

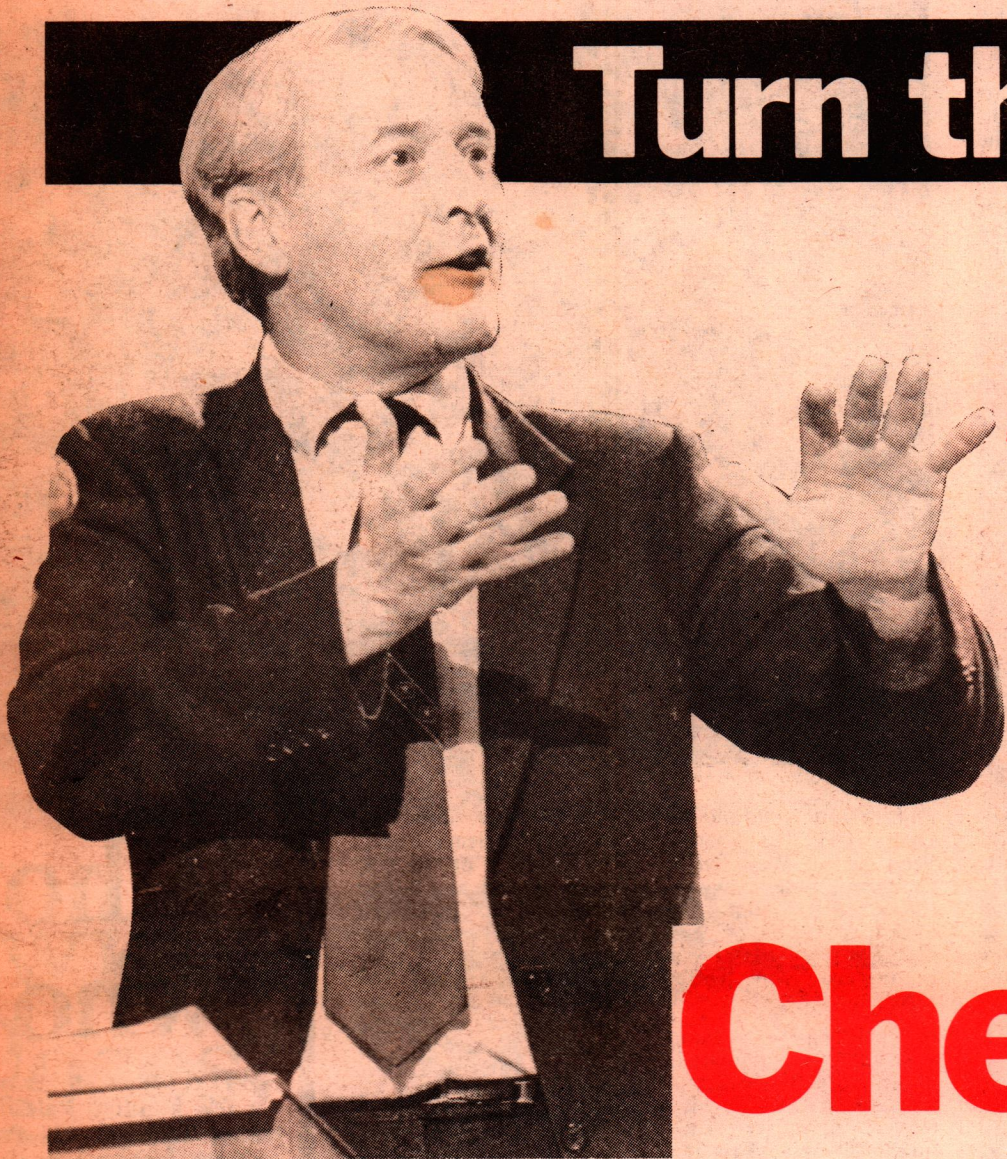
A **Socialist** ACTION

The Battle of Beirut pages 2/3

Defending the GLC pages 6/7

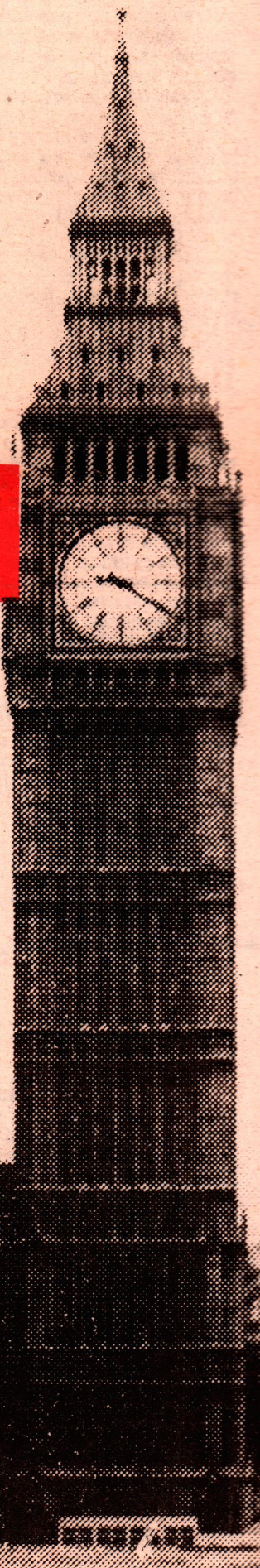
Back page Chernenko

Turn the tide-



All hands to

Chesterfield



CHESTERFIELD CAN AND must turn the tide for Labour. The Tories are starting to look like an injury prone party. A majority of public opinion — stretching well beyond Labour voters — is against government plans to close down the metropolitan councils.

That same opposition exists on cruise missiles, rate capping, and the banning of trade unions at GCHQ. Inflation is sure to rise again this year. The affair of the Oman contract and Mark's job with Cementation keeps on nagging at Mrs Thatcher.

As the cracks begin to appear the government no longer looks as impregnable as it did last June. This by-election gives Labour its chance to show that it is the only realistic alternative to the Tories. A resounding win for Benn would drive that lesson home and start a process whereby Labour could regain the ground it has lost since the days of the Callaghan government.

A defeat for Labour

would be a serious blow. It would weaken Labour's position against both the Tories and the SDP/Liberal Alliance, thus helping Thatcher to weather her present difficulties. The Tories would see the result as a signal to speed up their attacks on Labour's links with the unions. The Alliance would get another boost — as the most likely victors if Labour lose — which would split even more the 'anti-Tory' vote.

The right, in the party and the unions, would blame it all on Benn and the 'looney left'. They would use this to ditch Labour's more radical policies and they would move again to get rid of the 'troublesome far-left'.

