

Socialist Organiser

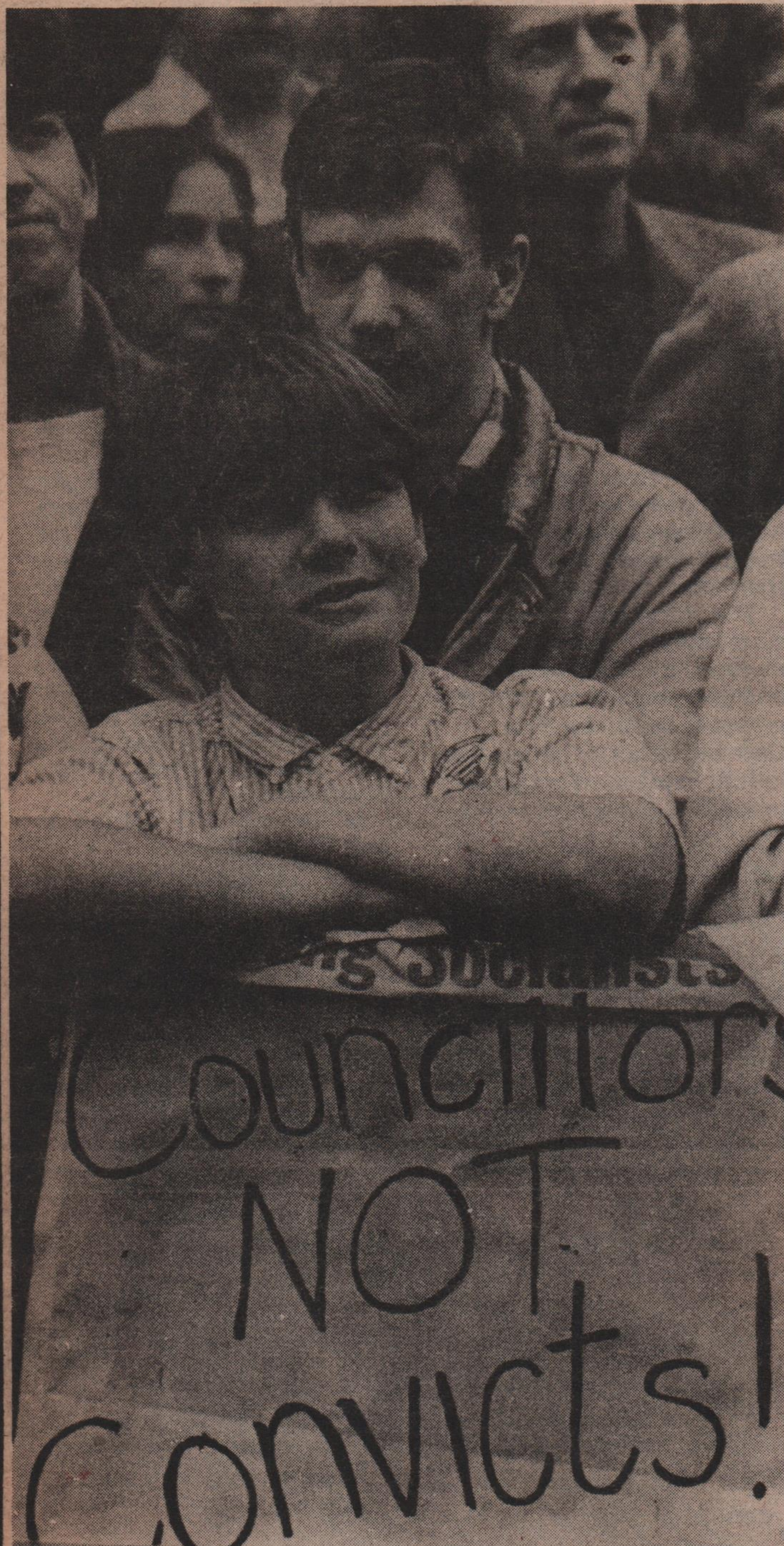
No.234 July 3 1985 25p Claimants and strikers 10p

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Surcharges for Liverpool, Lambeth: Edinburgh's cash stopped

SUPPORT THE REBEL COUNCILS



4,000 demonstrated in Liverpool on Saturday 29th. Photo: John Smith, IFL.

LIVERPOOL City Council shop stewards have voted to strike if any councillor is surcharged or disqualified.

After three months of phoney war over the Rates Act, their council is squarely confronting the Tories. On June 14 Liverpool City Council set a budget with no cuts and a 9 per cent rate rise. It will balance if the government grants Liverpool an extra £30 million and withdraws £88 million penalties — but not otherwise.

The District Auditor has already written to Liverpool councillors threatening them with £2,165 surcharge apiece, just for not setting a rate until June 14. Further threats are sure to follow.

Surcharge

Lambeth councillors, in London, have also received threats of surcharge of some £3,967 each. As we go to press, Lambeth is the only council still standing by the 'set no rate' tactic initially adopted by most rate-capped councils. On June 22 councillor Mike Bright resigned, destroying the narrow majority for 'no rate' in Lambeth, so a rate may be

By Mick O'Sullivan

(London Bridge, in personal capacity)

set at the council meeting on July 3.

The surcharge proceedings could still go ahead. And if Lambeth's 'no rate' stand holds, further penalties will follow there too.

In Edinburgh the Labour District Council has had a £7 million rate support grant payment due on July 1 blocked. In Scotland rate-capping has already been law for some years, and Edinburgh's crime, in the Tory book, is to defy instructions to reduce its rates and to cut the amount taken from rate income for housing improvements and for maintaining its rent freeze.

Edinburgh council could be found guilty of contempt of court.

The pressures on the councillors everywhere are great. Any surcharge over £2000 means automatic disqualification from public office.

The Tories' tactics, so far as can be seen, are to drag things out as much as possible. Thanks to the coward-

ice of Labour councillors elsewhere than in the three rebel authorities, they have succeeded so far: the stand by Liverpool, Edinburgh and Lambeth would be much more powerful were it not that it appears as the tail-end of a movement which started with some 16 council leaderships promising to defy the government by not setting a rate.

Now appeals against the surcharges are likely to come up in the High Court in the autumn. Liverpool and Lambeth may run out of cash if the Tories stop payment of central government grant or the banks stop their credit; but the government can control the timing of that crisis, too.

Nerve

If the councils keep their nerve, they can win.

Even the sham 'no rate' policy aroused a powerful movement among council workers. In London local

authority shop stewards organised across unions and across boroughs for the first time, in the London Bridge committee.

Everywhere, council unions have been the strongest part of the resistance.

Impossible

If the councils stand firm, then eventually — one way or another — the Tories will have to try to take over the running of major local authorities in the face of industrial action and defiance by the workforce. Tenants and community groups can also be mobilised to make the prospect of such a take-over impossible for the Tories.

Support the rebel councils; commit the unions to industrial action in the event of any surcharge, disqualification, or attempted Tory takeover of local authorities; fight to get other Labour councils to stop debt payments to the City in the event of the defiant authorities being penalised.

• More on the local government battles: page 2.

**THIS
WEEK**

'Youth Training Scheme': the Tories in trouble — pages 6-7

NUM conference backs Scargill: but what now? pages 4-5

Political levy victories: p.3
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Liverpool heads for the crunch

By Martin Thomas

THE LABOUR Party national executive on June 26 voted unanimously to support Lambeth, Liverpool, and Edinburgh councils.

It called for contributions to a fund for the legal costs of councillors appealing against surcharges.

But a proposal by Eric Heffer and Dennis Skinner to spell out active support for the councils' campaigns was defeated by 18 votes to 8. According to the Financial Times (June 15), Neil Kinnock wrote last month to Lambeth councillors "warning them of the consequences if they go ahead with their defiance of the government".

This would fit in with Kinnock's speech in February, when he undermined councils' plans for defiance by declaring that they should stay legal, and in office, at all costs. "Better a dented shield than no shield at all".

Liverpool, however, is by all evidence beyond the stage of gestures and warnings. Other councils have adopted fudged 'deficit' budgets this year, relying on the usual shortfalls of spending below budget plans to see them through. Liverpool's budget, however, leaves a gap of £117 million between income and expenditure — too big for any fudging.

Liverpool may win an appeal against the current surcharge proceedings — which are to do with its failure to set a rate earlier, not the rate it set — but a confrontation is inevitable, either through legal action or through the banks cutting the council's credit.

The council leadership, in which 'Militant' is influential, initially suggested a budget with a 20% rate rise which might just have made fudging-through possible. But the council unions insisted on a clear-cut fight against the government.

So far this year Liverpool has not organised the sort of mass campaign which it conducted quite effectively up to May last year. But — despite growing criticisms of the 'Militant' line in Liverpool Labour Parties and trade unions — there is little doubt that the local labour movement will rally to the council against the Tories.

The Tories' apparent desire to string out the issue as long as possible leaves time for a considerable campaign to be generated.

Meanwhile the first announcements about next year's rate-capping are due this month, and discussions about Labour's response are already beginning. A serious effort to learn the lessons of the fiasco of the 'no rate' tactic is thus not just of historical interest, but could materially affect Liverpool, Edinburgh and Lambeth.

'No rate' was a fudged, half-hearted policy from the start. The unspoken assumption was that the Tories would be struck all of a heap by councils not setting a rate, and would hurry along with concessions. The whole issue could thus be resolved entirely by council-chamber dramatics and negotiating-table finesse, without any need for mass action.

Left-wingers who asked what Labour would do if the Tories didn't panic so easily were told that we couldn't tie our hands tactically in advance. Meanwhile under the banner of unity, 'set no rate' was watered down into 'defer setting a rate'.

Faced with councils prepared only to go (as Islington's Margaret Hodge put it) "right up to the brink", the Tories of course did not panic. And the fudged unity quickly fell apart.

For next year, Labour must be committed to a definite fighting policy. If only a minority of councils are willing to fight, then that minority must take a clear stand rather than sinking itself into a muddy consensus.

Unbalanced budgets like Liverpool's are the best council-chamber tactic. But the most important thing is the campaign outside the council chambers. Councillors must be tied into joint campaigns with trade unions, Labour Parties, tenants' and community groups, with the tactics democratically decided rather than handed down by council leaders, and with a definite perspective of mass action.

Greenwich Labour activists have come up with the idea that councils should be pressed to postpone rate-making until after the May 1986 local government elections. The idea is that the rate decision can then be made by the new Labour groups, improved we hope by reselection, rather than by the old ones which have failed this year.

It's a good idea, but obviously secondary to the main question of overall strategy.



Who are the terrorists?

A SHOW OF MUSCLE

By Clive Bradley

THE 'sweep' on people suspected of being involved in an IRA 'seaside terror' campaign has been a big propaganda coup for the police and the Tory government. The trial of people accused of trying to blow up Tory leaders in Brighton last year has come neatly in its aftermath.

There is some doubt about the authenticity of the 'seaside terror' campaign. It would not, as Paul Johnson has noted in the Guardian, be in keeping with recent Sinn Fein policy. But it is possible that the military wing (or a section of it) wants to show its independence from the politicians and re-stress the primacy of 'the armalite' over 'the ballot box'.

Glasgow

The police operation began with the arrest of five 'suspected terrorists' on the South Side of Glasgow on June 22, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Throughout that week, Stewart Street police station was cordoned off and patrolled by armed police, on both the street and the rooftops. Similar 'security' alerts followed, with mounting hysteria.

When a 'suspicious package' was discovered at Kincardine Bridge on the day of a visit by Princess Margaret to an army regiment, it was too good an opportunity to miss.

Motorcycle police roamed the area where the event was to take place, military police searched gardens of local houses and then stood guard in the same gardens, while members of the regiment acted as a back-up security force for the police.

The arrests were used as an excuse for the police to flex their muscles on the streets of Glasgow. The detainees were held without being charged, and without being allowed to see a lawyer; and protests outside the station have been prevented by armed police patrols.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act itself was rushed through — as an emergency measure — after a pub in Birmingham was bombed, probably by Republicans, at the end of 1974. It has remained law ever since, now allowing the police to deprive people of legal rights for four days.

The current ballyhoo about terrorism should put us on guard against attempts by the Tories to introduce new repressive laws.

Terrorist?

Laws like the PTA are a back-up to the British military occupation of Northern Ireland.

The recent electoral successes of Sinn Fein con-

firm that within the Catholic community there is deep-rooted support for the Republican movement and for the reunification of Ireland. A movement with such support cannot be regarded as 'terrorist'. The Provisional IRA emerged as a defence force for the Catholic ghettos against Protestant paramilitaries and the British army, and has waged a guerilla war against British military occupation.

Justice

Certainly methods such as indiscriminate attacks on British holiday-goers (if they were really planned) should be condemned by socialists. But the basic struggle is a just one.

The Tory party and the Labour party leaders raise a hue and cry about 'terrorism' but they have no justice on their side in Ireland.

The Northern Ireland state, created by the British-imposed partition of Ireland and gerrymandered from the outset to capture a 35% Catholic minority beneath an inbuilt Protestant majority, institutionalises discrimination against Catholics. Now successive British governments try to beat down the Catholics to make the state viable again.

Such repression breeds more repression. Troops out and a united Ireland with maximum minority rights for the Protestant areas — that's the only way to end the terror.

Pit policing comes to Wiltshire

By Ian Hollingworth

"Pit strike tactics to stop pop fans", was the headline in the local press on April 4 as Wiltshire geared up for the 1985 Stonehenge pop festival. All through the period leading up to the "Midsummer Solstice", Salisbury Miners' Support Group had tried to draw out these parallels.

