

# A Socialist ACTION

**Imperialism out of Lebanon!**

Picket of El Al airlines, Regent St, London — then on to US embassy Saturday 24 September, 11am-2pm

Organised by the Palestine Solidarity Campaign

## Tory medicine: empty wards and empty

## wage packets



THE Tory onslaught against workers in the public sector, and against the health service in particular, was revealed in all its terrifying glory last week.

The Tory plans — another 8000 jobs lost announced last week — next year. The cuts will include: the closing of dozens of hospitals and hundreds of wards —

all in the next year.

\* The imposition of a three per cent public sector pay increase 'guideline'.

\* Massive financial curbs in the civil service, including thousands of redundancies over the next few years, and a reduction of pension and other benefits for civil servants.

### Clear

While the 3 per cent pay guideline is a 'guideline', it is perfectly clear that its most vigorous application will be in the health service. As the 3 per cent guideline was announced, social services minister Norman Fowler announced a complete re-structuring of NHS pay negotiating procedures which in effect replaces the Whitley Council system — and put Fowler's own appointees in charge.

# NO CUTS!

The Tories intend to capitalise on last year's defeat of the seven-month health workers strike to ensure a pitiful increase for them this year. You can be sure that if 3 per cent is the guideline, then Thatcher's favourites — the army and the police — will be well above it with their increase.

The scope of the cuts in the health service will be devastating. Even some of the most modern hospitals will suffer ward closures and restriction of catering and laundry and

other ancillary services.

The headlong rush towards privatising such services will be redoubled. One of London's most prestigious hospitals, the Royal Free in Hampstead is facing the possibility of the loss of 500 jobs — this in a hospital with 900 beds. The same sort of thing will be repeated in hospitals throughout the country.

The three per cent pay guideline is the Tories' attempt to put a brake on pay increases throughout industry. Its most devastating ef-

fects will be on the low paid. Last year health workers in particular suffered from the inability of the TUC to organise an effective fight back. The same thing cannot be allowed to happen this year.

### Crucial

The most crucial struggles against the Tories in the next couple of years are going to come in the public sector. The TUC has a responsibility to build the widest public sector against the cuts, privatisation and the vindictive attack on the low paid. Only national, all-out, industrial action is going to win these fights in the end.

## TRIBUNE RALLY

### Put Socialism on the Agenda

- Eric Heffer MP
- Jo Richardson MP
- Tony Benn
- Bob Wareing MP
- Mandy Moore

Chair: Chris Mullin

Central Hall, Westminster London SW1 Tuesday 27 September 7.30pm

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MODERN TIMES



Look, it's no defence to say it'll be worse at the Labour Party conference...

RED

# Owen shifts SDP right

DAVID OWEN was determined to stamp his authority on last week's SDP conference, and make it absolutely clear that Roy Jenkins and his supporters were out for good. In doing so, he highlighted the political direction of the SDP in a much more decisive manner than Jenkins had done. In a word that direction was — 'keep right'.

The SDP committed itself openly to the 'free market economy'. In other words, the foundations of SDP economic strategy will be the promotion of unbridled capitalist enterprise. This, Owen thinks, will create the necessary wealth to afford the luxury of looking after the poor — 'love, altruism or whatever you may call it'. This approach is a sharp break from the Keynesian notion of the 'mixed economy' the strong public sector guiding economic planning, which is the traditional approach of the Gaitskellite social democrats.

## Spectrum

Owen has decided that since Thatcher has moved the political spectrum to the right, the SDP has to compete with her on her own terrain — 'Thatcherism with a human

face'. What this really means was given away by Shirley Williams when she argued that the SDP's approach meant 'healthy competition' between the private and public sector, as for example is now taking place in British Telecom! In other words a public sector at the service of, and making profits for, private industry.

By Paul Lawson

The SDP leadership hope to distinguish themselves from Thatcher by posing as the free enterprise supporters who have a social conscience. But, of course, if the free enterprise they champion fails to create sufficient wealth, so much the worse for social conscience!

Owen doesn't intend to permit Thatcher to get away with being the sole champion of British nationalism and philistine

chauvinism. In effect, Owen pledged his support to the deployment of cruise missiles, with or without a 'dual key' with the Americans. NATO and the EEC remain the cornerstones of SDP foreign policy.

## Shift

Behind the right shift is a feeling that perhaps the Labour vote has been 'squeezed' to its limit by the SDP, and that new inroads into the Tory vote have to be made.

The Owen-Williams team firmly slammed the door shut on any early fusion with the Liberals. While politically attempting to corner some of the Liberals' economic policies, they shifted their approach to government coalition. For Owen, an SDP-Liberal government is just one possibility. But if at the next election the SDP were to emerge much stronger than the Liberals, Owen is leaving open the possibility of a coalition with either the Tories or Labour.

The SDP's right turn is a calculated gamble by Owen to carve out a new



'Good to see you Dave — there's been a few changes since you've been away'

political space for a rightist, populist and openly capitalist party. But there are dangers in this approach. By moving to the right, the SDP creates a space to its left. There is a genuine political difference now between the traditional Labour right wing, with its 'mixed economy' rhetoric and the SDP. The right turn makes

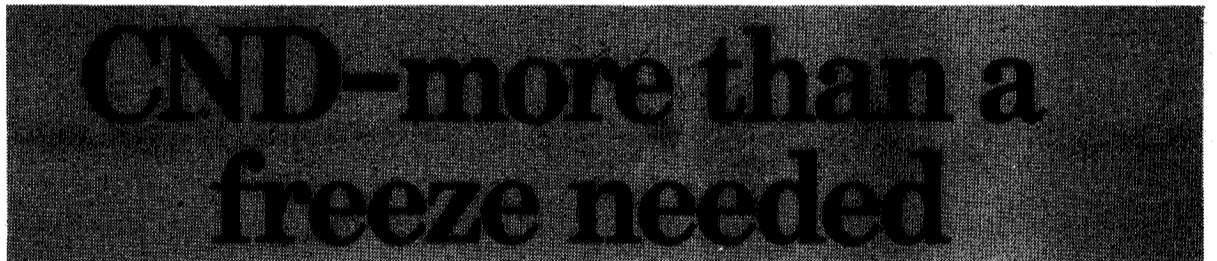
it less likely that more Labour MPs will desert Labour for the SDP. Indeed it is significant that the discussion in right wing circles, most of it not very serious for the moment, has been about creating a new 'Democratic Labour Party'.

While some trade unions have indicated their willingness to talk to the

SDP about trade union reform, this is a function of the temptation of the right wing trade union bureaucracy to detach themselves from any party allegiance. The chances of right wing unions going over to support the SDP are very remote indeed.

The response of the labour movement to the SDP shift should be clear

enough. From now on the SDP proclaims itself, proudly and openly, a party of unbridled capitalism, a party which supports the missiles with no 'buts', a party ready to go into coalition with the Thatcherite Tories. To combat the SDP with a clear socialist alternative means to refuse to get pulled into the swing to the right.



THE FOLLOWING article appears in the autumn issue of Radioactive Times, Manchester's CND journal. The article reflects a continuing discussion and concern in CND in Greater Manchester about the freeze campaign.

One of the results of the discussion has been the decision of Greater Manchester CND to submit an emergency resolution to this year's CND national conference rejecting the freeze by a 3 to 1 majority.

ON 12 JUNE last year one million Americans marched in New York in support of a nuclear freeze. The 'Freeze' movement's central demand is for a mutual freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons.

The emergence of the Freeze movement in the USA has been spectacular, adding to the international character of the peace movement and acting as a brake to Reagan's plans to deploy the destabilising new weapons systems — MX, cruise and Trident.

It has also led to a major new campaign around the freeze by the World Disarmament Campaign and the United Nations Association in Britain. How should CND react to the demand for a freeze?

Rumours are spreading that national CND wants to prioritise the international campaign and play down the demand for unilateral nuclear disarmament.

### Why change CND's basic demands?

This move seems to stem from the idea of exploiting current 'public opinion' to try and win a limited victory.

The opinion polls have consistently shown that the majority of British people are opposed to cruise and Trident but not in favour of unilateral nuclear disarmament. The lesson drawn from this by some in CND is that we should give less pro-

minence to unilateralism and attempt to form a broad front around the demand for a freeze.

This has led E.P. Thompson, for example, to argue that 'if one collects into one lump the votes opposing Trident and supporting a freeze — Labour, Liberal, SDP, SNP etc — then there was a clear peace majority'. In other words, Thompson attempts to redefine what constitutes the peace movement. But do these votes really constitute a peace majority? And what can such a broad front do in campaigning terms?

### Against prioritising the freeze

If you look at the support

for unilateral nuclear disarmament over the last two years you will find that it has actually fallen from about 35 per cent to 25 per cent.

This is because CND has campaigned around cruise and Trident without succeeding in bringing unilateralism to the fore. This situation has been exploited by the government who attack unilateralists as 'one-sided disarmers' and discredit us with smears, innuendo and half truths.

If we take up the idea of a broad pro-freeze coalition, to the neglect of explaining and campaigning for unilateralism, support for unilateralism will continue to drop.

The freeze also presents a problem when campaigning on the ground. I've heard freeze petitioners approach the public and explain to hesitant people that 'freeze is not unilateralism', as if that were something extreme and dangerous. How's that for driving a wedge into our campaign!

Attempting to cobble together a broad pro-freeze campaign will also begin to restrict the scope and militancy of our activities. There will be those who argue that such-and-such an action should not be supported because it will alienate the 'middle ground'. Bye-Bye blockading? Bye-Bye working with the trade unions towards industrial action?

There's a further factor to bear in mind. In 1963 the Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT) was signed

and welcomed as a major victory for CND. However, the PTBT disarmed the peace movement. It created the illusion that negotiations between the nuclear powers could lead to disarmament. It reduced the sense of urgency of the campaign, and enabled exhausted activists to move onto other issues (or retire) without feeling guilty.

The point is this: in the first wave of CND the campaign against nuclear testing was the sharp edge of CND's wider campaign against all nuclear weapons, performing a similar role to today's CND campaigning against cruise and Trident. So the decline of CND after the signing of the PTBT is a grim reminder of the dangers of success on a limited and short term demand.

Today there is pressure from sections of CND's leadership to adopt a similarly limited and short term demand; the freeze. The demand for a freeze agreement between the super powers should be supported, but not as a substitute for the demand for unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain.

The strong moral, political, economic and military arguments for unilateral disarmament still stand. And it is unilateralism which gives coherence to our opposition to cruise, Trident, Polaris and the American bases, and which binds together massive numbers of women and men in the powerful movement which is CND.



## Manchester CND resolution

CONFERENCE notes the decision of CND council to make freeze a central slogan on the national demonstration on 22 October.

Conference notes that despite passing their own freeze demand the US Congress subsequently voted to approve the deployment of the first 10 MX missiles.

Conference rejects the freeze demand as a campaigning slogan of CND. It considers that the demand distracts the movement as MX, cruise

and Pershing II are deployed.

Conference reaffirms the commitment of CND to campaign against cruise and Trident, for their removal in the event that they are deployed, and for full British unilateral disarmament.

Conference mandates the National Council of CND to launch a charter against cruise seeking millions of signatures to demonstrate majority opposition to cruise.

Conference instructs the CND council to drop Freeze as a campaigning slogan of CND.

CND groups and affiliates which support the points in the above resolution, or would like to form a composite with it are asked to contact:

Greater Manchester District CND link person, Dick Withecombe, c/o 116 Chadderton Way, Oldham, Lancs. Telephone: 061-236 4905.

Scottish CND discusses freeze — page 11

**Campaign  
for political  
rights at work**

# Meetings discuss lessons of witch hunt

PEOPLE all over the country want to know the real story of the Cowley sackings. At the meetings I have spoken at in the past few weeks, complete strangers have come up to me afterwards and explained how they have been victimised because they were trade unionists or politically active.

Val from Stockport has been a victim of blacklisting since 1978. She applied for 50 jobs in 12 months, but couldn't get a reference from her previous employer where surprise, surprise, she'd been a shop steward. Every year since then, she's sent a resolution on blacklisting from her union to the Labour Party Conference. So far it's never been discussed!

By Steph Grant

At Crouch Construction in South London union members have been viciously attacked by subcontracted non-union labour. One young trade union member had his head smashed open with a hod, and even last week, the union members were sent home 'for their own safety'.

It's time the labour movement acted and put a stop to these practices.

Ken Livingstone knows what he's talking about when, speaking at a Stockport meeting, he described the press as 'part

of the front line attack of the ruling class'.

## Slanders

He's been at the receiving end of two years of virulent attacks and personal slanders from the gutter press. The latest one he entertained with the 80-strong audience with was how *Private Eye* managed to make a lurid, suggestive story out of the fact that he had been to San Francisco, centre of the gay community, and bought some sci-fi books and a bottle of pills!

And when 90 people heard strikers from Britain's Toys at an East London anti-witch hunt meeting, they were reminded why the press have led such a vile campaign about women track workers at Cowley. At Britain's the women workers are exclusively in the low paid assembly jobs, on piece work, like many women workers and blatantly exploited by the management.

Peter Tatchell has heard a lot of lies in

politics, not only about himself. He reckons Margaret Thatcher should take the prize for 'big blue pork pies' over her record in the Malvinas War last year, when she ordered the sinking of the Belgrano, as it was returning to Argentina, defending her action to the world by saying that the Belgrano was a threat.