When the stakes are as high as they are at Chesterfield exceptional measures are called for. Nothing can be left to chance. Every Labour Party and trade union branch should send teams of canvassers to Chesterfield.

The town must be flooded with Labour activists whose campaigning and presence will carry Labour to victory and Benn to Westminster on 1 March.

Socialist ACTION

The Wrong Answers

Last week a debate took place in London with large implications for the future of the Labour movement. On one side were Harriet Harman and Robin Cook — Neil Kinnock's campaign manager for the leadership of the Labour Party. On the other were Beatrix Campbell and Eric Hobsbawm — two of the leading writers of the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party. The event was the discussion on 'Labour's Missing Millions' between *Marxism Today* and the Labour Coordinating Committee.

Debate

To say that the debate represented a confrontation of ideas would be to engage in a considerable exaggeration. Indeed Robin Cook went out of his way to emphasise that he had mainly differences of 'emphasis and nuance' with Campbell and Hobsbawm.

Sarah Benton, reviewing the debate in the *New Statesman*, truthfully, and approvingly, wrote 'the purpose of the debate was to wheel in to public view the new axis that has formed on the left. Organisationally, the axis runs from the Labour Co-ordinating Committee (a soft left grouping within the Labour Party) to the middle of the Communist Party. This is not a very great distance. But such an axis puts both the LCC and the 'eurocommunists' in a stronger position for their separate fights for dominance in their own parties.'

Between

In one curious sense the LCC-*Marxism Today* axis is a step forward. The British labour movement and British politics, was for years dominated by an almost total indifference to any explicit political ideas or political theory. Eric Hobsbawm, Bob Rowthorn, Beatrix Campbell and others in *Marxism Today* have done the left a service by lifting its vision of debate. Instead of skulking around in intellectual corners, discussing who said what about who in 1917, *Marxism Today* has helped force the left to come out of its hole and begin to face up to some of the big contemporary questions of British and international politics. The fact that the answers they give are totally wrong is a different matter.

Marxism Today and the LCC furthermore have a common political and social framework. Their policy is alliance with the European imperialist powers against the United States. The political milieu oriented in this direction is undoubtedly the most rapidly growing in Britain. It is seen not only in the success of *Marxism Today*, and Kinnock's success in taking the leadership of the Labour Party, but also in the sales growth of the *Guardian* newspaper relative to its rivals the *Times* and *Daily Telegraph*. Its immediate political goal on the left is to destroy 'Bennism' as the most influential current among Labour activists.

Differences

There are still differences — and more than those of 'emphasis and nuance' — between *Marxism Today* and the LCC. The LCC and Neil Kinnock are oriented to building up the Labour Party against the Alliance. *Marxism Today* is already oriented to a 'broad popular front' with the Alliance against Thatcher.

But of the two *Marxism Today* is by far the more consistent. Neil Kinnock will fail in his attempt to rebuild Labour to the point where it can win a majority in a general election. Then the question of relations with the Alliance will come out in its full force. It is Eric Hobsbawm and Beatrix Campbell, for all their smaller forces, who have the axis of their debate.

... of the Labour Party ...

LAST WEEK'S fighting in Lebanon has changed the political situation not only in that country but in the whole Middle East. PHIL HEARSE outlines the course of the Battle of Beirut, the stakes for the US, Israel and Syria and the prospects for the future.

WHEN ISRAEL invaded Lebanon they calculated that it was possible to establish the power of the Christian Phalange party by kicking out the PLO. The events of the last two weeks have shown that their calculation was wrong. Gemayel has been flattened by a generalised insurrection of the Muslim masses. The basic reality of Lebanon — that the Christian Maronites are in a minority — has reasserted itself.

Since the beginning of 1983 Gemayel's Phalangist government has been trying to extend its area of control around Beirut. West Beirut — for years the centre of left wing and Arab Nationalist resistance — had been subdued by the Israelis, and was policed fiercely by Gemayel's army.

At the beginning of this month army units began massing on the fringes of Beirut's southern suburbs. Their objective was obviously to make inroads into the power of the Amal Shi'ite Muslim militia, which controls south Beirut.

On the evening of Thursday 2 February the army units advanced, artillery and tanks blazing. The army attack was co-ordinated with the Lebanese Forces, the murderous Phalangist militias, responsible for the massacres at Shabra and Chatila.

Amal fought back, utilising only rocket-propelled grenades and rifles against the tanks of the army. They won a famous victory, overrunning four outposts of the Lebanese army. Fighting also erupted at Souk-al-Garb in the Chouf hills overlooking Beirut, with the Druze militias joining Amal in fighting the army.

On the morning of Friday 3 February the leaders of the anti-Gemayel National Salvation Front met in Zghorta in the north of the country and demanded Gemayel's resignation. As the army counter-attacked in southern Beirut, it became known that 250

Palestinian fighters loyal to PLO dissident leader Abu Musa had joined the fighting against Gemayel and the Phalange.

The whole of southern Beirut was shelled by the army as its citizens took to their cellars.

As the fighting continued over the weekend cracks started to appear in the Lebanese army. During the 1975-76 civil war, the army had broken in two, with its Muslim component defecting to the left-nationalist opposition. The same process started to reassert itself.

