armenia and Azerbaijan. Then Turkish power collapsed. In late 1918 the British Army occupied Armenia and Azerbaijan, and for two years Armenia and Azerbaijan were nominally independent republics under British domination.

The different peoples in the area were heavily intermingled, and boundaries were difficult to draw. Armenian nationalists claimed most of Azerbaijan; Azerbaijani nationalists claimed most of Armenia. The nationalists of Christian

By Martin Thomas

Armenia were much more hostile to the Azerbaijanis — a Muslim people ethnically akin to the hated Turks, and socially less developed than the Armenians — than to Russia.

Nagorny ('mountainous') Karabakh was one bone of contention. It was a small area where a concentration of Armenians lived — 70% of the inhabitants according to one book on the subject, 40% according to another — surrounded by an Azerbaijani population.

In September 1918 a Karabakh assembly accepted Azerbaijani rule. The British put a ruler over Karabakh who oppressed the Armenians.

Another assembly in February 1919 voted for union with Armenia. There were bloody clashes between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Karabakh. In August 1919 the British decided that Karabakh should remain within Azerbaijan, but with local autonomy. That status has continued to this day.

After the British withdrew, the Baku workers — who were mostly Armenians or Russians rather than Azerbaijanis — set up a Bolshevik government in Azerbaijan (April 1920), and Armenia was overrun by the Turks again (October-November 1920).



Demonstration in Armenia

The USSR's powder-keg

The mass demonstrations in the Soviet Republic of Armenia are the latest in a series of protests which have emerged in the light of day in the USSR in response to Gorbachev's policy of 'glasnost' — openness.

The Crimean Tatars, a nation deported en masse in 1944, have demonstrated for the right to return to the Crimea. The people of the Baltic states, grabbed by Stalin in 1939 with Hitler's agreement, have asserted themselves. Evidently, there are vast numbers of people in the USSR who feel that they have special problems as members of minority nationalities.

The combined minority nationalities are a majority of the people of the USSR. Over the last 50 years, most of them have been badly oppressed by the dominant Great Russians, and some of them savagely. The 50 million people of the Ukraine constitute the biggest oppressed nation in the world today. Denied independence, they have recently been subjected to a sustained campaign to force them to adopt the language and culture of the Great Russians and abandon their own.

Today the USSR is again what Russia was before the revolution of 1917 — a giant 'prison-house of nations'. It is the biggest such prison-house in the world today.

The Bolshevik Revolution liberated the nations from oppression and set out to organise a free democratic coexistence of the peoples. In conditions of civil war, imperialist invasion, and terrible shortages, they achieved less than they aimed for, but there was no lie in their claim that they broke down the walls of the prison-house of nations.

The Stalinist counter-revolution put the minority nationalities back in chains. Whereas the Bolsheviks had denounced and condemned Great Russian chauvinism as the

EDITORIAL

main reactionary nationalism in the USSR, the Stalinists in the '30s insisted that it was the national feelings and aspirations of the minorities that must be stamped out.

Those national feelings and aspirations were trampled on for decades, but they were not stamped out. Decades of brutal Great Russian chauvinism have not wiped out the minority nationalisms, but only driven them underground.

Stalinist centralism has turned the national question in the USSR into one of the most explosive issues in world politics. Now, at the first easing of bureaucratic pressure, it is emerging explosively in many different parts of the USSR.

It has emerged at other times, too. When the Nazis invaded the USSR in 1941, many people in the Ukraine at first saw the German Army as their liberator, though they soon learned different, the hard way.

The current protests are not just caused by the easing of pressure from the centre in Moscow. The 'liberalising' Gorbachev faction is very much a Great Russian grouping. Some of the bureaucrats it has attacked have been seen as local champions, and their 'liberalising' opponents as Great Russian centralisers. There were riots a year ago

in Alma Ata, the capital of Uzbekistan, over the sacking of a local bureaucrat.

We do not know enough to have a clear opinion about the demands raised by the Armenian demonstrators. They demand a neighbouring territory which has never been part of Armenia and which was not included in Armenia in the days when the Bolsheviks were conscientiously trying to construct the workers' republic on a basis of democracy and equality among nations.

Only people ignorant of history and politics will believe that subject nationalities are always free of impulses to dominate or oppress other national groups. No, unfortunately, the drives and impulses towards domination and oppression are part and parcel of all nationalism, including the nationalism of the oppressed.

Whatever the details of the Armenians' claims, the mass demonstrations are significant as the latest and most gigantic manifestations of the nationalist demands, nationalist ferment, and national conflicts now gathering force in the USSR.

During the last liberalising phase — in the '50s, under Nikita Khrushchev — national and social antagonisms in Eastern Europe shook Stalinist rule there to its foundations. The rule of the USSR in Eastern Europe was preserved only by massed tanks, rolling through Budapest to crush the

Hungarian Revolution in 1956.

Now the national tensions are wracking the USSR itself. The bureaucrats may find that they do not have enough tanks to crush the movement.

National oppression in the USSR is a powder-keg at the foundations of the main citadel of Stalinism. If the peoples of the USSR — the Great Russian workers among them — shatter that citadel, and once more, as in 1917, open the gates of the prison-house of nations, then humanity will have taken a big step forward.

The working class in the Stalinist states will have a better chance of replacing the rule of the bureaucracy with working-class power and socialism.

That is an added reason — apart from the intrinsic justice of their case — for socialists to support the movements for national freedom in the USSR. We must do it without illusions in nationalism, and without making any concessions to national chauvinism and exclusivism.

Immediately, Gorbachev and his co-thinkers may prove to be the chief victims of the explosion of nationalism. The bureaucrats who instinctively want to batten down the hatches will be greatly strengthened, at the expense of 'glasnost' and 'perestroika'.

But they may not be strong enough, all the Great Russian bureaucrats put together, to put down the revival of long-suppressed nationalisms with which the Kremlin is now faced.

1688 and all that

This year is the 300th anniversary of England's 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. What should the labour movement say and do about it?

Elsewhere in this week's paper we print a statement by Anti-Fascist Action which argues that we should boycott and protest against any celebrations of the anniversary. Why? Because the Orange Order will use such celebrations to promote their reactionary and sectarian cause.

That reason cannot be enough. After all, the Daughters of the American Revolution are a right-wing group. The US Republican Party lays claim to the legacy of the American Civil War. Jacques Chirac celebrates the anniversaries of the French Revolution. Stalinist tyrants commemorate 1917.

1917 does not belong to the Stalinists, and 1789 does not belong to Chirac. Does 1688 belong to the Orange Order?

William of Orange came to power in 1688 as the chosen man of

Parliament and the merchants of London. Thereby the rising bourgeoisie undid the Stuart Restoration of feudalistic power, and regained what they had won in the Civil War of the 1640s. A Parliament — albeit, as yet, one elected only by the propertied classes — would rule, rather than kings and lords.

The cause of bourgeois democracy was associated with Protestantism, and that of the power of kings and lords with Catholicism. And so 1688 was followed by the putting-down of the Catholic people of Ireland — who had supported the Stuarts — and the imposition of apartheid-like 'Penal Laws' against them. That is what the Orange bigots celebrate.

But it is not the essence of 1688, any more than the fact that George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were slave-owners makes slavery the essence of the US War of Independence, or the Jacobins' law against trade unions makes anti-unionism the nub of the French Revolution!

The original English Revolution of the 1640s had been followed by

Cromwell making terrible war against the Catholic people of Ireland. Still, it was basically about the replacement of feudal and monarchic institutions by a society where people were at least formally equal.

We cannot understand history by going through it and giving Jefferson or Robespierre or Cromwell or William of Orange good marks or bad marks according to how they measure up against conventional left opinions of 1988.

History is not a gradual process of ever-increasing enlightenment, but a matter of class struggle. In 1688 the bourgeoisie, the class William represented, was a progressive class. The ideals in the name of which we condemn Orange bigotry today — equality, democracy — owe their life to the struggles of that bourgeoisie against the power of kings and lords.

The labour movement should respond to the Orange bigots, not by boycotting the anniversary of 1688 and thus leaving it to them, but by organising our own commemoration.

WOMAN'S EYE



Hands off me, fake lefts!

By Lynn Ferguson

Remember 'left' Labour councils? London boroughs like Lambeth, 'red bases' across the country — Manchester, Sheffield, the 'Socialist Republic' of South Yorkshire, and of course the late lamented GLC?

Local councils who said they were going to fight the cuts, take on the government, not pass on Tory cuts to working people?

Where oh where are they now? Well, the GLC is no longer with us, but well before its demise, its glorious leader, 'Red Ken', who has now gone on to higher things, decided it wasn't possible to take on the government after all. In time honoured tradition of all sell-out merchants he looked for something to hide behind. And we all know what he found. Ken suddenly discovered a deep commitment to women's rights, lesbian and gay rights, and anti-racism.

In doing so he set a precedent for all the other local government backtrackers. The radicalism of Labour authorities was no longer to be measured by their commitment to fighting cuts, but by the number and size of their equal opportunities committees.