In Bristol, a speaker from Labour Steering Committee against the Witch Hunt explained that we are facing witch hunts inside our own movement, with the national expulsion of the Militant editorial board, even though most of their local parties have refused to expel them.

## Charged

And in Wythenshawe, the whole of the Labour Party has been suspended by the NEC, because the party there is too left and likely to put up left Labour candidates in next year's council elections.

Unmesh Desai extended his full support to the Cowley 13 from the Newham 8 Defence Committee, and as he told 50 people at a meeting in Brixton last week, those eight youth are being charged with conspiracy, a word we've heard a lot of

recently. But the repeated racist attacks on Asian youth and the compliance of the police has been the real conspiracy in Newham.

The Cowley victimisations have uncovered a massive area where trade unionists, socialists, and activists are under attack.

But we should take the message that has come out of every meeting I have spoken at, which is that we shouldn't be demoralised, we should fight back!

## Further meetings in September

**Thurs 22 Sept**  
Wakefield, speakers include Steph Grant

**Fri 23 Sept**  
Stoke, speakers include Peter Tatchell and Steph Grant

**Tues 27 Sept**  
Birmingham, speakers include Clare Short MP, Peter Tatchell and Steph Grant

**Wed 28 Sept**  
Deptford, speakers include Richard Balfe MEP, Peter Tatchell and Steph Grant

Further details in Listings page 10.

# Wythenshawe defies NEC ban

By Graham Attwell

BY A unanimous vote Wythenshawe Labour Party voted last week to re-open for normal business. The constituency party has been suspended by the Labour National Executive Committee since April for alleged irregularities in selection procedures.

The allegations are part of a long running row in Manchester City Labour Party which has resulted in 29 councillors having the party whip withdrawn. This has led to desperate attempts by right wingers to prevent reselection giving the left a majority on the Council.

The General Management Committee of the Wythenshawe party is furious that they have had no proper opportunity for legal representation or to answer the charges against them which they totally refute.

Since March this year David Hughes, the national agent of the Labour Party, has been officially in charge of Wythenshawe.

Alf Home, chair of Wythenshawe, says, 'They have made no real effort to get the constituency reopened. They're trying to find a way to stop some delegated bodies from par-

ticipating.' In a new move attempts are being made to deprive Alf Home of his Labour Party card for allegedly speaking on a Workers Revolutionary Party platform, which he denies. Not surprisingly many delegates see this as part of a witch hunt against the left in the constituency.

Wythenshawe members are especially concerned that the NEC's actions will have repercussions for the party as a whole.

'The NEC are there to uphold the constitution, not to change it at will' says Alf Home. The reconvened GMC unanimously agreed to lobby the Labour Party conference at Brighton. They will be asking conference to overturn the NEC decision.

As Alf Home says, 'The fight for Wythenshawe is vital if the witch hunt in the party as a whole is to be stopped.'

# More backing for national appeal

IN THE PAST week hundreds more signatures have come in to back the national appeal against political vetting and victimisation. New MPs signing the appeal include Joan Maynard, Eric Deakins, Syd Bidwell and Michael Meacher, NUM executive member Eric Clarke has also signed.

Warwick and Leamington Constituency Labour Party passed the following resolution at its last GMC meeting: 'This CLP views with alarm the McCarthyite campaign conducted by the media and employers against socialists and trade union activists. It calls upon the NEC to protest strongly against witch hunting of any socialists or trade unionists.'



Alex Lyon

The national appeal reads:

'WE ARE deeply concerned that the recent dismissal by British Leyland at Cowley of workers for their political views is merely one example of increasing evidence of the victimisation of workers who are considered radical or socialist. In our view an employer is not entitled to censor ideas or penalise normal trade union activity.'

The press treatment of the Cowley story was gravely disturbing in assuming guilt where non was proven. Yet few voices were heard in criticism. This is a new McCarthyite tendency to condemn people by association and, taken with the activity of organisations like the Economic League, it is a tendency which ought to be reversed. We would welcome your support in forming a committee to counter this tendency and to give support to those who are victimised at work for their political convictions.'



Joan Maynard MP

Initial signatories (all in personal capacity)

- Alex Kitson, Assistant General Secretary TGWU
- Terry Marsland, General Secretary Tobacco Workers Union
- Geoffrey Drain, General Secretary NALGO
- Alan Sapper, General Secretary ACTT
- Jim Slater, General Secretary National Union of Seamen
- Jimmy Knapp, General Secretary National Union of Railwaymen
- Ken Cameron, General Secretary Fire Brigades Union
- Jack Collins, Kent area NUM
- Morris Jones, President Yorkshire NUM
- Eric Clarke, NUM Executive
- Ken Barlow, Midland Region UCATT
- Eric Deakins MP
- Joan Maynard MP
- Syd Bidwell MP
- Eric Heffer MP
- Jo Richardson MP
- Martin Flannery MP
- Tony Banks MP
- Jeremy Corbyn MP
- Harriet Harman MP
- Dennis Canavan MP
- Ron Brown MP



Ken Livingstone

- Michael Meacher MP
- Ken Livingstone, leader GLC
- Richard Balfe MEP
- Mabel Goldwin, Southwark councillor
- Peter Troy, Southwark councillor
- Penny Newell, Chair Peckham CLP
- Alex Lyon
- Les Huckfield, Tribune
- Jeremy Hawthorn, Sec Peckham CLP

- Lloyd Trot, Treasurer Peckham CLP
- James Curran, editor New Socialist
- Glenys Thornton, secretary Political Committee Royal Arsenal Cooperative Society
- Anstey Rice, Southwark Black Peoples Alliance
- Peter Carter, Industrial Organiser, Communist Party
- Prof. Sheila Allen
- Prof. Hilary Rose, Bradford University
- Prof. Steven Rose, Open University
- Prof. Stuart Hall, Open University
- Sue O'Sullivan, Spare Rib
- Helen John, Greenham Peace Camp
- Robin Blackburn, editor New Left Review
- Anthony Arblaster
- John Saville
- Anthony Kendall, leader Hackney Council

- Gultekin Bekdemir, executive member of the banned Turkish union DISK
- Michael Bryant, Sec. NUPE
- Camberwell Green
- Norman Ellery, Chair NUPE
- Camberwell Green
- Danny McNamara, Chair NUPE
- Southwark General
- Clr Noel Hayes, Waltham Forest
- Dave Haywood, Sec. Ealing-Southall CLP



\* Stop deportations now! \*

With the support of NALGO, the **MUHAMMAD IDRISH**

Defence Campaign calls on labour movement and anti-racist activists to support a

**NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION**

against racist deportation laws from Booth Street, Handsworth **BIRMINGHAM, 11am, SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER**

\* Stop deportations now! \*

Contact your local NALGO branch for travel details



Demonstrate against racist attacks on September 24. March called by Newham 8 Defence Committee. Assemble 1pm, Plashet Park, London.

# IRELAND UNFREE

## Tories turn to super-grasses

A CAMPAIGN of resistance to the use of paid informers looks like opening up a new stage in the struggle in the North.

It is now two years since the hunger strike, and although the five demands of the hunger strikers are still to be achieved, the lasting effects of the mass movement built behind those demands still remain.

The republican movement continues to move leftward and lessons have been drawn from 1981. These lessons include the necessity for mass action; for a campaign on a 32-county basis; to campaign internationally; to involve women centrally in the struggle; understanding the value of using the electoral arena; building a base inside the unions and working with the left in Britain to build a broad-based troops out movement.

In Britain more and more Labour Parties are inviting Sinn Fein representatives so that the 'wall of disinformation' created by the government and the media can be broken down. Resolutions to Party conference call for the ending of the Unionist veto, and the removal of Labour's support for the phoney Assembly.

British intelligence might not be very good, but one thing they do realise is that the problems in the North cannot be solved by military superiority. After all, a couple of Harrier Jump Jets could knock out the main centres of republican resistance in an afternoon if political conditions allowed.

It is for this reason that Thatcher was intransigent over the prisoners issue. It didn't matter what clothes the men of H-block wore, what was important was to establish that they were criminals, and that campaign failed. Since the H-block struggle, political initiatives have floundered. The Assembly could not even gain the credibility offered by the participation of the SDLP who would normally accept any offer of collaboration.

The British will not consider withdrawal until the nationalist population can be thoroughly defeated. Criminalisation offers the only possible short term strategy. So now they comb the over-filled jails trying to buy off prisoners who will betray their comrades in exchange for fabulous riches and a place in the sun. It is an ideal breeding ground for every kind of undercover agent and secret service operator.

These paid perjurers can only operate in a system where non-jury courts have thrown every normal notion of justice to the winds. Sinn Fein are now starting to organise resistance to this latest British offensive. They go into a new campaign with lessons partially or wholly learnt from the H-block/Armagh struggle.

Already the so-called allies in the church have taken their distance. Civil libertarians from Britain in the form of Lord Gifford and the Cobden trust investigate the moral issues. In Britain, the Labour left must build support for the nationalist resistance. The last time round, confusion was rife about the criminalisation issue. This time — despite the witch hunt and retreat of the left — let's get it right!

# Divorce Tory-style Women get the blame

NEW FIGURES issued this week reveal that while the number of divorces is rising (one in three marriages end in divorce today as compared with one in ten 30 years ago), the number of marriages went down by five per cent in 1981.

This is causing great consternation in establishment circles and will no doubt spur on the introduction of the Tories divorce bill and other measures in this parliamentary session.

The figures tend to indicate a growing trend toward later marriages according to the report by the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. The decline in the birth rate should not have affected the 1981 statistics, although the number of people of marriageable age will decline in the future.

By Hilary Astor

In the Queen's Speech this summer the government promised to introduce a new bill in the next session to 'reform' the current divorce law in the hopes that such a bill would 'improve family life'.

It will be based on a private member's bill introduced in the last session by Martin Stevens, MP for Hammersmith, and has been hailed by the press as a 'quickie' divorce bill, a bill to give more help to children and so on.

It is none of these — it is in fact yet another attempt by the Tories to attack women, to make them responsible for the break-down of the family and to penalise them. One proposal will provide for fixed-term maintenance to end the so called 'meal ticket for life' of divorced women, and another will allow for conduct to be taken into account when defending financial settlements. Divorce will be permitted after only one year of marriage and the bill says piously that the interests of the children must be paramount, though it has no proposals on how to ensure this.

The aim of the first proposal for fixed-term maintenance is supposedly to allow the couple to

make a 'clean break' after divorce so that a marriage which has broken down is not artificially held together.

This reform has been strongly urged by groups like the Campaign for Justice in Divorce — a campaign consisting mainly of divorced and remarried middle class men.

They complain that they are impoverished by having to maintain their first wives and that as a consequence their second wives have to go out to work! They label women who receive maintenance as 'alimony drones sitting on their powdered bums expecting a meal ticket for life'.

The reality of these women's lives is of course rather different! In a recent survey it was found that at the time of divorce only nine per cent of wives relied on maintenance as their main source of income.

## Scandal

A few years after the divorce this figure was down to five per cent, most of these having childcare responsibilities. Only two women without dependants in the whole sample were receiving maintenance in their own right!

As Labour MP Harriet Harman pointed out in response to this proposal: 'The problem of divorce is not the few women getting too much from rich husbands, but the overwhelming majority who get nothing at all.'

It's a scandal for woman-hating organisations such as the Campaign for Justice in Divorce and the Tory Party to try to represent this



proposal as one favouring female independence and the 'clean break'. No woman wants to rely on a man for maintenance but until women receive equal pay, the benefit system is overhauled and more nurseries are provided then this situation will not be wished away.

Ironically, it is precisely the policies of this Tory government that are deliberately encouraging increasing dependence by the whole family — women, young and old — on the male breadwinner.

But it is not just the Tories who seek to punish women in this way. In fact the whole thinking behind the current system of maintenance is also inadequate. The law on property distribution after divorce is based on the 'one third rule' whereby the wife gets one third of the property and the husband two thirds — regardless of who cares for the children.

The reason for this was explained very succinctly by Lord Denning in a famous judgement: 'When a marriage breaks down,

there will now be two households instead of one. The husband will have to go out to work all day and must get some woman to look after the house — either a wife if he remarries, or a housekeeper if he does not.

## Blame

'He will also have to provide maintenance for the children. The wife will not usually have so much expense. She may go out to work herself, but she will not, usually, employ a housekeeper. She will do most of the housework herself, perhaps with some help. Or she may remarry in which case her husband can provide for her'.

It is clear that the new Tory bill will merely strengthen the ideology behind the existing legislation, and it is to be regretted that the Labour Party in particular has put forward no real alternative to this. In fact the initial response to this bill from Labour was to support it — though this was hurriedly changed!

One thing which recent legislation did try to establish was to remove the idea of blame in divorce proceedings. The new Tory bill will reintroduce this notion.

other matrimonial offence. It was believed that a woman should forgive a husband's adultery whereas a husband could not be expected to do the same.

Until very recently, women have had their children taken away from them if they slept with someone other than their husband. In this case the children would go to the husband who had probably done the same thing.

Lesbian women still have great difficulty in getting custody. Women's 'misdemeanours' are still seen as worse than men's and women are 'punished' for the breakdown of the marriage. It is clear that the proposals of this bill aim to bolster the family at women's expense.

## Concern

The proposal to allow divorce within a year of marriage instead of three years is consistent with this. Much better to make clean break, brush out of the way a marriage which will not work in order to make way for the 'real family' — that is the husband's second marriage.

The idea that this is motivated by concern for children involved in long marital breakdowns is a joke when you consider that financial security and comfort to the children of single parents is being taken away by the Tories at every turn.