The estimated cost of the operation to seal off Stonehenge was at least £750,000. Police and army gelled together like clockwork. Police ringed the "hippy" encampment 20 miles away from the ancient stones, whilst a helicopter hovered overhead all night with a searchlight and army firepower exercises between the camp and Stonehenge were rescheduled just to emphasise the point.

On June 1, police called in local vets to put down dogs and puppies made ownerless by the arrest of their owners who were on the Peace Convoy.

The Labour Party is calling for a public inquiry into the events this year, and provision of an alternative site next year. It has also been stung into trying to set up a Policewatch committee. Members of the Salisbury Miners' Support Group are trying to set up a public meeting with eye-witnesses.

MIS dirty tricks

MIS — the political police — had a 'dirty tricks' campaign in Northern Ireland in the mid-'70s, according to a file sent to Mrs Thatcher by a former civilian officer for the army.

The campaign included a project, codenamed Clockwork Orange 2 but never actually put into operation, to implicate Loyalist leaders and Labour politicians in London in homosexual relations. The intention was to discredit both Loyalist leaders preparing for the 1974 Ulster Workers' Council strike that led to the end of power-sharing, and the recently-elected Wilson government.

In the end MIS decided to back the strike.

The file also suggests that both army intelligence and the Royal Ulster Constabulary knew of sexual abuse being committed at the Kincora boys' home by Loyalist leaders, and covered up for them.

MIS is a law unto itself, pursuing its own policies regardless of elections or Parliaments. It should be scrapped.



Neil Kinnock. (Photo: John Harris, IFL).

Gillick decision set for mid-July

The fight to reverse the 'Gillick ruling' on contraception for the under-16s goes on, following a demonstration of 3000 in London on Saturday June 22.

The ruling bans doctors from giving advice on contraception or abortion to under-16s without 'parental advice'. In fact it will deter — and on available evidence already has deterred — young women from seeking

advice for fear of parental involvement. Generally if young women don't tell their parents there is good reason.

The appeal is being heard in the House of Lords, and a final decision is expected in mid-July. The campaign against Gillick must be kept up.

EDITORIAL

Keep our unions Labour!

THE UNION of Communication Workers last week (June 27) reported a three-to-one vote to maintain its political fund. It became the fourth union to vote to keep the political levy — following SOGAT, ISTC and FTAT — and the next day the National Communications Union engineering group (formerly POEU) became the fifth, with a 81% majority.

Other unions are increasingly confident about results in their ballots. The National Union of Seamen, the GBMATU, and the AUEW have balloted this month; APEX and the EETPU began this week.

The ballots — made legally obligatory by the Trade Union Act 1984 — are a big plank in Tory anti-union laws. The Tories had hoped for big 'no' votes.

Crippled

If they got their way, trade unions would be politically crippled — legally forbidden to organise campaigns on any but the most humdrum 'trade union' issues. Campaigns on unemployments, cuts, privatisation, anti-union laws — let alone on international issues — would be crippled.

And if only a few big unions stopped paying the political levy, the Labour Party — already in a financial mess — would probably go bankrupt. Labour Party leaders would then quite possibly try to find some way to transform it into a straight-forwardly capitalist party, like the SDP, funding itself from some other source than the workers' movement. The working class would lose even the indirect, blurred political voice it has now.

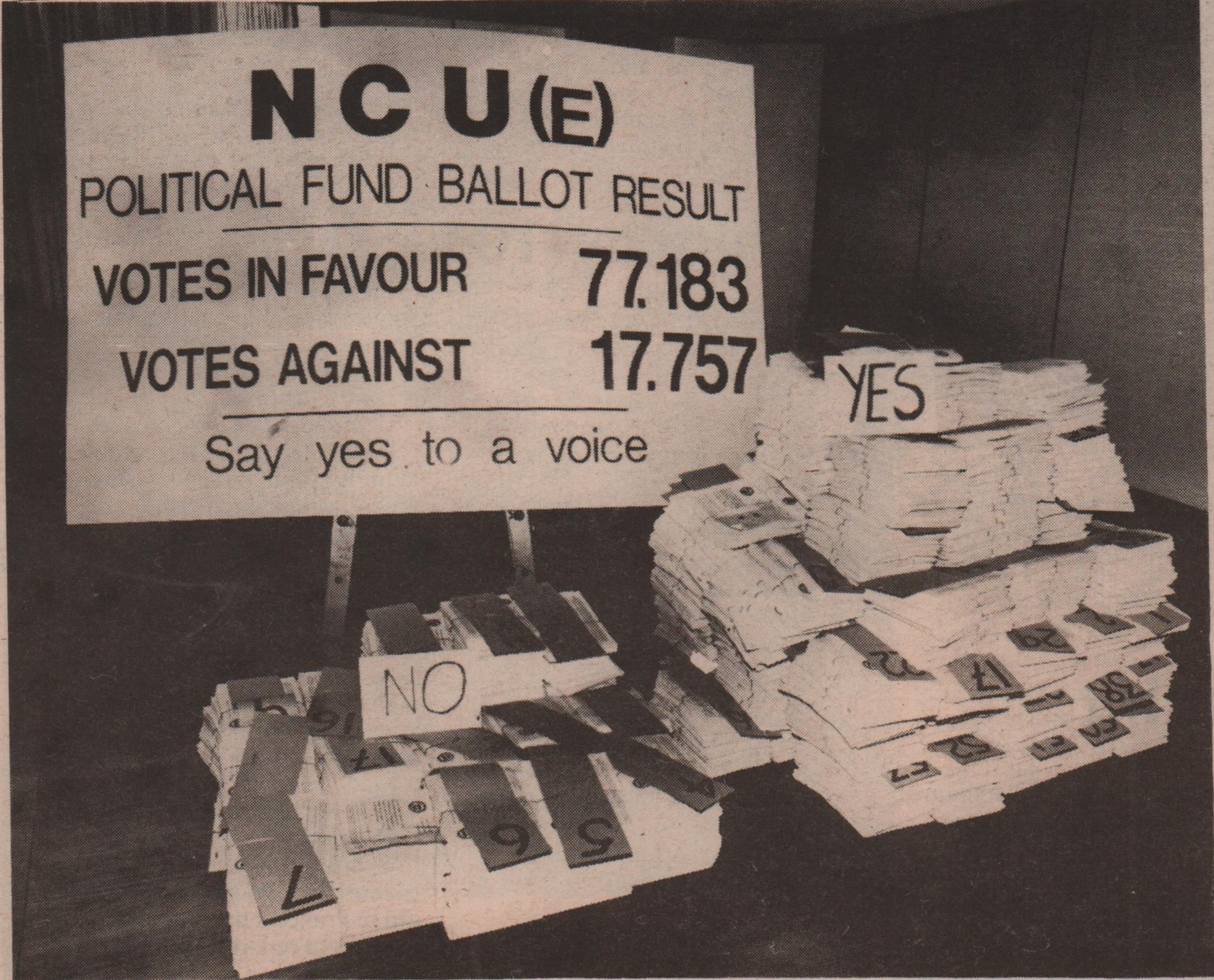
Despite often being conducted stodgily and defensively, the campaigns to save the political fund have obviously mobilised many activists. At the NUR conference last week, general secretary Jimmy Knapp reported that the campaign for a 'yes' vote in that union had brought forward 1500 activists prepared to work for it.

Workplace

The conference decided to build on that by encouraging workplace Labour Party branches, as a component and a follow-up to the political funds campaign. The proposal was moved by Socialist Organiser supporter Rob Dawber.

Workplace branches are the best way to organise such activists, and to begin to make the Labour Party more relevant to rank and file struggles.

They can help win the 'yes' votes — and combine them with a campaign to kick out the Tories. And they can provide an avenue for rank and file activists to work to change the Labour Party, to organise against its present leadership and for class-struggle politics.



NCU(E) POLITICAL FUND BALLOT RESULT	
VOTES IN FAVOUR	77.183
VOTES AGAINST	17.757

Say yes to a voice

Marxism from Moscow?

Below: scab coal from Poland being unloaded during the miners' strike. (Photo: Martin Shakeshaft). Above: NCU ballot figures (photo: Stefano Cagnoni, IFL).

THE Sunday Times of June 30 reported that the NUM is to send 20 miners active in the strike to attend a trade union college in Moscow this autumn.

Tory minister Peter Walker spluttered: "British miners must be aware that they are led by a man more interested in Marxism than in them".

If only it were Marxism that miners would learn in Moscow! But it's nearly 60 years since Moscow taught Marxism. In the official ideology of the Kremlin, shreds and

phrases from Marx have been woven into a doctrine which has as much to do with Karl Marx's theory of the self-liberation of the working class as Cardinal Spellman's blessings on the US forces in Vietnam had to do with the Sermon on the Mount.

Poland

Last November Arthur Scargill wrote to the Polish ambassador in Britain:

"The Jaruzelski government has dramatically increased the amount of coal imported to Britain... [It] is giving direct assistance to Mrs Thatcher's government..."

"The NUM has no intention of even considering the 'offer' to receive 100 striking miners' children for a holiday in Poland..."

"Please convey to your government and trade union movement our absolute disgust".

That Scargill could reply to the offer — officially coming from the state-recognised trade unions — by a letter to the ambassador, says everything about those 'unions'.

The official trade unions in Poland, in the USSR and in Eastern Europe are not genuine unions. They are transmission belts for the decisions of the bureaucrats. Real unions — like Solidarnosc in Poland — are savagely repressed by the Stalinist states.

Break links

Yet the NUM leadership is trying to get an international link-up of miners' unions, centred on the East European state unions.

Whatever the NUM leaders' motives, and whatever the hypocrisy of the Tories' denunciations, to have such dealings with the state 'unions' is a stab in the back of working-class militants trying to establish real, free trade unions in Eastern Europe.

The whole TUC, and many other unions beside the NUM — including right-wing ones like the ISTC and the GMBU — have links with the state 'unions'. But the labour movement should break those links, and instead help those trying to set up independent workers' movements.

Jeremy Corbyn MP Hyping up the law

In the debate on Kenneth Newman's 'anti-IRA' operation, the completely undemocratic nature of London's police force came through.

But there is another side to the whole debate.

It would appear that the government is using the present claims of terrorist activity to hype up the law and order argument and, I believe, pay the way to introduce very restrictive and very repressive legislation.

This legislation, either before the summer recess or later in the year, could well take the form of control over political activities — marches, demonstrations, protests.

Extension of the Emergency Provisions Act [for Northern Ireland] was debated last week. Many of the Campaign Group MPs were present and voted against its continuation. Apart from that the turnout by the Parliamentary Labour Party was very small.

Party policy is to oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Act and the Emergency Provisions Act, which paved the way for the Diplock no-jury courts, and it is appalling that the party leadership is not prepared to go out and campaign on this issue.

On Friday morning Tony Benn presented an Amnesty Bill for the miners who are either imprisoned or sacked. I've been in touch with a number of miners in prison, and they are looking for the Labour Party to win the next election and to put an amnesty into practice immediately.

We have received a great deal of support for the Amnesty Bill — letter from miners and other people throughout the country, and we have launched, jointly with the NUM, a financial and political appeal for the imprisoned and sacked miners

Central American Independence Day

Wednesday July 3

Picket US Embassy

12.00 to 2.00 p.m.

Press conference in the
House of Commons
at 3.00 p.m.

Thursday July 4

4.30 p.m. Not the Boston
Tea Party — a Nicaraguan
coffee party and picnic
in Jubilee Gardens, South
Bank, London

6.00 p.m. Rally in
Jubilee Gardens. Ron
Todd, Glenys Kinnock,
Ken Livingstone invited.

6.45 p.m. Concert in
Jubilee Gardens with
Newtown Neurotics and
others



Amnesty for police but not for pickets? — see story on right. Photo: John Harris, IFL.

Where the cuts hit

OVER 7000 homes in Tower Hamlets, East London, are unfit for human habitation.

11,000 people, according to a report by the local Information and Resource Centre, live in conditions of 'statutory overcrowding'.

Sickness and death rates are high in the borough, but over the last three years the District Health Authority has had £4.5 million cut by central government, and the right wing Labour

council has cut £2.4 million off the social services budget.

IT'S NOT just the housing, it's the water too.

The poor state of the sewers means frequent flooding of homes in Tower Hamlets. And the Thames Water Authority says that the water has a high level of nitrates which could increase risks of stomach cancer.

Fascists in Stoke

The fascist British National Party are going ahead with a rally in Stoke on July 27 with their leader John Tyndall speaking.

Last year the National Front held a march through Stoke which went unopposed. Since then the BNP have been putting a lot of work into spreading their filthy ideas in the area.

Calls have been made by local

councillors, and by Labour MP Mark Fisher to the Chief Constable asking him to ban the fascists. Such calls can only have the effect of demobilising the working class.

Instead we should call on all local labour movement organisations to get their members out on the streets against the fascist scum.

Socialist Organiser meets

Socialist Organiser supporters from across the country met in Manchester on June 22-23 for our AGM.

We assessed our work over the last year, outlined perspectives for the coming year, and elected a new Editorial Board.

"There is no doubt that the miners' strike was a defeat", SO editor John O'Mahony said in introducing the main discussion on perspectives, "but tens of thousands of people have found out what capitalism is about. The working class has to go through a whole period of lessons, struggles and setbacks; there is no other way that the labour movement can transform itself".