Now a commitment to fighting discrimination is a good thing. For too long the labour movement has behaved as if the working class consists solely of white straight men. The left Labour authorities played a positive role in bringing the issues onto the political agenda. But their largely cynical motives were, I think, quite disgusting.

This year is a crunch year in local government. Those Labour authorities who were able to 'creatively account' their way out of the crisis, just can't do it anymore. Now it is back to voluntary redundancies, freezing posts and cutting back services. But the ex-left councils are still clinging onto their scraps of radicalism.

Linda Bellos in Lambeth has played the 'I'm very oppressed so you can't criticise me' card in forcing through her cuts budget. In other London authorities, there has been talk of 'monitoring' redundancies, to make sure that black and women workers aren't disproportionately hit.

So what we end up with is the old divide and rule tactic, this time served up as equal opportunities.

Because equal opportunities doesn't make sense in the context of cuts and redundancies. What it means in practice is shifting the responsibility back onto the workforce. The Labour council refuses to fight the cuts so it encourages its workforce to slog it out over who is going to lose their job first. Meanwhile the left posers sit back smugly in their committee rooms tut-tutting over how backward white male workers are, for not happily giving up their jobs for the sake of their more oppressed workmates. Disgusting, eh?

So far as I am aware, this little scenario hasn't been acted out yet. It remains a vague idea in some councillors' heads, vaguely mooted but not yet worked through. Let's hope it stays that way. I for one don't want my oppression used by fake-lefts to hide behind.

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GRAFFITI

Tories stop education

Nearly one million schoolchildren in England and Wales don't have sufficient paper or exercise books to do their school work.

A survey published this week shows that parents are now having to fork

out for transport to libraries and swimming baths and for exercise books. Schools are having to resort to fundraising events to pay for essentials such as text books, computer software, and chemicals for science

lessons. Only 3% of schools consider their funding to be adequate compared to 57% who say their funding is simply nowhere near enough.



Glasnost Farm

Russian bureaucrats have lost one of their privileges. For the past 40 years the only people in the Soviet Union allowed to read George Orwell's '1984' have been senior party officials. 1,080 numbered copies were produced, translated by KGB interpreters.

But now the Central Committee has decided to allow the literary journal Novy Mir to publish '1984' this autumn. Also to be published for the first time is Orwell's

satire on the rise of Stalin, 'Animal Farm'. But Glasnost has its limits. The works of

dissident writers of the 1970s such as Solzhenitsyn still remain proscribed.

Worse off

The new Family Credit system, which will replace the existing benefits system in April, will leave low-paid workers with children as much as 20% worse off.

A single mother with two children aged four and six, who earns £70

a week before tax, will lose £13.59 a week. Couples with children who have only one wage will also lose out.

The government initially presented the changes as a move to targeting resources on — you've guessed it — low income families.

JFK

John F. Kennedy got into the White House with the help of the Mafia.

Judith Campbell Exner, an ex-mistress of Kennedy, says she acted as a courier between Kennedy and leading Mafia men Sam Giancana and Johnny Roselli, using her connection with the dodgy crooner Frank Sinatra.

This all goes to explain how Kennedy, a Catholic, managed to win the crucial West Virginian primary — West Virginia is 95% Protestant.

The Mafia paid around \$50,000 to election officials and local sheriffs, to make sure they delivered the state to Kennedy and ensured the defeat of his main rival Hubert Humphrey.

Ms Exner has kept quiet for the past 25 years. And not surprisingly. Apart from Sinatra, all the key figures in her story have been murdered.



Cry Scandal

The film 'Cry Freedom' recently had its Australian premiere. Socialist Fight, an Australian socialist group went along with a petition calling for the release of jailed South African trade unionist

Moses Mayekiso. Amongst those who signed was the film's director, Richard Attenborough. Bob Hawke, Australia's Labour Prime Minister, refused.



In 1982 Fleet Street electricians defied the law to strike for the health workers

Defend Thorn-EMI stewards!

By Paul Wooley

Four shop stewards at Thorn-EMI, Manchester, face disciplinary action after taking solidarity action with the health workers.

Workers at Thorn voted to strike on 19 February — Manchester health workers' day of action. They, along with workers at Massey Ferguson and Manchester Polytechnic, were then hit with injunctions. Under Tory anti-union laws, this secondary action in support of health workers is illegal. Only the Thorn-EMI workers decided to defy the injunction.

Now the Thorn bosses are going in hard. Four shop stewards face a disciplinary hearing on Tuesday 1 March. Among the 'charges' is 'inciting other workers to break their contracts'. The company refused the union a mass meeting to discuss the disciplinary action. The union's phone calls are being monitored.

Scabbed

The company have statements from workers who scabbed on the 19th, alleging intimidation by strikers. The union has statements from others who scabbed saying they faced no threats or intimidation.

Thorn bosses are making a test case

here. If they get their way, it will be a major blow to any future solidarity action — and not just in support of the health workers.

The Manchester labour movement must stand by the Thorn-EMI workers. We must repay the solidarity they gave on 19 February. For a start, the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (encompassing Thorn-EMI) meets this week. The Confed must pledge and prepare for action if Thorn bosses don't back down.

Health trade union branches from Manchester and elsewhere should telephone support to Dave Hodgkinson, 061-865 1181 ext 337 and send written support to: G. Jones, GMB, 60 Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0PN.

'Save Elsie's, save our jobs!'

By Stan Crooke

"Save Elsie's — Choice for Women!" "Save Elsie's — Save our Jobs!" chanted over a hundred demonstrators outside last week's meeting of Lothian Health Board, at which the threatened closure of the Elsie Inglis Memorial Maternity Hospital was under consideration.

Moir Burns, secretary of the Elsie Inglis Action Group explained the background to the campaign and the lobby of the Health Board.

"The action group was first started in

Charges up

More pre-budget health cuts...The Tories have just announced that prescription charges will go up by another 20p on 1 April.

It is estimated that this will raise an extra £10 million a year for the government to put towards really important things like tax cuts, advertising the electricity privatisation, Trident, etc.

When the Tories came to power in 1979 prescription charges were 20p per item. The new increase will take the price to £2.60 per item.

Tony Newton's advice to people who might not be able to afford the new charges? Ask the chemist if you can get the medicines more cheaply without a prescription. Funny, I always thought that prescriptions were about providing medicines more cheaply than any other way.

1984, when the Health Board shut down the labour ward in the Elsie Inglis, and then tried to shut down the whole hospital. There was such a public outcry that the Board was forced to back down, but the hospital has remained under threat ever since.

The campaign was revived in the last couple of years, when the hospital came under immediate threat again. We regrouped, with local women getting involved and also women from outwith Lothian, given the good reputation that Elsie Inglis has.

"We organised petitioning and a 'Choices in Childbirth' conference to try to open up debate. But although members of the Health Board were present at the conference, they did not take up any of the points made at it. Our main arguments now are concerned with safety, the long-term future, and finance.

"The Elsie Inglis is as safe as any other maternity unit [the Health Board has claimed that the hospital lacks adequate facilities]. If this unit is shut down, won't the closure of other small maternity units follow? And the Health Board seems interested only in short-term financial gain — the Elsie Inglis is a prime central site."

In order to pave the way for closure, the Health Board has deliberately manipulated a "lack of demand" for places at the hospital by directing pregnant women, even those living in the immediate vicinity of the hospital, to other maternity units.

If the maternity hospital closes — the scheduled closure is August — staff employed there fear for their jobs. One member of staff (organised in NUPE and NALGO) told SO:

"Lothian Health Board has a policy

of redeployment, but it has just announced that 500 jobs are to go. They could change their policy overnight, and there is no certainty that we will be redeployed. In the Western Infirmary they have already been asking for voluntary redundancies.

Closure of the hospital would fit in with the Board's policy of closing all small hospitals in the Region. But thousands of pounds have been spent on re-decorating this hospital in recent months. To what purpose, I ask you?"

The threat to the future of the Elsie Inglis — and three other hospitals and three clinics in the Lothians — needs to be opposed in its own right. But it also illustrates the need for the current fightback against the privatisation of hospital ancillary services in Scotland to be broadened out to include issues such as closures and job losses, if a decent NHS is to be maintained in the face of the Tories' attacks.

The Elsie Inglis Action Group is appealing for maximum support for their continuing campaign. Further information from Moira Burns (031-669 5277).

Shop stewards in London have voted to call for a national shop stewards' conference. Get your stewards' committee to back this initiative.

Write to the Health Stewards' Conference Arrangements Committee, c/o 23 Compton Terrace, London N1.

Massive response to Scottish strike

Thousands of NHS workers from all over the Lothians voted with their feet on last week's Scottish TUC Day of Action in defence of the NHS (24 February). Ancillary workers in every hospital in the region went out on strike, whilst leaving emergency cover, and marched through Edinburgh in a massive demonstration of over 15,000.

"The biggest and most impressive demonstration in Edinburgh for years. It's the same story all over Scotland, with lots more turning up for demonstrations than expected. There must be a lesson in that somewhere for the union officials," was Edinburgh

Trades Council President Callum Macrae's verdict on the demonstration.

