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LAURENCE SCOTTS EVICTED!

centre page

Laurence Scotts convenor Denis Barry told us: 'Thanks for Socialist Organiser's support

and coverage. I can't say the same for some other political groups. For forty years the Communist Party has preached socialism and progress. Yet when it comes to the crunch on real struggles they just don't want to know. 'Pull your head out of the sand and to the union line', we were told by leading CP people in Manchester. In this situation you can understand why they did bugger all for Robbo'.

BL WORKERS GO FOR £20 ACROSS THE BOARD

And Edwardes says not a penny.

centre page

RAIL DISPUTE

£58.75 basic, 54 hour average week, the conditions the railworkers are fighting against.

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LOTHIAN SACKS 900 TEACHERS

But Labour activists continue the fight

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Ken Loach's film reviewed.

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REAGAN'S WAR CRY

by John Lister

THEY CALL it the "free world". The capitalist minority are free to exploit you, together with the vast majority of the world's population are "free" to toil for a pittance or to languish on never-ending dole queues.

This kind of 'freedom' is dear to the hearts of Reagan and Thatcher. But it is none too popular with the masses in the Third World.

Time and again they have risen up in struggle against imperialist oppression. And recent years have seen a string of defeats inflicted on US and British imperialism - Vietnam, Angola, Iran, Nicaragua and Zimbabwe.

Reagan and Thatcher have set themselves the task of stopping the rot.

But that is no easy matter. It means arming their allies to crush powerful revolutionary movements in El Salvador, Southern Africa and Palestine. It means intimidating the masses in the rest of Southern America, Africa and Asia.

Forces

And this attempt to shift the balance of forces in favour of imperialism also means preparing for confrontation if necessary with the Kremlin-led Stalinist regimes.

The US is already supplying arms to the junta in El Salvador and heavily menacing Cuba.

Such a military strategy does not come cheap. In the USA it means the biggest arms spree in American history.

Reagan was already committed to a colossal arms budget, including new missiles, aircraft carriers, new bombers, tanks, and a Rapid Deployment Force to put down revolutionary struggles in the Middle East.

Now Washington, under the pretext of achieving "nuclear superiority" over the Soviet Union by the end of the decade, has embarked upon a further \$200 billion programme which will include (over and above the neutron bomb):

*building a new strategic bomber - the B1;

\$1,500,000,000,000 budget for means of mass slaughter

*building a new, more lethal submarine nuclear missile;

*building a new fleet of permanently airborne bombers to carry the MX missile system over the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans;

*building a vastly expanded satellite communications and command network.

The total arms bill for the next five years is no less than \$1.5 trillion - that is 1.5 thousand billion dollars. As one defence analyst declared, "We've got a national military strategy: it's called M-O-R-E."

The spending is racing ahead regardless of Reagan's huge budget deficit, and warnings from his economic advisor that 'defence' spending should be cut by \$10-\$20 billion this year and next. The alternative, he warned, was a 50% cut in domestic (welfare) programmes.

Priority

But for Reagan (and Thatcher) there is only one priority: to make the world safe for capitalism.

And let nobody cherish the illusion that the imperialists seek only to restore some kind of frozen military "balance" with the Kremlin.

The Reagan government has openly set out to develop a "first strike" capability, to enable it to wage what it regards as a "limited theatre war". Next time it is faced with a Vietnam - so the strategy goes - it will



not send millions of troops, just a few nuclear bombs.

This government means war on the working class - in the USA and internationally. Reagan must be stopped!

The drive to impose the will of US imperialism on Central America and the Middle East, and to step up the military threat against the nationalised economies of the Stalinist states, must be defeated.

Ally

The main task of defeating the US war drive must be in the hands of the American workers' movement. But the British government

is Reagan's no. 1 international ally. The British and European working class can take important steps to weaken the imperialist offensive.

Cruise

We can step up the fight against the siting of Cruise and Pershing missiles in Europe and for the removal of US bases.

We can fight tooth and nail against Thatcher's arms build up and the purchase of Trident missiles.

We can step up the struggle in the labour movement for a policy of withdrawal from NATO and anti-Soviet alliances, and the unilateral nuclear disarmament



Support PATCO strike!

THE REFUSAL of air traffic controllers in Britain and other countries to support their striking colleagues in the USA has delighted the cynical union-busters in the Reagan administration.

It means that their frontal attack on the US air traffic control union PATCO - in which they have sacked all 12,000 PATCO strikers, fined and jailed union leaders and paraded them in chains - has survived its first hurdle.

So far the skeleton crew of scabs, non-union controllers and military personnel has managed to keep a large percentage of flights in the air without a major disaster - though near misses are being reported by the dozen.

Safety

As long as they do so, the mealy-mouthed excuse that action is called for only on grounds of "safety"

rather than in defence of trade union solidarity becomes less and less credible.

Action on grounds of "safety" in Canada and Australia quickly crumbled. The International Federation of Air Traffic Control Staff failed even to respond at this level.

Blacking

And in Britain air controllers have continued throughout to guide flights into and out of air space. Only the Portuguese controllers have offered a show of solidarity - with a 48 hour spell blacking.

Action is needed urgently. Within the IPCS, calls have been raised for support to PATCO. Other trade unionists must insist that British labour movement supports its American brothers and sisters.

*Black all US flights!

of British imperialism.

And we must make the fight against the imperialist war danger a central component of the struggle to oust the Thatcher government.

Out of NATO

*No Cruise or Trident! Jobs not Bombs!

*Bring down the Tories! For a workers' government based on international solidarity!

Troops out of Ireland! *Destroy the NATO alliance! For a Socialist United States of Europe!

LOTHIAN COLLAPSES BEFORE TORY AXEMAN

by Lothian Socialist Organiser supporters.

ON THURSDAY 13 August 17 Labour councillors obeying the Labour Group whip proposed cuts in Lothian's spending of £15.25 million. The Tories and Liberals immediately left the Council chamber, dropping their £26 million alternative to the Labour Group's pitiful crumble in the face of Tory Secretary George Younger.

Seven Labour councillors defied the Group whip and voted against every cut proposed. And reaction in the Labour Party was immediate.

That evening, Edinburgh Central GMC passed an emergency resolution (see box). This will be sent to the Regional Labour Party, the Lothian Region Action Committee and all major national labour and trade union movement bodies, as well as the local press.

Lothian SO supporters believe that all Labour Party affiliated union branches and all CLPs and wards should pass resolutions to the Regional Party demanding the disassociation of the Party from the actions of the 17 and the withdrawal of their names from the panel for next year's Regional elections for flouting Party policy.

After coming so far, the action of these councillors is nothing but a sell-out.

In their panic to keep on the right side of the law, the Labour Group have actually agreed to three times the level of cuts Younger was demanding.

Hurried

A hurried decision to put a moratorium on council spending till the end of this financial year will mean the equivalent of £96 million cuts.

The council is expected to be recalled to reverse this, but if legality is to remain the rule, then cuts equivalent to Younger's demand of £30 million will have to be found.

To a great extent the climbdown is due to the actions (or lack of them) of the Lothian Region Action Committee (LRAC) and the Lothian Joint Trade Union Committee (LJTUC).

On the day before the council vote, and at the same time as the Labour Group took their cutting decision, a joint meeting of the LRAC and LJTUC spent its time ridiculing two Unemployed Workers' Association delegates for suggesting that these committees were set up to campaign and coordinate action to fight the cuts.

THIS CLP condemns the cuts implemented by a majority of the members of Lothian Region Labour Group. This attack on working class living standards will not satisfy the Tory government who will demand that even more devastating cuts be made.

This CLP congratulates the seven group members who stood by party policy of no cuts, no job loss and no redundancy.

Central Edinburgh CLP calls on the Labour Group to stand by party policy and to unite with the Joint Trade Union Committee of

Lothian and the Lothian Region Action Committee to follow this strategy to defeat the Tories:

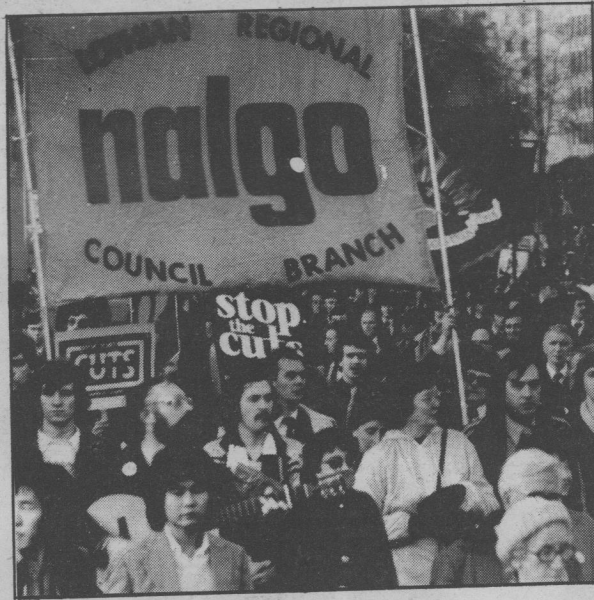
*No cuts; no compromises.

*A mass campaign for all out industrial action by regional employees and the wider trade union movement.

*Joint action with other councils threatened with the cuts.

*National co-ordination by STUC, TUC, Labour Party NEC and Scottish Council of the Labour Party.

*Full support for the 12 September demonstration.



Labour ranks call for industrial action

TGWU full-timer, Alistair McQueen ignored the decision of this year's TGWU Biennial Conference to back strike action against the cuts, and echoed the often heard cry of the trade union bureaucrat in the act of selling out - "it's unrealistic, my members won't take industrial action against the cuts."

Of course there isn't 100% support for action but 20,000 on the streets is a start. Unfortunately the complete lack of any follow up to the action of June 30, the cave-in by the council and the behaviour of union officials such as NUPE full-timer Alistair Macrae (who mouths off to the press about his members taking strike action while he does nothing to build it) have left activists bewitched, bothered, bewildered and almost completely demoralised.

Nevertheless trade union full timers and prominent Labour Party members on the LJTUC and LRAC still intend treating the rank and file as Boris Spasky treats his pawns in a game of chess, to be thrown away at will.

And even the seven left-wing councillors, despite their vote against cuts on the 13th, have weakened.

Had the Tories and Liberals stayed in the

council meeting to press their £26 million cuts, these seven councillors had planned firstly to put a no cuts motion and after that had been out-voted to fall in behind the Labour majority's "lesser of two evils" proposal.

At the joint meeting of the LJTUC and LRAC a resolution initiated by SO supporters in their ward Labour Party calling for delegates to the LRAC from wards and CLPs was turned down. District councillor Alex Wood argued that if adopted the action committee would become too big!!

Polish Solidarity please note!

We need a broad committee to help plan, co-ordinate and campaign a successful campaign against the cuts.

Trade union branches, Labour Party branches and GMCs, shop stewards committees, tenants groups, etc, should keep on pushing for delegations to the LRAC and the LJTUC. Shop stewards' committees should force the reconvening of the Joint Shop Stewards Conference.

LRAC should convene a national conference as quickly as possible to organise action in sup-

port of any sections taking action against the implementation of the cuts, whoever is enforcing them.

Monitors will have to be set up throughout the Region's workplaces to record any cuts that are being put through.

Nationally, comrades should be putting resolutions to their union and Labour Party branches condemning the Labour Group decision and promising support for any fight taken against the cuts.

Contact: Lothian Region Action Committee, 12 Picardy Place, Edinburgh.

LAST MINUTE: Over the weekend East Edinburgh Constituency Labour Party called for the Regional Labour Party to reinterview all the councillors who voted for cuts.

Nine hundred teachers are sacked

by Callum McRae (EIS representative, Firhill School, Edinburgh)

NINE HUNDRED teachers and lecturers on short-term contract in Lothian Region were told, two days before the start of term on August 18th, that their contracts would not be renewed.

200 non-teaching jobs are to go as well.

Some of these teachers have been employed on successive short-term contracts for up to 15 years. Most of the rest are in jobs where, until recently, permanent contracts would have been given. All have been timetabled for, and their pupils and students are turning up to find no-one to teach them.

Appalling

Leaders of the EIS, the major Scottish teachers' union, have threatened strike action. It is vital that this happens immediately.

Rank and file teachers are calling for a one-day national strike and all-out action in Lothian Region, supported by a national levy.

This appalling situation has arisen as a result of the 'moratorium on new spending' agreed by Labour councillors in Lothian Region at the same meeting that the 'no cuts' policy was abandoned. The moratorium was introduced in addition to £15 million specific cuts when council-

ors panicked after being told that unless they chop the full £30 million demanded by the Tories they will go into a position of 'illegality'.

It now seems that the moratorium, if maintained, will result in such 'side-effects' as an inability to buy more bus fuel and food for school meals when current stocks run out.

The Labour Group on the Council, now in total disarray as they realise the extent of their actions, is talking of reversing the moratorium. But unless they are willing to stand up and fight again (i.e. go into illegality, if necessary), they will have to implement the further £15 million demanded by Younger.

This would mean around 2400 redundancies in the Region, including over 1000 teachers.

In other words, most of those now sacked would be given their jobs back only to lose them again - this time, in company with many teachers on permanent contract.

For some 63 of these teachers, it would be the third time in as many months that they had been told their jobs were safe only to lose them again. Last time a threatened strike by Lothian Region teachers in defence of the 63 was called off after an assurance from the Labour Group that their jobs were safe.

St Mary's domestics face hearings

by Ann Evans

SUPPORT is growing for the occupation at St. Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road. Donations and messages of support, including one donation of £100, have been pouring in.

An official from the Licensed Taxi Drivers' Association, who have an office close to the hospital, has promised to inform taxi drivers about any demonstrations and mobilise them to keep the hospital open.

Bulletin

The Occupation Committee have now started a bulletin to keep the staff informed about any dev-

elopments within the hospital, and to monitor any moves that might be made towards cutting services or jobs.

Disciplinary hearings against the domestics who have refused to take on extra work in line with the Occupation Committee's decisions, have now started. NUPE members among the domestics have decided that they should attend these hearings.

Other trade unionists within the hospital

are unhappy at this decision, feeling that management bodies and disciplinary procedures should be ignored while the hospital is under occupation.

Attend

However, it has now been agreed that all the domestics (four at present) who have received disciplinary notices should attend their hearings, to the accompaniment of a forceful demonstration of hospital work-

ers. The importance of continued support on the picket line cannot be stressed enough. Organise a regular delegation from your union branch, Labour Party or SO group. The picket functions all day, with a special effort on Saturday afternoons.

Messages/money John Dolan, c/o Cashier's Dept, St Mary's, Harrow Rd, W9.

CORRECTION: In last week's SO we stated that only one doctor was on duty at Casualty on Saturday 8th August, causing queues of up to 5 hours. In fact, the queues were caused by an unusually large number of injuries, and it is normal for only one doctor to be employed at this time. A nurse asked for extra staff to be brought in to cope with the influx, but management refused this. The whole incident really shows the need to expand services and staffing rather than slash them as the AHAs and government would like to do.

Strike and occupy to stop the cuts!

**Socialist
Organiser
EDITORIAL**

Speaking for Labour, or NATO?



LABOUR's front bench defence spokesperson Brynmor John and his four deputies have issued a letter to trade unions calling on them to help reverse Labour Party policy of unilateral nuclear disarmament and military spending cuts, decided at last year's conference and confirmed at July's National Executive.

Even if Britain scraps the Bomb, they say, "in any event, nuclear weapons exploded in, for example, France, would affect large parts of the United Kingdom whether or not we were directly attacked".

That is, of course, true enough. If warmongers anywhere in the world have the Bomb, then all of us in danger. We need to disarm and overthrow all the warmongers.

But John's conclusion is: the British labour movement should not start by disarming our own warmongers! Logically no-one else should start either. And when the four minute warning sounds, we'll still be waiting for the international talk-shows to produce peace...

John also argues that expelling US bases would "ruin the alliance" between Britain and the US, and disrupt US-British economic cooperation. Again,

true enough: to scrap the Bomb would annoy Reagan! But it would also build a strong alliance between the British labour movement and the American working people who opposed the Vietnam war.

The front bench team's final argument, directed against military spending cuts, is that these cuts will mean loss of jobs in the armed forces and arms industries. Lucas and Vickers workers have already prepared plans for switching their factories from military to socially useful production.

A shorter work week, nationalisation, and economic planning under the democratic control of the working class, are the answers to unemployment - not more weapons of mass murder.

Brynmor John is not in the business of convincing people. As in 1960-1, when once before Labour Party conference voted for unilateral nuclear disarmament, the right wing relies on its continued grip on the real posts of power to beat down the rank and file.

John has already threatened to resign as Labour defence spokesperson. But the real question is: why is he Labour's front bench defence spokesperson now? Or, more to the point, whose defence spokesperson is he really?

John does not argue for Labour Party policy against the Tories. Instead he campaigns against Labour Party policy and for a policy essentially similar to the Tories'.

We know the Labour Committee for Transatlantic Understanding is active, headed by union right wingers like Terry Duffy and Frank Chapple, with a budget totally provided by NATO. We know that the CIA was probably active in helping reverse Labour's anti-Bomb policy in 1960-1.

We can be certain that John discusses with NATO chiefs, but we don't know if his links go any further. In any case, he speaks for the policy of NATO, of the warmongers, and of the capitalist class.

It shows how far the Left still has to go to win real accountability in the Labour Party.

In the 1960s the method of the Left was to pass resolutions and leave the right wing in control of the movement's leadership. The right wing leaders defied the resolutions and raised a hue and cry about disruption when members protested at this defiance. Sadly but submissively, the Left retreated.

Tony Benn's challenge to Dennis Healey as deputy leader is a first break with that tradition. But the whole Labour front bench is still dominated by

men and women openly contemptuous of Party conference decisions.

And too many people on the left take the complacent attitude that we've won most of what we need to win. We can leave the rest to work itself through in time, gradually, cautiously, and without causing too much trouble.

They don't just want to skin the tiger of capitalism by claw - they want to do it without using a knife!

And others are weakened by the spirit of going half way. They deplore 'excessive' arms spending but will settle for a cheaper defence of British capitalism. They criticise militarism but accept British troops in Ireland. They go half-way - or half-way to half-way.

Labour MPs must be made accountable to their CLPs and the Parliamentary Labour Party must be made accountable to the Party as a whole. The right wing and do-nothing fake-lefts must be removed from the positions where it can sabotage Party policy, and we must organise a clear class struggle left wing to replace them.

