

Socialist Challenge



Photo: PETE GRANT (Socialist Challenge)

The chant of 'Bobby Sands MP' resounded through Kilburn and Whitehall on Sunday. Despite the ban on marches and 40 arrests, hundreds of supporters of the Irish political prisoners made their voices heard in the streets of London. After a rally in Kilburn, unfortunately curtailed as the assembly tried to assert its right to march, protesters made their way to Downing Street where a picket was moved on by police. Eventually, the demonstrators dispersed.

The world asks Thatcher: how many more must die in Ireland?



THIS WEEK — week 42,393 of the British occupation of Ireland — it seems that Bobby Sands, Member of Parliament for Fermanagh and South Tyrone will die.

From all over the world calls have come for the British government, headed by the self-styled 'Iron Lady' Margaret Thatcher, to resolve the crisis in the Irish prison camps of Long Kesh and Armagh, and meet the demands of the political prisoners.

The most recent appeals have been made by the Michigan State Senate, the Massachusetts House of Representatives, socialist parties in Norway and Denmark, and trade

unions in France, Spain, and the United States.

Last week the Scottish TUC added its voice and appealed for Thatcher to concede. Even Ronald Reagan felt it necessary to express his 'concern' about the fate of 'Mr Sands'.

The world is learning what Britain's presence in Ireland really means. For Thatcher, it mattered not that over 30,000 people voted for Bobby Sands in Fermanagh and South Tyrone. For her, Bobby

Sands remained an 'ordinary criminal'.

It mattered not that the protest in Ireland, organised by the National H Block/Armagh Committee, was largely peaceful: at the start of this week the British government arrested over 20 of the leaders of the campaign.

And it did not matter that the youth of Derry, Belfast, and elsewhere in the North of Ireland took to the streets. Two youths were mowed down and killed by British Army Land Rovers, and another was murdered with a plastic bullet.

Such are the ways of British democracy in Ireland, and editorial writers throughout Europe and the United States blink their eyes, to make sure what they see is real, unable to comprehend the heartlessness, repression and inhumanity of the British government.

But the people of Ireland have come to expect as much. Generation after generation has asked no more than that Britain should leave their country. They have been answered by concentration camps, famines and massacres.

Mood

And now there is the latest grisly chapter with British MPs — including those from the Labour Party — rushing to congratulate Thatcher for encouraging the bones of Bobby Sands MP to break through his skin.

A correspondent of Socialist Challenge in Belfast, Gerry Foley, phoned this newspaper on Monday to report 'a mood of tense, grim expectation' in the working class Republican ghettos of Belfast.

A Republican newspaper has warned: 'There will be fire and there will be fury.' Let there be no mistake — whatever form the Irish fury takes, it will be understood throughout the world.

May Bobby Sands not be forgotten; may the people of Ireland be left in peace, and may Britain do the only thing it can do to shed at least some small portion of its guilt: get its troops out of Ireland now.

TAKE THE TROOPS OUT NOW!

We say...

What we want is jobs not bombs

THE total cost of idle machinery and jobless workers in Britain is a staggering £42.5bn every year. That figure alone shows the complete insanity of the Tories' policies.

The only explanation for this senseless waste — at a time when the government claims it is trying to save money — is to bring the organised working class to its knees.

Jobs not wage rises is the gun being levelled at every worker's head. Well, we want jobs and wage rises and decent homes, schools and hospitals.

And the longer this government remains in office the worse it threatens to get. By 1983/4 government spending will be 4 per cent down on 1979/80 figures. Education will go down 11 per cent, government aid to industry will decline by 40 per cent, housing will be 50 per cent down but defence spending will increase by 13 per cent.

Old people die from cold while electricity and gas prices rise astronomically under Tory policy. Yet every minute Britain spends £15,000 on defence.

The bill for Trident will be £6bn. Yet the cost of one Trident submarine — and there are to be six or seven — could build 100 hospitals, 200 schools and 50,000 houses.

With 2.5 million people registered unemployed it is scandalous that people are homeless and have to wait many months for operations. The TUC and trade union leadership have to demand a programme of public works to meet the needs of working people and to create jobs for the unemployed.

The real figure for those out of work is much nearer the three million mark. Many women and school leavers do not register. Over 200,000 workers are on short time which is the equivalent of 140,000 people out of work.

Yet despite the vast numbers unemployed and on short time working, the average hours worked in all manufacturing industries is still 60.9 hours a week. We want work or full pay.

A thirty-five hour week without loss of earnings would immediately create nearly one million jobs. But all this means a fight to bring down the Tory government.

The TUC and trade union leadership should stop playing Thatcher's game. 'Well reasoned argument' based on profitability coming first will not persuade the Tories to 'change course'.

To do that the labour movement has to kick them out of Westminster. That's the only argument the Tories will understand.

On the march against the Tories



THE People's March for Jobs is on the road. As the five hundred unemployed make their way from Liverpool to London, workers are fighting back against Tory attacks.

● Lee Jeans women in Greenock, Scotland, are still occupying after twelve weeks.

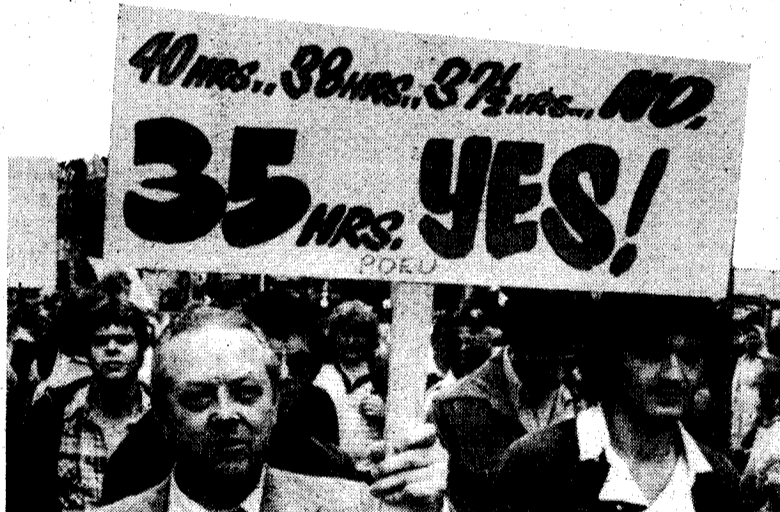
● Laurence Scott Electromotor engineering workers occupied their plant in Openshaw, Manchester, last Friday. The factory is threatened with closure with a loss of 650 jobs.

● Royal Pride women workers are still on the picket line in Salford after nine weeks, fighting for the right to belong to a trade union.

These struggles show that workers are not prepared to let their jobs go to the wall.

As the People's March moves through the North-west, Socialist Challenge reports on some of the struggles that are taking place.

On the road



MARK Philbin, an unemployed teenager from Bury, Lancs, has been sponsored by his local NALGO branch to go on the People's March for Jobs. Socialist Challenge spoke to him and to Ian Stephenson the Bury NALGO branch publicity officer.

Why are you going on the march? What do you see as its purpose?

Mark: Being disillusioned with the boredom of being on the dole it was an opportunity to do something positive and political.

The purpose of the march is to bring to the attention of people the scandal and waste of massive unemployment.

The government is doing nothing to help the unemployed. On the contrary, its policies have done much to add to the problems.

What do you hope that the march will achieve?

Mark: We need to get rid of the Tories and hopefully the march will

do much to bring attention to the meaning of savage deflationary policies in a climate of mass unemployment.

However, that doesn't mean

that we should wait until the next election, no matter what the TUC leaders say.

I hope that this march will lay the foundation for a strong and

vigorous campaign incorporating the whole labour movement to challenge the government's policies which are designed to attack the working class.

What will you be doing on the march?

Mark: Apart from walking a long way, I will be trying to convince marchers that we are not here as publicity fodder for the TUC leaders, but as a central focus for a national fightback against unemployment.

I would hope that other marchers would join me in speaking at any factory, Socialist Challenge or other workers' meetings on the route of the march.

What is NALGO's policy on the People's March?

Ian: NALGO is also planning to support the march, and in our branch we have tried to turn paper support into action.

As well as sponsoring Mark Philbin to go all the way, our vice president, Mark Hackett, will walk from Liverpool to Manchester. We will be sending a delegation to Liverpool at the start of the march and have arranged for coaches to go to London on 31 May.

Socialist Challenge

JOIN THE FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM

If you would like to be put in touch with Socialist Challenge supporters in your area or would like more information fill in the form below

Name.....

Address.....

Age.....

Union/CLP (if any).....

Send to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP.

Stockport builds support

STOCKPORT is typical of many towns suffering from the government's economic policies. Over the last few months, 2,500 jobs have been lost.

Many of the larger factories have already held meetings to decide on how to support the People's March as it comes through the area.

Fairey Engineering, already on a three-day week, will stop work at 3pm on Thursday 7 May to join the march.

The National Supply Company is sending three coach loads of delegates to join the march. The workers there intend to raise £1,500 from a levy.

Bernard Regan, Stockport's AUEW district secretary, believes that many other factories in Stockport will follow suit. 'What seems significant to me,' he told Socialist Challenge, 'is that some of these factories are on full-time working

— National Supplies has a more than full order book — and yet they are prepared to support the unemployed.

'The Tories are trying to divide the employed from the unemployed but it looks like they're failing. What we need to do now is build united action against the government to force it to change its policies or get out.'

Stockport Trades Council is organising accommodation and facilities for the marchers, despite the fact that the Tory council is refusing to let them use any council amenities.

Hopefully 7 May, when the march passes through Stockport, will also be the day when Stockport celebrates the end of Tory rule and welcomes a victorious Labour council that will do something for the town's 9,000 unemployed.

Reports by Pete Clifford, Ian Stephenson, Des Tierney, Tessa van Gelderen, Jeff West and Jude Woodward

What's on in Manchester

Monday 4 May May Day demonstration to greet the march. Assemble Eccles Recreation ground. March to Buile Hill Park, Eccles, Old Rd for a rally organised by Salford Trades Council. Bury Trades Council is organising a feeder march.

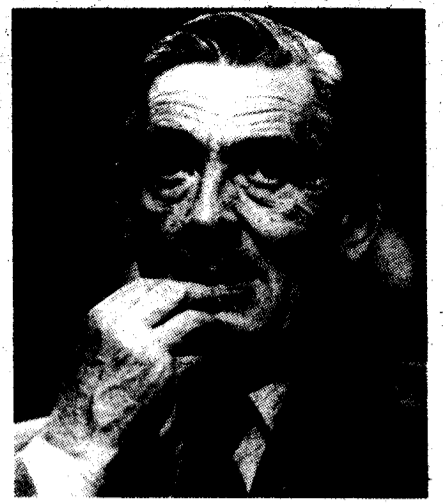
Tuesday 5 May. 12noon march leaves Salford Tech. Rally 1pm Crown Sq Manchester, followed by civic reception in the Town Hall. 3pm march leaves town hall for UMIST.

Wednesday 6 May Factory gate and other meetings throughout Greater Manchester on unemployment called by No 29A Confed.

Thursday 7 May 1pm Mass demonstration to escort march to Stockport. Called by No 29A Confed, Manchester Trades Council, UCATT, Manchester area NUS. Assembly Granby Row, Manchester. 3pm rally at McVities, Stockport Rd. March to Hollywood Recreation ground, Stockport organised by Stockport Trades Council and No 29A Confed.



Michael Foot, leader of the Labour Party, visited Lee Jeans occupation last week and pledged his support



Have you seen this man?

LEN MURRAY, rumoured to be TUC general secretary, was too upset, on hearing the latest unemployment figures, to issue more than a few words of comfort to the two and half million unemployed.

In case they think he's forgotten about them, Socialist Challenge is reprinting his complete statement to the press:

Today's figures set another dismal and depressing post-war record. As the government's isolation increases opposition to their policies grow.

The TUC's Week of Activities hammered home that there is an alternative to these policies of decline and despair. The People's March for Jobs - starting in Liverpool on May Day - will provide yet another compelling call for compassion. These pleas for sanity must be answered.

The issuing of such a dynamic statement was too much for Lionel Murray OBE. He has returned to his retreat.

Tories to cut unemployment at a stroke

UNEMPLOYMENT figures will soon be reduced by 10 per cent, if the government has its way. Has the government had a change of heart? Is it intending to build much-needed hospitals, schools and homes? Don't worry.

A quarter of a million people will no longer find themselves part of the jobless statistics - but they won't have jobs. They are the poor unfortunates who have to sign on at the dole office every fortnight although they are not entitled to any benefit, such as those who have not worked long enough to qualify.

The government wants to count only those who receive benefit in the figures of the unemployed. Nice one Thatcher!

Lee Jeans: 'Frontline troops in the battle against unemployment'

THE OCCUPATION by women workers at Lee Jeans in Greenock was the highlight of the Scottish TUC last week. When discussing the Tories' economic policy and the way to fight redundancies, speaker after speaker drew on the example of Lee Jeans.

Their action contrasts starkly with the dismal performance of the leadership of the Scottish trade union movement in fighting unemployment in recent years. But promises of action and support for the women were certainly forthcoming at the conference.

An emergency resolution was passed pledging all affiliated unions and trades councils to back the occupation. A speaker from the transport union, seconding the motion, said that if there were any move to evict the women from the factory, it may be necessary to take industrial action. The TGWU was already prepared for this.

Troops

The Scottish miners' union delegate argued that if any move was made against the occupation, then the working class should be prepared to flout the law. These were the frontline troops in the battle against unemployment.

Ray Buckton, general secretary of the rail union ASLEF, echoed these sentiments when he said that

the Greenock workers would require more than just words to sustain them in their campaign.

Heroic

It was left to the only woman speaking on the resolution, from Greenock Trades Council to contrast the heroic fight at Lee Jeans to the other situations where workers were 'queuing up' for redundancy money.

Sammy Barr, one of the shop stewards involved in the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders work-in in 1971, stressed the importance of a Lees victory. Not only was this a fight for the right to work, but the women there were leading the fight for a women's right to work.

It's been a long time since the STUC has been the scene of such an emotional and inspiring debate.

Applause

Let's hope the example of Lee Jeans will be followed very soon by other occupations in defence of jobs and that the applause of the STUC

WOMEN WORKERS SHOW THE WAY

delegates is turned to action.

A Lees Jeans worker is being sponsored by a Post Office Engineering Union branch to march from Liverpool to London on the People's March for Jobs. Ian Grant, branch committee member of Metropolitan North West branch explained why his branch had agreed to support the occupation in Greenock.

'The workers at Lee Jeans are showing the way to fight unemployment. Women are particularly vulnerable to attack from this Tory government so it is especially important that trade unionists give them as much support as possible. A victory for Lee Jeans workers is a victory for the whole labour movement against the Tories.'

