

**Join the
Labour
Party**

Write to 150
Walworth Rd.
London SE17.

Socialist Organiser

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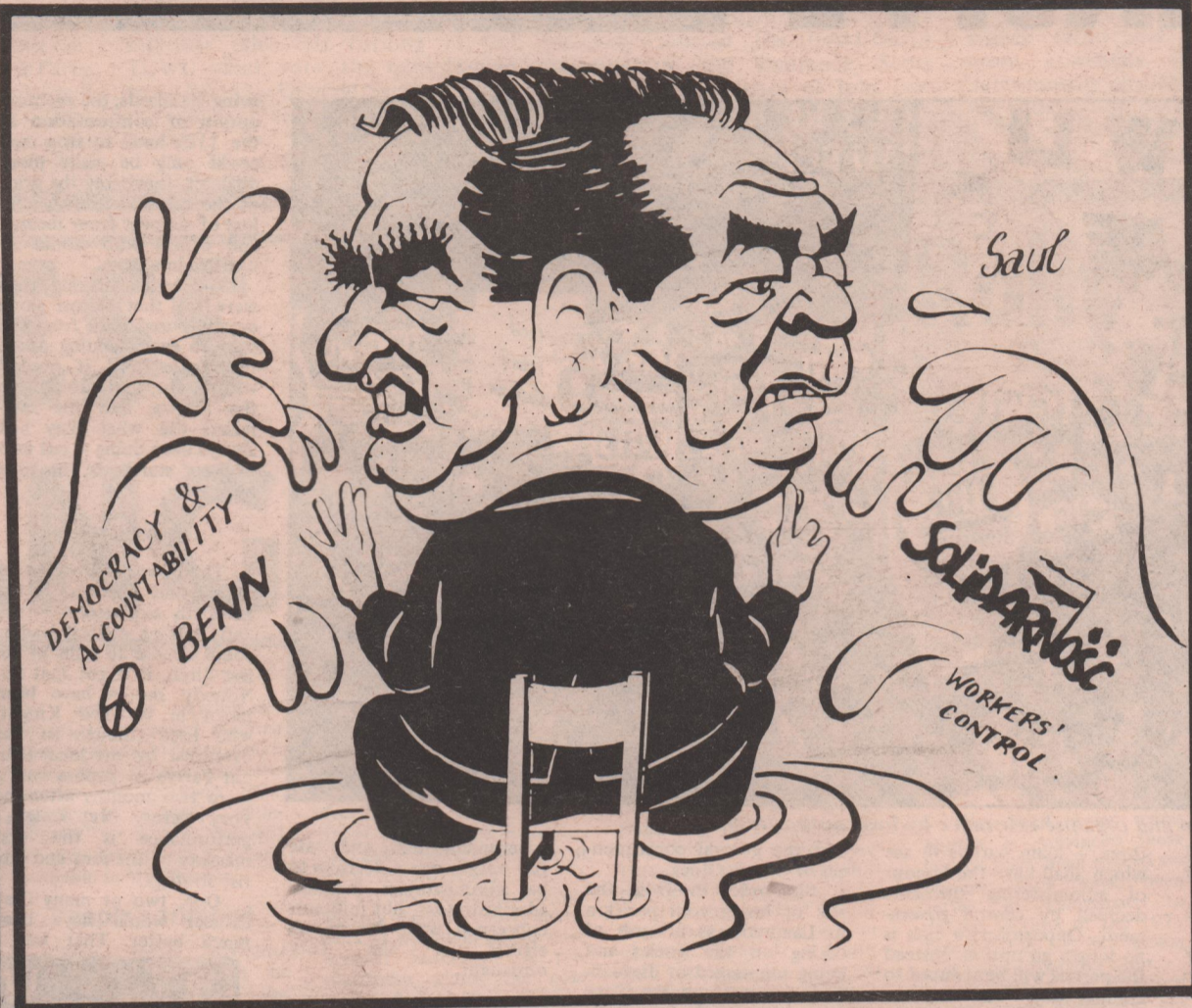
STOP BRITISH TERROR IN IRELAND!

Polish call to East

THE new Polish workers' movement, Solidarnosc, has cocked a snook at the Soviet bureaucracy and their heavy-handed military black-mail — and urged workers throughout Eastern Europe to follow their example and form independent unions. The Kremlin has in turn accused Solidarnosc of attempting to take power in Poland.

REPORT — page 5

HANDS OFF POLAND



WHILE the main focus of attention in British media coverage of Ireland is still the hunger strikes and the alleged weakening of morale of the H-Block campaign, the daily brutality of the British army and RUC has continued unabated.

Over 7,000 rounds of plastic bullets have been fired at Catholic workers and youth since the second hunger strike began.

On 15 August a youth from the Ormeau Road area in Belfast was set on when he refused to leave his local fish and chip shop when ordered to do so by the police.

He was beaten up and taken by the RUC to a nearby Loyalist area where the RUC handed him over to a group of Loyalists.

After they had beaten him up he was again taken and dropped in another Loyalist area, four miles from his home. He managed to find his way to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he received treatment for a fractured nose, broken teeth and multiple bruising.

On 27 August a 19 year old youth from the Beechmount area was beaten up by the Royal Marines and again dropped in a Loyalist area.

Such actions by the RUC and the British Army are daily occurrences in the six counties.

At the same time the indiscriminate shooting of children with plastic bullets continues. There have been 10 murders with plastic bullets and dozens of people seriously injured, the majority of them children.

Two recent victims include 12 year old Paul Carr, shot in the face as he rode his bicycle in the Beechmount area of Belfast. He has just come out of intensive care.

And a 15 year old girl was shot in the neck on 24 August as she stood outside her house. She too remains in hospital.

Meanwhile in Britain the struggle for labour movement solidarity remains an uphill task, hindered by the Labour and trade union bureaucracy.

The TUC voted down a proposal from the NUJ to campaign for the repeal of the so-called "Prevention of Terrorism" Act, and members of the Smash the PTA Campaign came in for a rowdy reception from Congress delegates when their march arrived outside the hall.

Despite the problems the fight must be pressed home both in the unions and the Labour Party.

*Victory to the hunger strikers! Political status now!
*Troops out now!

Smash 'H' Block!

TIME TO ORGANISE THE LEFT!

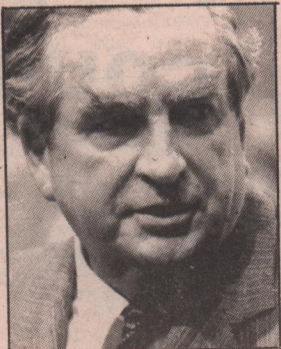
An Open Letter to Tony Benn

Dear Tony Benn,
After their 'coup' at the TUC, the right wing have now prepared a hit list of leftists to remove from the Labour Party National Executive Committee.

The Left needs to organise. We need to fight back. We need to make re-selection work. We need to build a mass Labour Party.

You have said more than once, and rightly, that the labour movement is now in effect 'refounding the Labour Representation Committee' — the seed out of which the Labour Party grew. The mass labour movement is trying to renew itself and rethinking its social and political philosophy.

The decisions of the Labour Party for democratisation — for submitting Labour's parliamentarians to regular re-selection, and for giving the labour movement outside Parliament the major voice in choosing the prime minister when Labour has a parliamentary majority — and the large number of people who have joined the



Benn's challenge to Healey has boosted the Left



urgency of organising the working class, young as well as old, for a coherent and organised fightback against the Tories.

We urgently need a mass Labour Party. But who is going to build it? Only the Left can build it. Only the Left can generate the energy and enthusiasm and the conviction that the Labour Party must become a fighting, democratic force for socialism.

Only the Left can draw millions of workers into the Party, into the struggle to transform the Party, and into the discussion to hammer out policies for the socialist reconstruction of British society.

Only the Left can break with the past intolerance, organised, entrenched, and bureaucratically policed intolerance of the Labour Right and sections of the Left, and allows full freedom for organised tendencies in discussion as the preparation for unity in action, then it can create a countrywide network of mass forums for

thrashing out policies which are also centres of organisation and support for strikers, youth, women, ethnic minorities, tenants, etc.

focused on the concerns and struggles outside Parliament, such a Party would nonetheless be a tremendous power in elections.

Division

This development could overcome the characteristic division of Britain's Left into sterile and impotent sects — usually outside the Labour Party — and a timid and permanently demoralised, time-serving, parliament-focused soft left.

It can be decisive in mobilising masses of workers.

Only the Left can create a mass Labour Party.

But the Left itself needs to be organised. To gain and keep the possibility of doing the great work of class organisation that cries out to be done, we need to organise to defeat and rout the Right.

We need to organise for Labour democracy in the trade unions, and for trade union democracy as well.

So far the Left's organisation is rudimentary and inadequate. The Labour Coordinating Committee exists. Less structured Lefts exist all over the country. Supporters of Socialist Organiser organise to do the work spelled out above; we will continue to do that, and we call on socialists to join us in doing it.

But no structured Left with a powerful national profile and high visibility exists. We need it.

You, comrade Benn, can play a decisive role in calling it into existence.

You have more authority with those who will organise a mass Labour Left — and a mass Labour Party — than anyone else. Your decision to fight for the deputy leadership has been a tremendous blow in stopping the soft Left joining with the Right to burk the movement for democratisation and self-renewal in the labour move-

ment.

All sorts of people who have only a hazy idea about your politics, or who disagree with them, consider themselves 'Bennites'. We, supporters of Socialist Organiser — and we do not want to play down our serious political differences with you — consider ourselves in the latter category.

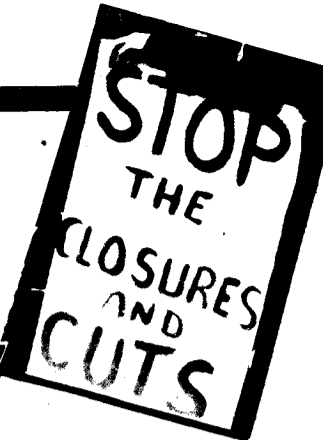
Responsibility

The tremendous responsibility your standing in the movement puts on you is matched only by the possibilities you now have to help the labour movement forward another step on the road to organisational and political renewal.

We urge you to make arrangements to call a national conference which will set up a broad and democratic national left wing movement in the Labour Party and the trade unions.

John O'Mahony
Socialist Organiser Editorial Board.

MAKE LABOUR COUNCILS FORTRESSES AGAINST TORY OFFENSIVE



OVER recent years, rate rises have been a major dividing issue on the Labour left, and especially between Socialist Organiser and London Labour Briefing. In the aftermath of Lothian's collapse and the GLC's big supplementary rate demand, JOHN O'MAHONY reassesses the debate. This article is also due to appear in London Labour Briefing.

"SOONER or later we have to recognise that we are losing the arguments in favour of maintaining services at the cost of high rents and rates (emphasis added).

"We are losing because Labour voters simply cannot afford to pay any more. In council homes the length of Britain, Labour councils are being blamed for the high rates and rents which are the direct result of Tory policies.

"If the slide is to be halted, Labour must take a stand..."

"Not only is Labour losing the battle over cuts, it is also getting most of the blame for the consequences. Sooner or later there is going to have to be a confrontation..."

CHRIS MULLIN, Tribune, August 28.

HUNTERS whose 'strategy' is to grab the large wild beast firmly by the tail and, without making the kill, to settle down to preparing the meal, are not quite as in touch with reality as they need to be.

If the animal has sharp teeth and claws, the hunter is quite likely to become a meal himself.

It was such a strategy that led the local government Left to try to respond to the cuts drive of the most indiscriminately vicious government we have had in Britain for 40 years by trying to just quietly get on with administering local government.

This was a major experience of the Left in the last two years. And it was the major dividing point between London Labour Briefing and Socialist Organiser.

The lessons are vital for the struggle yet to come. We offer an account as a contribution to preparing for the next round.

Clash

The central truth is that we did not — as some comrades thought we did — have local government 'power'. In a clash with central government over fundamentals there is no such thing.

Local government is at every point, legally and financially (and, in a crunch, by way of the military/police power of the central state) subordinate to central government. There is not — nor, unless the central state has disintegrated, can there be — such a thing as a 'People's Republic of Lambeth' (or Lothian).

After Thatcher won the 1979 election, we were peacefully able to do in local government only what a Tory government bent on savage cuts would allow us to do.

There were only two choices.

Either to comply with the government, thereby turning Labour-controlled councils into mere agencies for carrying out government-decreed cuts and passing them on to workers and small shopkeepers; or to confront the government.

Labour-controlled councils had the choice of being centres of sabotage, guerilla warfare and resistance to the government, or being groups of quistings terrorised by



Councillors should step in and organise resistance by local authority unions

Tory threats, agents working for the Tories against their own people.

That is still the choice now.

Nowhere does Tony Benn's proposal (in arguments for Democracy) for non-collaboration and 'disengagement' by the labour movement from the institutions of Thatcherism have more direct and immediate relevance than for local government, which has been assigned to the role of the blade of the Tories' axe.

The fatal illusion to avoid at all costs is the belief that Labour local government can continue to go its own sweet way, more or less humanely administering local affairs and ignoring the central government. The beast is alive and has teeth and claws which it is certain to use!

Rent and rate rises were at best a species of evasive action — a manoeuvre which had to be carried out on terrain which remained under the guns of the government and ultimately under its firm control. Confrontation, a challenge to the overall central government control by action aimed to rouse a national struggle, was ruled out by the local government Left.

Siphon

Labour local councils found themselves on a slippery slope. The Tories could, and did simply siphon off more than was raised by rate rises by cutting the flow of central government support. Having — to take the case of Lambeth — raised rates to avoid confrontation and thereby cut seriously into the living standards of workers in the area — the leaders of the council found that the Tories' big stick was still there. Capitulation followed.

In Tribune of August 28 Chris Mullin summed up the present situation of Labour councils:

"The 1982 election will simply be a competition between two — and possibly

three — main parties to see which shall have the honour of administering the cuts decreed by central government. Opposition to cuts is no longer an option. Instead the parties will be reduced to arguing that 'our cuts are more humane than theirs'."

Responsibility

But that has, essentially, been the choice for over two years. 18 months ago, in an open letter to Ted Knight, Socialist Organiser said:

"The central question now is to break the labour movement from class collaboration; to break it from the reformist commitment to bargaining within the capitalist system on a basis of taking responsibility for the system and being confined to options within it.

"But you see your role in Lambeth as only that of a humane administrator. That Lambeth Council has avoided any serious cuts is something to be proud of. But how has it been achieved? By backdoor cuts in living standards.

"... A socialist militant, as distinct from a professional councillor, is concerned with the social overview

and the general consequences of what he does...

"In order to avoid the risk of losing your position in Lambeth (as a result of taking on the Tories and being surcharged or disqualified you pass on the Tory cuts, translated into cuts in income by rent and rate rises. You refuse to stand and fight the Tories now, and cling to the power to decide from which area of working class income the siphoning-off should take place."

It is not mainly a matter of recriminations. It is a matter of learning the lesson that we are faced with either destroying the Tory government or living under its anti-working class measures — and, in local government, with either using it as a base for operations against them, or being forced to be their instruments.

Illusion

It is a matter of learning that for serious socialists the 'option' — i.e. illusion — of 'assuming local power' was no alternative to the only realistic option, of being revolutionary militants.

For in essence the local

government rent and rate rise option was a decision to be administrators, humane administrators, not militants concerned with the overall effects of the Tory onslaught.

Chunks

The delusion that we already had little chunks of 'power' locally and could exercise it, was misleading.

For even if an armed labour movement held real power in London, as the workers in Paris did for two months in 1871, it would have been necessary — if we were not to repeat the mistake made, according to Karl Marx's analysis, by the Paris workers in 1871 — to go on the offensive against the government of the rest of the country. And Labour councils do not hold state power, even locally.

The rent and rate rise strategy meant turning the left local councils into schools of class collaboration. There was not one of the arguments in support of the rent and rate rise policy that could not be applied to explain and justify 'the need' to cut. Even a cutting Labour council is still preserving some jobs and services, and wouldn't Tory commissioners be even worse....

And every one of the arguments about local government being 'realistic' and 'responsible' faced with the national Thatcher government could be applied and extended to a British Labour government facing the IMF. Indeed, they were so applied by the leaders of the last Labour government, and the same arguments may well serve a Labour government again.

Now we have cuts in Lambeth and Lothian. Both the councillors and the labour movement were softened up for these cuts by all that went before, especially the pseudo-left rationalisations. The local labour movement could only be turned away from the Labour council by rent and rate rises which cut

living standards; the eventual option of confrontation at the 11th hour to stop cuts could only be made more difficult. Inevitably the price of the rate-rise strategy was loss of support from tenants and others who would be decisive in a fight.

The rent and rate rises were for that reason alone counterposed right from the start to ever standing up to the Tories. All it needed was for the Tories to tighten the screws, and the rate-raisers did what they had always been doing — cut into workers' standards, this time by 'cuts'.

Measures

There was no reason to expect that — to stick to the Lambeth experience — the 'left' talking council leaders could choose to fight in the last ditch, if it got that far. Nobody should have been taken in by Ted Knight, who tried (though he was overruled by the local Labour Party) to impose cuts a mere two months after the Tory victory. Yet Knight's performance is the best measure of the rent and rate rise strategy.

One, two or many Clay Crosses would have been much better. That was a

'defeat' that shook not the labour movement but the Heath government, and helped force the repeal of the 'Fair Rents' Act.

Now we have a worse starting point than two years ago, because the experience of Lambeth and Lothian must depress the movement to some extent. Yet the fight goes on.

Chris Mullin in Tribune suggests the following lines of policy:

* Cast-iron Shadow Cabinet guarantees that surcharged councillors will be indemnified by an incoming Labour government.

* Labour Local Government Committees must coordinate a mass refusal by Labour councils to either increase rates and rents unreasonably or slash services.

* If the Tories send in the commissioners, councillors could occupy Town Halls and organise resistance by staff.

We urge London Labour Briefing to unite with Socialist Organiser and others to fight for it. Even now Labour-controlled town halls can be forts for the resistance to demolition squad Toryism, not seats of its (reluctant) local agents.



Manchester purge of councillors

AT A marathon 3½ hour meeting on Sunday 6th, the Manchester City Labour Party finished drawing up the panel from which candidates for the council elections in 1982 will be chosen.

In doing so it removed 24 of the right wing councillors who have been deliberately flouting city Labour Party policy for the last two years in their haste to carry out Tory cuts.

Most were rejected because they refuse to give any commitment to implement the election policy of the city Labour Party.

The right wing produced two arguments as to why they should not be excluded. They said councillors with long service should have an automatic right to go on the panel: but, looking at most of Manchester's inner-city areas, you could be forgiven for thinking that a troop of

baboons might have done a better job if they had been in charge for that length of time.

Labour Group secretary Bill Egerton also said: "Vote against these councillors. You'll split the party". What he meant was: he and others will split the party.

Some of the councillors are likely to be restored to the panel on appeal to the NEC. And whether the wingers get back on or not they will still continue to public attacks on Party policy and their attempts to undermine the Left.

The answer of the City Party must be to set policies that say the working class will refuse to pay the Tory attacks, and mount a mass campaign of confrontation with the Tory government that is bound to follow.

PETE KEENE'S



Ted Knight

**Socialist
Organiser
EDITORIAL**

1 million down . . . more to go?