Otherwise all the activity of the Left is little more than token protest.

PRESS GANG



RUNNING a Fleet Street paper must in some ways be like running one of those fringe religions which sweep across the world from time to time (usually starting from the US).

The main thing is the profit, dependent on how much they can screw out of the faithful. However the ideology comes a close second.

Each religion (or each paper) is in savage competition with its rivals. Yet each has a common interest in fostering a general sense of the almighty.

With religion the almighty is some kind of benevolent genocidal maniac hovering just out of range of the latest space probe.

Shadowy

With the press the almighty is a similar - if more shadowy figure, handing out hard lessons to prove the inevitability of greed and exploitation and the superiority of capitalism in organising these qualities.

Ronald Reagan is rapidly coming to fit both descriptions.

Like any self respecting fundamental revivalist, the press has started to construct elaborate temples in his honour.

If Mrs Thatcher is St. John the Baptist (and Britain presumably is the wilderness she has chosen to wander in) then Reagan is the one who comes after, whose feet she is not worthy to kiss.

Ether

There are messages in the skies, rumours of famous victories in the wind; good news in the ether. Imperialism is in its heaven and all's well with the world.

Reagan's policy of nuclear extinction has received fulsome praise.

Lord 'no doubt I shall be accused of being alarmist' George Brown wrote one of his spectacularly arrogant pieces in the Sunday Express - sentiments by NATO: sentence construction by Distillers.

Even the pro-NATO SDP is too soft for the former deputy leader of the

Labour Party (Dennis Healey: your destiny calls you). Brown complains that they have backed a pacifist at Croydon.

But it is the air traffic controllers dispute which has really caused the candles to be lit and the human sacrifices to be ordered.

The Daily Telegraph ran an editorial 'Reagan shows the way' which dispensed

with cautious appraisal.

"The strikers and their union were instantly hit with every weapon available to the Administration. The sack for 1,000 controllers, massive fines against the union, jail for five officials (later released).

"Also instantly set in motion was a big recruiting and training programme for new controllers, those

sacked being told they would not get their jobs back.

"All this was done not in dribs and drabs but all together, right at the outset. Thus we have another good indication of Mr Reagan's style.

"Following his triumphs in getting his economic measures - the Budget and the tax cuts - through Congress, it adds to the impression that America has a President who knows how to govern and has the skills to do so."

The Economist echoed these sentiments (which led in both cases to cautious calls for anti-strike legislation in Britain).

"He (Reagan) will now come under pressure from all sorts of affected interests to edge back into appeasement, so this is the week for ordinary people [news editors?] to all give him a clear 'bravo'.

"For the past 20 years, governments and employers have usually given in to strikes, because the cost of losing output in an interdependent world has tended to look higher than the cost of surrender."

After praising his 'admirable boldness' the Economist looks to a humiliating peace treaty.

Holiday

"In holiday mood in his ranch, the President may be pressed this weekend to rescind the sackings. If he does he should be careful to demand conditions - such as some cut in overmanning and full surrender by the unions in their wage demands - which would only confirm his triumph."

As the revivalists begin to froth at the mouth it is only a matter of time before they clamour for the air controllers to be crucified in rows alongside the highways.

What is really needed is a thoroughgoing plague of boils - in the shape of some solidarity action from international controllers.

It is time Reagan and his friends learned to suffer for their religion.

Perils of Wandsworth

PRIVATE TENANTS in Wandsworth face hazards even greater than those created by Wandsworth Borough Council - landlords who go armed to the teeth when they're collecting.

Former SAS captain Giles James Whitehead of Highlands Heath (a salubrious area where a property was recently advertised for £1/2 million) has recently

been found guilty of having a loaded Smith and Wesson revolver in a public place (one of his tenants' flats) and on five other charges of possessing firearms and ammunition without proper certificates.

When armed SPG men entered the bedsit where Whitehead was collecting rent, he reached for his gun (which was loaded) in his

shoulder holster. He was arrested, and when police went to his home they found a veritable arsenal, including two rifles and more than 800 rounds of ammunition.

He was fined £150 with costs and given a suspended sentence.

Whitehead is a director of the Ellenbury company, which owns a number of residential blocks.



THE DEFECTION to the SDP of eight leading Young Tories, including several ex-Student Union presidents and the former chairperson of the Federation of Conservative Students, looks like it should lead to some interesting encounters. How will they react to sharing a party with renegade Communist Party member Sue Slipman, their former rival in the National Union of Students?

It must be a broad party indeed which can accommodate these Tory wets and Stalinist-turned-feminist Sue Slipman, who says she has not changed her politics.

But the truth is stranger still. Though formally rivals in the NUS, these Tories and the Left Alliance headed by Slipman were in reality more like allies.

In votes for NUS positions, Tory second-preference votes often went to the CP. Together the Tories and the CP argued for NUS to cut its political campaigns. Together they fought against the left wing in NUS on many other issues. And together they fought against the Tory right-wing who wanted to pull local Student Unions out of NUS.

That last battle seems to have helped drive these Tories into the arms of the SDP. Open racists, neo-Nazis and Thatcherite head-bangers now dominate the Tory student organisation. The defectors have branded the Tory party as racist and 'class-based'.

But inside the SDP a tried and tested team for fighting left-wing militancy will be linking up again.

IN THESE days of rampant greed, the heart warms to the magnificent example shown by new ICI boss Robb Willmot in voluntarily taking a £25,000 wage cut.

The 4,200 ICI workers who are to lose their jobs, and the remaining 837 who are grumbling about their 12-month wage freeze, should be inspired.

Willmot now has to scrape by on £125,000 a year, plus a £290,000 rent-free house.

Q. Does the Ministry of Defence tell lies?

A. Certainly not. They're all jolly fine chappies who wouldn't sully their lips with even a little fib.

Q. Are nuclear weapons safe? What happens if there is an accident?

A. "Nuclear weapons have been stored in this country for many years. There has never been any accident or leakage" (from the Cruise Missiles brochure put out by the Ministry of Defence).

Q. What happened on 26th July 1956 at RAF Laken-

heath?

A. A B-47 bomber crashed into a storage igloo containing three Mark 6 nuclear bombs, each with eight tons of TNT as part of its trigger mechanism. Blazing fuel engulfed the bombs, badly damaging the casings.

If the TNT had ignited "it is possible that a part of eastern England would have become a desert", according to a retired US Air Force general, who was at the time a B-47 pilot at Lakenheath.

Q. Do you feel secure with this kind of 'defence'?

MARCH AGAINST THE MISSILES

October 24 London CND Demonstration



World news

Sierra Leone strike

SIERRA Leone was hit by the first ever general strike in its history last week.

The strike is in defiance of the wishes of the Sierra Leone Labour Congress.

Striking workers want agreements on price controls for basic food-stuffs, better housing and hospitals, subsidised rents, and a freeze on transport prices.

Zia's ban

ALL ACTIVITIES by Pakistan's airline union have been banned.

Union offices have been seized by the military authorities, and any illegal activities will be punished by five years in prison, five lashes of the whip, or both.

Victim of Stalinism

by Ian McCalman

A NOTABLE victim of the current crackdown on dissidents in the Soviet Union is Anatoly Marchenko, a worker whose account of life in the Mordovian labour camps and Vladimir prison was painfully expressed in his book 'My Testimony'.

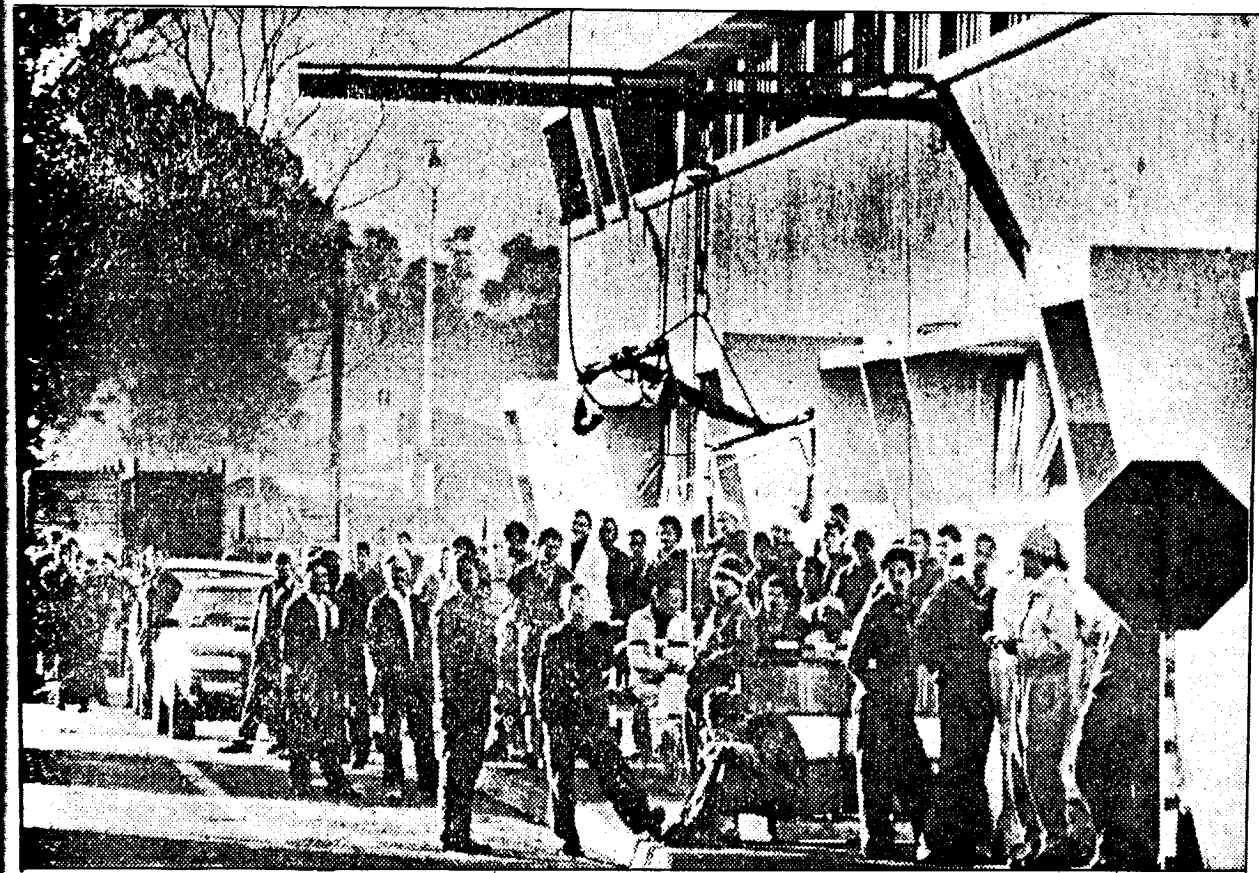
For writing this work he has suffered subsequent periods of imprisonment and administrative surveillance. In 1975 he was sentenced to a further 4 years exile in Irkutsk, which he described in his book 'From Tarusa to Chuna'.

Since his arrest in March a number of his personal documents have been confiscated, including, significantly, his day-to-day

comments on the situation in Poland.

As a result of an illness contracted in the labour camps, Marchenko is completely deaf without a hearing aid, but a doctor has given a certificate that he has no need of one and a lawyer engaged to conduct his defence has been refused admission to the investigations.

The determination of the bureaucracy to silence any echo of the struggles in Poland penetrating the Soviet Union itself must be matched by socialists in Britain more actively pursuing solidarity campaigning in defence of dissident workers and intellectuals.



South African Leyland workers struck - but solidarity in Britain was smothered

WORKERS' SOLIDARITY KEY TO ANTI-APARTHEID STRUGGLES

IN THE last few weeks, a new strike wave in South Africa, based mainly on the demand for a living wage, has spread from factory to factory in the East Rand - a concentrated industrial area near Johannesburg.

In the same area, 90 workers are struggling to get their jobs back after the entire workforce was sacked for being members of a union at Stag Packing.

Like many companies in South Africa, Stag Packing is directly linked with a British based company. It is a subsidiary of Turner and Newall.

There have been and will be declarations of outrage at such sackings from the liberals, from capitalists who seek to promote a more liberal image, from trade union bureaucrats who each day knife the struggle of workers in the back.

But it is only from workers, and working class action that real support can come to materially strengthen the black workers struggle.

The fight must be taken up to mobilise appropriate blacking and supporting strike action aimed at Turner and Newall in Britain.

The existing leadership of the Anti Apartheid Movement (AAM) can never be relied upon to mobilise such class action. Instead these liberals and clerics measure their success by the number of bourgeois dignitaries that they can get to declare themselves opposed to apartheid. They seek to 'develop' the class struggle through debates in the UN.

Moroccan

The Moroccan King has recently ordered troops to end a strike. The President of Sierra Leone last week banned a planned general strike. Kaunda, who publicly weeps when talking about the suffering under apartheid last month sent his parliamentary to try to smash a strike by thousands of mine workers who were striking against their own suffering in Zambia. Ghandi who has just been given powers to ban all strikes in India writes letters

THE 1981 conference of the Anti-Apartheid Movement takes place at the Westminster Cathedral Conference Centre, Morpeth Terrace, London SW1 (10am-5.30pm) on November 1. It is open to all AAM members: apply for membership (£7.50 a year for individuals or organisations), or send resolutions (before September 18) to the AAM office, 89 Charlotte Street, London W1.

In this article JIM FARNHAM discusses some issues facing South African solidarity activists.

supporting strikes in South Africa.

The Stalinists who are loud in attacking apartheid, prop up the imperialist system of which the South African state is a crucial part with their class collaboration and 'peaceful coexistence'.

Sections of the capitalist class who grow rich off the exploitation and oppression of workers each day, make speeches in which they criticise the way in which exploitation and oppression are organised in South Africa. Even the imperialist backers of the apartheid regime claim to be 'anti-apartheid'.

But the struggle against apartheid, if it is ever to be carried through to victory, must be developed and built as the workers struggle for power.

No one who exploits and oppresses workers anywhere can ever be the real ally of workers in South Africa - whose real struggle is to destroy oppression and exploitation, not re-organise it.

Repeatedly mass demonstrations show the deep opposition to apartheid amongst workers and militants.

Symbolic acts - the pickets, the protest meetings, marches and demonstrations - can all act to boost the morale of South African workers, breaking down the constant efforts by the state to create a sense of isolation amongst those workers.

But left in the hands of well-meaning liberals, such symbolic acts are used as substitutes for the struggle for more effective solidarity

action. The reality is that much more than symbolic acts are possible - and much more is necessary.

Supporting strikes and blacking action are the weapons which the working class internationally can and must wield.

The South African ruling class is completely entwined in international finance capital. There is almost no major international capitalist company which does not invest, directly or indirectly, inside South Africa.

Connive

Again and again there are strikes in South Africa at factories which are subsidiaries of companies based in the imperialist countries. The international capitalist class and its imperialist governments connive with their ally inside South Africa to protect capitalist rule and property.

But exactly the same international links lay the basis for effective and powerful working class action, which can materially aid the struggle of black workers.

Despite imperialist declarations for a halt to arms supplies for South Africa, arms are continuing to be supplied. It is only working class action to black supplies of arms and related materials that can stop the flow.

Only through the struggle to open the books, and against all secret diplomacy, can the realities of imperialist connivance with their ally in South Africa be uncovered by the working class, and effective blacking of arms

implemented.

In addition, the struggle for solidarity demands the fight to open the books to investigate the links of every company with South Africa and thereby to lay the basis for immediate supporting class action whenever struggles develop at linked companies inside South Africa.

This requires the direct building of factory to factory links, so that the demands and needs of South African workers can be directly conveyed to their class brothers and sisters.

In order to keep all links with South Africa under their own bureaucratic control, the leadership of the AAM has recently rejected a motion calling for the building of such direct links.

In this they have the support of the trade union bureaucrats, for whom any independent working class mobilisation is a challenge to their control.

Too often have requests for solidarity action from workers in South Africa been swallowed up in bureaucratic manoeuvres - with shop stewards and workers on the shop floor not even being informed by union officials.

This has recently occurred in both the Wilson Rowntree strike (subsidiary of Rowntree Mackintosh) and the Leyland strike.

As a Trotskyist involved in the struggle for solidarity action in the USA put it:

"The bureaucrats fear that if workers are mobilised to take strike and blacking

action in support of black workers in South Africa, next thing they'll be taking the same action in support of workers at home."

The struggle inside South Africa depends on building the independent organisations of the working class and mobilising it behind its own demands and class interests.

So too outside South Africa does the struggle for the most effective solidarity depend on building independent working class action.

This is the struggle which Socialist Organiser will take up inside the AAM. At every point, we will seek to develop and deepen the hatred of apartheid into an understanding and hatred of the class basis on which it arises and is maintained.

We will seek to orientate those involved in anti-apartheid mobilisations to the working class, to take up the struggle for the most effective programme of solidarity action - working class action of blacking and supporting strikes.

This struggle for solidarity with South African workers must not be limited to the organised AAM. It must also be taken directly to workers and into the organisations of the working class.

Messages of support to strikers at Stag Packing: National Union of Textile Workers, 18 Palladium Buildings, Third Street, Springs, SA.

Wilson Rowntree workers: SAAWU, P.O. Box 7002, East London 5200, SA.

NEW ZEALAND BATTLES

MOBILISING half the country's police force, Robert Muldoon's New Zealand government enabled the rugby international on August 17 to go ahead despite 20,000 anti-apartheid demonstrators.

The South African team had to stay in a suburban rugby club because hotel workers refused to serve them, and were then smuggled into the ground at dawn, six hours before the match was due to start. (No wonder they lost!)

Now Muldoon has given civil servants paid leave to serve as special constables.

But the protest against apartheid continues to grow. The New Zealand National Seamen's Union, which has already held one one-day strike against the South African tour, will be striking again on August 29.



SEAMEN PLAN STRIKE

BBC supports Turkish junta's public relations campaign

SOCIALIST'S LIFE IN DANGER

SAVE THE LIFE OF DOGAN TARKAN!