A discussion on the Labour Party decided that we should demand that the Labour Party leaders campaign vigorously against the Tories and for a general election, while also urging local Labour Parties to campaign on their own policies. A minority view held that we should avoid any electoral focus.

With the coming period probably not one of big direct struggles, we decided to place emphasis on regularising our own routine of paper sales, local readers' meetings, education, fund-raising, etc.

Considerable progress was registered in our youth work, and we decided to make a fresh turn towards organising round the government's cheap-labour Youth Training Scheme. Other discussions covered our work in the women's movement and dialogue with socialist groups in other countries.

The biggest controversy at the AGM was on Palestine. Many supporters felt unready to come to a decision, and so we decided to extend the discussion — see page 8.

The trouble with democracy

One Coal Board, one profit motive, one Führer?

NCB representative Michael Eaton, explaining why the NCB insists on a one-person 'review' of colliery closures rather than the three-person set-up promised to NACODS last October, said last week: "If you get three people you're bound to get disagreements and votes. We need decisions".

Perhaps the NCB is worried by the report from the House of Commons select committee. Having more than one member, this committee was likely to run into problems, and in fact a maverick Tory voted with Labour so that the committee came out for a national review of the

Bromley 10

THE TRIAL of the Bromley Ten, who were arrested in Bromley High Street, in Kent, while collecting food and money for the families of striking miners, has been remanded to September 2.

When the trial, on charges of wilful obstruction, began on May 7, Bromley magistrates court was lobbied by supporters of the ten. Now the defence campaign is organised a lobby of the Labour Party national executive on July 24 (9am at 150 Walworth Road).

The lobby is not just for the Bromley Ten, but for all those who suffered police harassment during the miners' strike while collecting. A contingent of sacked Kent miners is expected there.

Donations for the defence campaign fund to: Sue Yates, Secretary, Ravensbourne CLP, H G Wells Centre, St Marks Road, off Masons Hill, Bromley, Kent.

Careers

THE Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) has come out against Ken Livingstone's campaign for Labour Party treasurer and Livingstone's and John McDonnell's candidatures for the National Executive Committee.

"An excess of 'Left' candidates" says CLPD, "can only result in the left vote being split. Any split in Left Constituency Labour Party votes for Treasurer will ensure that Booth is unsuccessful and McCluskie elected."

"In the CLP section of the NEC, past experience shows that it is the Left's two women candidates, Richardson and Wise, who are most vulnerable to such splitting."

"The Left's cause is not served by undisciplined pursuit of personal careers at the expense of collective strategy".

Stabilising

According to figures published last week, TUC affiliated membership now stands at 9,855,000.

This is well down on the 1979 record high of 12 million, but the loss over the last year, 227,000, is much smaller than in the previous five years of mass unemployment.

The TGWU's membership has dropped to 1.49 million. Other big unions are: AUEW, 1 million; GMBU, 0.85 million; NALGO, 0.77 million; and NUPE, 0.67 million.

cases of the 700 miners still sacked.

The NCB rejected this call out of hand.

Eaton's other job over the last week or so, as the Coal Board media person, has been to egg on the media's denunciations of Arthur Scargill's alleged plans for 'dictatorship' in the NUM.

Cops' amnesty

No amnesty for charges arising from the miners' strike? It depends who you are.

In Parliament on June 25 it was reported that 135 complaints made against the police during the strike have been investigated so far, and not a single disciplinary action has been taken as a result.

Another 414 complaints remain to be heard.

One thing, of course, makes it easier for the police to get their amnesty. The police themselves are judge and jury for the complaints.

Same police

Governments come and governments go, but the police remain.

And that's true even when the government is avowedly socialist and the police pro-fascist.

Behind the socialist facade of Felipe Gonzalez's government in Spain, the police and civil guards carry on much as they did in Franco's day, according to a recent report from Amnesty International.

Suspects are held incommunicado for up to ten days and denied access to lawyers during most of that time.

They are beaten, burned with cigarettes, hung upside down, given electric shocks and partially suffocated during interrogation.

The 11 examples cited in the Amnesty International report are from 1983. Amnesty International says that they are selected to illustrate the problem and that similar allegations continue to be made.

Witch-hunt

In a lengthy and stormy recent meeting of Glasgow District Labour Party, the Labour Coordinating Committee and right wing joined forces to vote through a recommended list of council candidates which clearly excluded a number of Militant supporters and sympathisers.

The criteria for selection are supposed to be purely technical, that is to say, the experience and knowledge of the nominees on Labour local government affairs.

Sandy Smeaton of the LCC admitted, however, that he and others on the district executive did take political opinions into account when they made their selection.

Several of the exclusions were hotly contested, with fairly close votes in a 90-strong meeting. Supporters and sympathisers of Socialist Organiser and the Independent Labour Party were to the fore in defending Militant supporters against these blatantly politically biased recommendations.

This gives the lie to Socialist Worker's claim that those on the left who criticise the Militant's positions on such issues as Ireland and gay rights are opening the door to a witch-hunt.

Many Glasgow Labour Party members must now consider breaking from the LCC.

Miners fight on

NUM

But after the resounding Conference votes, what will happen in the Areas, where local leaders have been dragging their feet over a campaign for sacked and jailed miners? John Bloxam reports.

ON ITS first day, July 1, the NUM conference in Sheffield declared proudly that the miners were right to fight in March 1984.

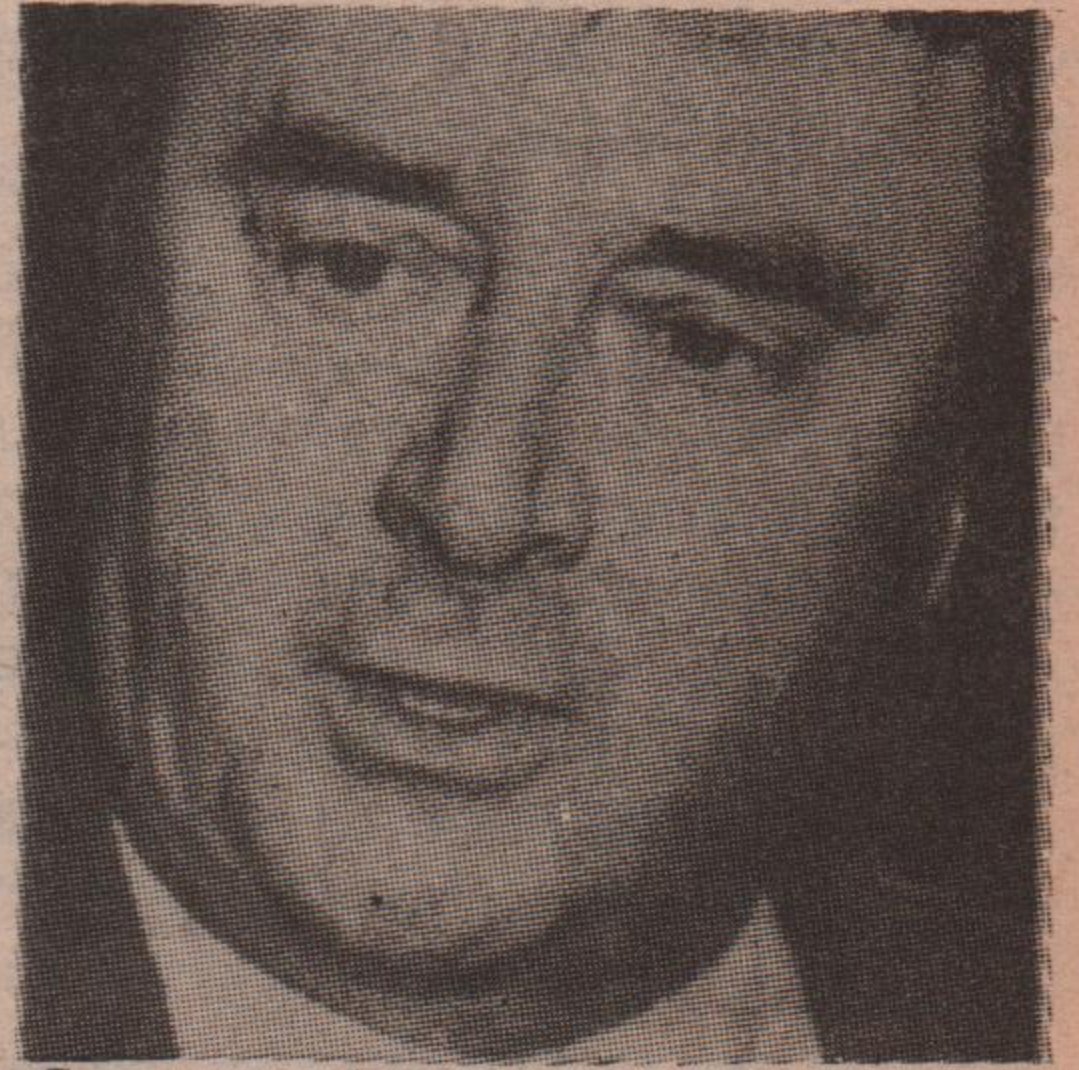
It was the best possible reply to the cynics, the right-wingers and the soft-lefts who have been saying that the NUM shouldn't have fought, or should have fought less militantly.

On the floor of conference, the only opposition came from the Notts scab delegation, who had arrived at the conference with police outriders. They couldn't even find a seconder!

Arthur Scargill argued that with 80% of the membership out, a ballot last April had made no sense. "It was not a failure of mass picketing", he insisted, "but a failure to mass-picket, that represented a weakness in many parts of our union".

the Eurocommunist-dominated area leaderships. They want more 'campaigning' — in alliance with bishops and chief constables — and less militancy and industrial action. They have consistently soft-pedalled the 'difficult' cases of jailed miners.

They said nothing about all this in the debate — preferring



Super-scab Roy Lynk



Arthur Scargill

to do rather than to say! In recent weeks their arguments have been mostly about the NEC's proposed rule changes, which are due to be debated from Thursday in closed session — but they may back out from fighting that issue on the conference floor, too.

The rule changes, say the Eurocommunists, are a diversion. They will turn the union inwards, rather than outwards to launch a 'campaign for coal'. They will divide the union rather than unite it.

The NEC's motivation is clearly to make the NUM a more effective fighting unit — more centralised, less open to interference from the Tories and the judges.

Changes

But the proposed rule changes can and must be criticised from a direction entirely different from the view that denounces both the rule changes and mass picketing.

Like the 'Miners' Next Step' proposals 70 years ago, the rule changes should have combined increased centralisation with a radical extension of democracy in the union. But the second element is weak in the new rule book, which for example makes it almost impossible to remove full-time officials.

Because of this, the proposals are also weaker as a weapon against the leading scabs and those consciously organising a breakaway.

The widest opposition has been to the proposed rule

Miners for S Africa?

A South African gold mining firm is taking advantage of the threatened closure of collieries in the North East and launching a recruitment campaign in the area.

The General Mining Union Corporation, the second largest mining company, has held meetings at Peterlee, Newcastle and Blythe, as part of a nationwide campaign that is intended to recruit 400 skilled miners. They are offering a permanent career in gold mining and a company house available at £60 a year rent, including electricity.

Tyneside Anti-Apartheid Campaign members have picketed the hotel where the Newcastle meeting was held. A Durham Area NUM Executive member has condemned the firm's moves and stated that anyone taking up the firm's offer would be aiding the oppression of black miners.

goes left



Conference agreed with Scargill that the union was right to fight. (Photo: John Harris, IFL).

change on 'associate membership'. Last week the Yorkshire Area Council voted overwhelmingly against it.

Some militants who favour recognising Women Against Pit Closures groups still object to an open-ended rule which leaves the NEC with the power to give or deny 'associate membership' to anyone.

Confidence

But a vote for this rule change will be clearly a vote of confidence in the women's groups.

Women Against Pit Closures is calling a demonstration outside the conference on Thursday.

The rule change should be supported. Amendments next year can say who should be 'associate members'; can give the final judgment to conference; can extend the recognition of the Women Against Pit Closure groups to affiliated status in the union — just as other amendments should extend democracy in the union to include regular election and right of recall of all officials, on the NUM's terms and timing.

A debate on new technology

is scheduled for Tuesday. The divisive bonus incentive scheme is also down for discussion.

Such debates can help to put flesh on the bones of Scargill's repeated calls for a campaign for industrial action.

Sack

The NEC recommendation to sack Notts scab leader Roy Lynk and to reprimand his associate Prendergast is to be decided at this conference. Lynk is armed with a three-to-one ballot vote in Notts to defy the

new rule book even if it means being expelled or breaking away.

But on Monday Arthur Scargill warned that any breakaway would be a "disaster" — and "most disastrous of all for those who themselves form any such breakaway". Lynk won't be convinced, but his isolation in Monday's vote could make him more cautious.

In any case, more help will be urgently needed for supporters of the national union in Notts, to minimise the damage that the scab-herders can cause.

Whip

Ray Powell, the Ogmore MP and Labour Whip in the House of Commons, has also declared that the Party would "go it alone" if the National Executive failed to carry out

Paul Whetton's diary

Notts after the conference

WE'VE gone through resolutions for annual conference. There are about four or five resolutions where we disagree with the position taken by Notts.

What I am looking for from this conference is support for the National Executive's recommendation to sack Roy Lynk.

I hope they will also turn the "wrist-slapping" against Prenderghast into sacking as well.

Apart from that, the first part of the conference, dealing with policy, does not contain any particularly contentious stuff.