TUC unions have lost over one million members in the last two years as a result of cuts, closures and redundancies. But the only jobs the TUC leaders seem concerned with defending are their own gerrymandered seats on the General Council.

Nothing could more underline the mind-boggling irrelevance of this year's debates in Blackpool to workers on the shop floor, the dole queues, and estates, than the cynical wrangling over the General Council's size and structure.

Right-wingers, led by Roy Grantham of APEX, drew up their 'hit list' of left-wingers and Communist Party members on the General Council whom they wanted removed. They also campaigned for automatic seats to all unions with over 100,000

members, and a reduction for some larger unions.

Some left-wingers nailed their colours to the mast of the existing system whereby each General Council member is notionally elected by the votes of Congress as a whole - in reality through a system of backdoor deals and alliances between General Secretaries.

The claims of either side to be 'democratic' are patent nonsense: both 'left' and right wings of the bureaucracy were seeking to use their relative strengths to further their interests (the left turning to the TGWU block vote, the right hoping to utilise the General Secretaryships of some of the newer white-collar unions).

But where does all this argy-bargy

leave the working class? During the last year all of Grantham's 'hit list' of eleven supposed 'militants' have been on the General Council, together with other supposedly left wing leaders.

What lead have these people given to the working class?

True, the right wing have set the pace in outright treachery and open acceptance of Tory policies. But they have in no way been challenged from the left.

Scargill and Gill have loudly denounced unemployment: yet each has passively assisted the Boyd/Duffy betrayal of the Laurence Scott occupation in defence of jobs (see page 14).

Ray Buckton of ASLEF worked hand in glove with Sidney Weighell

to knife the rail unions' struggle against productivity strings and job losses.

The others on Grantham's list have simply sat back in company with the right wing and allowed the employers and the Tory government to butcher jobs and services.

Len Murray even has the gall to claim that the smaller TUC is 'leaner but stronger', since the percentage of employed workers in trade unions has increased to 55%!

Workers are certainly leaner: they are certainly angrier. TUC leaders are visibly fatter and seemingly even more criminally complacent and determinedly inactive, the more dire the situation becomes.

For all the hogwash spoken at this year's TUC, there can be no answer

to the loss of membership through unemployment without the stubborn defence of all existing jobs.

Workers at Lee Jeans, Laurence Scott, Plansees and St Mary's hospital have shown themselves willing and able to embark on such action.

But nothing could be further from the thoughts of the TUC bureaucracy: 'left' and right alike, their efforts have been directed towards avoiding and preventing such action on the part of the rank and file they supposedly represent.

That is why this year's Congress - more than almost any time since 1926 - underlines the necessity for workers to construct a new, revolutionary leadership in the labour movement.

PRESS GANG



JAMES Anderton, the charismatic head of Manchester police, is being gagged.

He is not allowed to deliver his message. His views are kept from the public. His penetrating thoughts about the future of law enforcement remain a locked away secret.

Who knows what pearls of wisdom vital to the future of a peaceful, equitable and happy society would fall from his lips - if they had not been sealed shut?

And who has done this dastardly act? The Marxists on Manchester police committee, that's who.

If it were not for the brave, small circulation underground papers passed from hand to hand and the clandestine TV stations of the BBC and ITV, nobody would have the least idea what was going on.

By deferring Anderton's report to a special meeting this week (a brilliant touch that) they denied him the chance of reaching 'the public of Greater Manchester' - a fact revealed by the Times which is not available in Manchester.

People's tribunal

What these anarchist terrorists wanted was to force Anderton into the dock of a people's tribunal to answer questions from any 'Tom, Dick or Harry' who were 'not infrequently even hostile, impertinent and rude.'

This inquiry concealed its true nature by managing to get 99.9% of the youth in Manchester to boycott it.

Only the Express revealed that Anderton could face the sack if a Left Labour Government were returned.

Back street

This is all the more likely because, even as Anderton is gagged the Labour Left is praised, paraded and adulated in the pages of the popular press.

The disgraceful way in which the London New Standard has become the official fan club magazine of Ken Livingstone is too well known to need illustration.

But what about Tony Benn and the Daily Mail?

Only front page lead articles in the Telegraph, the Times, the Daily Express and a variety of other backstreet publications have managed to produce veiled versions of what Anderton believed.

'In the past I have always been a powerful advocate of police accountability to local government and that is providing the practice is not abused.'

That is just one of the gems the public has not been allowed to hear. It was tucked away on the front page of the Daily Express in an interview marked 'Exclusive'. (What a tragedy that such perceptive warnings should be confined exclusively to just one of these duplicated 'samizdats').

'I would go a lot further now and suggest that the time might come when some kind of totally independent police board should be established within the community - outside the strict realms of local political affairs'.

Who else could have thought of it? Independent. Just like the press. Why not a police board made up of these independent newspaper owners themselves?

It can never happen while these Manchester Trotskyites on the police committee manage to stifle all thought.



Anderton

What money passes hands to ensure such favourable coverages? Instead of highlighting Anderton's plight the Mail gave yet another free puff to Benn, with a front page headed in letters six miles high, 'We owe it all to the Russians'.

To any unbiased observer Benn's speech to Party members in Bridgend might have seemed humdrum. A few platitudes about the cold war and a passing reference to the 25 million Soviet

citizens who died in the war against Hitler.

Only the most devoted friend could conjure from this a front page lead designed to boost Benn's popularity by trading on the traditional friendship between Daily Mail readers and the Soviet system.

It is this kind of favouritism that Anderton is complaining about. It is doubtful his message will get through. The censorship is too powerful for that.



SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHES

POWERFUL stuff, sea air. One whiff of it turns 7-stone weaklings into striding giants.

You are sceptical? Look at the miraculous change it's wrought in Alan Fisher. Barely do his feet touch down on Blackpool's golden sands than he's issuing stirring pronouncements about public sector workers rising up and teaching the Tory bullies a lesson.

He's proposing a campaign of united industrial action by miners, steel, gas, water and power workers, the railways, the civil servants and health service. Such a powerful public sector alliance is clearly what is needed to bring the Tories to their knees. Right on, Alan.

But can this be the same man who exactly a week ago led a TUC delegation to Lothian council which is in a spot of bother with those same bullies who need to be taught a lesson?

Did Mighty Mouse Fisher suggest an all-out strike by

Lothian's public sector workers against the Tories' demands for £30 million cuts?

Did he propose extending the action nationally? Drawing on the strength of the powerful industrial unions? Did he . . . ?

Not exactly. What he did, in fact, say was that Lothian should push ahead with the full £30 million cuts and not stop short at £24 million.

And his intervention was crucial in swaying the seven Labour councillors who had held a no cuts position to vote with the rest of the Labour Group in imposing cuts.

Some lesson

That's really some lesson to teach the Tory bully boys!

Nothing else changed in the week leading up to the stirring speech. It must be the sea air, QED. Perhaps we should demand Congress House is moved to Blackpool permanently!



Mighty Mouse Fisher

SOCIOLOGY has been described as the painful elaboration of the obvious. And a piece of research on women factory workers just reported in the Department of Employment's 'Employment Gazette' seems to fall into just that category.

Surprise

The researchers from the University of Lancaster interviewed 143 women doing repetitive production line work in three food factories in the North of England. Surprise, surprise, they come up with the fact that these women reported symptoms of stress such as headaches, stomach upsets, weariness and depression.

Women with children, especially, were tired, emotionally drained and anxious about their children's welfare during the day. For many the day started at 5 or 6 am. And lots of the women were reportedly near breaking point.

Equality myth

READERS whose memories go back that far will remember International Women's Year, when we had all sorts of well-heeled ladies asking us to celebrate the great strides forward towards equality made this century.

We've got the vote, more and more women are working and everything is getting equaler and equaler in the most equal of all possible worlds.

We may have laughed hollowly, as our jobs started disappearing and wage differentials between men and women crept back down to what they were before 'Equal Pay'. Now it seems even that trend towards equality, which is now being reversed, was a myth in the first place.

Same

Dr Catherin Hakin, principal research officer in the economic and social division of the Department of Employment told the British Association for the Advancement of Science that new ways of analysing data show that the proportion of women working in 1971 was the same as in 1861!

All that's happened is that women were driven out of the labour force at the beginning of the century and have only just got back to their previous position (and are now being driven back again). Nor has there been any great advance in women's position at work.

No change

Over the last 70 years there's been little or no change in job segregation except that overall the work has been towards women being concentrated in the lowest grades of manual and white collar work.

If that's not bad enough we're getting more and more women in the lowest grades of manual work as many as 20% in the Inner City.

Good

Or will it just be used as a further argument to justify women being thrown out of the jobs they do have 'for the good of their health'?

Rally called to back Bradford 12

ANOTHER mass rally in support of the 'Bradford 12' has been called for Friday 11 September at 7.30 pm - at the Arcadian Cinema, Bradford.

The 12 Asian youths were arrested in July and are awaiting trial on 'conspiracy' charges about making petrol bombs. Only one has been granted bail.

Picked on

The local Asian community is convinced these youths have been picked on because they have been active in campaigns to defend victims of the 1971 Immigration Act like Anwar Ditta and Jaswinder Kaur.

Meanwhile, the Bradford Asian Youth Movement has

established another Defence Committee for Mumtaz Kiani - who faces deportation, despite being given 'indefinite leave to remain in the UK' in 1977, on the grounds that her husband has been deported.

Deportation

Mumtaz's two children, Attia and Nadia, aged 18 months and two years, also face deportation, although they were born in Britain. And Mumtaz's only surviving close relative is her brother - with whom she lives in Bradford.

The Defence Committee asks supporters to:

1. Write a letter of protest to Mumtaz's MP, Edward Lyons, at the House

of Commons, London SW1. The Home Office Reference is K.265598 and is to be quoted on all correspondence.

2. Write a letter of protest to Timothy Raison, the Minister, at Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1.
3. Get your organisation, union etc to affiliate.
4. Organise a public meeting in your area.
5. Send a donation.
6. Let the Defence Committee know what you have done.

Contact Mumtaz Kiani Defence Committee, c/o 4th Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate, Bradford 1.

World news

ONE YEAR OF BRUTAL DICTATORSHIP IN TURKEY



By JACK JOHNSON

THIS week is the first anniversary of the military coup in Turkey. It has been a year of repression, torture, imprisonment, death and starvation for the working masses and their organisations in Turkey.

120,000 are political prisoners; more than 400 have been killed by the state forces; 16 prisoners have died under torture; ten people (eight of them revolutionaries) have been hanged; all trade union and democratic rights have been taken away; DISK, (the revolutionary trade union confederation) is closed down with 52 of its leaders on trial, facing possible death sentences.

Closed down

All labour movement organisations are closed down with their leaders put on organisational trials. 1768 death sentences are being demanded by the military prosecutors, in addition to the numbers of trade union leaders already shot dead by state forces (the latest being Kenan Budak, leader of the Leather Workers Union (DISK)). Some union leaders are still under systematic torture.

This is a brief summary of the facts of repression in Turkey. But these facts are ignored or consciously covered-up by the media.

The military dictators in Turkey get favourable coverage from the press, and support from European governments.

SO readers who watched the BBC documentary film on Turkey several weeks ago would have noticed that the BBC prefers to spend its time on navigational problems in the Bosphorus rather than on the repression of the working class movement in Turkey.

The Thatcher government is currently planning £15 million in military aid to the generals.

Stabilisation

Moves in Turkey towards the establishment of a "constituent assembly" in reality seek only internal and external stabilisation of the regime.

This assembly will consist of 160 people. Of these 160, 40 will be simply appointed by the five-man National Security Council. But there will be some "elections": "Nominations will come in through local mayors and from among them the 5-man Junta will "elect" the other 120. Whichever way you look at it, this is "democratic" rule by 5 men over a 45-million strong nation.

Turkey is a backward capitalist country. It is a country where, historically, capitalism was developed from outside by the intervention of imperialist capital.

Therefore Turkey has historically been dependent on imperialism, and major political and economic decisions in Turkey have always been



Evren

subordinated to imperialism and its crises.

In the 1970s the development of the world capitalist crisis had three or four times more impact in Turkey and similar countries (Latin America, Pakistan, etc) than in the advanced nations.

Massive defeat

Because of its economic dependence on imperialism, (importing such basics as industrial goods, machinery and oil with very little to export) Turkey has always faced a massive deficit in the balance of trade.

In the late 1970s Turkey's deficit rose annually to 3-4 billion dollars and Turkish capitalism was faced with bankruptcy.

The Turkish bourgeoisie had no other options but to go to the IMF and other imperialist institutions for credits.

In return, successive Turkish governments tried to introduce IMF conditions which went to subordinate the Turkish toiling masses to further capitalist and imperialist exploitation.

Throughout the 1970s Turkey witnessed bitter class struggles, together with national resistance in Kurdistan, since the working class and the oppressed masses were by no means prepared willingly to accept massive attacks on their living standards and rights.

Fascist party

More and more the possibility of introducing these attacks by parliamentary means was eliminated, and the bourgeoisie in Turkey and imperialism turned more and more towards solutions outside parliament - developing and

financing a fascist party and a mass fascist movement.

The masses, they decided, must be terrorised and forced to submit to the demands of capitalism and imperialism.

The fascist movement of NAP has been used to intimidate the masses and systematic violence and terror has developed in every section of society. Every street, village, factory and school, even entire cities have been divided into warring camps of revolution and counter-revolution.

In this period there were 20-25 political killings a day and the fascist movement reached over 1 million followers (in the NAP trials figures officially claim 700,000 members and over one million supporters).

Crisis

The fascists were mainly from the petty bourgeoisie and lumpen proletariat suffering under the savage economic policies, and looking for a bold and decisive alternative.

Offered no such alternative by the workers' movement they turned in desperation to the fascists.

In this sense the development of fascism and repression in Turkey also signifies the crisis of revolutionary leadership of the working class in Turkey.

Through the late 1970s, the Stalinists of the Turkish Communist Party (TKP) together with reformists and the "democratic left" advocated a strategy of a "popular front" with the "democratic" sections of capitalists as their answer to fascism.

That in practice meant an alliance with Bulent Ecevit's bourgeois radical Republican People's Party - leading to

DESPITE the obvious danger of victimisation of Turkish citizens being involved in anti-junta activities, a solidarity movement is being built up in several West European countries.

At an international Turkey solidarity conference held at the end of August in Hamburg, representatives attended from Denmark, Britain, Belgium and Austria.

It was convened by the West German group Alternative Türkei with a perspective of drawing together all those who are actively involved in the struggle for democratic rights in Turkey.

Detailed reports were received about organisation for the September 12 anniversary, where various forms of protest are planned, throughout Europe.

The biggest will be in Duisburg, West Germany,

where 15,000 are expected to demonstrate in response to a joint appeal from nearly all the Turkish democratic and socialist formations, this unity itself being something not possible in the past.

On September 5 a hunger strike is due to begin in Vienna and in Britain there is the Week of Action and September 12 rally.

It is hoped a representative of the German campaign will be able to participate in the London meeting.

An important step towards strengthening the links between national campaigns was the decision to begin publication of a bi-lingual Newsletter which can carry material of each group's activities. The first issue will be published towards the end of September.

support for the RPP both in elections and in government.

In return, the RPP when it formed a government, introduced the IMF's anti-working class measures and waged massive attacks on the working masses.

The slogan of the late 1970s, "our only hope is Ecevit" has led millions of Turkish workers to political confusion and disorientation.

The Stalinist TKP did not change its course of supporting the bourgeois RPP even after the RPP-led unions took control within DISK and suspended the TKP-controlled unions for a year.

These organisations constantly run away from physical combat against the

fascists. Instead they demanded government action to ban the NAP and its youth organisations.

The alternative offered by pro-Albanian Stalinists was to adopt sectarian policies reminiscent of the 1929-34 "Third Period" of Stalinism, stridently denouncing Ecevit's RPP as "social fascist".

Those organisations which originated from the DEV-GENC movement of the 1960s, continued with its traditions, and genuinely fought against fascists. But their programmatic and political weakness meant in practice, that these actions were carried on in isolation from the working class.

However, despite the massive confusion and crisis of revolutionary leadership, within the labour movement the Turkish working class and oppressed masses have resisted the attacks of the fascists and state forces.

The resistance of workers at the Taris plant in Ismir and armed resistance of the toiling masses who for several weeks combatted the fascists in Corum, have been the highest points of these struggles against fascism.

The working class and oppressed masses in Turkey demonstrated time and again that they would not surrender until the last person fell in struggle against fascism.

Civil war

By 12 September 1980, the imperialists and the bourgeoisie in Turkey were forced to decide how to resolve the political crisis.

They had to turn either to the fascist NAP or to the military. The first alternative would almost certainly have meant an open civil war, where the Kurdish masses (influenced deeply by the developments in Iran) would be pushed into open armed resistance.

A prolonged civil war in Turkey would not be favourable for imperialism in relation to the Middle East.

Instead millions of backward petty bourgeois layers, politically confused and frustrated by years of systematic terrors, created the conditions and consensus for a military coup.

From these conditions emerged the "anti-terrorist" "anti-anarchist" posture of the military dictatorship, which poses as "against both left and right".

It has gained a mass base of support and this support has enabled the military junta to carry out whole-

sale repression against the workers' movement.

This same mass consensus has been used by western governments and the USA to openly support the massive repression of the workers' movement in Turkey.

Credits

Since 12 September 1980 the military junta has introduced the IMF's economic programme.

Through the successful application of these policies, the Junta has managed to obtain credits and loans from western governments and the USA. The survival of their economic programme very much depends on these credits, and relations with Europe and the OECD.

Because of the delicate internal and international balance that the junta has to act on, concrete solidarity actions of the labour movement organisations in Europe and in Britain can have an immediate and direct effect on the regime and the type of repression against the labour movement in Turkey.

This is why it is the duty of the labour movement in Britain to be at the forefront of defending working class organisations in Turkey.

Save lives

Every protest and every resolution passed within the labour movement bodies in Britain and in Europe can help save lives of trade unionists, revolutionaries, and democrats in Turkey.

Furthermore, every single bullet, machine gun or piece of industrial equipment going to the military butchers of Turkey that is blacked by the labour movement bodies in Britain can help lay the basis for the overthrow of the military dictatorship in Turkey.



Turkish state forces

World news

Picket to defend arrested Chinese socialists

by Chan Ying

The Peking authorities have stonewalled all appeals internationally to release the arrested editors of China's unofficial magazines.

Since April, when most of the arrests took place, the regime has not brought any of the editors to trial publicly, and has refused to disclose any information about them.

Since the trial of Wei Jingsheng in October 1979, six months after his arrest, the regime has not staged a public trial of a dissident editor.

The 15 year sentence produced an international outcry which embarrassed the regime. And it failed to deter the democracy movement, which continued to flourish and gain influence among students and industrial workers in all of China's main cities.

The unofficial magazines' increasing circulation, the large votes in the local elections for dissidents standing on a political platform of radical anti-bureaucratic changes and workers' strikes demanding Polish-style trade union rights in 1980, have forced the regime to take tough action.

Conscience

Amnesty International has adopted 20 of the dissidents as prisoners of conscience, though probably more have been arrested.

What is striking about the arrested editors, is their youth (30s or late 20s), and their working class backgrounds (at least 12 of the 20 are factory workers).

They belong to China's post-49 Revolution generation who have been taught to believe that China is a "People's Republic" and that the Communist Party is leading the workers and peasants towards a communist society.