Response to the Day of Action from workers employed by the NHS was overwhelming, and included 400 nurses joining in the strike. There was likewise overwhelming support for the Day of Action from workers outside of the NHS, though the extent to which this was translated into solidarity strike action was limited by the failure of the Scottish TUC and the Scottish leadership of individual unions, including the health service unions, to call and campaign for solidarity strikes.

But even where union leaders chose to sit on the fence, strike action could be successfully organised at rank and file level. The UCW leadership failed to give any kind of a lead, but branch officers in the UCW Edinburgh Outdoor branch met an enthusiastic response when they

campaigning for strike action in the run-up to the Day of Action. An Edinburgh UCW member told SO:

"What a magnificent response to the Day of Action from the postal branch! Especially when you consider it was done against the wishes of the national officials. They wouldn't authorise action, using the argument that the health unions had not asked for it.

"The postal branch officers rightly took the initiative themselves and worked to get people out. Apart from NHS workers themselves and the NALGO contingent, the UCW contingent was probably the biggest on the march."

It was the same story in the TGWU: no lead from the top, but support for strike action where it was organised from the bottom.

But attempts to win support for strike

action at grassroots level were not always successful. Workplace ballots on strike action which had been authorised by the CPSA leadership resulted in just one Unemployment Benefit Office in Edinburgh voting to strike, a poor result largely to be explained by the obstructive efforts of supporters of Broad Left '84, who preached doom and gloom in the event of support for strike action.

In contrast to this, thousands of Regional and Edinburgh District members of NALGO struck and participated in the demonstration — the biggest contingent apart from the health workers themselves — after the local executives had authorised half-day strike action in support of the NHS dispute.

The potential support which clearly could be mobilised in defence of the NHS underlines the poverty of the proposals to follow up the Day of Action

which were announced at the conclusion of the demonstration.

Bill Speirs, a member of the STUC General Council, called for continuing with selective action, petitioning and supporting the 5 March demonstration, in order to "mobilise the whole of the Scottish population", while NUPE full-timer John Lambie merely made vague references to an "intensification" of the action and to "whatever action is necessary to win the dispute", and urged "the people of Scotland to stand four square with us".

But Lambie was certainly correct to describe the Day of Action as just "one stage in the campaign". But it will be up to the rank and file of the unions both inside and outside of the NHS to ensure that it was a stage in the direction of victory, not of defeat in the form of a "compromise."

Manchester stewards



Manchester day of action, 19 February. Photo: John Smith, Profile.

Rodney Bickerstaffe we needed a general strike. He said that Thatcher wouldn't respond to a general strike and we would lose public sympathy.

I don't know how the TUC will respond. We need to keep the pressure up by putting pressure on the regional offices and making the demand for a general strike part of all the local strikes and protest actions.

All the leaders on the platform seemed shocked by the level of militancy; shocked that we saw the 19th as only the start and we were prepared to go further.

Has contact been made between local militants and militants in other areas?

There are informal contacts. There have been discussions in Manchester about a national shop stewards' conference. The Greater Manchester JSSC has agreed in principle. The proposal from the London JSSC for a meeting on 26 March is going to be discussed this week.

Some stewards feel that although the action has been strong in London, Manchester, Yorkshire and Scotland there are a lot of areas which haven't got active JSSCs together and haven't been involved in much of the action. They are worried that a national stewards' organisation won't recognise the very different levels of activity across the country.

I personally don't see that as an argument for not holding a national stewards' meeting. The best way to assess what is happening throughout the country and see our strengths and limitations is by holding that national meeting.

One example of the usefulness is the confusion around the 14th and 15th. Initially the active strike committees were calling for action around the 15th, changed to the 14th after COHSE's call for a day of action and will now have to reassess the situation following NUPE's call for the 15th.

We also need to have a national meeting to discuss where to go after Budget Day.

How does the present situation compare to 1982?

One of the big differences is that in 1982 the action started by being called by the leadership and started off in their hands. Whereas this time it is rank and file stewards who have organised the majority of action up to now and the leaders are desperately trying to get it in their control.

The other difference is that at the start of the 1982 dispute there were hardly any JSSCs in hospitals. This time there are still some effective ones in existence. Some meet irregularly, but those links between different unions are still there. In other hospitals the committees have collapsed, but people saw the effectiveness of them last time around, so they don't need to be organised from scratch like in 1982.

Also, there are probably greater differences in the level of militancy from one area to another. There were differences in 1982, but they appear to be wider now.

Looking for a lead

How did you think the Day of Action in Manchester went on 19 February?

I thought it was really good — brilliant! There were a lot of people there, most of the hospitals were out, and the mood of the demonstration was really good.

Afterwards about ten people phoned me to ask when the next Day of Action was, and whether they could book coaches for the national demonstration on the 5th.

The night staff at Springfield couldn't strike because they work at emergency cover level all the time. But they came on the demonstration and then picketed the hospital for an hour before going in to work.

The other good thing was when Jeremy Spafford, a COHSE steward from North Manchester, spoke. He asked the demonstration to vote on whether they wanted a general strike on the 14th. It was unanimous. People were wanting further action, waiting for it to be spread.

What was the support like from other workers?

The support from council workers was excellent. Direct Works were absolutely solid — all the depots were closed and lots of them went on the demonstration.

Massey Ferguson, GEC, and Thorn EMI all voted to strike. Two days before the 19th, Massey Ferguson management threatened an injunction. A mass meeting voted not to come out because of the injunction. We expected none, but the whole of the joint shop stewards' committee came on the demonstration and brought a sizeable delegation. We got support

Karen Reissman, assistant branch secretary of the COHSE 332 (North Manchester Psychiatric and Community) Branch, spoke to Socialist Organiser.

from firefighters — some were on strike, and others off duty.

There were all grades of health workers. There were lots of nurses, despite having to provide emergency cover. A lot of night staff came straight from work, spent all day on the demonstration, and then went back into work.

The Greater Manchester JSSC was formed to build for the 19th. What are the next steps for the committee?

We are focusing on building for the national demonstration on 5 March, and pressurising the TUC to call a one-day general strike around budget day.

We have been waiting to see how successful the 19th and the Day of Action in Scotland on the 23rd are before deciding on future action.

We are wary of calling a lot of one-day actions in Manchester. We don't want to repeat the leadership's mistakes — calling a series of one-day actions which wear out militants because it is not effective action.

The JSSC doesn't feel it is strong enough to call action on more than a Manchester basis. Because of demoralisation following 1982 and

the miners' strike people depend on a call from the TUC. One thing we did was to visit NALGO, COHSE and NUPE regional offices and the Regional TUC to get official backing for the 19th. That was really important in getting the less organised hospitals out.

What is the mood like locally?

At North Manchester it is really good. People are just looking for the action to be accelerated. People at North Manchester are quite political — we understand it is Tory policies we have to defeat. That means standing with other workers inside the health service and outside. We're prepared to take that challenge on.

Why is COHSE calling for action around Budget Day?

Because in Greater Manchester, London, York and Scotland, health workers' strike committees have all been demanding a day's general strike around Budget Day, and writing to their regional offices. Also because Neil Kinnock said in Parliament, "Let's make Budget Day NHS Day".

COHSE has been forced to respond to that to gain control. The leadership has been forced to support the local stewards, often in action it would not have called itself, even if it thought it could win.

Because of all that pressure COHSE had to call something to defuse the demand for a general strike. Initially they called for a Day of Action on 14 March, but it has been very difficult to get clarification from COHSE of what they mean. Last week I spoke to Regional Office. They want a rally in Westminster, with action limited

SOCIALIST
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**DEFEND THE NHS, BACK
THE HEALTHWORKERS**

**Strike on
March 14!**

**TUC must
call a
one-day
general
strike!**



ACTIVISTS' DIARY

Wednesday 2 March.
Edinburgh SO meeting,
'Socialists and Ireland'.
7.30, Windsor Buffet,
Leith Walk.

Wednesday 2 March.
Canterbury SO meeting,
'Socialists and the Labour
Party'. Speaker: Lynn
Ferguson. 1pm, Keynes
College JCR3.

Thursday 3 March.
Merseyside SO meeting on
South Africa. Speaker:
Tom Rigby. 1pm.

Thursday 3 March.
Northampton SO meeting,
'Socialists and the Labour
Party'. Speaker: Tim
Anderson.

Sunday 6 March.
Lambeth Against Alton
benefit at the Ritz
Cinema, Brixton. From
1.25 p.m. Women only.

Tuesday 8 March.
South London Women's
Centre Open Day on the
Alton Bill. Noon to 6pm at
Acre Lane, London SW2.

Tuesday 8 March.
Newcastle SO meeting,
'Palestine: two nations,
two states'. 8pm, Tyne
Rooms, 10 Pilgrim St.

Saturday 12 March.
Lambeth Against Alton
benefit, at the Old White
Horse pub, Brixton Road.
All welcome.

Saturday 19 March.
Fight Alton's Bill. National
demonstration. Assemble
11.30, Embankment.

**Saturday-Sunday 16-17
April. North London
Socialist Conference, at
North London
Polytechnic, Holloway
Road, London N7.**
For further details of SO
meetings, contact 01-639
7965.