Lee Jeans London tour

4 May 1pm Blackheath. Festival with Tony Benn in celebration of 1381 Peasants' Revolt

5 May Tower Hamlets Trades Council public meeting Queen Mary College Bancroft Rd E3

6 May Hackney Trades Council; NUJ Book branch

7 May Women in Action meeting on a woman's right to work. Lucas Arms, Grays Inn Rd Kings Cross 7.30pm

9 May Festival for Women's Rights against the Tory attacks. Starcross School Rising Hill St N1, 11am-5pm.

10 May Transport and General Workers Union meeting on a woman's right to work.

If you want to arrange a visit from the Lee Jeans occupation to your workplace or labour movement meeting, phone Jude (01) 359 8371.

Messages of support and donations can be sent to the Treasurer, Lee Jeans shop stewards committee, 45 Brougham St, Greenock Scotland.

Royal Pride: 'We're the thin end of the wedge'

WOMEN WORKERS at Royal Pride in Salford have been on the picket line for nine weeks. They are demanding the basic right to belong to a trade union - and they've been sacked for it.

Royal Pride boss, Novack, is moving materials out of the factory and threatening to close it.

The women realise that they can't win their fight alone. So they're organising a demonstration in Manchester and a member of their strike committee, Elsie, is being sponsored by her union, Furniture, Timber and Allied Trades, to go on the People's March for Jobs.

As the leaflet the women have distributed states: 'We're the thin end of the wedge'. Each group of workers has previously had to fight on

its own but, as their leaflet points out, what Royal Pride workers need is the strength of the whole labour movement.

Messages of support and donations can be sent c/o FTAT 37 Anson Rd Manchester 14.

*No Grunwicks in Manchester
Defend Royal Pride workers*

*Demonstration Saturday
16 May 12.30pm
All Saints, Oxford Rd
Manchester.*

Sponsored by Salford Trades Council, Manchester City LP, Salford CLP and FTAT.

Manchester engineers occupy to save jobs

WORKERS from Laurence Scott Electromotors occupied their factory last Friday. The plant is under threat of closure with a loss of 650 jobs. The employer, Arthur Snipe, wants to transfer work to the company's Norwich plant.

In the view of Bob Penchion, the union convenor, the company is 'asset stripping' and is trying to attack its most organised workplace.

The Laurence Scott group has recently been taken over by Mining Supply Company. It produces motors on contract to the National Coal Board and for the Royal Navy's Polaris submarines.

The workers are now getting down to the task of building support for their occupation. The factory in Norwich is to be asked not to handle any work from Manchester. The group has other plants in Blantyre near Glasgow, Wolverhampton and Aylesbury.

The occupiers will also be looking for support on the People's March and on the 16 May Manchester demonstration organised by the Royal Pride strikers.

The firm has been benefitting from the government's short-time working scheme and two Manchester Labour MPs, Charles Morris and Kenneth Marks, are demanding to know why, after receiving the hand-outs, it is now under threat of closure. Messages of support and donations to: Appeal Fund, Laurence Scott, Louisa St, Higher Openshaw, Manchester 11.

Socialist Challenge

'One of the most readable left-wing papers for working class people produced today.'

Colin Herd (steelworker) Bob Anderson (miner).

'I think Socialist Challenge is the best paper on the left - it's as easy as that, isn't it.'

'What's been good recently are the specials - the in-depth news about industrial struggles and situations - which have been useful for militants to learn something from.'

'Usually, the left papers just comment on the industrial scene but Socialist Challenge is now able to aid militants at their place of work. This is crucial for a socialist newspaper and Socialist Challenge's major strength.'

Dave Ward (Branch Secretary, Crawley POEU; Secretary, Crawley Trades Council; South-east Regional Council of the TUC.)

MAY DAY GREETINGS from Lee Jeans Occupation

WE would like to take the opportunity of thanking all those trade unions, political organisations, women's organisations and individuals who have supported us so much in our fight to save our jobs.

We have now been occupying our factory since 5 February - and we're going to stay here until we win our fight.

Ellen Monaghan, Senior shop steward, Lee Jeans strike committee.

Labour Party

Lift-off for Benn in Manchester

Journalists' leader backs 'Champion of CLPs'

ensure that next time round we have a leadership of the Labour Party committed to carrying out these policies.'

Press

Other speakers at the press conference were Bill Daly, president of the Greater Manchester Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions; Arnold Spencer and Val Stevens of Manchester City Labour Party; and Mick McAuley, chairperson of Ferranti Hollinwood shop stewards' committee.

The launch of this 'Back Benn' campaign in Manchester followed wide circulation in the local labour movement of a statement which welcomed Benn's decision to stand.

Bill Daly explained the need to take the campaign into the trade union movement: 'It's undemocratic for some unions to be declaring in the media which way their union will vote. We should be campaigning for that decision to be made by union conferences.'

Michael Meacher out-

lined plans for the campaign in the run-up to the October election.

This includes asking all constituency Labour Parties to invite a speaker on the candidacy and to nominate Benn; requesting the trade union conferences to ask Benn to speak or to organise fringe meetings, and to set up support rallies around the country.

Sign

Additional signatories to the support statement are: Bob Cryer, MP; Bob Wright, assistant general secretary AUEW; and



Bob Wright

Steve Wright, Manchester district cttee. AUEW.

JONATHAN Hammond, vice-president of the journalists' union, considers that far from going against the unity of the Labour Party, Tony Benn's candidacy will reinforce it.

'Benn is evidently the champion of the constituency parties,' says Hammond, 'and he will help to build unity in the party by giving a voice to the rank and file.'

Support for Benn as deputy leader, he adds, should be raised at the conferences of all affiliated unions. 'The conferences should decide, rather than a stitch-up by full-time officials.'

The NUJ, like the teachers' and other white-collar professional unions, is not affiliated to the Labour Party. Hammond is concerned that it should be.

He mentions that at a recent conference on unemployment, TUC chairperson Alan Fisher said that we could no longer afford the luxury of 'non-political' unions.

Benn campaign wins first victories



Des Tierney and Steve Potter

Two powerful speeches at the Scottish Trades Union Congress last week marked the beginning of a break-up of the initial near-universally hostile reaction by trade union leaders to Tony Benn's bid for the Labour Party deputy leadership.

TUC chairperson Alan Fisher set the tone on the first day of the congress.

While formally bringing the greetings of the TUC General Council, he took the opportunity to give an anti-Benn speech by Helen Liddell, Scottish Labour Party secretary.

Referring to her appeal for unity in the face of the attacks, Fisher asked: 'Unity for what?'

He went on: 'How did we get a Labour government which was committed to an irreversible shift in wealth in favour of the ruling people when it was elected, and yet at the end of five years 84 per cent of the population were still owned by 7 per cent of the population?'

Fisher

'We must not have a false and simple unity,' he continued, 'these issues must be debated.'

After his speech, Alan Fisher told the press that he personally supported Benn's candidacy and that he was the fourth largest vote, with 600,000 votes, and also be likely to vote for Benn in a straight run-off with Denis Healey.

Fisher was too polite to name Benn in his speech. He mentioned Mick McAuley, the Scottish miners' president, felt no constraints.

McAuley

To thunderous applause he declared: 'I'm for Tony Benn. The issue of one of personalities is what will be the character of the next government.'

Recognising the mood of the overwhelming majority of delegates, Mick Foot scrapped his speech on devolution and

Alan Fisher (above left) has said NUPE is likely to back Benn. Scottish miners' leader Mick McGahey (above right) received thunderous applause at the STUC congress when he declared his support for Benn, while Peter Shore (right) took to the streets - well, a street - to brand the left with the crime of 'asserting the supremacy of the party over the supremacy of parliament'

addressed himself to the crisis in the party.

The Labour Party leader claimed he was 'the last person in the movement' to argue for suppression of debate. But he tempered this approach by returning to the theme of unity against the Tories.

It was as much for this fine balancing act and for the fact that he did not criticise Benn's candidature that Foot earned his standing ovation.

The shift to the left in the STUC was followed by another bombshell for the right wing on Friday when news broke that the leadership of the Transport and General Workers Union has shifted from its position of outright opposition to Benn's campaign.

Some motions being considered for the union's biennial conference this summer promote the idea of a vote by all affiliated members in their branches and a national count to determine the attitude of the union's delegation on the major questions at the Labour Party conference.

Jenkins

A similar proposal is being considered by activists in the white-collar



union ASTMS. Clive Jenkins, the union's general secretary, was the first to attack Alan Fisher for his speech at the STUC.

The credibility that Jenkins won in ASTMS because of his support for the 40-30-30 election formula is starting to evaporate with reports that he would back Healey in a straight run-off. The left in the union plans to have Benn address a fringe meeting at the conference.

Two big eye-of-conference rallies with Benn speaking were a feature of the conferences at the Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers and the white-collar union APEX this week.

And the Broad Left in the Post Office Engineering Union expects hundreds of delegates to attend a fringe meeting for Benn at the POEU conference this summer.

Reply

Rank and file militants at the union conferences will be replying to the right wing that it is they and not Benn who have been the most destructive of unity against the Tories with their failure to respond to Tory attacks, particularly unemployment.

And to the right's claim that a large vote for Benn could lead to further defections to the Social Democrats, militants will be arguing that no conces-

sions should be made to blackmail of this sort, while denouncing any such split as a treacherous attack on the unity of the working class.

The strongest guarantee against a split in the Labour Party is a strong Labour left which understands and bases itself on the struggle in the unions.

The best guarantee of denying Weighell, Sirs, Chapple, Duffy and the rest of the right is the building of a left wing in the unions dedicated to taking home the struggle to the union bureaucrats and their counterparts in the Labour Party.

The STUC congress showed the effect that the Benn campaign can have in building such a left wing in the labour movement.

Count me in, says Transport Union leader

WALTER GREENDALE, an executive member of the TGWU representing Region No. 10, told Socialist Challenge:

'The decision was made at the Labour Party conference that there should be elections for the party leadership and deputy leadership. You can't have an election without candidates. Perhaps someone will decide to stand for the leadership, too.'

'I support Benn as deputy leader - without qualifications. I think he's very sincere and I like the policies he advocates. They are in line with the TGWU's own policies: anti-EEC, against government interference in wages; anti-nuclear, and for accountability.'

'The usual practise in the TGWU is that the executive makes a recommendation on Labour Party issues, and then the Labour Party conference delegation, made up of delegates from the union's regions, would have the right to make its own decisions.'

'I think that the activists in the movement support Benn; it will be the activists who make their views known.'

Labour promises a campaigning GLC

Working class people are facing massive rents and rates rises. Won't the Labour Party's proposals to further raise rates to pay for your programme mean a bigger cut in living standards and demoralise working class people?

THE Labour Party's manifesto promises that if the Tories lose their majority on the Greater London Council on 7 May, the council will be in the forefront of a campaign against the government.

Tessa van Gelderen asked JEREMY CORBYN, a Haringey councillor and executive member of the London regional Labour Party, about the way he sees this being implemented.

campaign against unemployment has to be linked to the 35-hour week and higher wages.

A Labour GLC has to support the unemployed in organising, not through recreation centres, but directly through trade union organisation. We also have to create jobs, by creating industry and support for workers' co-operatives, and by fighting to get rid of the Tory government. Unemployment is the cornerstone of every Tory policy.

The 7 May election isn't simply a council election. It's against the Tory government, and if we win London we must campaign to get rid of the government. The GLC has to be committed to doing that in everything it does.

The raising of rents by borough councils to compensate for central government cuts is very regrettable. The Labour movement has failed to unite local authorities into a cohesive force against the government.

They said they would support local authorities in dispute with the government, but they haven't attempted to lead that struggle.

The GLC is a huge local authority, so an aggressive Labour administration could be very effective in mobilising support throughout London in defending local government services and campaigning against the Tories in Westminster.

Much of the responsibility must lie with the TUC and the Labour Party national executive. They are deliberately not co-ordinating national action.

A local authority shouldn't adopt a neutral bureaucratic role simply administering services.

Problem

A Labour-controlled GLC should be providing support for those on strike, campaigning against nuclear weapons, creating jobs in London through public spending, cutting the price of school meals, publishing a campaigning newspaper, and so on.

One problem is that the Labour group on the GLC has acted as local elite, divorced from the labour movement. There should be recorded votes at its meetings, which should be open to representatives from the party and the unions.

All candidates signed a pledge agreeing to abide by the manifesto.

Resistance to unemployment has to be at

the centre of the fight to get the Tories out of government. Yet the trade union leadership merely argues for the government to change course, while the alternative economic strategy doesn't begin to answer the problems.

Are you in favour of a fight for the 35-hour week? How do you see a Labour GLC taking it up?

It's nonsense to think that the kind of campaign the

TUC is running against unemployment could be successful. We've seen the same approach before over racism, which ignored its causes.

It's the same with unemployment. The reasons have to be stated — the lack of control over capital, and the fact that more money is to be made by speculating than producing.

Thatcher wants to divide the labour movement by saying that wages cause inflation. The cam-

How to flatten high-rise rents and rates (without cuts)

By Geoffrey Sheridan

WITHIN days of the 7 May local elections, many working class people will have received rates rises which in some parts of the country are as high as 50 per cent.

Rents on council houses have also come in for high-rise treatment, and it's Labour councils which are to the fore in this cost-of-living escalation, a number of them choosing rent and rates rises to save — or partially save — council jobs and services.

Their argument is a simple one: Blame the increases on the Tory government. There's some truth in that.

While the axe on council spending began under the Callaghan government, Thatcher has set about sharpening it with a vengeance. In 1980-81 the Tories aimed to cut back local authority spending by over 5 per cent compared to the previous year.

For 1981-82 they want further cuts of 3 per cent in current expenditure, 3 per cent in housing investment, and 7 per cent in other building projects.

Government ministers haven't just made speeches appealing for these cuts. They have brought in legislation changing the basis on which councils receive central government funding, and enabling Westminster to keep tight controls on local authority spending.

The system is now rigged to favour the Tory

shires, while central government funds to the deprived inner-city areas have diminished.

Councils which have defied the Tory dictates on cuts have been penalised by an even bigger axe on what they receive from Westminster, and in-

dividual councillors have been threatened with a surcharge on their personal income.

So the Tories can certainly be blamed for changing the rules of the game, and for ensuring that it's a game only the wealthy can win. That's a good reason to vote Labour on 7 May.

But the trouble is that Labour councils haven't quit the gaming tables.

Hiking up rents and rates in order to save services is based on the assumption that the answer to local need lies in the pockets of the working class. It hardly amounts to defiance of the Tories' aims.

Yet this has been the policy advocated by left-wing Labour councillors, while the Labour right has thrown in a package of cuts, too, encouraging the Tories to push their luck still further next time.

If the Labour left believes it is following a lesser-of-two-evils policy, many working class people disagree. In Scotland tens of thousands of council tenants are on rent strike, and similar moves are underway in parts of England and Wales.

There is one way that Labour councils can gain working class support and hasten the end of the Thatcher government. That is by refusing to make any cuts, or to increase rent or rates.

It is not a novel idea. It was among the proposals adopted at a conference held by Lambeth council last November where over 600 labour movement organisations were represented. But it does require real defiance to implement the plan.

Labour councillors ask where the money is supposed to come from if rent and rates aren't raised. They should take a look at the profits being made by the banks. In 1979 the big four banks notched up profits totalling £1,562m, and with sky high interest rates they have been raking it in since then.