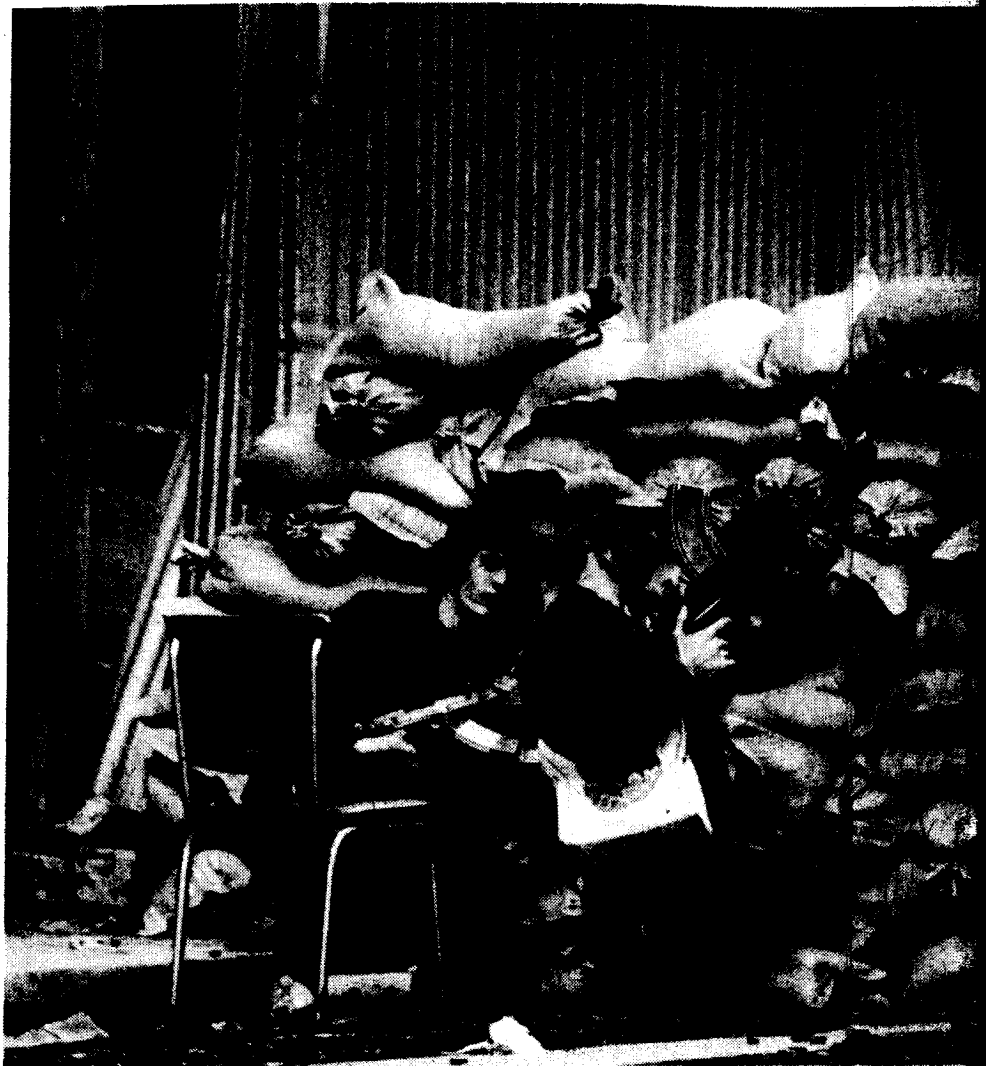
By Sunday 5 February it was clear that the army had lost the battle for south Beirut. Several army units had defected to Amal, taking their weapons with them.

On Sunday afternoon Gemayel's prime minister, Shafiq al-Wazzen and his cabinet resigned. Amal's victory in south Beirut cut the road to the airport, thus effectively cutting communications between the centre of Beirut and the US troops, who were now isolated and extremely vulnerable.

On Monday morning there was a lull in the fighting. Then events took a dramatic turn in West Beirut. The Murabitun 'Nasserist' militia suddenly emerged on the streets of West Beirut, in uniform and full armed.

In 1983 the Israelis disarmed the Murabitun and everyone imagined they had been crushed. Now they began a ferocious battle alongside

The battle



units of both Amal and the Druze PSP, to liberate West Beirut. West Beirut itself came under heavy artillery fire from the Christian-held areas, and Christian East Beirut was bombarded from Druze positions in the hills.

By Monday evening West Beirut was liberated. Radio and television stations, together with the Interior Ministry were captured. This was the second big defeat for the Lebanese army. As Sunni and Shi'ite leaders appealed to the Muslim soldiers not to fight, the army began to disintegrate.

Huge amounts of weaponry were handed

over to the militias by deserting Moslem soldiers. The situation of the US, British, French and Italian soldiers of the 'peace keeping force' had become impossible.

On Tuesday 7 February the US soldiers came under a terrific pounding from both Shi'ites and Druze. Withdrawal was just a matter of time.

The defeat of the Lebanese army was above all the work of Amal. The Shi'ite community, the poorest and most oppressed community in Lebanon had asserted itself. No political settlement can now fail to take their interests into account.

Who who

WITH the exception of a few hundred Palestinian fighters, all the forces involved in the Battle of Beirut were Lebanese. But each of the different groups, at least for the time being, has a foreign backer.

The Lebanese losers are the Christian Phalangists; but their foreign backers — Israel and the United States — have also suffered a sharp blow.

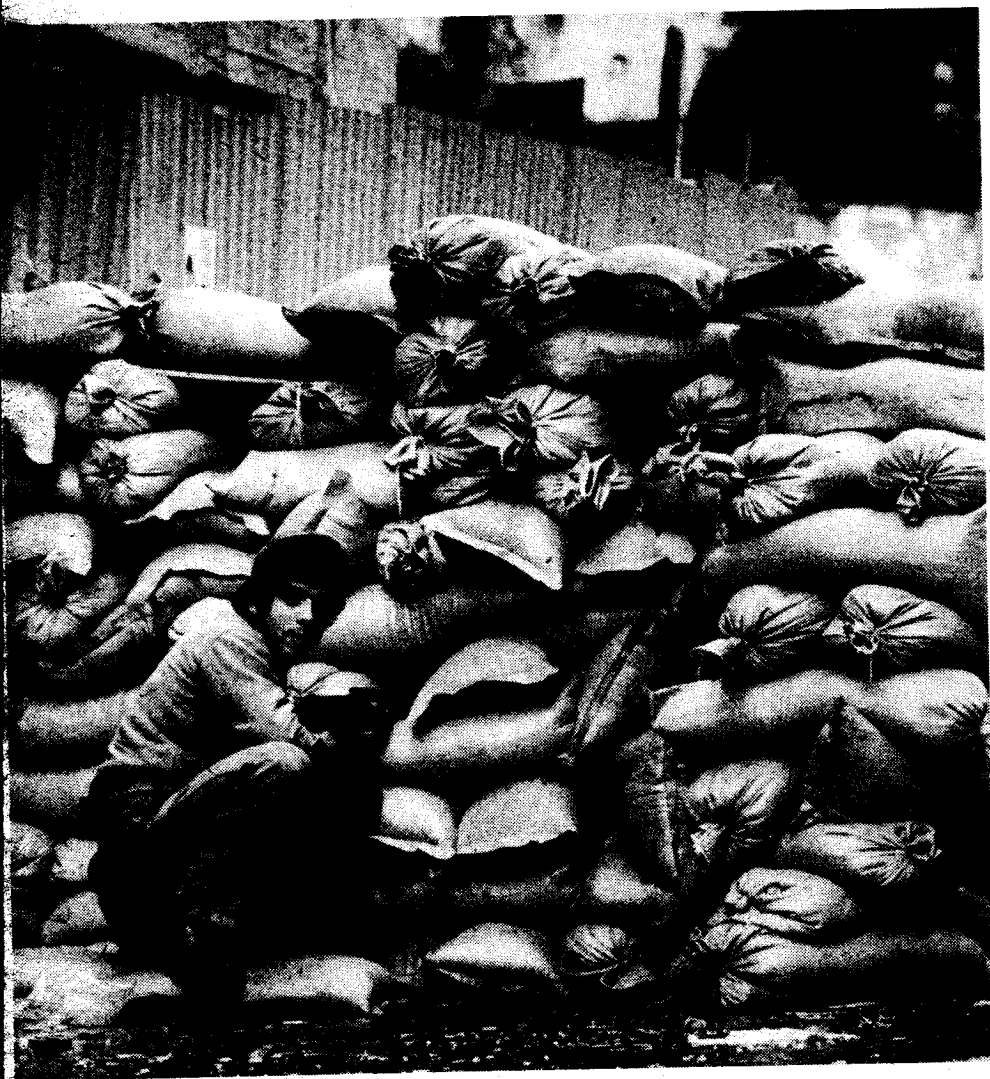
When Israel invaded in 1982, its objective was the creation of a unified Lebanese state, with a strong national army to maintain 'order' and a Phalangist government. To this end, the Israelis installed the leader of the Christian fascist militias, Bashir Gemayel, as the President. But after Bashir's assassination his brother Amin proved less pliable to Israeli pressure.