1917

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made a revolution



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What makes the bureaucrats tick?

By Jim Denham

A visitor from Mars, witnessing the desperate efforts of union leaders like Mick Murphy to prevent (and then sell out) the Ford strike, or observing the recent grovelling before the High Court of seafares' leader Sam Mc Cluskie, might be forgiven for assuming that these people are simply bought and paid for agents of the bosses.

They are not. But union "leaders" like these have their own priorities and interests, which are quite distinct from those of the workers they are supposed to represent.

They are a layer of people within the working class who occupy a position between the employers on one side and the workers on the other.

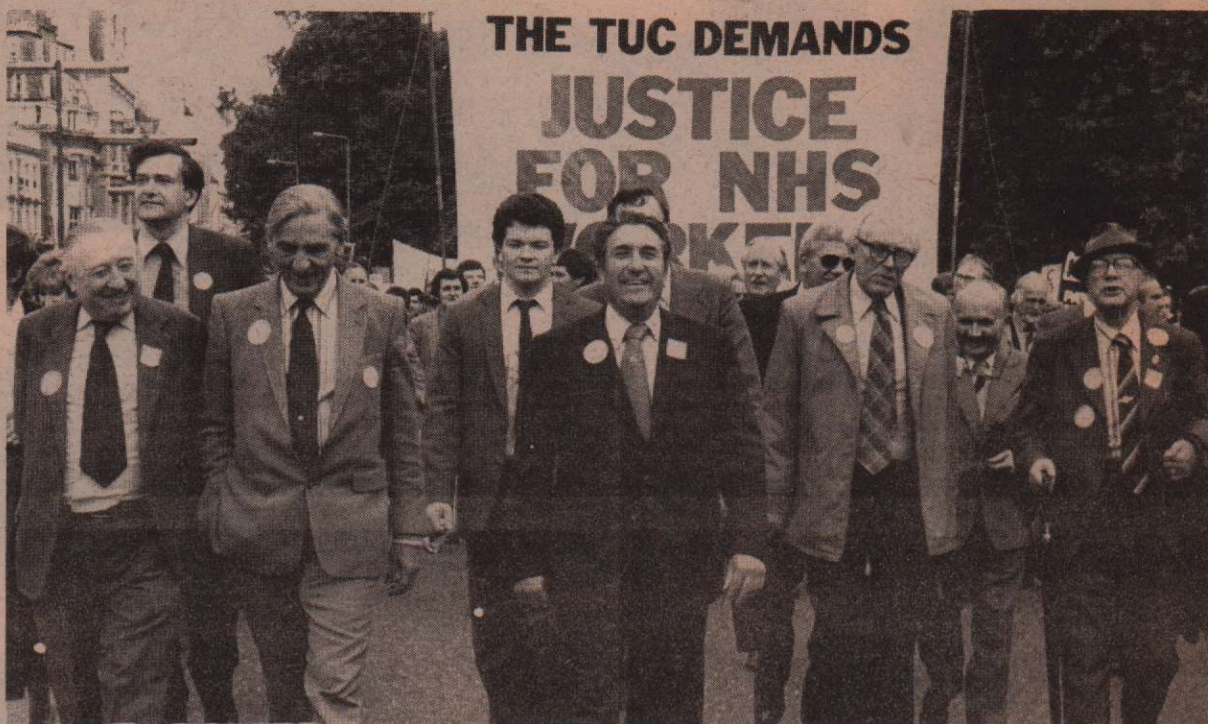
They must be seen to extract concessions from the employers from time to time, in order to justify their own existence. But they are more terrified of uncontrolled militancy (uncontrolled by them, that is) from the rank and file than they are of any employer.

Rank and file militancy upsets cosy arrangements with employers, undermines the authority of the leaders in the eyes of employers — and can give workers the dangerous idea that sometimes direct action can achieve more than skillful negotiation by full-time union officials.

For all these reasons, union leaders and officials don't like militant action, other than that which they have called, and can turn on and off like water from a tap, in order to strengthen their hand in negotiations.

Trade unions emerged in Britain with the rise of capitalism itself. The thousands of workers driven into the grim factories of the industrial revolution soon realised the need to combine into unions.

And the first lesson they learned was the need for solidarity amongst all the workers in each factory — and between workers in different factories and industries. In the early 19th century the most advanced militants, the Chartists, saw the need for solidarity throughout the



This is the gang who betrayed health workers last time

entire working class (and what remained of the peasant class) to achieve political power.

The early struggles were bitter and not always successful. Bad communications, frequent unemployment and grinding poverty made it very difficult to maintain stable, continuous union organisation.

But as capitalism itself expanded, so stable employment for the skilled sections of workers gave rise to permanent, financially viable organisations much more like trade unions as we know them today. Politically, too, the new "craft" (i.e. skilled) unions were much more like today's TUC "new realists".

Their leaders accepted the capitalist system as natural and inevitable. Their role was to act as a pressure group maintaining the immediate, sectional interests of their members. More far-sighted employers began to realise the advantages of establishing a good relationship with "responsible" union officials. Lord Elcho, the coalowner, used to invite Alexander MacDonald, the miners' leader, to champagne breakfasts.

Proposals for wage cuts, or new working practices, were more likely

to be accepted if the union leaders had already been persuaded to agree. They became, in the words of the American revolutionary Daniel De Leon, the "Labour Lieutenants of Capitalism."

Movement

When, later, a movement arose to organise unskilled labourers, it came about not because of the craft union leaders, but because of the spontaneous actions of workers like the dockers and the agitation of socialists like Eleanor Marx and Tom Mann.

The traditions of conservative craft unionism has marked the British labour movement throughout this century.

The Labour Party was formed by the union leaders to negotiate in Parliament in the same way they did at the workplace — and on the same political basis.

Of course not all union leaders are exactly the same. Some are personally honest, others corrupt. Some stand on the left, others are openly right wing. They are susceptible to different pressures from their members, from the employers,

from the government — and how they respond to those pressures will vary depending upon circumstances. Sometimes this can result in surprising twists. It was interesting to note that during the Ford strike, the only TGWU leader to call for solidarity action in defiance of the law was Brian Nicholson — a leading right-winger. He had his reasons...

But ultimately, all union leaders — left or right — are concerned to protect their own positions and their relatively privileged life-styles.

And that means accepting capitalism, and policing the members should they get out of hand.

Demands

That's why socialists may place demands on the leaders, and even support them when they say or do the right things — but we always warn against placing any reliance upon them, and encourage the rank and file to organise themselves within the unions. It will be a lesson that a whole new generation of trade union militants in the NHS, the motor industry and elsewhere must learn as a matter of urgency.

WHERE WE STAND

Socialist Organiser stands for workers' liberty, East and West. We aim to help organise the left wing in the Labour Party and trade unions to fight to replace capitalism with working class socialism.

We want public ownership of the major enterprises and a planned economy under workers' control. We want democracy much fuller than the present Westminster system — a workers' democracy, with elected representatives recallable at any time, and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

Socialism can never be built

in one country alone. The workers in every country have more in common with workers in other countries than with their own capitalist or Stalinist rulers. We support national liberation struggles and workers' struggles world-wide, including the struggle of workers and oppressed nationalities in the Stalinist states against their own anti-

socialist bureaucracies.

We stand:

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Against racism, and against deportations and all immigration controls.

For equality for lesbians and gays.

For a united and free Ireland, with some federal system to protect the rights of the Protestant minority.

For left unity in action; clarity in debate and discussion.

For a labour movement accessible to the most oppressed, accountable to its rank and file, and militant against capitalism.

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The first postwar world Jewish congress

What makes Jews Jewish?

I do not feel that anti-Zionism per se is anti-semitism, despite the fact that for many anti-semites today, anti-Zionism is a convenient guise for straightforward anti-semitic feelings. Nonetheless, one should realise the fact that one can be anti-Zionist without being anti-semitic.

Yet the problem is much deeper. In its most fundamental sense, anti-semitism has always been not a mere hatred of Jews, or of all things Jewish. What anti-semitism in all its historical manifestations objected to and aimed at were always the sources of the legitimacy of Jewish existence.

Therefore, when in the Middle Ages religion was the mainstay of Jewish identity, Christian persecution of the Jews aimed at delegitimising Jewish religion, by depicting Jews as deicides; with secularisation and the rise of modern nationalism, nineteenth century racial anti-semitism emerged as an ideology delegitimising the Jews as an ethnically or 'racially' inferior and pernicious entity.

Israel — the historical product of Zionism — is today the broadest

common denominator for Jewish self-consciousness all over the world. Certainly Jewish religion cannot be viewed anymore as the common bond uniting all people who call themselves Jewish.

Many Jews consider themselves as having been secularised, and certainly the vast majority lead a highly secularised life-style.

Secondly, Jewish religion today is no longer a uniform structure of codes and modalities as it was in pre-Emancipation days.

The differences between Reform Judaism and the Orthodox traditions are certainly not a unifying factor in Jewish life — the opposite is the case.