Through their political experiences of the past two decades (some were Red Guards or Communist Youth League members, some were jailed under the Gang of Four), they have developed profound criticism of all factions of the Communist Party and of Maoism.

They declare that China cannot be a socialist country while being ruled by a bureaucracy which denies the people basic democratic rights.

The best known dissident is Wang Xi-zhe, aged 33. He joined the Red Guards as a student in 1966, at the start of the Cultural Revolution, when Mao encouraged youth to attack officials in authority.

Control

In 1968, when Mao had won his faction fight within the Chinese Communist Party and regained control, the Red Guards were forcibly disbanded and many, including Wang, were arrested and sent down to work in the remote countryside for several years.

In November 1974, Wang and three others, Li Zheng-tian, Guo Hongzhi and Chen Yiyang, put up a long wall-poster in Guangzhou (Canton) entitled "Socialist Law and Democracy", signed by Li-Yi-zhe, a composite pseudonym from their names.

This 67-page document attacked the bureaucratic and violent repression in the ending of the Cultural Revolution, and demanded social-

ist democracy bound by a legal code.

The Li-Yi-zhe wallposter achieved international fame, but Wang and his two comrades were sent to labour reform camps for several years.

Wang was released in January 1979, after the authorities ruled that he and his comrades were victimised by the Gang of Four.

(It took two years after the fall of the Gang of Four for the authorities to reverse their verdict).

Key

Wang became a key activist in the new-born democracy movement. He has kept up a prolific correspondence with journals throughout China, and his essays have been published in English, in New Left Review and other magazines.

Xu Wenli, a 36 year old electrician in Beijing (Peking), was chief editor of the journal "April 5 Forum". The journal had a circulation of several thousand and at its peak before the regime first banned it in 1980.

Xu was a prominent petitioner for the release of Liu Qing, who was arrested for distributing the trial transcripts of Wei Jingsheng. Xu considered himself a Marxist and insisted that "democratic socialism" could not be "achieved by police action".

Xu however thought that the CCP would, under pressure, be reformable. When the journal "April 5th Forum" was relaunched, Xu's editorship passed to more radical elements led by Yang Qing, a steelworker in his early 30s. Yang has also

been arrested.

Chen Er-jin who is in his late 30s received no more than primary school education in the remote province of Yunan. Despite this, and with only limited editions of Marx and Lenin's writings as references, Chen produced a booklet in 1976 "on the Democratic Revolution of the Proletariat" which concluded that China was ruled by a privileged bureaucracy.

He was arrested, tortured and imprisoned in 1978 as a result of his booklet. Though not well known, and not yet translated into English, his booklet is politically even more incisive than the Li-Yi-zhe wallposter.

Fu Shenqi, from a Shanghai worker's family, worked in Shanghai City Motor factory for five years after leaving school. In 1977 he gained admission to Shanghai No. 4 college and returned to work in his factory a year later. Fu was a member of the Communist Youth League.

He became active in the democratic movement in Shanghai in 1978. In 1979 he helped found the journal "Voice of Democracy". When "Voice of Democracy" declared its support for the "strike activity of Polish workers fighting for democracy and against bureaucratic tyranny", the authorities declared the journal "anti-Party and anti-socialist".

Elections

In April 1980 Fu stood as a candidate in the local elections for a "people's representative". Despite being branded by the factory committee as a "dissident

... who has joined an "anti-party, anti-socialist organisation", he came top of the poll with 43% of the vote.

Rules

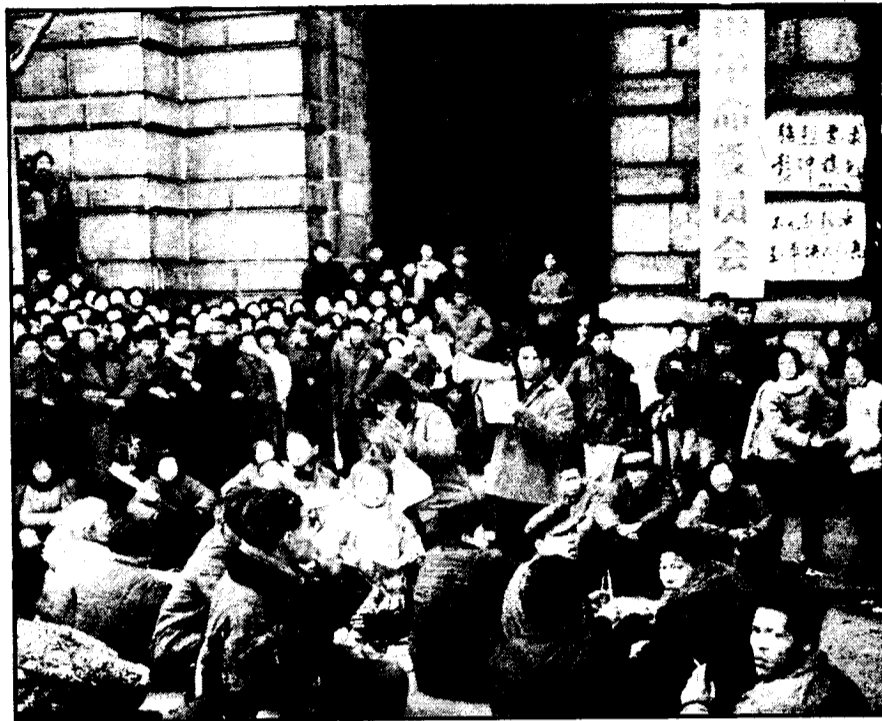
The election rules require a minimum of 50% of the vote for a successful election, so under normal circumstances a second ballot should have been held. The Party Committee promptly cancelled the second ballot to prevent Fu's election.

In October 1980, the National Association of Unofficial Magazines was founded to unify and coordinate the democratic movement throughout China. Fu assumed the position of the chief editor of the National Association's journal, "Responsibility", from the third issue onwards. Nine issues were produced before the wave of arrests in April.

Picket

In Britain, the Socialist Committee in Defence of the Democratic Movement in China has called for a picket of the Chinese Embassy on Thursday October 1, the day the 1949 Chinese Revolution is celebrated. They have also launched a petition campaign demanding the release of the dissidents and demanding the rights of free press, the right to strike and the right to organise parties and trade unions in China.

For details, copies of the petition, etc., please write to the SCDDMC, c/o S. Grover, 380 Edgware Road, London W2. Please send letters of protest to the Chinese Embassy, 31 Portland Place, London W1.



Demonstration in Shanghai, 1979, by opponents of the Stalinist bureaucracy

Indian workers speak on strike ban

Socialist Organiser has been talking to Indian labour movement activists about Gandhi's recent ban on strikes in India.

P.S. Khabra, Ealing Borough Councillor and President of IWA (Southall) told us:

You have to recognise the power of the Indian Congress Party. After inde-

pendence it was this party that was seen to institute all the democratic structures in India. Opposition to Congress was practically non-existent.

The prestige of Congress was so great it swept elections all over the country.

Of course there is opposition now - the Janata

party - but that is equally as corrupt, and they only got into government as a reaction of the people against Indira Gandhi's Emergency.

I was there during the Emergency and I was shocked. The aim was quite clearly to silence political opponents. It was like Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy.

People were afraid to say anything, the fear was if you said anything you'd be locked up.

And there was also the disgusting spectacle of Sanjay Gandhi. Sanjay was basically a dictator - he could do what he liked through his mother.

Any pretence at having Parliamentary democracy in India became a farce then. There were even slogans written up all over the place saying "Sanjay says grow more trees", as he had an idea about trees needing to be grown to stop soil erosion. Or "Sanjay says produce less children", as he had an idea about restricting population.

That is well known. I'm not surprised to hear that Indira Gandhi has imposed a six month ban on strikes. I think she's learnt a lot of lessons since the Emergency.

There has been no real limit on corruption and blackmail, the bribery and black market activities - and there wasn't during the Emergency, which was the public reason for it, according to Congress.

It was on the basis of stopping corruption that they got the support of the Communist Party of India for the emergency powers. I criticised the CPI for that.

I don't know what the CPI's attitude is this time round, but I can never support the restrictions on freedom of speech, assembly and press that Indira Gandhi imposes, or banning of strikes.

It's all part of the corruption and thirst for power at any price that prevails in India now.

WORKERS' CONTROL IS THE KEY IN POLAND

by Alexis Carras

SATURDAY 5 September: Gdansk: the first part of Solidarnosc's national congress opened.

912 delegates representing 9,447,000 members, and observers from all the biggest international trade union federations were also there, except of course from the Stalinist state 'unions'.

Exactly a year ago, the first occupations and workers' committees met a deathly silence in the tightly-controlled Stalinist press. Ignore it and it will all go away, was the accepted wisdom.

But within a week they could not ignore what was occurring any longer.

A year later the ruling party, the PUWP, is fulminating against Solidarnosc's supposed attempt to censor it!

The state-controlled radio and television net-

works are being banned from the Congress. Negotiations broke down on who should have final presentation and editing rights on the transmission of the Congress proceedings.

Resorting to its characteristically unabashed cant, the PUWP stated that, "The silence over the airwaves is an extraordinary event which only adds to the existing social tension!"

Fearing action by the media workers, who like

the vast majority of the Polish working class identify with Solidarnosc, the government has placed all television and radio installations under guard.

And the bureaucrats have already threatened to declare a state of emergency.

In Olsztyn the state already faces a major challenge from print workers who have refused to print the local PUWP news-

paper. The strike also challenges the union's national leadership. Repeated calls from Solidarnosc headquarters for the workers to go back to work have failed.

The hardening of attitudes between the workers and the government is also reflected internationally in the Russian press, once again railing at the 'counter-revolutionaries' ruining Poland. And the USSR has begun another series of military manoeuvres on the Polish border. 100,000 soldiers are involved, making these the biggest exercises in that area since the late '40s.

In Bydgoszcz hundreds of thousands of workers have been put on strike alert in protest at the Prosecutor's decision to close the case on the police brutality against members of the local Solidarnosc last May. In Katowice, the workers in the Huta Katowice steel works are persisting with their refer-

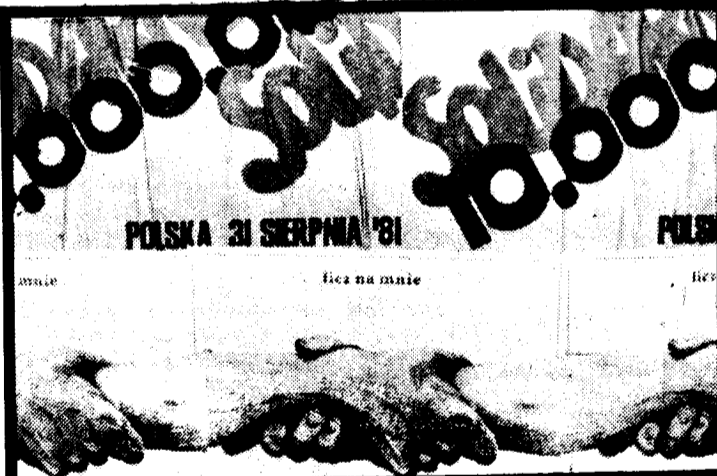
endum to re-elect the plant's manager.

The manager, who shut down the plant's Solidarnosc newspaper for printing anti-Russian cartoons, has called on the PUWP to back him up, and to reaffirm the Party's exclusive authority in the matter of appointments.

There are differences of emphasis between various tendencies in the PUWP Central Committee. Some would accept some form of elections for factory managers - as long as the results, in the end, always conform to the Party's wishes! - and then there are the table-thumpers who pull dusty copies of 'Lenin on Anarcho-Syndicalism' off their shelves to condemn any workers' control.

The bureaucracy cannot relinquish its monopoly of appointments without seriously and irreparably damaging itself.

The bureaucracy is also



Labour Party

LCI fights for emergency motion on Ireland

THE Labour Committee on Ireland, at its latest National Council, agreed to contribute an occasional column to Socialist Organiser. This week's

article, from LCI vice-chairperson Bruce Robinson, reports on the LCI's plans for the Labour Party conference.

THE issue of Ireland will be at the centre of the stage at this year's Labour Party conference. As well as the fifty or more Constituency Labour Parties who have submitted resolutions opposing bi-partisanship, Owen Carron, successor to Bobby Sands as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone will be there to challenge Foot and Concannon directly over the hunger strike.

Carron has asked to attend the debate on Ireland as an observer and will also be speaking at the Labour Committee on Ireland fringe meeting on the Tuesday of the conference.

There are no signs that the Labour Party leadership will respond to his pleas for support for the hunger strikers. Last week official Labour spokesman Don Concannon again attacked them and the long-awaited report of the NEC working party on Ireland has come out against the prisoners' demands.

It states "the privileges which are available to conforming prisoners go way beyond what is available to prisoners in Great Britain... we believe the original decision to introduce [special category status] was wrong and consequently we do not believe we should return to the kind of prison regime which then existed."

Little better

"We do not support political status. However we would welcome further improvements in prison conditions in Northern Ireland and Great Britain as a whole."

The rest of the report is little better. It makes a commitment to a united Ireland, but the working party's united Ireland is more like never-never land.

Firstly, it respects the Unionist veto over the will of the majority of the Irish people by talking about the need to achieve the consent of the majority within the sectarian Northern Ireland state.

To get there, the report says, power-sharing will have to come first and as that is not now possible, direct rule will have to go on for the time being.

Despite the call for 'troops out' being "reflected in the evidence received from constituency parties and branches", it is rejected out of hand and instead the report calls for support for the RUC.

The report only came out a fortnight before the last date for amendments to NEC documents and it will be moved separately from the main debate on Ireland. In order that Labour Party conference can give a clear opinion on the document, the Labour Committee on Ireland is calling on all CLPs who put resolutions or amendments on Ireland to support the emergency resolution printed below.

Pressure

If your CLP has a resolution get your GMC or EC to accept the emergency. If Standing Orders Committee refuses to accept the emergency, the original resolutions will stand, but it is



SO supporters backed LCI lobby of Labour NEC in support of hunger strikers

important that the maximum pressure is brought on them to accept it.

The LCI will be holding a meeting for delegates on Saturday morning in Brighton to discuss tactics for composing and approaching the Standing Orders Committee. Further information from Labour

Committee on Ireland, c/o 4 Burnhill House, Norman Street, London EC1.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

"Conference notes the publication of the NEC's report on Northern Ireland policy. It welcomes the statement of support for progress towards the ending of partition and the estab-

lishment of a united Ireland. Conference strongly affirms that the central thrust of Labour Party policy on Ireland should be these two ends.

Conference however expresses its deep reservations with those parts of the NEC report which imply that British withdrawal should be conditional on winning the support of the Unionist community for this line of action.

It believes that formulations of this sort can serve as an excuse for perpetuating the Unionist veto on the achievement of a democratic national solution to the Irish question.

Conference also regrets that urgent action to resolve

the H-Block crisis is not given the highest priority in the report. The events of recent months have demonstrated the overwhelming support for the demands of the hunger strikers amongst the oppressed nationalist community. Conference therefore calls on the NEC and the PLP to ensure that immediate pressure is brought to bear on the Conservative Government to ensure that the five demands of the hunger strikers are conceded in full.

Conference believes that the implementation of the objectives outlined in the report require that the Labour Party now give a statement of irrevocable intent to commence the process of withdrawal from Ireland immediately on the assumption of governmental office. Only in this way can the Unionist veto be effectively ended and a productive dialogue on ways of establishing a relationship with the rest of Ireland be commenced.

In the light of the above criticism of the report, Conference calls on the NEC to prepare a comprehensive policy statement which translates the present support in principle for Irish unity and British withdrawal into a series of practical policies aimed at achieving these ends. We call on the NEC and the PLP to cooperate with the trade union movement and all progressive forces in Ireland to ensure that such policies have the broadest possible popular support."

'Mafia' quits to join SDP

ISLINGTON North's right wing MP Michael O'Halloran, has finally declared himself "sick" of the Labour Party, and led a gaggle of local councillors into the Social Democrats.

The final list of SDP recruits is not yet clear - but it is predicted their group could grow from six to 22 on the Council.

Strange

Islington's Labour Parties explained the reasons for this strange behaviour in a press release: the councillors who will definitely resign "knew they would not be re-selected", the others are hoping to get in next year on the Labour ticket and then join their friends.

Labour Group leader Don Hoodless said exactly what most Labour Party members think: "Their final departure is to be welcomed". Some may need a shove.

'Divine Right'

Labour's right wing brought the party into utter disgrace in Islington. The local Labour Parties say they feel well rid of the people who "supported the sale of council houses on the open market while there are 10,000 people on the waiting list [and] voted to cut nursery places... The old undemocratic municipal mafia who think they have a divine right to govern Islington regardless of the people's views".

NIK BARSTOW

Delegate meeting discusses Benn campaign and weekly SO

by Steve MacArthur

Last Saturday delegates from 14 SO supporters groups met in London. Apart from local work, there were reports on the St Mary's Hospital dispute, on Ireland, Turkey, paper sales and special launch meetings to mark Socialist Organiser becoming a weekly.

The meeting also discussed the libel action brought against the paper by the WRP, which is progressing slowly, and will continue to be a strain on our financial resources.

Benn Campaign

There were reports on work done to support the rail unions and some discussion on what kind of contribution SO supporters could make to strengthen the left in the wake of the settlement.

The main discussion was on the progress of the Benn campaign and the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy. The meeting was reminded of the limitations of the Alternative Economic Strategy, yet dele-

gates decided that energetic support for Tony Benn should continue and that the left should remain united behind his campaign and the struggle for extending Party democracy.

Committees

A proposal was made and accepted, urging SO supporters to organise local committees, with pre-conference public meetings on trade union support for Benn and further meetings after the conference to consider the way forward for the Labour Left.

Arrangements for the Labour Party conference were discussed. A daily SO conference bulletin will be issued, and there will be a fringe meeting on the Thursday evening and a 'social'. Several SO supporters are going as constituency delegates.

Problems

Quite a number of our supporters are being nominated to stand for Council in next year's local elec-

tions. It was thought that this presented a number of problems.

For example: should SO supporters stand despite inadequate manifestos? What should we do when the majority of a Labour Group ignores or abandons the manifesto? How can councillors improve relations with the trade unions?

It was agreed to call a meeting for all SO supporters who have been nominated, along with comrades who are already councillors plus a delegate from every group, to consider these problems.

It was also decided to run an article in the paper to 'kick off' a debate on the issues involved.

Contributions

There was a proposal to help meet the shortage of funds by raising the minimum contributions that SO supporters are asked to make. However, as the paper is dependent upon larger and completely voluntary contributions by the most active supporters, an increase in the

minimum is of limited importance. The meeting compromised and decided to ask supporters for at least £1.50 a month (an increase of 50p), but no increase for the unemployed.

Meetings

A number of further organisational changes were agreed by the meeting. It was decided that in future there would be six regular delegate meetings a year, with provision for extra meetings if they were needed.

Notice of meetings and agenda will be circulated well in advance so that groups can discuss the issues and brief their delegates as they think fit.

It was agreed to hold a conference every year to discuss the organisation and politics of SO and decide who should work on the editorial board. Meanwhile it was decided that the Secretariat needed additional members, and four supporters, Dettie Clinton, Chris Hickey, Steve MacArthur and Chris Brind were elected.