The Israelis gave up the attempt to create a Phalange-dominated state and went instead for a break-up of Lebanon into warring statelets, with the south occupied by Israeli troops as a guarantee against attacks by any remaining Palestinian guer-

President Reagan stepped ... the United States ... the biggest loser from the outcome of the Battle of



of Beirut



wins, loses?

Beirut. The withdrawal of the marines is a sharp blow to the prestige of the United States in the whole Middle East region.

The heavy guns firing from the *New Jersey* are firing in fury and impotence, but will have no effect on the outcome.

President Assad of Syria is the big winner on the international scene. Since the Syrian army entered Lebanon in 1976, Assad has used his domination of events to ensure that Syria would be central to any peace settlement in the region.

The finances and military power of the Syrian dictatorship depend on the role Syria plays as the 'front line' Arab State in the confrontation with Israel. Vast amounts of oil money from the Gulf states finance the purchase of Soviet arms and equipment, and bank-roll the military bureaucracy which assures Assad's power.

By ensuring that pro-Syrian forces have the whip hand in Lebanon Assad makes sure that the United States or anyone else seeking a peace settlement have to deal him in on the card game.

Syria is hardly a Soviet puppet. But given that the Soviet Union is the main military backer of Syria, Russian diplomatic influence in the region is bound to be strengthened.

On the ground in Lebanon, obviously *Amal* and the Shi'ite community are the big winners. *Amal* is not however a fundamentalist movement in the same way as Khomeini's Iran is fundamentalist. It does not demand



Gemayel

the reconstruction of the state on an Islamic basis, but merely a bigger share of power for the Shi'ites.

Amal's leader Nabih Berri is a bourgeois politician who will want strong *Amal* representation in any new government. But it seems likely that both he and the Druze PSP leader Walid Jumblatt, will accept a Christian Maronite president in return for more power for their respective political movements.

On the ground in Lebanon the main change is the crippling of the US-trained Lebanese Army. It will mean the end of attempts to impose central government control of Muslim areas.

But the political complexion of Lebanon has not simply reverted to the pre-1982 situation. The strength of the Sunni Muslim and leftist Arab nationalist forces has drastically decreased. West Beirut, before the Israeli invasion, was controlled by the Sunnis and the PLO. Now the remnants of the Arab nationalists forces have to accept a strong *Amal* presence in West Beirut, despite the fact that few

Shi'ites actually live there.

In a sense this represents a political regression on the pre-1982 situation. *Amal* and the Druze PSP are not anti-imperialist forces. Their leaders want a bigger slice of the cake, but they do not want a socialist Lebanon. They are quite prepared to do a deal with US imperialism, provided it recognises their own power and influence.

The big loser among the Lebanese forces is the Phalange party and its fascist militias. The butchers of Karantina, Tal al-Zatar and Sabra and Chatila got a bloody nose in the Battle of Beirut. Their defeat opens a new situation in which progressive and anti-imperialist forces will have more space to organise and grow.

The experience of Iran shows us that a big defeat for capitalist reaction and imperialism does not necessarily open up the way for working class advance. But it opens up that possibility if all forms of reaction are trenchantly fought. That is the task which now faces the Lebanese left.

The road to civil war

1943. Lebanon gets independence from France. National Covenant distributes power in government to different religious communities, but Christian Maronites get the dominant power.

1958. Druze-Muslim rebellion, inspired by rise of Arab nationalism in Middle East, especially Nasserism in Egypt. Revolt is put down by intervention of US marines.

1970. 'Black September' in Jordan. Palestinian fighters and refugees flee from Hussein's terror to haven of Lebanon. PLO forms alliance with Lebanese leftists and Arab nationalists.

1973. Israeli commandos attack PLO leaders in Beirut. Lebanese army does not interfere. Mass demonstrations by Muslims and Palestinians accuse government of complicity. Communal strife is leading to civil war.

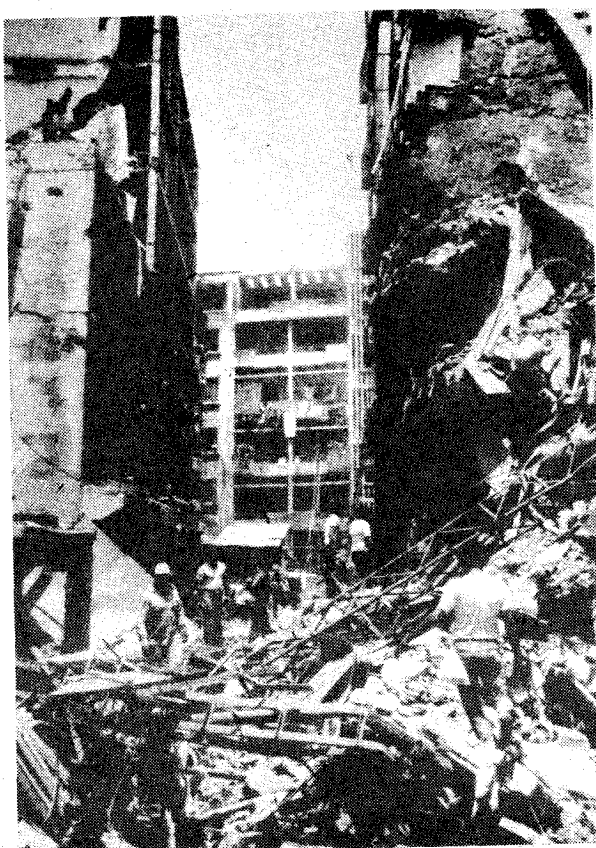
1975-6. Open civil war breaks out. Beirut is divided between Muslim West and Christian East.