It is in this context of a largely secularised world that Israel has emerged as a normative centre for Jewish self-consciousness and Jewish self-definition in our age. The fate of Israel, its triumphs and tribulations, its problems and achievements, all these play a more central role in the self-understanding of more Jewish people all over the world than any other facet of Jewish life.

Secular and Orthodox Jews, left wing and right wing Jews, American and Soviet Jews — for all of these, Israel is more central to their self-definition of being Jewish

than any other factor they hold in common.

To strike at the legitimacy of Israel today, through anti-Zionism as an ideology of delegitimising Israel, as the SWP does, means striking at the very centre of the normative self-definition of the Jewish people as Jews understand it. It is a fact that most Jews define themselves today, in some way or other and in various degrees of intensity, in relation to Israel.

Should Israel disappear or a major catastrophe befall it, practically all Jewish people would conceive it as a major tragedy for their own existence as Jews. Therefore, a delegitimisation of Israel is tantamount to the delegitimisation of Jewish existence as understood by most Jews.

Many non-Jews may deplore this Jewish identification with Israel; but then many non-Jews deplored the obstinate refusal of Jews in the Middle Ages to convert to Christianity, and it is out of this unwillingness to accept the Jews as what they consider themselves to be that anti-semitism has historically arisen.

It is in this deeper sense — not in the facile semantic equation of anti-Zionism with anti-semitism, that

anti-Zionism is identical in its fundamental attitudes to former modes of traditional anti-semitism. Just like Christian theology in the Middle Ages and modern racist anti-semitism, current anti-Zionism of

the form where the legitimacy of the state of Israel is denied, aims at extirpating the basic legitimacy of Jewish existence.

MARK EDWARDS,
London

Review



Dragging the net

By Thomas Macara

"Dragnet" was a big-hit TV series in the mid-'50s. Made in the flat style of pretend-documentary accounts of police work, it had a hero, Sergeant Friday, whose often-repeated line became the series' catchphrase "I want the facts, ma'am, just give me the facts".

Now Dragnet has been recycled for the big screen as a comedy for the late '80s.

This movie is from the school which gave us 'Ghostbusters' and 'Trading Places' — the school of amiable parody and decaffeinated satire: No-one gets hurt or has reason to take offence. The question is: does anybody laugh? I did,

though not much.

This is present day Los Angeles and this Friday (Dan Ackroyd) is the nephew of that Friday, if you follow me. But he's just as square as his uncle was, as though he'd stepped out of a time capsule from the 1950s. That's the central joke of Dragnet. The young fogey, the uptight self-righteous cop from the fictions of yesteryear set to police decadent modern Los Angeles.

At first the film baits the young old man and seems to side with his hip new partner. But then it turns around and starts to work the other side of the street. Friday emerges as the hero whose sterling old-fashioned virtue saves the day and thwarts the villain, Christopher Plummer, whose cover is...religious revivalism.

I supposed I enjoyed it.

PAUL McGARRY
Manchester

SWP backs Khomeini

Oh dear, oh dear. Have you ever seen anything like it? What a bloody shambles. The SWP have fallen for Khomeini. They are supporting Iran in the Gulf War.

More than that, they now oppose strikes in Iran because they would "hinder the war effort".

The SWP's programme, in effect, comes down to a demand that more Iraqi workers, who have been conscripted into the army, should be killed in order to more efficiently pursue the "ant-imperialist" struggle.

Most people think that the Gulf War is between two profoundly reactionary, anti-working class regimes — Iran and Iraq. But there you'd be wrong. It's really between Iran and imperialism. And when imperialism raises its head, socialists should always line up with the other side, because, automatically, the other side must have become anti-imperialists!

That war is murdering millions of working class people, including children sent to the front to clear the minefields. The destruction of towns and villages and the chemical warfare is all for nothing save to

prop up the Iranian and Iraq regimes.

That war benefits no-one except the ruling classes of Iran and Iraq. We want neither side to win. We want an end to the war.

The SWP have never been this bad before. It seems they are very wound up. They have refused to print Socialist Organiser any more. Could this be because of two problems they have in their own ranks. Firstly the leadership can't hold the line on Iran and secondly they have the same problem with supporting the witch-hunting Democratic Left against SSiN in NUS conference elections.

So it makes sense. To deflect attention away from these issues and so unite the 'Party' (sic) they are pushing for making the Middle East the touchstone of revolutionary credentials. In particular one's credentials against SSiN. SSiN's so-called 'Zionism' puts us outside the left.

But unfortunately, as the SWP try to out-left each other they go over the top and crash down into the morass of left-wing anti-semitism.

As they disappear, pulled along by their own logic, they find that old lines have to change too. Tony

Cliff, the SWP leader, in Socialist Worker Review no. 100 says that he now thinks that Jewish emigration to Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s should have been opposed. He doesn't say where the Jews should have gone, bearing in mind that the imperialist powers refused to let them in and it was Palestine or death, it's not surprising that he doesn't have an answer.

It's all rather unfortunate really. In 1948 Israel fought a war against British imperialism. The SWP's line on the current Gulf War is to align with Iran because imperialism is against Iran...So you can see they have a problem. With hindsight, in 1948 they would have supported the proto-Israeli state, because imperialism was against it.

And what makes life even worse for these comrades is that they keep losing the arguments to SSiN members and their full time workers know it.

I think they are right to refuse SSiN's open invitation to debate them on the issue — any time, any place. I'd brick it too, if I had a line like that.

Health and Socialism

The response to the current attacks by the government on the NHS have shown the depth of feeling in favour of a health service which is accessible to everyone.

Both health workers and the general public are not willing to watch the service be dismantled. Opinion polls show that even amongst Tory voters there is majority support for increased funding of the NHS and for the health workers in their fight to save the service.

However, going along with this apparent support is the widespread dissatisfaction felt by people who use the health service. Much of this dissatisfaction reflects the run-down of the service — even before the current crisis people using the NHS often found it to be a miserable experience. There were generally no opportunities to have any say in how you were treated. The NHS has always been a production line system. Women and people from ethnic minorities often experienced sexist and racist stereotyping.

Sickness

The service was purely aimed at treating established disease — it was a national sickness service, not a national health service. There was nothing but lip service paid to a central idea in the original 1944 health service plan that it should be about the "promotion of good health rather than the treatment of bad" through both preventive medicine and social policies aimed at removing such fundamental determinants of poor health as unemployment, inadequate housing and poverty.

The recognition of the inadequacies of the NHS which existed even before the Tories decided to threaten its very existence has led some health workers to say that the current disputes should not be about the defence of the NHS, but

By Dr. George Davey-Smith

should be purely around pay and conditions.

They argue that the working class should not be misled into having any faith in the state provision of health care. This argument misses the central point that, with all its inadequacies, the establishment of the NHS was a partial victory for the working class. Anyone who remembers or reads about life before 1948 will know about the misery of the poor, or the penny club doctors, the reliance upon charity for medical treatment and often simply the absence of health care altogether.

Advocating that defence of the NHS is counter to socialist principles can make no sense to anyone who has lived in the real world.

The NHS — paternalistic, social democratic and inadequate institution that it is — has been very important in most people's lives, a fact reflected in the massive support shown for it. We must build upon this support to link in other workers with health workers in campaigning for a better health service for all — a campaign which obviously and by necessity includes concerted action demanding much improved pay and conditions for health workers.

The fight must be one that defends the NHS whilst at the same time demands its extension. It must support the health unions call for a 20% wage increase for nurses and tie them in with demands for across-the-board increases for all health workers, with a minimum wage of £150 per week. Generally health workers are very poorly paid — most female ancillary workers earning less than the supplementary benefit level, the "official" poverty line.

A functioning health service can't be run off the backs of its workers. Conditions of work need to be improved. The hierarchical organisation of the NHS workforce, with workers at the bottom of the tree

Cuts close wards

running around at the beck and call of those higher up, makes working in the service miserable for many and divides health workers from each other. Equality in pay and working conditions is necessary.

An essential component here is fighting for adequate staffing levels. The good will of health workers mustn't be taken advantage of. The current understaffing is only possible by increasing the already huge workload of nurses, ancillary workers and junior doctors.

Funding to meet these pay increases must come from central government, not from cuts in other areas of health service spending as has happened in the past. Funding must be sufficient to meet the costs of new treatments, of new problems such as AIDS, and of the increasing needs generated by an ageing

population.

A programme of new hospital and health centre construction is required. Part of the depressing experience of being treated within the NHS are the shabby and run down hospitals and inner-city general practice surgeries. However presently NHS land and buildings are being flogged off to fund the service, and this practice is increasing. Such "selling off of the family silver" must stop.

Research

Even the research team working for the Parliamentary Committee on the NHS reported underfunding since 1981 of £1.8 billion. The obscene spectacle of tax cuts for the rich while the NHS dies must not be allowed to occur.