Socialist Organiser Alliance

To make Socialist Organiser a real campaigning paper that can organise the left in the movement, it needs its own organised activist support - and money.

Local supporters' groups have been established in most big towns to build a real base for the paper.

Supporters are asked to undertake to sell a minimum of six papers an issue and to contribute at least £1 a month (20p for unwaged). So becoming a supporter helps build our circulation and gives the paper a firmer financial base.

If you like Socialist Organiser, think it's doing a good job, but realise that it can't possibly do enough unless you help, become a card-carrying supporter.

Fill in the form below and send it to: Socialist Organiser, c/o 28 Middle Lane, London N8.

I want more information I wish to become a Socialist Organiser supporter

Name

Address

Phone

CLP TU

FIGHTBACK STEPS UP STRUGGLE IN UNIONS

by Ann Evans

THIS year's Women's Fightback AGM was combined with the weekend school (see separate report by Glenda Bennett) and held at Wydale Hall on Saturday 29 August.

This meant that it was not a general conference of the membership and affiliates of Women's Fightback: attendance could only be limited.

Nevertheless, it was a useful meeting, which drew together and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of our work over the past year and discussed what initiatives we should take over the coming year.

We also discussed a comprehensive 'Action Programme' put forward by Anne-Marie Sweeney. This was an attempt to draw up guidelines for the policies Women's Fightback groups and members should be fighting for in struggles around jobs, health cuts, nursery closures, abortion rights, and so on.

The resolution drew on the experiences of, for instance, the women at Lee Jeans, whose occupation has been a beacon to the whole of the labour movement in the fight for jobs.

It resolved:

"In Women's Fightback we must not only lend support to such struggles that break out but offer a lead and guidance on the kind of action women can take to stand up for their rights, drawing on the experience of women who have made a fightback against the Tories".

Other resolutions filled



Women's Fightback: a year of campaigning

in some gaps where Women's Fightback had not previously formally taken a position, although the paper had carried articles — for instance on gay rights and in support of the H-Block and Armagh prisoners' campaign in Ireland.

We also discussed in some detail how to strengthen our presence in the unions, where Women's Fightback has not played a

prominent role, despite the work of many individual members.

We agreed to call a rank and file women's conference on unemployment as part of the campaign for a woman's right to work.

We hope to be able, from this conference, to establish Women's Fightback caucuses in at least a few of the unions. Delegates stressed that these caucuses should not be set up in

competition with existing groups such as the Civil Service Women's Rights Group.

A day-school on new technology is to be organised, and a substantial part of an issue of the paper devoted to new technology in the run-up to the school.

As Rowena Jewers, moving the resolution on new technology, pointed out, "We are not doing

enough on the impact of new technology on women's jobs". She also pointed out the health risks that need to be studied in order to get the unions to fight for safety measures.

Rachel Lever moved a resolution on the Labour party and the way Women's Fightback members should consolidate the gains the Left has already made in the Labour Party women's organisation.

As she pointed out in the introduction to her secretary's report, the Labour Party is already taking women's issues more seriously. For the first time, a party political broadcast has been devoted to women, while last year's Labour Party conference had its first ever debate on women's rights.

Women's Fightback's influence has helped to push the party along this road, but a great deal more remains to be done, especially through democratising the women's organisations.

Many other resolutions were discussed and passed, and there was some discussion about the role and nature of the paper.

In retrospect, we should have organised the AGM separately from the school, in order to have had better representation and more women involved. Nevertheless, some constructive debate took place, and with the initiatives around the trade union conference on women's unemployment, the day school on new technology, and further work in the Labour Party women's organisation, Women's Fightback is set for another year of campaigning.

MORE DETAILS OF WOMEN'S FIGHTBACK
Contact Rachel Lever,
41 Ellington Street,
London N7. 01-607 9052

WHAT'S ON

TURKEY SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

WEEK OF ACTION

Friday 11 September, picket of Turkish ambassador's residence and Chilean Embassy, Devonshire Street, London WC1. 5.30 - 7.30.
Saturday 12 September, 11 am, picket of Downing Street, 2 pm rally at NUFTO Hall, Holborn, London WC1.

ANTI-APARTHEID

South Africa for Beginners
Workshops: October 5, 12, 19
Archway Development Education Centre
173 Archway Road
7.00 pm

ANTI-APARTHEID MOVEMENT

Benefit
Caxton House
St. John's Way
Saturday 10 October
7.30 pm
Admission £2
23 Skidoo, Mysterions Disco and Bar

BIRMINGHAM SO

Classes
September 20, 7.30
America's leadership of the advanced capitalist world
Oct. 4 at 7.30
The American working class.
Contact 021-429 4166 for venue

East London
'Which Way Forward for the Left?'
Speakers: Alan Thornett, Theresa Shannahan (Tower Hamlets Target 82 group), and a Newham councillor.
Thursday September 17, 7.30, THAP bookshop, 178 Whitechapel Rd.

PUBLIC MEETINGS TO LAUNCH THE NEW WEEKLY SOCIALIST ORGANISER

OXFORD
Wed. 16 September
8.00 pm
next to East Oxford Community Centre
Princes St., Oxford

LEICESTER
Thursday September 17
'Build a fighting left'
7.30 pm
Leicester Socialist Centre (above Blackthorne Books)
High St., Leicester

BRADFORD
Friday 18 September (details from Barry Turner: 0274 636994)
Speakers: Pat Lally John O'Mahony

SHEFFIELD
Sunday September 20
7.30 pm
Brown Cow, The Wicker
Sheffield

LAMBETH
Friday September 25
Lambeth Town Hall
7.30 pm

Sharing skills, discussing Marxism

GLEND A BENNETT writes:

THE Women's Fightback conference on the Bank Holiday weekend at Wydale Hall, near Scarborough, was the first Fightback event I had attended. This report is a purely personal view of what I saw to be the strengths and weaknesses of the conference.

The aims of the conference were to share campaigning skills and to further political development in discussion, specifically on the questions of Marxism and feminism, reform and revolution, and Stalinism.

The first day was, therefore, a series of group discussions, breaking down into smaller workshops. The second day was an attempt to apply theory to practice, working in small workshops on campaigning against the cuts, on unionisation struggles, on using the media, and on a woman's right to work.

One of the real strengths that emerged from the discussions seemed to me to be the diversity of sisters' experiences as reflected in their contributions.

Three delegates from the Labour Party Young Social-

ists drew our attention to the plight of young women; faced with the relentless prospect of life at home, destined by unemployment always to work in their parents' or (as a means of escape) in their marital home.

They argued for the need for Women's Fightback to address itself to young women who may well never become unionised or join the struggle.

They spoke up against the sexism of the Militant testified by its treatment of Thatcher as "Plunder-woman".



Another sister, from Leicester, spoke of the need to use the language of the class, and not to mystify with the use of jargon such as "dialectical materialism". She argued that if we are to involve more working class women within Fightback we must learn to clearly and coherently express our beliefs.

Such varied contributions seemed to me to reflect the strengths of Fightback in its ability to draw women into the organisation, and to allow their voices to be heard.

Wydale Hall was a rather beautiful, if ironic place for us to be. It comes under the diocese of York. We were embraced by Mother Church in the figure of the patriarchal rector. We duly bowed submissively to grace at mealtimes, and his benevolence extended itself to making jokes in the graces to ease the embarrassment.

Advantages

It is interesting that the Church is more tolerant to the left, than the left to the church.

Anyway, Wydale Hall did have its advantages — it was miles away from anywhere (and that included the pub), but it did offer space for sisters to relax and get to

know each other.

Sharing was one of the keywords of the weekend — a chance to share experiences and expertise. In the workshops, sisters who had participated in the Royal Pride strike and in the Beal Street and Oxford Nursery Campaigns spoke of their experiences and gave direction and advice on how to organise exhibitions, occupations and how to work on picket lines.

Practical advice

One sister who had used the media gave very useful practical advice and expertise which hopefully can be used in the future — as Fightback is investigating the possibilities of the new fourth TV channel.

One of the frustrations was the sheer lack of time to develop ideas. This was true of the workshops — where you had to decide between one of three — but it was particularly true of the initial day of discussion.

There was a good basic introduction to Marxism, which led onto a discussion of the limits of reformism and the need for revolution — which surprisingly gave rise to very little debate.

The next question, which was how and why did the Russian Revolution fail to



improve the position of women, seemed to me to be left unanswered. Not surprisingly, most sisters agreed that the Soviet claim to have improved the position of women was untrue, but the issues of the failure of Russian and other revolutions to improve the position of women were not dealt with.

I felt many sisters might have left the conference with a utopian idea of socialist revolution — seeing it as something desirable but being unclear as to how it would happen and when, if ever it would come about.

It seemed to me too important an issue to be



The City and the London Stock Exchange (above) are still major centres of world wealth and power

BRITAIN: A IMPERIALIST

John O'Mahony continues his discussion of Tony Benn's recent article on "Britain as a Colony"

to defend the status quo against the parliamentary majority elected to transform it. "This may seem far-reaching, but at least those forces opposed to democratic reforms could argue that they were operating in accordance with the letter of the constitution, even though in no sense within its spirit.

"Unlike countries where the overthrow of elected governments by a non-elected military elite has to take place in open defiance of the constitutional safeguards enjoyed by the people, and is thus seen to be illegal, the British Constitution reserves all its ultimate safeguards for the non-elected elite. The democratic rights of the people can, in a crisis, be adjudicated to be illegal, thus legitimising the military in extinguishing them.

"Within that essential legal difference between the British Constitution and the constitutions of other parliamentary democracies lies part of the proof of the continuing colonial status of the British people".

Crown

He makes the analogy with the legal situation of a Crown Colony.

2. Because of the vast power over Britain, British affairs and the people of Britain exercised by the international market and the multi-national companies that dominate it. These are, he points out, outside possible control by the British government.

"These global corporations - in oil, engineering and minerals - have long since outgrown nation states in the sheer size of their wealth and income and the worldwide scale of their operations. They perceive their prime responsibility to lie with their shareholders, and they have the power to maximise their return on capital by deploying their resources without

regard to frontiers. This applies with equal force to those multinationals whose home base is Britain, since they feel no allegiance to the nation from within whose territory they grew".

Morality

3. Because of the power of the IMF, an institution whose policies reflect the interests and ideas and morality of the dominant imperialism. He speaks of "the humiliation that IMF imperialism imposes upon colonial Britain".

4. Because Britain is in the EEC, which has the right to make laws for its component parts under the Treaty of Rome and which under the British treaty of accession can make laws binding on Britain which (in theory) overrule decisions by Westminster.

5. Because Britain is in a subordinate place within the USA-led military alliance. "Parallel with the colonisation of post-war Britain by the multi-nationals and the bankers came the much more specifically political supervision of another area of our policy - defence - by the USA".

Because the USA has missile bases in Britain, it could effectively declare war for Britain. Britain thus, says Tony Benn, lacks one of the essential characteristics of an independent state, the right to make war or peace.

Concretely, what does Benn propose to do to change things?

1. To make reforms so that the House of Commons is the legal sovereign power in Britain.

2. The British government to resume the right to make tariffs for Britain and to enter various types of agreement to regulate the multi-nationals.

3. Resistance to IMF dictates.

4. Withdrawal from the EEC.

5. The removal of US bases from Britain (Britain to be a non-nuclear member of NATO, like Canada).

Removal of US bases is Labour Party policy and deserves the support of every sane person in Britain. Point 1 is woefully inadequate. The House of Lords would be abolished but the monarchy would not! Nevertheless, anything that strengthens democracy, even formally, deserves the support of socialists.

Points 2, 3 and 4 would, if implemented, surely strengthen or 'restore' Britain's formal independence. It seems to me a certainty that they would not decisively alter Britain's real situation.

For if Britain's economic decline continued - as it will under capitalism: and Benn would, essentially, leave capitalism intact, if lightly shackled - such measures must certainly continue and probably increase real dependence and subordination of Britain to the world market, to the EEC and to the IMF.

Disguised by the trappings - even the exaggerated trappings - of formal independence, it might well be. But the actual content of Britain's formal independence will not rise higher than the reality of its relative wealth, strength, might and importance in the world and in Europe.

For Benn's solutions are concerned with formalities and legalities, not with the real relationships and economic realities that give - or take away - weight and substance to those forms. And his formalities and legalities would not of themselves seriously change the decisive factors.

Benn's solution is a uni-dimensionally 'political' one (and, as we shall see, even a misunderstanding of the politics).

His solution flows from his analysis and diagnosis of Britain's situation. He describes the condition of Britain: "an accelerating spiral of decline into chronic mass unemployment; the dismantling of essential public services; a widening gap between rich and poor, with growing social tensions; the erosion of the rights of women, trade unions, and the black communities; mounting attacks upon civil liberties; and the increasing risk of nuclear war". These are more or less attributable to Government policies.

In a key passage, he continues: "The establishment has played its cards with exceptional skill in diffusing and defusing our anger (emphasis added) so as to preserve its own position. We are told that our economic difficulties are caused by our low productivity and lack of competitiveness; that our trade unions are destructive; that socialism is subversive; that our whole nation is afflicted by some malaise; and that our people are irresponsible and decadent. These are the themes that come through much of the media coverage of events. They add up to a barrage of propaganda designed to legitimise the present balance of power" (and to legitimise repressive, right wing ruling class solutions).

Propaganda

It is implied that all the things he lists are, self-evidently, not true, that they are no more than inventions or gross exaggerations created for propagandist purposes. There is nothing in the article that qualifies this.

Throughout the article Benn deals with real and possible inequalities and political proposals - but not with the underlying economic problems except implicitly to dismiss them as propaganda by the ruling class.

He says it is no more than black propaganda:

"The establishment and the media have conducted a long and reasonably successful campaign to win public assent for their strategy of 'abandoning parliamentary democracy' and going into Europe by undermining the self-confidence of the British people and their faith in the vitality and efficacy of our democratic institutions. The media have presented the

"If we are to attempt serious reforms, we shall find that we need to restore democracy by taking back our rights of self-government. We shall need to rebuild our self-confidence as a nation, to build it upon a clearer and better concept of human values, and to take charge of our own economic and political destiny.

"To attempt all that is, in effect, to embark upon a national liberation struggle (emphasis added).

"This is the true challenge confronting the labour movement and the socialists within it, and all believers in democracy. The role of the British labour movement must be to offer leadership in that liberation struggle to end our colonial status, and to allow the people to enter into their rightful inheritance".

THOSE ARE the words which end and encapsulate Tony Benn's important new article, 'Britain as a Colony'. They are the summary answer to the question he puts earlier like this, "Is Britain a colony like any other? On the face of it this may seem an outlandish question to pose..." Yet he does pose it, and answers it with a call for a national liberation struggle.

He has said all this before (for example in the interview with Eric Hobsbawm in last October's Marxism Today, a Communist Party journal). But now it becomes the framework, package and focus of Tony Benn's programme.

The very title of the article is of course

a programme. For if Britain is a colony, then it should be liberated, and that conclusion from the definition of Britain as a colony would not be confined to the labour movement, or even to democrats.

The liberation of Britain, to restore its lost/former independence is what Benn proposes to the labour movement as the immediate goal (and therefore the effective political content) of the working class fightback to kick out Thatcherism.

The ideas in Tony Benn's article, which sets up the restoration of British greatness (though that is not his word) as the historic goal of the working class and socialism, are loosely and, in my opinion, badly worked out. The article has sketchy notions of history or obviously wrong ones. But as a contribution to the discussion in the labour movement now, Benn's article will be a valuable contribution to clarifying our minds and our perspectives if it provokes, as it should, a thorough discussion of the issues Benn raises.

Benn argues that Britain is a colony because:

1. "The Lords' veto, the prerogatives of the Crown to dismiss and dissolve, and the loyalties of the courts and the services to adjudicate upon legitimacy and to enforce those judgments might all be used

* In no.1 of the Labour Party magazine 'New Socialist' and, in a fuller version, in the book 'Arguments for Democracy'.



French steelworkers focussed their jobs fight on opposition to Germany and got detailed

COLONY, OR IMPERIALISM IN DECLINE?



imperialism, a term which Benn uses in a number of different senses in the article, is here reduced to just a word.

For his general position Benn needs to 'ignore' the economics. An examination of the ex-colonies would show that in most cases the condition of real economic strength or lack of it has not changed.

This is not to disparage the struggle of any of the former colonies for independence. Indeed, some ex-colonies have been able to transform their societies substantially, even within capitalist limits, as a result of political independence. Algeria is an example - but one that shows up the inapplicability of the term 'colony' for Britain.

Algeria's economy is still heavily linked with and even partly dependent on France. But the Algerian capitalist class can negotiate the links on much more favourable terms because it no longer has a huge French army on its territory, using terror to enforce massive privileges and racist discrimination. (The development of the oilfields has also boosted Algeria's strength).

The British capitalist class faces no occupying armies, but only the objective limits of its economic strength. It is not a victim, held down by armed force, of the imperialism of the multinationals - but a junior partner in that imperialism (in world terms, not so junior as all that).

Serious change in Britain requires the overthrow of the capitalist class.

For the sake of the argument, let us agree (though personally I would not) that British withdrawal from the EEC has some advantages for the working class. It is still a very small degree of enhanced self-determination that is likely to become available to Britain from the taking back of what was voluntarily (by the ruling class, at least) merged into the EEC. Its absence now is not at all related to foreign coercion, but rather to a practical calculation by the ruling class. For that reason alone, the identification of weak imperialism Britain as a colony of imperialism is grossly misleading.

The weight of the British economy is what adds or subtracts weight from formal independence. No unilateral political decision could restore Britain's former level of self-determination.

Outside of the EEC, Britain would have to find new arrangements with its neighbours, reflecting real strengths and real weaknesses.

Even if we agree that restoration of Britain's former level of self-determination and self-sufficiency is a desirable objective, neither Benn's proposals, nor any others, can achieve it. Not even the socialist revolution can do that.

CONTINUED NEXT WEEK

great diversity of morbid symptoms" (Antonio Gramsci). That is exactly where we are at in terms of the problem to be solved. The British capitalism system is in a crisis of decline; the British labour movement is in a crisis of reorientation, of politics, of philosophy, and of leadership.

I have explored this passage in such detail because central to Benn's whole view of "Britain as a colony" and to his shallowly formalistic and 'political' nationalist solution is a refusal to face up to the reality of the decline of Britain. Everything he misdiagnoses and mis-prescribes flows, I think, from that.

Formalities

He measures Britain's decline in self-government in terms of formal treaties and the formalities of relationships, and he proposes changes in those formal relationships like EEC withdrawal. But the real measuring rod for understanding what has happened and why, and what needs to be done, is the *real decline* of Britain.

The central fact of what Benn has rightly called the tragedy that has overtaken the British people and threatens to overwhelm the labour movement, is fundamentally a catastrophic economic decline. By whatever measure you choose - production, productivity, financial operations, area under its control - Britain's relative position has declined sharply since 1945 (and indeed was declining before then).

Britain was among the few most privileged states for centuries. In one of the first countries of bourgeois development, then the pioneer of industrialism, the British bourgeoisie - motives of self-enrichment granted, but not detracting from this - was the bearer of a new system of production and of the great world capitalist civilisation now in decline.