Before the military coup in Turkey last year, Dogan Tarkan was the editor of Kurtulus (Liberation), a weekly socialist newspaper. The Home Office has decided to refuse political asylum to him. We understand that his deportation would almost certainly mean his being sentenced to death by the Turkish authorities. Rush telegrams, resolutions, messages of support, etc., addressed to the Home Office to Friends of Dogan Tarkan, c/o Turkish Solidarity Campaign, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

THERE IS an ancient saying in Turkey: "dogs don't bite dogs!" It is an appropriate summary of the BBC's latest phoney documentary on Turkey.

At least the BBC admitted that it wasn't easy to film in Turkey: they are not allowed to go to the Eastern, Kurdish region, or into the Mamak military prison in Ankara, where 500 political prisoners are currently on hunger strike against the conditions and ill-treatment in prison.

So instead BBC filmed about the navigation problems on the Bosphorus and local problems of inhabitants dying from lung cancer because of the volcanic rocks they use to build their houses.

Two-thirds of the programme was spent on those subjects.

The coup in Turkey last year, and the junta that has ruled since then, have received a favourable press in this country.

The view of the generals themselves that their intervention prevented the slide into outright civil war has been accepted at face value.

The Newnight programme did nothing to alter this impression.

The programme supported General Evren's contention that the bad odour that Demirel's Justice Party and Ecevit's Republican People's Party had brought upon parliamentary

campaign

by Jack Johnson



democracy justified the suspension of democracy and the banning of all experienced political figures from any future role.

The programme also supported the notion that the generals are entirely in the tradition of Mustapha Kemal - "Ataturk" - the father of the modern Turkish state.

However, to anyone who does not believe that the anti-imperialist credentials of

Kemalism have any relevance to Turkey's economic and political crisis today, the programme did an inadequate job of papering over the chasm between the junta's ideology and reality.

The "investigation" of the allegations of systematic torture consisted of interviews with Evren and former Prime Minister Ecevit. Ecevit said the torture was due to the poor education of the

police - they are not sophisticated enough to get information by other methods!

The only material on prison conditions shown was taken from a government film.

This hardly merits the term 'investigative' journalism. The last omission of the programme was that it did not detail the nature of "democracy" that the generals will hand over to.

The "Constituent Assembly" will consist of those directly appointed by the junta or those that the junta chooses from those recommended by the (junta-appointed) local mayors.

This programme therefore assisted the Turkish dictators' attempts to legitimise in the eyes of European public opinion their vicious repression against the working class movement in Turkey.

The Thatcher government is also planning to give £15 million in military aid to the dictatorship.

Here are a few of the facts about Turkey which the BBC willingly distorted or concealed:

*There are 120,000 political prisoners, not the 25,000 claimed in the programme.

*Eight people - one only 16 years old - have been hanged.

*Over 400 have been murdered in military man-hunts, and 74 have died under torture.

*1768 people are being tried, with the prosecutors

demanding death sentences.

*500 officials of DISK (Confederation of Revolutionary Workers' Unions which has nearly one million members and is also a member of the ETUC) are being held in jail by the military regime. The military prosecutors are demanding death sentences for 52 of them.

*Kenan Budak, leader of the DISK Leather Workers Union was shot dead by the Turkish police on 26 July.

*Uygur, leader of the DISK mine workers union has been subjected to systematic torture since June 10.

*Kamer Tayhat, leader of the DISK metal workers union was wounded after a raid on his house by state forces. He and his wife have faced systematic torture since their arrest on July 1.

If the BBC is not yet convinced that the dictators in Turkey have nothing to do with "democracy" and that the "anti-terrorist" demogogy of the Junta has been used only to cover up the massive repression of the labour movement in Turkey,

then they should write to the Turkey Solidarity Campaign for copies of documents, reports, materials and real facts about Turkey!

The Turkey Solidarity Campaign is launching a Week of Action from 6 to 12 September with the aim of building broader solidarity with the working masses of Turkey.

The culmination of the week will be a rally on 12 September - the first anniversary of the coup - with speakers from the labour movement.

The programme of the Week of Action is as follows: Public meetings in Oxford, Bradford, Newcastle, Leeds, Liverpool and Edinburgh.

Pickets: Turkish Ambassador's residence (Friday) and 10 Downing Street (Saturday).

Rally (Saturday) NUFTO Hall, 14 Jockeys Fields, Holborn, WC1, starting at 2 pm.

Social (Saturday) Crouch Hill Recreation Centre, Hillrise Road, N 19, at 7.30 pm.

CONTACT: TURKEY SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN, BM BOX 5965, LONDON WC1N 3XX.

DESPERATION DRIVES ON POLISH WORKERS' STRUGGLE

by Alexis Carras

IMAGINE having to queue for hours to buy even the most basic of food stuffs necessary for a family meal. All this on top of the rest of the domestic work lumped onto the shoulders of women as well as an eight hour stint in a factory or office.

Then in addition the government courteously inform you that not only are the prices of basic food-stuffs going to skyrocket by between 200 and 900%, but also that others will be strictly rationed.

This is the situation facing millions of Polish housewives - the causes propelling thousands of them onto the streets in massive hunger demonstrations over the last few weeks.

The humiliation and drudgery of queuing for hours is now compounded by government and party attempts to unload the crisis of Polish agriculture and food shortages onto their already overburdened shoulders.

The ration for meat has been further reduced to 3 pounds per month by government decree - ostensibly only for the month of August.

On 30 July 30,000 women and children staged a hunger march through the streets of Lodz - Poland's second city where the major slogan was "General, we want to eat".

In Czestochowa, the local Solidarity leadership, with-

out consultation with Solidarity national leadership, launched partial protests and strikes in over 360 of the district's factories.

In Warsaw public trans-

port workers blocked roads leading to the main Party headquarters for 48 hours while the CC was in progress, in protest at the price increases and the rationing.

Steel workers from Huta Warszawa joined in the protests and thousands of onlookers expressed their support and encouragement to the demonstrators. Minor



Now the government has banned public transport workers from joining the food protests and blocking traffic

skirmishes developed with the police as they were pelted with eggs and abuse.

The government have since decreed it illegal for public transport workers to use state buses/trams etc on demonstrations to avoid a repeat of the massive traffic jam.

Irrespective of whatever happened at the 9th Extraordinary Congress of the PUWP - the "Congress of Renewal" - the attitude of Poland's working class to its masters remains unequivocally hostile - summed up on one of the banners in the Lodz hunger march - "The government governs, the party leads and the people die of hunger."

In the face of this groundswell of working class anger, an anger which has been maintained and broadened despite an entire year of privations, hardship and sacrifices - Solidarity's national leadership, in particular Walesa, has made violent attacks on the government, accusing it of "abusing the trade union's patience. We have waited for an entire year for the government to formulate measures against the crisis and carry out economic reforms. We can't wait any longer. We shall have to deal with it ourselves."

But Walesa's radical rhetoric, implying confrontation with a government which has lost the confidence of the masses, was suitably toned down to prevent any initiatives which would challenge the govern-

ment's shaky authority even further - and in Walesa's words - "I don't mean that we want to take the place of the government - we're going to increase the pressure."

Pressure would be the least that Solidarity would have to apply, in the face of a national upsurge of militancy threatening to break out of the control of the union leadership and on the other hand the virulent denunciation of Solidarity's "Sabotage" and wrecking of the country in the entire Polish media.

Against this background the negotiations between the government represented by Rakowski and Solidarity on the other hand were doomed to failure.

The negotiations were shipwrecked immediately on the question of special "control commissions" to monitor the provision and distribution of food.

Suspicion

Suspicion was so rampant that no agreement could be reached on the composition and division of authority within these commissions. Other questions, like that of workers' control, were not even broached.

Marshal Victor Koulikov - head of the Warsaw Pact forces has also visited the Polish capital just to underline Soviet displeasure with the recurring crisis and to make clear the motive of the

present military and naval manoeuvres.

In this situation the PUWP leadership has finally come out against the "socio-economic aggravation in the country".

This concerted campaign is whipping the moderate around Walesa into line. Walesa and the National Coordinating Council of Solidarity (KKP) at the close of its meeting on August 12 appealed to the Polish working class to abstain from all strikes, demonstrations and hunger marches until the reconvening of the KKP on September 5 - when the situation would be reviewed.

Apart from this obvious climbdown the Solidarity national leadership also called on Polish workers to accept price rises for bread and given the appalling state of the economy to work free Saturdays this year.

The right to a free Saturday was one of the hard fought for demands of Solidarity last year.

It seems that the several marches starting from different cities around the capital which were to converge on Warsaw on August 22 have been called off, at the insistence of Solidarity and the Church.

The clamour inside and outside Solidarity for the national leadership to stand to and fight for the demands raised last year in Gdansk is becoming more and more vocal.

Labour Party

BENN'S CAMPAIGN: FIGHTING THE AUTHORITARIAN RIGHT WING



No time to lie low

Nigel Williamson of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy executive contributes the CLPD column this week.

THIS IS a difficult time for the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy. After Blackpool and Wembley, even a few of our own supporters began to wonder whether CLPD ought to lie low, at least for a while.

One MP asked for his name to be no longer linked with CLPD as he believed that MPs had not been made accountable and the fight for democracy had been won.

Just how mistaken a view that was, has become readily apparent.

And even when mandatory reselection has been finally implemented in the way conference always intended, even when we have secured a democratic and accountable process of drawing up Labour's manifesto, the struggle will not be over.

Clearly there is still a long hard road to travel before Labour's elected representatives become truly accountable to the rank and

Abuses

But the immediate struggles must revolve around reselection and control of the manifesto. Almost every week, new 'horror stories' of the abuses of mandatory reselection come to light, and regional organisers still fail to inform selection conferences that the NEC has ruled that shortlists of one are not 'normal practice'.

Therefore in view of the way in which the NEC guidelines to this effect are still being ignored, the only way to prevent the shortlist of one abuse is through a further constitutional amendment.

The other major issue that must concern us this year is the need to give the NEC the final say in drawing up the Party's election manifesto.

This was won at the 1979 conference but lost again by only 117,000 votes the following year. Since then, the APEX conference has carried a resolution which clearly implies that, for the first time, their delegation to the Labour Party conference must support NEC control of the manifesto.

Balance

Their 109,000 votes would be enough to swing the balance in favour of democracy and accountability this year.

However, APEX General Secretary, Roy Grantham, has since disputed this somewhat unconvincingly in a fascinating correspondence with the CLPD in the pages of the Financial Times (SO supporters can be forgiven if they missed this!).

Nevertheless, the message is clear. Whether the APEX delegation renege on their commitment or not, there is a very real possibility that the manifesto is an issue which can be won this year. And above all, which ever way the votes go at Brighton in October, there can be no let-up in the Campaign.

Dear Janey Buchan,
You have publicly charged and branded Tony Benn with being engaged in pushing us all at full speed towards the Stalinist Gulag. You reached this odd opinion and you try to prove it to your readers by way of the well-tried Goebbels-Stalin technique of pronouncing him "guilty by association".

You link Benn with some remarks of Arthur Scargill's and then identify him with your own fantastic 'interpretation' of Scargill's words.

Attack

The attack was big news and good news for the press, which faintly praises the old Labour Party by ferociously cursing Tony Benn and the present Labour Party.

'The Observer' has devoted a page to praising you and the 'Daily Mirror', which pays good money for articles, printed your open letter.

Now if one were to judge and label you and your attack on Tony Benn by your associations and go on to identify you with those who have cheered your "Open Letter to Benn", greeted your "contribution to the debate" as a blow on their side, lauded you and — yes — possibly paid you, then there would not now be many tatters left of your left-wing reputation.

And unlike your comments on Benn and Scargill, it would not depend on far-fetched 'interpretation' to show your friends in the media to be socially reactionary, right-wing and enemies of a socialist labour movement.

But of course it would be unjust and misleading, wrong and ungenerous to judge you like that: it would also be to miss the point.

Your "Open Letter" is painfully confused, but it is clearly a genuine cry from a representative of Labour's 'Old Parliamentary Left', which is now faced with the fact of being by-passed by events and maybe with forcible retirement.

Fuzzy

Conditions in Thatcher's Britain have clearly made the techniques of the "Old Parliamentary Left" ineffective and are making them redundant.

All the typical 'Old Parliamentary Left' techniques of fuzzy thinking, evasion of the real issues and small-beer demagoguery are on display in your 'Open Letter'.

And how demagogic

THE 'Open Letter to Tony Benn' by Euro-MP Janey Buchan, published in 'Labour Weekly' and the 'Daily Mirror', has rallied the 'soft-left' opponents of Benn — and brought protests from the militant Left.

RACHEL LEVER and JOHN O'MAHONY take up the debate in an Open Letter to Janey Buchan.

you are!

Arthur Scargill said that those MPs who vote against Tony Benn will be giving tacit support to the politics of the right. Benn is the only candidate for this key party office who supports Party policy. This — you say — is the same principle as that followed by the rulers of the East European Stalinist police states — "those who are not with us are against us", and then you say it must lead directly to totalitarianism.

Armed

The armed intolerance of a totalitarian police state and of its bureaucratic ruling caste is thus equated with an attempt to get elected as a Party official someone — Tony Benn — who will support democratically decided Party policy instead of one — Denis Healey — who fought bitterly against the key party policies and who will use any position he holds to continue to fight them and to sabotage them.

Scargill calls for Party officials who will respect and defend the democratic rights of Party members instead of abusing the positions of power and responsibility to which they are elected. And that, you say, will lead us to the Gulag! Isn't that preposterous? Isn't that the same as saying black is white? And when you feed it to the media for use in their anti-Benn campaign (in fact, an anti-Labour campaign) isn't it slanderous and poisonous too?

In fact, Scargill's words, like Benn's candidacy, go right to the heart of the issue, to the choices and dilemmas facing the labour movement now.

These are:
* whether to be satisfied with paper victories on democracy and leave those who oppose those policies in a position to sabotage their operation, gut them of meaning and, should it be necessary, eventually reverse them; or else to put supporters of new polic-

ies into office;

* whether to sort out the politics and organisation of the labour movement now to make it capable of offering the working class an alternative to Thatcherism and capitalism; or else to settle for a seductive but illusory unity with our own pink Tories against Thatcher's Tories now — at a cost later of not having adequate socialist or working class answers for the crisis of our society once we've settled with the Tory government.

The traditional "Old Parliamentary Left" answer — your answer — is to pass resolutions and leave it at that.

The "Old Parliamentary Left" yearns to settle into 'compromises' that would effectively put an end to the movement for change in the Party — compromise, for example, like the notorious attempt to gut reselection by way of one-man 'shortlists'.

Benn's candidacy posed the question of accountability sharply and concretely in reaction to the as yet unrealised decision for accountability. It put a stop to the cosy drift.

Turned

By calling out the right, Benn has forced the 'Old Parliamentary Lefts' like yourself to declare where they stand and most of them — like you — have 'turned on him'.

It is clear from the Open Letter that you feel oppressed by what is going on. And like someone labouring under a strong feeling of being 'got at', you lose your sense of proportion and balance: things around you take on strange shapes. You say that the movement for democratic change is "being twisted into an unacceptable (sic) version of authoritarianism".

Control

Authoritarian? That is when the labour movement insists on having real control over what those we elect do in its name and

organise to ensure that Party officers shall carry out Party policy.

If this is authoritarian what then was liberty? Liberty must have been — and must be now — the situation where the MPs and Party officers could do what they liked — once elected, without fear of being held to account; when they spat on the Party and the rank and file, on their socialist aspirations and even (as with the recent wage-cutting Labour government) on their immediate interests. Tolerance? That was when the labour movement put up with such an outrageously undemocratic situation.

Janey Buchan: it is clear from this that yours is the standpoint of the most anti-democratic — and in its days of control, extremely authoritarian — segment of the labour movement — that of its Parliamentary oligarchy.

Elitist in the extreme is your attack on Benn for putting himself forward for Deputy Leader before the Tribune Group of MPs had a chance to object to him doing so. Why should a loose association of Parliamentarians have had the right to decide whether he stood or not? He has mass support among Party members. Clearly the habit of thinking of the PLP — or any part of it — as being all and the rest of the movement as nothing dies hard, even with one as anxious as you obviously are to shine up her left-wing credentials.

You advise 'tolerance' of the 'intolerant right'! If they manage to get the upper hand now, the left had better watch out!

More important, you miss the central point: people like Denis Healey represent capitalism in the Party. Toleration of the right is toleration of an entrenched and powerful group who are determined to stop us preparing the movement to settle with the Tories and their capitalist masters.

For all that, and despite your talk of intolerance towards 'honest dissent', nobody is proposing to do anything to the 'honest dissenters', or to Denis Healey, except to stop them using key positions against Party policy.

Win

The Old Parliamentary Labour Left never fought to win and never when it did manage to win — as it did, for example, on unilateral nuclear disarmament in 1960 — it ran away, instead of seriously fighting to consolidate its victory.

It never showed signs of wanting to grow up to responsibility: it preferred words and political adolescent fantasies for itself and to let the right keep control and responsibility. It was a left of gestures and postures not of deeds and achievements. Essentially it was symbiotic with the Right and inseparably entwined with it.

Today most of its members hate Benn because — in however limited a way — Benn is vigorously fighting the right and spoiling things for the soft left.

In fact this left, whose character traits your letter sums up so nakedly, has no future. To take on the Tories in the present crisis, the working class needs a new class struggle left rooted in the factories, as well as in the local Labour Parties, relying on the rank and file and expressing the democratic spirit of the shopfloor organisation of the working class, instead of the oligarchic spirit of the PLP.

Streets

It must vigorously fight the class struggle in the factories and in the streets, as well as in the sphere of conventional politics, to smash capitalism. To do this it must be armed with policies and a programme for the replacement of capitalism by democratic working-class socialist rule.

Socialist Organiser

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AGE OF THE CLAIM!

BRITISH RAIL workers do an average work-week of 54½ hours. With only three weeks holiday in the year, their total working hours per year are about one-third more than anywhere else in western Europe.

The long hours of overtime are due to low basic pay and deliberate under-staffing by BR. 'Railman' grade workers have a basic of £58.75 a week. The 'minimum earnings level' is £66.60 — but any worker who refuses to do overtime does not even get that.

Since 1975 — according to the official arbitration tribunal — railworkers' real wages have gone down 29%.

Parker

Meanwhile British Rail boss Peter Parker gets £37,500 a year. Jimmy Saville was paid £140,000 to do his 'Age of the Train' ads. And £70 million — more than enough to meet the unions' demands — was paid out by BR last year in interest charges to financiers and in continuing compensation to the people who owned the railways before nationalisation in 1947.