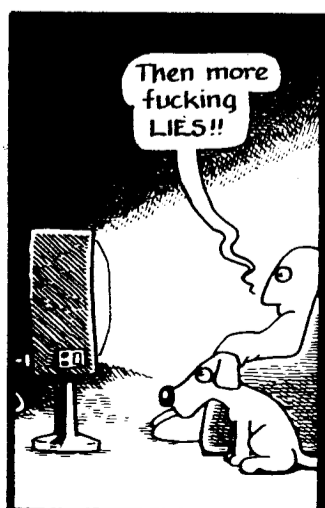
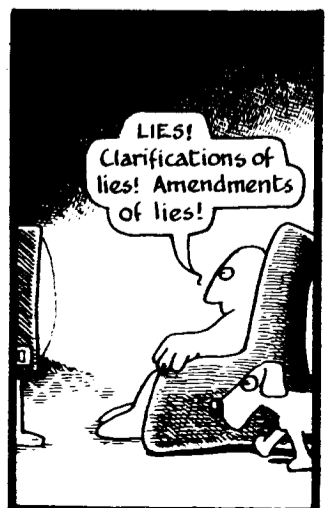
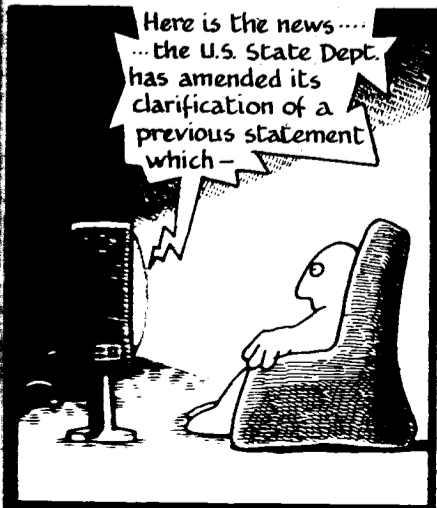
Independence, security and choice of lifestyle for women and children will be a step further away if this bill becomes law, and there is no doubt at all about the need for the labour movement to fight the bill which will be the next in a long line of attacks on women.

## Suffer

This means that the whole history of the marriage will be raked up as a bargaining counter in disputes over who gets the house or how much maintenance is paid. The woman will suffer most from this, because of the double standards in our society.

In the nineteenth century, a man could get a divorce if his wife had committed adultery. A woman had to show adultery and cruelty or any

# A PIECE OF THE ACTION



# What future for NAC?

**SHOULD THE National Abortion Campaign continue as essentially a single-issue movement for abortion rights or broaden out to take up all the aspects of 'a woman's right to choose'?**

At the beginning of October, the NAC Conference will be deciding on the future of the campaign. Below, we publish views from both sides of the discussion on the way forward for NAC.

## For a pro-choice campaign

By the NAC/Labour Abortion Rights Campaign Trade Union Liaison Committee

WE BELIEVE NAC's success comes from its focus on clear demands on the state. The 1967 Abortion Act does not give us choice as a right, but it was a tremendous step forward and must be defended from continued attacks.

We believe it must be extended, that a facilities Act is imperative if all women are to be able to choose whether and when to have children.

Such a bill will not be passed by a Tory government, but it might by Labour if sufficient public pressure is mounted. We have hardly started to work to get mass support for a Woman's Right to Choose bill.

The demand remains radical because it challenges the state's control of women, which makes abortion a crime that women commit and makes women economically dependent. It has still to be achieved and the need for it has not gone away.

NAC understood early on that contraception and

banning sterilisation as a condition for abortion were essential parts of the demand for freedom of choice, the latter because of the genocidal attitudes of the state towards black women.

The law recognises the need for contraception to be freely available, that abortion and sterilisation must be separated and a woman must consent to both. What remains, as far as parliament is concerned, is the need in law for freely available abortion. The quality and practice regarding the right not to be sterilised and the right to contraception certainly

need monitoring and improving, but these rights have not even been established with regard to abortion.

Therefore, we see it as imperative that the national campaign continue to be a mass campaign aimed primarily at parliamentary change. The demand of 'free abortion on demand — a woman's right to choose' is a demand for working class women, for all those who cannot afford to buy their rights. The fears that the campaign is racist are based on what we don't take up rather than what we do fight for.

Contributors to the debate have explained how we do not take on the different situations that various women are in. We agree that there are many aspects of women's lives that must be changed. We believe that the most successful way to do so is in a variety of campaigns, each working out its demands and how to achieve them. It is for the women's liberation movement to bring these together.

## Pressure

If NAC tries to become a substitute for the women's movement, or even a women's health campaign (and why stop at health?) it will inevitably drop the pressure for abortion, because it is impossible for one campaign to fight on all fronts at once. It will probably fail on all issues, as anti-cuts campaigns and save-our-hospitals campaigns have done, and as generalised anti-racism campaigns have.

We believe that NAC should work within the labour movement to gain active support from our

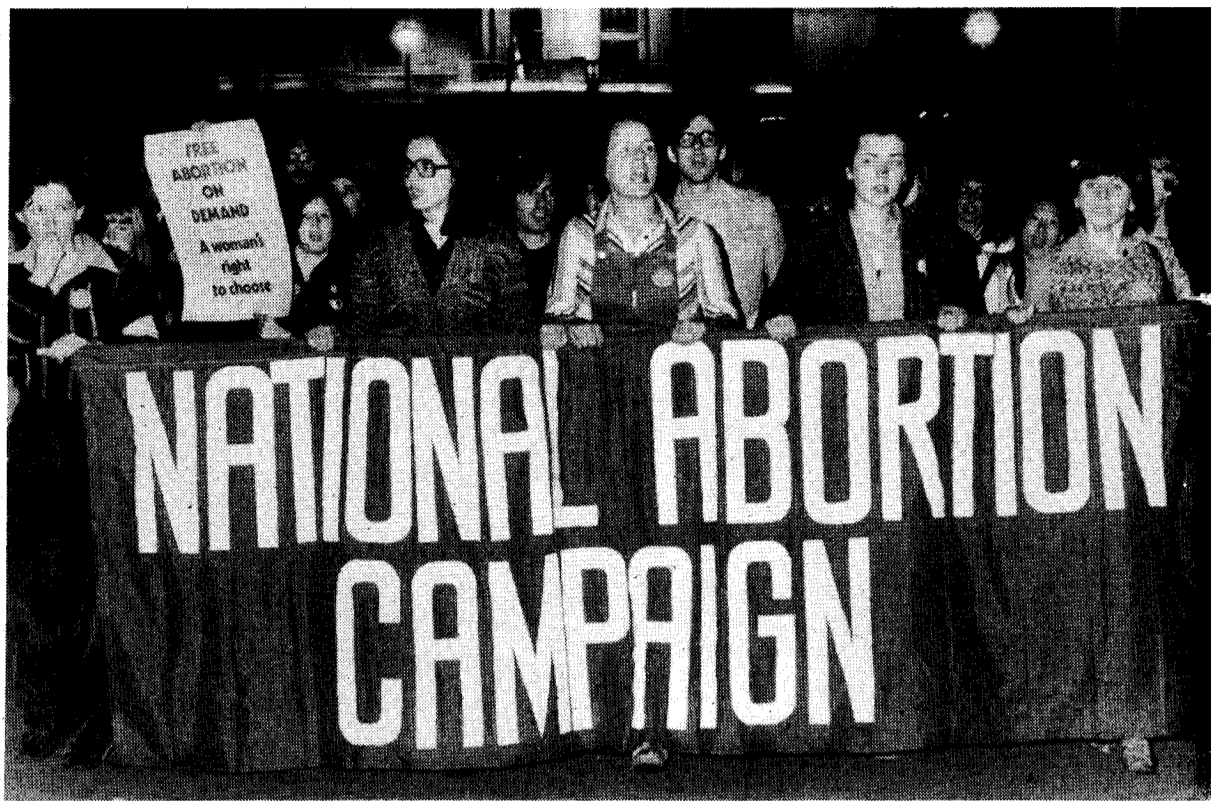
ship and to a woman who has decided never to have children.

As women, we all share a lack of control over our own bodies in terms of when and if we want children. But we experience that lack of control in different ways, and it is not only through abortion that control over our reproduction is felt.

There is an entire climate which promotes certain women having babies and which does not favour others, on the basis of prejudice and oppression to do with colour, class, marital status, sexual preference, disability and notions of the 'fit/unfit' mother. We come up against these notions when we go for contraception, if we need an abortion, if we want artificial insemination, if sterilisation is an option, if we need tests for infertility, or if we are pregnant or want to get pregnant. We come up against them precisely at the point where we attempt to make whatever limited choices are open to us, given our individual circumstances.

## Attack

In the '70s, abortion rights were most publicly under attack. Abortion rights are still being attacked and eroded now, much more insidiously and successfully than five years ago.



'NAC's great strength lies in its mass appeal around a clear demand'

sisters and brothers in the Labour Party and trade unions for the struggle for abortion rights.

More and more women are joining trade unions and the unions are being forced by their members to take up women's demands. The demand on the state for 'free abortion on demand' is one which unions take up because they understand the connection with the fight for other working class rights and for equality of pay and conditions of their women members.

We cannot afford not to involve in the campaign for abortion rights the large number of women organised in the unions, and we must support their

struggle to have this issue taken up by their unions.

A changed campaign may raise additional problems for women in the labour movement who have struggled to win their organisations to NAC, who may have to argue the case from scratch for a new type of campaign. Almost all national union affiliations were won in the more favourable climate of the late '70s. Whether or not these unions will continue to belong when a new campaign is formed depends on whether the case can be put that the campaign has not essentially changed. If that fails, it will be years before there'll be national union affiliations to the

campaign.

NAC's great strength lies in its mass appeal around a clear and straightforward demand, and its support from women and men within and outside the labour movement and of all sorts of politics.

## Oppose

The adoption of any one political viewpoint means sacrificing a mass campaign. We oppose turning NAC into a reproductive rights campaign because we don't have the forces to run a campaign on contraception and sterilisation as well as remaining the only mass campaign for a woman's

right to choose.

Accepting the need to press on to defend existing abortion rights and extend them, we believe that action should be stepped up to combat what is going to be a huge attack from anti-abortionists supported by a government violently hostile to women, and to work towards positive legislation.

We have a long way to go to get a woman's right to choose and it's going to be tough even retaining what we've won. We will not be able to maintain that struggle if we branch out into other areas of women's oppression.

(This contribution has been edited due to lack of space.)

## Why become a reproductive rights campaign?

By Julia South & Jane Marshall (Merseyside NAC); Helen Minett & Cathy Manthorpe (Leeds NAC); Isabel Ros (Norwich NAC); Marge Berer, Julia Goodwin, Sarah Vickerstaff & Jo Mussen (NAC Steering Ctee); Dianne Grimsditch (Preston Women's Centre).

THE MAIN AIM of NAC has been 'free abortion on demand — a woman's right to choose' since 1975 when the campaign began. All of us remain committed to that aim, but some of us feel we've become complacent about what 'a woman's right to choose' means.

'Choice' suggests being able to pick from an ideal set of options. But we are deluding ourselves if we believe that women in this society can make choices about having children or not, when there are over four million unemployed, when the wages most women earn (if at all) are still abysmally low, when being married or not makes so much difference, when there is such a lot of very often unchallenged racism on both an individual and institutionalised level, and when we are faced with virulent anti-lesbianism.

A campaign that intends to speak for women needs a political perspective and demands that

reflect women's actual needs and experiences.

NAC did this on the issue of abortion in the '70s, and at that time our demands were radical. But our experiences both in NAC and in the women's movement generally since then have made it clear that to focus exclusively on abortion rights is no longer enough.

Abortion is not an isolated event in women's lives. It means something different to a woman whose doctor is discouraging her from having a third child by suggesting sterilisation, to a woman whose husband has just been made redundant, to a young woman involved in her first sexual relation-

The struggle to protect these rights remains crucial in a right-wing and repressive atmosphere, but for us this has become a struggle within a struggle. So much else is also threatened that to continue to focus on abortion means ignoring too many other, equally important and totally related, issues of reproductive rights.

If we continue to do this in NAC, we are excluding and making invisible those of us who experience these other problems.

For example. Closure of family planning clinics has begun. If it continues, our choices of contraception will narrow because not all GPs have the training or time to provide all the methods, and many women do not want to go to their GPs for contraception. Contraception has only been a right — free on the NHS — since 1974. It could well become a right on paper only.

There is an increasing backlash against whatever sexual freedom we can be said to have, especially for young women. Policies such as routinely fitting IUDs after an abortion and routinely giving Depo Provera with rubella vaccinations after childbirth lump us together as passive receivers of contraception 'for our own good'.

Contraceptive failure is defined as our failure

only, and there is an increasing intolerance of accidental pregnancy. We are offered — or denied — particular methods of contraception, abortion or sterilisation, depending on who we are. And we are encouraged — or prevented — from having children on the same basis.