Pay

Some 60 per cent of council tenants in the inner city, and in years ago, when it cost an incredible £120,000 on average to provide a council home, 88.3 per cent of this sum went on interest charges.

Refusing to pay the money lenders would be a stride towards nationalising the banks and finance houses under workers' control, a policy which the next Labour government should be committed to.

If, as is probable, Labour councillors would be jailed for not playing the Tories' game, they will need to summon mass support to mount the kind of resistance the government can be forced to bow to.

It backed off pit closures quickly enough when the miners took to the picket lines.

Poplar

Left Labour councillors claim that that support wouldn't be there. How they know when they've never called for it is one of the mysteries of our time. They prefer not to recall that thousands come out on to the streets of Poplar in support of jailed councillors in the 1920s.

Sweeping gains by Labour next Thursday will be a boost to removing the Tories from Westminster, and defiance from Labour councillors — many of whom face reselection before the 1982 elections — would bring the kind of mass action needed to ensure that development.

Out soon: Socialist Challenge pamphlet on No cuts, and No rent or rates rises.



Photo: LARRY HERMAN

Deptford inquiry police on the spot

By Toni Gorton
AS THE official inquiry into the Deptford fire goes into its second week, the police and the coroner are trying to prove that the fire which claimed 13 lives was the result of a fight within the house.

According to John Larose, a member of the New Cross Massacre Action Committee, the police have deliberately not pursued any other lines of investigation such as the fire being caused by a racist inspired bomb.

The police and the coroner are intent on badgering people who were at the party. They

refuse to allow the families' lawyers to call witnesses, such as the father of a policeman who was actually in the house as the fire started. He went away to the local police station without saying anything to the people there.

John Larose adds that the families are able to put a fight at the inquest because of the fact-finding commission which the community set up immediately after the fire. 'Had we relied on police information then we'd be in the same position as all other such inquiries.

'Our campaign and the Black People's Day of Action have been important to our case.'

The pickets of the court continue as long as the inquiry continues. Join them at the Coroners' Court, County Hall London SE1 from 9.30-1pm. For leaflets and further information contact the New Cross Massacre Action Committee, 74 Shakespeare Road, London SE24. Tel 01-737 2268.

Black self-defence patrols needed

By Anna Reese

SATNAM Singh Gill, a 20-year-old student from Henley College was brutally kicked and stabbed to death by racist thugs in Coventry Precinct on 18 April.

The Campaign against Racism, involving black and left wing organisations, has been set up in response to the murder. It is urging support for Satnam's funeral procession and a demonstration against racist attacks on 23 May.

This murder is the worst in a series of racially motivated attacks.

Beaten

A fortnight ago Susan Sheema was attacked with a sickle in her father's shop; black youths have been beaten up; and Asian women have been spat on and pushed.

Coventry racist murder

Since the murder at least ten more attacks have taken place.

In a further response, over 400 black workers and youths discussed black self-defence at a meeting organised by Coventry north-east Labour Party Young Socialists.

They decided to build anti-racist defence squads and to initiate patrols in Coventry Precinct.

Kernal Johal, a bus driver, summed up their feelings: 'We in the Asian community have taken the lead. We cannot afford to wait for the labour movement to protect us.'

'We have taken a lead on this issue and we must and will fight in the labour movement, in the trade unions and the Labour Party for support. This way we will win.'

Create

White youth must be won away from racist ideas and actions. It must be explained that it is Tory policies which create the social conditions that make life so miserable, not black people.

It's a pity that the national

and local organisers of the People's March for Jobs have not taken up this issue.

But in Coventry black people are assembling a black contingent on the march under the banner 'No to racist attacks, no to unemployment.'

They have also called a public meeting on 20 May on these demands.

Campaign Against Racism Demonstration 23 May

Assemble 1pm, Edgewick Park and march to Coventry precinct

For further details contact Mr Singh, Guin Nanak Temple, Harmall Lane, Coventry.

Racist murders in Atlanta

By Rashid Meer in the USA

AT A time when America is spending \$10bn on the space shuttle and giving the murderous Salvadoran junta \$45m, a serious problem here goes un-solved.

On 17 April the 24th victim in the series of murders in Atlanta Georgia, was found.

He was another victim of the racist violence that is part and parcel of the daily lives of people of colour living in the 'civilised' world.

The police, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and politicians in the White House have added to the grief of black people with their theories on the motives for the murders.

They have suggested that the slain youth were child prostitutes, mentally retarded or that they were 'street children' with no family life and so presumably 'deserved' their fate.

The official theory on the killer is equally insulting. Police have repeatedly stated that the killer is a black male. No black men are being harassed.

One FBI agent has claimed that in four of the deaths the parents were the killers and in another that the killer was a homosexual black man.

Black people have refused to take this sitting down. Groups set up by blacks across the country have organised rallies that have brought tens of thousands on to the streets demanding that a state of emergency be declared in Atlanta. This would bring in federal funds to be used in the search for the killer(s).

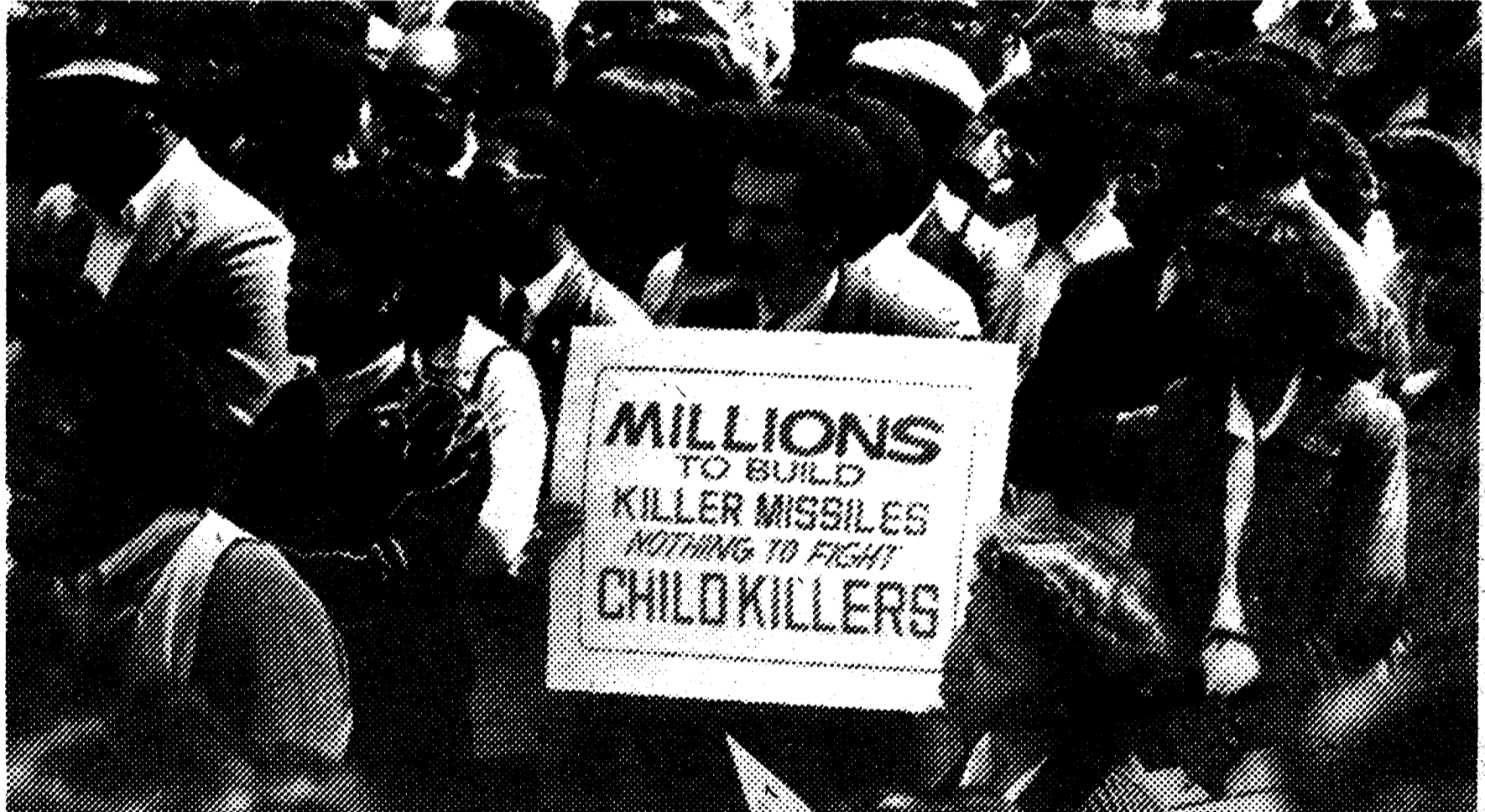
Camille Bell, chairperson of the Atlanta Committee to Stop Children's Murders, and mother of one of the murdered youths, spoke at a recent local rally.

Uncle Tom

She emphasised that the problem was not restricted to Atlanta and could only be worsened by Reagan's proposed budget and cuts.

She stressed, too, that even though the mayor of Atlanta, Maynard Jackson, was a 'nigger' he was not black. 'He has refused to take up the campaign in the interests of the people and does not see it as a racial attack.'

Camille Bell spoke about the need for black people to realise that Uncle Tom and Uncle Sam are the same. She said that the response from the middle-class blacks was disappointing and that more support



had come from poor whites.

This is definitely reflected in the local groups which are predominantly black and are supported by local white trade unions.

While the situation in Atlanta continues to look grim, national support for the Atlanta children indicates a growing awareness that the killings are tied in with black people's basic struggle to survive in an era of

cutbacks and growing racial violence.

J P Blair, a black mother of four, said during a memorial service attended by 2,000 in Washington DC: 'I think there is something racial going on and it doesn't stop in Atlanta.'

'I really think there are people out there who hate blacks and they believe they can destroy us ... God I hate to say it, but that is my honest feeling.'

Atlanta Blacks assert right to self-defence

By Tom Fiske in the US weekly newspaper *The Militant*

BLACK residents here are determined to continue self-defence patrols despite arrests and harassment from city officials and the police.

The self-defence patrols were established by the Techwood Homes Tenants Association because of police failure to stop the murders and disappearances of black children.

The cops have made no arrests.

'If the police were doing their job we wouldn't have to do this,' explained the THTA president, Israel Green. 'This is our community and if we don't protect it nobody's going to protect it.'

On 20 March the association organised 25 people in patrols. Most were armed with baseball bats painted in the black liberation colours — red, black and green.

The bats are known as 'Hank Aaron Crime Stoppers' (Aaron was a top baseball slugger). Patrol organisers decided that a few participants should also carry unloaded guns.

Mayor Maynard Jackson branded the patrols as 'vigilantes' and declared 'that if patrols did not work with the police they will not be tolerated'.

The police smeared the self-defence units as the 'work of outsiders' and arrested four of the participants.

Tenants reacted angrily, saying: 'The Ku Klux Klan has armed camps and they don't

get labelled vigilantes. We get labelled because we are black and low income.'

Other tenants' associations are setting up patrols. The US Veterans, a black veterans' organisation, is talking to residents in many housing projects about organising self-defence.

The group calls for a Project Watch to safeguard the streets and stop kidnappings of black children. 'We want the whole city to be one massive patrol,' said Commander Anderson of post 7 of the US Veterans.

We are glad to see people willing to come together to protect the community. We will branch out particularly in areas that have been victimised.

'Black people have to rise up to protect themselves.'

Tory 'law and order' must go

By Toni Gorton

FROM Atlanta to Coventry, from Brixton to Deptford, the story is the same — increasing violence against black people.

But black people are fighting back. They're organising self-defence, they're protesting, challenging the police and the courts, and they're organising politically.

William Whitelaw says that 'mob rule must end' and that he will propose stronger measures to achieve the law and order he and his party so devoutly desire.

We can only ask, in whose interest does the law operate and what sort of 'order' is envisaged?

According to their laws police have the right to terrorise whole communities as they did in Brixton; to harass young black people through the 'sus' laws; to raid factories and homes in search of 'illegal immigrants', and to deny

people like Anwar Ditta their own children.

In their legal system they can arrest people suspected of terrorism and keep them for seven days without legal advice. In the north of Ireland they can try people in no-jury courts and put them in concentration camp conditions of the H blocks and Armagh jail.

Their laws permit them to ally all of us with the repressive regimes in El Salvador, South Africa, Saudi Arabia and Chile.

Their idea of order is to

keep people deprived of the basic necessities of life and to ban public political dissent about it.

For the Tories 'order' consists of hammering black and white workers into line through unemployment, threats of repatriation of blacks, and laws that restrict democratic rights.

Voting Labour will strike a blow against Tory policies and give strength to all those fighting against racism and for jobs, housing, schools and hospitals.

We say that the Tories have to go!
Vote Labour on 7 May

We say...

- that black people have the right to form organisations to defend their communities and fight for their demands. The labour movement as a whole has the duty to support them.
- that the Nationality Bill and all the immigration laws should be dumped.
- that the Brixton defendants should have all their charges dropped. For a labour movement in-

quiry into Brixton. Boycott the Scarman inquiry. The Special Patrol Group should be disbanded.

● that the labour movement must campaign against the bans on demonstrations. Right wing groups should be cleared off the streets through mass action.

● that the conspiracy and 'Sus' laws should be abolished. And so should the Official Secrets Act, the Criminal Damage Act and the Public Order Act.



The Grunwick struggle marked the beginning of an alliance between Brent Asians and the local labour movement

Blacks fight labour right in Brent

A FIGHT has been raging for over four years in Brent Labour Party in NW London in which the racist views and policies of the local right-wing leadership of the party have become a major issue.

The struggle is now reaching fever pitch as the party members select their candidates for the 1982 council elections. Such is the change in the party that the leader of the council, John Lebor, has not even been nominated by his own ward.

Brent blacks and Asians have been joining the Labour Party and uniting with the left.

Ronan Brady, of Brent East CLP, spoke to Brent councillors MERLE AMORY and MANUBHAI PATEL. Merle is the first black women councillor in London and Manubhai is a founding member of the Asian Labour Party Alliance.

The Asian Labour Party Alliance aims to fight racism in the labour movement and to organise equal opportunities for black people.

It has branches in Harlington, Wandsworth, Croydon, Camden, Islington, Lambeth, Leicester, Birmingham, Bradford, Luton and Northampton. Contact ALPA c/o Brent Indian Association, 116 Ealing Road, Wembley, Middlesex.

Merle represents Stonebridge, an area dominated by high-rise council flats and she sees housing as the major problem.

Manubhai Patel, who came from Uganda in 1961, joined because 'the Labour Party first gave freedom to the colonial

people.'

He is excited by the growth of the Asian Labour Party Alliance (ALPA) — 'It's catching on all over — like Asian flu!'

Manubhai produces a letter from the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party welcoming the formation of ALPA and promising to publicise it. 'One small step...'

Next

For both of them, the Nationality Bill is an attack on black people and should be got rid of by the next Labour government.