It is right at the end of the conference, in the part deal with rules revision that the scuffles will come.

Notts has got a mandate, supported by a ballot, to oppose all the rule changes. In the main those rule changes will be passed, though not necessarily on the nod.

Result

While we have had good results for the striking miners in the recent elections in the Notts Area, we recognise that a lot will now depend on whether Notts remains part of the national union, or whether it breaks away.

I would imagine that once the conference had taken its decision on rules revision, the Notts area will split off and we will then have to begin the task of forming a new Notts Area of the NUM.

There will obviously be problems — recognition by the NCB, for example — but we aren't going to be able to put things right overnight. It's going to be a long-term and difficult process.

On the rule changes themselves, a couple of them appear to be quite contentious.

On the question of five yearly ballots, that is something we have fought for over a number of years and it would be two-faced of us to turn round now and say we don't want it. Of course we want regular elections of full

time national and are officials.

I don't think it is as contentious as the media portrays it. If the vote goes that way, then Scargill will be quite prepared to submit himself to five-yearly reelection.

The media are frightened of the death of Arthur Scargill and they will do everything they can to make it a personality issue and turn the union against Arthur Scargill.

The other contentious issue is the question of associate membership of the union — which would be open, for example, to Women Against Pit Closures. I think that is very important.

The Notts strikers could not have done what we did without the full backing and support of the women. Perhaps the picture is sharp within the Notts coalfield in recognising the important role played by those women and the rights that they ought to have, than it is in other coalfields.

I find it hard to see anyone opposing this, though because the women were active in every coalfield.

I don't think the women's groups should be incorporated at branch level into the NUM because they would just be swallowed up, but I think they should have associate membership and recognition for their own groups.

It would be a retrograde step if the proposal to offer them associate membership were voted down.

I was very pleased to see that Thatcher has decided to recognise what Clarke and Ottey have done. A lot of the lads were upset, but I think it highlights the role they played during that strike.

It is a recognition by the ruling class of the important role played by strike-breakers and scabs.

The Coal Board has announced that the Colliery Review Procedure will involve just one person. When we are talking about one person we know who that person will really be — Margaret Thatcher, even if she isn't actually the person named.

Witch-hunters help NCB

St. John's NUM Lodge is facing another Bedwas as the NCB attempts to whip up fear and anxiety at the pit.

The Board's strategy has succeeded to some extent, as 367 men have so far accepted redundancy. Of these, however, 200 were over the age of 50, in a pit that has been overmanned since the closure of Caerau and Coegnant pits, also in the Llynfi valley.

Following the redundancies, the workforce is now at the size demanded by the NCB before the strike. But they still insist on closure.

Local pits have been closed on the grounds that the Margam super-pit, which is yet to be sunk, will provide new jobs and a profitable pit.

Margam, however, has been long awaited and has given the Board a useful excuse to close pits — with no guarantee that it will ever be

By Martin Barclay

sunk.

The Lodge's argument has been that the reserves of coking coal Margam is meant to reach can be got at more cheaply from the St. John's end.

The Board, for their part, have shrugged this off, claiming "geological difficulties". On this basis no South Wales pit would stay open and the closure is obviously a second political attempt to destroy the lodge. The Lodge leadership were sacked during the strike for peacefully visiting a scab's home, but were then reinstated in the negotiations following the return to work.

That leadership also faces attack from another direction.

Neil Kinnock has visited

the pit to show his "support" but his supporters in the Ogmore CLP have not let this stand in the way. Two weeks ago the Party passed a resolution to national conference calling for the expulsion of supporters of the Militant tendency. This is obviously aimed at Militant supporter Ian Isaac, who is St. John's Lodge secretary, and a member of the South Wales NUM executive.

He is also chair of the Militant-dominated Maesteg West ward in the constituency.

the expulsions.

The witch-hunt reveals the support of Kinnock's followers for what it's worth, and represents a serious crack in the unity needed to fight the closure of the pit.

The Lodge is continuing its campaign despite these attacks and has set up a local action committee to coordinate activity.

With the help of Mid-Glamorgan County Council, a public inquiry is being held on July 9 - 11, chaired by Alan Fisher (ex-NUPE) to examine the case for and against closure.

The Lodge has to face the scabbing of the local Labour Party as well as the prospect of closure and needs every support.

Contact: Idwal Isaac, secretary, St John's NUM, c/o 10 Bridge St., Maesteg, Mid-Glamorgan.

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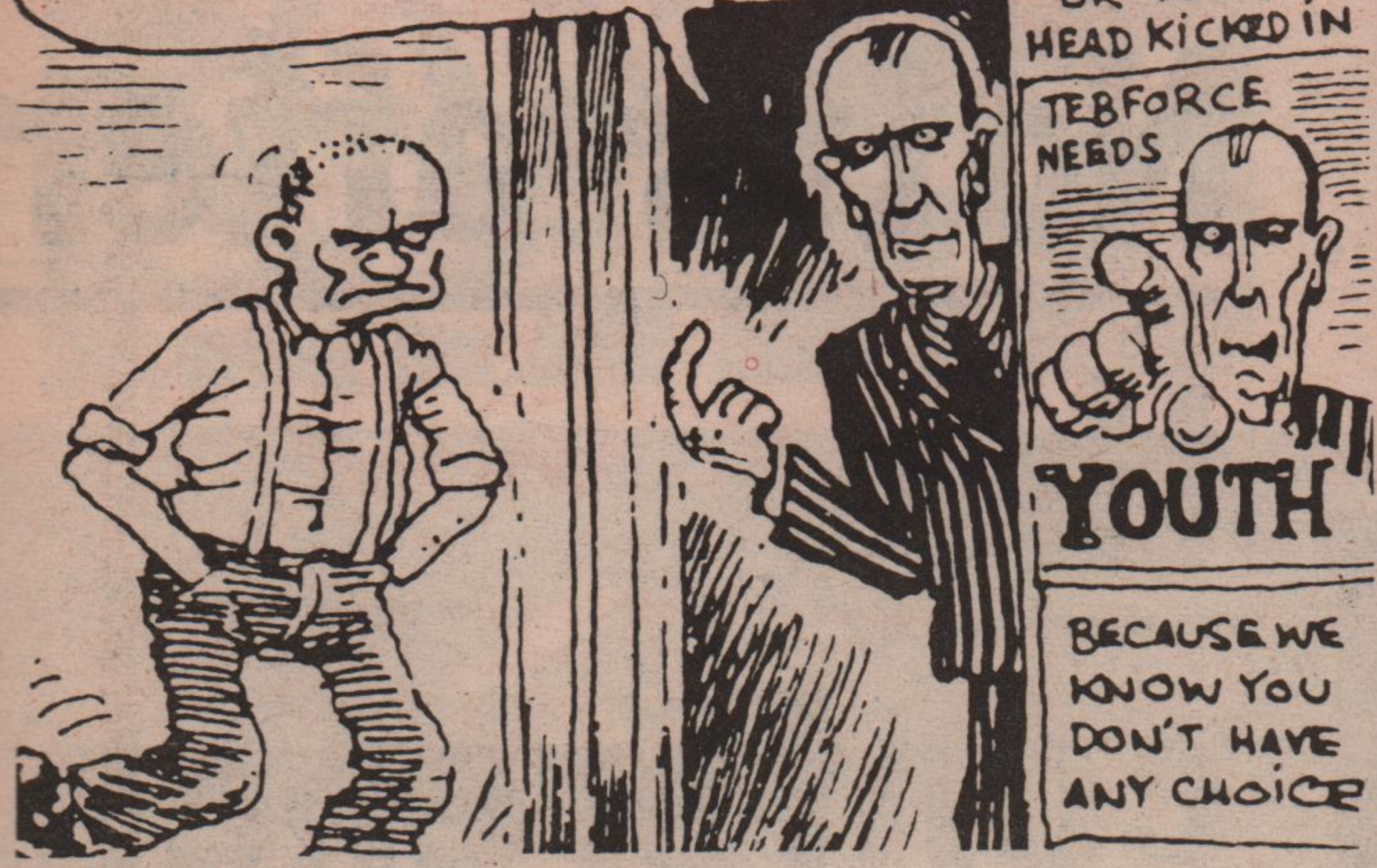
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Organising in the workplaces

Colin Foster summarises a survey on the Youth Training Scheme by the Labour Research Department ('Bargaining Report' no.41, June 1985; £2.25 from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF).

More and more employers are using the government Youth Training Scheme (YTS) as their regular channel for taking on young workers.

Pilkingtons Glass no longer recruits any under-18s except through YTS. Marks and Spencer fills most full-time vacancies from its YTS trainees. Fine Fare and Debenhams do most or all of their school-leaver recruitment through YTS.

The Central Electricity Generating Board now takes nearly twice as many school-leavers through YTS as through its regular trainee programmes. The furniture industry takes most young workers through YTS, and few through apprenticeship. Likewise for hairdressing.

In electrical contracting, all first-year apprentices are now on YTS; the construction industry and electrical contracting training boards have by far the biggest YTS scheme, with 17,700 trainees.

For these firms, YTS means cheap youth labour for a year. YTS trainees are mostly paid £26.25 a week — but that, plus a £14.75 a week subsidy, is paid to the 'agent' running the scheme by the government. Other under-18 trainees earn an average of £58 (male) or £47.50 (female). And at the end of the year the firm can throw the YTS trainees onto the streets, with no questions asked, or pick and choose those it keeps on.

Difficulties

40% of YTS trainees end their YTS year without a job. The Labour Research survey notes the difficulties for trade unionists in organising against these cheap-labour conditions. Some 40% of YTS trainees are in the 'Distribution, hotels, catering, repairs' sector, which is

usually ill-organised. Everywhere trainees are likely to work as isolated individuals or tiny groups, in small workplaces — especially on mode A (private employer) schemes, which cover 75% of trainees.

But the survey also notes that the Tories and the employers are not having things all their own way with YTS.

Funding

At the start of 1984, only 25% of 16 year olds and 6% of 17 year olds were on YTS — and of those on YTS, 37% left early. The Tories are talking about making YTS a two-year scheme, but without a vast increase in funding — which they will not provide — they can't hope to get anywhere near all school-leavers onto YTS.

At the end of January 1985, 30% of all mode A programmes still did not meet the official Manpower Services Commission standards as regards training. No doubt the Tories do not worry too much about that, but it's another index of the problems they'll have with expanding YTS.

In several firms, trade unions have managed to get improved pay and conditions for YTS trainees.

16% of YTS trainees get 'top-up' payments on top of their £26.25 a week. The best agreement is at Massey Ferguson, where trainees get £83.41 a week. Tate and Lyle pay £60, Sheffield and Hackney councils £52, ICI (Gloucester) £50.

In several places trainees also get fringe benefits — travel expenses, clothing allowances or free overalls, subsidised meals, etc. Labour Research cites "a number of examples where trade unionists are aware of and involved in training". Some YTS schemes do lead to recognised qualifications, such as City and Guilds.

Five workplaces are identified by Labour Research where equal opportunities policies cover YTS trainees.

In several other companies, YTS has been blocked because the bosses would not accept union conditions for its introduction.

WE CAN YTS!

THE government is beginning to run short of options in its attack on working class young people. That's the meaning of recent developments around the Youth Training Scheme.

The Budget contained an announcement that the YTS scheme was to be expanded. The stated intention is to start offering two year places to 16 year olds, and one year places to 17 year olds.

The additional year is to come under Mode A (company-based schemes) and will supposedly be made possible by two measures:

*First, there will be some extra money (£125 million in 1986/7 and £300 million in 1987/8).

*Secondly, the Young Workers' Scheme (in which the government paid firms to cut young people's wages) will be stopped, though not straightaway.

Benefits

Most people had been expecting that a third measure would also be announced, namely the withdrawal of benefits so as to force young people onto the expanded scheme. So why has this idea, originally floated by Tebbit in 1981, been shelved for a second time?

The answer lies in the fact that the government doesn't feel strong enough to take so decisive a step towards compulsion when the proposed expansion

The Tories have just approved an extension of their Youth Training Scheme to two years. Eventually they see this cheap-labour scheme covering all 16 and 17 year olds. The TUC has approved the new Tory plans, but resistance to YTS is growing, as Colin Waugh reports.

clearly does not add up to the guarantee of a place for all those who will now become entitled to claim one.

In fact, on closer inspection the budget proposal begins to look like the kind of ducking and diving associated with the incompetent small-time crook Arthur Daley's ceaseless struggle to offload flood-damaged bathing costumes, studless football boots, etc., in TV's "Minder" series.

In the first place, although it appears that more money is being put in, the cost of the proposed two-year scheme has actually been set at £1 billion per year — that is, exactly the same amount proposed by Tebbit in 1981 to cover a one-year scheme.

This is possible because savings have arisen from:

*the fact that at least one-third of the young people eligible for the one-year scheme still manage to avoid going on it, and

*from the fact that the average time spent by those who do go on it is between nine and ten

months, rather than a full year. Compulsion would abolish most of these savings.

Each place on the present one-year scheme costs £2400, in contrast to the £900 it costs to keep a school leaver on the dole. In a second year, the allowance paid to trainees would probably need to be higher; at the same time, there are signs that neither the large firms that currently provide most of what can be presented as 'quality' training, nor the smaller ones which are getting apprentices on the cheap, are keen to cough up for a second year.

Gain

The only Mode A providers who would definitely stand to gain are the firms set up purely to make a profit out of 'training'.