Like almost every basic sector of British industry the railways are being run down at the expense of the working class. The bosses get paid well to manage the run-down, and whenever they want they can take their money somewhere else. But for the working class the choice is to fight back or see conditions worsened and the dole queue get longer.

Battle plan

For the Tories, the railworkers are victim no. 4 in a worked-out battle plan. The strategy was laid down in a Tory internal memo before the 1979 general election: avoid (to begin with) all-out clashes with strong sections like the miners, and pick a series of targets: steelworkers, the civil service, BL.

By choosing their battles the Tories hope to notch up victories and pave the way for bigger confrontations.

After a tremendous fight, the steelworkers were ultimately defeated by their own union leaders' failure to



link the fight for wages and the fight for jobs. The civil service workers have been beaten by their union leaders' pussyfooting — months of ineffective selective action instead of an all-out strike.

BL workers have suffered a series of heavy blows, again mainly through the weakness of their official leadership. But they are still fighting back.

Edwardes style

Now the Tories want to take on the railworkers. The Sunday Times on July 12 — before the arbitration tribunal had even reported — told readers that BR bosses were going for a "Michael Edwardes style" "show-down", and accurately predicted the bosses' line: no pay rise without productivity deals.

Like Edwardes in BL, the BR bosses are pushing aside normal trade union negotiating practices, and presenting a take-it-or-leave-it ultimatum.

While Edwardes routinely threatens BL workers with a shutdown of the whole corporation, BR is trying to blackmail railworkers by saying that 20,000 jobs will go if they strike. The £50 million loss for the first half of 1981 is being used for all it is worth.

The BR bosses, however, are only acting as front-men for the Tories — who have told them that BR will

not get the money it needs for electrification unless productivity deals and job cuts are agreed first.

The Tories can be beaten. With effective organisation, blacking and solidarity, a rail strike can hit the Tories just as hard as the developing miners' strike this February that forced them to back down. What the miners did, railworkers can equally do.

The setbacks the steelworkers suffered can be avoided if the lessons are learnt.

The steel unions divided the jobs issue from the wages issue, thus weakening the fight and giving the bosses a walkover victory on jobs after they had been pushed back significantly on wages.

Local strike committees

took control of the picketing. But they never organised on a national scale sufficiently to form a new leadership, able to force the full-time officials into action or push them aside if need be.

The TGWU made verbal expressions of support. This time, too, Transport House has told regional secretaries to instruct members not to carry freight normally carried by rail.

But in the steel strike there was no clear, well-publicised instruction to TGWU members not to cross the picket lines.

Unambiguous

There was a front page article in the union paper, the Record, but nothing strong enough to give the necessary support to drivers facing threats from their employers if they didn't carry the steel.

This time the support must be clear and unambiguous.

Solidarity was the key for the steel strike. And it will be the key for the rail strike, Employment Act or no Employment Act. With

solidarity, the railworkers can not only win their pay rise without strings, but stop the jobs rundown in their industry and strike a deadly blow to the Tories and their plans.

Obstacle

The potential support and solidarity is present in the working class as workers look for ways of hitting back against the Tory offensive.

The obstacle to solidarity is the leadership of the rail unions and of the TUC — who (like their colleagues in the steel union bureaucracy) fear above all that their members will recognise their own strength and take action that goes beyond the limits of the TUC's "peaceful co-existence" with the Thatcher government.

Unity

The unity we must fight for is unity in class action against the BR management and the Tories, not the false "unity" of empty rhetoric and inaction as peddled by the existing leaders of the labour movement.

Strike committees are vital to win

STRIKE committees are already being formed by some rail union branches. And a lot will depend on



these strike committees — how active they are, how democratically organised, and how ready to give a lead.

Whether there is a strike or not may depend on them. ASLEF conference policy is against productivity deals, but ASLEF leaders are willing to talk about selling jobs. And the NUR accepts productivity deals in principle.

Unless the rank and file is mobilised and vigilant, the slightest pretence at concessions from BR will be enough for the top full-time officials to call the strike off.

If the strike takes place,

strike committees will be vital then, too.

This strike will not be won by sitting at home and waiting. Four weeks' strike notice has given the bosses plenty of time to prepare (that's why the Scottish Region of ASLEF has voted unanimously to bring the strike date forward a week).

Blacking, flying pickets and mass pickets will be vital to blockade the depots and stop rail traffic being moved by road. Many railworkers are also calling for the extension of the strike to London Transport.

The strike committees should be joint ASLEF-NUR committees, democratically

electd from mass meetings, recallable by mass meetings during the strike, and drawing in extra militants beyond the established branch committees.

The first links from outside the rail industry should be with the 'Triple Alliance'. The NUR conference this summer voted for an alliance against cuts and redundancies between rail, steel, and coal unions; and for this to include "Triple Alliance activity at branch level with the NUM and ITC".

Coal, coke, iron and steel represent 66% of BR's freight revenue, so solid blacking by miners and steel-

workers will be vital for the success of the strike.

But every factory which receives supplies of rail has a duty to support the strike. And the TGWU has a special duty.

In the steelworkers' strike, there was a formal statement of support from the TGWU — but no firm clear instruction to TGWU drivers not to cross picket lines.

In the miners' strikes of the 1970s, and in other disputes, the railworker have had a good record of solidarity. Now they need and deserve support themselves.

Bosses reject report

THE RAIL unions demanded a "substantial increase in pay", but agreed to go to arbitration.

The official tribunal reported on July 16, recommending an 8% increase on basic rates to be dated from April 20, and another 3% to be dated from August 1.

It also proposed a 15% rise in the Minimum Earnings Level, and an increased London Allowance.

With inflation around 12%, the recommendation was hardly generous. Because of taxes, inflation usually takes a bigger proportion of any increase than of your original wages, and 15 or 18% was needed just to keep pace with inflation.

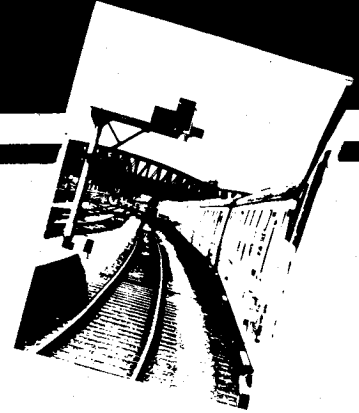
But the tribunal did recommend the wage rise without strings.

The unions accepted the recommendation. But on July 20 British Rail bosses announced that they would pay the second part of the increase on basic rates — the 3% — only if the unions agreed major changes in work practices.

The major rail unions, ASLEF and the NUR, refused to 'sell' jobs and conditions for... nothing. Only the white-collar union, TSSA, accepted BR's outrageous blackmail.

Now ASLEF and the NUR have called a strike from midnight on August 30/31.

FULL CLAIM! NO STRINGS



BL V

WITH Michael Edwardes issuing leaflets to all of BL's 80,000 workers, warning that the company may make no pay offer at all this year, the BL Combine Committee last Saturday voted unanimously to support a unified £20 pay demand.

The resolution adopted was broadly in line with one passed at a mass meeting at the Cowley Assembly Plant, and avoids any reference to percentages or payments some workers receive under the company's

What BR's productivity strings would mean

BRITISH RAIL wants to cut 38,000 of its 240,000 jobs in the next five years. Already it has cut some 150,000 jobs over the last 15 years, and 6,500 between April 1980 and June 1981.

At present BR has about 9,000 vacancies — and a deliberate policy of not filling them, because it wants to get rid of the jobs involved or use them

to 'redeploy' workers from other axed jobs.

Long hours of overtime on the one hand, and train cancellations through staff shortages on the other, are established BR policy.

The NUR has calculated that a 35 hour week on the railways would create 23,000 extra jobs. But the BR bosses' push for profit means a relentless drive

to increase the dole queues.

So far, job cuts on BR have come mainly through 'natural wastage'. Because of BR's rock-bottom wages labour turnover is high — about 20,000 workers a year have been leaving the industry.

But as unemployment mounts, the turnover is slackening. And if BR can't get the job cuts it wants through 'natural wastage', it will get them through sack-

ings.

BR's productivity proposals mean more jobs lost and more long and 'un-social' hours.

The rail bosses want flexible rostering. This means:

- *Sundays become normal working days;
- *The standard eight hour day is scrapped. Workers may have to do ten-hour shifts or split shifts. Split shifts can mean a few hours at morning peak times and a

few hours at evening peak times, with a gap in between.

They want to extend one-man operation of trains. Different grades will be telescoped into one 'trainman' grade, guards and drivers' assistants will lose their jobs, and safety standards will suffer.

And they want 'open stations' — stations with no workers. Tickets would be issued and collected on the trains themselves. Ticket clerks' and ticket collec-

tors' jobs would go.

If these proposals are accepted, there will be many more — for scrapping meal-breaks, increasing job flexibility, reducing manning, etc.

Whole

With two and a half million already unemployed, the railworkers' fight against these plans is the fight of the whole working class.

Laurence Scott strike up against Boyd's ma

At 2.45am on Tuesday August 18, 40 or 50 bailiffs smashed their way into the Laurence Scott occupation in Manchester and evicted the workers. Doors and windows were broken down and one worker was hit over the head.

Shop stewards' chairperson Peter Rowan said, "The manner in which the factory was repossessed will make the workers even more determined to pursue their fight from the streets outside."

"We have contingency plans to continue. There are still £3 million worth of orders in the factory, and the management want to get them out".

A repossession writ had been granted three weeks before, but the police and bailiffs had delayed.

CAROL HOBBS sent in this report shortly before the bailiffs swooped.

ONE OF the central concerns of the workforce is still the raising of finance to keep the sit-in going. The two mass pickets of Mining Supplies in Doncaster alone cost £1000 in coach fares.

While the AUEW Executive is refusing even to consider rescinding their previous decision to withdraw official status from the strike, the Manchester North District Committee, under the leadership of Duggie Daniels, has circulated local branches requesting them to continue to keep sending money and support to the Scotts workers.

Importantly this has placed the AUEW District at loggerheads



PHOTO: JOHN SMITH (JFL)

Now the fight will continue on the picket line

with Boyd and Duffy at Peckham Road, and rumours abound that the latter are formulating disciplinary measures against, in particular, Secretary Daniels.

However, the stewards committee have moved into full swing with a national 'unofficial' campaign throughout the AUEW, both to commit branches to send resolutions to the EC calling for 're-officialising' the struggle and to continue the fund raising for maintaining the sit-in.

On Monday 10 August a 350-strong meeting of the workforce again ratified the stewards' unofficial campaign and endorsed a series of proposals for keeping the issue in the national limelight.

Firstly it was accepted that if the police attempt to expel the

occupiers in a dawn raid, then the workers would put up passive resistance and measures have been taken to make it as difficult as possible for the police to gain entry.

Secondly, it was agreed to continue the struggle from outside on the pavement. The stewards have prepared a fall-back HQ in a vacant factory near Scotts from which to continue the picketing from the outside if the police eject them from the plant.

JSSC chairperson Peter Rowan says:

"The irony of the situation is that we've no other jobs to go to after Scotts, but there are loads of empty factories which we can take over and use as a base for continuing the picketing of Scotts."

Interestingly, the workers have received

letters of support from fifteen Labour MPs who have said they back the struggle against closure — and giving implicit support to the "unofficial" action. A press conference of MPs and stewards is being prepared for the near future whereby the issue will be brought to the national arena more clearly.

Peter Rowan, chair of the JSSC, explained: "We hope that by launching a press conference with the MPs we can embarrass Duffy and the EC into reversing their previous decision."

"It will also make it easier for us to approach other workers for support. We've circulated 400 AUEW branches with a specific resolution asking them to pass it — and pressurise the EC."

"We are also contacting local celebrities, from

Elsie Tanner of "Coronation Street" to Alan Gowling (chairman of the Professional Footballers Association and Bolton Wanderers star), asking them to speak up for Scotts.

"By placing as many pressure points as possible on both our own union leaders and Snipe, we hope to continue the struggle."

"What's more, we've got three people sat permanently on the phone all day just following up the various angles of support."

"One of the ironies of the situation now is the big turn-about that's taken place between the officials and the MPs. Initially, the officials were keen to back us up but when Duffy withdrew official status the majority of local Confed officials just don't want to know."

"One TASS official said recently that we'd passed into the camp of the far left and that there was now no hope for us."

"Initially the MPs weren't all that interested in Scotts. Charles Morris (MP for Openshaw) asked a question in the House about Snipe fiddling the government compensation scheme and that was about it. But all of a sudden they've started taking an interest, so we are lining some projects up for them."

While the support of the MPs should be welcomed and they should be pressurised to take initiatives in the workers' interests, the real problem will arise when John Boyd and Co get wind of their union sponsored MPs backing a force that threatens the interests of Peckham Road.

It's a known fact, for example, that AUEW sponsored MPs have their speeches vetted by Duffy before they are made on union related matters.

Ken Eastham (MP for Manchester Blackley) has been rebuked on a number of occasions for not towing the Duffy line in speeches in Parliament.

Their power over the union extends to the fact that the two Broad Left Assistant General Secretaries, Bob Wright and Ken Brett, according to one local AUEW official, "can't go to the toilet without Big John's permission".

A fundamental problem, therefore, for grass

roots activists on the stewards committee is that unless at the end of the day the positions of the right wing power barons are broken inside the unions, the prospects for workers developing an offensive strategy are bleak.

Denis Barry, the convenor of Scotts, lays a lot of the blame for this situation at the door of the Communist Party:

Forty

"For forty years the Communist Party have preached socialism and progress — but when it comes to basic, fundamental questions like at

District b

by Gerry Hoffa

AFTER A 80-strong picket at its last meeting, the Manchester North AUEW District Committee has fully endorsed the continuation of the Laurence Scotts occupation. Peter Rowan, chair of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, said: "Once the DC members saw we outnumbered them four or five to one at the meeting, a few minds were quickly clarified. They are now backing us once again".

And the Scotts workers have launched a campaign to repeal the withdrawal of official status.

The following resolution has been passed by both the Joint Shop Stewards Committee and the District Committee:

"We call upon the Executive Council to abide by the decision of the AUEW

National Committee meeting in Eastbourne which pledged full support to the workers at Laurence Scott in their fight against closure.

"We remind Executive Council of Rule 29 [para 9] referring to dispute benefit which states, "In all cases where a claim for such benefit has been approved, nothing in these rules shall be construed as giving power to any Council, Committee or Branch to stop payment of this benefit until the member again becomes employed, provided the member concerned acts in accordance with the requirements of the rules and that in no case shall benefit be paid for more than 52 weeks".

"We further point to Rule 15 [para 16, line 7] which states: "The Executive Council, or anyone acting on their behalf, shall not

WHAT YOU CAN DO - Send donations - Support the picket line - Pass resolutions through all Confed union branches condemning the leaders' withdrawal of support

WORKERS SET SIGHTS ON £20

bonus scheme. It declares: "This Leyland Combine Committee calls for a full BL shop stewards conference to coordinate the 1981 wage claim. This Combine Committee recommends that the claim should be one that protects the living standards of its members. 1) £20 paid to the grade rates.

- 2) Pro rata percentage increase on premium rates.
 - 3) 35 hour week.
- The claim to be negotiated by reconstituted committee acceptable to all unions, comprised of a majority of lay delegates. Alternatively an ad hoc committee based on the same principles for this review only." Edwardes, panicked

by the growing evidence of militancy on the wages issue, has called upon the BL workforce to become "lean and efficient" in order to meet foreign competition. But BL workers are sick to the teeth with lean times and dwindling living standards. They are spoiling for a fight.

The Leyland Action Committee, which has championed the £20 demand can play a crucial role in the next period in putting forward the necessary demands and focussing attention on the actions and manoeuvres of the officials and right wing convenors.



Cowley led the way

Cowley plant walks out

MILITANCY has erupted at the Cowley Assembly Plant. Workers on the Ital track walked out last Friday morning when their bonus earnings dropped from £10 per week to less than £2. They were quickly followed by workers from the Honda Acclaim track and the Princess track. By mid-afternoon the whole plant was at a standstill.

Caught between low wages and speed-up, workers in Cowley are more than ready for a showdown with Edwardes. On Monday morning the Honda Acclaim workers remained on strike and sat on the tracks. A management offer of a paid mass meeting of all production workers at 11 am failed to get them to start work, and they stayed on strike until the mass meet-

ing took place. But the very militant mass meeting was completely sold out by the two convenors Bob Fryer of the TGWU and Doug Hobbs of the AUEW. They argued that nothing could be done about the bonus, and told the workers to "keep your powder dry for the annual review".

Reduce

When a motion came from the floor for an overtime ban, they argued that it would "reduce production to a 3-day week". This is true - and exactly the kind of action the meeting was looking for.

But what Fryer and Hobbs couldn't do by force of argument they did by other means. A vote of at least 3-1 in favour of the overtime ban was declared from the platform to have been lost.

Scenes

Angry scenes followed, after which workers went back to their tracks, had their own section meetings and imposed an overtime ban anyway.

Some sections went home and are still out on strike.

Workers on the plant are angry and confused, particularly at the role played by Bob Fryer whom they have supported in the past for his stand against the management.

Shop stewards are demanding an emergency stewards committee meeting to discuss the episode and possibly call a reconvened mass meeting to put a principled policy against Edwardes' attacks.

Workers are still on machine

REPORT BY CAROL HOBBS

Scotts - they don't want to know. "They've become so obsessed with winning the next election in the union they've forgotten the ABCs of trade unionism, like organising physical support for workers defending jobs when your national union leaders have stabbed you in the back. "The leading CP convenor in Manchester told us the other day, 'Some of you lads have got your heads in the sand - you ought to toe the official line.' Yet we all know that if it was their plant and jobs on the chopping block we'd hear a different story.

"We've also had problems contacting Arthur Scargill - he seems to have gone to ground. "The problem is that once people hear you've been made unofficial it's that much more difficult to gain support, so we have returned to see the many rank and file activists in the factories and



Scargill - gone to ground?

the vast majority of them are still supporting us. "We received a cheque for £1,000 last week from the stewards' committee at the local BAC plant and they've promised more later."