'Until we do that,' says Merle, 'a lot of black people will feel cheated and the Labour Party will be treated with mistrust.'

Manubhai says that the Labour Party at a local level must 'show its commitment to the multi-racial society'.

He points out that 'only 4 per cent of Brent council houses go to Asians who make up 20 per cent of the local population.'

Merle says that 'racism is more evident in the trade unions than in the Labour Party because being a member of a trade union doesn't necessarily require you to have the same political consciousness as being a member of a political party.'

'One long-term solution to racism in the labour movement would be to have masses of black people involved in these bodies. As a step to this,' Merle adds, 'the party has to accept the right of black people to organise independently.'

'It's the strength of black people in the movement that will force white people to confront their own racism.'

Manubhai agrees: 'We don't want to be used as mascots.'

Women

Merle has been campaigning for a town-hall creche so that young women with children can get involved in local politics.

'The problem is even greater for black women,' she says. 'Because of racial oppression and cultural traditions they have further barriers to playing a full role in society.'

Both Manubhai and Merle are strongly in favour of the right of women to decide on the question of abortion.

Manubhai extends this principle to the right of the Irish people as a whole to determine their own future. 'Labour-Tory bipartisan policy is an abomination,' he says.



MERLE AMORY

Organise now to fight the bans

THE TIME has come to call a halt to the blanket bans that William Whitelaw has been placing on the right to demonstrate.

Big questions are before us. How we should fight these bans? Should we be in favour of selective bans? Should we defy Whitelaw?

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has declared its intention to oppose the three month ban on all marches in the Strathclyde area of Scotland.

CND had planned a major demonstration to go from the Faslane Polaris bases to the centre of Glasgow.

CND national organiser, Sally Davison warned 'A lot of our limited resources have been put behind the march and we fear that if this march is called off it could lead to future bans. That would effectively be the end of CND.'

These bans won't just be the end of CND unless challenged they could seriously erode the hard won right of assembly.

It is one of the most vital of political rights we have — to take our views into public, to march, to protest, to challenge government — to make demands.

In this period of soaring unemployment, of deep social crisis, of increasing racial attacks, of the race to nuclear extinction, how can we throw away our right to protest what our rulers are doing?

The National Council for Civil Liberties, The Trades Union Congress and a few other bodies have denounced the bans. This is good but more is needed. We should organise in the labour movement to build a campaign to challenge the bans.

Is it possible to defy the bans? The bans can only be defied and defeated with the full involvement of the labour movement. But for this to happen political clarity is needed.

The battle to win the democratic right to march and to demonstrate must be won on the streets. This can only happen if the balance of forces between the government, the police and the working class and the social movements is shifted in favour of the latter.

This change can only come about as a result of debate and discussion within the labour movement.

At the present time the leaders of the trade unions and Labour Party and campaigns like the Anti Nazi League are arguing for bans not against.

While their arguments are aimed at getting the fascists off the streets they undermine the basis of everyone's rights.

Right now the National Front with the connivance of Whitelaw and the police is starting to determine our right of political protest. There is no such thing as 'selective' bans.

We say: circulate the following model resolution in your trade union, Labour Party or campaigning organisation.

● We call upon the government to lift all bans on demonstrations and not to impose others.

● We call upon our Member of Parliament to raise as a matter of urgency the democratic right of people to assemble which is in grave danger of being denied.

● We call upon our executive committee to initiate a campaign structure to defend democratic rights and fight the bans.

● We declare the intention of this branch participating in such a campaign and will give it publicity, funds and whatever other resources it requires.

Socialist Challenge

'The thing that strikes me about Socialist Challenge is that I find it refreshingly open minded and not as rigidly doctrinaire as other papers on the left.'

Jacob Ecclestone, Deputy General Secretary, NUJ

'One of the reasons why I appreciate Socialist Challenge is its good coverage of CND. The paper has always been unequivocal on its policy of Troops Out of Ireland and has had good coverage of Irish issues.'

'I also like its coverage of the economy and the workers' movement and its policy on issues such as women and race.'

Pat Arrowsmith

MERLE Amory joined the Labour Party in 1976, the year after she left school.

'I went to a demonstration against the National



THE scenes that have appeared on our television screens over the past weeks are familiar. British soldiers being pelted with all sorts of missiles, massive funeral marches, riots, hijackings and burnings.

Ireland is once more in the headlines and on the front pages of every British newspaper.

Why do the Irish keep on fighting? When will they stop? Can anything be done? Socialist Challenge gives the answers to the questions being asked this week in the factories, shops, and pubs.

WHY THE IRISH KEEP ON FIGHTING

What are the Irish fighting about this time?

The latest street-fighting has been sparked off by the prospect of the death of Bobby Sands and other hunger strikers.

Bobby Sands was elected a couple of weeks ago as an MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. He received just over 30,000 votes.

By then, he had been on hunger-strike for 40 days and his election showed how much sympathy there was for him and the stand he was taking. But Thatcher refuses to do anything to try and solve the prisoners' issue.

She says 'a crime, is a crime, is a crime' and that Sands has to be treated as an ordinary criminal.

What has inflamed the situation further, especially in Derry where the rioting has been particularly fierce, is that the British government has shown that when its soldiers commit 'a crime' it is judged very differently.

When two Derry youths were mowed down and killed by an army Land Rover last

'We will never allow ourselves to be criminalised, nor our people either. Grief-stricken and oppressed, the men and women of no property have risen.'
Bobby Sands, MP

week, the police said they were treating it as 'an ordinary traffic accident'.

Can you imagine that when the IRA sets off a car bomb the police would treat that as 'an ordinary traffic accident'?

That's all very well, but how can all these people vote for Bobby Sands? He's a terrorist, isn't he?

Well, he's a member of the IRA. But what is a terrorist?

Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe used to be called a terrorist. Then, after he won an election, just as Bobby Sands won his, Mugabe was transformed overnight into a respectable world leader.

Or take another example. In the last war when the French underground movement was blowing up trains, shooting

'There is but a single issue at stake: the right of human dignity for Irish men and women who are imprisoned for taking part in this period of the historic struggle for Irish independence.'
Bobby Sands, MP

German soldiers and so on, they were called 'terrorists' by the Nazis, but for most of the world they were resistance fighters.

Many use violence for political ends only when they've no other option — when the normal channels of democracy aren't open to them.

Look at Bobby Sands' election. We used to be told nobody supported the IRA; that only a tiny minority backed the hunger-strikers.

The votes in Fermanagh and South Tyrone dispelled that myth. But when the electors made their wish clear, did that change the government's attitude? Not a bit of it.

But that still doesn't explain why they all voted for Bobby Sands.

Obviously, people vote a certain way for different reasons.

Some thought voting for Bobby Sands would save his life, because it would force the government to admit he was a political figure and not an 'ordinary criminal' as Thatcher keeps claiming.

All those who voted for Sands must have agreed with the demands of the hunger

strikers as that was the platform on which he stood.

Another reason that people voted for Sands is because many support the aims of the IRA — a united Ireland and British withdrawal from the north of the country.

Well, if the election proved that point and was such a significant success for the IRA, why don't they just stick to standing in elections, instead of all this shooting, bombing and rioting?

They did try that, and were successful, but it didn't prove effective. The best example was the British general election in 1918. Now that's going back a bit, but the roots of the present trouble were planted then.

Britain controlled all of Ireland in those days and in the 1918 election over 70 per cent of the Irish people voted for Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA. Sinn Fein was standing in support of an independent Irish republic, a united Ireland free of any British presence.

No candidates in that election stood on a platform which included the partition of Ireland, but partition is exactly what the British established.

When a majority of Irish MPs refused to accept this and set up a republic in Ireland the British army was sent in to smash the republic.

So it's all very well talking about democracy as opposed to violence, but it was British violence which suppressed Irish democracy in the first place.

Yes, but that's not the situation today. The majority of the people in Northern Ireland want to stay with Britain.

That's true, but how was the majority created in the first place? The constituency of Fermanagh and South Tyrone is a good example.

It's on the border with the south of Ireland, the majority want to be part of a united Ireland, so why were they ever

included in the northern state?

The same can be said for parts of county Armagh and the city of Derry. If you were drawing a border across Ireland it would be logical that all these areas would be part of the south.

But the Loyalists in the north would never have swallowed that. Their aim was to grab as large an area of Ireland as possible, as long as within that area they could expect to have a comfortable majority. That was the undemocratic basis on which the border was erected in Ireland.

Consequently, to talk of majority rule inside the north of Ireland is to talk of a majority which was artificially created. It's like saying that if 75 per cent of union members vote for strike action, the 25 per cent who voted against have the right to cross the picket line.

'I was born in Rathcoole, a predominantly Protestant area of Belfast. I was keen on sports and won a lot of medals for Protestant clubs.'

'In 1972 my family was intimidated out of our home and we moved to Twinbrook on the outskirts of Belfast. Soon after this I was intimidated from my workplace at gunpoint.'

'Shortly after this I joined the Republican movement. I had seen too many houses wrecked, fathers and sons arrested, neighbours hurt, too much gas, shooting and blood — most of it our own people's.'
Bobby Sands, MP

Maybe one solution would be to redraw the boundary, so that those areas which wanted to, on the northern side, would be allowed to join the south.

On a practical level that wouldn't work. Take the example of Belfast. Around a third of the population there supports a united Ireland, but you could hardly split that city up, give a third of it to the south and leave the rest under the control of Britain.

Anyway those in the north of Ireland who support the ending of partition don't necessarily just want to be transferred

into the south. They want a united Ireland, and that means all of Ireland.

Many are also critical about the type of state the south has become. For example, the Provisionals say they favour a socialist republic — and the south of Ireland is as far from being socialist as Thatcher's Britain.

That brings up another point. All this talk of Irish unity and Irish nationalism, why should socialists be interested in such things? Aren't socialists meant to be internationalists, not nationalists?

Of course, eventually the socialist vision is of a world in which national boundaries will disappear, but that should be the free choice of the peoples concerned.

And certainly Britain is not

'I was born in Rathcoole, a predominantly Protestant area of Belfast. I was keen on sports and won a lot of medals for Protestant clubs.'

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'Shortly after this I joined the Republican movement. I had seen too many houses wrecked, fathers and sons arrested, neighbours hurt, too much gas, shooting and blood — most of it our own people's.'
Bobby Sands, MP

in Ireland for internationalist reasons — it is there to defend Britain's own national interests and those of its Western allies.

Socialists say that in a contest between British nationalists and Irish nationalists we should support the Irish — because their nationalism is in support of the people of Ireland to govern their own country, while British nationalism aims at repressing that right.

It is the British state which is the aggressor against the Irish people.

A second point is that socialism in Ireland is only

possible, once there is the prospect of a united working class, and the working class in Ireland are permanently divided by the border.

But why is Britain in Ireland? The only thing we seem to be getting out of it is trouble?

Ideally, Thatcher and the Tories would like to get out. Or at least they would like to be able to withdraw the troops and see the north return to some degree of normality. They might even put up with a united Ireland if it stopped 'the troubles'.

But a number of conditions would have to be met first. They would need to be sure that a united Ireland would be friendly to British interests; that Ireland would join NATO for example.

They would need to know that British investments would be safe in any united Ireland, and that British companies and financial institutions would be free to continue to exploit Irish workers.

None of this would be at all certain if Britain got out now — which is why British governments have always felt obliged to stay in Ireland. The dilemma they face is that the longer they stay, the more oppressive their presence becomes and the greater is the anti-British feeling in Ireland itself.

In that respect, it is very difficult for the ruling class in Britain to get out of Ireland because it cannot be certain of what it will leave behind.

But surely, if the troops were pulled out, there would be more violence?

First, let's appreciate the role of the troops, and the aim of Britain's whole security policy. The troops are all stationed in Republican areas.

They are supported by the Army-controlled Ulster Defence Regiment, over 90 per cent of whose membership is made up of Protestants. The IRA is an illegal organisation, while the Loyalist Ulster Defence

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'I was only a working class boy from a nationalist ghetto, but it is repression that creates the revolutionary spirit of freedom.'

I shall not settle until I achieve the liberation of my country, until Ireland becomes a sovereign independent socialist republic.

We, the risen people, shall turn tragedy into triumph. We shall bear forth a nation.'
Bobby Sands, MP

vulnerable to Loyalist attacks — the working class ghettos — where the call has been loudest for Britain to get out.

The people there know that the sooner Britain leaves, the greater the prospect will be for permanent peace in Ireland.

So Britain should get out now?

Yes, and not just because that is the most practical solution. The Irish people have a right to rule themselves, to determine their own future, to sort out their affairs without the interference of what most of the population regard as a foreign government.

The people of Ireland have been fighting the British in their country for over 800 years, and all the signs are that they will keep on fighting until Britain leaves.

That is why socialists in this country call for the immediate withdrawal of British troops, and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole.

So what can people do who support these arguments?

First of all they should win the broadest support possible for the H Block/Armagh prisoners inside the British and international labour movement. Then there are also a number of different organisations in this country who are active on the Irish question, and in general support of British withdrawal.

The largest is the Troops Out Movement which has local branches in many parts of the country. The TOM is open to

all who agree with its two demands — self-determination for the Irish people, and the immediate withdrawal of British troops.

The TOM can be contacted by phoning (01) 267 2004.

There is also the Committee for Withdrawal from Ireland which has organised meetings, conference and demonstrations. They can be contacted by writing to CWI, c/o Youth Office, 1 Whitehall Place, London SW1.

For those in the Labour Party there is also the Labour Committee on Ireland whose motion at the last Labour conference called upon the next Labour government to 'immediately begin the process' of British withdrawal. The LCI can be contacted c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

Socialist Challenge

'I went to Socialist Challenge to tell what really happened because the truth of the matter is that it is the only paper I do support.'

It's the only left paper I read and feel at one with.'

Michael McAliskey on why he told the story in Socialist Challenge of how he and Bernadette McAliskey were shot.



Which way forward for workers in Wales?

LAST month a consultative document, the Wales TUC Social Plan, was issued for discussion at this weekend's Wales TUC conference. As an alternative to the Tories' economic policies it projects a 3-way agreement between the trade unions, the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) and the next Labour government. PAUL HIGHFIELD and BARRY WILKINS argue that the strategy of the Wales TUC is no way forward for Welsh workers.

Welsh working people have been hit particularly hard by Tory government policies and the economic slump. In one year, from March 1980 to March 1981, unemployment in Wales rocketed from 100,000 to nearly 147,000, a staggering increase of 47,000.

South Wales miners recently showed how to fight back with the significant defeat of the Tories over pit closures. They proved that the government can be beaten in the fight over jobs.

The Wales TUC could give working people the inspiration and direction to learn from the miners on how to defend jobs and living standards. Unfortunately there is an obstacle to this: the current leadership of the Wales TUC and the policies they support.

Their approach can be summed up as follows: to create new jobs Wales needs new investment; to attract this investment Wales must show that it is a co-operative and non-militant workforce; before demonstrations and strikes are counterproductive, and everything must proceed through negotiations and collaboration with employers and government.