However, these concerns rely on placing trainees with employers who are actually producing goods or services for 'work experience' — a catch 22 situation for the government unless it can find money from



somewhere else.

This in turn will not be made any easier by the difficulty of trying to persuade the general public that such agencies provide anything like worthwhile training.

However, shelving or postponing open compulsion doesn't prevent creeping compulsion entering by the back door. For example, the practice of fining YTS refusers 40% of their Supplementary Benefit goes on.

This system reduced the income of 12,000 16-17 year olds to £10 a week in the period November 1983 to November 1984. This sort of thing has



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ady started to undermine the
le scheme's pretensions to
ality'.

aced with increasing prob-
s, of 'indiscipline' (that is,
ormal resistance by trainees)
le A employers are likely to
uit still more selectively,
leaving more young people
e catered for under Mode
and annulling the govern-
t's intention to move
wards an increasingly
employer-led' scheme.

urther effect of creeping
ulsion might be that, in
er to defuse trainee resis-
e, the MSC would make it
er for young people to swop
emes, leading to the appear-
e of 'sink' schemes and a still
se public image.

nder normal circumstances,
government would naturally
t to its allies in the upper
elons of the TUC and Labour
ty to help it over these diffi-
ies. And indeed, Kinnock
wed that he was ready to
nter his services when he
missed 200,000 school stu-
ts who took action against
S compulsion on April 25 as
ities'.

Problems

Unfortunately, it seems that
n in this quarter problems
y be developing.

A number of groupings,
ending beyond the revolu-
ary left to include a broad
pectrum of professionals
olved with the scheme, are
nning to establish them-
es. These include the
field-based Labour Move-
nt National Inquiry into
uth Unemployment and
ining, and the London-
ed Action on Youth Rights
Opportunities. REITS
cial Equality in Youth Train-
Schemes) has recently
ught out an effective expos-
of race discrimination in YTS
emes, using data collected in

Coventry.

If any of these activities do
break through to a wider public,
other union leaders will start to
find themselves in the same sort
of embarrassing situation now
occupied by some of those high
up in NATFHE, the college
lecturers' union. It is their mis-
fortune to have to sit as TUC
reps on the various Manpower
Services Commission commit-
tees which are planning the

extension of YTS to two years
when, as of Whit weekend,
NATFHE's annual conference
has voted to oppose the whole
scheme in its present form.

Signs

To sum up, the signs for those
who have consistently opposed
YTS from the beginning are
moderately encouraging.



Rigging the NHS figures

By George Beckman

Norman Fowler's 'The Health
Service in England' leaflet is
supposed to 'help you see how
the NHS is developing and
improving'. In fact it consists of
an unrepresentative selection of
statistics from 'The Health
Service in England; Annual
Report 1984' (HMSO) which are
often of dubious validity.

450,000 copies of this leaflet
have been distributed through-
out the English NHS (although
not it seems in Scotland, Wales
or Northern Ireland). It ostens-
ibly originates from the Depart-
ment of Health and Social Secur-
ity, but its crude propagandist
tone identifies it more closely
with the Conservative Party
Central Office.

Mislead

The leaflet is deliberately mis-
leading in a number of ways. It
compares health statistics for
two years only, 1978 and 1983.
No reason is given to explain
why 1978 — the year before the
Tories returned to power — is
chosen in a supposedly non-
party document.

Choosing two years only
doesn't allow people to see how
changes may be a part of a long
term trend. For example peri-
natal mortality — still births and
deaths in the first week of life —
has been falling steadily since
the mid-1950s, so a fall between
1978 and 1983 is not surprising.

Furthermore the years to be
compared are arbitrarily altered
if it gives a better picture. The
leaflet says that waiting lists are
down, 'reduced from 750,000 in
1979 to 690,000 in 1984. This
compared March 1979 — the
peak of the waiting lists follow-
ing the 1979 industrial action —
to March 1984.

If March 1978 had been
chosen instead, a 15% increase
in waiting lists would have been
seen. Furthermore there have
been changes in the definitions
of waiting lists to reduce the
numbers. People waiting for
day surgery are now excluded
from the figures.

Figures

Fowler tries this strategy
again with staffing level figures.
NHS staffing level statistics are
given in 'Whole Time Equiva-
lents' — i.e. part-time employ-
ees are counted according to the
fraction of the full-time week she
or he works. In 1980 the full
working week of nurses was
reduced from 40 to 37½ hours
per week, so increasing the
whole time equivalent work
force by 7% overnight without a
single extra hour being worked.
Of course this is not mentioned
when triumphant statistics are
given about improved staffing
levels.

The Royal College of Nursing
report from 1983 says that
'Nurses want the public to know
that standards of care are
already threatened, that staff-
ing levels on wards hover just
above danger level and that out
in the community increased
numbers of patients are over-
burdening community care and
making good nursing practice
practically impossible.'

A third way of cooking the
books is by presenting only one
side of a gain/loss situation. For

example the leaflet says that
11,000 new beds were opened
between 1980 and 1984 (many of
them planned before the 1979
election). However, overall
there has been a net loss of
12,900 available beds between
these times.

NHS spending is compared
only to the Retail Price Index
level of inflation. But prices in
the NHS have risen in advance
of general inflation, and when
considering the health service,
spending must be considered
relative to need.

With the proportion of the
population over 70 increasing
and with technological advance,
need for resources increases.
The debacle of the cervical
cancer screening service reveals
one vast area of unmet need.

Thatcher has consistently
claimed that 'The NHS is safe
with us'. But are even health
service statistics safe in her
hands?

A similar book-cooking exer-
cise has taken place with unem-
ployment statistics, with chang-
es in definition excluding many
from the figures in an attempt to

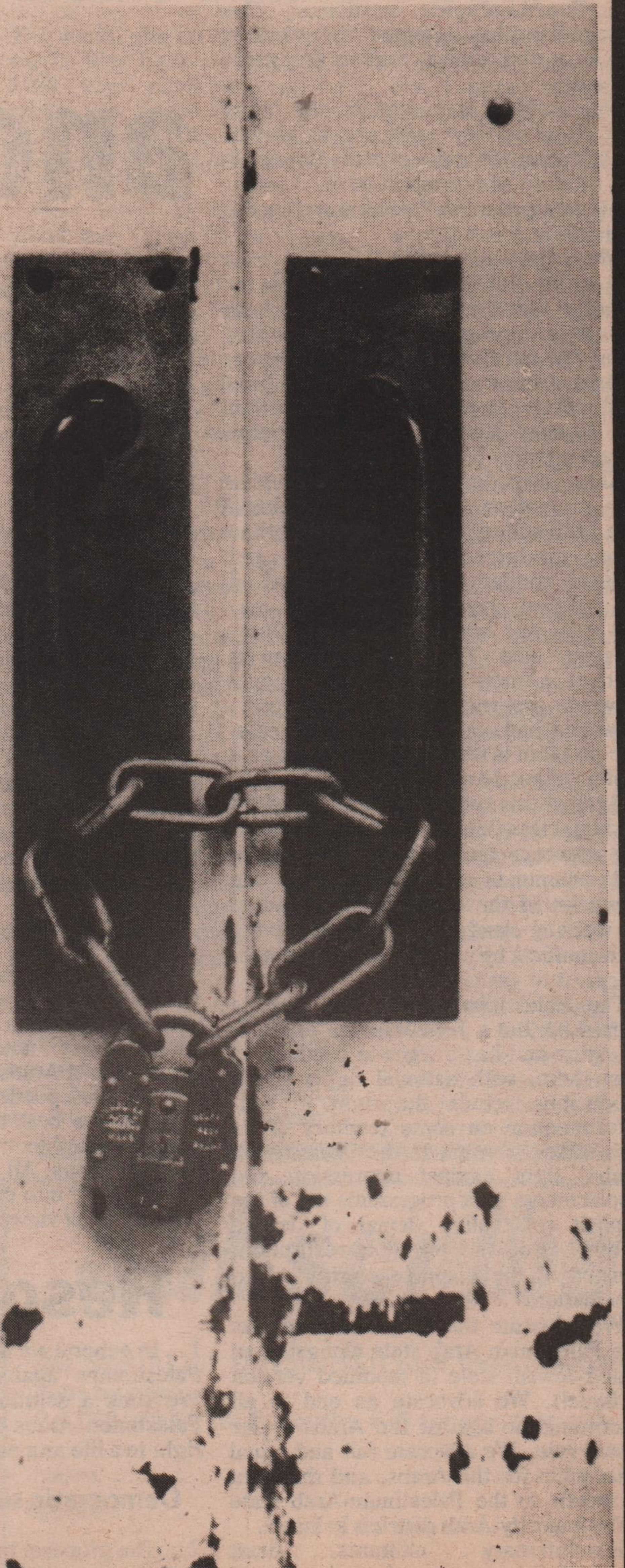
make the rise in unemployment
look less disastrous. The recent
figures supposedly revealing an
increase in employment were
given in such a way to disguise
the fact that an increase only
occurred in part-time "pin
money" jobs and that the de-
crease in full-time employment
has continued.

Don't believe a word, or a
number they say.

Lies

It is important for people
working in the health services to
combat Fowler's lies. Radical
Statistics Health Group have
produced a booklet 'Unsafe in
their Hands' from which many
of the above details originate.

It is available for 50p from
Radical Statistics Health Group,
c/o British Society for Social
Responsibility in Science, 9
Poland Street, London W1V
3DG. If you are really hard up it
can be obtained free from the
Cardiff Socialist Organiser
group, c/o 22 Norwood Court,
Roath, Cardiff.



At the Socialist Organiser AGM on June 22-23, we discussed Palestine.

Until now SO has supported the slogan of 'a democratic, secular Palestine'. Some SO supporters still say we should call for a single state in Palestine, embracing Jews and Arabs; others argue we should propose an independent Palestinian-Arab state alongside a modified Israeli-Jewish state. We published some discussion articles last week.

The AGM felt that we weren't yet ready to take a decision, and so resolved to continue the discussion.

This week we publish a draft statement of the 'two states' position by John O'Mahony and Martin Thomas. Further contributions to the debate are welcomed, and will appear over the coming weeks.

Preamble

The Palestine question mainly presents itself to working-class militants as follows:

a) 37 years ago a new Jewish state, Israel, was created in Palestine by immigrants from Europe, America, and the Arab countries. The core of them were refugees from European anti-semitism, including survivors of the greatest racist crime in recorded history, Hitler's massacre of six million Jews. The Jewish state is heavily dependent on outside financial support and it functions as a satellite of US imperialism, though it has autonomous interests and projects of its own.

b) Most of the Palestinian people have been displaced, and transformed into refugees and stateless persons outside Palestine. The remainder are either an oppressed minority within pre-1967 Israel, or under military rule in the West Bank and Gaza.

c) A chronic national antagonism exists between Israeli-Jewish and Arab workers in the region, and between Jewish and Arab workers in Israel and in the Israeli-occupied territories. This antagonism has crippled the working class in the entire region for many decades.

Our problem is to explain and interpret these developments and to answer the question: what programme do socialists propose as a solution to the Jewish-Arab antagonism in Palestine and in the region?

The most widespread left-wing reaction to the Palestine problem states or assumes that the Zionist enterprise was and is a 'conspiracy', and identifies Zionism totally with imperialism. General denunciation of 'Zionism' and 'Zionists' follows, in terms which imply that the 'Zionists' have no rights in Palestine except possibly individual rights.

Class considerations therefore give way to national/communal categories. The Arab ruling classes have more than once massacred Palestinians, and willingly condemn them to be pawns on the political chessboard; but this outlook puts the Arab states on the 'progressive' side. The whole question is seen as a mere item in the struggle between progressive and reactionary, good and bad, camps on a world scale. The problem is thus defined almost as a conflict of good and bad peoples.

Against this, we assert basic Marxist working-class ideas. Class is decisive. We approach all questions of national and communal antagonisms from the viewpoint of the class struggle, and of the working-class programme for solving such conflicts by way of consistent democracy.

The Palestinian Arabs are bitterly oppressed; but a Jewish nation exists in Palestine and has a right to continue to exist there, with national rights which irreducibly include the right to self-determination on some territory of its own. We champion the Palestinian Arabs' fight against oppression and displacement on a programme not of the implicit or explicit denial of Jewish rights, but of compensation, restitution, division of the disputed territory, and conciliation.

We advocate the immediate creation of a Palestinian Arab state alongside an Israeli-Jewish state (a modified version of Israel). We advocate an end to all discrimination against the Arabs under Israeli rule. We advocate full and equal citizenship for the Arabs, and the right to secede to the Palestinian-Arab state of the majority-Arab districts in Israel.

Revolutionary militants must approach this question from two viewpoints simultaneously, and integrate those two viewpoints. We are against chauvinism and national exclusivism



How to unite Arab and Jewish workers

everywhere, whether in Britain, Northern Ireland, or Palestine; and the Palestinian Jews are chauvinistic and exclusive. We support those in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza who fight for Jewish-Arab equality. But the ending of Jewish chauvinism and exclusiveness is not and cannot be, for us, a precondition for accepting that the Jews have rights in Palestine.

The Jews have the right to a certain portion of the territory of Palestine by virtue of the fact that they are there, and most of the Jews now there were born there. Their rights there cannot be made conditional on how they conduct themselves in that territory, any more than the vile racist immigration laws of Britain — which we fight and oppose, as some Israeli socialists fight and oppose the chauvinism of the Israeli Jews — nullify Britain's right to exist. (Or any more than the openly chauvinist line of the Palestinian Arabs' leaders up to the late 1960s could nullify the Palestinian Arabs' national rights).