Three

So there is a three pronged character to the stewards campaign to win the struggle - these are 1) the campaign to increase the £3,000 a week coming into the factory;

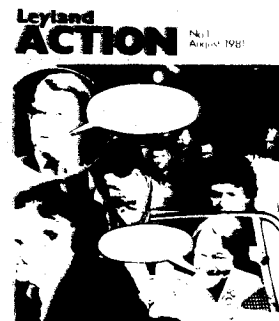
2) the struggle to reverse the AUEW Executive Committee's decision to withdraw official status. Support is

being mobilised around the country to pull the next AUEW National Committee - the final arbiter in constitutional terms in disputes between the EC and the District Committee - in behind the Scotts JSSC policy for keeping the plant open;

3) An offensive based on MPs, celebrities, and leading trade unionists to highlight the leading role of the Scotts occupation in opposing redundancies in general.

Donations and resolutions of support should be sent to JSSC, c/o George Fryer, 20 Round Croft, Romilly, Cheshire.

5,000 copies of a four-page Leyland Action Committee bulletin were distributed in major 3L factories in the week before the Combine Committee meeting and got a huge response. The bulletin argued for an across-the-board claim and explained why bonus payments should not be included in the claim. It gave reports from the factories and called for the reconstitution of a national negotiating committee for BL on a democratic basis.



1981 2 Annual Review: £20 Across the board

Available from 194 Dawlish Road, Birmingham 29 (send SAE)

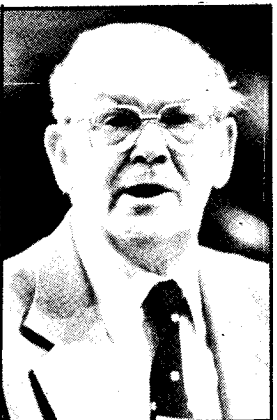
Backing for Scotts' stand

be allowed to complete an agreement with any employer or employers concerning wages, piecework prices or system of working unless the terms of agreement are first submitted to the district or districts affected.

"In all cases of disagreement between the district or districts affected and the Executive Council, the whole case shall be submitted to, and decided by the vote of the National Committee, to which both sides of the question may be put by each party concerned". So, the Executive decided to withdraw official status not only when it was clear that the mass of Laurence Scotts workers and the district rejected the agreement - and has refused to place the issue before the National Committee. The CSEU has now voted

to instruct all affiliates to withdraw support for the strikers. Branches of all affiliated unions should attempt to get resolutions passed on the above lines.

The Laurence Scott struggle has exposed the



Duffy - no reference to National Committee

hypocrisy of the majority of officials of the national and local CSEU. In the last four months factory closures and large-scale redundancies have been announced in Manchester at Ingersoll-Rand (500), Luke and Spencer (450), B and S Masseys (200), ICL (700-plus), etc.

And at each of the mass meetings of the workforces at these plants, the officials bemoaned and berated the workers for a lack of fight. Yet when a whole workforce rises up in union to defend jobs at Scotts - the officials can't wait to call off the battle.

But does this mean that all officials are the same, whether Broad Left or right wing, as the SWP tells us?

Certainly not, for while the recent behaviour of AUEW Broad Left officials leaves a lot to be desired, without having John Toch-

er (divisional organiser) and Duggie Daniels in key positions at the inception of the occupation there would have been no struggle at all.

Why? Because, initially, the leadership of the Scotts struggle was held by conservative stewards with little experience of struggle and indeed the early mass meetings were only carried with small majorities. Tocher, in particular, played a vital role in keeping the ball rolling in the early days.

Problems

It was when Snipe rained counter-blows on the occupation and it became clear that a new offensive by the workforce (picketing Snipe's headquarters in Doncaster) was necessary that a new leadership emerged. These comrades

are now quite capable of handling the problems of leadership without 'guidance' from above.

You cannot rely on the full-time officials. But you cannot ignore them. They must be tested and pushed as far as they can go.

The main lesson of the Scotts struggle that has become apparent to leading stewards is this: if you ignore your union branch and District, and are simply active at the level of the plant, then you'll end up getting the union leadership you deserve.

Where we must differ with the SWP is around the central question of fighting to recapture and repossess the apparatuses of labour movement organisations (the trade unions and the Labour Party) for the class-struggle Left. Can anyone doubt that if the class-struggle Left had a majority

of EC positions in the AUEW a victory at Laurence Scotts would have been attained weeks ago?

At the end of the day, all the rank and file activity at the base of the union will come to nought unless we have a coherent strategy for weeding out both the Boyds and the Hattersleys.



Boyd support withdrawn in defiance of District Committee

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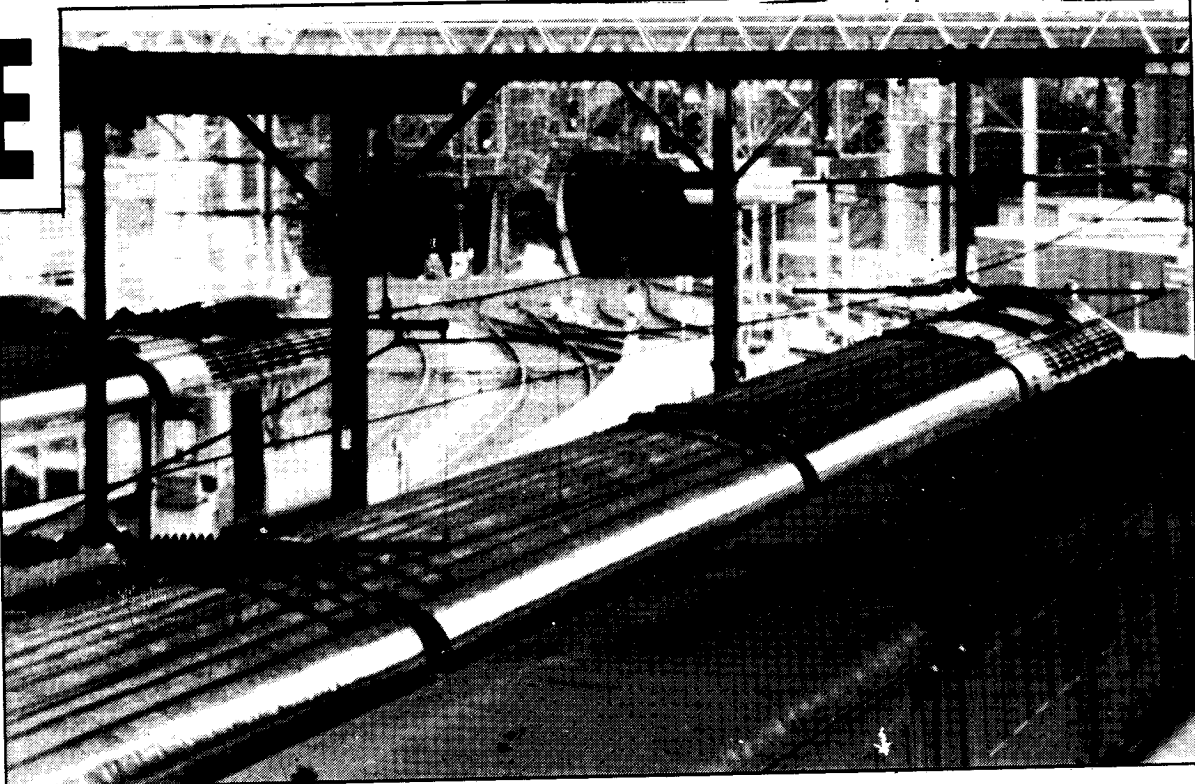
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Socialist Organiser **INDUSTRIAL SPECIAL**

TORY POLICY ON RAIL SERVICES, LET THEM TAKE TAXIS!



IN 1980 just 12 new engines were built for the whole of British Rail.

The diesel units used for most local services were designed for a working life of 10 years. Seven out of ten are now over 16 years old, many around 30 years old.

The signalling equipment on more than 4,000 miles of railway is over 40 years old.

Only 22% of BR's track is electrified. This compares with 62% for Sweden, 52% for Japan, 46% for West Germany, and 38% for France.

Services are being cut. This June, Southern Region lost over 20% of its Saturday and Sunday trains.

Delays and cancellations are at an all-time high.

Many stretches of track have permanent speed restrictions because of lack of repairs.

And accidents due to delayed repairs and maintenance are increasing. In 1980 nine derailments "occurred

at locations where a deliberate decision has been made to defer attention to the track."

The British Rail Board has been reduced to putting adverts in the papers begging the government to find the major investment needed even to maintain the present rail network. But the Tories' policy is to sell off the profitable bits and let the rest rot.

Decaying

British Transport Hotels, the Sealink service, and even the highly profitable Victoria-Gatwick line could be hived off.

For railworkers, this means a decaying, ill-paid industry. For all working people, it means less (and worse) public transport, and more crowded and polluted roads.

BR's electrification programme would cost £42 million a year. The govern-

ment spends £420 million a year on roads (though, under this government, that is being cut).

Road hauliers - who do not have to pay to build the roads - are obviously likely to be more profitable than the railways. Also, the road hauliers can pick and choose the profitable business, while the railways are supposed to provide a public service.

Rail lines in rural areas, or commuter services used heavily just for a few hours each day, are difficult to make a profit on.

In some areas in the USA, this dilemma has been resolved just by letting the public transport services go broke. Then the well-off

have their cars, and the poor just have to manage as best they can!

The same crazy profits-first logic is behind the rundown of British Rail, too - a rundown which began in the 1960s, and has continued since under Labour and Tory governments alike.

Nationalisation of British Rail has not led to it being operated as a public service under democratic control of the working class.

BR is a state capitalist corporation, controlled by

capitalist interests and run on capitalist lines. And nationalisation will always produce that result until we have a government genuinely accountable to the working class, and workers' control in industry.

Year after year, the TUC has passed resolutions for an integrated transport policy. To make those resolutions reality is now a vital need for the maintenance of jobs and basic services.

We must demand that the

next Labour government is a government controlled by the labour movement, not by the hard-bitten Tories who run the permanent apparatus of the British state. We must demand that it nationalises the whole transport industry, to be run according to a democratically decided workers' plan, with jobs guaranteed by work sharing with no loss of pay.

But, while organising for these demands, we cannot

afford to wait for a Labour government. Railworkers have the power to stop BR's jobs rundown, to form committees which can veto BR's cutbacks, to enforce a shorter working week, and to build links with other transport workers.

The strike should be a great opportunity to go on the offensive, to start a fight for a transport policy based on the needs of the working class.

A POLICY TO STOP THE SLIDE

A 29% cut in real wages since 1975, and over 9,000 jobs gone in the same period - in decaying capitalist Britain; railworkers seem to be faced with a constant struggle just to check or slow down the deterioration in their living standards and conditions.

How can the slide be halted and reversed?

The productive resources exist to guarantee everyone a decent and improving standard of living. Only the chaos, crisis, and inequality of capitalism stand in the way.

But if workers sacrifice wages and jobs 'in order to get through the crisis', the sacrifice won't stop the crisis. The bosses will just demand more sacrifice.

Automatic monthly cost-of-living increases, in line with a price index established by workers' committees, and work-sharing without loss of

pay, should be basic demands for the whole working class.

The need for decent living standards and jobs should come first, not profits. Working hours should be cut, not jobs.

If the bosses protest that these basic demands are economically impossible, then - let's see the books.

Banks

Let's see the balance sheets, not only of this or that loss-making industry, but of the banks and financial institutions and the state.

Millions

Let's see where the millions are going.

And if the profit system does make the basic demands impossible, then let's get rid of the system - and replace it with a democratically planned economy, with workers' control.

HOW LEFT IS THE ASLEF LEADERSHIP?

by Steve Good
Kings Cross ASLEF

THE FIRST all-out national rail strike since 1955 is now set to take place on August 31.

The strike call has given the ASLEF and NUR leaderships virtually a whole month to work out a compromise with the British Railways Board.

Record

Weighell's record as an out-and-out right winger in the trade union movement who has sold thousands of his members jobs in recent years is well known.

But the ASLEF executive is widely regarded as militant and left wing. (They committed the union to support Benn in the Labour Party deputy leadership contest very early in Benn's campaign).

Their record is worth examining.

In May of this year, there was industrial action on the Southern Region, concentrated at Tunbridge Wells depot. Services were threatened with severe cuts, which would have meant a cut in wages of up to £32 per week for a driver at the depot.

NUR and ASLEF members developed a policy of joint action and decided to



ASLEF's Buckton

come out on alternate days, thereby stopping the job but ensuring that there was no great loss of pay. Management responded by suspending the guaranteed week.

The ASLEF EC who declared verbal support for the action, refused to make the dispute official, until under considerable pressure they called for an official one day strike.

As the strike day drew closer the EC went into negotiation with management and reached a decision. Not only was the one-day strike called off, but the guaranteed week agreement

was thrown out the window!

At the same time, other depots through BR were involved in consultation with local management over the new summer rosters. The new timetables meant cuts in service at nearly every passenger depot in the country.

The EC drew up a directive calling on Local Department Committees (LDCs) to work to the old rosters, thereby refusing to accept the cuts. This directive was withheld for nearly two weeks before it reached the depots.

Meanwhile, LDCs were instructed to pull out of consultation over the new rosters, and even this instruction was not uniformly applied. Some depots remained in consultation, others pulled out and some depots were moving into dispute over the new workings.

Depots

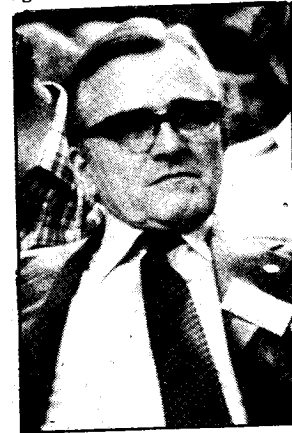
By the time the directive arrived at the depots, the EC had issued new instructions completely contradicting the original directive. LDCs were to get back into consultation, accept the new rosters and men were to work to the new summer timetable. The cuts were allowed in through the back door.

Without doubt, the EC

deliberately created this confusion in order to prevent the fight against the cuts from spreading beyond the Southern Region.

Up to that time, ASLEF was committed to a policy of opposing the cuts, but the EC were not held down to a formal position of industrial action to defend jobs and services. This position was clarified at the union conference held in June.

At the conference, the EC was completely outmanoeuvred by the rank and file delegates and the union was committed to taking "forms of industrial action" against the cuts. Not perhaps



NUR's Weighell

the clearest wording possible but no doubt that it involved action against the cuts.

The EC stated that it was just a matter of days before they would meet and decide how and when to put that policy into action. ASLEF members are still waiting.

At the recall delegate conference held at the end of June, the closure of the Manchester-Sheffield electrified line (MSW) was imminent. An independent inquiry had concluded its investigation in Sheffield and its findings were that the MSW should remain open. The BRB responded by announcing that it would close.

Lacks

The recall conference was faced with a specific issue over which the new union policy could be tested - and nothing was done about it at all.

The MSW, opened only a few years ago at considerable cost to BR, will close without a fight on the part of ASLEF.

A number of depots and mass meetings up and down the country have now expressed support for the action. These rank and file members show a determination to go into a national strike and win which the EC, on past performance, lacks.

Women in struggle

'WHEN YOU SEE MEN LIKE THEY DO, IT'S ENOUGH TO PUT YOU OFF!'

IN TESCOs the next day at the checkout a homelp was discussing this film:

"It's funny, but you didn't really feel like laughing watching it. When you see men like they do, it's enough to completely put you off."

Prostitute I Am, Common I'm Not was probably the most talked about programme this month apart from (ironically enough) the Royal Wedding - which is the other side of the same coin in our society.

Both are complementary symbols of the relationship between men and women; marriage and prostitution both have their own costumes and rituals; and both have the same basic feature - the use of women to serve the needs of men.

As Kollontai says in her speech of 1921 on 'Prostitution - the ways of fighting it':

"The black shadow of prostitution stalks the legal marriage of bourgeois society.

History has never before witnessed such a growth of prostitution as occurred in the last part of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In this present post-war period every woman faces the possibility of unemployment. Unemployment hits women in particular and causes an enormous increase in the army of "street women".

The trade in women's flesh is conducted quite openly which is not surprising when you consider that the whole bourgeois way of life is based on buying and selling.

There is an undeniable element of material and economic consideration in even the most legal of marriages."

Every woman I have



The other side of the coin

talked to who saw the film by Judy Lever has said how it disturbed them despite the obvious bizarre and funny anecdotes which came as desperately needed relief. For a moment you could laugh, with the prostitutes at their clients instead of sharing their constant fear and revulsion.

The point that emerges from the film is that prostitution and rape are a reflection of the sexual relations encouraged throughout bourgeois society. They echo many so-called "hidden

fantasies" that are pumped out of most pornography, sex shops, blue films, etc.

The women point out the men all look normal, but:

"once in a room all changes... And then they go back to work in the courts. Most are travelling salesmen."

The fantasies and desires are for the most part about violence and humiliation, designed to dehumanise women, to reduce the female to an object of sexual access, the private property of men.

The prostitute's story tells it all:

"In 8 years I've been doing it I've been taken into hospital about 100 times..."

"The first time I did it, he told me to take my clothes off and then hit me across the face. Nobody told me about that side of it - a straight fist in the face."

"I never let their hands near my throat. They might strangle me. Never turn your back on them."

"Yes, as a prostitute I was raped. He cut my

breast with a penknife and then robbed me."

Like pornography the sex described in the programme is not about freeing sensuality from moralistic and parental inhibition. It is detached and mechanical, perpetuating roles of coercion, power and repression.

Most of the reviews written in the papers have been by men. Many, not surprisingly, concentrated on Lindi - the prostitute who can make £2,000 a week "effortlessly".

Exploiters

Lindi, they stress, shows who the real exploiters are - these hard headed business-women taking men for a ride.

But in the film Liz was much more of a reflection of the mass of prostitutes - working class women driven into it because, as she says, "I want my kids to have a good life."

For Liz the reviewers reserved contempt and derision, calling her "fat Liz", "gormless Liz", lacking in glamour and panache.

The film did not attempt to draw any conclusions. The dialogue concentrated on what it was actually like to be with a "punter". It emphatically showed that it was nothing to do with pleasure and had put the women well and truly off sex.

Sheila, a prostitute for 20 years, even believes that her work is a social service,

perhaps saving women from the horrors of rape.

Monetary right

Susan Brownmiller's book *Against Our Will* answers this view:

"Operating from the old and discredited lust drive and relief theory, men have occasionally put forward the notion that the way to control criminal rape is to ensure the ready accessibility of female bodies at a reasonable price through the legalisation of prostitution, so that the male impulse might be satisfied with ease, efficiency and a minimum of bother..."