The Wales TUC Social Plan is a good example of this strategy. Its centre-piece is a utopian 'agreement' between the trade unions, the next Labour government, and the CBI. The government and the CBI would agree to in-

creased social spending, the expansion of employment in the service sector, and a reduction of the basic working week to 35 hours.

They would also ensure wages kept pace with inflation, and set a minimum wage level at not less than two-thirds of average earnings.

Wales TUC

public fringe meeting
1pm Sat 2 May
Marine Hotel

Speakers: Lee Jeans occupation, Port Talbot and Llanwern Action groups, South Wales leg of People's March. Also invited: NUM, NUR, British Aluminium Resolven.

The trade unions for their part would accept the inevitability of redundancies in manufacturing industry, confining their response to negotiating better redundancy payments.

They would also allow 'manpower restructuring', meaning more shift work, more intensive working practices, and more flexible use of the workforce, along with more control by the trade union leadership over the rank and file to smother unofficial action.

The Social Plan should be thrown out by the Wales TUC conference. It says nothing about what working people should be doing now to fight the Tory onslaught. It is absurd to suggest that the CBI would ever volunteer

to let wages keep pace with inflation unless they were forced to by the labour movement.

Further, the Social Plan disarms the trade union movement in advance by rejecting any militant struggle. It binds and gags the union membership in order to win agreement with the CBI and the government.

This strategy of open collaboration with the bosses is extremely dangerous for working people. It was the militancy of the miners which saved their jobs, and the 'reasonableness' of ISTC leader Bill Sims and Wales TUC general secretary George Wright which lost the steelworkers their jobs.

Lastly, the Social Plan pushes the idea of co-operatives. According to George Wright, significant employment opportunities can be provided in Wales on the model of the Mondragon co-operatives in the Basque country.

But it took 25 years to create 18,500 jobs in these Basque co-operatives. And this was helped by the boom years of the 1950s and 60s. That many jobs (18,500) were lost in Wales in just one month last year as the government ran down the steel industry!

With total unemployment now standing at 147,200 (13.6 per cent of the workforce), and in the depths of an economic slump, Welsh co-operatives could barely begin to meet the massive need for jobs.

Problem

The proposal for co-operatives does not tackle the basic problem — defeating the Tory government and resolving the economic crisis in favour of working people rather than the bosses.

Opposition to the Social Plan has grown inside the labour movement over the last month. It is rumoured that George Wright may withdraw it from the Wales TUC conference agenda because he is afraid it will be rejected!

In the wake of the miners' victory, militants argue that to defend jobs and living standards working people must use the only weapon we have: our organised strength in the trade union and labour movement.

The weapon should be used to fight for socialist policies. A 25 hour work week with no loss of pay, combined with a vigorous campaign against over-



Photo: GM COOKSON (Socialist Challenge)

To defend jobs and living standards the only weapon we can use is the organised strength of the labour movement

Wales TUC leaders: how not to fight back

'WE have become a respected part of the Welsh establishment'. That's general secretary George Wright's view of the role of the Wales TUC. It explains the leadership's startling record of hesitancy and inaction.

During the 1980 steel strike they twice postponed the call for an all-out industrial strike in Wales, resulting in much bitterness and demoralisation.

When Thatcher visited Cardiff in December 1980 the Wales TUC half-heartedly called for a picket, but did nothing to build it. And when she returned in March this year, it refused to do anything, and left the job to the Cardiff Trades Council.

The Wales TUC's main contribution to the British TUC's 'week of action' in April was a 'gala', rather than a demonstration, which proved a total flop.

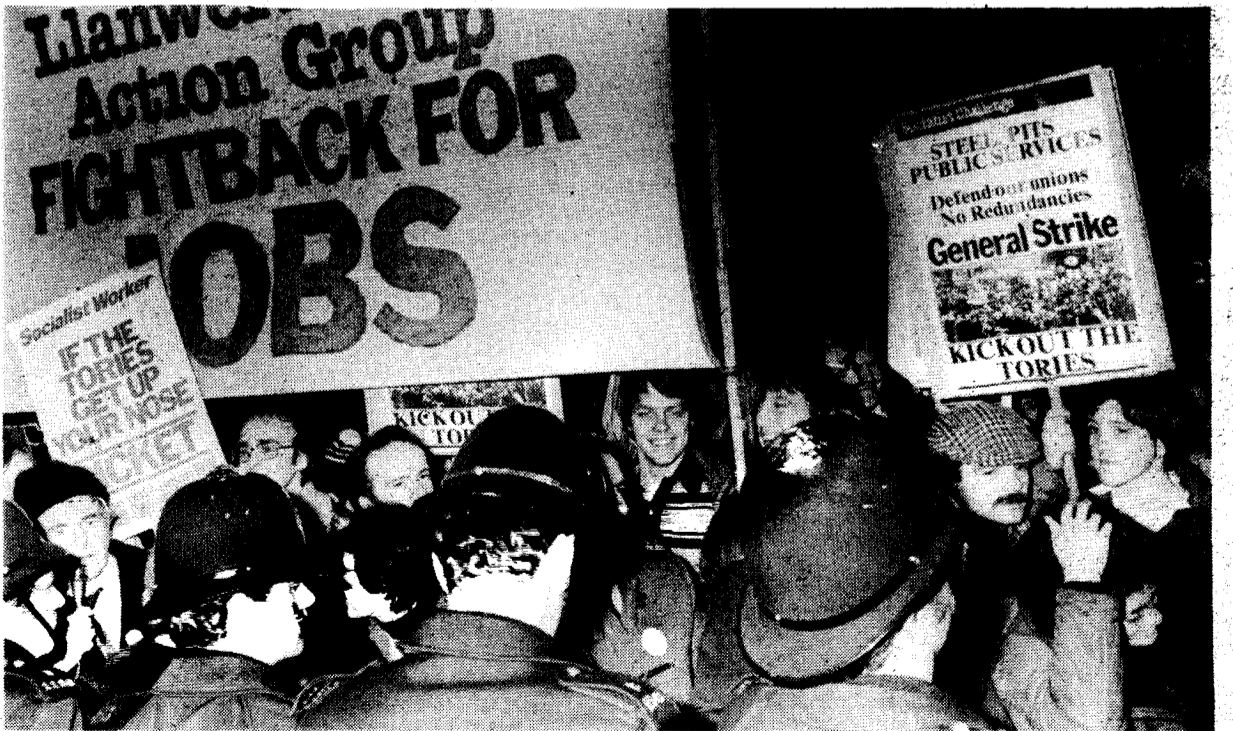
The only time that the Wales TUC has given leadership was on 28 January 1980. Under massive

pressure from steelworkers and miners it called a one-day general strike and demonstration in support of the steel strike and in defence of steelworkers' jobs.

It was a tremendous success, with nearly a quarter of a million Welsh workers on strike, and the biggest demonstration Cardiff has ever seen.

Instead of developing this action to force the British Steel Corporation to back down on their redundancy plans, the Wales TUC stifled it. George Wright's comment on the affair is illuminating.

He told the House of Commons Select Committee on Welsh Affairs: 'There has only been one hiccup in industrial relations in Wales since the Wales TUC was created, and that was on 28 January, one hiccup in seven years.' He was also the author of the famous remark: 'Always keeping people employed in the steel industry, that is not practical.'



Steelworkers picket Margaret Thatcher's visit to Cardiff last December.

time, would create hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

Further jobs could be saved through determined resistance to redundancies, including through occupations, regional and national strikes, to demand major capital invest-

ment in the Welsh pits, railways and steel.

The building of more houses, hospitals and schools would not only employ more building workers and fill a crying social need; it would also increase demand for coal and steel. Such a building

programme could be paid for by reducing the massive arms bill, in particular cancelling all nuclear weapons.

The powerful militancy of the Welsh workers should be used to spearhead industrial

action to get rid of the Tories, and to return a Labour government committed to socialist policies. A useful first step in that direction would be for the Wales TUC to throw its weight behind Tony Benn for deputy Labour leader.

Socialist Challenge

... a balanced view of the political and economic issues and enables working class people to see the role of the state and the need for socialist change.

... and Connolly, convenor of crafts, Yorkshire BSC

Women beware this Tory government!

The hidden unemployed

Nearly half a million women want jobs but are not registered as unemployed. They are labelled as housewives whatever work they've done in the past or plan to do in the future. In addition 200,000 to 400,000 women are home-workers, probably the most exploited group of workers in Britain.

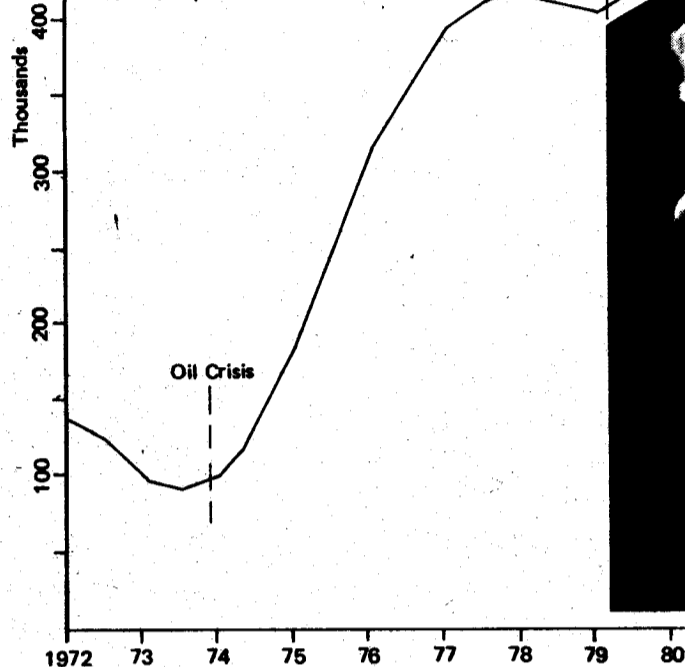


Young and black

Between 1973 and 1977 white female employment increased by 606 per cent. Black women's went up by a staggering 1,110 per cent! A survey of youth unemployed in South London showed that 70 per cent of young black women had no job since leaving school compared to 20 per cent of white female school leavers.

WOMEN'S UNEMPLOYMENT (GB) (REGISTERED)

The number of unemployed women rose steadily in the 1970s. Since the end of 1979, there has been a sharp acceleration



Our rights attacked

Unfair dismissal: under the Tories 1980 Employment Act all workers must have worked for at least one year to qualify for protection from unfair dismissal — two years for those who work in firms of 20 employees or less. This affects many jobs mainly done by women. For example: 75 per cent of the workforce in clothing manufacture are women and 61 per cent of these firms employ less than 25 people.

Maternity: An employer is now under the Employment Act only obliged to give a woman her old job back after pregnancy if it is 'reasonably practicable'. Only 42 per cent of apparently eligible women who worked in firms of less than 100 employees actually received their maternity pay.

Government policy on social security provisions, maternity benefits, taxation and so on, is designed to force women back into the home.

Jobs: The first to go

Women's unemployment has risen sharply as a direct result of government policies. For the first time since the early '50s the number of women employed dropped drastically. Since 1975 female

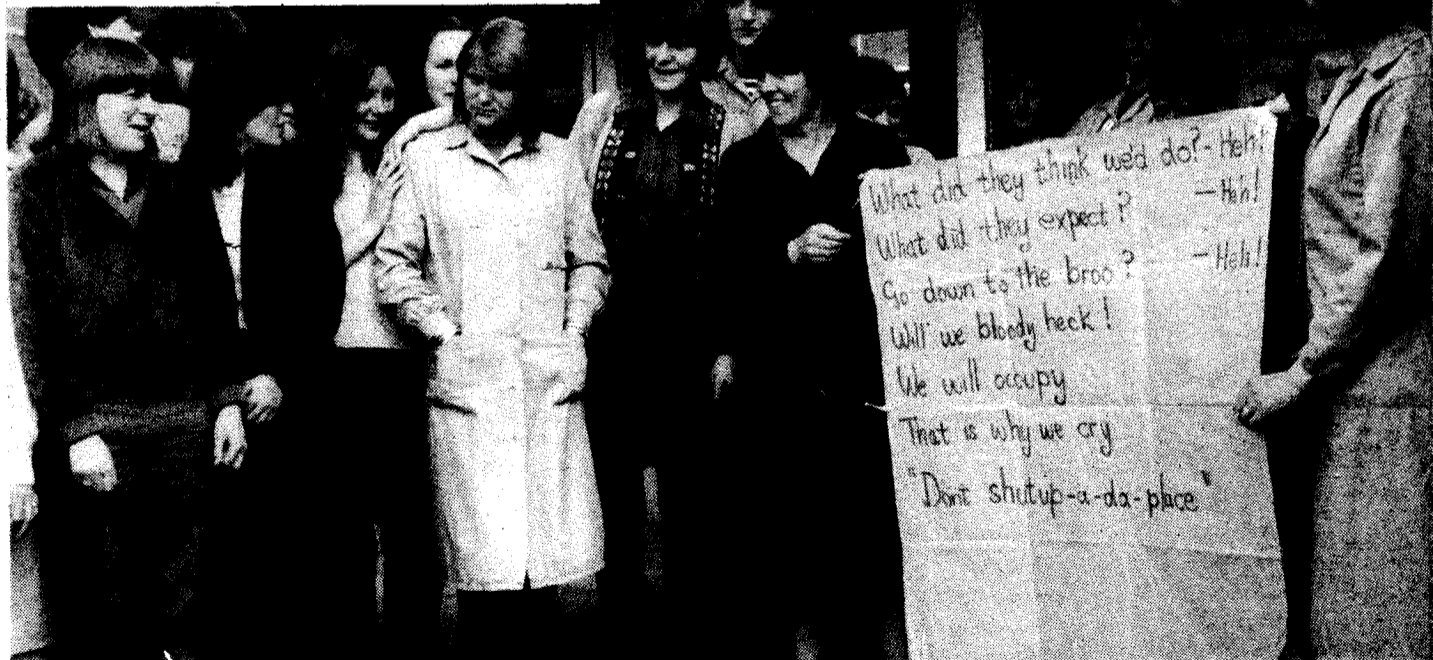
unemployment has risen by 207 per cent. Between September 1979 and September 1980 every industry, except insurance, banking and finance, has cut the number of women it employs.

...but we're fighting back

In the unions

Nearly one-third of Britain's trade unionists are women and the numbers are growing every day. In the last ten years the public employees union, NUPE has increased its female membership by 236 per cent; the white collar union, ASTMS, by 721 per cent and the male dominated engineering union, AUEW by 52 per cent.

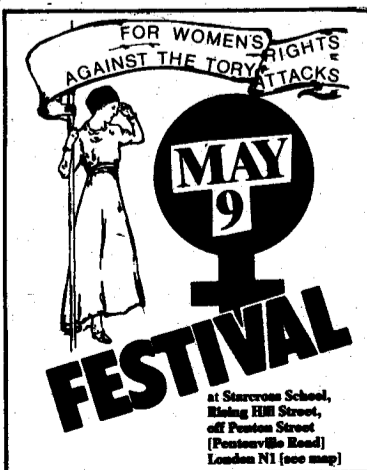
In the workplace



Women workers occupying Lee Jeans factory in Greenock are fighting for the right to work

At the Festival for Women's Rights against Tory attacks

Women from Lee Jeans occupation, Royal Pride factory dispute in Salford will speak at the final rally. Jo Richardson MP, will talk about the fight ahead of us for improved abortion facilities. Let's halt the onslaught.