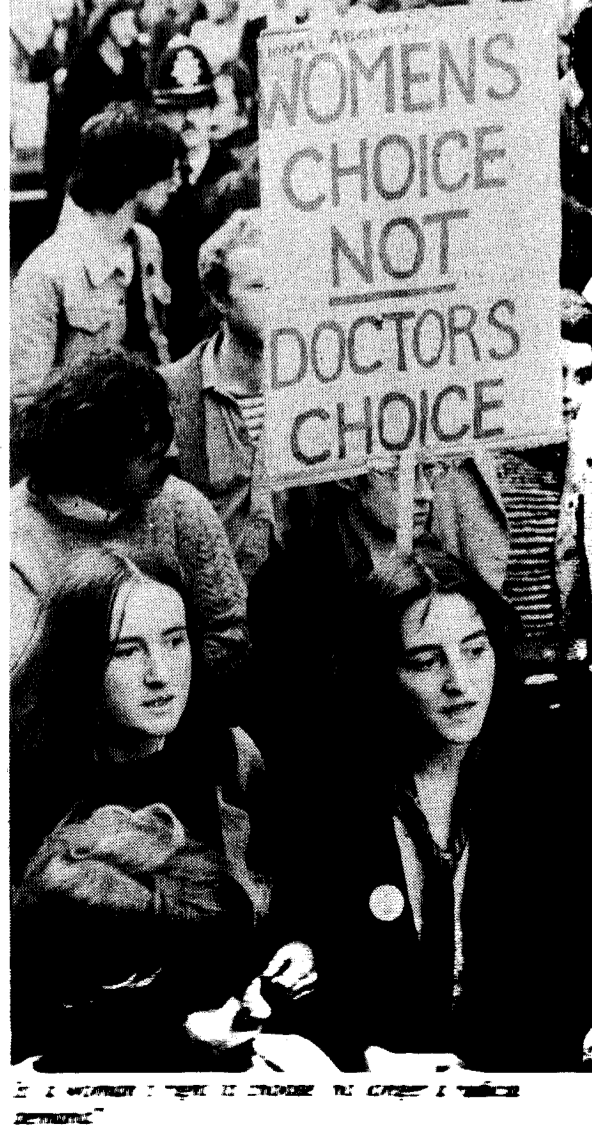
Our politics have changed as we have learned these things, and we believe NAC must change too. It has become clear to us that NAC ought to be campaigning for reproductive rights generally, if we are to become a politically relevant feminist campaign again.

## Structure

We are therefore proposing to NAC Conference that we dissolve NAC and start again with a new name, a new structure based on local groups, a broader perspective, and hopefully new energy and new women involved.

We would like to work more closely with, for example, the women's health groups that have formed and with the groups who are working around other specific aspects of reproductive rights.

We feel it is the only way to continue at all as a campaign, without denying what we have learned, and without ignoring the women whose experiences we have learned of.



# THE LEFT MUST

THE LEFT in the unions and the Labour Party faces a very hard battle. The right wing leaders are in full scale retreat before the Tories, as evidenced by the TUC and the statements of Hattersley, Shore and company in the Labour Party.

But the left has still not organised itself in an effective way to defeat the right and has let the right get away with 'political larceny'.

**BOB PENNINGTON** looks at the tasks facing the left and argues for building a mass-based united front inside the unions and the Labour Party.

In another article he explains how the left organised in the days of the National Left-Wing Movement, and **ALAN FREEMAN** shows how the right have always used the method of the witch hunt against any threat from the left.

TWO YEARS ago Tony Benn and Denis Healey were racing neck and neck in a photo-finish style race for the Deputy Leadership. Things seemed set fair for the left.

It had stored up a number of important victories. At the special Wembley conference it had won the vote on the election of the leader and deputy. Mandatory re-selection was in the bag. The party was committed to leaving the EEC and the two thirds vote needed for unilateralism was more or less a formality.

The signs pointed to the return of a Labour government which would be bound to implement a

number of left wing policies. By the early summer of the next year events had taken a very different turn and the expectations and hopes of the left had taken something of a hammering. The Falklands factor had hit British politics.

Maggie Thatcher was able to exploit the war in the Malvinas and ride to the top of the opinion polls on a wave of patriotism. Her exploitation of this issue was helped by the Labour leaders who endorsed Britain's war aims and in so doing handed things to her on a plate.

Unfortunately, with a few honourable exceptions, the left MPs and union leaders either went along with Thatcher's imperialist aims or stayed silent on the sidelines.

As the recession ravaged industry the TUC and the union leaders did almost nothing to organise resistance to

unemployment. When workers did take action they either got no support or were sold out by the bureaucracy. Last year's health dispute enjoyed the support of millions of people outside the NHS, and provided a real chance of defeating the government and turning the tide against the Tories. But in a display of almost unbelievable cowardice the TUC managed to make sure the strike was lost. Their actions did not just lose a strike, they also placed in jeopardy the very future of the health service itself.

## Dispute

In the struggles against unemployment, in the railworker's dispute over flexible rostering and in the NHS pay claim whilst the left MPs and union leaders were sympathetic, and in some instances turned out on the picket lines, the sad fact is that as a group they did nothing to organise a mass alternative to the inaction and betrayals of the right wing.

The pay-off came with the general election. From the very beginning the right wing sabotaged the campaign. Using a very grateful media they made it clear that they had no time for many of Labour's policies and presented an image of a party that was divided and had no idea where it was going. But what really lay at the root of Labour's failure to win mass support for its policies of unilateralism, getting out of the EEC, combatting unemployment and defending the welfare state was Labour's prior failure to build mass campaigns around these issues.

Even during the general election when the People's March for Jobs took place the union bureaucracy did everything in its power to make it 'non-political', and the Labour Party never put it right at the centre of its election campaign. On issues such as unilateralism and unemployment it is not enough to carry resolutions at conference. These policies have to be taken into the population at large which means building CND, putting all the

The witch hunt:  
always the first  
recourse against  
a left wing

THE LABOUR PARTY has had three previous left wing movements with varying degrees of influence in the working class. In each case they were smashed up and defeated, not by political debate but by organisational measures against them, namely witch hunts.

The first, and probably most powerful organised left wing in the Labour Party grew up between 1922 and 1926, in the run up to the General Strike, and was made up of Labour Parties sympathetic to the ideas of the young Communist Party, and to the militant Minority Movement in the unions, which grew out of the shop stewards movement and the general disgust at the way the right wing union leaders sold out during the war. The Communist Party, after some argument, decided to apply for affiliation to the Labour Party — not at that time such an unusual proposal, because the Labour Party had a federal structure. Bodies like the Independent Labour Party were affiliated but retained their own structure. Indeed, until after the 1914-18 war there were no individual members of the Labour Party at all.

The 1922 Edinburgh conference of the Labour Party rejected the Communist Party's request for affiliation. But its influence, and that of the Minority Movement, continued to grow because the unions were becoming more and more radical. Indeed two 'Communist Labour' MPs were returned in 1922 having been selected by their local Labour Parties. So the Labour leaders set about changing the constitution, so that Communists could not even be sent as delegates by their unions to conference.

The growing influence of the left really scared the Labour leaders who looked over their shoulders at the ruling class whom they were terrified of offending. Philip Snowden, then an important leader in the Labour Party, gave an interview to the right-wing *Morning Post*, which was designed to put the capitalist class at their ease.

By Alan Freeman

Snowden said, 'No Labour government would ever be the government merely of the manual labouring classes. The present constitution of the Parliamentary Labour Party is an answer to that fear. A considerable proportion of the party members belong to the middle classes. It contains lawyers, doctors, university professors, teachers, ministers of religion, consulting engineers, manufacturers, journalists, and even landed proprietors. A Labour government would certainly contain many men of this type.'

Now the right claims that they want to 'return the Labour Party to its working class roots'. At the same time they are preparing to cut its links from the unions. In the 1920s the organisational attacks were designed to limit working class influence in the party. The common link between all witch hunts was the desire to prevent the organisation of minorities whose views threatened to create a mass movement which could unseat the power of the bureaucratic leadership of both unions and party. The right wing always responded to political arguments, which it could not defeat, with the suppression of ideas, organisations, and individuals.



Bevan with Harold Wilson to his left and Mikardo, Driberg and Barbara Castle — 'B'

The departure of the Independent Labour Party after the betrayals of MacDonald, Snowden and company in 1931, left a void inside the Labour Party. This was filled by the Socialist League — an organisation made up of left reformists and Marxists — which was formed on the eve of the 1932 party conference.

The collapse of the Labour government and the enormous pressure brought to bear on that government raised for the first time in wide left reformist circles a discussion about constitutionalism and whether or not Labour's aims could be realised through normal parliamentary methods.

In January 1937 at a special delegate conference the Socialist League adopted a manifesto by 56 votes to 38 for the launching of a Unity Campaign with the Communist Party and the ILP.

The campaign was launched at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester on 24 January and on 27 January the Socialist League was disaffiliated from the Labour Party. The right was determined that no left movement was going to build a base across the wide labour movement and so the Socialist League had to go.

After the return of the Labour government in 1945 the activities of the left were restricted to a very small minority in the parliamentary party. It was not until 1951 when Labour made the first cut backs in the NHS that a new and broadly based left emerged. This was led by Nye Bevan and attracted the support of a significant number of Labour MPs and some leading lights in the unions.

The Bevanites soon began to have an impact in the Labour Party and got some influence in the unions. This led to a witch hunt around the accusation, in the *News Chronicle*, that the Bevanites had set up a 'Party within a Party'.

'The Bevanites hold regular meetings to decide their party line, quite independently of official party meetings ... they have a travelling circus which tours the constituencies crusading for the Bevanite slogans and attacking the official leadership ... Their ready made propaganda organ is *Tribune* which circulates at special rates inside Constituency Labour Parties.'

The right wing's fears were the same as in the 1920s, that the left was gaining in influence in the party ranks. At the Morecambe conference in 1952 the Bevanites took six out of seven consti-

# ORGANISE!

## Building Labour's left in the twenties

of the Labour Party behind in dispute and working alongside those workers defending the state.

### Restricted

Of course the right wing leaders in the Labour Party and the unions had no intention of doing any such thing. The left also failed to do these things in an organised way. In general it restricted its activities to individual actions. It conspicuously failed to organise through the trade unions and the Labour Party against the right. An alliance between the trade union and Labour left which turned towards mass action was badly needed. Because it did not exist the right got away with its sell-outs and capitulations and the Tories swept home in the election.

The labour movement now faces a sharp uphill battle for the return of a Labour government. The onus for taking on this task lies with the left inside the party and the unions. That means

above anything else building an organised left across the labour movement which can provide leadership in the fight against unemployment, in defence of the welfare state, against the threat of nuclear war and in defence of democratic rights.

Such a movement will find allies not just in the Labour Party and the unions, but also in the women's movement, among the unemployed, particularly the youth, and in the Black and Asian communities. No single current in British politics can on its own build that movement, firstly because no political grouping either left reformist or Marxist enjoys the support of millions of people. If the left works together to build such a movement then it has the potential to reach out to the millions needed if Toryism is to be defeated.

The job of building a united left leadership is of overwhelming importance. It means the difference between defeat and victory for the working class and its allies.

**RIGHT UP TO** the Liverpool conference of the Labour Party in 1925 Communist Party members could be individual members of the Labour Party. This strengthened the left and helped to spread Marxist ideas inside a Party whose left wing was deeply imbued with reformism.

The right wing had no intention of allowing this to continue and they got a resolution carried at Liverpool excluding Communists from any kind of participation in Labour Party affairs. This did not go unresisted in the Labour Party.

A sizeable minority of local parties simply did not operate the Liverpool decision. Many of the left reformists saw the attack made by the right as part of a general offensive against all left ideas. In December 1925 a National Left-Wing conference was held to organise a struggle inside the Labour Party whose aim was 'not to supercede the Labour Party 'but to "re-mould it nearer to the heart's desire" of the rank and file'.

The conference was impressive. Its main organisers were Tom Mann, Joe Vaughan, a former mayor of Bethnal Green and a member of the London Labour Party executive, Alex Gossip of the furniture workers union and William Paul, editor of the *Sunday Worker* which then had a circulation of around 100,000. The conference was informed that nearly 100 divisional and borough Labour Parties had suspended carrying out the Liverpool decision.

Some 50 of these associated themselves with the National Left-Wing Movement. Eyen the disaffiliation of a number of parties who had not carried out the ban did not break up the National Left-Wing Movement. Rather it confirmed in many members' eyes the need for such a movement. In 1926 came the defeat of the General Strike which many Labour lefts blamed on the right-wing leaders of the TUC and their counterparts in the Labour Party which therefore led to more support for the National Left-Wing Movement.

By 1927 the movement was gaining fairly widespread national influence. When it held its second conference in September 1927-54 local Labour Parties plus quite a number of other groups were represented. There were delegates from the North London Federation of the Independent Labour Party — the ILP London and Southern Counties Guild of Youth, prominent miners' leaders like A.J. Cook and S.O. Davies were there. The chairperson was W. Crick who was also chairperson of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council.

The *Sunday Worker* by then had become more or less the paper of the National Left-Wing Movement and it carried regular articles reporting its activity and putting forward its programme. The pamphlet *Towards a Labour Government* produced by the National Left-Wing Movement, which was the proceedings of the conference, sold over 100,000 copies. For the first time a strong organised left existed inside the Labour Party. It had the advantage of being organised nationally and it was made up of Marxists and people who still believed in reformism but who were becoming more angry and disgusted at the actions and policies of the right-wing leaders.

These were people who supported the right of the Communists to be individual members of the Labour Party. They wanted a socialist programme and they wanted more militant policies inside the Labour Party and the trade unions. However they had not accepted a number of the policies of the Communist Party. Most of them were far from convinced about the need for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and were suspicious about democratic centralism.