To my mind the experience of the American military in Vietnam, where brothels for GIs were officially sanctioned, even incorporated into the base camp recreation areas, should prove conclusively that the availability of sex for a small price is no deterrent to the decision to rape, anymore than the availability of a base camp shooting range is a deterrent to the killing of unarmed civilians and children. But my horror at the idea of legalised prostitution is not that it doesn't work as a rape deterrent, but that it institutionalises the concept that it is a man's

MARY-ANN TODD reviews 'Prostitute I Am, Common I'm Not' (ITV, Tuesday August 18)

monetary right, if not his divine right to gain access to the female body."

Nor are bourgeois men even consistent in their rationalisation of prostitution, as shown by statements from the bench in the Ripper trial that unfortunately some of the victims were "innocent", while the rest, as prostitutes, were seen as fair game.

After all, it is argued, they "choose" to become prostitutes.

The film showed what material pressures were exerted on a woman at a given moment that resulted in that 'choice'.

As Trotskyists it is not for us to moralise about the evils of prostitution but to fight for a society where women and men will have no need for it. As Kollontai wrote:

"Under communism all dependence of women upon men and all the elements of material calculation found in modern marriage and prostitution will be absent. Prostitution is terrible because it is an act of violence... where passion and attraction begins, prostitution ends. Under communism prostitution and the contemporary family will disappear. Healthy, joyful and free relationships between the sexes will develop."

Fightback AGM

WYDALE HALL, set in 14 acres of woodland, in the Vale of Pickering, just outside Scarborough, is the venue for the Women's Fightback AGM and weekend school over the August Bank Holiday (29-31 August).

The AGM has been shifted to the Saturday to enable those wishing to attend for the one day to travel there.

On Sunday there are educational work-shop sessions where we can

discuss basic Marxism, reform and revolution, what went wrong in the USSR, and socialism and feminism. (If you would like a basic reading list for these sessions ring the phone number below).

Monday is set aside for skill-sharing sessions where we'll discuss how to organise campaigns in areas like cuts, abortion rights, unionisation, campaigns against sexism and unemployment, drawing on the experience of Fightback members and groups in these areas.

There will also be sessions on organisational necessities like writing and producing leaflets, using the media, how to organise a lobby and much more.

It's £18 for the full weekend if you're in work, or £7 for unwaged, with a small charge for the first child and others free. This includes all meals from Saturday afternoon, but does not include the pooled fare.

Sue Carlyle (01-790 4937) is helping people with transport. All other enquiries to 01-607 9052

More & more unequal

THE NEXT time you come across one of those fine fellows who snorts "Women's rights? But women are equal now. We've even got a woman Prime Minister", you'll be able to throw another statistic at him, as well as your beer glass.

Not only are women losing their jobs at three times the rate of men, but for those who've still got them, their wages are beginning to fall again relative to men's.

Peter Morrison, Under Secretary at the Department of Employment (as it is laughingly known), gave the following figures in reply to a Parliamentary question: women's average gross weekly earnings in April 1981 were £88.90 to men's £141.30.

The gap's widening - between April 1979 and 1981, men's wages rose by roughly 40% and women's by only about 25%.

Scandal of Indian women for sale

WHILE THE buying and selling of Thai women as part of the gigantic prostitution racket in Bangkok has become an international scandal, the market in Indian women is rather less publicised.

But now a major scandal has broken out following the report of the purchase of a middle aged woman from Madhya Pradesh for \$306.

The woman was bought three months ago by a reporter on India's largest circulation daily paper the Indian Express.

The purchase price - 2,300 rupees - was "half the price of a buffalo in the Punjab".

Reporter Ashwini Savin brought her to Delhi as living proof of the trade in women carried on in parts of the country. He posed as a doctor with a large family in the market for a wife for his farm foreman.

He returned reporting a widespread trade in women. Some are sold as prostitutes - many merely as servants. Prices range as high as \$2,800 for a 15-year old girl.

Kamala, the unfortunate woman purchased by Savin however now finds herself in an even worse predicament as a result of his attentions.

Since being brought to Delhi she has been confined to an orphanage by court order - since there appears to be no other means of ensuring that she is provided for.

She is forbidden to smoke, subjected to prolonged investigations and quite naturally irritated by all the commotion.

Full of concern, the Express chief reporter, Ms Coomy Kupoor, has suggested that the only solution might be to "marry her off".

The director of the orphanage complains that Kamla "acts irrationally" and uses obscene language, insisting that she wants to leave.

But until some socially acceptable way can be found of disposing of her, Kamla remains in effect a prisoner, an embarrassment to her "owners" and a living example of the exploitation of those who sold her.

Meanwhile there is talk that the police and officials in the town where the sale took place may prosecute Savin - for conducting a trade in women!

*For more on the sale of women in Bangkok, see Women's Fightback, July/August issue, available from 41, Ellington Street, London N1, price 35p including postage.



A women's movement is beginning to develop in India

AN UNRIVALLED VISION OF PICASSO'S WORK

BOB SUTCLIFFE reviews 'Picasso's Picassos', an exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, South Bank, London (until 11th October)

THIS IS probably the first time in the history of painting that an exhibition contains the painter's name twice in the title. Appropriately, the name is Pablo Picasso. His adult life and painting career covered the first three-quarters of our century; and if there are still humans alive next century, they will almost certainly still regard Picasso as the most notable painter of the 20th century.

He was and is, as the critic John Berger points out in his brilliant study *The Success and Failure of Picasso*, one of the most famous people (not only painters) who has ever lived.

His fame and wealth were greater than any other artist's in the history of the world. His signature on a piece of paper invested it with a monetary value which the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England would envy.

In fact, it was Picasso's financial success which gave birth to this exhibition. The death duties on his vast estate were met by the handing over to the French tax authorities of 500 or so of the paintings that he had kept himself. They are soon to be housed in a new permanent museum in Paris, and are meanwhile touring the world.

So the collection is not of the best-known of Picasso's work, nor (many would think) of the best. There does not seem to have been any particular reason why these were the paintings which Picasso chose to keep.

But the collection is uniquely representative of the whole span of his long and prodigiously prolific career. It is possible to see aspects of Picasso as a painter which are not so striking from individual paintings.

One of these is the immense range of his visual imagery, in spite of the repetition of similar subjects.

To understand as much as any viewer can what Picasso was trying to convey through his painting, you would need to know something of African art, of Greek and Roman mythology, and of the paintings of earlier artists, so many of which Picasso produced caricatures of.

You would, however, hardly need to know anything about any other twentieth century painter.

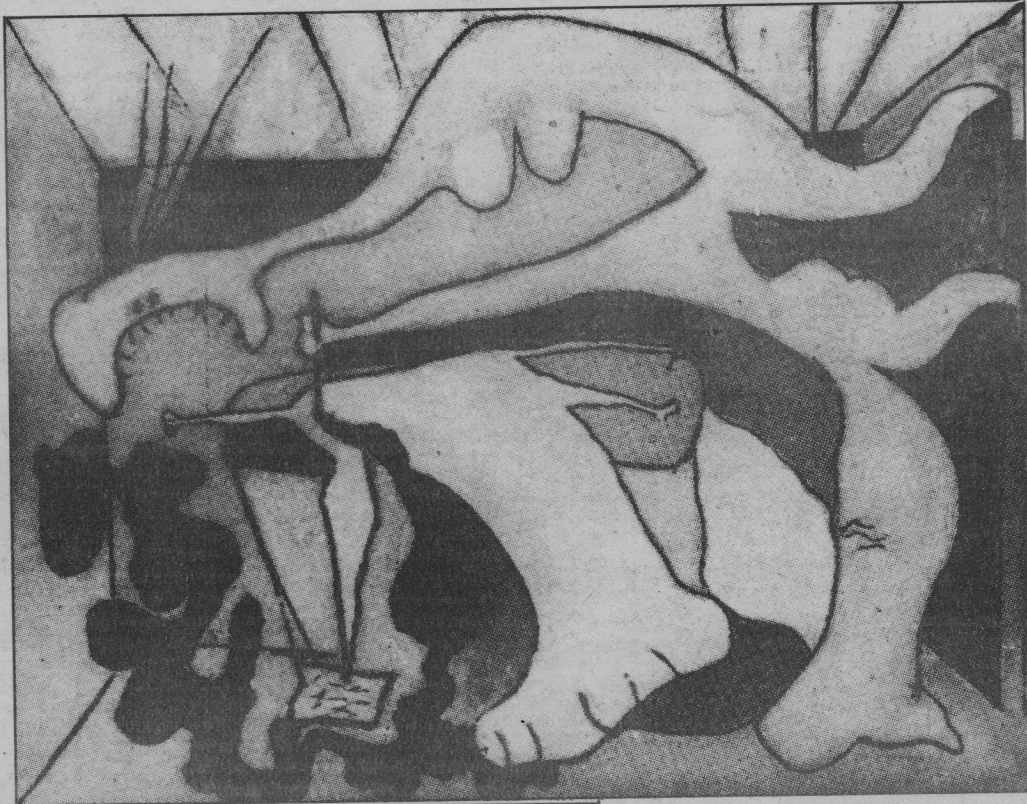
Picasso's style (or rather styles, since there are so many) is quite unlike that of other painters. And, as Berger says, he was never part of any school except for the one he helped to invent - cubism.

At that time (1907-14) Picasso and Georges Braque worked, as Braque put it, "liked mountaineers roped together" to produce a revolution in the language of painting.

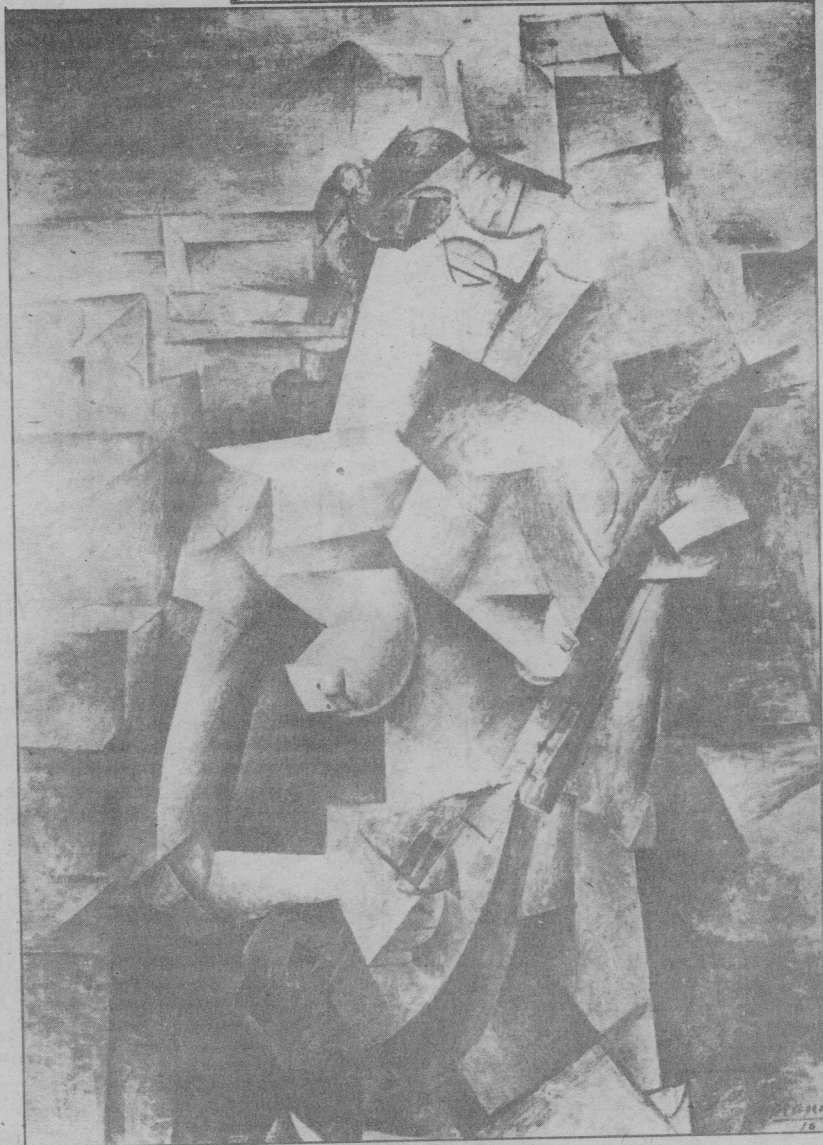
Analogy

Berger's claim that cubism was a form (the only one in art) of dialectical materialism - the fusion of Courbet's materialism with Cézanne's dialectic - should be treated, in my opinion, as no more than an analogy. But his insistence on the revolutionary significance of cubism is surely right.

Even though, unlike some other painters of the movement, Picasso quickly ceased to paint in pure cubist style, the influence of cubism remained with him for the rest of his career. And it has done the same for other painters, in terms of what is acceptable as the subject matter of



Woman with stiletto, after David's 'Death of Marat', 1931



Above Mandolin, 1910; below, Guernica

painting, its materials, and its style. The famous distortions of human and animal figures in Picasso's paint-

ings were possible only after the liberation of painting style produced by cubism.

One of Berger's conclusions which this exhibition helps to confirm is that after 1914, the high point of cubism, Picasso's fame and wealth grew as his artistic influence declined.

Scarcely any later painting would have been possible without the innovations of Picasso and his cubist colleagues before 1914. Yet if Picasso had died then, probably nothing which happened in painting subsequently would have been any different.

As we can see clearly in this exhibition, Picasso did not become

less original, nor unable to paint good or even great paintings. But he did become a very individual painter, using his art to express his obsessions, desires and pain. This led to the sentimentality of the 'blue period', whose paintings seem very dated, and then to the increasing, almost obsessive, use of sex as a subject matter of his paintings and, more especially, drawings.

Picasso perhaps did more than any other artist to liberate sex as an artistic subject - sex explicitly as physical pleasure or sex as humour, as opposed to implicit and repressed sex which was more characteristic of 19th (and early 20th) century painting.

Form of sexism

I'm not sure whether Mrs Mary Whitehouse has attacked the Picasso exhibition as she has attacked the National Theatre over Waterloo Bridge - but she certainly ought to. Though perhaps she is less scandalised because, in Berger's words, Picasso "abstracts sex from society and returns it to nature".

The positive aspects of the sensuality of Picasso's paintings are combined with a form of sexism. He seems obsessed with the need for sex to take place between strong masculine men (sometimes transformed into minotaurs or centaurs, just to beef up the masculinity) and all-human young women who, when they are not physically idealised, are distorted by the shrinking of their heads and the enlargement of their breasts, and who are always supine and passive.

In his paintings of the 1930s and 1940s, the theme of pleasure (especially sexual pleasure) is joined by that of pain - often expressed through the images derived from his native Spain, from which Picasso had all his life been an exile.

Hideous events

As Berger so illuminatingly says, these images are the way that Picasso reacted, in a very personal and introspective manner, to the hideous political events which went on around him in Spain, France and Germany. As with sex, "he abstracts fear and pain from history and returns them to a protesting nature".

In the paintings from this period you will look in vain for any overt

political statement - or even analogy. But Picasso discovered a symbolic language (bull-fighting), which he used to express his own personal reactions to the cruelty and pain of others.

It is for this reason that it is ironic, perhaps, that one of these paintings - 'Guernica' - has become the most celebrated political painting of our age.

Democratic enough?

It is not in this exhibition, but some of its precursors are. It was painted on a commission from the Spanish Republican government for its stand at an exhibition in Paris after the ghastly bombing of the town of Guernica by Nazi bombers flying for Franco.

The political history of this painting is not over, since Picasso's executors are in the process of deciding whether Spain has now become democratic enough for it to be returned to Spain from New York where it hangs in the Museum of Modern Art.

Neither in Guernica, nor in any picture in this exhibition, nor (hardly) in any of Picasso's sparse writings and sayings, do we get much idea of his politics.

Probably he was a little drawn to the anarchism of some of his friends in the cubist movement early in the century.

But it did not convert him into a publicly political person. That happened only when he joined the French Communist Party in 1945. It was an act perhaps more of political naivety than of cynicism.

Artistic reaction

But the Stalinists in Paris and in Moscow were glad to make use of his vast international fame for their own ends, and encouraged him to draw millions of doves of peace, while banning his painting as decadent and bourgeois.

Thus, whether wittingly or unwittingly, Picasso ended his life collaborating meekly with the darkest forces of artistic (as well as all other kind of) reaction - forces which the best and most original of his paintings continue to do something to undermine.

If, like me, you are not a great lover even of Picasso's most significant paintings, you will gain from this exhibition an unrivalled vision of the work of one of the major artists and geniuses of the 20th century. And maybe also, like me, you will admire the boldness of all his work, and enjoy some of its sensuality and wit.



Still life on a pedestal table, 1931



Letters

We need regular column on housing

I AM writing this letter in the hope of getting some lively debate in the letters column of the new weekly.

There seem to me to be two crucial areas for revolutionary socialists at the moment. They are youth and 'urban problems'. To a certain extent they come together in the present riots because it is the streets which have been chosen for rebellion.

The significance of these riots cannot be overplayed. Nationwide rioting in nearly every major city in mainland Britain is something the ruling class and its political allies have not experienced for perhaps 50 or 60 years.

BIG SLEEP

It is like an awakening from the big sleep, although in some respects it does reflect the weakness of organised labour. (On that same weekend Rover workers voted to accept massive redundancies).

But what are our slogans in Socialist Organiser - little more than an echoing of the left bureaucracy of certain trades unions, e.g. 'real jobs', and a front page that makes *The Times* look like a comic.

At a time when many youth are rejecting the whole mentality of wage-

slavery and seeking an identity elsewhere, we completely miss the boat for the spreading of Marxist ideas, which can be presented in a readable form without destroying their essence.

The other point we are missing out is revolutionary ideas on the state. The youth more than any other section of the working class have few illusions about the benevolence or neutrality of its various forms. We should use this to get over our difference from the Benn 'statist' policies.

Many revolutionaries think the direction for workers' control will come from the workplace and spread into other areas.

This is a dogma. In Trotsky's writings on Germany, he points out that the initial spark for workers' control may indeed come from consumption and not production. It depends on the circumstances.

I would suggest that the direction of capitalism since the 1950s and the present areas of struggle suggest that the circumstances are such that it is the area of consumption which is ripe.