All that is gone, and gone forever. The decadence of the ruling class and its inability to impose its chosen solutions to Britain's problems have pushed Britain down even further than was inevitable after World War 2. But if Britain is now (and for decades past, long before joining the EEC) massively less in control of its own destiny, in face not of hostile powers but of the ebbs and flows of the international economy and the decisions of the more powerful governments and groups, that is in the first instance, and fundamentally, the result of its chronic economic decline.

Threads

The formal relationships, the EEC membership, the subordinate place in the NATO alliance, the weight or lack of it in IMF bargaining, flow from that condition and do not create it. (It is even debatable whether they exacerbate it - the realities of wealth and power would hit Britain in a different way if, for example, it was outside the EEC; but they would not go away).

Britain is tied by a million threads of economic dependence on the world market and by many additional ties to the EEC (which is not a conspiracy, but an organic trading unit). These cannot be cut or severed: to try would produce a catastrophe unprecedented even by current Thatcherite standards. The links can of course be manipulated and managed in different ways and in different class interests. Even, however, if the working class had power in Britain, in the sense in which Marxists use the term, it would still be a matter of dealing with the realities - real forces, real weight, comparative strength and dependence.

This means that the scope for actually making Britain independent again is extremely limited. What Benn mourns for and presents in *political terms* as a loss of political self-determination is in truth rather different. No force other than economic realities, calculated and assessed according to the self-interest of the politically fully autonomous British ruling class, could do one rather than another deal with the IMF, or enter the US-led

imperialist bloc. No force other than that now keeps Britain in the EEC.

All these were not the negation of *their* (the ruling class's) self-determination, but its expression.

Apart from the central fact - which would in itself be decisive for invalidating Benn's assessment - that Britain is itself still an important, though enfeebled, monopoly capitalist imperialist power, the analogy on which Benn pins so much is thus radically false (and, in the notion of Britain being ruled as a Crown Colony, strained beyond breaking point).

To define Britain's decline as lack of political self-determination is not only inadequate and likely to lead to a false search for solutions in external details. It is a dangerous act of *ideological* packaging, prepared for by this extraordinary definition of what the revolutions against colonialism were all about:

Economics

"What we have to do is comparable to a national liberation struggle, of which we have seen many examples in the era of decolonisation which followed 1945. These colonial struggles were motivated by the desire for universal adult suffrage, self-government and political independence - all of which we regard as our natural rights..."

The completely formal, surface, 'political' picture, devoid of awareness of the economics of imperialism - the motive force and the goal of the imperialist exploiters and predators - what is it but the model of the picture he draws of Britain?

There is a gross lack of proportion in the equation of the condition of the colonies with problems of reform in Britain. But the notable thing is that



End of the People's March: the nationalist answer

British people as being so irresponsible as to be unfit to exercise ultimate control, and Britain as so weak in the world as to make self-government virtually meaningless. In that way our people became confused and diverted from an understanding of what was really happening, while our democratic rights were taken from us and were reduced to colonial status".

Let us examine these arguments. *Britain does not suffer from low productivity and lack of competitiveness?* Of course it does. Benn implies it does not. The reason why, of course, is not lazy workers but irresponsible profligate profiteering. Yet the results do exist as towering objective facts - as the soil on which British society and the British labour movement exist. It is not ruling-class propaganda, but the reality of ruling-class administration.

The trade unions are not 'destructive'? It is only ruling-class propaganda that maligns them, and they really have a universally benign effect on British society? Not so. At the root of this fairy story is the notion that there is no fundamental antagonism in our society.

Unions

The unions are immensely destructive of a system whose well-being depends on profit. That is why they are attacked by the government. In the last 15 years the working class has repeatedly destroyed or completely battered out of original shape the successive strategies, under both Tory and Labour governments, for running Britain according to the needs of its social system, a capitalist system.

Subversive

Both a measure and a result of the historic crisis of the British ruling class - as a capitalist ruling class - has been their inability to deal with the working class. The 'constructive' efforts of the 'statesmen' at the head of the TUC and the key unions have counted for nothing, and they have been forced into opposition, battered by governments on the one side and the rank and file on the other.

The trade unions are destructive - of the capitalist system. The self-defence of the working class is destructive for capitalism, with whose profit mainspring workers' wages are permanently at odds.

Socialism is not 'subversive'? The old Labour Party was not. The ruling class think the Benn movement and the movement for democracy is.

Essentially they are right. The movement for Labour democracy means - so far - that there is no stable, reliable, house-trained and house-broken Labour Party as a fall-back government for this system, as the Labour Party was in 1974. That is subversive of the status quo, of 'the consensus', of bipartisanship (e.g. on foreign policy). The peaceful transfer of parliamentary power through elections is now, for the ruling class, a problem such as it thought it had long outgrown. And that is only the beginning.

beginning.

Socialism is subversive, and working-class socialism should be consciously so.

Our whole nation is not 'afflicted by some malaise', says Benn. But surely it is, comrade Benn?

Not basically a malaise of the spirit and of morality, but the malaise of decaying and rotting British capitalism. British society is being poisoned at the roots by rotting capitalism. Benn says so, repeatedly.

But he attributes much more to the machinations and conspiracies of the ruling class than to the general decline of Britain and what it does to the ruling class and its options.

The EEC

The British ruling class remained outside the EEC for 15 years, tried to scuttle it, opposed it, and organised an alternative to it (the European Free Trade Area) before joining in 1972.

So surely they joined because events had defeated them, narrowed down the options; because British capitalism could not compete? Not in Benn's view, which, incredibly, is this:

"The British establishment concluded years ago that the ballot box, combined with a strong and united labour movement, was going to prove capable of introducing Britain to socialism by democratic means through Parliament... The establishment and the media have cooperated to cover up the systematic transfer of power from the British Parliament to the Common Market, the Pentagon, the IMF and the multinationals... The establishment betrayed our heritage of democracy, because they feared for their power and privilege if it was allowed to continue.

"They opted for survival as the colonial administrators of a subject Britain rather than accept displacement by the democratic processes in Britain".

Conspiracy

They would if it came to that, to be sure, as many threatened ruling classes in history have. *But did they?* In 1970-1 (the threatening upsurge of industrial militancy did not 'take off' until the miners' victory in 1972)? In 1967? In 1961, when Britain first tried to join the EEC? Such a view of the matter is preposterous. (The section is, incidentally, subheaded in the book, "How the British Establishment persuaded the British people to abandon Parliamentary Democracy").

Benn's view of Britain's 'malaise' diagnoses a ruling-class conspiracy rather than the inescapable consequences of the rusting-up of the profit mainspring of British capitalism, its decline, and the convulsions that flow from it, at all levels of society - including both the alienation ('irresponsibility') of the working class and the decadence of the rulers.

"The old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, there arises a

The new Benn campaign broadsheet includes articles on the SDP, issues at Brighton, the right-wing attack on the NEC, cuts, abortion rights, polic, and power and wealth.

September 1981
Price 20p

MOBILISE FOR LABOUR POLICIES

My candidature is clearly and firmly based upon the following policies:

- 1 As a first priority, to restore full employment during the life time of the next Labour Government by adopting the alternative economic strategy.
- 2 To expand the develop Housing, Health, Education, Welfare and other essential public services both to meet peoples needs and to create jobs.
- 3 To support and strengthen the rights of women, to extend democracy and self-government at all levels in industry and society, to defend the Trades Unions, to protect the interests of the ethnic communities, to enact a Freedom of Information Bill and to end the House of Lords.
- 4 To develop co-operation with all the countries of Europe to secure the complete withdrawal of Britain from the Common Market and to support the United Nations in its work for peace, international justice and World development.
- 5 To adopt a non-nuclear defence strategy for Britain, to work for European nuclear disarmament, and to secure the removal of all American nuclear bases from Britain.

TONY BENN

20p from Rank and File Mobilising Committee Deputy Leadership Campaign, 16 Tyler Street, London SE10.

'THE SOCIALISM OF THE PROVISIONALS IS A BIT SPURIOUS'

How do you see socialism? How is socialism going to be achieved in Ireland?

By the expulsion of British troops and by the recognition of the Loyalist community that once capitalism has been taken out of society there is no longer any barrier to prevent the Protestant and Catholic working class coming together.

Ultimately, we recognise that sooner or later they are going to have to come together. It's a question of how we pursue that.

We believe that as long as the troops are here, as long as the Loyalists have a veto over what happens in the Six Counties, as long as they have control over the paramilitary organisations — the RUC and UDR — they are never going to give away what they feel they have.

They have nothing, of course. We recognise that, and they recognise it, too; but for some obscure reason they believe that being poor and linked to the United Kingdom is better than being poor and linked to a united Ireland.

What they don't appreciate is that the coming together of the two sections of the working class — the Protestants and Catholics — will ultimately provide the impetus for the transformation of society in the 32 Counties.

If the Brits pull out there will be a totally different situation in Ireland. In that totally different situation there will be intense debate, discussion, politicisation, and revolutionary organisations will put forward their programme, try and gain support to lead towards a socialist republic.



How are you going to expand the struggle into the 26 Counties?

We always recognised that the level of consciousness was lower in the 26 Counties than it was in the North, and we attribute that to the ongoing military struggle against Brit imperialism in the North.

We recognise that as long as the Brits, RUC and UDR are kicking down doors at five and six in the morning, as long as they allow people to die on hunger strike and the rest of it, there is always going to be that higher level of activity and consciousness in the North.

That's obvious. Because you can lead a normal life in the Free State — as normal as anything in Britain until you got your riots recently!

Even in the North there are areas which are relatively quiet — Fermanagh/S.Tyrone, for example. It's basically a quiet area.

We naturally assumed that there was no opportunity for building a mass base in an area like Fermanagh/S.Tyrone because they're all small farmers — all very devout Catholics, nationalists with a small 'n' or maybe with a capital 'N'. We didn't take them too seriously.

But then the H-Block crisis develops, and we are

THE IRISH Republican Socialist Party was formed in November 1974 following a major split in the Official Republican movement (now Sinn Fein the Workers' Party).

Disagreement

At the centre of the split was a disagreement over the Officials' policy on the struggle against British imperialism in the six counties of Northern

Ireland.

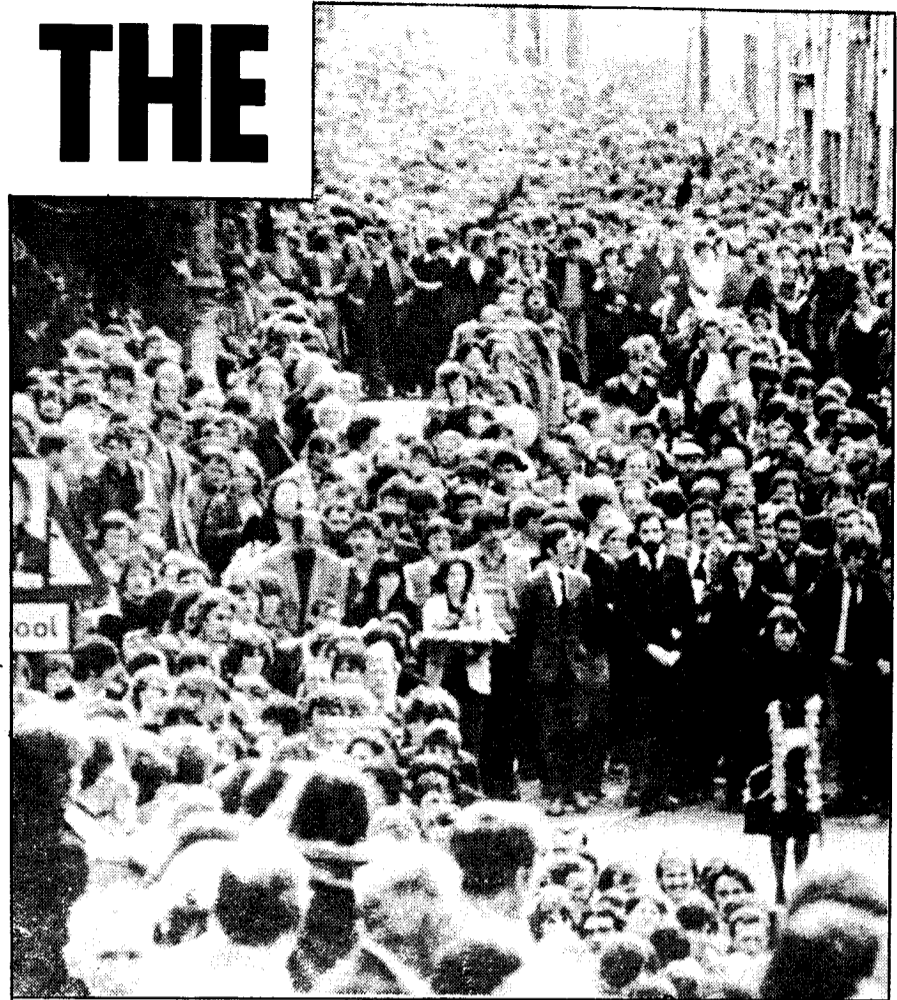
The Officials' leadership, influenced by the Irish Communist Party, increasingly swung to a position of seeking only the 'withdrawal of British troops to their barracks' and the 'democratisation' of Stormont and the Orange statelet.

Withdrawal

The opposition which was to form the IRSP

argued that such a formulation was misleading, discredited, and should be replaced by a call for immediate withdrawal of British troops.

IAN SWINDALE and TIM HAIG, on a recent visit to the Six Counties, spoke in Derry to two IRSP members in an attempt to draw out the politics of the IRSP and their differences with the Provisionals.



Funeral of Patsy O'Hara, INLA hunger striker, in Derry



Daily presence of British troops raises anti-imperialist consciousness in the six counties

faced with Bobby Sands standing for Fermanagh/South Tyrone. Who would have believed that 30,000 people would vote for Bobby Sands?

They're not saying, 'we want socialism in Ireland'; it's us that's saying that the logical conclusion of getting the troops out of Ireland is the demand for socialism.

Naturally they don't see it that way. But in some obscure way they are saying they want troops out, they want a new system, they want a united Ireland.



When you left the Officials, why didn't you join Provisional Sinn Fein?

The socialism of the Provisionals talk about is a bit spurious in some ways. It's not the socialism of their rank and file.

There are many good and sound socialists with the Provisionals, but I don't believe they are a socialist organisation as such.

The proof of that is the way they try and take over any of the broad front organisations. They see things in terms of dominating broad front organisations

because they see that as the goal.

We see ourselves primarily as a socialist organisation which relies heavily on a solution to the national question. They see themselves as an organisation which relies on the national question and sees as an addendum the need for socialism.

And they see socialism in very narrow, restricted terms — they see it in terms of co-operatives and people cooperating together.

Fundamentally their view of Irish society as a whole is no different from the view that De Valera [the ex-Republican prime minister of the Southern state] had in the 1930s — an Ireland Gaelic and free.

They don't see it in terms of the working class gaining control of their own right and their own volition. They see themselves as the revolutionary vanguard, not leading the Irish working class but leading the Irish people.

They don't see things in class terms at all.



We recently spoke to Provisional Sinn Fein about H-Block, and they seemed very pessimistic. They seemed to think that there was little more that could be done to put pressure on Thatcher to concede the five demands. Do you share that view?

I think more can be done. I think a lot of the initiative has been taken away from the area committees of the National H-Block campaign.

We had great opportunities in Derry. We created a mass movement based not just on people coming onto the streets but on factories and factory committees.

One of the healthiest developments we had in Derry was factory shop-floor

committees attached to the H-Block Committee in Derry which were responsible on several occasions for bringing masses of people out and closing the town down completely.

We see that development, if we get the support of the Provos, as creating the conditions where the British government will be forced to sit down and realise that either they solve the H-Block problem or they find the country ungovernable — and ungovernable from the point of view that nothing is being produced.

Pessimistic

The other thing about the H-Block struggle is that it's easy to be pessimistic and say that so many men have died and so many more are going to die, but the struggle in Ireland is not only for political status.

That's part of the struggle, and certainly the most

prominent part at this time. But the overall struggle is to get rid of the Brits.

Now prior to the H-Block hunger strike, the Brits' policy in Ireland was normalisation, criminalisation and Ulsterisation, and to some degree they were succeeding in that — certainly if by 'normalisation' you mean troops walking round the streets with guns.

Ignoring

But they were in fact walking about, and a lot of people were just ignoring them. They were becoming part of every day life. And the British had convinced a lot of people, internationally at least, that the prisoners were criminals and nothing more.

The RUC were beginning to come back to the fore, and coming in on their own without the backing of British troops.

Now, since the hunger strikes began, the prisoners have in a sense gained political status — in the eyes of the Irish people they are political prisoners, and everybody in Ireland accepts that.

And internationally a lot of people, including govern-

ments, now accept that they are political prisoners.

The British government are the only ones who are saying they're not political prisoners. So to that extent the prisoners' struggle has succeeded.

And as a result of the intransigence of the British government in allowing the hunger strikers to die, 'Ulsterisation' has gone under. The RUC can't move now unless they have the backing of British troops.

The same thing happened with 'normalisation'. British troops can't come round now without dustbin lids and whistles going. It's almost back to 1972.

Lives

All of the middle ground which Britain attempted to win — the middle class, the Alliance Party, the SDLP — has gone. To that extent the prisoners' struggle has increased immensely the prospects of an ultimate victory for the republican struggle.

There are grounds for optimism, even though we have to watch men die — young men who are doing this voluntarily and are prepared to lay down their lives for their principles.

SO comment

SOCIALISTS should judge the IRSP more stringently than the Provisionals.

The Provos are certainly a conscious political formation. But they represent a very old tradition with a real, tenacious mass base in the Catholic population.

The IRSP calls itself Marxist. It must be judged according to its claim.

Yet the senior IRSP members interviewed have only a hazy notion that the nationalist movement will grow over into a socialist movement. How? By way of the 'historic process', it seems.

Given the terrible antagonism in the North, a breakthrough in Ireland can only be made by linking an organised intervention in the national struggle in the North and the workers' struggle in the South, where straightforward West European class-struggle conditions exist. What is done in the south will, finally, be decisive for the north.

That is the testing ground

for the IRSP; and on that test it is just a nationalist organisation, with socialist rhetoric.

All of the Irish organisations linked to military groups have so far become appendages of the narrow military concerns of those groups. The IRSP is known to be linked to the INLA. Nothing suggests it is an exception.

The INLA is more reckless than the Provisional IRA about possible sectarian consequences of what it does. For example, it admitted to an attempt to kill Ian Paisley.

The speakers say, "Once capitalism has been taken out of society", the Catholic and Protestant workers will unite. Who is going to take capitalism out of society if not the working class?

The problem is that the working class majority in Northern Ireland is Orange, and that organisations like the IRSP in the South are just nationalists.

JOHN O'MAHONY

REAL SUPPORT NEEDED IN NAMIBIA STRUGGLE

British fingers in the pie

THIS WEEK the TUC will consider a resolution from the Tobacco Workers' Union calling for support for SWAPO in Namibia — the first time the TUC will ever have given official backing to a particular national liberation movement by name.

An associated resolution calls for comprehensive sanctions against apartheid South Africa. At the end of the month, similar resolutions will be taken at the Labour Party conference.

What meaning does this have for revolutionary socialists? Against the background of the recent South African invasion of Angola, Ben Campbell, an activist in the Namibia Support Committee, looks at the issues.

THE TRADE union and Labour bureaucracy have of course developed the technique of resolution-mongering to a fine art. On Southern Africa this has meant, especially in the Labour Party, a long history of militant-sounding calls to support southern African liberation movement and for trade sanctions.