The National Left-Wing Movement therefore provided a form of organisation which could unite in common action and in common policies the two most advanced currents in the labour movement — the revolutionary Marxists of the Communist Party and the left reformists of both the Labour Party and the unions. The National Left-Wing Movement continued to grow. In many cases it worked to replace right-wing parliamentary candidates by those from the left.

As working class militancy revived after the General Strike more people were drawn into the fight against the right. A manifesto calling for a socialist policy inside the Labour Party was put out by A.J. Cook and James Maxton of the ILP. This was backed by the left Clydeside MP John Wheatley and many other left MPs. It was then officially endorsed by the National Left-Wing Movement. At the Left-Wing May Day Demonstration in London in 1928 10,000 people turned out.

The 1928 Conference showed that the movement had spread its roots much wider than before and around 80 Labour Parties were represented. But despite its successes the National Left-Wing Movement was the cause of much bitter discussion inside the Communist Party.

### Opposition

The majority of the Communist Party Central Committee led by Arthur Horner the miners' leader, J.R. Campbell and others were strong supporters of such a policy, insisting it was 'a bridge to those workers' moving forward in opposition to capitalism ...'. A minority of the CC led by Harry Pollitt and R.P. Dutt argued against it. They insisted that the Labour Party had become like the Liberal Party of the last century and that it must be destroyed not built up. They saw the National Left-Wing Movement as an obstacle to building a revolutionary party.

The executive committee of the Communist International found in favour of the minority. Stalin's International was by then heading for the policies of the 'Third Period' whereby the main enemy were to become the social democrats who they claimed stood in the way of the overthrow of capitalism. The adoption of such a sectarian line spelt disaster for the National Left-Wing Movement.

By December 1928 Pollitt was writing that '... the Labour Party is a third capitalist party' and insisting 'our strength will grow in the degree that we can weaken the Labour Party'. In January 1929 R.P. Dutt, the chief theoretician of the Communist Party, poured scorn on the strategy of building the National Left-Wing Movement. He wrote: 'If it is argued that it is necessary for the Communist Party to organise this tendency as a bridge to itself then this becomes in the end equivalent to arguing that it is the task of the Communist Party to organise centrism.'



A.J. Cook miners' leader who supported both the National Minority Movement and the National Left-Wing Movement



Bevanite' members of Labour's national executive.

constituency seats and Gaitskell declared that one-sixth of the constituency party delegates appeared to be Communist or Communist inspired! Again in the 1950s, as in the 1920s, the right responded with an organisational, not a political attack. On 23 October the Parliamentary party banned the Bevanite group in parliament. Yet the left continued to gain influence. The Bevanites then organised through looser formations such as their 'Brains Trust' panel. At the same time left wing newspapers such as *Socialist Outlook* began to gain influence.

Always, the attacks centred on 'subversive' and 'undermining' activities. Thus William Lawther of the *Daily Telegraph* in 1953 wrote: 'The opinion of the Trades Unions is that the Bevanites activities are a deliberate attempt to undermine the leadership in the same way that Hitler and the Communists did. There is no difference between them'.

The real problem for the right is shown in the NEC minutes for 28 April 1953, which record that 152 CLPs had passed resolutions opposing German rearmament. The political opposition to the leadership was not confined to a parliamentary group but had strong roots in the CLPs. The right responded

by using bans and proscriptions. *Socialist Outlook* was banned and the expulsions and disaffiliations of local parties started. The left vigorously defended the right of free speech and Michael Foot, in a rather different tone to his 1982 pronouncements, explained that, 'We cannot allow this to go on, and free controversy and free newspapers to be stamped out of existence. ... The great men who built this movement would be ashamed'.

Nevertheless the ban stuck, and then the right turned its attention to the Bevanite left as a whole. *Tribune* came under attack in 1954, and in 1955 an attempt was made to expel Bevan from the Labour Party itself.

The witch hunt did not destroy the left's influence; but what it did was to reduce the left from a mass movement to a relatively small, and atomised set of individuals and splinter groups. It had succeeded in its real aim; it broke up the possibility of forming a mass left opposition.

The lessons are clear. If a mass opposition to the present rightward drift in the labour movement is to be formed, its number one condition for survival is to stop the witch hunt in industry, in the unions and the Labour Party.

The argument of J.R. Campbell that: 'We must have a Left-Wing Movement ...' in order 'to unite with the honest rank-and-file members of the Labour Party, who are genuinely dissatisfied with some of the Labour Party policy, but who are not prepared to come right over to the Communist Party' was destined to go unheeded. Then the 10th Congress of the Communist Party voted that party members should leave the National Left-Wing Movement. Shortly after, the National Committee of the Movement on which the Communist Party had a majority voted it should dissolve and advised its supporters to join the Communist Party.

This caused considerable indignation in the ranks who had never been consulted and left a bitter taste in the mouths of many left reformist militants. The ruling class and their servants in the right wing of the Labour Party and the trade unions welcomed the National Left-Wing Movement's demise. As far as they were concerned another obstacle to pro-capitalist policies had been removed.

Whilst history simply never repeats itself and conditions are very different than in the late twenties it is important that socialists study what happened to both the National Left-Wing Movement and its counterpart in the unions, the National Minority Movement (see *Socialist Action* No.25). Both serve as examples of the need to build broad based oppositions to the attacks of the employers and to the sell-outs of the right wing labour leaders. They showed when these movements were at their height how they could unite in action Marxists and reformist-minded workers.

They are the living proof that if the left today is going to revitalise the labour movement by organising the forces that are in opposition to the Tory government it can only be done by organising an opposition rooted in the mass movement. It must offer a way forward to all those who genuinely want to fight for policies that serve the interests of the working class and its allies.

## Lebanon

# 1,000 British marines on stand-by

THE Lebanese army launched an all-out attack on left-wing Druze militia positions last Friday, in the wake of the joint US-Saudi attempts to arrange a ceasefire. In fact, the ceasefire was a trick. While the Lebanese government stronghold of Souk al-Gharb was in danger of falling, the United States made barely-concealed threats to unleash its aircraft and marines against the Druze militias in the Chouf mountains, unless a 'status quo' ceasefire was arranged.

While the fighting subsided the Lebanese army regrouped for an attack, even setting into motion its six-plane airforce, unused for ten years. Two of the ancient Lebanese planes were shot down.

By Paul Lawson

Even British Foreign Office officials last week were saying that the name 'peace keeping force' was a misnomer for the allied

armies in Lebanon. The brief of the US, French, British and Italian armies is not at all to 'keep the peace' but to shore up and support the Lebanese government.

Both the Lebanese government and its army are dominated by the right wing Christian Maronite community. For the world's imperialist armies, and especially for the United States, the Maronite Christians are

the key to establishing some sort of pro-Western state in Lebanon.

The US intervention is an alarming escalation of its world counter-revolutionary police role. If the weak Lebanese army fails to defeat the Druze militias the US will undoubtedly move in force.

## Marines

Already there are 2000 US marines waiting offshore on aircraft carriers. Reagan has given the US commander in the region the authority to call up air strikes without asking Washington's approval first.

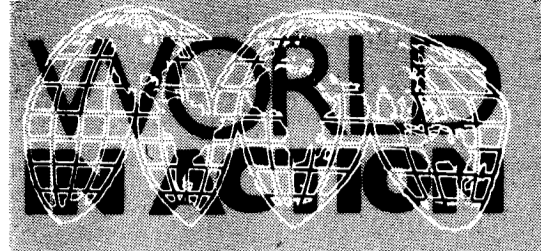
Ever since the Vietnam war, the right wing in the

United States, together with the military establishment, has been trying to overcome 'the Vietnam syndrome' — the widespread feeling in the US that foreign military entanglement should be avoided. While the world's press has highlighted the US build up in Central America, the actual deployment of US troops in combat in Lebanon marks a potentially more decisive blow in overcoming US isolationism. If Reagan can get away with an expedition in Lebanon, then it will be that much easier to strike at Central America.

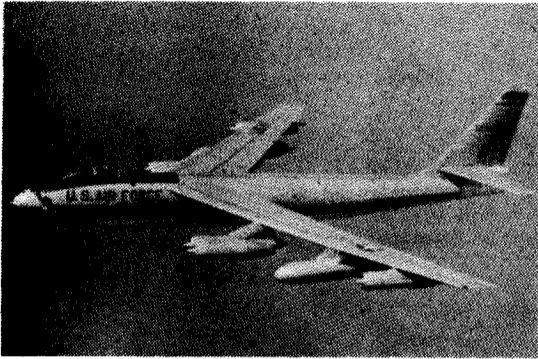
British military preparations for battle in the Lebanon are in full swing. In addition to the Buccaneer jets which have

been moved to Cyprus, and which have already overflowed Beirut, 1000 British marines have been moved to the Mediterranean. Although the Ministry of Defence refuses to detail their precise destination, it's no secret that they're on their way to Cyprus, as a staging post for Lebanon.

If British troops do go into Lebanon, then they will of course be able to put to good use their experience of house-to-house and street fighting obtained in Ireland. Doubtless the 'lessons' of the Falklands adventure will come in useful as well. The time has come for the British left to make the Middle East, and British involvement there, a major campaigning priority.



## US plane 'dropped nuclear bomb'



B52 in flight — Goldsboro just survived

ROBERT MacNamara, former US Defence Secretary, now a leading official of the World Bank, revealed last week that in 1961 a B-52 bomber accidentally dropped two 24-megaton nuclear bombs. The accident happened as the bomber was crashing over Goldsboro, North Carolina.

One of the bombs broke up and contaminated an area with plutonium radiation, but the other went through six of the seven arming mechanisms and nearly exploded. If it had done so it would have produced

a nuclear explosion 1800 times more powerful than the Hiroshima bomb.

MacNamara also revealed that in 1967 the Soviet Union and the US came close to war over misunderstandings about US naval manoeuvres in the Mediterranean. MacNamara has concluded that nuclear weapons are 'useless'. He says he expressed this view to both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and got an informal assurance from both to use nuclear weapons only if the USSR did so first.

## Dreux election uproar

THERE was uproar last week in France in the wake of the electoral victory of the right wing opposition in a by-election. Dreux is a town with a large immigrant population and in the first round of the elections the extreme right Front National — a more or less explicitly fascist organisation — got 17 per cent of the vote.

On the second round the Gaullist-Giscardian opposition made an electoral pact with the FN to ensure a right wing victory over the socialists. The election is a landmark in French politics because it demonstrates the extent to which disillusionment with the

Socialist-Communist government is feeding the right wing. But it also marks a watershed in the history of Gaullism — with its wartime 'anti-fascist' pretensions in ruins.

The alliance with the FN brought bitter denunciations from some leading right wing politicians. Some cynics thought that President Mitterrand was rather enjoying the whole thing. The disaffection of some more moderate right wing politicians would provide him with potential ministerial material when he eventually kicks the Communists out of the government.

## Borge visits France

THOMAS Borge, the Nicaraguan Interior Minister visited France last week for discussions with the French government. Borge asked the French government to help stop US aggression against Nicaragua. French prime minister Mauroy pledged France's continued

'economic, cultural and commercial solidarity with Nicaragua'. Foreign minister Cheyson, however, stressed that Nicaragua's continued commitment to 'political pluralism and a mixed economy' (read capitalism) would greatly help its case.

## Belgian strike

THE Belgian centre-left government was in the grip of a near-general strike last week as nearly one million public sector workers took action. The workers came out last Wednesday on a one-day strike against government cuts in wages, benefits, and pensions to

balance its 1984-5 budget. However, most workers, including dockers, transport workers, teachers and civil servants came out. The dockers were ordered back to work by Royal Decree last Saturday.



1500 people marched last Saturday in London on the anniversary of the Shabra-Chatila massacre. Demonstrations in solidarity with the Palestinian resistance took place in many European capitals on the same day.

# Tamil women need support

STATE INSTIGATED racial violence in Sri Lanka has destroyed Tamil owned property and industry to the value of 300 million dollars. Seventeen of the largest factories affected were involved in the production of textiles and garments ready made for export. 80 per cent of the workers in these factories were women, often the sole wage earners of large families.

The only options the government is now offering them is re-employment in textile factories and weaving mills situated between 15 and 60 miles from their homes and employment on permanent night shifts. They will be paid minimum wages and prospective employers will not be liable to contribute to Employees Provident Funds. Officially, night work for women is illegal in Sri Lanka. The International Labour Office Convention No.89, prohibiting night work for women was signed, but as

various reports indicate, not ratified in 1982.

## Our Sri Lankan correspondent

The suggestion that the ban would be lifted in 1982 met with widespread opposition from women workers, the women's movement and the trade union movement in Sri Lanka. The government, taking advantage of the present crisis, is now forcing women to accept work on the night shift. For lack of an alternative and through sheer economic

necessity many will be forced to accept. Many women felt the ban on night work for them was a right won by women and should be extended to men as well.

Apart from the enhanced exploitation, the injury to health and the disruptive influence of night work on social life, there is no guarantee that women returning to crowded and noisy boarding houses or large families will be able to get sufficient rest. It will only mean that the burden of housework will have to be assumed sooner than later in the day.

Night work will also mean that women travelling long distances using poor transport facilities and ill-lit streets will be easy prey to all forms of sexual harassment and intimidation.

Women workers in Sri Lanka have fought before under repressive 'emergency' conditions, have met brutal police attack, have been arrested and remanded, and they are fighting again.

## Burdens

The current deep going economic crisis in the country will no doubt visit its worst burdens on the women of Sri Lanka. This together with the naked repression unleashed upon the Tamil speaking people, the Tamil liberation struggle and the working class movement by the 'constitutional' dictatorship of the Jayawardene regime, demands the commencement of an international campaign of protest now!