From my own experience housing is becoming an important area, whether it be fights over rent increases

or urban renewal. What I would like to see is a regular column on housing in the paper, to break down the isolation and to give a wider perspective. Also, some thought on how to build independent movements, independent of councillors.

We need to examine the ideas in the Transitional Programme over price committees and how these ideas can be brought up to date to cope with massive extension of state services into the working class.

Historically the link between residential area and

workplace has been very important for a revolutionary situation - the Red Clyde 1915, the Turin Councils 1919-20, more recently Free Derry. With a government which is hell-bent on class war in the cities as well as the factories, we must seize the opportunity to put the socialist alternative.

D.J.WELLS,
Birmingham.

P.S. on areas such as child care the paper is excellent, and a real difference to other left papers which seem tokenistic towards this type of area.

Unite workers and jobless

John McHeath [S0 46] claims that the term unemployed workers union is misleading and can confuse and alienate workers.

Unemployed workers unions have never claimed to be an alternative to the trade unions, but have seen the need for dual membership of both trade unions and unemployed workers unions.

Encouraged

Locally we have found that far from confusing workers, through the unemployed workers union we have encouraged those who have never been in a trade union before to become members of one.

A central aim of all unemployed workers unions is to unite the employed and the unemployed to defend the interests of all workers and not, as is suggested, separate the unemployed from the trade union movement.

Even though it is TUC policy for all member unions to retain their unemployed members and recruit the unemployed, the current rules of the unions do not allow this, and it will take a number of years for the rule changes to be achieved even if the individual unions themselves are willing.

How long can the unemployed wait for the trade union bureaucracy to move? I feel that it would have

been more honest if the writer of the letter had opposed the principle of unemployed workers unions in favour of an unemployed workers council, and not deliberately distorted the current role of unemployed workers unions to justify the alternative proposal for unemployed workers councils.

MICK JARMAINE
Leicester Unemployed Workers Union.

Avoid racist term

LAST WEEK'S Press Gang gave an excellent treatment of the issues raised by the Down's Syndrome child, except for one.

Mongolism is not 'more accurately known as Down's Syndrome'. It is a racist term produced by Victorian pseudo-science which sought to link Down's Syndrome with the Mongoloid/Oriental races.

The same era of 'science' busied itself with theories such as explanations of why black people and women were less intelligent than the white man.

CHEUNG SIU MING,
South London.

Jelly babies of SWP

I find Socialist Organiser quite good in general, but there was an irritating misuse of terms (and a few mysterious ones) in the July 30 edition.

For example, the SWP is described as 'ultra-leftist'. The Angry Brigade was ultra-leftist, the Red Army Fraction is ultra-leftist, the Red Brigades are ultra-leftist, and despite serious disagreements politically, I love these comrades.

They have the spirit of

rebellion that wants to pull the head off the capitalist state and carry the flames of resistance in their blood. How on earth can you put them in the same camp as the jelly baby, Schachtmanite, state-cap SWP bunch?

'Syndicalist' is described away as narrowly trade unionist, which is a contemporary American leftist usage which robs syndicalism of its revolutionary anarchist politics. In correctly criticising Hallas for re-

writing the history of the Labour Party, the author does the same thing to Syndicalist traditions in Britain.

Different means

While defending the Irish revolution, the centre pages give the distinct impression that the actual punters with the guns and 'the demagogues' in their political wing weren't quite approved of. Maybe they've got a

different means of progress and therefore haven't got it quite right.

However all these things aside, I find the paper very good. I hope the niggling, irritating sentences will phase themselves out in time.

Revolutionary greetings,
DAVE DOUGLASS,
Delegate,
Hatfield Main Branch NUM

Duffy won't go away!

BOB BROUGHTON (Socialist Organiser no. 47) is spot on when he says Duffy and Boyd have stabbed the Laurence Scott strikers in the back by signing a blatantly sell-out agreement with Arthur Snipe. Only six or seven years ago it would have been unimaginable for top union leaders to carry off such a stunt.

So why has it happened? One reason is that Boyd has craftily calculated that while the right is outnumbered by left activists at the base of the union, there is no serious challenge to his complete control over the union apparatus.

As long as struggles can be localised at the level of the plant, and not translated into a political campaign to remove Boyd and Co. from

the top positions, then the Executive could comfortably crap on a dozen Scotts occupations and get away with it!

Duncan Hallas in Socialist Worker (8th August) tells us that "the spectacle of 19 full-time officials, including some 'heroes' of the Broad Left, urging Laurence Scotts workers to accept a sell-out, is typical". Fair enough.

The SWP tell us that over the last few years, we have seen the increasing incorporation of convenors and stewards into the official structure - particularly through growth of centralised negotiating procedures. The task, the comrades say, is to 'reforge new independent rank and file links', and in this way go round the bureaucracy.

And as far as this goes, it is vitally important. The Laurence Scotts workers are doing exactly this at the moment by renewing contact with Doncaster stewards after Duffy has made them unofficial.

However, while this work is essential, the real danger is that some stewards are drawing the conclusion: 'it's pointless bothering with the official structures - that'll get us nowhere'.

In a period of growth of centralised wage bargaining and the role of confederated unions, a real dilemma is posed for socialists in the working class movement. Can we afford to ignore this - and bypass it by just building rank and file links at the base and leaving it at that?

It is clear that those who control the union apparatus at the top will - at the end of the day - always defeat the 'rank and file' struggles on the ground unless there is a real fight to wrench this apparatus out of their hands. The building of rank and file movements has to be integrated with a strategy of replacing the right-wing leaders.

Conference

A useful start would be the calling of a labour movement conference of workers to discuss how the lessons of Scotts can be taken into the battle in the unions as a whole.

PAUL RAMSEY (AUEW)
JOE ROURKE,
Manchester.

Not so liberal

JOHN Lister's article (Socialist Organiser 48) brings out well the trend to a paramilitary and openly political role for the police.

As he points out, some police chiefs are worried by the risks and problems of this trend. John Alderson, Chief Constable for Devon and Cornwall, has openly criticised it.

But we should be aware that this 'liberal' wing of the police is none too liberal. Alderson's reaction to the recent riots was to tut-tut at the tactics of Oxford and Anderton - and say he favoured a new Riot Act!

COLIN FOSTER,
London



Boyd with henchmen Laird and Duffy.



by Mandy Williams

ALMOST TWENTY years after the horrors of Thalidomide, the effects of a drug prescribed to pregnant women suffering from nausea and vomiting are coming to light.

They are not unlike Thalidomide, although in this case about one per cent of women who take it in early pregnancy are affected, whereas Thalidomide affected nearly 100%.

Bendectin (called Debendox in this country) has been on the market for nearly 24 years, during which time it has caused around 140,000 limb, brain and heart defects in children whose mothers took it

in early pregnancy.

It was never properly tested for side-effects. And the findings about its results have been consistently suppressed by its manufacturers, a subsidiary of Richardson-Merrell, who were responsible for marketing Thalidomide in the US before proper tests. Recent work also shows that it is ineffective against morning sickness.

When the effects of Thalidomide became well-established, Bendectin was tested. The study, funded by Merrell, then suggested further research should be done. Merrell investigated no further, and withheld the study from the USA Food and Drug Administra-

tion (FDA), which controls drug marketing.

17 years later the original data were re-examined and the parallels with Thalidomide became clear.

Many doctors in the US and Canada who had prescribed Bendectin/Debendox wrote to Merrell reporting birth defects. Merrell managed to get most of these rephrased as 'enquiries'. 'Adverse reaction reports' have to be passed to the FDA: 'enquiries', even those from hospitals involving up to 1000 cases, do not.

Doctors were reassured that there had been few adverse reaction reports.

There is only one truly independent study of Bendectin, and it indicates the dangers very clearly.

A British study was made

in 1977 by a Leeds paediatrician, Dr Smithells. But he received \$26,000 from Merrell towards his research on Bendectin, plus a 'consulting fee' of \$1500 into his (illegal) Canadian bank account.

The FDA's own staff raised doubts about Bendectin's safety and effectiveness, some were promoted or moved away from its review, and a few were cultivated by Merrell.

Mother Jones magazine writes: "We are not suggesting that Bendectin is the only drug in FDA history to receive such preferential treatment. The agency is full of people who believe they were either transferred or demoted for recommending nonapproval of other drugs"

Under one per cent of pregnant women, according to the American Medical Association, actually need prescribed drugs for nausea in pregnancy. But in 1977, with three million new pregnancies in the US, there were 3.4 million prescriptions for Bendectin alone.

Usually much simpler remedies are effective - and much safer. As with many sensitive stomach complaints, it is wise to avoid fatty, greasy and highly spiced foods, to eat small amounts every few hours (even at night), and to use herbal teas if they are soothing.

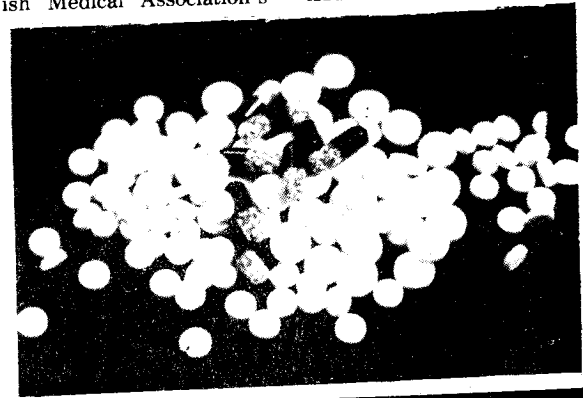
In addition, pregnant women should drink plenty of fluids, and get a balanced vitamin-B-complex. Meanwhile Bendectin/

Debendox is still on the market. The two cases brought against Merrell in the USA have been lost, and Merrell has so far not been charged with keeping information from the FDA.

In this country, the British Medical Association's

fact sheet recommends that although Debendox is safe, it should not be used in early pregnancy - the only time it is intended for!

★ Information from 'Mother Jones', November 1980 issue.



STILL NO DEAL IN SIGHT AT LEE JEANS

STAN CROOKE looks at some of the problems facing the Lee Jeans occupiers as they await the outcome of talks between the owners, Vanity Fair, and potential buyer Nigel Wright.

OVER a month after the start of talks between London businessman Nigel Wright, owner of the 'Dickie Dirt' jeans stores, and Vanity Fair (VF) Corporation, owner of the occupied Lee Jeans factory near Gourrock, agreement is yet to be reached, although rumours abound - still - about its imminence.

VF originally asked for £750,000 for the factory, but have now upped the price to £795,000, on the grounds that they are now prepared to sell the laundry in the factory, which had not been included in the original price.

Final decision

According to reports in Glasgow newspapers Wright has offered £615,000. VF's British representatives have referred his offer, whatever it is, to the corporation's head office in America for a final decision, which should be known by the time this paper appears. (But, on the other hand, a "final decision" has been pending for over a fortnight now).

The talks have become

the focal point of the dispute - and that is now the main problem.

Instead of taking further initiatives to increase the pressure on VF to surrender, or ensuring that initiatives already taken (e.g. blacking at the docks of VF products) are working properly, many of those in the sit-in are unfortunately tending towards passively awaiting a deal being done between Wright and VF.

Subordinated

After over six months in occupation the workers obviously have every right to want the deal to go through so that they can start picking up a wage again. But the problem is that any further militant development of the dispute has become subordinated to negotiations between a nouveau riche Londoner and an American multi-national.

Workers in the occupation don't know what impact, if any, blacking of VF goods at the docks has had, and are also becoming increasingly indifferent to this question - because of



their focus on the negotiations.

Deal

- A leaflet to be used for shop boycotts has not been produced, nor does one seem to be forthcoming. Again, because the workers' hopes are pinned on Wright doing a deal.

- The local Action Committee (which, in any case,

was only a collection of bureaucrats humming and hating but organising nothing) has not met for weeks, and there is no interest in building a real action committee to support their fight for jobs.

tions, etc. should the deal go through, and such questions are not being seriously raised in case they get Wright's back up.

Wright takes the initia-

tives and VF reacts (insofar as fudging and temporising count as any kind of action at all). Wright opens the talks and makes the offers; VF listens to his propositions and promises to give them the consideration they deserve.

Meanwhile the workers in the sit-in gradually descend into passivity, speculating about the identity of the

'mystery man' who is Wright's partner in the talks, and waiting for the phone call to say a deal has been fixed up. Or to say that the talks have collapsed.

At the same time the NTGWU bureaucrats continue their scandalous role unchecked. Having taken seven weeks to make the dispute official (claiming that they had not heard about it!), having taken another five weeks before paying the fiver a week strike pay (claiming that they wanted to see whether or not the women were serious before paying up!), the bureaucrats recently withdrew official support and now openly work to kill off the sit-in.

Just before the occupation rota was re-organised to allow one section of the workers to go on holiday whilst the rest kept up the occupation, the union officials suggested that they should all go on holiday at the same time. Management, they claimed, would not dare change the padlocks and lock them out during their absence.

Not taken up

Their suggestion was not taken up, so the officials finally argued openly for an end to the sit-in. "Go out with dignity. With your heads held high," one of them advised the women.

In spite of such an attitude (or more exactly: precisely because of it), VF will discuss the sit-in only with national officials from the union, not with any of the shop stewards directly elected by those actually involved in the sit-in. So the women are supposed to rely upon union bureaucrats openly opposed to the occupation to put their case in talks with VF and Wright.

And the union officials have now widened their field of inaction to Ireland as well. Sackings are now taking place in the Irish factories meant to be taken over jeans production from the Gourrock factory, as the make the change-over from knitwear (what they have mainly produced till now) to jeans.

Inactive

In one sense the union officials have linked up the sackings in Scotland and Ireland: by remaining inactive in both cases. Unfortunately the Irish shop stewards do not share the combativity of the Gourrock workers: they have suggested that the Gourrock workers should make their demands higher redundancy payments so that they could then claim the same for the members in Ireland being sacked.

More treacherous

If anything has changed in the last month of the dispute, it is only that the union officials have become even more treacherous and VF has become even more bloody-minded about reaching a deal with Wright.

But whether or not the deal goes through, serious problems threaten the sit-in. If the deal is fixed up, what can they extract from Wright in terms of pay and working conditions? And if the deal falls through, can the former level of militancy be restored?

Defend closed shop!

THE CLOSED shop looks like the ideal issue for the Tories: they can come out as supporters of individual rights against collectivism and trade union power.

The snag is that many employers find the closed shop a good way of dealing with the unions, and others have no wish to get drawn into battles to protect a few right wing cranks or eccentrics from the trade unions.

Laws against the closed shop are often quietly ignored by major employers.

But, with union organisation weakening in the slump, more and more bosses are ready to break up closed shops. Opinion in the Tory party has swung in favour of new laws soon against the closed shop.

Boosted

These plans will be boosted by last week's European Court of Human Rights decision in favour of three men sacked by British Rail in 1976 for refusing to join unions (though the Court limited itself to the specific case and did not rule against closed shops in general).

Collective rights

A blow against the closed shop is not a blow for individual rights, but a blow against the collective rights of the working class.

Individual rights like free speech, free association, etc.,

have been won for the working class by collective action, and can only be defended the same way. The 'right to scab' is no more a legitimate individual right than the 'right' to sabotage.

Closed shop deals sewn up between bosses and particular unions are often not the best way of defending working class organisation. 100% trade unionism, with workers free to choose their own unions, is better. But any attempt to outlaw the closed shop must be defeated.

The TUC has promised 'staunch and determined resistance'. It could start by breaking off its collaboration with the Tories in the NEDC and on dozens of other committees and boards, and going for action against the Tories rather than pleas with them.



Prior



EETPU members lobby their annual conference in support of the Central London

CHAPPLE STRIKES AGAIN

by an EETPU member

THE Executive Committee of the EETPU has decided to break up the London Central Branch of the union, which it suspended in April.

Branch members have already lost their rights in the union for almost six months because they refused to obey an executive diktat that broke union rules.

The branch was instructed to appoint John Lees, a member who hadn't attended meetings for 14 years, to a local Labour Party management committee, in order to help Chapple's plans to put discredited right wing councillors back in control of the Southwark Labour Parties.

Now the Executive has decided to 'amalgamate' the London Central, West and North East Branches into a huge 10,000 member branch for contracting electricians that will be run by a full-time official.

Broken up

EETPU activists know full well what these 'amalgamations' mean - the branches that cover huge areas and few people attend meetings. Existing branch leaderships are broken up so the full timers have a clear run, and members have

no real chance to discuss what is going on.

At last year's conference a resolution opposing further amalgamations was carried, against the advice of the EC. But Chapple is so anxious to stamp on London Central that this means nothing.

Branch members have been successful in winning a lot of support for the campaign to reopen London Central, as well as actively backing the People's March for Jobs and joining the fight for an investigation into the death in police custody of one of their members,

Winston Rose.

Union activists like these who won't stay quiet are a real threat to Chapple and he is prepared to trample every vestige of democracy left in the union to smash them.

He's roped the TUC in on the act too. Southwark Trades Council circulated London Central's case to all its branches and for this 'crime' the TUC has threatened to withdraw its credentials.

Chapple's campaign to support the Labour Right threatens to take away effective

union organisation for thousands of electricians, to disband a Trades Council, and to disrupt the three local Labour Parties in Southwark.

Campaign

He has to be stopped. Trade union and Labour activists everywhere should campaign to get their organisations to back the members of London Central.

*Details of the "Campaign to Reopen London Central EETPU", c/o Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE5.

Pergamon decisions

THE NATIONAL leadership of the NUJ is poised as we go to press to take decisions which would make or break the 24 week Pergamon strike.

The Emergency Committee on August 21 will decide whether to instruct all NUJ members throughout Maxwell's empire to withdraw their labour and whether to issue an instruction to all NUJ members to black copy to Maxwell's

printers.

These decisions will be of crucial importance to the future of the strike and are seen by the Pergamon strikers as the only way to defeat Maxwell, who sacked the whole NUJ chapel within three days of it going on strike over pay in March.

Meetings of some industrial councils have already taken place last week. While the Freelance Industrial Council

expressed its readiness to issue blacking instructions, others were reluctant, if not hostile, to lead the fight against Maxwell and took decisions to consult their membership before making recommendations to the Emergency Committee.

*Messages of support and donations to the strike fund should be sent c/o 5 Union Street, Oxford.