Checklist for the Festival

- DISTRIBUTE leaflets in workplaces, shopping centres. Ask for speakers to advertise festival at all May Day events.
 - IN the run up to the People's March for Jobs, make sure there are speakers on women's rights and remember to advertise the Festival.
 - IF other women in your area would like to come, why not book a mini bus or coach?
 - IF your organisation wants a stall at the Festival then contact us at 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Tickets, posters and leaflets also available.
- Feel like relaxing after the rally? BOP AGAINST THATCHER. Women in Action and Women's Fightback Benefit. Bands and disco. Entrance £2 Saturday 9 May UCL students union, Gower Place (off Euston Rd) 8pm till late.

Socialist Challenge

'Socialist Challenge has been a great help to us in getting news out about our occupation. The more people that read it the better!'

Ellen Monaghan (Senior Shop Steward, Lee Jeans Greenock)

CISREPORT WOMEN IN THE 80'S



Most of the facts here have come from the CIS Report. It is crammed full of useful data and looks at every aspect of women's lives. Available from The Other Bookshop 329 Upper St, London N1. 95p plus p&p.

Fight for socialist policies in industry

Where you can buy Socialist Challenge

Scotland

ABERDEEN: SC available at Boomtown books, King St. For more info ring Bill 896 284.
DUNDEE: SC available from Dundee City Square outside Boots, every Thursday 4.30-5.30pm, Friday 4.30-5.30pm, Saturday 11-4pm.
EDINBURGH: SC sales every Thursday 4.15-5.15pm Bus Station, St. Andrew's Square and bottom of Waverly steps 4.30-5.30; Saturday 11.30-2pm East End, Princes St. Also available from 1st May Books, or Better Books, Forrest Rd. More info on local activity from SC c/o Box 6, 1st May Bookshop, Candlemaker Row.
GLASGOW: SC sales every Thur/Fri 4.30-5.30pm at Central Station. Also available at Barrett's, Byres Rd; Clyde Books, High St; Glasgow Bookshop Collective, Crosswell Lane; Hope Street Book Centre.
HAMILTON: SC on sale 8-11 every Sat. outside County Bar Almada Street, every Sat outside Safeway 1.30-5. For more info contact Paul, 17 Clyde View or John at 54 Eliot St, Hamilton.

Wales

CARDIFF: every Sat in Butte Town 10.30-12. Also available 1-0-8 Books, Salisbury Road.
NEWPORT: every Sat in town centre 11-12.30
PONTYPRIDD: SC sales every Saturday outside Open Market 11-1pm
SWANSEA: SC sales outside Co-op, Oxford St, 11am-1pm, Saturdays.

England

BATH: SC on sale at 1985 Books, London Road, and Saturdays 2pm-3pm outside the Roman Baths. Phone 2828 for more details.
BIRMINGHAM: SC on sale at The Ramp, Fri 4.30-5.40, Sat 10-4. For more info phone 643-0669.
BRADFORD: SC available from Fourth Idea Bookshop, 14 Southgate.
BRIGHTON: SC sales regularly every Sat outside Open Market, London Road, from 11am-1pm.
Bristol: SC on sale 11-1, 'Hole in Ground', Haymarket. More info from Box 2, c/o Fountelmars, 110 Cheltenham Rd, Montpellier, Bristol 6.
BURNLEY: SC on sale every Sat morning 11.30-1pm St James St.
CHESTERFIELD: SC supporters sell outside Boots, Marketplace, Saturdays 11.30am-12.30pm.
COVENTRY: SC available from Wedge Bookshop. For more info about local activities phone 461138.
HEMEL HEMPSTEAD: SC sales in Time Square, Saturdays 10.30-1.30pm.
Huddersfield: SC supporters sell papers every Saturday 11am-1pm. The Piazza. SC also available at Penworths.
LEEDS: Every Saturday 11-1 at Leeds Lane Pedestrian Precinct and 10.30-12.00 at Headingley Arndale Centre. Corner Bookshop, Woodhouse Lane.

SC Events

Brent: Tues 5 May, public meeting US Hands off El Salvador. Film Revolution or Death, speakers from El Salvador Solidarity Campaign and Socialist Challenge/Revolution Youth. 8.00pm, Harlesden Library, Craven Park NW10.

What's Left

RATES for What's Left: 5p per word or £4 per col. inch. Deadline: noon Sat. prior to publication. Payment in advance. Phone 01-359 8190.

TAKE a chance and win £250 or smaller sums of money in the Grand Spring Raffle. Tickets are 50p per book (5 chances) or 10p each. If you want your counter-falls (not necessary as proof of purchase should you win), enclose stamped and add 15p for post. Cheques/postal orders payable to Hackney Book Group, 25 St Agnes Close, London E9. Shows on 2 May.
ROCK Against Unemployment. Fri 8 May, 8-11.30pm. £1.50 (£1 dose card). Ealing Town Hall, Uxbridge Rd, Ealing, London W5.
RED Spoke, Socialist Cyclist Club. Jobs not Bombs, CND-sponsored ride. London to Brighton, Sat 9 May. Proceeds to sponsor marcher for 'People's March'. Forms and further

International Marxist Group notices

NATIONAL LESBIAN/GAY Fraction 16 May National centre 11 am. All cities welcome even if not active around this question. Main item: perspectives document, orientation to labour and womens movement. Pool-of-fare. Childcare if there is advance notice, and accommodation. Ring Jessie on 01-637 2249.

Revolution Youth notices

BRANCH Organiser's fraction on 16 May 11am at UCL students union, Gower St, London WC1 nr. Euston station. Note: writing and speaking school planned for 17 May postponed.

May Day Greetings

MAY DAY greetings to trade unionists everywhere from Hackney Trades Council. Chairperson T. Doucas. Secretary D. McNeil.
MAY DAY greetings to the workers of the world from Ruskin college students union. Pat Hall president and Geoff Walker secretary.

MANCHESTER SC supporters sell 11-1pm Sat at OLDHAM outside the Yorkshire Bank, High St; at BURY in the shopping precinct and at Metro Books; at BOLTON in the town centre; and in MANCHESTER outside the central reference library in St Peter's Square and at Grassroots and Percivals Bookshop. Tel: 061-236 4905 for further info.
NEWCASTLE: SC on sale every Sat 11-1pm outside Fenwicks. Also available at Days of Hope bookshop, Westgate Rd. For more info ring Phil or Pete on Newcastle 737507
OLDHAM: SC sold every Saturday outside Yorkshire Bank, High Street. For more information about local activities. Tel. 061-682 5151.
OXFORD: SC supporters sell every Fri 12-2pm outside Kings Arms and every Sat 10.30-12.30pm in Cornmarket.
SHEFFIELD: SC on sale Thursday, Pond St, 4.30-6pm; Saturday, Fargate 10.30-12.30pm.
STOCKPORT: SC sold every Saturday, 1pm, Mersey Way. Can be delivered weekly: phone 483 8909 (evening), 236 4905 (day).
SWINDON: SC on sale 11-1 every Sat., Regent St (Brunel Centre).
TEESSIDE: SC on sale Sat lunchtime in the Cleveland Centre, and in Newsfare, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, and outside Woolworths on Stockton High Street.
WOLVERHAMPTON: SC sales on Thur/Fri at Poly Students Union from noon-2pm and British Rail 4.30-6pm; and Saturday near Beatties, town centre from 11am-2pm.

London

BRENT: SC supporters sell at Willesden Junction every Thur at 4.30pm.
EALING: SC supporters sell every Thursday, Ealing Broadway tube, 4.30-5.30pm
ENFIELD: SC available from Nelsons newsgents, London Rd, Enfield Town.
HILLINGDON: SC supporters sell every Friday, 4.30-5.30 at Uxbridge tube station; every Saturday 10.30-12.00 outside Woolworths, Uxbridge shopping centre.
KILBURN: SC sales every Sat, 10am in Kilburn Square, and Thursday 8.30am at Queens Park tube.
LAMBETH: SC available from Village Books, Streatham; Tetric Books, Clapham; Paperback Centre, Brixton; Oval tube kiosk. Also sold Thur and Fri evenings and Thur mornings outside Brixton tube.
NEWHAM: SC sale every Saturday, 11am to noon, Queen's Rd Market, Upton Park.
PADDINGTON supporters sell at Portobello Rd market every Sat at 12 noon.
WEMBLEY: SC sales Fri 6.45am at North Wembley BR Station.

Is your town or city mentioned above? If not, send in details to this sales column.

EALING: May day fair and jumble sale, Sat 2 May 11am-4pm Princes room, Ealing Town Hall, Ealing Broadway. Jumble, gifts, books and pottery, records and food, tombola, games and refreshments all day.

activities from Red Spoke, PO Box 82, London E2.
'AFTER Bristol and Brixton — Tasks ahead for anti-racists? Socialist Action Forum. Speakers: Bernice Grant, LP dir; Mike Rodney, Socialist Action and a speaker from Brixton. Wed 29 April, 7.30pm, Roebuck Pub, 108 Tottenham Ct Rd, London W1. Details 01-769 1160.
THE Patriot Game — Irish Republican film — and Time is Running Out, anti US involvement in Vietnam film. Sun 3 May, 7.30pm. Organised by Central London TOM at London Film Makers Co-op Cinema, 42 Gloucester Av, NW1. Admission 75p or 30p unaged.
SOCIALIST Students Alliance open conference for activists on Sat 2 May at Birmingham Poly Edgbaston site. 11am. For more info contact Dave Clarke at B'ham Poly at 021-356 8164. Social in evening. Sunday 3 May same venue SSA national committee open to SSA members.

IRISH fraction jointly with Revolution Youth. Now on Sun 31 May at national centre.
RAIL national fraction, Sun 3 May, 1-4pm, national centre. Discussion of claim, proposed Broad Left Benn campaign in NUR.

Forum

STUDENT fraction with IMG on Fri 22 May, 11-5pm at UCL students union.
TRADE union subcommittee meets in Manchester on Sun 3 May. Ring Alix on 01-359 8301 for details.

Forum

'KICK out the Tories in the GLC elections' say GLC & ILEA NALGO.
UNITE to kick out the Tories. May Day greetings from Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council.

'KICK out the Tories in the GLC elections' say GLC & ILEA NALGO.
UNITE to kick out the Tories. May Day greetings from Battersea and Wandsworth Trades Council.

By Brian Grogan

SOCIALIST Challenge supporters have called a conference in June with the youth paper *Revolution* to discuss the fight for socialist policies in industry.

The recent victory of the miners against the Tories over pit closures starkly revealed the strength of the industrial unions. If that power can be mobilised no 'strong government' can stand in our way.

The depth of the crisis has forced militants in industry to start thinking about overall social problems and to act in a political way.

It was the historic mobilisation of the TUC which crushed the Corrie abortion bill. And the steelworkers' and sheet metal workers' unions sponsored the recent labour movement conference on abortion rights.

Even on Ireland, which has long been a difficult issue to take up in the unions last week the Scottish TUC backed the demands of the Bobby Sands' campaign.

The scope of the economic crisis forces the working class to seek overall political answers. Many industrial militants are beginning to put their heads into the Labour Party — while keeping their feet in the unions. This explosive mixture will come to a head in Benn's campaign for deputy leader of the Labour Party.

Need

His candidacy raises the need not only for a Labour government to replace the Tories but the policies that government should adopt.

The Tories have thrown everything at the



Miners brought their industrial muscle to aid their sisters and brothers at Grunwicks

working class without breaking its resistance. As the light begins to emerge

at the end of the tunnel a growing number of industrial disputes has broken out. The women workers of Lee Jeans are a beacon for the whole class in that fightback.

The conference on fighting for socialist policies in industry will centre on the need to build a new class struggle leader-

ship inside the unions and the Labour Party.

New militant leaders are emerging inside the stewards' committees and the Labour Party. Revolutionary socialists have to place themselves at the head of this process. This conference will be a small step on that road.

Socialist Challenge/Revolution conference
The fight for socialist policies in industry
 June 27/28
 Entry by ticket only from: PO Box 50, London N1

Fund drive: thanks a thousand!

By Nick Robin

ANOTHER £1,000 rolled in to our coffers this week towards our £100,000 fund drive target. Fund raising socials and dinners are fast becoming a staple part of our supporters' political diet.

Islington supporters raised over £120 at an African evening last weekend, and it's rumoured that an Australian cultural evening may be in the

pipeline from other supporters!

We also received another trade union branch honorarium this week from a Hackney

AUEW supporter. So keep that money rolling in. We want our supporters to have sent us £20,000 from local fundraising by the end of May. So far we've received £6,000.

On May Day we'd like to thank all those comrades round the country who have been working flat-out to raise the money to buy us a computer, our building, and all the other necessities of a weekly socialist paper.

Times may be hard but an investment in Socialist Challenge is one of the only guarantees you have of a better future. Help us to help you kick out the Tories!

Our thanks this week to:

Swindon	£4.00
Hackney supporter	6.56
Hackney	100.00
Nottingham	9.00
Preston	20.00
Glasgow supporters	70.00
OWL	100.00
Lambeth	4.00
Southwark	25.00
Oxford	100.00
Brent	94.00
Haringey	20.00
Cardiff	80.00
J. Nudger	0.50
Standing orders	145.00
Lewisham	3.00
Wandsworth	48.00
Anon	3.00
Paris Gang of Four	60.00
DR Allen	3.00
Cardiff supporter	2.50
Bill Beveridge	1.00
Save World History	5.00
DFW Power	2.00
Leif Wadstadt (Sweden)	1.50
Islington supporters	120.00
Total	£1027.06
Cumulative total	19457.03

Socialist Challenge Sales Week!
 THE best way to raise money, morale, and the level of the class struggle, is of course to win new readers to Socialist Challenge.
 That's what our supporters will be doing all over the country this week: Socialist Challenge Sales Week. Local supporters are aiming to increase their sales by 50 per cent while campaigning to kick out the Tories in the local elections, mobilising for the People's March for Jobs, and celebrating May Day.
 So, if this is the first time you've bought Socialist Challenge, buy it again or take out a subscription; if you read Socialist Challenge regularly, try selling a few copies; and if you already sell a few copies, sell more copies!

SUBSCRIBE TO SOCIALIST CHALLENGE

For new readers we are offering TEN ISSUES of Socialist Challenge for the incredibly low price of £2 (real value £3.15!)

With 12 month subscriptions we are giving away a FREE COPY of *The British Economic Disaster* by Andrew Glyn and John Harrison, published by Pluto Press (usual price £2.95).

Complete the form below and rush your order to: Socialist Challenge, PO Box 50, London N1 2XP. Cheques and POs payable to 'Socialist Challenge'.