However, Labour in power has reneged on these policy decisions (as on so many others); and there is little evidence of official party mobilisation.

The best-known example is Zimbabwe. Even when pressured to pass legislation on sanctions, the Wilson and Callaghan governments kept the goods flowing, as the famous Bingham inquiry on oil to the Smith regime revealed.

Wriggled

The Labour cabinets wriggled out of prosecuting senior members of government, civil servants and directors of BP and Shell, all of whom had blood on their hands. The bourgeois press even talked of a British 'constitutional crisis' should the prosecutions proceed.

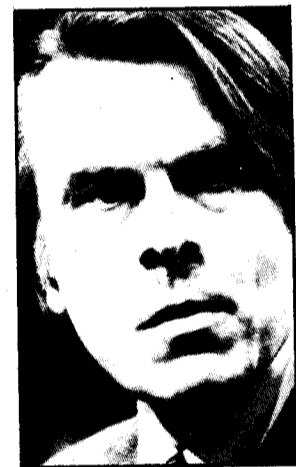
By burying the Bingham report in Parliamentary committees, the Callaghan Cabinet got off scot-free when the Tories arranged a back-dated amnesty as part of the 1979 Lancaster House settlement.

Namibia is now at the centre of the stage in the armed struggle against white supremacy in Southern Africa. As with Zimbabwe in the first stages of the liberation war, imperialist interests are threatened.

Plundered

The need to protect the huge treasure-house of strategic raw materials (including the world's money commodity, gold) plundered by British, US and other foreign capital from the super-exploited African working class, and global military-strategic interests, put London, Washington, Paris and Bonn firmly on the side of Pretoria against the rising tide of black worker and peasant mobilisation.

Namibia poses a special difficulty for imperialism.



David Owen



Carrington



Heath

The black population is heavily proletarianised (more so than in Zimbabwe, and second in Africa only to South Africa). And state power in Namibia is held by South Africa through its increasingly massive and murderous army of occupation (the equivalent army in Britain would be six million troops!).

SWAPO has had to be based firmly among the Namibian workers, who are seeking wide-ranging social and economic changes following the expulsion of South African colonialism. And Namibia's white settlers are in a very weak position to maintain their domination if the South African armed forces leave.

Problems

So, for the imperialists, Namibia poses more problems than Zimbabwe. 'Independence' (from South Africa) would have to be coupled with the creation of an indigenous capitalist state in as little time as possible, in order to hold back the social revolution developing inside the Namibian liberation movement.

Namibian 'independence' will also pose internal problems for the South African regime — the possibility of another rear base for the growing ANC guerrilla incursions; a possible split in the white Nationalist Party over the loss of "South West Africa" to SWAPO; and the demonstration that a small guerrilla force with the masses behind it can actually inflict a defeat on the massive South African army.

It's hardly surprising, therefore, to find that the last Callaghan government,

pressed in the UN to impose sanctions over the Namibian question, launched a diplomatic offensive against SWAPO.

General ignorance on Namibia, narrow British chauvinism in the labour movement, and the lack of any democratic control over Labour's policies, made this task an easy one for David Owen, Ted Rowlands and co.

The Namibian question had twice been raised at the Labour Party conference, in 1973 and 1976. On both occasions there was an unanimous vote in favour of cancelling the Namibian uranium contracts. Tony Benn, as Minister of Energy, had signed contracts with RTZ (Lord Carrington's and HM's profit-winner) to deliver uranium from Namibia to the expanding British

nuclear power programme.

At both conferences, it was stated that, in view of South Africa's illegal occupation of Namibia, all trade was to be barred.

The scandalous story of how the Labour tops have helped make Namibia Britain's nuclear colony is recorded in the book 'The Rossing File' (85p from NSC).

Annex

Owen, working with Vance, eventually produced (in 1978) an 'independence' plan for Namibia which allowed the South Africans to keep their police and administration in the whole territory, and army bases in the north, during the proposed UN-supervised elections, as well as to annex Namibia's only port.

Not a murmur of protest was heard from the Labour rank and file in Britain — most workers hadn't a clue where Namibia was, let alone that our Labour Party misleaders were conspiring against the Namibian people.

What's worse, since all the Namibian negotiations take place in the United Nations arena, and since there is virtually no informative socialist writing on this imperialist substitute for real world democracy, many British socialists thought that any plan with the UN stamp on it was somehow going to guarantee the right to self-determination.

The Labour leadership's narrow head-in-the-sand view continues.

It is British Centurion tanks, British Buccaneer aircraft and Plessey radar systems, fuelled by British BP and Shell oil and British Barclays finance, that are being used by the racists to butcher Namibians and Angolans demanding their rightful political independence. The Labour leadership has blood on its hands for allowing these deliveries.

However, the new military offensive goes hand in hand with a political one. The Reaganites and the Tory Right, following Pretoria, want the Namibian constitution drawn up with capitalist property guarantees so that it can be imposed in advance of any constituent assembly elections.

They want a future ban in Namibia on all forces 'hostile' to South Africa.

MINING:
Rio Tinto Zinc
Charter Consolidated Ltd
Selection Trust
Anglo-American Corp.
Consolidated Goldfields
BANKS AND INSURANCE
Barclays International
Standard Chartered
Norwich Union
Legal & General
Royal Insurance

TRADE:
Central Selling Organisation
Diamond Trading Corp.
Central Electricity Generating Board
Tsumeb Sales
Hudson's Bay & Annings
Eastwood and Holt
Clan

Union Castle
Shell Transport & Trading
BP
Princes Food
OTHER
Acrow Industries
Babcock & Wilcox
Blackwood Hodge
British Leyland
British Oxygen
Metal Box and Thorn-EMI
Taylor Woodrow
Reed International
Lonrho
Lead Industries
Associated Engineering
Associated British Foods
Stewards & Lloyds
Michael Cotts
George Wimpey
Davey Ashmore
Delta Metal Co.

And now, they want the Cuban troops withdrawn from Angola prior to the limited South African troop withdrawal from Namibia.

The new French so-called 'Socialist' government is acquiescing in this. And the Tories led by Carrington are active conspirators.

The Labour leadership do not even see these new moves as a danger. They denounce apartheid — as do most Tories (see Edward Heath in the Times) — but they fail to expose the diplomatic offensive against the Namibian workers and peasants, or mobilise workers in Britain against imperialism.

At this time of intensifying armed struggle by SWAPO, the Labour Party cannot even make a serious material aid contribution. No effort has been made to campaign for key Namibian political prisoners — whose cases Amnesty International and the Red Cross refuse to take up because the Namibians concerned accept violence as a necessary means of struggle.

No effort has been made to mobilise workers to halt Namibian uranium (technically, stolen produce) coming into Britain.

This is not a simple moral issue. The chauvinist and nationalist, racist and pacifist, traditions embedded in the British working class have to be confronted active-

ly in struggle and we must learn to fight for our independent class interests as a component of the world proletariat, against our own reactionary and brutal imperialist British state.

At present, the labour bureaucracy is having a field day in deadening the political development of workers in relation to southern Africa; and those Namibians who come into contact with Britain's official labour movement learn nothing to aid their struggle.

This is the context in which one must view the TUC and Labour Party Conference resolutions. Empty rhetoric hiding the barrels of imperialism's guns — unless we do something to make them more than that.

Benefits

THE Namibia Support Committee, which has been working in solidarity with the Namibian struggle for eleven years, is asking for support for a fund-raising benefit at Islington Town Hall, Upper Street, on Saturday 19 September at which it is hoped Owen Carron MP will speak. Starts at 7.30, bands will be Tropicana, Split Rivitt and the Enchanters. Tickets £3.00 in advance, £3.50 on the door, from Namibia Support Committee, 188 North Gower Street, London NW1 2NB, phone 388 5539.

Vigil

THERE will be a vigil in protest against the Reagan endorsement of the invasion of Angola outside the American Embassy from 6 pm on Thursday 10 September until 9 am on Friday 11.



Solidarity with S. African workers

THE Oxford Trades Council has passed a resolution from the TGWU 5/293 branch at BL's Cowley assembly plant, to be submitted to the annual conference of the Anti-Apartheid Movement.

The Oxford Trades Council resolution gives a direction and a programme of action in the fight for the strongest solidarity with the struggle of South African workers and oppressed — working class action to support our class brothers and sisters in South Africa, and to mobilise effective resistance against the bosses'

apartheid state and its allies in Britain, the capitalist class and their Tory government.

Socialist Organiser calls on workers and militants to support the approach of this resolution, raising it at appropriate meetings of union branches, Labour Party wards, AAM bodies and at South Africa solidarity meetings and events.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement conference is open to all AAM members — applications (£7.50 a year for individuals or organisations) to AAM, 89 Chancery Street, London W1.

We urge all militants and SO supporters at the conference to give maximum support to this resolution and to campaign for its implementation inside the labour movement.

JIM FARNHAM

"CONFERENCE resolves that wherever struggles develop inside South Africa at workplaces with direct or indirect British connections, the AAM will campaign for appropriate blacking and strike action at the linked workplaces in Britain — liaising with trades councils, shop stewards committees

and similar bodies, to organise workers' mass meetings, leafletting of workplaces and so on.

Conference further resolves that the AAM will direct its resources to a campaign in the labour movement (liaising with trades unions, trades councils, shop stewards committees):

1) for the building of direct workplace-to-workplace links so that the needs and demands of South African workers can be directly conveyed to workers in Britain;

2) for workers to open

the books to investigate the links of every capitalist with South Africa, and so lay the basis for immediate solidarity action as necessary;

3) for the labour movement to fight against all secret diplomacy and to uncover the imperialist deals and links with the South African state;

4) for full blacking action against all military and related supplies to the apartheid regime;

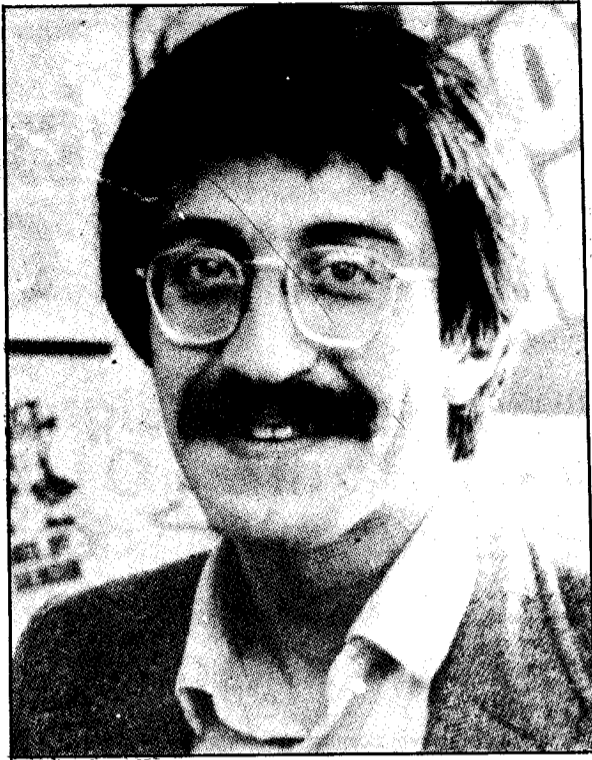
5) for the nationalisation of under workers' control of companies and banks involved in South Africa.

Letters

SAVE THE LIFE OF DOGAN TARKAN!



Writeback to
Socialist Organiser
28 Middle Lane
London N8



A MAN who is certain to face torture and probably execution if returned to Turkey, has just been refused political asylum by the British authorities.

Dogan Tarkan is a Turkish socialist newspaper editor and former full time official of the metal workers' union (Maden-Is).

He was forced to flee from Turkey following the September 12, 1980 military coup. Eighty people have already died in prison while thousands have been tortured.

Executed

This fact has been confirmed by observers from Amnesty International and from the European Trade Union Confederation. Ten have been executed.

Dogan Tarkan has committed no crime under British law. However, the harsh laws in Turkey make it a crime to write or publish radical articles, or to belong to an independent trade union - laws taken from

Mussolini. Evidence exists that his friends and associates are being tortured even now so that the military authorities may discover his whereabouts.

Free speech

Britain seemed the obvious place in which Dogan Tarkan should seek asylum because of its status as a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, as amended by the 1967 Protocol and its well known history of democracy and tolerance of free speech.

Immediately on arrival he made an application for political asylum. The Home Office, although satisfied with the evidence provided, refused his application on August 12, 1981, which means that he is now likely to be returned to Turkey where he will almost certainly be executed.

Dogan arrived in Britain through Lebanon. If returned to there, Dogan will again be within reach of the

Turkish army's killers.

Already the United Nations High Commission for Refugees has made representations on Dogan's behalf, and the TUC International Secretary has appealed to the Home Office. You too can help to save the life of this man by taking the following steps immediately:

1. Write a letter to the Home Office requesting that it reconsiders its decision to refuse Dogan Tarkan political asylum.

2. Write to your MP and urge him or her to take up the matter in parliament.

3. If you are a member of a trade union or a professional association, pass an emergency resolution through your branch.

Please understand that it is only a matter of days or weeks before this man is removed from Britain, so only immediate action from you can save his life.

Thank you.

FRIENDS OF DOGAN TARKAN

BM Box 5965, London

WC1N 3XX

Time to change T&G rule book

THE Transport and General Workers Union is regarded as probably the most left-wing of major unions in Britain, but the TGWU's own internal structure could be envied by that wonderful democrat Frank Chapple.

If any member of the union reads the rule book, you will soon find that it is a strong weapon for the TGWU bureaucracy to use against any militancy of the membership. With the TGWU votes at Labour Party conference securing a little more democracy for the

rank and file of the Labour Party, the time has come to start a campaign for democracy within the TGWU itself.

As most brothers/sisters within the TGWU know, the only full-time official to be elected is the General Secretary. All other full-time officials are appointed.

With recent developments within the union such as the sell-out at Ansell's and the behaviour of full-time officials in the recent Stockport bus drivers' strike, the time has come for a campaign to democratise the TGWU.

The national conference of the union is held only once every two years and the full time officials are using the rule book more and more. I do not need to go into the rule book with any deep observations, except to quote the infamous Rule 11, Clause 19 which reads: "Any member violating any working rules, registration or by-laws, disseminating false statements or any rumour which tends to depreciate the organisation, its officers, or any section appertaining to the union, or circulating any business of the union to unauthorised persons without authority, or who is guilty of other forms of misconduct shall be fined a sum not exceeding £10 or otherwise dealt with by the branch or authorised committee of the union as may be deemed fit."



In other words if you don't behave yourself, you're out on your ear.

The only campaign which I know of to call for accountability of officials within the TGWU was started by the SWP some years back, but it didn't get very far. Apart from this effort, little has been done to set up any sort of co-ordination of the different sections within the union.

The time is now ripe for the membership to start a campaign for all officials to be elected, union policy making bodies to be elected, the delegation to the TUC and Labour Party conferences to be elected, and for elections for these positions to be taken at workplace meetings (with election addresses being circulated unaltered and all candidates and supporters allowed full access to all branch meetings) and the unionisation of the unemployed with full rights within the union.

If any member of the TGWU is interested in forming a campaign for democracy within the union could they please contact me at the address below.

Yours fraternally,
BARRY HASLAM
6/741 Branch
136, Malvern St West,
Rochdale

Don't let Healy discredit dialectical materialism!

AS TWO Trotskyists who managed to smuggle ourselves into the recent WRP "41st Anniversary of Trotsky's Death" rally, we would like to clarify and expand on your report of this event in Socialist Organiser no. 50, 'The Secret Policeman's Ball'.

We listened closely, but have no recollection of Healy "telling us that the world was the centre of the universe" or the other formulations in that paragraph. Omitting his various tangential lapses, Healy's speech had two main components:

Firstly, a formally correct assessment that neither the bureaucracy of Moscow nor the TUC can ultimately offer any defence against the Reagan/Thatcher reaction.

Secondly, drawing on contributions made by his acolytes of the American Workers' League, he adumbrated a further level of attacks on the USFI and the American SWP in particular, implicating them directly in the murder of Tom Henehan several years ago, as part of a world-wide joint conspiracy of the FBI, the KGB, and the 'revisionists'.

Murder

Two large WRP booklets have already claimed to have implicated the late Joseph Hansen in the murder of Trotsky in 1940. This latest rally marked the launching of a new thick paperback entitled 'Security and the Fourth International', no doubt not the last of its genre. This paranoid conspiracy theories serve as the central 'political' pole of the Healy sect.

The Workers' Socialist League leaflet distributed outside attacked "what they [the WRP] laughably call 'dialectical materialism' that the WRP peddles", and the Socialist Organiser article derided Healy's going on about 'dialectical materialism'.

In the context of polemics, this is inadequate without spelling out the differ-

ence between Marxist philosophy as a guide to analysis and action, as opposed to Healy's elaborate abstractions that can only obfuscate politics.

This could inadvertently provide ammunition for the WRP misleadership to write us off in front of their membership as being 'revisionists who attack dialectical materialism', and this familiar theme could be dredged up in the context of the WRP's current law suit.

Spectacle

The WRP rally was a familiar spectacle, with its ritual ejections, platform demagoguery without a single contribution from the floor:

only the membership has been changed to protect the guilty.

Officials

The programmed film did not materialise, and a demonstration to the American Embassy in protest at US warmongering against Libya was tailed by Libyan officials.

This 'tail that wags the dog' is likely through its generosity to preserve the death-mask of Trotskyism that is the WRP well beyond natural expectations. Therefore a careful assessment will be necessary for an unfortunately long time to come.

T.S. (WSL member)
B.P. (SO supporter)

London



Healy

Organising unemployed

MANY TOWNS have unemployed workers' centres or are about to form them.

With women losing their jobs at three times the rate of men (but not showing up in the unemployment figures, as women do not bother to sign on when it does not benefit them), it is very important that women should be encouraged to contribute and attend meetings of the centres.

How can we ensure this? By doing estate surveys *during the day*, to ask women if they are 'at home' because they choose to be or because it's been chosen for them by Thatcher's policies (public spending cuts, lack of child-care facilities, etc.)

Important

It is very important that the centre, and the unemployed, link up not only with the labour movement and the employed, but also with the vast army of women both in and out of work.

It is also the task of

women in Socialist Organiser groups to involve themselves at a local level in these centres.

A national conference is being organised in London to bring together the unemployed movement, following the Leicester initiative earlier this year.

Follow Lee Jeans

THE ASSOCIATION of Unemployed Workers in Stirling again picketed our local Job Centre following the release of the national unemployment figures on August 26. The response was good, with local press coverage.

We have also recently decided to send delegates to the conference of Unemployed Workers' Associations on October 31 in London. And we hope to see an amalgamation of Unemployed Associations in the Central Region, to stimulate and coordinate activities and to

Every effort should be made for unemployed women and claimants to attend, so that this important initiative is not male-dominated but represents the working class - male and female - as a whole.

I hope therefore that the organisers of this conference

make contact with other Associations in Scotland.

Town centre

The Labour-controlled District Council has agreed to try and assist the Association in every way possible, and a meeting was held on August 19 to discuss the possibility of a town centre site for a UWA centre.