Self-determination

We recognise the right to self-determination of the Israeli Jews; we support those in Israel who fight chauvinism and exclusiveness and advocate equal citizenship of Arabs and Jews; we advocate an independent Palestinian-Arab state on the best terms possible which are compatible with Israeli-Jewish national rights. All these elements must be combined into one coherent working-class socialist viewpoint.

Resolution

1... In general we support the oppressed Palestinians against oppressor Israel. We seek a solution which gives both Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews the right to a life as a nation.

Democratic secular Palestine

2... The proposal to amalgamate the two Palestinian nations — Arabs and Jews — into a unitary democratic secular Palestinian state is unfortunately utopian. Such an amalgamation is impos-

sible. National identity, and still less national oppression and conflict, cannot be conjured away; two hostile nations cannot be amalgamated into a single unit.

Where there is national oppression, the demand to 'forget national differences' is usually a cover for the oppressor. A unitary Palestine — in the foreseeable future — would mean a state in which the Palestinian Arabs were oppressed by the Israeli Jews, if there were no outside intervention.

In fact the practical meaning and implications now of the Arab-nationalist slogan, 'democratic secular Palestine', are: full conquest of the Israeli Jews by the Arab states. It is not a proposal for a democratic solution, but the cutting edge of Arab propaganda in a drive for Arab conquest which would turn the Jews from oppressors into the oppressed.

A 'democratic, secular Palestine' is not an answer to the national question, but something desirable which might be possible in the distant future after the national question has (by some other means) been solved — indeed, after national identities and prejudices had begun to wither away. As a proposed solution to the Palestinians' oppression, either it tells them that they must themselves shed national prejudice, and then also convince their oppressors to do likewise — or it is an encoded term for full suppression of the Israeli Jews by the Arab states.

West Bank/Gaza

3... Immediately, we demand an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, in line with the right of self-determination of the people of those territories.

Mini-state

4... A Palestinian mini-state in the West Bank and Gaza could alleviate the situation, but the national conflict of Palestinian Arabs and Israeli Jews would certainly continue. A solution to that conflict demands a more far-reaching programme.

Considered as a national territory for

4½ million Palestinians, these areas — essentially fringe districts of the Israeli state — are very limited in size and resources. They could not provide an adequate Palestinian homeland.

Right of secession

5... Meanwhile some 600,000 to 700,000 Arabs would remain under Israeli rule.

The Israeli Arabs consider — rightly — that they are part of the Palestinian-Arab nation, that they have rights in the areas where they live (and have long lived), and that the territory of Israel cannot be considered the exclusive property of the Israeli Jews. The situation of the Israeli Arabs is thus not a separate 'minority question', but an integral part of the Palestinian-Arab/Israeli-Jewish conflict.

We support the right of secession to the Palestinian-Arab state of the mainly-Arab areas within present-day Israel (western and central Galilee, Little Triangle).

Over one million Palestinians live in Jordan, forming half or more of the population there. They live under the rule of a monarchy artificially created by British imperialism, and propped up militarily and financially in succession by Britain and by the US and oil-rich Arab states. We support the overthrow of the monarchy in Jordan, and federation or merger between a Palestinian mini-state and a democratic Jordan.

Federation

6... If it can be achieved, a federal relationship (in the circumstances, necessarily a loose one) between the Palestinian-Arab state and a modified Israel (or over a broader area), including agreements to defend the rights of the Arab minority and of Arab labour in Israel, will be preferable to Arab secession from Israel and full-scale repartition.

a) The two nations are at present heavily intermeshed (Arabs living in Israel, West Bank and Gaza people working in Israel, etc.) Full intermeshing is not possible in the short term, given the national hostilities. However, we should seek to minimise the separating-

out.

b) Economically, a larger unit is preferable. The present economic isolation of Israel from the surrounding countries is economically irrational and political leads to dependence on the US, etc. Generally, the division of the Middle East into several, mainly small, nation-states boosts nationalist and communal narrowness, economic underdevelopment, and imperialist manipulation. A West Bank/Gaza state, or even a West Bank/Gaza state united with Jordan, would be extremely weak economically and thus would be forced into dependence on states like Israel (the main employer of West Bank/Gaza labour) or Saudi Arabia (the paymaster of the present Jordanian state).

Though our programme is a socialist federation of the Middle East, with self-determination for national minorities (Israeli Jews, Kurds, etc.), this should not contradict proposals for smaller federations, e.g. in Palestine.

c) Full-scale repartition would be bloody and almost certainly untidy, creating material for fresh conflicts.

For these reasons, advocacy of a federation would be advantageous for Jewish-Arab working-class unity. However, the 'two-states' formula is not conditional on federation being possible. It is the irreplaceable first step to peaceful coexistence of Arab and Jews in Palestine and thus to working class unity.

Opposing Zionism

7... Historic Zionism, 1897-1948, was reckless and devastating in its consequences for the Palestinian Arab people.

But we reject the idea that either historic Zionism or modern Zionism (i.e. pro-Israel Jewish sentiment, however defined) can be simply described as racist. The state of Israel is a state pursuing racist policies and heavily based on racist institutions. It was not and is not a racist conspiracy, but rather a product of many circumstances. To try to 'ban Zionism' is to try to outlaw the reflex nationalism of the mass of Jewish people, and it is thus in effect anti-Jewish.

In terms of political argument, however, we counterpose internationalism to Israeli-Jewish nationalism, and democracy to Jewish sectarianism and Jewish supremacy in Israel (or any modified Israel). Within Israel (or any modified Israel) we argue for full individual rights and national minority rights for the Arabs; for an end to the ban on Arab labour in major industries; for an end to Israel's alliance with US imperialism and its role as a major military supplier to South Africa, Central American dictatorships, etc; for the full separation of religion from the state; for the dismantling of the specifically 'Zionist' features of the state (in particular, the set-up whereby quasi-state organisations, the Jewish Agency and the Jewish National Fund, provide funds and services to Jews only); for the creation of a labour movement independent of the state and the employers.

We demand compensation from Israel and the US to fund the resettlement of the Palestinian-Arab refugees in the Palestinian-Arab state.

The repossession of all Palestine by the Palestinian Arabs is now impossible without suppressing the Jews; and the Israeli Jews' national rights cannot depend on them ceasing to be 'Zionists' or agreeing to an unqualified right of resettlement in all of Palestine for Arabs. However, among the Israelis we would argue for immigration laws which would allow individual Palestinian Arabs to move in and out freely or to go and live there. Israeli-Jewish agreement to easy entry for Arabs would be an essential contribution to national reconciliation and working class unity.

We explain to Israeli Jews that no nation that oppresses another can itself be free or secure, and that they can achieve peace, freedom and security only by a democratic attitude towards the Arab peoples — just as we explain to the Palestinian Arabs that any solution that would oppress the Israeli Jews would be regressive and reactionary.

Arab states

8... While the Arab states have been victims of predatory attacks by Israel, they themselves are bourgeois or bourgeois-feudal states with expansionist and predatory ambitions. They have cruelly oppressed and more than once massacred the Palestinian Arabs. While in some circumstances we side with the Arab states against Israeli attack, we do not support the destruction of Israel by the military forces of the Arab states.



Syria, Jordan, US: false friends for PLO

THE militias of Amal are trying to disarm the Palestinians in the refugee camps round Beirut. They have a green light from Syria.

Syria wants to rearrange Lebanon its own way — which falls far short of the demands of the national democratic Lebanese forces. Syria couldn't do this themselves, they needed allies.

Amal is one of the Lebanese forces whose aims now coincide with those of Syria. That's why the Syrians gave the green light to Amal, who have their own reasons for trying to disarm the Palestinians.

Attacks

Their logic is that the Palestinian presence in Lebanon has caused Israeli attacks: so they must prevent the Palestinians using Lebanon as a base.

Does this mean that the Syrians are involved with the Americans or the Israelis in some kind of plot? We believe not.

The Syrians have miscalculated. They thought that it would take one or two days to defeat the Palestinians. It didn't. We have information that Nabih Berri, the leader of Amal, told Syria it would take Amal six hours to do the job.

On a recent visit to Britain, Abu Sami, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, spoke at a meeting organised by the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine. Clive Bradley asked him about the current situation in Lebanon, in the occupied territories, and in the PLO.

The Syrians want to eliminate any opposition forces — in the first place the Palestinians, but also the Lebanese Communist Party, the Syrian Social Nationalist Party — who aren't fascists, the name is misleading — to a certain extent the Lebanese branch of the Ba'ath Party, and, to a certain extent the Progressive Socialist Party of Walid Jumblat. These forces want a political rather than a confessional solution.

The attack on the camps by Amal is, they claim, a fight against the pro-Arafat groups, which is wrong. Only a minority of the people in the camps are loyal to Arafat.

And anyway it is not Syria's or Amal's task to carry out that fight, and not by military means. Arafat's right wing political leadership should be combatted by trying to convince his followers of the dangers into which he is leading the Palestinian revolution.

All the Palestinians in the camps, of whatever political colour, are resisting. It's not a battle against Arafat, that's just a pretext.

After the siege of Beirut in 1982, Arafat concluded that it was useless for the PLO to remain an anti-imperialist movement. So he insists on alliances with Jordan, Egypt, Iraq. He's ambiguous over the Reagan Plan.

Rights

These things follow from the class perspective of the PLO leadership. The upper strata of the Palestinian bourgeoisie are having a lot of influence on the Central Committee of al-Fateh. They need some kind of accommodation with imperialism to end the Palestinian struggle. Bit by bit they are surrendering the very basic rights of the Palestinian people — the right to have

an independent state of their own, the right of return to their homes, and the right of the PLO to be the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians.

The PLO leadership has begun practical involvement in the American plan for the region: some combination of the Reagan Plan, Resolution 242, Camp David, we can't forecast exactly. But we can be sure of what will not come out of this — no Palestinian independent state.

Opposition

The opposition in Fateh (known in the Western press as the Abu Musa group), the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the PFLP-General Command, the Palestinian Struggle Front, the Palestine Liberation Front, al-Saiqa, which is pro-Syria, have all formed a bloc in the PLO, called the National Salvation Front. Its aim is to win the PLO back to an anti-imperialist stand, and to maintain the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians.

This entails abrogating the Amman agreement, and removing the present leadership. But we want to be part of the PLO. We don't want to have two PLOs. We are trying to push Arafat aside, without giving him the PLO. It's not his PLO.

Resistance in the occupied territories has escalated, despite the attitudes of the right-wing PLO leadership. This can be seen in terms of military activity against the occupation forces, mass political activity, mass organisations making petitions against the Amman Agreement.

Small

We are not against cooperation with every democratic anti-Zionist force in Israel, so long as we do not have to surrender our right to struggle for an independent Palestinian state. We have contacts with the Israeli Communist Party, with the Matzpen [revolutionary left] fragments; we are ready to cooperate with any Israeli Jewish anti-Zionists. At present these forces are small, but we regard them as potential allies.

Cambodia like China?

THERE were some loose analogies drawn between the Khmer Rouge and Maoism in your review of 'The Killing Fields' (SO no.231).

"In some ways (which ways?) it was only a speeded up and concentrated — and therefore more murderous — edition of what the Maoists did in China, where — it is now officially admitted — many millions perished in Mao's so-called 'Great Leap Forward' and the Cultural Revolution".

The Chinese regime seldom resorted to execution of political opponents. It preferred to imprison them until they recanted their political views. They did this to hundreds of Chinese Trotskyists arrested in 1952, as well as to the dissidents of the Democratic Movement in the early 1980s.

The Great Leap Forward was an utopian attempt to raise industrial productivity and to collectivise agriculture. Thousands of intellectuals were harassed but not executed in the "hundred flowers" period before the Great Leap Forward. Three bad harvests combined with the Sino-Soviet split resulted in a severe dislocation of agriculture and industry in the early sixties. But "millions" did not perish.

The Cultural Revolution started as a faction fight when Mao tried to dislodge his political opponents entrenched in the Party apparatus by encouraging Red Guards to attack them as privileged bureaucrats and "capitalist roaders". The faction fight escalated to near civil war in various areas and thousands were killed on both sides. But it was not the State apparatus executing millions like Stalin's reign of terror. It would be just as naive to believe the claims of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution as it is to swallow the "official admissions" today from China's present leaders which seek to blame everything on the "Cultural Revolution and the Gang of Four".

Paradoxically, public executions have returned in a big way in post-Mao China.

It is valid to make the general point that the Chinese, Vietnamese, Khmer Rouge and Cuban regimes are all "members of the Stalinist family". But no insight is gained about either the Khmer Rouge's "bizarre and barbarous experiment in social engineering" or about Maoist China by loosely linking the two.

CHEUNG SIU MING

Inaccuracies?

The world, she do run in funny ways. Way back on October 4 1984, your publication ran a review by one Gerry Ben-Noah, of my books, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* and *The Iron Wall*.

Now Ben-Noah is forced to admit that "Most of the events he (Brenner) refers to," meaning my charges that various Zionist factions collaborated with the Hitlerites, "are real". However, "This is not to say that a sizeable catalogue of inaccuracies and contradictions within Brenner's corpus could not be assembled".

Well said, except that he then kind of forgot to tell us about even one specific inaccuracy.