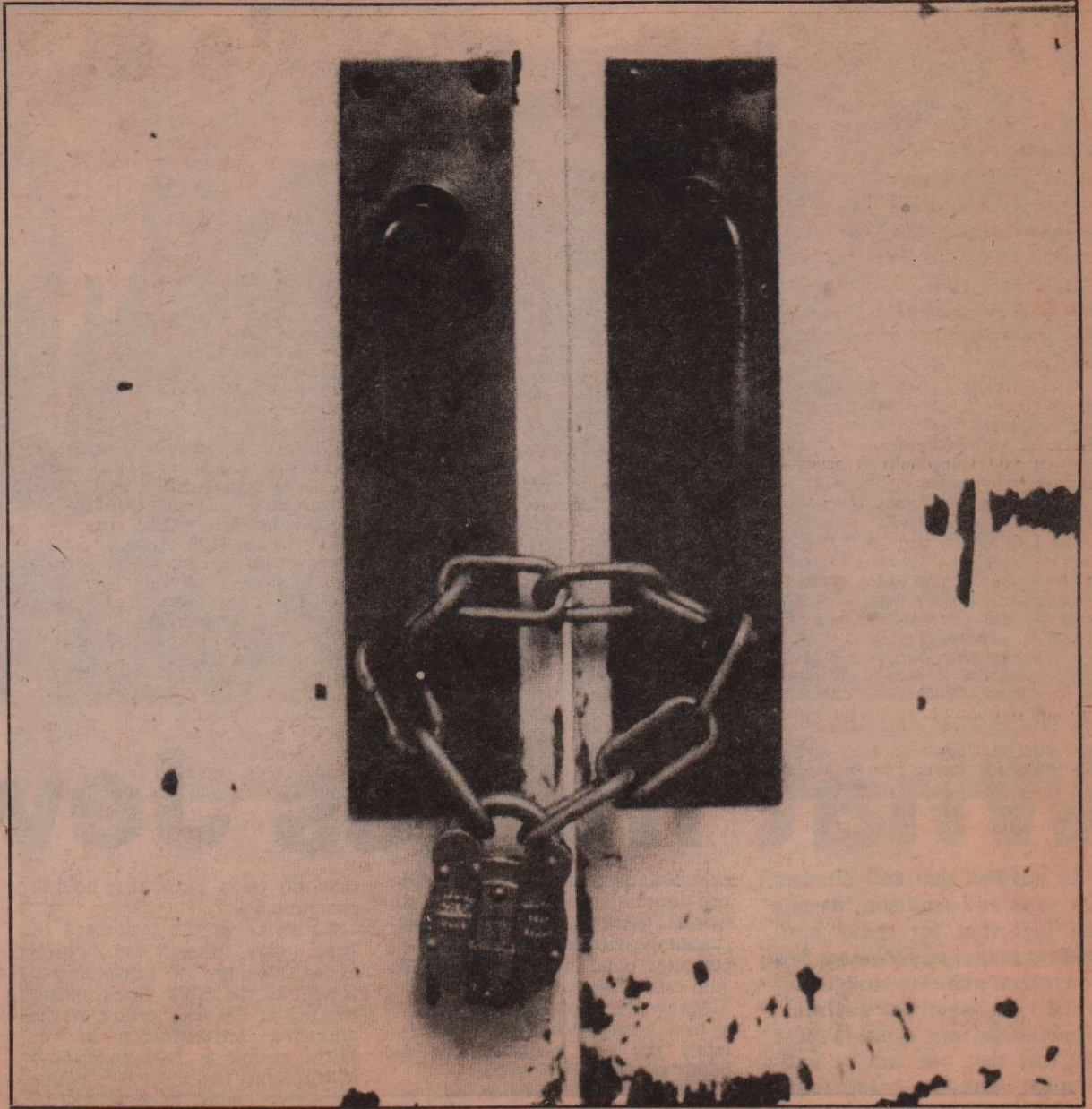
Private and corporation capital has not place in the National Health Service. Labour must be committed to the termination of all contracts which have privatised the ancillary services — privatisation has meant nothing but worse services performed by workers who are paid less and have worse terms of employment.

There should be no private medical practice. The current expansion of private medicine threatens a return to pre-NHS days, with an even more run-down NHS taking the place of charities in providing a second rate service for the less well off. The creeping privatisation of opticians' services (and hence charges for all glasses), of dental treatment and through increased prescription charges is part of a process aimed at the privatisation of the whole health service.

Working people have no input into decisions regarding the health services they get. The management structures of the NHS, the architect of which was Sir Roy Griffiths of Sainsbury's — is based on business principles. Health authorities are unelected. The chairs are nominated by the Secretary of State, the members being nominees from various sources — hospital consultants, local GPs, medical schools, local authorities, etc. There is just one trade union nominee, introduced by Labour in 1977 and now under attack by the Tories — since 1981 this representative no longer needs to be from a union affiliated to the TUC.

Health authorities should be made up of members directly elected during local government elections and trade union representatives, so the people who use and provide the health service can decide how it is to be run.

Health is not just to do with health services — even if the government met the full costs of a functioning NHS this couldn't deal with the ill-health caused by other areas of the Tories' policies which have led to a massive increase in unemployment and poverty, the deregulation of unhealth jobs, homelessness and poor housing. A fight to save the NHS must be part of a broader fight against the social conditions which cause ill-health, a fight which needs to take on the whole of this government's record.



1688

Stop this Orange provocation!

Anti-Fascist Action has issued the following statement:

In February Exeter's Labour-led City Council published its official programme for the 1988 celebrations to mark the 300th anniversary of the landing of William of Orange. In doing so it ignores 18 months of warnings and protests by the Exeter branch of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), that these 'celebrations' will attract and encourage the extreme right Orange Order and British fascist groups.

The Orange Order is notorious for its violent espousal of Protestant ascendancy and these celebrations will draw hundreds of Orangemen and their fascist supporters to Devon.

National Anti-Fascist Action is backing Exeter AFA's campaign and will be encouraging widespread national protest to stop these celebrations. A representative of Anti-Fascist Action said:

"The prospect of a Labour local authority giving such a golden opportunity to fascism is deplorable. It is well known that the fascists of the National Front have for some

time given top priority to supporting the Orange campaign against the Anglo-Irish agreement.

It is also well known that both the fascist and loyalist extremists are anxious for opportunities to rejuvenate their flagging campaigns, particularly in Britain. Anyone who knows anything about the importance of rallies and parades for the Orange movement and their fascist supporters; or the importance of William of Orange as the symbol of sectarian bigotry in Northern Ireland would not organise these celebrations.

As Exeter Council's Labour group are not Orange supporters we can only conclude that they are profoundly and culpably ignorant of what they are doing.

It is up to everyone who does see the dangers involved in these celebrations to protest to Exeter Council and the National Labour Party and have them stopped."

In November 1986 the Orange Lodges marched with the National Front to protest against the Anglo-Irish agreement in neighbouring Somerset. Then, the small town of Bridgewater, whose MP is Tom King, secretary of state for Nor-

thern Ireland, became the scene of Orange bigotry and fascist violence. In 1988 we have the threat that this will be repeated in Devon.

The 'Imperial Orange Council of the World' has booked a week long triennial conference in Brixham, starting 19 September. In the same week the 'Grand Orange Lodge of England' plans to hold a conference in Exeter University's Crossmead Centre. These Orange gatherings are to be preceded with an Orange march in Exeter on Saturday 17th. As for the National Front, they have stated openly:

"We have a lot of plans in the pipeline for 1988, when we hope to bring our supporters from all over the country to Devon."

The opportunities to execute their 'plans' are by no means limited to the parades and rallies in September. 12 July is the traditional date for the Orange Order's annual display of bigotry to mark the victory of William of Orange in 1690 at the Battle of the Boyne. 20 July could also be used by Orange extremists and their fascist allies to turn the official 'Re-enactment of the William III landing in Brixham'

into yet another violent protest against the Anglo-Irish agreement and all things they regard as Irish nationalist or Catholic.

Exeter Council has been made fully aware of the threat these 'celebrations' pose. Exeter Anti-Fascist Action has lobbied councillors, picketed Council meetings, held protest demonstrations, leafleted the local area and encouraged the widest protest at this misuse of £60,000 of public money.

More recently, on 4 February, they unfurled a banner in the Council chamber in Exeter, forcing the mayor to halt the council meeting for half an hour.

Exeter AFA have even published a small booklet spelling out in detail why Exeter Council — particularly a Labour-led Exeter Council — should not promote William of Orange's landing in England. However, Exeter City's local authority have not listened to reason.

Only nation-wide protest can now halt these provocative celebrations and avert an Orange binge in Exeter this summer.

For a comment on this statement, see page 3.

The Tories' double standards

For a long time we have been accusing the state and the authorities of using double-standards. Last week they proved it once again when the information came out that a British soldier, convicted of murder, had been released after just over two years and was now back at his job.

Since the strike we have been pressing that miners who, in the main, are guilty of no offence whatsoever — and those miners who are guilty of some offence have still paid their penalty to society — be given their jobs back.

But there are still some 260 miners victimised by British Coal.

The information that came out on Tuesday shows clearly what the state thinks. If you are part of the establishment then it is quite alright for you to serve two years for murder and then be given your job back. But if you are guilty of no offence but are part of the trade union movement, then you have to suffer for the rest of your life, as does your wife and your kids. It's a blatant indication of the way things are.