Christians massacre Palestinians at Karantina and Tal al-Zatar. Palestinians and leftists are on the verge of complete victory when Syria intervenes to defend Maronites. Much of north and east of country occupied by Syria, but PLO occupies part of south as base to attack Israel.

1978. First Israeli invasion, 25 miles into Lebanon. After withdrawal, Israel launches constant air raids against Palestinian and Muslim areas.

1982. Israeli invasion. West Beirut holds out for 10 weeks. Arafat takes decision to pull out PLO. Israelis install Bashir Gemayel as President; after Bashir is assassinated he is replaced by his brother Amin. Phalangists carry out massacre at Sabra and Chatila. Split develops in the PLO. Syria provides arms to anti-Gemayel forces.

May 1983. Gemayel signs 'troops withdrawal' agreement with Israelis, which in fact sanctions their occupation in south Lebanon. Anti-Gemayel forces prepare for show down.



The main forces in Lebanon

Kataeb (Phalange) Party. Extreme right wing party of the Maronite Christians founded in the 1930s by Pierre Gemayel. Centred on Bikfaya, ancestral home of the Gemayel family. Phalange organises the Lebanese Forces, the Maronite militia which works closely with the army. Pierre's son Bashir, a leader of the Lebanese Forces, was put in power by the Israelis. Following his assassination his brother Amin took over as President. By far the largest force among the Maronites.

Amal. The Shi'ite militia headed by Nahib Berri. Recent arrival on the Lebanese scene. Amal has become the dominant force among the Shi'ite Muslims.

Progressive Socialist Party (PSP). Part of the Druze community, mainly located in the Chouf mountains. Politically the PSP is a bourgeois nationalist movement, despite its name. Led by Walid Jumblatt, son of assassinated Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt. Lebanese affiliate of the Socialist International.

Murabitun. 'Nasserist' Arab nationalist movement, mainly of Sunni Muslims, strong in West Beirut. One of the main organisations of the now-defunct Lebanese National Movement which fought the Phalangists in the '75-'76 civil war.

Chesterfield

No time for complacency

AS THE CHESTERFIELD by-election enters its first week of official campaigning, BBC's *Newsnight* shows Labour in the lead with 42 per cent support. This is the same percentage that brought the Tories victory in last year's general election.

But victory is by no means certain for Tony Benn and the Labour Party, when the same poll shows the combined anti-Labour vote is 58 per cent. There is still time for the Tory vote to collapse and the anti-Labour vote to rally round the Liberal candidate Max Payne.

So far the Alliance is running a shoddy, amateur campaign, with literature that concentrates on attacking Tony Benn. And Payne made a bad showing at the all-party debate organised by CND last Friday.

By Carol Turner

Labour on the other hand, is well organised. National press officer Monica Foot is in Chesterfield full-time for the duration of the by-election.

Public meetings are booked for almost every night of the campaign, and speakers already include Neil Kinnock, Roy Hattersley, Denis Healey, Joan Maynard, David Blunkett and Dennis Skinner. Large bands of campaigners are arriving in Chesterfield, and doorstep work is well advanced.

Amidst such impressive organisation, a question to be raised is the lack of profile for the candidate himself. Labour has organised only two press

conferences with Tony Benn for the whole of the campaign. As the by-election proceeds it will be increasingly difficult to ignore the fact that Labour's candidate is a national and controversial figure.

There is a danger Tony Benn will face the glare of unsympathetic publicity, whether Labour likes it or not. Undoubtedly, Chesterfield will be an historic by-election. The stakes are high.

In Bermondsey last year, Peter Tatchell faced a hostile press with the Labour leadership openly against him. This time, the Labour leaders have learned their lesson.

Full support

There is no question — regardless of what might be in individuals' minds — but that Benn has the full official support of Walworth Road. But Labour activists can't afford to be complacent.

If Benn is returned, the left will see its most

popular spokesperson back in Westminster. This will give a much needed fillip to the left's flagging fortunes.

Most important, it would shift the balance of forces in favour of protecting party policies such as unilateral nuclear disarmament against corrosion by the party right and centre. Should Benn not win, on the other hand, this will open the flood gates of reaction in the form of a more confident challenge to progressive party policies and the leadership by Labour's hard right.

Final push

In the last week of the Bermondsey campaign, the media were able to give a final, successful push on tactical voting. It is not too late for such a move in this by-election.

No one can afford to be complacent. Between now and 1 March, Chesterfield must be the focus of attention for all party activists.

● *Helpers from outside the area are asked to let agent Peter Coleman know in advance of their arrival by contacting the campaign headquarters at the Labour Club, Unity House, 113 Saltergate, Chesterfield (phone: Chesterfield 208387). Mid-week assistance is especially welcome.*



Tony Benn — his return will protect policies such as unilateral nuclear disarmament from attack by the right

CLPD: Accountability not yet achieved

LAST WEEK Socialist Action carried an assessment of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy's annual meetings. We reprint below extracts from CLPD's press release on the result of their AGM.

THE TOP priority of the Labour Party is now party unity and winning the next general election. This was stressed at the AGM of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy held in London, Birmingham and Glasgow.

However the AGM recognised that the accountability of Labour's elected representatives had not yet been achieved. CLPD will therefore work to ensure that mandatory work election and the leadership elections become routine practice rather than one-off events, and campaign for the democratisation of the LP.

At the same time CLPD will not lose sight of the overriding need for party unity. It believes that the pursuit of further democratic demands must therefore be confined to party channels.

Resort to the media must be strongly discouraged so that there is no repetition of the 1981 'residential style' deputy leadership campaign. The meeting therefore endorsed the CLPD executive's proposal to oppose the leading named campaign for 'one member one vote' which would inevitably lead to public campaigning.

The slogan of 'one member one vote' is merely being used as a smoke screen by bypassing the democratic procedure of reselection and election

of the party leadership.