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 Othe air mail £24.
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 Name.....
 Address.....

For multi-reader institutions double the above rates.

Letters letters LETTERS

Here's a £1...

I HAVE been reading Socialist Challenge for the past two years but I have never plucked up the courage to write to you before, because until recently a lot of the articles were 'over my head'.

I did not think that you would publish a letter from someone like me. But recently I have noticed that the paper has got a lot easier for me and my workmates to read and discuss.

I fully support the Lee Jeans occupation and I like the way your paper helps me explain to the lads on the floor the way this links up with the struggle to get the troops out of Northern Ireland.

I enclose £1 — probably a millionth of what's going into the royal wedding. Keep up the good work!

BILL BEVERIDGE,
APEX shop steward,
Lucas Aerospace,
Coventry

Photo: JOYCE A AGE



Keep Youth CND young!

I WRITE as a member of Brighton CND, in a personal capacity, concerning Richard Rozanski's article on the conflict between Revolution Youth and national CND officers (9 April).

I have no argument against Revolution Youth being prominent in building Youth CND. So long as winning young people to socialist ideas is not practised as a wide party building exercise, there is no reason why it should conflict with strengthening a united front against the war drive.

But I do disagree with Rozanski's arguments about the age limit for YCND. The argument about other youth organisations having an age limit of 25 is specious. Why should YCND follow these practices?

Having an age limit of 21 is a positive step because it's all too easy for the younger members of a youth campaign to be dominated by those a few years older.

It may be that some CND national organisers want YCND to be a relatively powerless organisation. But if you think there's some magic drink which enables those over 20 to resist this, while those under 20 will be docile, you're in for a few surprises.

IAN MILES,
Brighton

Unilaterally disarming, to encourage the others

I WONDER what the International Marxist Group members of the organising committee at the CND labour movement conference thought they achieved when they voted on the day to overturn its recommendation that delegates should not consider resolutions?

The conference was not a policy-making assembly for any organisation, so resolutions passed couldn't instruct anyone to do anything. The move to take resolutions and then the discussion and voting on them took up quite a bit of time which could otherwise have been spent discussing points arising from the excellent morning speeches.

As it turned out, the resolutions were not all that special. There was one from the Spartacists (thrown out), while those which were passed largely re-stated CND policy. Many delegates were furious at the Socialist Workers Party's threat to

disrupt proceedings if it didn't get its way.

Phil Davies and Brian Heron were critical of Frank Allaun's comment that 'Unilateralists are multilateralists who mean it', but it seems they missed his point.

There is a campaign afoot in the media and by the pro-NATO lobby to confuse people by suggesting that you can support either unilateral or multilateral disarmament but not both. The idea is to give the impression that CND wants Britain to disarm but is in some way against other countries doing the same thing.

In fact we hope that success for disarmers here will encourage those elsewhere to force their governments to disarm. Unless the speakers quoted don't want other countries to disarm, Allaun was quite right.

ALASDAIR BEAL,
Leeds 8

Women's oppression is not in men's interest

I WOULD like to reply to some of the points in Sian Francis' letter (19 March), to try to answer the question as to whether men have a material interest in keeping women in their place.

Socialist feminists have always argued against those who say that if women have equal pay then men's wages will be levelled down; or if women have jobs, men will lose theirs.

We have asserted the opposite — the fight for equal pay can be a spearhead for a fight for better living standards for all. Men, not just male supervisors but fellow workers, don't always understand this.

Many white workers don't understand why racism is not in their interests. Does this mean that whites gain material benefits from the oppression of blacks?

Such a notion falls into the trap set by the capitalists — that, for example, unemployment is caused by black people.

We counter this argument by saying that unemployment is caused by the capitalist market which all sections of society have an interest in fighting. Sian says that the material gains which men reap lie in the 'sexual and domestic service in the home'.

Does this mean the family plays some sort of progressive role at least for one section of the population? No! Everyone knows that despite what the magazines tell us the reality of family life is often that of misery, violence and poverty.

It's the capitalists who benefit most from the family and the role of women within it.

Take the question of the family wage which many trade unionists argue at the moment is a vital bargaining counter in the face of the government's policies.

The notion of the family wage, of course, denies the right of women to go out to work.

How do we argue against this? Do we say to men: Yes, it really is a sacrifice for you to give up the family wage, but we women want a share out of your so-called privilege?

Or do we say: The family wage is not a family wage? The welfare state takes care of many aspects of life, so the public spending cuts lower living standards and it's women who bear the extra burden.

You men have an interest in fighting for women's right to work, for a decent living wage for all. The family wage is a con trick and denies women their basic rights.

Sian questions whether a class analysis can really be useful as a reference point for the oppression of minorities.

Throughout its history the women's movement has been divided along class lines. Thatcher puts her class interests above her interests as a woman.

Getting rid of class society is no guarantee of the liberation of women or even of achieving socialism in the fullest sense. It is merely a precondition for it.

Of course, men do not always see this reality and will even oppose our demands. We as women will have to fight them hard on many occasions.

But it is their loss — it weakens their own fight. And it is all the more reason why women should fight for our own demands now.

JUDITH ARKWRIGHT,
IMG women's
organiser

WRITE TO US!

Think of this page as a noticeboard for your comments, criticisms, or even congratulations. Be brief, to leave space for others — maximum 400 words. Write to: Letters, Socialist Challenge, 328 Upper St, London N1 2XP. (tel 01-359 8180/9)

Coventry conference wasn't a footnote

I WAS intrigued by Pat Hickey's report on the Coventry conference on 'Building working class power' (5 March).

He wrote: 'The delegates came mainly from trades councils, public sector, and white-collar industrial jobs. It was a waste of a day. Is that juxtaposition coincidental?'

I was not too impressed with the conference. But in fairness to the organisers, it should be pointed out that the conference was called as a result of the publication *State Intervention in Industry*, which spelled out what type of Labour government could be in power.

How to get from 1981 to there was not the task. It was more how to avoid the mistakes of 1974-76. The illusions are being sown again — that the Labour Party manifesto is basically okay and all we need to do is see that it's implemented.

That wrong thinking is what the conference tried to deal with.

The same issue of Socialist Challenge had an article entitled 'Preston Trades Council makes headlines', explaining how the trades council has brought about a 'flood of ideas and energy' by buying a press, publishing propaganda and the like.

Yet Pat Hickey argued that any perspective which refuses to deal with the national orientation of the labour movement and its leadership is 'all grass and no roots'.

John Parkinson, the secretary of Preston Trades Council, seems to disagree.

It's understandable if the International Marxist Group takes a pragmatic attitude to the potential of trades councils, but don't slag off conferences which perhaps have similar problems.

ANDY SHALLICE,
Birkenhead

Male privileges are an institution

'WOULDN'T working class men be a whole lot better off if women were liberated?' asks Valerie Coultas in her article 'Women, Rape and Class' (26 Feb). Maybe Valerie should ask most working class men that question.

Don't they realise they'd be happier if no one cooked their meals, did their washing, catered for every need of their children, cleaned their houses, to say nothing of providing sexual services?

Doesn't Valerie acknowledge any problems at all in men giving up their privileges which are encouraged by class society? Does she think we should get them all to put 'demands on the state' for our rights and somehow men will get the message they have to change too?

Such counterpositions as 'demands need to be

placed on the state rather than concentrating our fire on men as individuals' are not useful.

I agree that women's oppression is a product of class society.

But male privileges have been entrenched for so many centuries that they are an institution in and of themselves that have to be tackled.

Men and the state need demands placed on them, which does not mean demanding higher sentences for convicted rapists. Instead we should demand that men support and encourage the self-organisation of women in the women's movement and labour movement.

We should demand positive discrimination for women, thereby removing some of men's privileges.

And we should demand that men actively fight the state for rights and laws that give women total control of their bodies and lives.

Dependency creates power and power is always held on to.

That new society that Valerie talks of, where women are no longer dependent on men, will only happen if we take away male power and privileges!

RACHEL FARM,
East London

So East Europeans all want to emigrate to Israel...

THE accusations by the Soviet Press of 'Zionist subversion' in Poland (*Guardian*, 22 April) have an unsavoury pedigree, reaching back to the purges of the 1930s with the then attacks on 'cosmopolitanism'.

In 1953 the fraudulent 'Doctors' Plot' was a thinly veiled anti-Semitic campaign, subsequently exposed by Khrushchev at the 20th party congress.

After the Polish student unrest in March 1968 Andrezej Werblan penned

an article for the magazine *Miesiecznik Literati*. The gist of this piece of wisdom was that a high proportion of the troublemakers were Jews who were 'particularly susceptible to revisionism'.

This campaign led to the departure from the country of many of the remaining 25,000 survivors of the Nazi holocaust (Poland's pre-war Jewish population was 3m).

There appears to be an interesting congruence of

views between the hardliners in Moscow and Warsaw and the extreme right-wing British historian David Irving. For Irving the Hungarian uprising was a plot by Zionists and Jewish leaders.

The poor unfortunate masses of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary apparently all really want to emigrate to Israel.

Solidarity has dissociated itself from the recent anti-Semitic rally in Warsaw and from the obnox-

ious Irving's attempts at 'aid'.

It is also a matter of record that the hardliners have a long tradition of 'defending socialism' with the methods of the extreme right. Small wonder that after 35 years of 'socialism' in Poland they are an isolated minority within the country and their own party, which may yet need to call in the Soviet tanks to survive.

They should be reminded of the words of

the well-known Polish-Jewish revisionist Rosa Luxemburg: 'The international fraternisation of the workers of the world is the highest and greatest thing on earth; it is my guiding principle, my highest ideal and my real fatherland.'

'I would sooner lose life itself than be disloyal to this ideal.'

JOHN KREEGER,
London NW10

Crisis deepens in Polish CP

By Davy Jones

'EVERYONE knows what it means when Suslov comes to talk to you', commented one Polish journalist on Soviet ideologist Mikhail Suslov's visit to Poland last week.

As the Polish Communist Party Central Committee prepared to meet, Suslov no doubt reminded his Polish counterparts of Soviet president's Brezhnev's warning that they should 'roll back the events of the past months'.

No wonder the Soviet leaders are worried. Within days of Brezhnev's speech at the Czech party congress expressing confidence in the Polish party leaders' handling of the crisis, his hopes were dashed.

First the Polish government caved in after months of struggle and recognised the right of the poor peasants to form their own union, Rural Solidarity. This could result in up to 3.5m peasants being linked into the national Solidarity movement, controlling the bulk of the country's food supplies.

Secondly, the 'anti-apparatus' rank and file movement within the CP held a national conference at Torun University on 15 April. Some 500 delegates from 19 cities attended, claiming to represent a third of the party's three million members.

The conference organ-

isers, including Zbigniew Iwanow, an interview with whom was published in Socialist Challenge recently, claimed the conference was a historic turning point.

There was bitter criticism of the party leadership. 'We are fighting for an idea. The top people in the party are only fighting to stay in their positions,' said one speaker from Szczecin.

Worse still for the Soviet rulers, was the response of the Polish party leadership to this 'unauthorised' conference. Three central committee members brought greetings to the conference and the official party paper, *Trybuna Ludu*, welcomed it as part of the process of 'socialist renewal' in the country.

Such unexpected reactions from the Polish ruling bureaucrats reflect the tremendous pressure from the party rank and file for



Many working class members are leaving the Polish CP

change, and the continuing strength of Solidarity. Further evidence of the crisis within the CP comes from two recent reports in the Polish press.

The newspaper *Zycie Warszawy* published an analysis of the 455 letters and resolutions sent to the

party central committee from party organisations since last August's strike wave.

Of these resolutions, 438 demanded a full explanation of the country's socio-economic crisis and the names of those responsible; 255 called for punishment of those

responsible for wrong decisions; 203 demanded a purge of corrupt elements and 206 called for the abolition of privileges for officials and certain other groups.

Last week too the party headquarters announced that 216,000 members had left the party in the last six

months. Other sources suggest that a high proportion of these defections come from the party's working class base.

At party meetings across the country rank and file militants have spoken their minds directly to the leadership. Starting directly at party leader

Stanislaw Kania, one Gdansk shipyard worker declared that the leadership's actions 'were so different from our expectations, it's almost as if they were running a different party, not ours.'

Purge

Since August only 13 of the 140 Central Committee members have been purged. But if a democratic party congress were allowed this summer wholesale changes would follow. The Soviet rulers have a lot to worry about!

While the struggle within the Communist Party hots up other conflicts are taking shape. Hardliners within the party are likely to organise a further provocation as they did in Bydgoszcz last month, to test the new two month ban on strikes imposed by parliament.

Such a provocation would also be likely to deepen the divisions emerging within Solidarity itself. Increasingly, this division is between the Catholic advisors and their supporters ranged against the working class base of Solidarity. The coming weeks could see dramatic new developments in the struggle for workers' power.

Nicaraguan trade unionists appeal for support

LAST week saw a visit by a delegation of Nicaraguan trade unionists to highlight the threat of US intervention in their country. One of them, ENRIQUE ROBLEDO, the general secretary of the Nicaraguan Timberworkers Union, spoke at a meeting in Glasgow called to organise solidarity with the revolution in El Salvador. This is what he had to say.

I want to make known our fears of American intervention in our country.

Today the US government is attempting to undermine the victory won by our people at the cost of so much suffering on 19 July 1979. They have cut off economic aid and are trying to starve out the people of Nicaragua.

The remaining \$15m of economic aid promised to us after the revolution has been blocked, and credit for the purchase of wheat and staple food for our people has been suspended.

The US government is also allowing the training of ex-Somoza National Guardsmen in camps in Miami and elsewhere. Twelve days ago, over 1,000 ex-Somoza National Guardsmen landed in Honduras after training in the USA.

The US government is not content with the 45,000 people it helped to kill and the 150,000 it helped to wound with its aid to the Somoza dictatorship. While the workers in our country are trying to reconstruct the economy, the US is trying to undermine our revolutionary process.

They have been involved in attempts to sabotage our industry and in providing the arms with which more than 150 members of our workers' militias have been killed near the Honduran border.

Our country was in ruins in July 1979. Industry was practically destroyed, and the country was bankrupt. When the revolution triumphed, 52 per cent of the population was illiterate and our people had no access to medical facilities.

Ours is a small country of 2½ million people. We know what war means as a result of what we have suffered through our own flesh and blood. We don't want war. But if the US forces the issue and prepares to invade, then we will take them on.

The threat to our revolution comes not only from the US but from sectors within our own country who are being used as tools by the US. We, the workers in Nicaragua, ask you, the people of Scotland and throughout the world, to help, to give us solidarity, by denouncing the intervention of the United States.

We know that the reconstruction of our country will be difficult. We know that many obstacles will be placed in our way. But our revolutionary spirit will triumph over them all.

Just as the people of El Salvador are fighting for their liberation, so we maintain our fighting spirit and are ready to raise again the cry we have raised so often before: 'Patria o muerte!' (Free country or death!).



Solidarity with the people of El Salvador!