The NUM, sponsored MPs and in fact everybody should now be arguing that if it's alright in the case of the army, then every single one of the cases of the 260 victimised miners should now be looked at again. I do not think there is any argument why they should not all be given their jobs back.

It's another incident that gives me a chance to urge once again that the

WHETTON'S WEEK

labour and trade union movement should not forget those miners who are still victimised, and are still showing tremendous resilience in the face of real hardship. Other workers should remember that they could be in the same position tomorrow unless we keep fighting on this issue.

5 March

I am looking forward to going on Saturday's TUC demonstration in support of the health workers. I will be going with one of my sons, who is a nurse. In some respects, I suppose, we should be grateful that the TUC has actually done something, although it is only a demonstration.

But demonstrations, petitions, etc., are not going to save the health service, and the 'new realists' who try and convince others that it will be living in cloud-cuckoo-land. The only way you will save anything from the Tories is to stand up and fight.

Since the end of the miners' strike I have been pretty disillusioned to see jobs and industries go down like ninepins in the face of the Tories' onslaught. Recently, though, I have begun to get a little bit of optimism. Arthur Scargill's re-election, the Ford strike, the healthworkers and so on. People have tried the new realists' way and time after

time it has been shown not to work. Stirring examples of nurses and Ford workers being prepared to stand up and fight are at least giving us a pointer to the way forward.

Incidentally, this is one of the dilemmas facing NACODS at the present time. They took their wage claim to the national reference tribunal, who ruled they should call off their action, but also that British Coal should stop victimising the deputies and trying to impose a new 7-day roster.

Not surprisingly, NACODS obeyed but British Coal has not, at least in Notts and Yorkshire. NACODS think they can talk their way out of a very difficult situation, but they can't. The only way they will win is by stepping up their fight, not by trying to call it off.

I am sure that on Saturday's demonstration there will be plenty of demands for the TUC to call at least a one-day general strike in support of the health workers. I am very much in favour of it, as I have been on a number of occasions in the past on other issues. But it is so clear for the health workers. It is an issue that affects every working class man, woman and child. Their health is at stake. It's their health service. The only possible answer is for every man, woman and child to participate in the fight.

People in the past have argued that the miners' fight was not their fight, that they were not the same as Ford workers and so on. But that argument is so obviously invalid with the health workers. The very least that the working class can do, as a whole, is to throw their tools on the floor in defence of the health service.

Last week the Tories came out with their plans for the privatisation of the electricity industry. It's the latest round in their selling-off of assets to finance their political strategy. The industries in which I like everybody else, used to have some form of stake, have been sold off into private hands — all without a ballot! Of course, that private control will rapidly become concentrated into fewer and fewer private hands.

The sale of the electricity industry will be a massive give-away. It threatens jobs in mining, rail, seafarers and within the power stations themselves. And in the run-up to privatisation the consumer will have to pay hand over fist for the bosses' rich pickings, with the prices being driven up. Nuclear power, of course, is enshrined in the plans, and could even itself end up in private hands.

Many pits would go, virtually overnight. It does not take a genius to work out that if you are buying coal on the market as a private investor, would you be paying the £40 odd per tonne from British Coal or would you be paying sometimes as low as half that figure by getting coal from South Africa, or Columbia, where coal is mined by kids, slaves and workers in slave conditions. Not even Nottinghamshire would be safe.

They are already expanding the facilities to import the cheap coal, and the rail is particularly threatened. Something like 80% of all freight traffic on the railways is coal. They would be decimated overnight, and even those lines that remained would then themselves become prime candidates for privatisation.

Les Hearn's SCIENCE COLUMN

The causes of Brazil's floods

What caused the disastrous floods and mudslides in Rio de Janeiro recently? At least 300 died and some 20,000 shanty town dwellers are homeless. The city is still under threat of more landslides.

What caused flooding in Rio Branco, capital of the eastern Amazon province of Acre, 3000 kilometres away? This left some 40,000 homeless and Rio Branco was still flooded ten days after.

Everyone agrees that the torrential rains had something to do with it but Brazilian scientists agree that these by themselves were not enough to explain the devastation. To understand the full picture, we must examine the situation in Rio de Janeiro and Rio Branco.

Cultivate

Due to lack of land for the poor to cultivate, hundreds of thousands of landless people have gone to Rio de Janeiro and other cities, searching for work. More than one million of them live in *favelas* or shanty towns on the hillsides surrounding Rio. These hills are actually quite high, over 1000 metres in places, and were extensively wooded. Over the years, however, the trees have been cut down to make space for hovels, for building materials or for fuel.

When heavy rain falls on a tropical forest, water is caught by the leaves and slowed down in its fall. Once the canopy has gone, though, the water hits the soil with full force, sweeping it away down the hillsides in muddy streams. If the process has been going on for some time, a particularly heavy storm can cause a catastrophic landslide and a river of mud carries all before it. In Rio, such mudslides destroyed the shanties on their way to the richer areas nearer sea-level.

In Rio Branco, the flood was caused by the bursting of the banks of tributaries of the Amazon but the underlying cause was again deforestation. Normally, the rain is delayed on its way into the rivers by the trees and soil. But once these have gone, the water pours straight in and the river in full spate tears down its banks.

In the Amazon forests, the reasons for cutting down the trees are different. People have flocked here in search of land not already occupied by ranch owners or multinational companies. They cut down and burn the trees (causing on at least one occasion last year massive air pollution and disruption of the weather), farm for a few years until the soil is exhausted and then move on. Multi-national ranching, timber and mining companies also cut down the forests, with the same result.

If that is the cause of the floods, then the solution is simple — replant the trees. But the soil has gone and is not easily replaced. The people, too, need land and work. This human tragedy in Brazil has economic, political and environmental causes. Preventing more such tragedies means tackling all these causes.

Civil servants

The left in NUCPS

Mike McGrath, the candidate of the Broad Left in NUCPS (National Union of Civil and Public Servants) for the presidency of that union, spoke to Socialist Organiser. NUCPS is the union recently formed by the merger of two civil service unions, the SCPS and the CSU. Mike was for many years a well-known activist in the CPSA. He is editor of "Open Left", the NUCPS Broad Left journal.

The existing leadership is controlled by a small group of Stalinists. These people think that everything started going wrong in the Soviet Union after Joe Stalin died. The uprisings in Hungary 1956, Czechoslovakia 1968, and more recently in Poland are all viewed as CIA-sponsored.

But the Broad Left doesn't exist simply as a political opposition: we are, after all, in a trade union, not a political party. We are critical of the leadership's secrecy and elitism.

For example, you have to be invited to join their secret 'left' caucus. They were opposed to the introduc-

Seafarers



The Peruvian 20,000 tonne Presidente Jose Pardo is stranded in Liverpool by the bankruptcy of its parent company, CPV, and a national strike of CPV crew. A fourfold pay increase would bring them in line with international standards from their present £60 a month, and the union is also asking for intervention in the com-

pany's affairs by the Peruvian president, Alan Garcia. In the meantime the 17 crewmen are stuck in Liverpool in poor conditions with little money, and no support from the 12 ship's officers, who are in a different union. They would welcome support and financial help. Contact Alex Doswell, 051-709 4398.

tion of election addresses (where candidates for union positions can tell the membership their background and policies); they oppose the election of full-time officers. On many industrial issues, they simply do not believe that members are prepared to fight seriously — ever.

What is the leadership's response to the existence of the open Broad Left?

Very hostile. A secret paper of theirs came into our hands, which rejected out of hand any cooperation with us. No doubt they would like to get rid of us in one way or another, but in fact they can't. Nor, I suspect, do they have the confidence to try.

What difficulties do you find in building a Broad Left in what is essentially a management union?

Well, since the merger with CSU, we have become a union which also organises the lowest paid in the civil service — cleaners, messengers, photocopiers, etc. However, it's true that the majority of the union membership are management grades, and this does present both opportunities and difficulties.

Many members still retain an illusion that they have a career in the civil service, and this can create a conflict between loyalty to the management and loyalty to effective union action. As managers, NUCPS members are called upon to report on, and to direct the work of junior staff — and that can put militants in a spot.

However, the attacks on our members are now so severe that the illusions are disappearing. Witness, for example, the vote to establish a political fund.

I am confident that we will see a surge of militancy in the civil service in the coming period. We must do what we can to ensure that it comes sooner rather than later, and be of a scale sufficient to roll back the government's attacks.

I don't think that the civil service workers alone can win: we need to join with other public sector workers. This is a difficult task, opposed as it is by the trade union leaders because of its political implications.

*Readers in NUCPS who are interested in finding out more about the Broad Left should contact the National Secretary, 54 Withy House, Globe Road, London E1.

Haringey teachers

A partial victory

By Mick O'Sullivan

Last week a mass meeting of Haringey teachers voted overwhelmingly to accept a deal struck between the council and their national union, ending the 5-week-long strike.

The union had taken action in response to the council's cuts in education. Their demands had been no compulsory redundancies, a limit on class sizes and an agreement on cover for absent teachers.