After wasting a page with unsubstantiated charges about my alleged errors, Ben-Noah sagely counseled us that "Marxists would be better off turning to Nathan Weinstock's *Zionism: False Messiah*". An excellent choice, especially as Weinstock has been kind enough to write me that my book is "a fine piece of work," and that he has tried to get it translated into French!

Ben-Noah had the audacity to call me a "paranoid". Why? Because of "the suggestion that rich Jews control the US Democratic Party and thus American foreign policy".

Except that since the Democrats don't control Washington, not even a paranoid like me can think that any Democrat, Jewish or otherwise, runs Reagan's

foreign policy.

However, crazy guy that I am, I do not 'suggest', I insist that rich Jews — not rich Albanians — are the single most important financial factor in the Democratic Party, and that therefore that party will stick with Zionism to the end.

But would you believe it, I'm not the only lunatic on the set. Certainly most American scholars would acknowledge G. William Domhoff as the great specialist on the country's rich. That sociologist wrote, in his *Fat Cats and Democrats*, that:

"Since the gentile financial community is almost exclusively Republican, however, it is the Jewish financiers who by default provide the Democrats with their handful of essential money raisers among the super-wealthy... Jewish investment bankers combined with other Jews... to provide the financial leadership of the Democratic Party in every major non-Southern city except Boston."

There is no need to go on, it is obvious that when Ben-Noah is not libelous he is ignorant, and when not ignorant he is libelous. All that needs to be further said is that it is evident that Zionism is in deep trouble over my charges if the *Jewish Chronicle* had to stoop to trying to utilise Ben-Noah's frothings to defend itself.

LENNI BRENNER

• We invite both Gerry Ben-Noah and Lenni Brenner to continue the debate in the pages of *Socialist Organiser*.



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GERRY BYRNE'S
TV
WATCH



The after-10pm people

WELL, I thought it was extremely bad taste.

No.73 ended its seventh run with Ethel getting married. To the bank manager. In Gay Pride Week (but only on Channel Four after 10pm).

We didn't actually see her tie the knot, or whatever the appropriate act is, so maybe she had a last-minute reprieve and ran off with Martina, it being Wimbledon fortnight. She could always borrow Dawn's rainbow-coloured nuptial skates.

Time is a curious thing. It even merits a programme of its own on Channel Four. A time to be born, a time to die, a time for minorities, a time for time.

And minorities are a funny lot, insomniacs to a woman. While decent white heterosexual men are tucked up in bed, doing whatever it is that white hetero men do, the minorities are only just waking up, like large-eyed lemurs, tuning in to Channel Four.

Balloon

A large slightly flaccid white balloon floated above the Gay Pride carnival, proclaiming, 'The Hippodrome is proud to be gay on Mondays'. Which rather begs the question: what about the rest of the week?

The answer is, of course, sleeping off the effects of all this late-night TV viewing. It's deadly serious stuff. Well, if you had to cram all the non-white, gay, female experience into the eleventh hour, you'd be pretty grim-faced; 90% of the world in 5% of the scheduling is some feat.

'Breaking the Silence' on lesbian mothers, despite its harrowing tales, did manage some laughs. A lesbian historian explained how the medical profession stressed the minority status of lesbians, only 5% of the population, and that, following Havelock Ellis, easily identifiable.

They stood with elbows on the mantelpiece smoking cigars and went round slapping chaps on the back.

One mother explained how she wasn't opposed to her daughter having boy-friends, but when one unre-

possessing specimen appeared she called out, 'Tracy, there's a pillock at the door for you'. The daughter later agreed with this assessment.

What details like this managed to convey was that despite the extraordinary courage shown in appearing — especially by those whose legal cases to be allowed to keep their children with them were still pending — here was a group of ordinary mothers with delightfully articulate children.

Attitudes

This shouldn't come as any surprise to anyone, but given the attitudes of judges and husbands it clearly needs to be given big-time airing to get that rather basic message across.

Perhaps it should be presented in soap-opera or sit-com form so as to be accessible to those who retire at 10pm.

Melanie Chait had an awesome task introducing the first TV film on lesbian mothers. But there was a good balance of information and human interest.

Two things particularly shook me. One was the historical perspective on child custody. The extremely recent phenomenon of (heterosexual) women getting custody of their children has already been turned into a reactionary myth by groups like Families Need Fathers, who claim that the law has gone too far in the mother's favour.

The second was seeing how mothers had lost their children through trusting their husbands for ten or 20 years to behave decently, expecting that their shared life would count for something, and getting instead a load of shit thrown at them.

A cautionary tale indeed, which went a long way to explaining why such a programme can only get an eleventh hour showing. At all costs the fiction must be maintained that lesbians are identifiably other.

Lesbian mothers, especially those who had their children in marriages, are a living challenge to this stereotype.

Taking flight

Clive Bradley reviews 'Birdy', directed by Alan Parker, which is now showing at the Odeon Haymarket.

THIS IS a beautiful, beautiful film. 'Birdy' gets his name from an obsession with birds — 'because they fly'.

He studies birds in order to learn how to fly; constructs working models; makes an unsuccessful flying machine. Friend Al can only watch in distress as Birdy becomes more and more preoccupied, losing touch with reality.

They are separately called up to fight in Vietnam. Al is seriously injured; Birdy goes mad. He sits alone in a cell in a military hospital, crouching like a bird, gazing up in despair at the window. His friend is brought in to talk to him, to try to get through to him and bring him back to reality.

Scenes of Al's attempts to break through to Birdy punctuate the flashbacks of their youth together, and the trauma of the war.

Sexual

The military doctors don't know about Birdy's obsession, or even his nickname, and Al wants to keep it that way, in case Birdy is locked up forever. Tensions between Al and the officer-doctor increase as Al tries to extend the time he has to talk to Birdy, and the officer-doctor begins to conclude that Al is mentally disturbed too. Al's devotion to his friend is in sharp contrast with the military doctor's lack of real concern.

The experience in Vietnam has smashed their lives. Al is physically crippled and psychologically ruined. War has destroyed Birdy's illusion of flight — of freedom — and transformed it into a prison.

The film is primarily not about Vietnam but about male friendship. Al is present throughout Birdy's growing obsession, helps him try to fly, and is always there to pick up the pieces when things go wrong.

"Were you very close?", the officer-doctor asks Al. "We were never queer for each other or anything", he insists.

Yet there is a deep sexual undercurrent to their relationship. Flight is itself, I am told, a sexual image. Birdy's relation-



Al and Birdy. (Photo: Tristar pictures)

ship with his birds is more or less explicitly sexual. And more or less explicitly this relationship serves as a metaphor for his relationship with Al.

As Birdy watches Al depart for Vietnam, his favourite canary smashes itself to death on the window. Al disappears, and Birdy is crouched crying

over the dead bird.

In the end Al's devotion is successful. Birdy is saved from becoming a cabbage by a love that will not give in.

There are stylistic echoes of Parker's earlier film, 'Midnight Express', though 'Birdy' is immeasurably superior. It is executed with great sensitivity

and subtlety, avoiding the temptation of sentimentality.

There are exhilarating scenes of simulated flight — we, the viewers, are taken flying by the camera as Birdy imagines himself soaring over the rooftops.

'Birdy' deserves the Cannes Grand Prix that it was awarded. I cannot recommend it too much.

Be moderate

'Be Moderate', the timorous cry
Who dread the tyrant's thunder,
'You ask too much, and people
fly
From you aghast, in wonder'.
'Tis passing strange, and I
declare
Such statements cause me mirth
For our demands most moderate
are
We only want THE EARTH.

Our masters all — a godly crew
Whose hearts throb for the
poor—
Their sympathies assure us, too,
If our demands were fewer.
Most generous souls, but please
observe,
What they enjoy from birth,
Is all we ever had the nerve
To ask, that is, THE EARTH.

The Labour Fakir, full of guile,
Such doctrine ever preaches,
And, whilst he bleeds the rank
and file,
Tame moderation teaches.
Yet, in his despite, we'll see the
day
When, with sword in its girth,
Labour shall march in war array
To seize its own, THE EARTH.

For Labour long with groans and
tears
To its oppressors knelt,
But never yet to aught save fears
Did hear of tyrant melt.
We need not kneel; our cause is
high,
Of true men there's no dearth,
And our victorious rallying cry
Shall be, we want THE EARTH.

Written by the great Irish
socialist James Connolly.



Songs of
liberty and
rebellion

Science and socialism conference

by Kate Godwin of BSSRS and Les Hearn

Many scientists who are socialists find their work brings them into conflict with their political beliefs. The recent conference of BSSRS* on "Working in Science" examined this conflict.

The conference opened with a panel discussion in which scientists discussed the development of their political views and how they reconciled their socialism with their scientific work.

One panel member was Steven Rose, Professor of Biology at the Open University and researcher into the nature and function of the brain. He has been prominent in the movement to debunk IQ and to destroy scientific support for racism.

Another was Maurice Wilkins, FRS and President of BSSRS, who worked on the "Manhattan Project" to design and produce the first atomic bomb during World War II. He described how he became increasingly unhappy at the social and political implications of his work and how he came to reject the idea that human problems can be solved with "technical fixes". Wilkins' post-war work has been in peaceful areas. As a prominent molecular biologist, he was involved with Rosalind Franklin in finding out the structure of DNA (though most of the honours for this "brilliant accomplishment" went to Watson and Crick). Whatever his intentions, though, the uncovering of the structure and role of DNA has led to the technology of genetic engineering, with all its promise and problems.

Disenchanted

Other speakers described the hierarchy of scientific work, how research has its scope limited and how most research and development work is for military purposes.

More and more science students are disenchanted with the work they do and are aware that, if they are open about their politics, their careers will not progress. Many therefore choose to leave science.

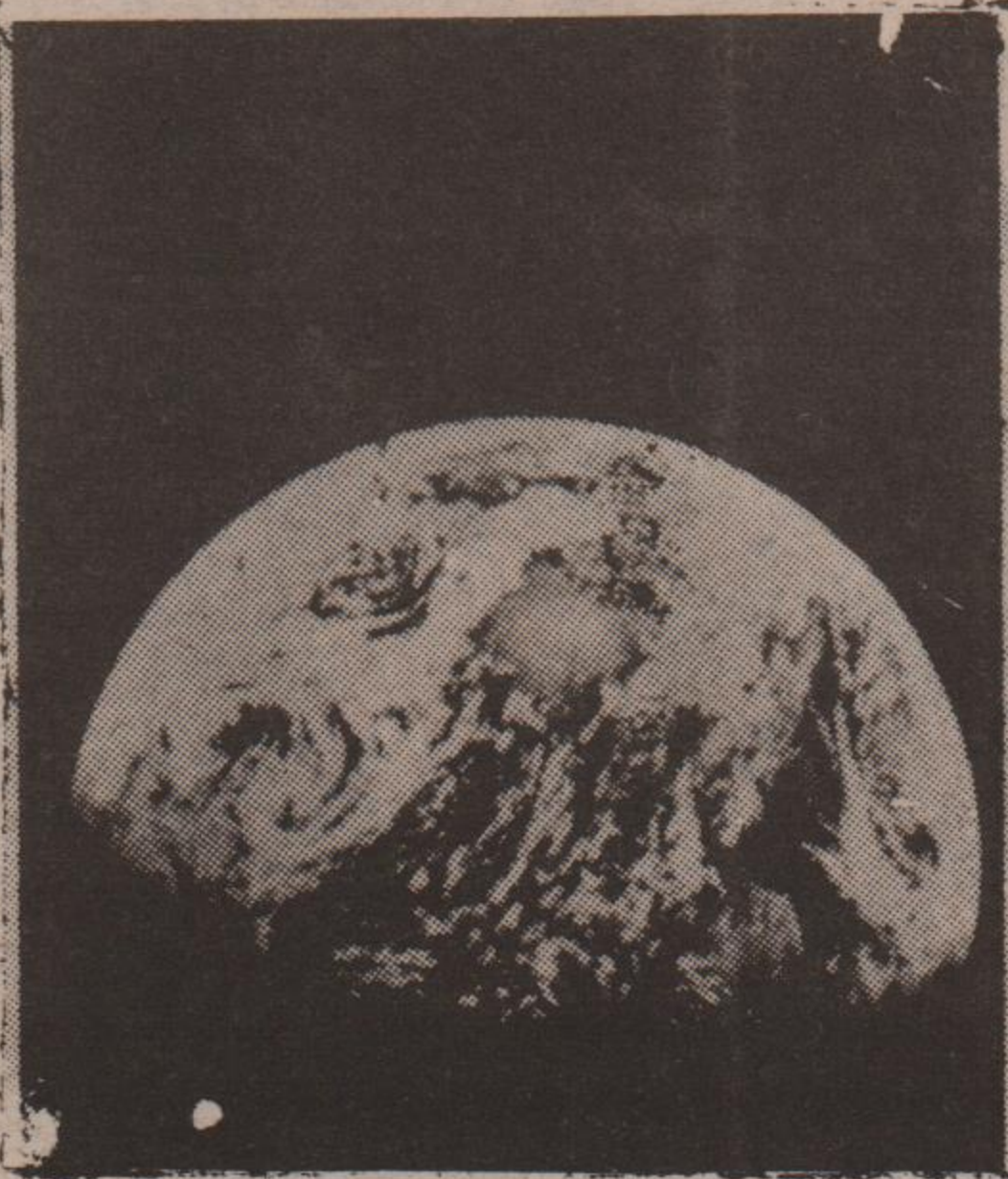
It was argued that to opt out in this way deprives people of the opportunity to practise their science together with their socialism. We should therefore examine ways of advancing socialism as part of the work we do.