O'Brien attack on NGA

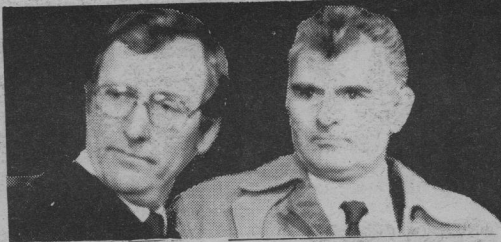
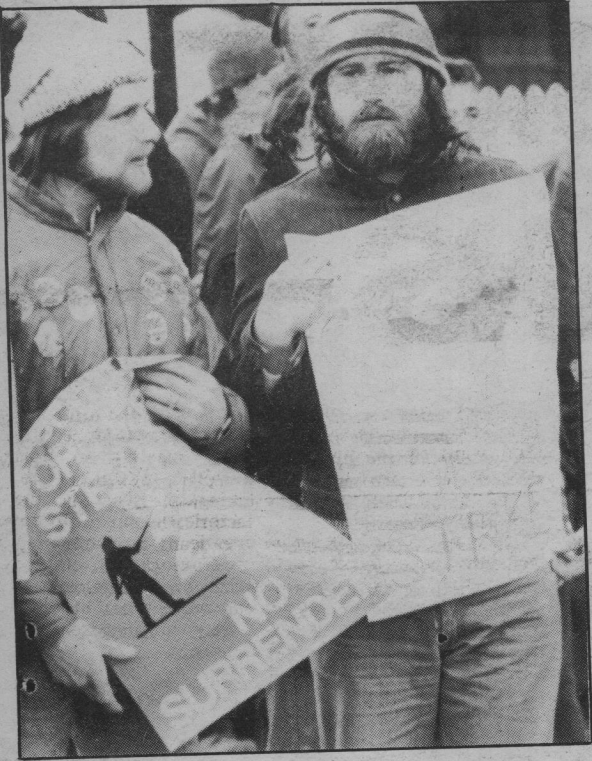
NGA printworkers facing lock-out threat from Financial Times were last week stabbed in the back by top officials of the larger print union NATSOPA.

Nineteen NGA machine minds at the FT have given notice of a strike for September 4. The bosses have responded saying they will lock out the FT's 600 printworkers from September 4, and continue publishing "by means necessary" - probably by printing in West Germany.

Instead of solidarity with the NGA members against this three NATSOPA national official Teddy O'Brien has attacked them. On August 13 he said "Whatever any cowboys choose to do to the industry, we will protect the interest of our members. We will not assist any party that seeks to attack our position."

Putting on a tough-guy pose, O'Brien dismissed the lock-out threat by saying NATSOPA "had no unemployment problem". "We put all our people to work."

NATSOPA members are reckless about the FT boss threat to jobs and an organisation should urgently set about calling O'Brien to account.



A QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP

Review by Tony Richardson and Donna Pickles

IT IS amazing that this programme ever got onto television.

Even in its present censored form and even though shown only in the ATV Midlands Region, it was dynamite.

Originally scheduled to be shown nationally last August, (most of it was filmed in May 1980) it was advertised in the TV Times but then cancelled on the day it was due to be shown.

Editing

It has taken a year of editing (polite word for censorship) and had a studio session with Bill Sirs added before it got this showing.

The programme format itself does not seem particularly sensational. A national trade union official, Sandy

Feather (ISTC) and a couple of local officials are brought together with a number of activists in the steel strike, both from the steel industry and from their supporters in the docks, car industry and the mines.

This discussion takes place shortly after the steel strike and is about the experiences of the strike.

This all seems fairly straightforward; but can any reader tell us when this has ever happened before?

True, this was the first national steel strike since 1926, and the longest-running national strike since then.

But what about the firemen's strike, the engineers' the lorry drivers' or the public sector workers? These strikes have also affected

millions of workers, yet not one of them has ever been debated by rank and file activists on television.

Add to all this the attitude of director Ken Loach and co-producer Barry Hines and you not only have an exceptional idea but a programme done in a sympathetic manner, in a way that the workers aren't put down.

To illustrate the point let me say that the programme is in two distinct sections.

Studio

The main part was filmed last May; but the additional session saw two of the original participants (Alan Thornett and Bernard Connolly) brought together in a studio across the table from Bill Sirs and George Wright of the Welsh TUC.

This latter section was forced on the director in order to make the whole programme acceptable. It was done in the "normal" manner - with an interviewer who allowed Sirs the great proportion of the time and allowed him to continuously interrupt Connolly.

Feeling

As they had done before both Connolly and Thornett criticised Sirs and the TUC leadership. But in the changed conditions the feeling seemed to have gone out of Connolly's words. He was no longer arguing in front of fellow workers.

Even coverage like this latter section is rare enough: it comes over as a debate between a reformist and a revolutionary perspective.

Sirs says that the only way to stop job losses "is to remove the government". But then he claims that the trade union movement is not willing to do this.

He declares that when his union went to the other unions in the TUC Steel Industry Committee and put down a resolution for strike action in defence of jobs, it was opposed by all the other unions.

Throughout his contribution Sirs continuously argued that the steel strike was "about wages purely and simply... I could not get my own people to go on strike for jobs".

Clearer

Against this Connolly argued that the jobs fight was behind the steel strike and Alan Thornett showed the political content of the strike and underlined how the trade union leaders are not willing to use the possibilities such as the steel strike to mobilise mass action that could bring down the government.

Everything was much clearer in the first section because of the way it was directed.

Here there was no interviewer, all were on equal terms. It was filmed in a

school away from the intimidation of the studios.

The viewer is completely absorbed as though part of the discussion; perhaps discussion is the wrong word. You feel you are part of a struggle - almost as though in the middle of a strike.

What has happened means something to all these people. It is one of the great moments in their lives that they are arguing about. The results of the strike have affected everything that has taken place since and the activists instinctively feel this.

As the discussion emphasized the steel dispute was just the "tip of the iceberg" - the working class is engaged in a fight against capitalist control and workers employed by Thatcher's government had common ground to overthrow the Tories.

However, this was not taken advantage of by the TUC leadership. Sixteen and a half months later the anger at this capitulation was brought back to the surface by the ATV programme.

Action

If there had been mass action taken by the labour movement in the winter of 1980 would we be in the mess we are in now?

The activists are aware that it left them lumbered with a Tory government which still threatens their jobs and living standards. They are angry because they realise with the steel strike there was the possibility of driving this government out of office.

This feeling is brilliantly brought out when Feather is explaining how he was surprised by the strike taking place.

The camera stays on Bernard Connolly as he takes his jacket off and rolls

up his sleeves, preparing to answer him. This is no academic discussion.

Many of the workers in the programme had never been 'political'. But they showed that they had learnt much from the strike. One section was on the role of the police. Enid Beaver from Yorkshire described one particular beating up of a picket which was filmed by a TV crew but the film never screened.

Women

Another part mentioned the role of women in the strike. Ray Davies from South Wales brought out the activities of wives on the picket line (though not enough was brought out about the activities of women steelworkers like Enid Beaver).

What dominated the programme was the hostility of the activists to the union bureaucracy.

This was something that particularly connected with workers who watched.

Comments in the car factory I work at were all favourable - such as "They really had a go at them."

For once workers were really able to find something on TV they could identify with.

Pergamon strikers too said that this described exactly their problem. And even during the BL Combine Committee meeting favourable comment was made about the programme.

The most positive aspect of the programme was the way it showed the form of the trade union leadership's betrayal. The leadership's role was put on the dissecting table by the working-class.

The main way the steel strike was betrayed was its isolation - consciously created by the trade union leadership.

Denis Kelly from the

Liverpool Docks described how a national dock strike was called at a delegate meeting and as they were leaving the meeting they heard the steel strike was called off. Why, he demands of Feather, did they run to settle the moment of the docks strike decision?

Alan Thornett went through the developments in British Leyland. BL was a similar case to BSC - with job losses and a low wage offer and well after the review date. A ballot was held in February - in the middle of the steel strike - and a 2-1 strike vote carried.

This strike decision was not acted upon by the trade union leadership in any way until April 8 - the day the steel strikers went back!

This is particularly powerful at the end of the programme. In between the credits, statements are made by some of the participants. Thornett says that the greatest betrayal of the strike was that the union leaders sat on the 2-1 strike vote by Leyland workers and refused to implement it.

Cover

Welsh TUC General Secretary George Wright on the other hand tried to cover up the role of the TUC General Council in opposing the call for a Welsh general strike.

Wright in fact claimed they had a general strike on January 28. Yet at the beginning of the strike they had called for an all out general strike from that date - only to cave in under heavy opposition from Len Murray and the General Council.

Colours

The TUC official leadership were shown in their true colours when faced with direct confrontations from their members. It was a very different picture from the supposedly militant leadership figures portrayed during individual TV interviews during the dispute.

One weakness was the cutting out in the edited version of the programme of a discussion on the "viability" argument and the transitional demands for the steel industry which stand opposed to this position.

Nevertheless, *A Question of Leadership* is exceptional in its method, its content of activists versus bureaucrats and its particular subject - the steel strike.

The results of this struggle could have been the end of the Tories. Instead Leyland workers, railway men and others now have to contemplate going into struggle on their own again and in conditions where one million are unemployed - one million more than at the time of the steel strike.

A QUESTION OF CENSORSHIP

by John Lister

FILM MAKER Ken Loach held a news conference last week to highlight the process of censorship "by nods and winks" which brought delays, alterations and a restricted audience for the film 'A Question of Leadership'.

The film was made for ATV but designed for national network showing. Eventually after a year of delays, cuts and the insertion of a studio session dominated by steel union chief Bill Sirs, it was shown only in the Midlands region.

The changes were imposed as a result of an intervention by ATV, who

decided that the programme failed to match up to the 'laughable' guidelines on "fairness and impartiality" laid down by the IBA.

But of course the "fairness and impartiality" sought by IBA bosses has nothing to do with ensuring an accurate depiction of the views of the working class.

As Loach pointed out to the Guardian:

"I think there's a nervousness in TV about ordinary people showing articulate political views.

They like working class people to be complaining about unemployment or bad housing, they like social distress, but they don't like numbers being added up and



Ken Loach conclusions drawn."

Among the conclusions that were drawn by workers in the original 1 1/2 days of filming, but which found no expression in the version that was shown, was the need to open the books of the steel industry and other sections of the British economy.

But despite the heavy editing Loach's film stands as a unique expression of the voice of rank and file workers. And his vocal exposure of censorship should be applauded.

Steelworkers, trade unionists and socialists in South Wales and other areas should demand loud and long that their regional ITV stations broadcast the programme, and commission similar discussions on matters of concern to the labour movement.

Advertisement

Following its fusion last month with the International Communist League, the Workers Socialist League is to hold a major rally and festival in Birmingham on Saturday October 10.

The activities will include exhibitions and workshops designed to deal with all the varied aspects of the work of the WSL - in industrial and labour movement

struggles, work amongst women and youth, and the building of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

The festival begins at 11 am at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. There will be a social in the evening. Transport is available from most areas of the country, and further details are available from the Workers Socialist League, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.



Socialist Organiser

Drop the charges!

FOR THE 3,000 youth randomly arrested and even more randomly fixed up with 'charges' during the riots, appearing in court is no more than a formality. The idea of a "fair" trial evaporated into thin air as the Tories and police began to take legalised revenge on young blacks and whites.

Most were remanded to borstals, locked up for a week or more before anyone had even heard their cases.

Most were also denied legal aid — the way the bosses' state tries to prove that justice is 'free' to all — leaving unemployed youth bills of £150 just for defending their innocence.

As for the trials, most

were a mockery. As with Southall in 1979, magistrates were taking it as read that if one cop appeared to give evidence against you then you were guilty, and your evidence was lies — even if you had ten witnesses.

Mick Liggins, National Left Wing Youth Movement Secretary, lifted in Leicester and charged with 'threatening behaviour', found himself on the day accused of throwing a bottle and a brick at police vans at a *non-existent* road junction. Both police witnesses who, the prosecutor claimed, were entirely independent of each other, picked the *same* fictitious spot.

When witnesses appeared

for Mick to testify to the real events and to correct police geography, the magistrates smiled — and found Mick guilty!

That is the practical experience of Tory 'justice' that the riot youth are not getting.

With the police already geared up for their next attack in the form of the conspiracy trials in Bradford, what is needed now is a massive defence campaign for all these youth.

*Drop the charges now!

*For a labour movement inquiry to establish the real guilty parties at Westminster and in the police.

PETER FLACK



'WHO killed Davy Moore?' shouted marchers in Liverpool on August 15. Police say that they have identified the driver of the police van that deliberately ran down and killed the disabled youth in Liverpool 8. But still there is only an internal police inquiry. And there is not even that for the case of Paul Conroy, whose back was broken when he was smashed against a wall by a police van speeding through Liverpool 8 'to disperse rioters'.

Britain is weak link of Irish solidarity

by John O'Mahony

'IT HAS become increasingly clear in recent weeks that the Provisional leadership would be prepared to accept almost any concessions to end the hunger strike', said Mary Holland, one of the best-informed reporters working from Ireland, in the New Statesman recently.

Michael O'Leary is leader of the Irish Labour Party and deputy prime minister of the southern Irish government. 'It is my personal opinion', he said in a radio interview a week ago, 'that the matter would have been settled if any other person was prime minister of Britain'. Even prime minister Fitzgerald, whose party was baptised in Republican

blood in the Irish civil war, has branded Thatcher as 'intransigent'.

Nine Republican prisoners of war have now died on hunger strike during the last fourteen weeks.

Yet according to reliable reports a deal acceptable to the H-Block prisoners was worked out early in July. It fell through because clinching it would have involved government representatives discussing it directly with the prisoners!

Like a World War 1 general Mrs Thatcher is prepared to dig in and let the bodies pile up around her. She must calculate that Britain can gain by letting waves of Republicans break themselves against the rock of Tory

intransigence, if they are seen to thereby gain nothing and the IRA can finally be forced to back down.

No greater miscalculation has been made since General Maxwell tried to tidy things up after the 1916 rising by shooting 15 prisoners of war. Mass Catholic support for the hunger-strikers is now enormously greater than regular support for the hunger-strikers' organisation. 12,000 people in Dublin tried to march on the British Embassy on July 16th.

Thursday's by-election for the Fermanagh/South Tyrone seat won by Bobby Sands in April may see the defeat of the Republican candidate, Sands' election agent Owen Carron (the law has been changed to exclude prisoner candidates), because both the Republican Clubs and Alliance Party candidates may take enough Catholic votes to tip the fine balance and let in the Unionist candidate Maginnis, a former UDR man.

Yet so strong is the mass

Catholic swing to the hunger-strikers that the main Catholic constitutional party, the SDLP, would have split down the middle had its executive gone ahead and stood a candidate against Carron.

Throughout much of the world there is very widespread support for the hunger strikers, and the British government is seen as bloody and bloody-minded for its attitude. Significant here is the decision last week by a New York city court not to extradite a former IRA man on the ground that he was 'political'. (Britain is appealing).

Meanwhile Princess Anne and her husband Phillips have cancelled a private visit to the USA rather than brave the demonstrations they would face.

Britain is the weak link: the deaths have had less impact in Britain than in almost any country in the world.

The first death, Sands', had the impact of a cliff crashing into a calm sea

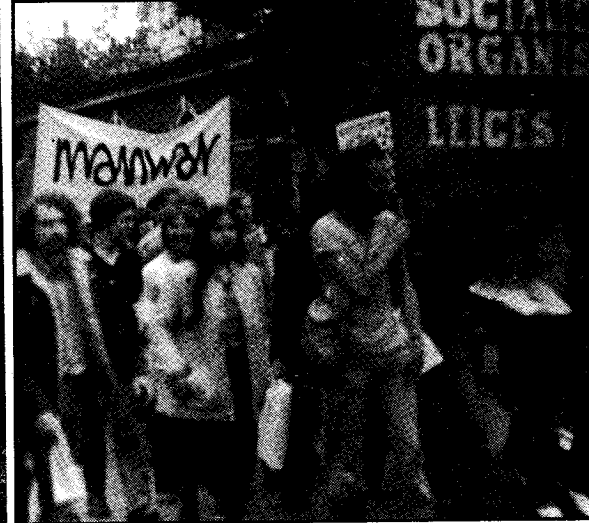
— and only partly because he was an MP. But the bipartisan line on Ireland held: Labour still backs the guarantee by Britain to sustain the Orange veto on any moves towards the only solution — a federal united Ireland.

The bloody Thatcher government is called a 'peace-keeper' by the official labour movement.

Meanwhile we have got used to the 'olling of the death knell. Four months ago who would have believed that it could have reached nine?

It can reach many more, unless the labour movement in Britain intervenes.

The British labour movement has the power to stop the carnage in the prison camps. Labour Parties and trade union branches, YSs and Trades Councils, should pass resolutions and send telegrams to Michael Foot and the NEC of the Labour Party, demanding that they support the campaign to gain the five demands of the hunger strikers for changed prison conditions.



OXFORD OUT!

THE POLICE took a hammering for a change in Liverpool last weekend [15th], as 3,500 people, black and white youth, trade unionists and Labour Party members, marched through the streets demanding the removal of Kenneth Oxford as chief constable.

Hundreds of youth marched down the main shopping streets, driving the police to one side, and shouting 'who killed Davy Moore?', 'Kill, kill, the old Bill', and 'Oxford out'.

There were a few scuffles as police received a dose of the same sort of attention as they have been handing out in Liverpool 8.

At the rally at Pier Head, there were speeches from the Liverpool 8 Defence Committee describing the 'positive policing' methods that killed Davy Moore. The Moss Side Defence Committee told how the

three coaches which had set off from the Moss Side were stopped on the motorway by police, but the speaker continued, 'If they think they can stop unity between the people of Moss Side and Liverpool by stopping a few coaches, then they're very, very wrong'.

Anwar Ditta spoke, and so did a representative from the Brixton Defence Committee and Tommy Banks from the Action Committee for Jimmy Kelly, who was killed by Liverpool police last year.

After the rally, 100 youth laid siege to Waverley police station, and police had to barricade themselves in until reinforcements arrived.

The message in Liverpool was loud and clear: 'Oxford out', along with his racist, anti working class, police force.

JO THWAITES

Socialist Organiser Alliance

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Thomas McElwee (left) is dead. Micky Devine, Matt Devlin (right), and others will die if British Labour does not act.