The deal is a partial victory. The teachers have won on the issue of compulsory redundancies, which have been withdrawn. Class size has been limited to 27 in primary schools and 30 in secondary schools and separate primary and secondary agreements have been made over cover for absences in schools.

The solidarity of the teachers left

many, including some of the local NUT leaders, believing they could have got more out of the bosses, especially over cover in secondary schools for absent teachers.

However, once the national union had made the deal it largely became a fait accompli. The national union pays virtually 100% strike pay and enforces iron discipline against unofficial strikes.

One of the problems of the Haringey action which helped the national union to impose a deal was the lack of support from other NUT Associations. A certain amount of blame must be attached to the local leadership in failing to turn the strike out, but much of the left effectively ignored the strike.

The most important aspect of the strike was that it happened. Haringey had hoped to get through massive cuts without any resistance. The teachers, isolated in the Borough as the only group facing compulsory redundancies, acted as a union, took action, fought for five weeks and saved 100 jobs.

Why are you standing for the post of President?

I'm not standing in order to further my own career in the union. In fact, I'm a somewhat reluctant candidate, but was felt to be the best choice by comrades within the Broad Left.

We are standing for two principal reasons. Firstly, in the new union, the presidency is the only position for which all members can vote. All other posts are reserved for members of each of the two old unions, CSU and SCPS.

Secondly, the current leadership has reacted passively to the threats that we face.

The pay agreement this year is full of the worst sort of class collaborationist rubbish. For pennies, we have sold defences on the introduction of new technology, on the direct recruitment of staff to grades to which our members expect promotion, and many other conditions of service.

As someone at work said to me the other day, "What our leadership doesn't seem to realise is that the government plans ceaselessly to find ways to screw us." The conflict is total and unconditional — the trouble is, only one side recognises the fact!

SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Rover: it'll be a long and tough fight

The Land Rover pay strike is now into its second week. The entire hourly paid workforce (6,000 in all) is out, and hundreds turn up for a mass picket of the gates on Monday 29 February.

Rumours had spread that management intended to bus strike-breakers into the Solihull plant on Monday morning, but in the event nothing of the sort took place.

However, strikers are worried that white collar staff (who last week voted to accept a pay offer similar to that rejected by the hourly paid workers) may be pressurised by the company into doing production work. One striker told SO, "There's no way the company could run the tracks using white collar staff and supervision, but they could possibly complete some final trim and rectification work, which would look good in the media, and be bad for our morale. So we're putting out a special leaflet to the white collar staff asking them not to do our jobs. If that doesn't work, we'll have to consider stepping up the picketing to stop them going in at all."

The Solihull Joint Shop Stewards have also decided to withdraw safety cover, provided in the first week of the dispute to protect plant and equipment. Another decision at last Friday's Joint Shop Stewards/Strike Committee meeting was to prevent the movement of Longbridge-produced Metros, some of which are stockpiled at the Solihull plant.

As one shop steward commented, "management have taken the gloves off; it's time we stopped playing by Queensbury rules."

With the government making it clear that they want Land Rover management to stand firm, the strikers are under no illusions that Land Rover will be a pushover. Most strikers expect a long, tough fight. The Solihull Joint Shop Stewards/Strike Committee, as well as organising 24-hour picketing, is also organising collections for a hardship fund, and negotiating with the DHSS to ensure that strikers' families receive their maximum benefit entitlements.

The action has been very well organised so far, and morale is clearly high. But regular mass meetings of all the strikers need to be organised to counter management's propaganda campaign (which is already underway in the local press) to keep all strikers fully informed of developments.

Meanwhile dockworkers must be approached and a boycott of Land Rover vehicles (70% of which are exported) organised by the TGWU.

Botha attacks

By Anne Mack

Seventeen organisations were effectively banned in South Africa last week.

This latest clampdown focuses on the United Democratic Front and its affiliates — which until last week were the open, legal — or at least semi-open, semi-legal — part of the broader Congress movement associated with the outlawed African National Congress. AZAPO, the largest black consciousness organisation, has also been proscribed.

Technically, the 17 organisations have not been banned. But they are barred from "carrying on or performing any activities or acts whatsoever".

COSATU, the giant trade union federation, has *not* been banned. However, it is barred from carrying out any political activities — including calling for the release of prisoners from detention, calling for the unbanning of illegal organisations, such as the ANC, calling for election boycotts, or any other form of anti-government publicity campaigns. It cannot commemorate the anniversary of any incident of public violence or unrest.

The immediate spark for these bannings was the forthcoming whites-only by-elections in the Transvaal where PW Botha's ruling National Party are trying to win Afrikaner support from the ultra-right Conservative Party. The Conservatives have criticised the Nationalists for being too soft on the black revolt.

The latest crackdown is designed as proof that the government is far from soft.

However, it would be wrong to see the crackdown as a mere electoral ploy. Rather, it should be seen as part of the government's broader strategy for dealing with the black revolt.

Since late 1985 the government has slowly but surely been piling on the pressure and increasing the general level of repression.

Botha's strategy was to sit out the township revolt and then attack at the time when the movement was running out of steam.

Botha was planning on the spontaneous revolt in the township eventually falling apart because of the lack of a coherent perspective from the dominant forces in the mass movement. Tragically, he did not miscalculate. As the township revolt declined in 1986, strikes reached record levels which were then exceeded in 1987.

Newly-organised workers in the mines, railways and municipal services flexed their muscles. Older-organised workers fought for a 'living wage'. Often, however, the unions have had to retreat. The 1987 miners' strike was defeated. In the wake of this defeat, the general level of working class militancy has declined.

Botha now plans harsher labour laws to further restrict the independent labour movement. There are rumours of an impending treason trial of the entire COSATU leader-

ship. The irresponsible factionalism of some UDF supporters in the trade union movement has weakened the workers' movement in the face of attack.

The latest moves do not show, as some commentators have argued, that 'Botha has run out of ideas'. Quite the contrary!

The Nationalist government has defeated the township revolt for now. The townships are under control, and a new layer of collaborators has a real chance of gaining some legitimacy from the black municipal polls this autumn. Botha plans a period of modernisation from above.

The effective banning of the UDF and the restrictions on COSATU means that they will be unable to intervene in those elections *either* by boycotting them or by participating.

The workers' movement is under intense pressure in South Africa today. It is vital that the left does not collapse under this pressure and turn to study-circle politics or guerrillaism.

The key question today is the defence of the labour movement



Black students' protest from state and vigilante attacks. The left also needs to draw out the lessons of the last few years. The

left in the unions must organise politically and link up with their allies outside the labour movement.

Council cuts

Strike on 8 March!

On 10 September last year, London Bridge, London Authorities Joint Trade Union Committee, at its conference, agreed to hold a one-day strike and demonstration in 1988 at the time the London councils were setting their budgets.

8 March has come from this decision, and in the week preceding Health Service actions, 8 March will be a large demonstration against cuts in local government and against ILEA rate-capping and abolition.

Support is growing in London for protest strikes on 8 March over

By Ed Hall, Secretary, London Bridge.

cuts, rate-capping and abolition of ILEA.

Already the NALGO branches of Islington, ILEA, Westminster, Ealing, Haringey, Lambeth, Lewisham, Hammersmith and Camden, together with the DLO joint committees of Haringey, Hackney, Southwark and Islington, support strike action on the day.

NALGO's Met District support, as does the Greater London

Association of Trades Councils, and other trades councils. Councilors against the cuts are supporting the strike, as is the London-wide Voluntary Sector Combine (ACTSS) and other community organisations.

The route of the demonstration from Kennington Park at 11.30 am to Jubilee Gardens for a rally is being organised by ILEA JSSC.

The one day action of the 8th is part of the process of rebuilding trade union resistance to the Tory cuts, being passed on to workers in health, education and local government services by capitulating Labour and other councils. There is a growing mood of defiance, given great heart by the action of COHSE and NUPE members in the health service.

The London Bridge AGM, held on 18 February, fully endorsed strike action on the 8th and publicity is now with most trade union branches in London. Despite some undermining, surprisingly from the SWP, the 8th is building into a significant event.

It is of vital importance that workplace rank and file trade union organisations open up as many communication channels as possible, and it is known that the dates now set for this month, be they the 8th for local government workers in London, or the 14th for the health service came about by pressure from those working 'on the shop floor'.

London Bridge will bring information across the London Boroughs, and will try to play its part in the ending of the most pernicious of governments, now embarking on a rampage against the very public services most needed.



Students demonstrate against the Baker Bill — Saturday 27th. See article on Labour students, page 2.

Our fighting fund

North London SO supporters raised £145.71 for our fighting fund at a jumble sale last Saturday. Nottingham sent £30 from a social, £29.83 donation from Pauline McCoy, and £15 from a sponsored give-up-smoking effort by Rosey Sibley and Reb Short.

Together with other donations, that makes a total of £5729.29 at the end of February. Our target is £10,000 by the end of March, so we need £4270.71 in the next four weeks!

Send money, and news of fund-raising, to SO, PO Box 823, London SE15 4NA.