On economic strategy, the AGM reaffirmed CLPD's aim to commit the next Labour government to a significant extension of public ownership into the commanding heights of the economy. Other major decisions were:

● to continue campaigning for positive discrimination within the Labour Party, in favour of working class, women and ethnic minorities;

● to campaign for the proposal that (a) the NEC women's division be elected by the Labour women's conference; (b) that this conference be given the right to submit five resolutions to the Labour Party annual conference; (c) that a special Labour women's conference be held to decide proper rules for all parts of the Labour Party's women's organisation.

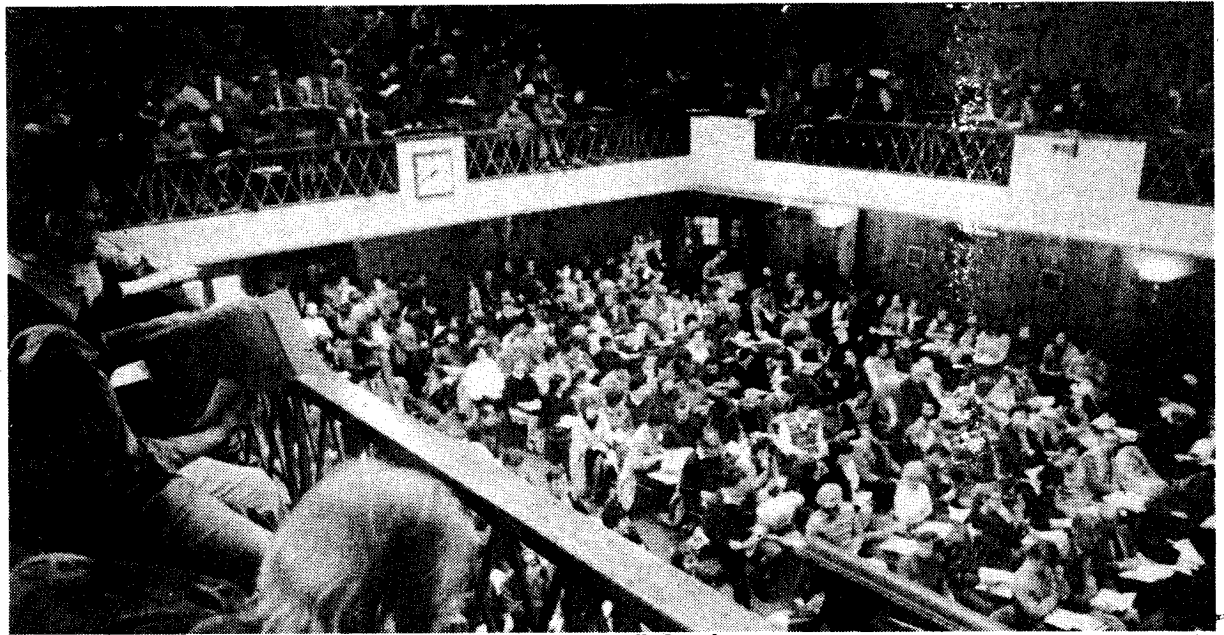
The AGM took the view that amending clause II and clause IX of the party's constitution, which give the executive discretionary powers, is the most effective way of combating the witch hunt.

Resolutions were passed in favour of a greater say for CLPs at annual conference — one more in keeping with their financial and material contribution. This measure is seen as a means of bringing CLPs and trade unions

closer together by making for more trade union involvement at the constituency level. It is in no way an attack on the trade union block vote as such.

The meeting elected Alan Sapper (ACTT) as CLPD's president for 1984 and Stephen Boddington (IWC), Bill Deal (FBU) Alastair Macrae (NUPE), Ernie Roberts MP, Audrey Wise, and Bob Wright (AUEW) as vice presidents. Marie Patterson was elected as chairperson and Vladimir Derer re-elected as secretary and Victor Shonfield as treasurer.

Over 250 supporters attended the AGM which for the first time was held in three venues to enable wider participation than can be achieved at a single meeting at any one venue.



Delegates at last year's CLPD annual meeting in Conway Hall, London.

Photo: JOHN HARRIS

A PIECE OF THE ACTION

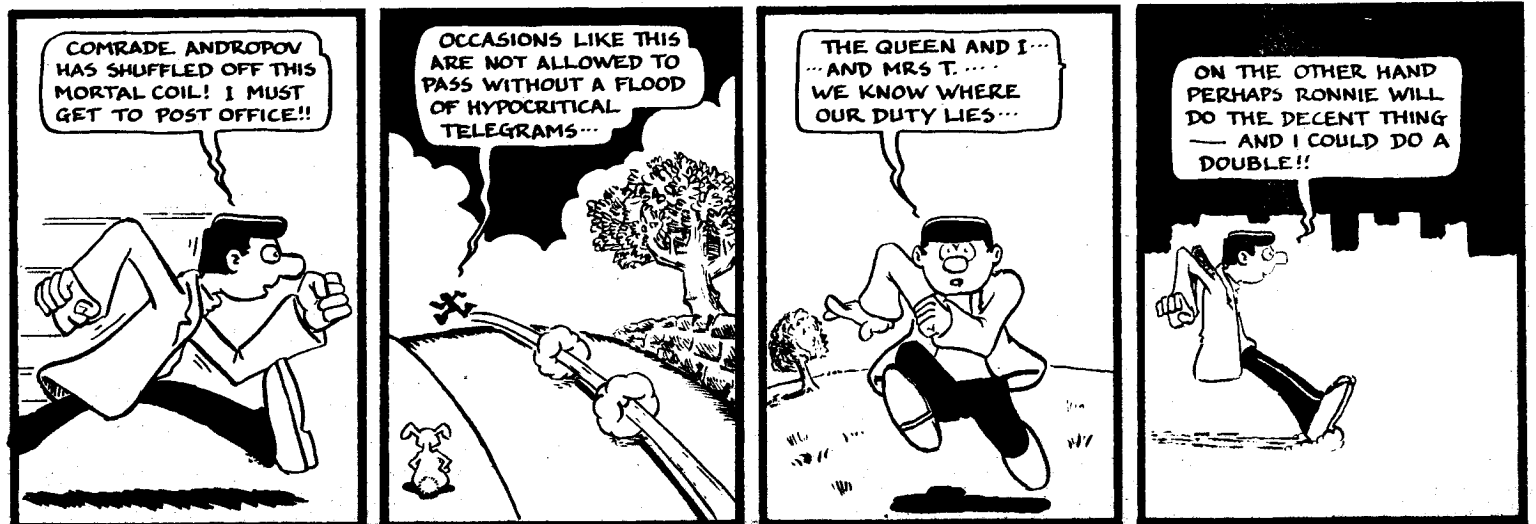




Photo: JOHN HARRIS

Ted Knight speaks at Labour Against the Witch Hunt's founding conference

Beware: witch hunts still in progress

WITCH HUNTS are far from over, but they've left the centre of Labour's public stage. That was the message from the quarterly National Council meeting of Labour Against the Witch Hunt, held at County Hall, London, last weekend.