The womens libera-

tion movement of Sri Lanka calls upon you to mount a pressure campaign on our government incorporating the following demands:

1. That all workers displaced by the recent violence be adequately re-employed and not be discriminated against with regard to employment or wages or —
2. be paid a monthly wage until adequate employment is found, and —
3. that women workers are not forced to work either a temporary or a permanent night shift.

Please address letters of protest to:

- a. The President of Sri Lanka, Presidents House, Colombo 1, Sri Lanka.
- b. The Minister of Labour, Labour Ministry, Narahenpita, Colombo 5, Sri Lanka.



## Angry at the witch hunt

I want to tell you how very angry and distressed I feel by the treatment of the workers at Cowley.

I think the exposé, by the alleged former member of the International Socialists, of the 'infiltration' techniques of Marxists was particularly revolting and made me seriously reconsider my position on capital punishment.

Anyway, although I have lots of reservations about your current analysis and priorities, I do recognise that we are all on the same side and deeply regret your supporters victimisation and humiliation.

DIANNE GRIMSDITCH, Lancashire.

## 1984 came early for me

CONGRATULATIONS for calling for the launching of a campaign against blacklisting in industry!

While my heart went out to the Cowley with all they suffered in the last month, I have to say that political victimisation at work is nothing new.

For the last four years I have been without a job, due in my case, I am absolutely certain, to my activities as a trade unionist in my previous place of work.

It is well known that the engineering employers maintain a blacklist of militants in the industry,

the problem is that individuals who are on it have no way of knowing for sure.

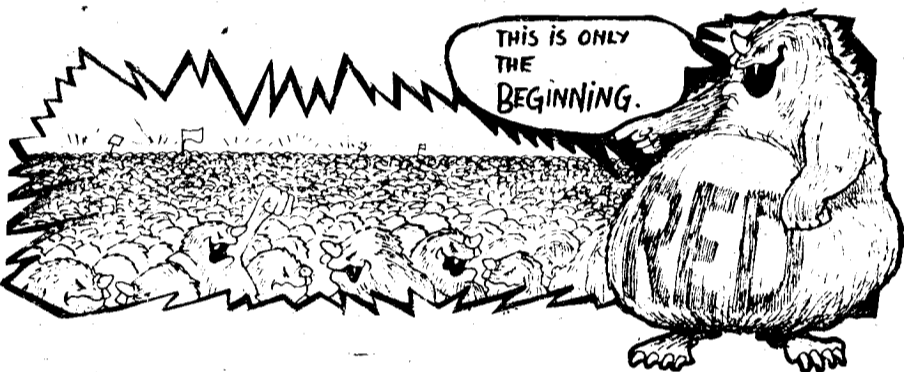
This is very demoralising, since at factories where you know there are jobs you are turned away time and time again, without knowing why until you suddenly twig.

In increasing desperation I am now going to assume a new identity to get a job.

1984 came early for me. Best of luck with the campaign. For obvious reasons I prefer to remain

ANONYMOUS, Birmingham.

KLMNOPQRSTU  
IJK **LETTERS** TU  
IJKLMNOPQRST



## Lickspittles of Stalinism?

I WAS appalled, though not altogether surprised by your editorial on the Korean jet disaster. Coming the week after SA's uncritical coverage of Arthur Scargill's bizarre Stalinist ravings in Moscow, it marks a further lurch towards 'campism' and crypto-Stalinism on the part of the paper.

Of course, we should have no truck with the hypocrisy and cold war posturing of Reagan and the western imperialists. We should lose no opportunity to point out that their hands are dripping with the blood of innocent civilians in Turkey, Central America, Indo-China, the Middle East etc, etc.

It is one thing to point out the hypocrisy of the imperialists' outcry — but quite another to slide over into justifying the massacre.

The editorials' convoluted, embarrassing and unconvincing apology for the shooting was, in places, not unlike the statement of the Russian bureaucrats themselves.

'If the Soviet leadership knew or suspected that the plane was indeed a civilian airliner then its destruction was a foolish and brutal action', you say, demonstrating a remarkable facility for understatement.

Then the editorial continues: 'But there are good reasons to think that this was not the case!'

The rest of the article is an apologia of the action, with reference to US spy planes in the area and the conclusion that Russia was only 'guarding itself from military encirclement and harassment of its borders'.

Who seriously believes that shooting down an unarmed civilian plane has anything to do with defence of the nationalised property relations of the USSR? As Trotsky pointed out, the only real means of defending the nationalised property (all we do defend about that police state, by the way) is to mobilise the working class for revolution internationally, and for the overthrow of the bureaucracy in Russia.

A precondition for that must be to tell the truth about the murderous indifference to human life systematically demonstrated by that bureaucracy.

In our concern to stay out of the camp of the cold warriors we must not allow ourselves to end up as lickspittles of Stalinism.

JIM DENHAM, Birmingham.

## Jonathan Hammond

A MEMORIAL meeting for Jonathan Hammond, former president of the National Union of Journalists, will be held on Wednesday 28 September at Bishop Creighton House, Lillie Road, London SW6 starting at 8pm.

The following have been invited: Solidarnosc Trade Union Support Group, Socialist Organiser, Troops Out Movement, Fulham Labour Party, Hammersmith and Fulham Trades Council, National Union of Journalists, Fulham Cam-

paign for Nuclear Disarmament, Turkey Solidarity Campaign, Writers' Guild and all organisations and individuals who shared Jonathan's life and political activity.

Messages to be read out to the meeting, from those who cannot attend should be sent to me at the address below.

JAMES RYAN, 49 Hawksley Road, London N16. Tel 254 1221 (home) 229 1234 (work).

## Write to us!

This is your page. Send us your comments, criticisms or even congratulations. But please be brief — letters over 300 words will be cut. Write to: Letters, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP. (Tel: 01-359 8180)

# Films



Danton gets a 'slice of the action'!

# Danton

DANTON IS ONE of the major films of 1983. Any film by Andrzej Wajda, the maker of *Man of Iron* and *Man of Marble*, is sure to generate critical and political interest.

But this time Wajda's chosen subject is revolution, revolution seen through the prism of the Terror and the guillotine.

By Chris Bertram

The film invites us to sympathise with Danton (Gerard Depardieu) as against the icily principled Robespierre (Wojciech Pszoniak). I confess that my emotions did not develop exactly as prescribed.

Danton comes across as a corrupt and drunker fool who has used the revolution to enrich himself and now wants out. It is only by virtue of his oratorical skill, and the fact that he has indeed

been 'fitted up', that we can develop any sympathy for him at all.

By contrast, Robespierre, for all his unfeeling nature, does at least believe in what he is doing and lives up to his reputation as the 'sea green incorruptible'. Not all the Dantonists are as bad as their leader, when Depardieu expresses a desire to return to a tranquil and simple life one of his supporters acidly replies, 'Yes, ours will be simple and yours will be tranquil'.

The Jacobins are caught in a trap that is not of their own making. They realise that to halt the revolutionary process is to condemn the revolution to death, so they are forced

to execute Danton. But the revolution has developed beyond the point at which it is possible to stabilise a social system in the 18th century. To execute Danton is to propel the bourgeoisie into the camp of the counter-revolution. Either way Robespierre and Saint-Just are doomed.

## Political

The film is often heavy handed in its political moralising. Thus Danton asks whether 'All revolutions, like Saturn, devour their own children'. Robespierre is portrayed ordering the removal of the faces of counter-revolutionaries from group portraits.

Perhaps it is inevitable that Wajda, as an East European critic of Stalinism should see in the

revolution a conflict of means and ends and the occasion of a timeless battle between sensuality and abstraction. Yet such a view is deeply pessimistic about the possibility of changing society. Any such choice between Robespierre and Danton will be based on individual caprice.

I suspect that this film will reinforce rather than challenge the preconceptions of whoever goes to see it. For this reason it cannot be seen as an unqualified artistic success.

It may whet the appetite of its viewers to read more about the events which it covers, and they should read Daniel Guérin's excellent *'Class Struggles in the First French Republic'* for a revolutionary Marxist interpretation.

## Overcoming the sectarian divide

SOME ON the British left support the Irish 'armed struggle' in the belief that a victory for the republican forces in Northern Ireland would be a victory for progressive socialism.

The presence of the British Army and the repressive nature of legislation in the province gives some validity to the republican claim that this presence is of an imperialist nature and can only be resisted by armed confrontation.

However, Britain's presence is not the only obstacle. The loyalist majority hold a veto in the province and would never submit to reunification. Indeed, if a

united Ireland was forced upon them, they in turn would engage in their own armed struggle against the republican forces. Human misery in the North would therefore continue unabated.

The solution to Northern Ireland is the application of the main socialist principle of working class solidarity. Sectarianism divides the working class, and perpetuates the myth that one section of the working class has different interests to that of the other.

The unionist politicians, undoubtedly reactionary, hold their own position of power,

not because of their commitment to the Irish working class who vote for them, but because the sectarian divide dictates that the Protestant working class must vote 'for their side'.

Like the national state is cast within the framework of sectarianism. It is therefore an essential precondition to Irish unity that the working class of Northern Ireland realise their common interests.

A united working class, disassociated from the British establishment and fighting for better housing, jobs and social welfare would make a united socialist Ireland

possible and would threaten the cosy alliance between reactionary governments of Thatcher and FitzGerald. I therefore call on all socialists, not only to ensure that pressure is kept on Labour for a full commitment to British withdrawal, but also to support efforts to organise the working class of Northern Ireland. The solidarity of working people would not only overcome Northern Ireland's prejudice and bigotry but would also enable the working class to fight back against the ravages of capitalism.

TIM PORTEUS, Edinburgh

# DIARY

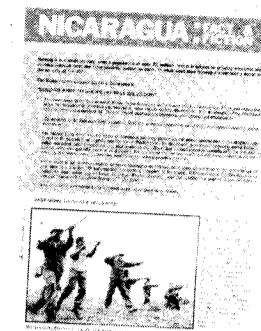
(These listings are free for all major labour movement and campaign activities. Semi-display advertisements cost 5p per word and must be paid in advance. Send to: Diary, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP to arrive not later than Thursday, one week prior to publication).

- **National Abortion Campaign** conference is on Oct 1-2nd. For details please contact NAC at 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Tel. 01-278 0153.
- **Labour Movement Conference on Ireland** — Peace through Democracy. Sat 26 Nov. Speakers include Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, and Clive Soley.
- **No Intervention in Central America (NICA)** is a broad based coalition of solidarity groups, human rights orgs, aid agencies and political parties. The NICA petition deadline has now been extended to 24 October. Copies of petitions or more details from NICA 20/21 Compton Terrace, London N1 01-226 6747.
- **Stop 'The City'** protest and carnival against financial institutions backing for military spending. 6am-6pm 29 Sept. Meeting points Finsbury Sq, Tower Hill, St Paul's Cathedral steps all day. General Planning meeting 24 Sept, 10am-6pm, Tonbridge Club, Cromer St, WC1. Details 01-809 1346.

- **Back to the Sink?** Discussion of the effects of Tory policies on women. Thur 22 Sept, 7.30pm, The Anchor (upstairs room), Uxbridge Road, West Ealing. Organised by Ealing Socialist Action supporters.
- **Lambeth Labour Campaign for Gay Rights** open meeting on Gays & Lambeth Council 23 Sept, 8pm, Lambeth Town Hall.
- **Hands off Central America** South London labour movement Rally 28 Oct, Lambeth Town Hall. Speakers include: Alan Sapper, Salvador Moncada (FDR/FMLN) and reps from Nicaragua and Grenada. Further details/leaflets from Vauxhall CLP, 01-582 2955.
- **North Staffs Labour Against the Witch Hunt** public meeting. Fri 23 Sept, 7.30pm, Guildhall, Newcastle-under-Lyme. Speakers include Peter Tatchell & Steph Grant (Cowley 15)
- **Seeing Red — the Press and the Left** public meeting called by West Midlands Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom. Tues 27 Sept, 7.30pm, Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham. Speakers Steph Grant, Clare Short MP, Peter Tatchell.
- **Low pay and how to fight it** Vauxhall CLP public meeting Mon 26 Sept, 7.30pm, Lillian Baylis School, Lollard St, SE11. Speakers: Michael Meacher, Stuart Holland, Reg Race, Emma MacLennan (Low Pay Unit).
- **Against Racism and Racist Attacks!** National march called by Newham 8 Defence Cttee and supported by National Campaign Against the Police Bill. Sat 24 Sept, 1pm, Plashet Park, East Ham, London E6.

- **Swansea YCND Festival** 24 Sept, St Phillips Community Centre, 1-6pm. Stalls, videos, music, food and workshops. Admission 30p, all welcome. Further info from Gareth Harding, 2, Overland Rd, Mumbles, Swansea, tel. 68660.
- **El Salvador Solidarity national raffle:** 1st prize Holiday in Cuba; 2nd prize Video Recorder; 3rd prize Barrel of beer. Tickets £2.50 for book of five from ELSSOC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1. Draw takes place 21 October.
- **The Labour Party and Black People** Westminster North CLP's Black Group and the London Labour Party one day conference. 24 Sept, 10.30-4pm, Herbert Morrison House, 195 Walworth Rd, London SE17. Speakers include: Arthur Latham, Russel Proffitt, Ben Bousquet. Agenda details from Jen McClelland 221-1745/0256 ext 268.

- **CND National Demonstration** London, 22 Oct. Details: 01-272 8896.