The rest of the conference focussed on the ways in which socialist scientists could act, either in the unions or in campaigning groups.

Workshops were held on such themes as:

A Feminist Science and Technology. Women are frequently excluded from any real influence in the world of science. Most women science workers are quite low down in the hierarchy of science. Many more potential scientists are repelled by the priorities and masculine image of science.

Counter Expertise and Campaigning Groups. This involves scientists sharing their skills and knowledge with those who are normally excluded from these. Scientific expertise is usually used to the disadvantage of working people so it is quite subversive of capitalist



Science

science that its secrets be exposed and used against it.

BSSRS has successfully pursued the goal of sharing scientific expertise in Work Hazards groups which deal with people's queries about dangers at work and in the home. The monthly journal Hazards** carries a great deal of useful information about specific hazards.

Other workshops took in *Radical Science Teaching and Medicine and Health.*

Critique

As the radical science organisation in Britain, BSSRS needs to get its criticisms across and make interventions, but at what level? Concentrating on established channels carries the risk of being absorbed in trying to improve capitalist science. The conference felt that BSSRS had to link its critique with people's problems and it needed to speak a language that others could understand (a need that other socialists should take note of!).

The tactic of forming alliances with specific groups who need access to scientific expertise will therefore be developed (as in the Work Hazards groups mentioned above).

It was felt that the ways in which science and technology are used under capitalism, such as speeding up or abolishing workers' jobs or manufacturing weaponry, are the best recruiting agents for the radical science movement and BSSRS looks set to go from strength to strength.

*The British Society for Social Responsibility in Science (BSSRS) has been going for over ten years, publishing a magazine "Science for People". It has several working groups such as: Feminism and Science; Socialist Strategies in Science; Computing; Public Health; Women and Work Hazards; Technology of Political Control and Politics of Food.

If you are interested in these or want further information about BSSRS, contact BSSRS at 25 Horsell Rd., London N5, tel: 01-607 9615.

**Hazards is obtainable at 45p (60p incl. p&p) from PO Box 199, Sheffield S1 1FQ. The latest issue contains background to the Sheffield fire that spread asbestos dust far and wide; a report from workers at the Union Carbide plant at Bhopal; a study on the dangers of working with cement; and a report on chest problems among workers.



NUR general secretary Jimmy Knapp. Photo: J.Harris.

Sharp practice on NUR vote

By Rob Dawber

APART from the set-back on strike ballots, the NUR AGM in Ayr has been good so far.

And it was only as a result of some sharp practice from the top table that the resolution requiring ballots before national strike action was carried.

At NUR AGM all resolutions on a similar subject are put under one heading. No compositing is allowed and only the first resolution in that group is taken.

The first resolution on this item asked the NEC "to seriously consider" ballots before action. An amendment cut out this clause and reaffirmed last year's policy of total opposition to, and non-compliance with, anti-trade union laws.

While we are not against ballots, to commit us to them now is a boost for the Tories, a green signal for the next round of anti-trade union legislation, and will hamper us in any fight back against the employers.

Both the amendment and the resolution were narrowly voted down.

Normally that would mean that we reverted to last year's policy of non-compliance. But after the break, the president ruled that since the amendment had fallen we had not reaffirmed the previous year's policy and so had no policy! Therefore, he

said, we must debate it again with the next resolution, a stronger one, requiring a ballot before action.

General secretary Jimmy Knapp made his second long speech for accepting ballots, and said we would use them "to smite the Tories". He assured us ballots would be no substitute for a campaign.

Second time lucky, the top table won by 40 votes to 36.

Closures

The following day we debated workshop closures and unanimously voted for "whatever industrial action was necessary" to stop the decline. Knapp outlined a nine-point plan for defence of the works, going from a boycott of the 150th anniversary of the founding of Swindon Works by the Great Western Railway through refusal to move wagons for scrap or into private repair workshops, and an overtime ban, up to being "prepared to lock yourself in the factory if necessary".

Conference voted for a united Ireland and against the Loyalist Veto, and also against United States interference in Nicaragua.

We unanimously voted for renationalisation of all privatised BR assets "without compensation other than on the basis of proven need".

Union leaders cross picket

By Mike Grayson

ON Tuesday June 25, APEX members working at the South London headquarters of the civil service union CPSA struck over their pay claim.

Three APEX members crossed the picket line — CPSA's senior full-time officers: general secretary Alistair Graham, deputy general secretary John Ellis and general treasurer John Raywood.

At the end of April, APEX submitted their claim of £15 per week flat-rate increase for all staff. After waiting five weeks, they got a response from CPSA's "Official Side" (the general secretary, deputy general secretary, general treasurer, president and two vice-

presidents).

This offer gave sizeable increases to high level staff — an extra £1904 per annum for the general secretary, for example, but only £250-£380 per annum for the majority of APEX members. It was rejected, and so was a later offer of arbitration.

APEX said: "We have no wish to gamble on the possibility of losing the principle of the flat-rate increases. We are quite capable of sorting out our pay claims using the traditional bargaining system at CPSA HQ."

Alistair Graham has sent out a circular to all CPSA Branch Secretaries attacking the APEX action as "unlawful" (because there has been no secret ballot), and trying to set CPSA members

TGWU rejects witch hunt

"IF YOU want a union to be proud of", newly-elected general secretary Ron Todd told the TGWU conference last week, "for God's sake fight for it".

The conference voted by a huge majority for a motion favouring non-compliance with anti-union laws. The T&G has already suffered legal penalties for breaking the law.

Todd, in another "fighting speech", urged opposition to an incomes policy, and support for free collective bargaining. He later gave a TV interview in which he refused to give the Labour leaders a 'blank cheque' and said he wanted to discuss 'more than just incomes policy' with them.

Though posed in a militant fashion, this could be an indication that Todd is still

By Gerry Bates

leaving the door open to a deal.

Roy Hattersley has been pushing hard for incomes policy in recent weeks, defying both Labour Party and TUC policy.

Neil Kinnock spoke at the T&G conference, calling for a continued and intensified witch-hunt against the 'Militant' tendency. "They are sectarians and splitters", he said, although without naming names. "There is no place for people like that in our movement".

Fortunately Kinnock was rebuffed. The conference voted against expelling 'Militant' supporters from the Labour Party.

Socialists on the board?

By Jim Denham

JOURNALISTS at Birmingham's commercial radio station BRMB are continuing their fight against redundancies.

BRMB management broke all procedure agreements in forcing through redundancies — 30% of the newsroom staff — and then suspended the journalists when they took action.

Mass pickets are being held outside the BRMB studios in Aston every Wednesday morning.

The role of labour movement 'representatives' on the BRMB board is now causing considerable concern to the NUJ. The GMBATU and APEX have shares in the company, and the GMBATU and the Musicians Union have 'representatives' on the board (although, astonishingly, the GMBATU 'representative' is a former regional secretary put on the board when the union bought its shares and now apparently acting as a free

agent!)

The company claims that the board unanimously backs its stand, and it is certainly true that none of the Labour Party or union members on the board have issued any statement to the contrary.

Musicians Union members should be asking what their national executive member Johnny Patrick thinks he is playing at, and Labour Party members should be demanding that City Council Labour group secretary Marjorie Brown comes out openly in support of the strikers.

All Brown has done so far is to request Labour councillors not to give interviews to BRMB.

Much worse, however, is the fact the chair of the BRMB board, John Parkinson, is a Labour Party member in Solihull (and he lectures in Industrial Relations at Solihull Tech!).

So far the GMBATU and APEX have issued statements of support for the journalists and are said to be 'considering' selling off their shares in the company.

Further pressure will be placed on the company if the Association of Broadcasting Staffs acts on a proposal to 'pull the plug' on all independent radio news broadcasts in support of BRMB journalists.

Messages of support and donations to NUJ Regional Office, Daimler House, Paradise Circus, Queensway, Birmingham.

Turkey Solidarity Campaign

Public meeting
Monday July 8 at 7pm
Camden Town Hall
MINERS SENTENCED TO DEATH IN TURKEY

Speakers from DISK, Fatsa Campaign and sacked Kent miners

Messages of support to: Lyn Adams, Branch Secretary, APEX (CPSA Headquarters Branch), 215 Balham High Rd., London SW17.

Socialist Organiser

Remember who the real thugs are Demand amnesty!

Paul Whetton
(Bevercotes NUM)

Despite the attacks on Tony Benn's Amnesty Bill, including attacks from MPs who are supposed to be on the left of the Labour Party, I remain of the opinion that the miners who were sacked or taken to court were victimised for fighting to defend their jobs and their communities.

I thought the way that Tony Benn outlined it was quite straightforward and quite simple. The greatest crime against the state is High

Last Friday Tony Benn presented his parliamentary Bill calling for an amnesty for miners in the same terms as used in 1980 to give an amnesty to Ian Smith and his fellow-conspirators in Zimbabwe. The Tory press denounced it — and so did Neil Kinnock. But strong support has come from miners and Labour activists.

Treason. That is what the white racists in Rhodesia were accused of and stood condemned for over a number of years.

Then, at the end of it, there was a general amnesty.

Now I don't see what is wrong with applying the same arguments to people who have tried to protect their

jobs and communities.

Many of the sacked miners have, since losing their jobs, gone to court and been found not guilty. Yet they are still without their jobs. Even with those who have been found guilty it can be argued that by sacking them as well you are punishing them twice for one offence.

It is important that Labour win the Brecon and Radnor by-election on Thursday, not to boost Kinnock, but as part of the struggle of the working class to assert its opposition to the Thatcher government.

Don't retreat!

Jeremy Corbyn MP

NEIL Kinnock's hysterical and emotive response to the call for an amnesty rather fits in with the image that some people in the party are trying to push at the present time.

They seem to imagine that we can win a future general

election by a series of sops and gifts and appeals to the middle class and the middle ground in British politics, meanwhile toning down any campaign to improve working class living standards and toning down opposition to the Tory government.

They have got to realise that we have the most vicious, oppressive, Tory government there has ever been. It's imprisoning people for political offences. It's paving the way for more repressive legislation.

A retreat in the face of that kind of force only encourages them to go much further and much faster. What we need is a clear socialist lead from the party.

London Labour Party
conference on
RATE-CAPPING AND THE
ABOLITION OF THE GLC

Saturday July 27, 10 to 4.30
at Mary Ward Hall, 5 Tavistock Place, London WC1.
Two delegates each from
LGCs, Labour groups, etc.

SO launches new premises fund

Our fund to cover the move to new premises got re-started well at our AGM on the weekend of June 22-23.

Including contributions which came in by post in the period just before the AGM, and IOUs to be met after the AGM, the collection totalled £1942.59.

Thanks to: Lori Landay, £100; Cheung Siu Ming, £100; Mary Corbishley, £50; Gerry Byrne, £50; Bruce Robinson, £40; Pete Cashman, £30; Nik Barstow, £25; Steve Battlemuch, £25; Jo Thwaites, £22.25; Patrick Blandford, £20; Mick Sidaway, £15; Jim Cooper, £15; Geoff and Mary Williams, Dave Gore, Richard Bayley,



A "war situation" requiring rough justice — that's how a Coal Board representative described the miners' strike in an Industrial Tribunal hearing which ordered the reinstatement of four North Staffs miners, sacked despite being acquitted in court. Photo: John Sturrock, Network.

After Gay Pride '85

THE GAY Pride '85 march on Saturday June 29, was the biggest ever — 10,000 strong. It was a carnival-like event, complete with pop stars, and was a spit in the face of the moral backlash.

People came up from South Wales mining communities for the march — an indication of the strength of the links made by Lesbian and Gays Support the Miners during the strike.

Sian from Dulais got a great reception for her speech. She stressed the lessons that had been learned in mining communities about lesbian and gay struggles.

But there was an air of unreality to the event. It was built

on an almost completely a-political basis. The 'political' speaker, aside from the woman from Dulais, was Ken Livingstone, pausing for a moment on his way to the House of Lords. And the main mobilising slogan was, 'Stuff the backlash, have a day out!'

Having fun is fine, but lesbians and gay men need to organise politically against Tory attacks. The biggest event of the year should have been a focus for this.

Lesbians and gay men can ill afford to be 'proud' in 1985 and leave it at that. Organising against the 'AIDS panic'; against police harassment and the Police Act; against attacks on 'Gays the Word' bookshop — these are the tasks now.

Martin Barclay, Kirsty Semple, Pete Radcliff, Bob Fine, John Batchelor, Ivan Wels, £10 each; H & C Baldry, £4; Fraser Neill, £1; Alan Wassell, £2.30; a London reader, £100; miscellaneous others and cash collection, £113.04.

That leaves £1190 to come in IOUs.

The IOUs include: Cardiff

SO group, £200; Colchester, £40; Glasgow, £3 (Stan Crooke); Leeds, £20; Merseyside, £100; Nottingham, £140 (plus £10 from Helen Rigby); Sheffield, £60; Stoke £50; York, £80; Islington £100; Other London, £347.

From Nottingham Steve Battlemuch reports: "The fund drive is well under way — two socials, jumble sale,

individual donations, and a sporting contest. Liam and I are playing golf, squash, tennis and bowls — if I lose a game I give £3 to SO, if Liam loses he gives £5. So we gain by £12 to £20 depending on winners!"

What's your local group doing? Send in details (and donations) to SO, 214 Sickert Court, London N1 2SY.