Council took reports on Whythenshawe (Manchester), Blackburn, Acocks Green (Birmingham), Stoke, Southampton and Liverpool. They indicate that, while the days of an up-front witch hunt openly led by Labour's national leadership have passed, they are not necessarily gone forever.

By Carol Turner

Since annual conference, witch hunting has changed into a lower gear. Nowadays, right wing constituencies and individuals spearhead local witch hunts, away from the glare of national publicity.

Whythenshawe constituency has finally been reconvened after a 12 month fight. It will hold its 1984 annual meeting at the end of this month, and looks likely to 'go left' despite the antics of national agent David Hughes.

But the five refused admittance to Acocks Green branch of Birmingham-Yardley Labour Party still face delays.

Small fires are being fanned elsewhere. Stoke South constituency is calling for an investigation of *Socialist Investigator*, but was recently forced to suspend a local branch which refused to issue 1984 membership cards to *Mil-*

itant supporters.

In Southampton, a local councillor suggested *Militant* supporters should not be allowed to hold office in his Labour Party branch. After he was told his proposal was against the constituency's anti-witch hunt policy, he issued a statement to the local press.

In Liverpool, MP Frank Field complained to the press that he was being 'witch hunted' when *Merseyside Briefing* carried an article critical of his non-adherence to party policy.

The witch hunt is not dead. The decisions of annual conference open the door to right wing constituency parties pursuing it at their own pace, in many cases with full support from regional headquarters.

Election

Far from the election of a new Labour leadership laying to rest the witch hunts of the last two years, conference has passed a neat piece of 'enabling legislation' for right wingers by confirming Tariq Ali's and the *Militant* editorial board's expulsions, and the sales ban on *Militant* newspaper at Labour Party meetings. This has removed the onus from Labour's national leaders.

All this makes the job of LAW more vital than ever. Party activists must not fall into the trap of believing witch hunts have stopped because they no longer get national publicity.

Material

LAW will continue to compile and circulate material on the witch hunt — which has significance for the whole party — drawing attention to the real threat which still exists, as well as offering advice and support to constituencies and individuals.

For this reason, LAW is producing a leaflet for Labour Party regional conferences and will be taking part in fringe meetings there. It is also circulating a statement from the Campaign Group of MPs calling for an end to the witch hunt, which will be presented to National Executive Committee in April.

The next National Council meeting will be in London on Saturday 7 April, in plenty of time to discuss and circulate model resolutions for this year's annual conference. (Copies of the Campaign Group statement and further details of LAW from secretary Keith Lichman, 11 Wilderton Road, London N16 (01-802 1709). Affiliation to LAW is open to CLPs, trade unions, Labour Party affiliates and individuals — details from the address above.

Nottingham conference

RUSHCLIFFE LABOUR PARTY are holding a consultation conference for constituency Labour Parties in Nottingham, on Sunday 25 March. This follows a fringe meeting at last year's Labour Party conference, attended by 200-plus delegates and visitors.

The Nottingham conference will reconvene workshops from that meeting on fighting the Euro-elections, building workplace branches, and defending local democracy. In a circular letter advertising the conference, the joint signatories — Audrey Wise, Ken Fleet and Tony Simpson — point out: 'The Tories are moving

swiftly and ruthlessly to cut the Labour Party's trade union connections, which could spell bankruptcy for our party.

'In all our localities attacks abound on local government democracy and independence, on general welfare provision, and on the NGS.

'Meantime deployment of cruise at Greenham, and the expan-

sion of the American bases in Britain are imposed on us with a brutal disregard for public preference and national sovereignty.

'It is more than ever necessary that CLP activists gather together to exchange experiences and agree practical plans.'

Constituencies are invited to send up to four delegates. Information has already been circulated to constituency secretaries.

More details are available from Tony Simpson, 26 Rockingham Grove, Bingham, Nottingham, NG13 8RY.

Back-door expulsions in Yardley

LAST SUMMER five people were excluded from membership of the Acocks Green branch of Yardley Labour Party in Birmingham. Three were already party members transferring from elsewhere; two were new applicants.

In the case of the three, Acocks Green's decision amounts to back-door expulsion, and is contrary to the rules of the Labour Party. Eight months later, the matter is still unresolved.

In January, the general committee of Yardley Labour Party finally adopted a procedure to sort out the mess: it will spend five minutes hearing a statement, followed by five minutes for discussion and questions, and five minutes for the GC to decide and vote! Is this 100-mile-an-hour democracy, or does it represent a shabby attempt to dispose of a problem that won't go away?

The reasons for the five's exclusion are equally shabby. They are accused of espousing 'subversive'

left-wing causes like Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and being seen in a socialist bookshop.

In other words, the case is based on rumour and innuendo. Most vile of all is that the main crime of one of the women appears to be her relationship with one of the men.

February's branch meeting refused to con-

sider a motion of no confidence in the membership secretary and censure of the branch officers for their handling of the affair.

It was ruled that a two-thirds majority was needed to decide to discuss the resolution. Copies of standing orders were not forthcoming, despite

repeated requests.

Although this vote was lost, support for the five is growing. The constituency meeting will be considering the matter at the end of this month.

This is one of the clearest examples to date of a witch hunt of ideas — it must be fought with the greatest vigour.



John Golding (right) — peace was the last thing on his mind

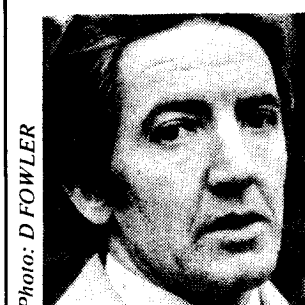


Photo: D FOWLER

Dennis Skinner

The prime minister is always prattling on about freedoms. Today's debate is about an extremely important freedom. It concerns the 700 people who die each year as a result of industrial accidents. It is about the 275,000 people, on average, who suffer serious injury as a result of work. It is about the 900 who die each year as a result of industrial disease.

They can be seen in the Welsh valleys, the coalfields and the textile areas. They suffer from asbestiosis and other diseases of the lung. They can be seen leaning over walls having managed to stagger 20 yards, their hollow chests coughing up their lungs. They are casualties of the arduous conditions in which they have to work.