By Megan Martin

TWO thousand people rallied in Trafalgar Square last Saturday to demand 'US Hands off El Salvador.' Labour leader Michael Foot addressed the rally, accusing US president Reagan of 'supporting international terrorism in El Salvador'.

Support for that charge has increased as more evidence has emerged that Salvadoran and Honduran security forces recently massacred up to 1,500 refugees sheltering in underground retreats near the Honduran border.

Eric Heffer and Joan Lestor also spoke at the rally from the Labour Party international committee and national executive. Trade union leaders Alan Sapper, Ken Gill and Todd Sullivan addressed the rally, as well as representatives from the Nicaraguan trade union federation and the El Salvadoran FDR.

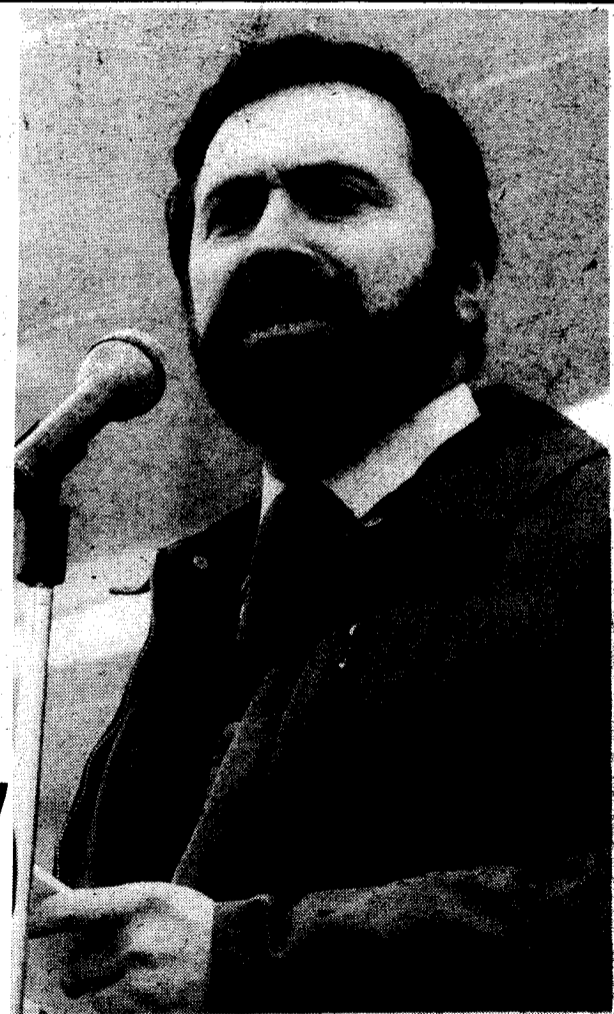
The speakers were unanimous in their

description of the junta in El Salvador as a repressive and bloody regime which does not represent the El Salvadoran people. All the speakers also attacked the US for its extensive economic and military aid to the barbaric regime.

Joan Lestor stressed Thatcher's alliance with Reagan's foreign policy and pointed out that she had agreed to Reagan's proposal that the British government should supervise elections in El Salvador in 1982. The rally concluded with an appeal to take solidarity with the people of El Salvador into the trade unions and the Labour Party.

The rally was an important first step in that direction, especially considering the appalling weather and the disruptive effect of the police ban on the planned march.

Police harassment of the rally went so far as the police ringing up the coach company supposed to bring 40 people from Greater Manchester to the London rally to cancel the coach, threatening arrests if the coach tried to go ahead!



Dr Salvador Moncada from the El Salvador FDR (above) and Socialist Challenge supporters at Trafalgar Square rally

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Sheffield employers on the offensive

By Rab Bird, AUEW shop steward, Sheffield

HADFIELDS, the private steel company in Sheffield, is planning to sack 1,900 out of its 2,600 workforce.

The steel plant, which is owned by the giant Lonrho corporation, is reported to be losing £1m a month, yet only last year Hadfields made efforts to buy the doomed Shot-

ton steel plant from BSC.

That suggests the company is not faced with the huge financial crisis its managers claim, although recently in a spectacular turnabout Lonrho offered Hadfields to BSC.

The antiquated machinery at the plant — which is one reason for the company's losses — meant that BSC wasn't interested.

The ability of the Hadfields workers to fight back has been undermined by the

failure of two other disputes in Sheffield.

At both Plansee Tool and Snows the whole workforce has been sacked after going on strike. At Snows, this was an attempt to smash the strong union organisation, as the work normally done in the factory has been transferred to other parts of the Elliot machine tool group.

The recession and the mounting unemployment figures have given the green light to the bosses to sack, and to attack union rights at will.

The failure of the TUC to offer a national response to these tactics is costing the workers dearly in areas such as Sheffield.

Witch-hunt of teachers rolled back

By Hilda Keen

MANY delegates went to last week's conference of the National Union of Teachers fearing that the union leadership would succeed in launching a witch-hunt against the left. But they went away much more hopeful, and keen to carry on building a broad opposition to the executive's policies.

The executive, aided by the leadership of the Communist Party's teachers' advisory committee — to which many rank and file CP militants were utterly opposed — attempted to isolate the left and support for NUT members in Lambeth who had been suspended for fighting the cuts.

They failed utterly, although media reports suggested otherwise.

Opposition to the executive's attacks on the membership and its capitulation to the government came from all areas of the country.

Critics of the leadership weakened position on the cuts come from outside London, from such areas as Avon and Barking where the union had sanctioned action.

The conference began with the executive trying to suspend standing orders to introduce a motion congratulating itself in its efforts to 'protect the membership' against those who showed 'contempt' for union rules — a move to ram home the attack on the Lambeth teachers, as well as to give the impression that opposition to the executive was minimum.

Conference rejected the manoeuvre by refusing to debate.

Classroom

There were significant victories for the left. Although affiliation to CND was not discussed the conference did overwhelmingly reject the executive's alternative — talking about peace in the classroom.

By a majority of 5,000 it was agreed to instruct rather than advise members to take strike action, providing the normal procedures were carried out.

On many issues card-votes were necessary, which reflected the polarisation at conference. Affiliation to the Labour Party received creditable support. On comprehensive educa-

tion, racism and sexism motions initiated by the Socialist Teachers Alliance and Rank and File were lost, but the position of the executive moved to the left under pressure. For instance, it was agreed to re-affiliate to the Women's TUC.

The executive did win the vote on most issues, but it certainly didn't win the arguments. Teachers knew what the alternatives were — taking strike action, organising with other public sector unions, ultimately taking on the government — and although the majority weren't prepared for these, as yet, it was recognised that the executive was not protecting jobs or wages.

Several important fringe meetings took place: a CND meeting attracted 200; a similar number came to one on El Salvador; 300 backed a meeting in support of the Lambeth teachers; 100 attended a discussion on women in the NUT.

The witch-hunt was not quashed, but it was rolled back. Over the next months a strong, united opposition is vital, and already a conference on fighting the cuts has been arranged by Haringey NUT.

The Socialist Teachers' Alliance will be backing all these moves and can be contacted via Dave Lister, 143a Ham Park Rd, London E7.

● A future article will deal with new developments in the left of the union.

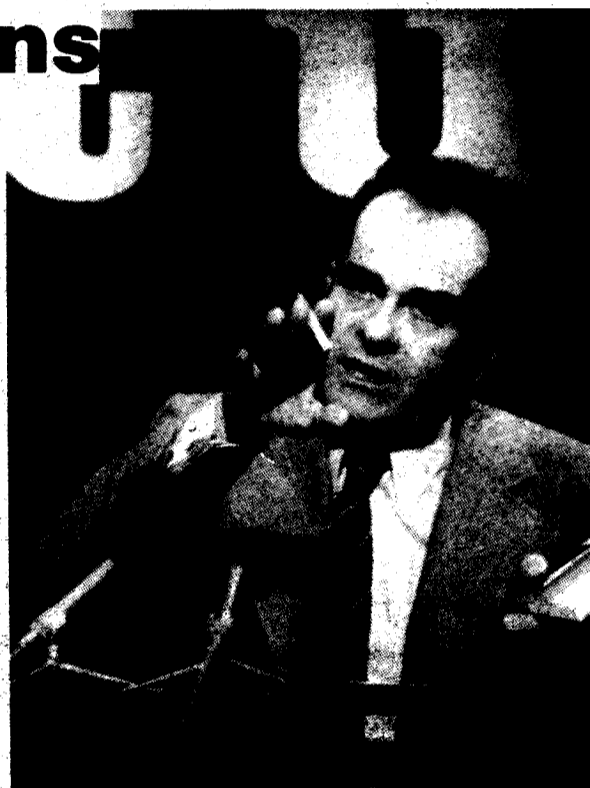
A million votes for far left in French elections

By Phil Hearse

AFTER the first round of the French presidential elections last Sunday, it's still on the cards that Socialist Party candidate Francois Mitterand could win.

The gap between his vote and that of incumbent president Giscard d'Estaing is much narrower than between the left and right in the 1978 elections — with more than 45 per cent of the votes to be re-distributed on the second round next weekend.

A victory for Mitterand would lead to the dissolution of the Assembly, and a new general election.



Georges Marchais — the Communists' calamity

Collapse

The most remarkable features of the election were the size of the vote for the extreme left and the collapse of the Communist Party's vote. A million people voted for Arlette Laguiller of the Trotskyist group Lutte Ouvriere, and for Hugette Bouchardeau of the United Socialist Party (PSU). Arlette alone gained more than 650,000 votes.

The collapse of the vote for the Communist candidate George Marchais — down to just over 15 per cent of the vote as against around 20 per cent

last time — amounts to rejection of the political line of the Communist Party by many workers.

Since the break-up of the Communist-Socialist 'Union of the Left' in 1977, the Communist Party has been on a sectarian binge. At every level, especially in the unions, the Communist Party has attempted to divide the working class movement, refusing all united initiatives with the Socialists and other left wing forces.

It's an open secret that Marchais and the Communists would rather see Giscard back in power than a Socialist win the presidential election.

The tactic of division is being used by the CP to try to defend its position as the most powerful workers' party. But this tactic has now boomeranged against them.

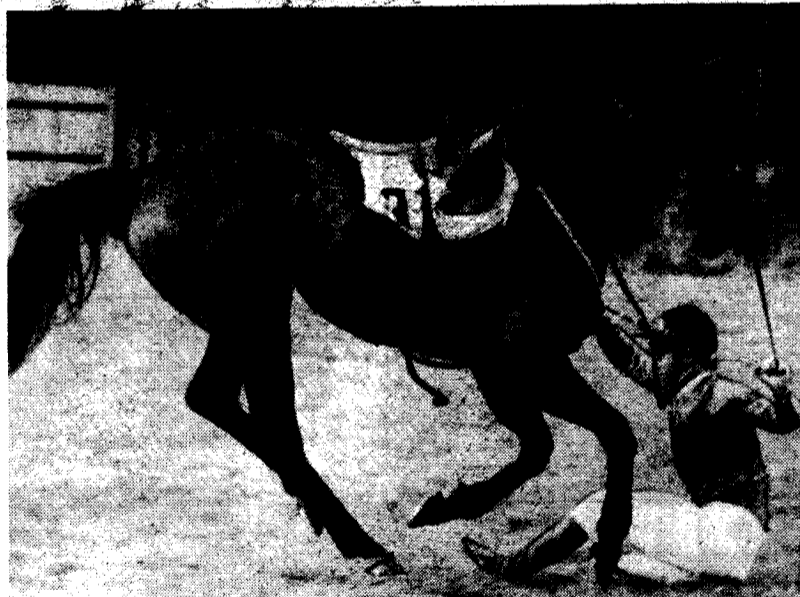
In the run-up to the elections the Communist Party particularly disgraced itself by trying to pick up votes by an anti-immigration campaign. Marchais, in words reminiscent of the National Front in Britain, said 'how can we tolerate more immigrants when there are 1½ million French people unemployed?'

Mitterand's chances of winning would be much enhanced if the CP now put out a clear call for a vote for him on the second round. But all through the campaign the CP has refused to commit itself to this. Once again, the CP's policy of division could harm the whole left.

District

A million votes for Lutte Ouvriere and the PSU illustrate that a large number of French workers distrust both the CP and the SP leadership.

This is the best guarantee that if a left wing government does come to power in the near future, the workers will demand real moves towards socialism, not a government of class collaboration.



Charles Windsor and horse — Mr Windsor is the one on the ground.

Switch off on the big day

Lowdown

By Bob Pennington

ITV does not intend that the great British public should miss one tiny detail of the Royal Wedding on 29 July.

The first nine hours of its coverage will begin with your cornflakes, when the suitably obsequious Alastair Burnett and Ronald Allison start off the horrendously boring experience.

The first part of the programme starts with what ITV describes as 'an exciting news build-up and reaction to the big day from all over the country'.

Informed circles suggest that spontaneous reactions from black youth in Deptford and Brixton are out. Nor is ITV likely to ask Arthur Scargill what he thinks of the young couple. The cameras are certain, however, to beam in on lots of ladies and gentlemen from proletarian centres like Cheltenham and Torquay.

Judith Chalmers, Carol

Barnes, and Selina Scott will be reflecting what ITV describes as 'the strong women's interest...'. Judith Chalmers, who used to prattle on about 'delightful sequined pink gowns' in *Come Dancing*, and gush in the Ascot Paddock about the creations worn by wealthy ladies for the Royal meeting, is guaranteed to be reverential about Di's wedding dress.

It is not thought very likely that either Judith, Carol, or Selina, will have time to reflect the views of those large numbers of women who find it obnoxious that even Lady Di should be treated as nothing more than a decoration on Charlie's arm, or a suitable repository for his genes.

Until two o'clock, Alistair and Ronald will guide us through the ceremony at St Paul's, and then in hushed tones, but betraying just a teeny bit of excitement, they will announce that Charlie and Di are on the balcony at the Palace.

But don't breathe a sigh of relief and think, thank Christ it's all over. At 4pm the damn saga begins again when we sit transfixed while they go off for their honeymoon. Even then it's not over.

All evening television viewing will be punctuated by highlights of the day's happenings. For the unemployed, the sick and the aged, who are suffering the attacks of Thatcher's cut backs in expenditure, the whole show will probably appear as obscene.

Bonanza

But where some lose, other can gain. Wedding time is bonanza time for Di's mum and dad. After all, it's not all the time that you get 900 people a day queuing up to pay to get in to your pad. At Althorp Hall, state home of the Spencers, they charge you to get in and make you pay for taking pictures — very indignant Lord Spencer exposed the film of some bound taking unauthorised photos.

People can even have a meal with the Spencers — for a big price. Di's parents know that in these hard times you have to make a fast buck where you can whenever you can. Whether IT will agree that the page boys and bridesmaids should wear shirts and blouses advertising Althorp Hall is a moot point.

If you are dreading the big day, don't give up hope yet. Three days before the wedding Charlie is away in Spain captaining England B in a polo match. With his record at falling off horses there is a good chance they might be forced to postpone the big day.

And who knows? Maybe the horses could resolve one and settle all the question of who is next in line.

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