**NICARAGUA: FACT AND FICTION** This pamphlet is a must for anyone active in solidarity work. Packed full of information, facts and figures. 10p each, 20 for £1 or 1,000 for £40 — plus postage. From Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign, 20-21 Compton Terrace, London N1, 01-359 8982.

- **No interference in Grenada, Central & Southern America** Public meeting organised by Kensington Young Socialists. 27 Sept, 7.30pm, The Tabernacle, Powis Sq, London. Speakers from Grenada, Chile, El Salvador, Nicaragua.

## No new Vietnam in Central America



Council Chamber  
Camden Town Hall  
Judd Street,  
London WC1  
Thursday 29th September  
7.30pm  
Jeremy Corbyn MP — just back from Nicaragua  
Maria Urrutia, Nicaragua Embassy  
Jane Lopez, FDR El Salvador  
Silvia Ballea, No Intervention in Central America  
Chairperson: Sue Laker, Chile Solidarity Campaign

## Labour Party Conference fringe meetings and events

- **The Labour Party & Black People**, 5 October, venue & time to be announced.
- **Consultation of Constituency Labour Parties** including workshops on: Fighting the European Elections (convenor: Stuart Holland); Building Workplace Branches to Resist Tebbit (convenor: Ken Coates); Defending Local Democracy (convenor: David Blunkett). At Brighton Tech College, Pelham St, Sun 2 October, 9.30am-3.30pm. Details: Steering Cttee, 143 Haddon Cres, Chilwell, Nottingham 0602-708318.
- **Agenda for the Peace Movement** with Tony Benn, Fenner Brockway, Ken Coates, Tam Dalyell, Stuart Holland MP, Michael Meacher MP. Sat 1 October, 7.30pm, Queens Hotel, Kings Rd, Brighton. (Organised by Bertrand-Russel Peace Foundation 0602-784504).
- **Campaign for Labour Party Democracy** meeting. Sun 2 Oct, 1.45pm, Corn Exchange (Pavilion complex). Speakers: Margaret Beckett, Eric Clarke, Bill Deal, Eric Heffer, Patricia Hewitt, Joan Maynard, Michael Meacher. Chair: Alistair McRae.
- **No socialism without gay liberation!** Labour Campaign for Gay Rights meeting with Jo Richardson MP, Reg Race, Jeremy Corbyn MP and other speakers. Weds 5 Oct, 5.30pm, Pavillion Theatre.
- **International social** — solidarity with the struggles for peace and freedom: Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin America. Sun 2 Oct at end of conference session to a Sussex Rm, Bedford Hotel, Kings Rd. Music, dance, late bar. Special guests from Nicaragua, PLO, and ANC. Admission £1. (Organised by Co-op Political Cttee London Region and many other sponsoring solidarity campaigns).
- **Peace march** organised by Labour CND. Sun 2 October, assemble 1.30pm, The Level, Brighton (nr BR stn). Rally 2.30pm, Sea Front nr Metropole Hotel. Speakers include Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone, Helen John, Richard Balfe, Ken Cameron and others.
- **Stop the witch hunt** Labour Against the Witch Hunt meeting Sat 1 Oct, 6pm, Sallus Benney Hall, Brighton Poly, Grand Parade Site (opp Pavilion). Speakers: Ken Livingstone, Anne Pettifor, Jane Stockton, Colin Talbot. Chair Jeremy Corbyn.

John Archer invites all who sympathised with and wish to commemorate the work of MARY ARCHER to come to her Memorial Meeting, on Sat 24 Sept in room 152, County Hall, London SE1 at 7.30pm.

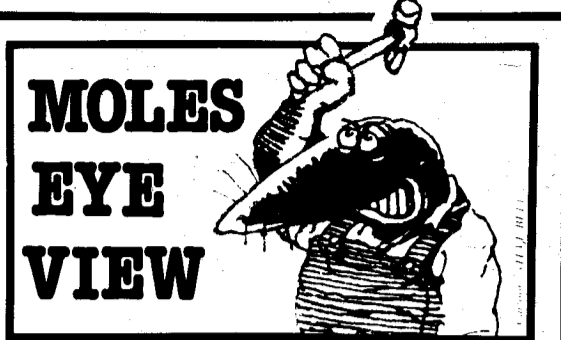
International speakers. Discussion. No charge for admission. Collection for memorial publishing fund.

**Jonathon Hammond, 1942-83**  
Ex-President, NUJ  
Labour Movement Memorial Meeting  
Wednesday, 28 September, 8pm, Bishop Creighton House, Lillie Road, Fulham, London SW6

**LABOUR & SINN FEIN** Hornsey & Wood Green LPYS public meeting with Jeremy Corbyn MP, Sarah Roelofs (LCI). Mon 26 Sept, 7.30pm, Stroud Green School, Woodstock Rd, London N4.



**RED MOLE T-SHIRTS**, red on yellow. £2.75 or only £2.15 each for orders of 10 or more (includes post). State size: S/M/L. From The other Printshop, 75 Piccadilly, Manchester 1.



## The gang of two

GWYNETH Dunwoody is hardly overmodest. There bold as brass in her list of nominees for deputy leader is the name G Dunwoody.

But maybe it's not overmodesty that's her problem. It could be loneliness. Perhaps she had to swallow her modesty and sign her own papers because no other MP would. Her other signatories only

total 4.78 of the Parliamentary Labour Party. And a minimum of five per cent is required.

Putting her own name down was the only way this popular mass figure could get nominated. Peter Shore poor lad is even more lonely. He hasn't got one constituency — including his own!

That's what I call having a real base.

## Sober as a judge

**EVEN A Crown Court Judge** like ex-Tory MP Judge Bruce Campbell is only human and likes the odd fag and a quick whisky.

So when he went to Guernsey with his mate Alan Foreman his eyes nearly popped out when he saw how cheap the booze and cigs were compared to here. Being a bit of a big spender — well he does get well paid for maintaining law and order — he splashed out on 10 cases of whisky and 10,000 cigs.

Naturally being tied up dispensing justice which keeps him very busy he never had the time to learn about all those funny laws about

paying customs duties. So when the Customs officers nicked him he remembered the story that so many of his clients in court had told him, and said: 'I did not know I was doing anything wrong.'

Alan Foreman speaking for both said: 'Those Customs are stupid. None of us done anything wrong.' The custom duty and VAT on the goods totalled £1000 and no doubt the good Judge is thinking about the number of people he has departed to jail for nicking far less than that.

But I am sure he will not want preferential treatment from the beak, if and when he goes up for sentence.

## Peter Sedgwick

By Phil Hearse  
MANY comrades on the revolutionary left will be shocked by the news of the death of Peter Sedgwick, at the age of 49. Peter left the Communist Party in 1956, and from that moment on was a partisan of the revolutionary movement. For many years he was a contributor to the SWP journal *International Socialism*.

Like his hero Victor Serge, whose books he brilliantly translated and edited, his Marxism had a decidedly libertarian and independent tinge.

I first met Peter at an IS meeting in York in 1968. Tony Cliff had come to explain why the organisation should be 'Leninist' from now on. Peter sat with his head in his hands, until he could stand it no more — and left.

Of course, he was wrong about Leninism (but not about Cliff) but it seemed to him like a repudiation of the libertarian Marxism he championed. Like many at that time, he thought that Leninism led to its grotesque caricature — Stalinism.

Despite political differences, Peter always befriended other comrades on the left. He hated sectarianism and the 'toy Bolshevik' posturing which makes deadly enemies of people who agree on 99 per cent of politics. In the late 1970s he briefly supported the *Socialist Unity* project as a possible step towards left unity.

Towards the end of his life Peter became preoccupied with problems of mental illness; his book *Psycho-Politics* was published in 1981. He always believed that capitalism was responsible for the agony and turmoil which fills our mental hospitals. His own life was far from happy — the insanity of capitalism seemed to weigh him down.

Peter was one of those comrades who reminds us in the heat of bitter faction fights and frenetic campaigns that socialism is about people, about liberation from the tyranny of the rulers and bureaucracies who crush our lives. For that reason and for many others, a comrade we can ill afford to lose.

## Hi-Tech drop out

IN THE same month that Maurice Bishop of Grenada took possession of a computer that is helping the New Jewel leaders sort out the 'scraps of paper' method for dealing with the economy much favoured by deposed Prime Minister Gairy, our own Hi-tech miracle is having problems.

It is not that we have stopped receiving cheques and postal orders sent in, it is just that the facility we have for printing our all those generous donations has been unilaterally withdrawn by the computer. As they say in the media, normal service will be resumed as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the normal service offered by the rest of the paper continues. Last week at

the Chile demo a large contingent marched behind the brightly coloured Socialist Action banner, depicting the American Eagle swooping down to escalate the war in Central America.

Meetings are being held all over the country against the witch hunt in the unions and in the Labour Party.

With our newspaper under attack, and the so-called hard left preparing for a difficult party conference, the fund drive money coming in is as important as ever.

We want to make sure that for conference we can return to the regular 16 page format and bring back all the features which have had to be left out over the summer.

Put a cheque in the post today. Everyone will get a mention — when the machine is fixed!

I would like to become a Socialist Action supporter.

- Please send me my supporters bulletin
- Please put me in touch with local readers
- I enclose a standing order/donation of £

### Socialist Action Bankers Order Form

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of .....

(Address of your bank in capitals)  
Please pay to the credit of Socialist Action, Acc. No. 70372315 at Co-Op Bank, 08-90-33, 1 Islington High Street, London N1. Starting on ..... (date of first payment) and thereafter monthly on the same date until further notice. Debit my A/C No ..... for the amount of £ .....

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Signature .....

When completed and signed please return to: The Business Manager, Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1 2XP.

Please do not send the Bankers Order direct to your bank. Thank you.

# Socialist Action

## Join the fight for socialism

If you want more information about Socialist Action or to be put in touch with local supporters send this form to Socialist Action, 328 Upper Street, London N1.

Name .....

Address .....

Tel .....

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

Convenor on Highland Fabricator strike

# "We took on Tebbit's Law and won"

**TWO THOUSAND Highland Fabricator strikers claimed a victory over their employers when they voted overwhelmingly to end their five-week strike last Friday. Stewards recommended acceptance after management conceded their reinstatement and full negotiating rights.**

**RAB WILSON, the convenor at the yard, spoke to Graham Barnettson on the history of the strike and the lessons it holds for the labour movement.**

**What were conditions like at the yard before the strike?**

At Hi-Fab we produce oil rigs. The one we were working on is a TLP, tension leg platform, for Conoco. There were many problems on this job because of poor quality foreign steel and bad design. This meant that the job had to be re-repaired.

To do this the workforce has had to work in very poor conditions. For example, the welders have had to work in temperatures of up to 150 degrees.

We asked for showers, free orange-juice and cooling shelters. These were to help the workforce to cope with the extreme heat. You must remember that if you are working in 150 degrees you can only withstand the heat for a very short time and you need to cool down gradually. The management conceded these.

But when we arrived back at the yard after the holidays the management informed us that they were withdrawing some of the facilities we had. These in-

cluded towels in the showers, free buses to and from work, the orange juice, cooling shelters and the subsidy on the canteen.

*They did this without negotiation. In the same way as the washing-up dispute at Cowley the management thought they could just ignore the established procedures and get away with it.*

We warned the management that unless the facilities were returned the workforce would have to consider industrial action. At a mass meeting the workforce took the decision to withdraw their labour till such time as the management gave us back those facilities they had withdrawn.

That is how it started. It had very little to do with orange juice. It was about a management changing conditions without negotiation.

**What did the management do to try to get you back to work?**

The management did not seem to be too concerned about the strike. A week later letters were sent out

by the management signed by the managing director accusing the workforce of inefficiency and bad timekeeping.

The management also offered 1630 jobs to the workforce (of 2000+) if they went to one of the seven local Job Centres to sign a company document listing 24 'conditions and terms of employment'.

Many of the workforce have commitments like a mortgage, families to look after so they had a lot of pressure on them to go back. The management said 483 went to the Job Centres but we think it was nearer 100.

Our action was very successful and showed the strength of the union to management.

**Did you receive the support of your local trades council and of your union national officials?**

The trades council gave us overwhelming support both in solidarity and in cash.