The TUC's efforts on organising the unemployed are not forceful enough. Their offer of massive re-training programmes comes into conflict with the real

I'D LIKE to take issue with John O'Mahony's article 'Behind the by-election' in Socialist Organiser of August 27, which contrasts with and completely negates his very positive front-page article, '31,000 say smash H-Block'.

In the article, he says that Owen Carron's victory is good news for the H-Block campaign, but then implies that it has disadvantages because the polarisation which it creates in the two communities is a backward step for the Irish working class.

I agree that the election

victory increases the polarisation developing from the hunger strike struggle, but we must recognise that the polarisation is inevitable. If the hunger strike is won there will be further polarisation which could well escalate to a civil war.

Comrade O'Mahony means the fact that the main parties in the election ran campaigns that could only appeal to the votes of their own community. Well, of course - the election was on one issue, on whether you supported the H-Block hunger strikers or Margaret Thatcher!

Comrade O'Mahony says "Fermanagh/South Tyrone is a paradigm of Six County politics in the last 60 years. Frozen communal antagonisms wiped out normal politics, especially class politics, there".

This is a very narrow approach to politics. What are 'normal politics'? It's such a shame that Irish politics are not the same as British politics.

I believe that both Bobby Sands' victory and Owen Carron's victory mark a major step forward, not only for the Irish working class but for the workers and the oppressed internationally.

I agree with the last paragraph of the article, which calls for the building of a revolutionary socialist movement in Ireland, North and South, but in order to do that it is necessary to recognise that the national question is very important. You cannot just duck the national question and get on with 'normal politics'.

It is desirable to have a united Catholic and Protestant working class, but this object is very difficult to achieve when there is so much that divides the two communities. I believe that it will only be achievable under a united Ireland.

MARIE CAMPBELL,
Oxford.

Wrong line on election

I'D LIKE to take issue with John O'Mahony's article 'Behind the by-election' in Socialist Organiser of August 27, which contrasts with and completely negates his very positive front-page article, '31,000 say smash H-Block'.

I agree that the election

Review

Edinburgh festival: everything on tap

STEPHANIE MALT-MAN'S impressions from the Edinburgh Festival.

THE Edinburgh Festival can be divided into two sections — the official, financed by the local authority, and the fringe.

For those with an enthusiasm for the visual or performing arts, the festival is the realisation of a dream — theatre, music and painting, continuous performance from early morning until well into the night in every possible venue. Since the introduction of the new licencing hours in Scotland, everything is on tap almost twenty-four hours a day.

The official festival provides a weighty helping of the sort of things one would expect.

At the Museum of Modern Art could be seen the now controversial doors to the Edinburgh Poor House rescued by the artist Joseph Benys and since sold to the Staedisches Museum, Moenchengladbach, for £25,000. It can at least be said in his favour that Benys is donating a substantial amount from that to help save Richard Demarco's sadly underfinanced gallery. Demarco is a unique champion of the arts, providing friendship, support and sympathy to unknown and known artists alike, and putting a truly democratic spirit into practice.

The Fringe Festival included 490 separate events. Its aim is simply to let people enjoy themselves on both sides of the foot-lights.

Message

Because of this, it provides a venue for many works of a more controversial nature; and is a platform not only for performance but for the message contained in that performance.

In the events I saw, the message was what seemed most lacking.

A play called 'Czechmate' by G. Docherty and Bill Kinross, was an excellent performance but seemed to amount to very little in the end. Based on what happened in Czechoslovakia in 1968, it told the story of a group of students at the University — among them Jan Palach, who committed suicide by setting light to



himself as a protest against the Russian invasion.

Even the use of news-reel of the time, projected onto a screen at the side of the stage failed to make any more potent statement. In the end it left one wondering what, if any, was the point they were trying to make?

The 'Cambridge Mummies' put on a lunch-time presentation 'Across the Roaring Hills', a portrait of Ulster through a compilation of prose and poetry related to that area. Absorbing and sometimes amusing, it was well presented and well acted, but in the end it was somehow unreal, without the anger that such a celebration must lead one to feel in the light of current events in Ireland.

By more contrast in their choice of material, again a far stronger and more important comment might have been made.

Other events included 'Monstrous Regiment's' 'Dialogue Between a Prostitute and one of her Clients', a great deal of Brecht in one form or another and several performances of 'Woyzeck'. Buchner's distressing story of the hopeless condition of a poor soldier.

Ivor Cutler, the Scottish poet, read poetry at four

o'clock in the afternoon each day in the Assembly Rooms and Griff Rhys Jones ('Not the Nine O'Clock News') led a cast of five in two hours of revue with which he is touring and performing for charity.

Scotland

There were plays about inner city deprivation ('Treatment' by Jonathan Moore — New London Actors) and female emancipation ('Trafford Tanzi' — coming to London, should be seen — by Clare Luckham, Traverse Theatre Company), plays about gays ('Yestergays' — Eric Presland, Consenting Adults in Public), and yes, plays about Scotland (Maran Sheppard Productions, 'The Jolly Beggars of Robert Burns' and 'A Drunk Man Looks at a Thistle' based on the poem by Scots Stalinist, Hugh MacDiarmid).

The event which perhaps dominated all others was part of the Edinburgh International Film Festival, whose chief importance must be as a much needed arena for more provocative and non-money spinning British made films.

Abel Gance's 1927 silent epic 'Napoleon', recently restored by Kevin Brownlow

(himself an undervalued name in British cinema) spun out its five and a half hours, projected on two screens simultaneously and accompanied by a musical score written by Carl Davis and performed by the Wren Orchestra.

It may be this last fact that is responsible for the ridiculously high price of tickets both in London and Edinburgh, the cheapest being £8 and the most expensive £16. However devoted one is to the cinema and however worthwhile the experience, these prices place it well out of the range of all but the elite.

In the magazine 'Cineaste' (vol. XI, No. 2) Peter Pappao describes 'Napoleon' as a monument to fascism, which any idealisation or sympathetic depiction of the life of the general must inevitably become.

The City of Edinburgh comes under the Labour Lethian Council. The cleanliness of the streets and parks, even at festival time and the efficiency of the bus service, top rate fare 25p, were outstanding. But how long will that last now?

Information and programmes for the Festival can be obtained from the Festival Box Office, 170, High Street, Edinburgh.

Women in struggle.

LEE JEANS:

HOW MUCH

OF A 'FAMOUS VICTORY'?

STAN CROOKE and IAN McLEISH look at the Lee Jeans victory.

IT IS a rare occurrence for the bourgeois press to whip itself up into a frenzy of enthusiasm for workers fighting for, and winning, the right to work. But this is what happened a fortnight ago when the Vanity Fair Corporation finally sold off its Lee Jeans factory near Gourrock, which had been occupied by the workers since February.

In an editorial entitled 'A Famous Victory', the Glasgow Herald praised the workers' "endurance and tenacity... their sheer persistence and patience", whilst banner headlines in the Daily Star screamed out: "We've won, girls! — Champs end to Scots job fight".

Victory

The sit-in's result was definitely a victory for the women's fight to keep their jobs. If they had not launched the occupation back in February, then most, if not all, of the women would today be unemployed.

And it was a victory won against all the odds. Their union, the National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers, (NUTGW), has no tradition of militancy, nor was there any tradition of militancy in the factory.

Union full-timers and many lay members of the union's executive were acutely embarrassed by the whole affair and wanted to wash their hands of it, which they eventually did in July when they withdrew official support at the initiative of members of the Communist Party.

It was a similar story with other trade unions and local trades councils. Blacking of VF goods at the docks



was organised by the women themselves, not the TGWU.

The local "Support Action Committee", spawned by a collection of dull-witted bureaucrats, was neither supportive nor active.

Levy

But this is not to decry the very real support which the women received from the labour movement in general. Donations poured in from Labour Party and trade union branches, notice boards in the occupied canteen were covered with wads of letters of support, and dockers and miners put on a weekly levy in support of the women.

But workers have won famous victories before, without being "fortunate" enough to be praised by the mass media and Tory MPs. Bringing down the Tories in 1974 or winning advances for Labour Party democracy in 1980 were likewise each a "famous victory", though there were never any headlines like: "We won mates — Champs end to fight to kick out Tories".

The Lee Jeans workers have won praise from strange quarters because their victory is a lot less clear cut than the way it is portrayed by the mass media, and even by papers on the left — Socialist Challenge being the obvious example.

Questions such as rates of pay, size of the workforce, working conditions in general have hardly been discussed yet by the workers and Robert Charters (the head of the consortium which has taken over the factory), never mind agreed upon.

Charters has promised to take on all involved in the sit-in. But will he be attempting to set a higher level of productivity for them than was set by VF?

As regards pay, Charters has said no more than that he'll pay 'the same rates'. But the basic rate under VF was only £49 a week!

The only way the workers could ever hope to win a better deal was by setting the pace for the rest of the workforce.

ed how the bonus will be worked out — if there will be one at all.

And this is where the negative side of the victory becomes apparent.

Charters is not seen as the person who, in the years ahead, will be trying to screw as much profit as possible out of the women's work. He is seen instead as an ally, someone with whom they should be co-operating to make the firm — in capitalist terms — a success.

"We feel that Mr Charters is a good businessman and with the workforce here, he will be able to make the venture a success," said Helen Monaghan, the convener who led the sit-in.

Her attitude is shared by the rest of the workforce. When Charters turned up at the factory a week last Wednesday (26/8/81) he was given what can only be described as a "rousing welcome" by the women.

How many workers are in the habit of giving their employer a standing ovation — especially one who recently tried to give them all the sack (Charters was VF director of operations in Britain until July of this year), and one who has not even told them what he's prepared to pay them?

Enjoy

It is precisely this attitude on the part of the women to Charters which makes it possible for the bourgeoisie to join in the celebrations about the women's "famous victory".

In one sense the workers have come out of the sit-in more militant than they went in.

"I think this fight has shown the whole of the working class what we can achieve, that if we fight we can win," one of the shop stewards told Socialist Organiser.

But in another sense they have become less militant. When Vanity Fair owned the factory there was a real gut hatred for their employer.

For the moment that hatred has been replaced by a more calculated, more pragmatic attitude.



WHILE cladistics, in spite of Professor Halstead (last week's column), seems to have little connection with Marxism, there is another current in modern evolutionary theory which apparently has more in common with our revolutionary philosophy.

Darwin originally rejected the idea of leaps in the development of species, as owing more to religious creationism than to science. He thought that evolution occurred gradually through the accumulation of thousands of tiny chance changes in living organisms.

Many of these changes or mutations would make an individual less successful in a struggle for survival, but some would aid survival and

might therefore, being passed on through the offspring of that individual, spread throughout the population.

Now there is plenty of evidence for gradual change in the fossil record, but there also seem to have been periods where evolution took place much faster. So it is proposed that while species usually get along in equilibrium with gradual changes taking place, sometimes, in response to catastrophic events or vast new opportunities, mutations occur much more rapidly, or survive more easily, and species can be destroyed or born more quickly than normal.

This is the theory of 'punctuated equilibria'

espoused by US Marxist Stephen Jay Gould of Harvard among others. I think it is a possible explanation of the diversity of life in the past and present.

To give some examples of how it could have operated — a nearby supernova explosion (the explosion of an unstable star in our galaxy) would bathe the earth in lethal radiation. This might eradicate or almost eradicate many species (as has apparently happened several times).

At the same time, it would increase the mutation rate in the survivors, and the monstrous offspring might find whole habitats unoccupied due to the radiation-induced extinctions and thus

be able to survive until mutation rates fell back to normal (equilibrium).

Another example — when an unoccupied habitat suddenly becomes available to a species specialised for one niche in a crowded habitat, the various chance mutations that would normally not survive may enable the species to exploit more of the new habitat, giving rise to new species.

This is what happened to the finches that were blown across the sea from South America to the Galapagos islands and which gave Darwin the first clues to evolution.

One original species has given rise to 13 descendant species which have adapted

of modifications and live on widely differing diets.

Anyway, this theory, according to the Prof, is nothing more nor less than Marxism. He is not a Marxist, so he rejects it, thus revealing himself not to be a scientist either.

For a scientist, the question is, "Does it explain the facts better than any other theory?" If the theory that best explains the facts is a revolutionary theory then so be it.

Information from Nature. Apologies from the typesetter for describing Tyrannosaurus as a bird last week. It is of course the opposite of a bird.

Evolution: just a Marxist plot?

by Les Hearn

Industrial

SCOTT STRIKERS CALL FOR ACTION FROM SCARGILL

Ready to fight at Hoover

by Carol Hobbs

It's a long, long way from May to September, but the Laurence Scott workers — out for four months now in defence of jobs — are lasting the pace well.

They are still picketing the factory 24 hours a day and are as determined as ever to see the fight through.

The offensive against the AUEW leaders who stabbed the workers in the back continues. Over eight branches and District Committees have now called upon the executive to reverse their decision to withdraw support from the strike.

This struggle can be taken a stage further as balloting begins for a range of posts in the AUEW, by working to get the largest possible ballot for the Broad Left candidates.

While Socialist Organiser does not believe that the programme on which these candidates are standing for office is in anyway adequate, their election would represent an important set back for the Duffy/Boyd sell-out merchants. We call for a critical vote for Ken Brett (General Secretary), Dave Walters (Executive Council, Division 3), Stan Cole (EC, Division 4), Harry Coultts, (National Organiser), Peter Fawcett (Divisional Organiser, Division 9) and Ernie Jacques (Final Appeal Court).

Supported

Moreover a number of other candidates, notably Derek Robinson, are standing at District level and should be similarly supported.

In Manchester North, where Duggie Daniels is standing for District Secretary, he hopes for a 100% vote from Scotts — a factory where in the past the left/



Ken Gill

right proportion would be nearer 60-40.

The names of Labour MPs who support the strikers keep rolling in and there are some very unlikely candidates among them, including Sir Harold Wilson and Joel Barnett.

This week the strikers will be at the TUC lobbying for support, contrasting the General Council's verbal aggression with their cowardice in action.

They specially hope to meet such prominent Stalinists as Ken Gill and George Guy — who sat on the Confed. Executive which denied the workers support.

Picketing and blacking remains the key to the dispute and here the picture looks bleak. With pressure exercised at national level to abide by the Confed decision, the TGWU is now coming into line with Boyd and Duffy.

In the next month, only firm instructions from the TGWU will stop scab drivers from trying to crash the picket lines and remove the valuable machinery from the plant.

A fight inside the TGWU is necessary together with mass picketing of the Openshaw plant.

But if the workers are to have any chance of winning, we have to go once more onto the offensive.



Arthur Scargill

of the trade union movement... We are in the vanguard of the fight against Tory economic policy."

No, Arthur, just now you are not. The LSE workers are.

A small isolated group, they cannot win themselves. They need your help and you are not helping them.

Few miles

You went all the way to London to be arrested at Grunwicks. You have not been prepared to march the few miles from Barnsley to Doncaster to stand with the LSE workers at Mining Supplies.

It was the direct threat in Doncaster that shook up Snipe before. It could do so again.

However, Arthur, if you think that the LSE workers are a small sacrifice to make for the good you can do as NUM President, think again!

Once installed in Euston Square you will find that there will soon be another principle to be sacrificed, another compromise to be stomach, another issue to be avoided — each easier and more serious.

You have issued an 18 page document stating in theory what you stand for as a Presidential candidate. Now show us in practice that

A firm stand by Arthur Scargill could still win the dispute, and the TUC provides an opportunity to drive this home to him.

Scargill played an essential role in the 1969 and 1972 miners strikes, in the rediscovery and popularisation of the mass picket and the flying picket. He was elected to his present position on a record of struggle.

While his politics represented the limits of the militancy of the late 60s and 70s (and still today, in my view, provide no answer to the crisis) nobody symbolised more its positive aspects.

In his stress on direct action, solidarity, the unity of industrial and political, and the need to turn the struggle into the unions and into the Labour Party without ever forgetting the primacy of the rank and file, Scargill represented the hopes of a whole layer of militants.

Limitations

But there have always been limitations to Scargill's militancy — especially as the NUM Presidential election approaches.

In a recent interview he said:

"The miners have always given leadership to the rest

you stand against sectionalism, and for using the power of the miners in the interests of the whole working class, &

Help the Laurence Scotts workers fight the Tories.

You once said "we took the view that we were in a class war. We were not playing cricket on the village green."

That's how the Scotts workers feel now! The hero of Saltley Gates would have used all the force and fury at his command to help them defeat Snipe and Thatcher.

Will the aspiring President of the NUM?

FORD CLAIM ECHOES BL

by Martin Thomas

Ford unions have formulated a wage claim similar to BL's.

They are calling for a £20 across-the-board increase, consolidation of average attendance bonuses, a 35 hour week, and improvements in pensions. The Ford settlement date is November 23, just three weeks after

"THE Company are attempting to fight a psychological battle — 'low wages mean job security'. It's the same worn-out tune we've heard before, accepted before and lost 3,000 jobs! There's no way the workforce will accept it this time."

That's how Eddie McAvoy, shop stewards' convenor at the Hoover Factory in Cambuslang, reacted to the company's latest plans for "viability".

The plans include:

1) Four options: a) cutting the workforce at both Perivale and Cambuslang; b) concentrate work at Cambuslang and close Perivale; c) concentrate work at Perivale and close Cambuslang; d) close both factories.

2) The next plant agreement will have a minimum period of 30 months.

3) Any agreement should include a period free of strike or other disruptive action.

4) No increase in wages until the company has a profitable year behind them.

5) Decrease sickness payment.

Eddie told us:

"The unions won't accept that. In the past the company has talked about 'Joint Plans' — what it's meant is that over the past four years there's been no reduction in management, while the workforce has been drastically cut and the wages of those left have

fallen by between 20% and 30%."

The unions have already had talks with local Labour MP Gregor Mackenzie, who has pledged himself to give every assistance and support to the workers. For the first time, the unions have agreed to organise joint trade union activity to fight the proposals.

The Cambuslang workforce has been beaten down time and time again and were seriously weakened by 520 workers accepting voluntary redundancy only last April, but anger and determination to win this time has never been stronger.

Eddie says: "There will be a fightback. To start with we'll use all the usual means, make sure people don't get demoralised and make sure the correct information gets across to challenge the company's statement."

"If at the end of the day that fails, the workforce will have no alternative but to take the lesson from the workers at Lee Jeans. They gave great inspiration to other workers and we've got to make sure that that great historic victory is not lost to the working class."

They will be getting together next week to work out their plans. One of the most important things they have already agreed to is organising the fightback jointly with the Perivale workers.

Eddie: "We've arranged a meeting with the Perivale workers to prevent the company playing one workforce against the other. In the past we've always kept one another informed of events and have had close co-operation on all wage negotiations."

"We'll be arguing that both factories are viable and that the blame for the company's demise lies with management — there's been no expansion in the UK while £10 million has been spent expanding their factory in France. The company wants to concentrate expansion in Europe and that means redundancies in the UK workforce."

The claim will be formally submitted next month.

IAN McLEISH

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OUR TARGET is £2,000 and our total so far is £471.34. The 16-page weekly devours even greater resources and so we must complete our £2,000 fund each month. Last month we didn't quite make it, so let's see if we can change that in September.

Send us a donation today and help us in the struggle to build a fighting Left within the Labour and trade union movement.

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BPC journalists vote to back Pergamon

by Patrick Spilling

JOURNALISTS working for Maxwell's BPC publishing house in London have voted to support colleagues in Oxford through strike action.