Our national officials were dragging their feet in supporting the members, were dragging their feet in making the strike official. The shop stewards committee decided to lobby our national officials at

## We had a picket of six people and over one thousand 'observers'

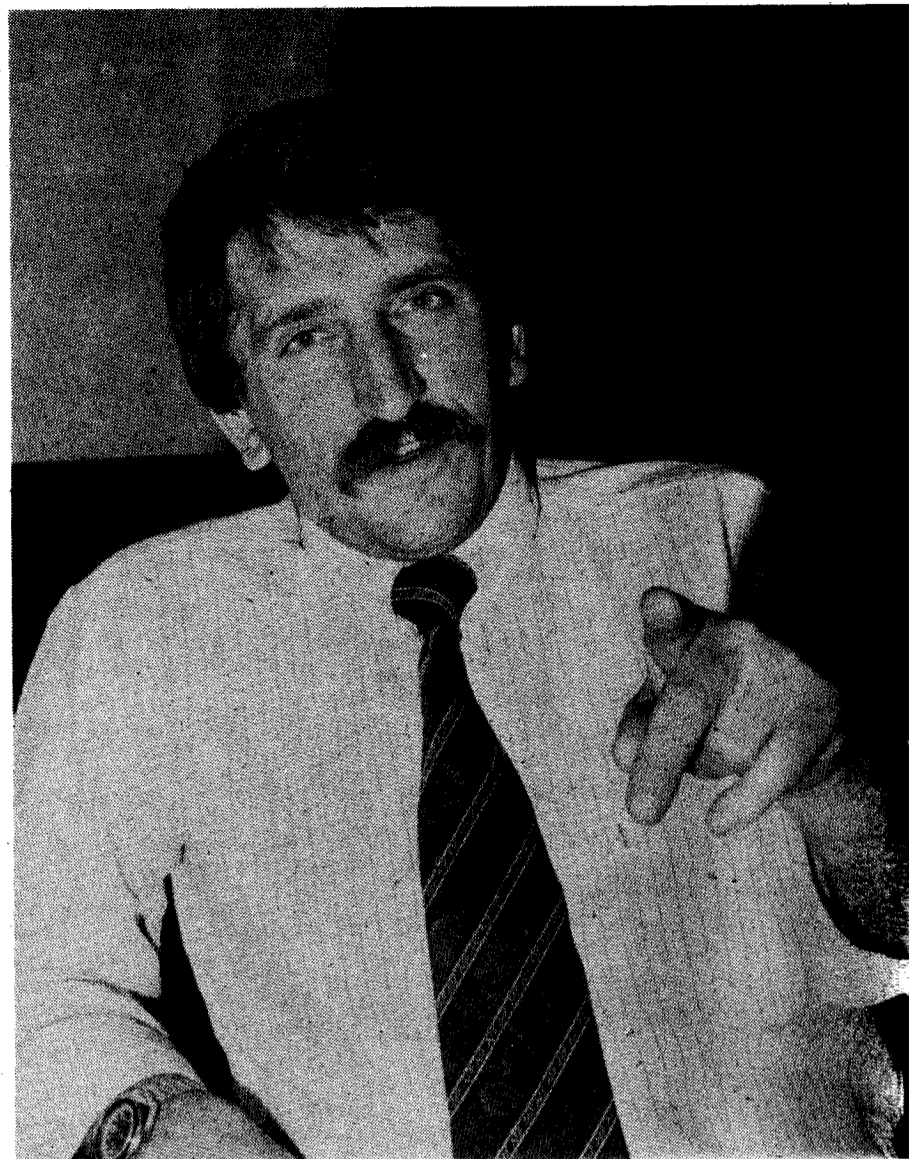
The management sent out another letter saying if you want your job back just turn up at the yard, sign the document and start work.

We had a picket of six people and over one thousand others were there as 'observers'. When the buses arrived they stopped at the beginning of the line which stretched for three miles from the main gate. Only 43 were prepared to run the gauntlet and tried to get into work. Most of them turned back but 19 went in. On the second day only three went in.

the TUC Congress. We did this to persuade them to make the strike official and to inform them that the membership had rejected the conditions laid down by management.

The officials wanted the membership to accept the management's plan and get back to work. This was not acceptable, the membership insisted that we should go back to work and then negotiate the conditions.

The national officials gave us a commitment to go back to Hi-Fab and give them our proposal. At this



Rab Wilson — turning the heat on management

meeting the management wanted to stop 90 people getting back, but conceded that the negotiations could take place after the workforce was back on the job.

Our officials fought this reduction of the workforce because it would have meant the stewards, safety reps and union activists not getting their job back.

**How do you see the outcome of the strike?**

The workers were prepared to fight a management using Tebbit's Law. We had restrictions on our picket, we were subject to summary dismissal. We fought the management and Tebbit's Law and won.

We may have to make concessions during the negotiations but the fact

remains that all the workers got their jobs back.

The management deliberately tried to get rid of the shop stewards and the activists. It is possible that this was the start of a plan to run down the yard. The Conoco job will last until March '84, but we may not get orders after that. But this doesn't change the fact that this time we won.

# Scottish CND debates freeze

**MORE THAN 200 delegates and individual members were at Scottish CND's annual conference in Dundee on 10/11 September. Wide debates showed the movement in no way demoralised by the election.**

Enthusiastic endorsement was given to getting the largest possible contingent on the 22 October demonstration. News of Glasgow district council's provision of two free buses helped build commitment.

**By Tony Southall**

Conference opened with a speech from Joan Ruddock, national chairperson of CND. 'Despite the election we could still win victories to halt the new generation of weapons.'

Joan dealt with the freeze campaign adopted by CND national council. Interestingly she saw it as a

punctual affair. 'If cruise was installed in December we would need to rethink our commitment.'

She also touched on the Executive's intervention into Youth and Labour CND. These were 'necessary corrections of course, in response to pleas within these organisations.' She accused leaders of YCND in particular of introducing new political positions into its practice, such as the proposal to back the 11 September demonstration commemorating the Chilean coup.

Unfortunately she never answered the press witch hunt. The most contentious debate at Dundee was around the freeze campaign.

A small majority backed commitment to this. Its movers were at pains to stress their commitment to unilateral disarmament, but they didn't explain why they are currently backing a multilateral

position. A Scottish freeze conference is already planned for early November. CND branches and affiliates now need to start insisting to go into that conference with clear arguments for unilateralism.

## Absurdity

We should also argue to withdraw support from the existing petition. The freeze advocates never dealt with the question of timing raised by Joan Ruddock. That would have revealed the tactical absurdity of a campaign that will have been scarcely started before it comes redundant.

Opponents of the freeze insisted on immediate campaigning and to centre on the new war drive. That meant prioritising

- building 22 October and stopping cruise
- building the anti-trident convention in Manchester in February

● building opposition in local authorities and unions to the new civil defence regulations before Parliament on 26 October.

● Conference received a message about development in Rolls Royce at Hillington. Glasgow Stewards have had a long term policy of blacking work on Trident.

Now management have opened procedural negotiations to change this by the new year. They have backed this by talking of inevitable dismissals if agreement isn't reached.

Hillington has lost three thousand workers since January 1981 and a thousand already this year. Conference agreed that it was now essential to transmit every possible form of support to encourage them to stand firm.

Finally conference recognised new tasks posed by the war drive in Central America. It instructed to prepare material for circulation on this.

## The fight against Project Mercury continues



**THIRTEEN engineers were suspended in Aberdeen last week for refusing to provide or maintain circuits involved in the ceremony to inaugurate BP's Magnus oil field.**

This dispute arose after BP, British Telecom and ITN, the satellite system contractors, decided to control the ceremony

from Aberdeen rather than London.

**By Anne Shirley**

This was because of continuing action by the POEU in London against the private alternative Telecoms network — Project Mercury.

Aberdeen POEU's action was undermined by management connecting the important circuits and the broadcast went ahead, though not

up to the usual standard. In retaliation the union began an immediate overtime ban and non-cooperation with the management concerned.

Aberdeen being the oil capital of Europe means that the POEU here are clearly going to play a major part in the fight against Mercury. The correct national leadership can mean that Aberdeen POEU's recent action will be just a start to an ongoing fight to affect BP's operation.

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## POEU special conference

# New mandate to fight privatisation

POST OFFICE Engineers voted to continue their campaign of industrial action against Tory plans to privatise their industry at their special conference in London last weekend. DENNY FITZPATRICK from the West London branch of the union was there.

Conference rejected motions calling on the union to accept the Tories' majority in parliament by a 2-1 margin. Instead the union endorsed the executive report to continue

the anti-privatisation campaign.

But the conference failed to spell out the specific forms of future action. Motions calling for action to hit stock-brokers and other financial institutions as well as those calling for all-out action with other public sector unions were not reached on the agenda.

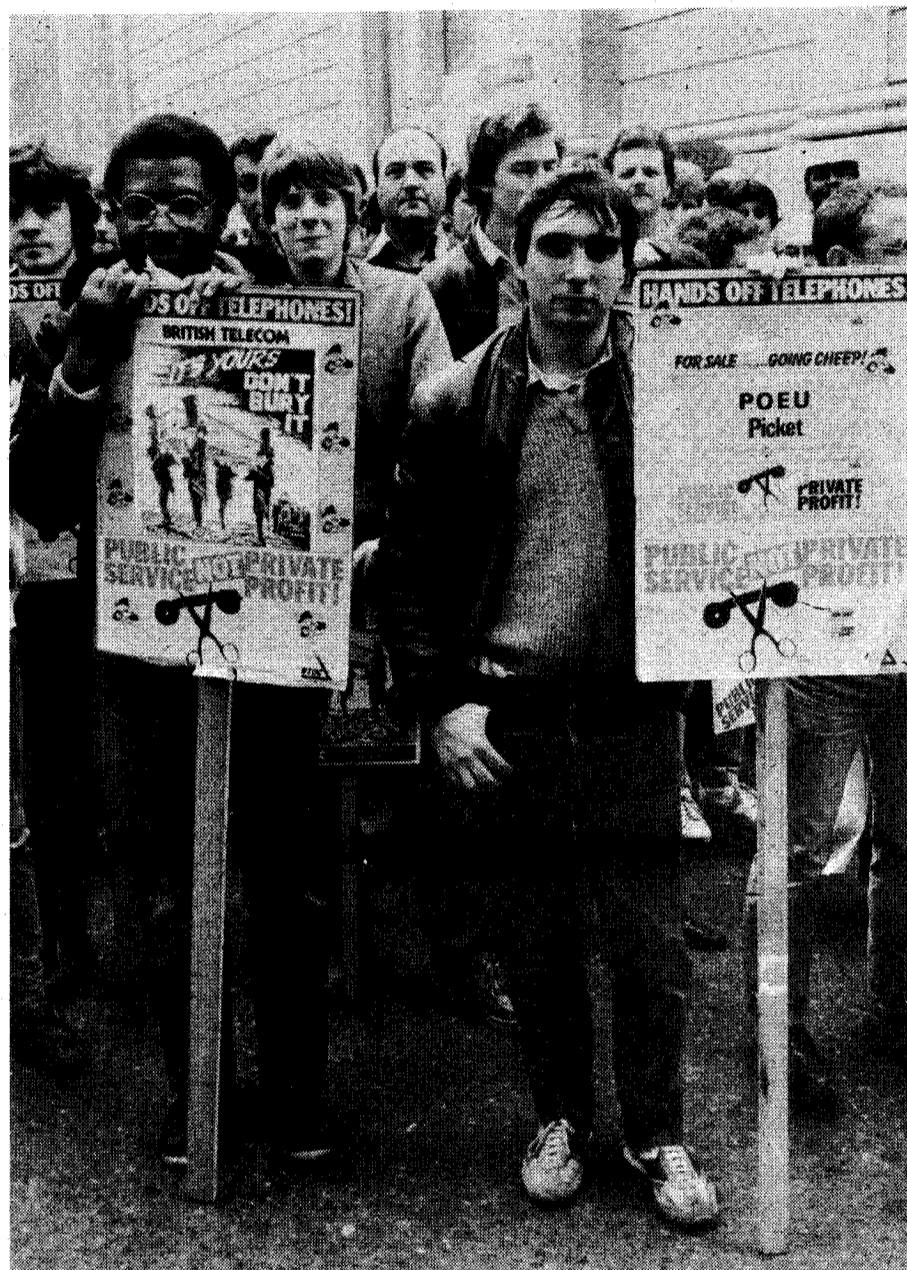
The union's chairperson assured conference that they were only opposed because they tied the executive's hands.

All such motions were referred to the union's Industrial Action Strategy Committee — the body responsible for nationally coordinating the action against privatisation. This means that following the conference pressure from the rank and file of the union will have to intensify if the 'package of industrial action measures' the executive report spoke of will be used, 'should the executive so decide'.

The broadsheet issued by the union's broad left at the conference argued that selected action can lead to isolation and that 'escalation of our action would provide us with an excellent platform from which to breathe life into our successful proposition to the TUC on joint action in defence of the public sector'.

An important amendment carried with NEC support reflected this sentiment instructing the executive to approach other public sector unions to fight a coordinated battle against the government's privatisation plans without necessarily waiting for the TUC to initiate such a campaign.

The decision of the special conference to continue the fight gives a mandate to the rank and file of the union to step up the action against the Tory 'pirates'.



Post Office engineers on City of London picket

Photo: GM COOKSON

## But Golding scores a victory

'THE Militant Tendency have done me a good turn in showing me the great deal of support for moderates among the branches.'

These were John Golding's words after the POEU special conference passed a motion recognising that 'the NEC had made a serious error of judgement in refusing to nominate John Golding MP for the NEC of the Labour Party ...'

The executive recommended to conference that the motion be referred to the forthcoming November conference of the union when delegates will discuss Labour Party affairs under the report of the Political Fund Management Committee.

They argued that this would allow the membership access to the information which led the executive to decline to nominate Golding. But 'the champions of

democracy' who were moving the motion were not interested in the facts.

Within 15 minutes of the motion being motivated it was put and voted on. Summing up against the resolution for the executive, Donald MacDonald said that Golding had played a valuable role in the House of Commons in the fight against privatisation, but his role inside the Labour Party ran counter to the interests of the POEU membership.

### Disunity

He argued that the Labour Party's failure to win the election was in part due to the disunity and division caused by the organisational measures that John Golding led against members of the Labour Party.

But otherwise the facts were not presented in the debate. And nobody asked where Golding got his mandate for witch hunting



Photo: JOHN HARRIS

and the way in which he has used his position on the NEC.

In the press comment which followed Sunday's decision none of the industrial correspondents mentioned that this was the first time that the issue

of the NEC nomination has been placed before the union. Despite all their cries of democracy the right wing in the union never put the matter before conference when they had the majority on the executive.