The BPC chapel fought a long battle against redundancies earlier this year and have been threatened with closure.

Strike

Nevertheless they voted overwhelmingly to tell the NUJ national executive that they were ready to be called out on strike if a national blacking campaign is launched in support of the Pergamon nine.

The nine NUJ members at Pergamon, Oxford, were sacked six months ago by former Labour MP Robert Maxwell, three days after striking for better pay and conditions.

Key meetings of the Sunday Times and Observer

chapels have still not been fixed at the time of going to press. They have the power to black those papers' colour supplements, which are printed by Maxwell.

The Radio Times chapel

has already said it will obey an instruction to black; and a number of chapels in the Book and Magazine sector have said they will support.

The national executive is

Lockout threat successful

By Clare Russell

THE Financial Times' threat to lock out all its 600 printworkers succeeded on Friday 4 September in forcing the NGA machine managers to back down on their wage demand.

The NGA men had said they would strike from the 4th — and the FT, that in that case they would lock everyone out and print the paper by whatever other means necessary.

According to the FT itself after the settlement, no 'other means' for a scab FT were actually found. Nevertheless, the machine managers backed down. The NGA, though giving official support to them, had made no preparations for a show-down.

NGA and NATSOPA have also agreed to negotiate a joint press room agreement.

This outcome must strengthen FT bosses for the

due to meet within seven days, and is under growing pressure to spark off national action if Maxwell does not concede full and unconditional reinstatement.

coming conflicts over jobs. They are demanding 7% job cuts (or else wage cuts) immediately, and much bigger cuts with the introduction of new technology.

Little sign

The unions show little sign of a fight. But the NATSOPA clerical chapel has told its members not to take voluntary redundancy, on pain of losing their union cards.

a socialist organiser 20p
broadsheet
the fight for
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democracy



20p plus 15p p&p from Socialist Organiser
28 Middle Lane, London N8

Pickets put on Longbridge future in doubt Schreiber gate

by Brian Howman

ON FRIDAY August 28, while union officials were discussing threatened redundancies with management at Schreiber, Runcorn, the redundancy notices were handed out by supervisors — a week earlier than Schreiber had indicated.

A meeting was called and we decided to picket the gates 24 hours a day from the following Tuesday.

Some workers transferred from the Manchester plant — safe in the knowledge that they were not on the redundancy list — tried to stop the action, but their proposals were beaten in discussion.

Schreiber had also tried to split the shop stewards' committee by giving notice to three stewards and leaving

the rest 'safe'.

On Tuesday morning we turned up for work to find the gates locked to prevent an occupation. However, the picket has been quite successful.

The following morning pickets were sent to the Brindley Rd and White House factories in Runcorn. White House supported us but Brindley Rd did not.

We were also informed on the Wednesday that our action had been made official by FTAT.

ON Saturday, three scab drivers crossed the picket line telling the pickets that they were taking 12 loads out. They took three (worth approximately £70,000) and while they were gone we got picket reinforcements and a camera.

We stood in front of the

wagons (where a policeman told us we legally could) and told the drivers that we had every right to defend ourselves. One picket took photos and told the drivers that these pictures would be distributed throughout the press and to every T&G branch.

Film

Eventually a deal was agreed whereby they left and took no more loads, in return for the film.

Donations already received include a tent from a Labour councillor and £65 from the local GMC, but if we are to win we need more. Please send donations and messages of support to Barry Poynton 15 Baxter Close, Murdishaw, Runcorn, Cheshire (cheques payable to Schreiber Workers' Welfare Fund).



by Jim Denham

What is the future of engine production at BL Longbridge? Shop stewards at the plant fear that all engine and transmission production there may soon end — meaning the closure of the Cofton Hackett area, the "Flight Shed" and the North Works with the loss of up to 3,600 jobs.

These fears are based on an article in Car magazine (September issue) about Honda engines being used for the new LM10 model.

"Given the existence of Metro engines up to 1300cc,

have been announced to the press before union representatives have heard about them. Even under the old participation system this occurred on several occasions (the Speke closure, for instance).

Engine

It is certainly clear that no engine or transmission development is in the pipeline at BL. The Metro A-series engine is a 30 year old design.

Does this mean that BL plan to import all their engines and transmissions?

Or build Japanese designed engines at Longbridge? Or does it herald the end of BL's volume car production altogether?

Instead of sounding off against the "Japs" (the immediate response of the Longbridge plant leadership) the priority must be to demand that BL opens its books and reveals its future plans to workers' inspection.

And we must also prepare to fight for work sharing on full pay to protect all Longbridge jobs.

Glencroft women solid

FOR six weeks now, 15 women workers sacked from the Glencroft Knitwear firm in Glasgow have been picketing the firm's premises every weekday from 7.30 am to 5 pm.

The dispute began when their boss, Leon Newman, refused to meet the women in connection with the sacking of their supervisor on the grounds that he did not recognise the union. The women walked out and Newman sacked the lot of them.

The women are demanding their reinstatement and recognition of the union to which they belong, the National Union of Hosiery and Knitwear Workers. But as yet Newman, who clearly fancies himself as Glasgow's answer to George Ward of Grunwick infamy, shows no sign of budging.

Victorian

Glencroft Knitwear is a sweat-shop run by a tin-pot dictator. The discipline which Newman tries to impose on the workforce is reminiscent of a Victorian workhouse, and so too are the rates of pay: many of the women are lucky to clear £50 a week.

In the last week Newman has called in the police for help in trying to beat the strike. Although in general a rather dull-witted individual, he displays a remarkably fertile imagination when it comes to inventing crimes (obstruction, breach of the peace, assault, to name but a few) which the pickets have allegedly committed and for which they should therefore be arrested.

Excuse

But not even the Glasgow police have been able to find an excuse for arresting any of the women, although the heavy presence they periodically display on the picket lines, especially at clocking on and off times, is an obvious encouragement to the scabs and an attempt to intimidate the pickets.

Police have also harassed supporters on the picket line, threatening them with arrest unless they 'move along'. And Newman himself has helped out in trying to intimidate the pickets by appearing one afternoon with a camera and photographing everyone on the

picket line.

The six weeks of picketing have had an impact on supplies to the firm but not on the 40-odd scabs who daily cross and shout abuse at the picket line. They have torn up leaflets appealing for their support and countered the impact of picketing on deliveries by picking up supplies of thread, buttons, etc., themselves.

Official

The union has made the strike official and is paying strike pay. Union officials have regularly turned up to the picket lines and are also trying to get Glencroft products blacked by TGWU workers at the airport (most Glencroft products are for export).

But the union has dropped any attempt to get Glencroft products blacked by workers at the washing plant they go to before being ready for sale. Management at the plant has said that they would have to make workers redundant through lack of work if the Glencroft products were blacked.

The union has therefore withdrawn the appeal for blacking. But the logic behind this retreat is a logic which means that workers would never strike, since management always warns about 'redundancies' or 'closure' whenever the strike is in the offing.

The STUC has mailed its affiliated organisations about the dispute. But the mailing explains nothing and calls for even less. The STUC letter, signed by Jimmy Milne, merely states his "hope that you can extend to the NUHKW workers the normal support given in such circumstances".

The accompanying letter from the NUHKW says no more than that "members of my union are engaged in a dispute with Glencroft Knitwear", that "the dispute has been declared official", and that "I would be most grateful if this letter could be distributed to unions affiliated to the STUC."

"Normal"

Hardly the kind of correspondence to whip up support for the strikers throughout the Scottish labour movement. And if

"normal support" means the kind of support given to the Lee Jeans occupation by the STUC, then the Glencroft women would probably be better off without it.

Ignored

But members of other unions are already taking steps in support of the women. SOGAT members are trying to get Newman's adverts for scab labour in the local papers blacked, and NUJ members are trying to get reports about the strike into the Glasgow press, which has ignored it completely.

The dispute was due to be brought up at an ACAS tribunal on September 2, but was in fact never dis-

cussed. Newman's lawyer brought up a technicality about procedure which resulted in the case being postponed for another month at least.

And even if the tribunal were to find in favour of the 15 women, it has no powers to force Newman to take them back on.

So the dispute looks like being a long drawn-out one, which makes active support more essential than ever, especially in terms of building physical support for the picket lines so as to start making an impact on the scabs.

Donations to/collection sheets from: Glencroft Knitwear Dispute, c/o NUHKW, 44 Kelvingrove St., Glasgow G3 7RZ.



EETPU militants lobbying this year's union conference



Time and again Frank Chapple and the right-wing leadership of the EETPU have simply shut down branches protesting at their dictats. The latest is London Central, shut down because it refused to accept an Executive nominee as its branch delegate to Bermondsey Labour Party.

Rank and file EETPU members will be lobbying the Union Executive on Sunday September 27, from 4.30pm at the Conference Centre, Brighton, to demand the reopening of London Central and Birmingham Midland branches.

Coaches have been arranged from Birmingham and London: for details, phone 01-607 5268.

Textiles redundancy fight

WORKERS at Bridgeport Textiles, Leicester, are beginning to refuse overtime in response to 150 redundancies in the last three months and a threat to 220 other jobs.

The Leicester factory is one of the biggest milling machine producers in Britain, along with another in Bridlington.

The AUEW plant convenor has signed forms to ask the Government for three day week working to save jobs. A previous move avoided 90 redundancies, but this must be the wrong tactics.

Aiding

While most sections are working the normal five days some are on overtime, with seven-day working. The plant leadership is actively aiding the bosses on meeting shorter delivery times.

Workers on seven days are now earning the same wage as three years ago. Some are even worse off. If they get orders out at week-ends, then there is no work in the week and they lose bonus payments.

As part of its campaign to link the employed and unemployed in the jobs fight, Leicester Unemployed Workers' Union has leafleted Bridgeports suggesting:

- * An overtime ban,
- * Work-sharing with no loss of pay
- * Continuous production to build stocks to meet orders, rather than order-by-order production to meet deadlines.

A parallel was drawn with Polish Solidarity's Advertisement

demands for workers' control over production.

The Shop Stewards' Committee later that week rejected a full overtime ban because they thought the shop floor wouldn't accept it.

Instead they opted for reduced overtime, increased

production for stock, and work-sharing with no loss of pay.

The Unemployed Workers' Union leaflet had an impact, and most workers are now refusing overtime.

STEVE AKERS

Leyland ACTION No.1 August 1981



Available from 194, Dawlish Road, Birmingham. 29 (send sae).



Rally of Trotskyist unity

BRING DOWN THE TORIES! FIGHT FOR A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT!
BUILD A REVOLUTIONARY LEADERSHIP!
Public launching of the Workers Socialist League from the fusion of the WSL and I-CL. Saturday 10 October, 10am-5pm, Digbeth Civic Hall, Digbeth, Birmingham.

Admission £1 [50p unwaged]

Details and tickets from Workers Socialist League PO Box 135, London N1 0DD



Mass meeting at St Mary's this week

Socialist Organiser

BL bid to vet workers' private lives

By BILL PETERS

LAST THURSDAY, 3rd, at a works conference held in the Cowley Assembly Plant, BL management again refused to recognise Alan Thornett in any senior capacity should he be re-elected in the elections due in December.

Alan Thornett, well known as a member of the Workers' Socialist League and as part of the militant leadership in the Assembly Plant, has remained victimised for over seven years now.

In April 1974, BL refused to recognise him in any trade union capacity. After a month-long strike, BL restored his recognition as a sectional shop steward, but continued to refuse to recognise him as deputy convenor.

to do with BL. The first is Alan Thornett's presence on the picket line at Advest Engineering in Reading on July 14th 1980 - during the works annual holiday. After that picket Thornett was convicted of obstructing the highway.

The second incident, also last year, took place late on a Friday night after a meeting of Oxford Trades Council.

Thornett was convicted of giving a black eye to Mick Soans, the then president of the Trades Council. An argument had arisen after Soans, a leading member of the Communist Party, called Thornett a 'scab'.

The other part of BL's case is 13 strikes which have taken place in the transport department, where Alan Thornett is one of the shop stewards, since October 1980.

These particular allegations will be dealt with at a separate conference because the AUEW is involved. But management have made no effort to substantiate the allegations except to say that they "hold the accredited representatives responsible".

TGWU Oxford district secretary David Buckle, leading the trade union delegation at the works conference, told management that what employees do in their own time has got nothing whatsoever to do with BL. Their position was totally unacceptable and a failure to agree was registered.

The issue will now be the subject of a national conference.

Making the activities of employees outside of working hours subject matter for the BL disciplinary procedure is a very serious development indeed, particularly since BL is the pace-setter for wide sections of the employers.

BL and their South African chairman now want to control the private lives of their employees in Britain as they are able to do successfully in plants in India and in the South African apartheid state.

The management of the Cowley Assembly Plant want to go back to the days when the plant was run by Billy Morris, who had workers in the office for displaying Labour Party posters in their windows, or sacked them for joining a union.



Alan Thornett

For the past four years he has been repeatedly elected deputy convenor by secret ballot of the workers in the plant. Each time BL has refused to recognise the results of the ballot.

Last year, BL personnel director Geoffrey Armstrong gave an undertaking at national conference that BL would recognise Thornett should he be elected in December 1981, providing they had not been able to establish a legitimate case against him in the meanwhile.

He gave an undertaking that complaints would be dealt with as they arose, and no dossier would be compiled.

Now, a dossier has been compiled - and issues brought in which create dangerous precedents for the trade union movement.

BL are quoting as a major part of their case two incidents which happened outside of working hours and are therefore nothing whatever

St MARY'S: THE CUTS STOP HERE!

by Dettie Clinton

THE DECISION by the so-called Minister of Health, Gerard Vaughan, to go ahead with the decimation of the service at St Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road, has brought together those who are determined to fight to maintain and expand the health care in W.9.

Vaughan has sanctioned the closure of two medical and two surgical wards, and the complete shutdown of 11 rehabilitation beds, making a total of 120 beds.

The rheumatology unit is not to be re-opened, and casualty is to be open only for 'walking wounded'. All these proposals are meant to be implemented by mid-October.

However, the workers in the hospital and their supporters throughout London have different ideas.

Occupation

The Tories are intent on destroying the NHS, particularly in the capital, and lives lost mean nothing to them. Attempts have been made over the last four years to destroy the W9 hospital as a full general hospital, but they have always been resisted.

Now, for the first time in a general hospital, an occupation has been declared.

Since the decision to occupy was made two

months ago, the struggle in defence of manning levels has been the key issue, and the need to fight against the victimisation of workers who have stood by union policy.

Bed occupancy has been monitored so that now it will be obvious if it is run down. Union support has been built up both inside and outside the hospital.

Vital

This support will clearly be even more vital now; we need commitments from unions, Labour Parties and other organisations to help build up a picket rota and to be able to respond in an emergency to a call from the occupation committee.

The Joint Shop Stewards' Committee will need to be strengthened to act as the driving force in mobilising the workers.

At the mass meeting last week it was decided that there should be no cooperation with the management's departmental meetings, which are designed to put pressure on individuals to move to other hospitals - the document informing staff says, "... some individual members of staff may wish to move to another hospital for personal reasons..." (!)

A vital speaker at the mass meeting last week was Terry Ventham of the London Ambulance Service, who brought assurances

from the ambulance convenors that ambulances would continue to bring patients into W9, despite instructions from the Waterloo control centre.

To make sure that adequate medical cover is available to deal with these patients, further nurses will be recruited. NUPE London Division has agreed to do some work on contacting unemployed nurses.

They have also agreed to support industrial action taken by NUPE members in defence of W9. They are well aware that if the hospital is isolated, it will be the sure recipe for defeat.

Region 1 of the T&G has been asked to campaign for the same thing. A motion passed by the W9 T&G branch can perhaps be used by other branches. After a preamble recognising the vital importance of the struggle at W9 to the fight against Tory government cuts, the branch demanded that the Region:

1. Circulate all branches with requests for money,

and a request for each branch to take a time on the picket line.

2. Mobilise supporting strike action if the occupation is threatened or any member is sacked for carrying out union policy.

3. To guarantee to make up the wages of any member sacked for following union policy, while the dispute lasts.

4. To support the Day of Action on Saturday October 3rd.

NUPE London Division has agreed to support the Day of Action, and other organisations are asked to send delegations with banners to assemble at 11am at the main gate on Harrow Rd.

There will be a demonstration, and a debate later on health cuts to which Vaughan has been invited to justify his policies.

There will be exhibitions, theatre and visits to patients, plus a social in the evening.

Messages/money to: John Dolan, c/o Cashiers' Office, St Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road, London W9.

Army danger grows in Iran

by Andrew Hornung

THE assassination of Ayatollah Ali Ghoobusa, Iran's Prosecutor General, only a few days after the killing of the President and prime minister, testifies to the degree of disintegration in the country.

The ruling Moslem fundamentalists are rapidly losing their grip; their own bodyguards are infiltrated, the Pasdaran (the pro-Khomeiny militias) are deserting, the economic situation hovers on the brink of collapse, and the opposition grows more unified.

The new prime minister, Ayatollah Kani, who almost certainly retains links with the circle around Mehdi

Bazargan, the first prime minister after the fall of the Shah, will try to use these links to create a new ruling consensus and to divide the opposition.

The most likely beneficiaries of the present situation must be the army and the bigger capitalists. Social disintegration and elements of civil war combine to make the situation favourable for their intervention.

This week, a group of militants opposed to the regime in Iran - mainly PMOI supporters - briefly occupied the Iranian embassy in London.

They were later arrested. It is important that any move to deport them be resisted.



Sadat bid to crush critics

PRESIDENT Sadat of Egypt has followed last week's purge in which over 1500 people were arrested by announcing a series of further repressive measures.

Several publications have been closed down, including the weekly paper of the Socialist Labour Party (which, together with the National Progressive Union, constitutes the only legal political opposition in Egypt).

Journalists, broadcasters, lecturers and teachers have been transferred to other jobs, Moslem and Christian Coptic religious societies have been banned, and the Coptic Church's Pope dismissed.

Repression

In June and July there were religious riots directed against the Copts by Moslem fundamentalists, for the first time in ten years. These serve Sadat as an excuse for his measures - and for general political repression.

Opposition

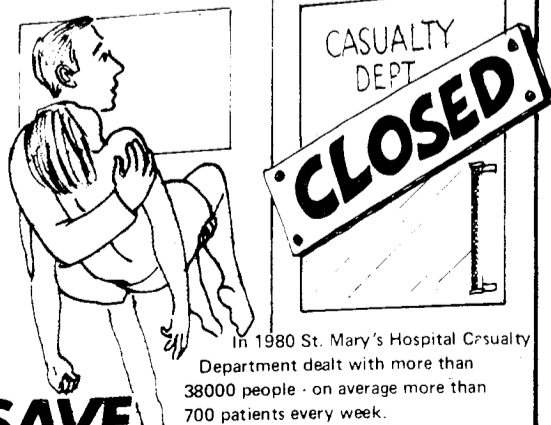
Sadat is afraid of a resurgence of the Moslem Right. There is a long tradition of such activity in Egypt, and recent developments in Iran have boosted it again.

Recently the Moslem fundamentalists have been among the sharpest critics of Sadat's pro-Israeli, pro-Western policy.

While the June/July riots were in themselves not very important, Sadat's response underlines the insecurity of his rule and the widespread opposition to the Camp David sell-out and Sadat's ruinous economic policy.

ANDREW HORNUNG

THREAT TO CASUALTY!



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