People who work in the new technologies such as the chemical based industries have fingers that are wasting away as a result of the cancer inducing substances with which they have worked and which have gradually permeated their bodies.

The Health and Safety Executive needs only a few million pounds to start with on top of the

View from



Westminster

More money needed for Health and Safety

By Dennis Skinner (MP for Bolsover)

On 3 February Dennis Skinner moved a private Members' motion in the Commons condemning the government's lack of finance for the Health and Safety executive. We reproduce below some comments from his speech.

£85 million it now has. The government are spending £18,000 million to finance the dole queue. They say there is

no money in the country when there is all that waste of talent and resources. The latest estimate

for Trident is £12,000 million. The government are spending all that to keep Ronald Reagan happy and to provide additional work in the run up to his election, before the boom comes to a halt and we come into the biggest economic crisis that this country or the western world have ever faced.

Of course there is plenty of money in this country. The carpet in the House of Commons costs £24 per square yard, yet we are told there is no money in this country. I am told that the Duke of Devonshire has now organised his taxes so that his group does not pay any, so there must be plenty of money about.

The prime minister has had £1.5 million spent on the tax-payer on all the gallivanting trips abroad. So of course there is plenty of money to finance the Health and Safety Executive.

Some of the fines imposed on those who went to defend the NGA on the picket line were greater than those paid as a result of prosecutions (of employers) after people had been killed at work.

In the pits, mines and quarries the number of inspectors has decreased by 19 since 1980.

One might ask why we have had all these government cuts. The answer is simple. The government intend to give those who support the Tory party a better chance to exploit the workers.

Reproduced by permission of Dennis Skinner

Defending

Tories a

the

GLC

THE FIGHT AGAINST Tory plans to abolish local services and local democracy could unleash the biggest political battle yet against the Thatcher government. It certainly deserves to be. The government proposals add up to political and economic assault on the gains of working people as severe as anything done so far.

The stakes are high. Thousands of services and jobs are at risk, along with the very fabric of city life. If Labour leaders at Westminster and in the town halls give in without a fight, people will despair and Thatcherism will get stronger.

The Tories are attacking on two fronts. The first is rate capping. This gives the government power to fix a minimum level of spending for each council in the country, starting with the dozen or so at the top of their 'hit list'. Any rate levied above the amount needed to pay for permitted spending would be illegal. This would lead to massive cuts in jobs and services.

By Steve Fisher

The idea is that fixing spending levels for 'hit list' councils will intimidate others into cutting their spending down to government limits. If this failed, the government would use the reserve powers of the bill to 'cap the rates' for every council in the country — a prospect that frightens even Tory councils.

The government is doing this because its previous policy failed. The original idea — made law in 1980 and 1982 — was that councils would be made to toe the Tory line by the threat of government grant cuts to match or even exceed 'excess' spending. Over spending fell entirely on the rates, to the point where each pound of excess spending added £2 or £3 to the sum to be raised from rates.

The Tories hoped voters would turn against Labour councils refusing to carry out cuts, or that fear of this happening would force Labour councils to do the Tories' dirty work.

Some argued that Labour councils should say not to cuts and rate rises. They should refuse to implement the Tory laws, and challenge the state. But even the more left councils refused to do this, claiming they would be isolated. Nobody would give a lead.

Some councils did cut, others raised big rates. But neither pleased the Tories. The so-called 'big spending' councils — those in the inner cities with the worst problems — put up the rates



John McDonnell

ministration will be refusing to cooperate, which will put us outside the law. But I don't envisage a single Labour member will collaborate.

The legislation means bringing the GLC to an end in April 1985. A body of nominated councillors from the London boroughs would then administer the GLC's services for a 2 month period, transferring GLC powers to the boroughs and quangos. I should think that the great majority of Labour boroughs will refuse to participate. It would mean administering cuts of between £3-400 million. No Labour borough could carry out that level of cuts.

With the exception of Liverpool, the Tories' rate capping proposals won't hit most councils till next April, when they'll be forced into direct confrontation with the government. There will be no option but a united front. At the same time the GLC will be facing abolition and refusing to cooperate.

The Labour Party must take a firm stand at this year's annual conference. It must give a lead to the National Executive Committee and the Parliamentary Labour Party. The role played so far by Neil Kinnock and John Cunningham, shadow spokesperson on the environment, has been supportive in terms of parliamentary performance. But they have failed to effectively stimulate grass root activity. Now we need firm regional and national conference decisions to commit the Labour

The 24 January demonstration was a remarkable success. The unions came out, and so did a number of community groups dependent on the GLC. (Over 1000 voluntary organisations will go to the wall if the GLC is abolished.) At the end of the day we'll win the campaign by a combination of lobbying and industrial action.

Local

Through their annual conferences, local government unions are now committed to a policy of non-cooperation. We're hoping to see a series of disputes between the government and workers in the GLC, London Transport and the boroughs. They'll be saying they won't accept the transfer of powers because it means an increased workload for them and cuts in services. It's not up to the GLC's elected members to dictate industrial action. But we've liaised closely with our own GLC unions and provided whatever support and assistance they've demanded.

The critical stage for industrial action will be in October-November, when the abolition and transfer of powers goes through. We're almost certain now that it will contain a legal demand that members and staff collaborate in this. The unions have taken a firm stand. And the Labour ad-

Joint
action
will stop
abolition

JOHN McDONNELL is the GLC Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee. That puts him in the forefront of the fight to stop the abolition of the GLC. He explained his strategy to Socialist Action, and gave his views on how to win the campaign.

The campaign to save the GLC is three pronged. First we concentrated on disseminating information to the 'opinion formers' — MPs and the media. We put across our arguments against abolition by explaining Londoners' loss of their voting rights and what cuts in services will result from the transfer of their functions to non-elected quangos. We've largely won the argument in the media — a media that's been solidly against us since 1981.

Now, the second stage is to stimulate a grass roots campaign which focuses Londoners' anger on those responsible for the decision. We've set up borough-based 'Save the GLC' campaigns. And we expect them to be at their height when the Paving Bill is published in March or April. This is the legislation which stops next year's elections and abolishes the GLC, transferring its powers to the London boroughs and the quangos (unelected 'joint boards').

Activities are planned throughout March. We'll launch a round-London tour by Ken Livingstone, with public meetings, and a travelling exhibition. Other imaginative events will take place: street theatres, sit-ins, sing-alongs, and high-jacking London transport buses. The climax of all this activity is a march from Hyde Park, on 15 March, against the abolition of the GLC and the metropolitan counties, and against rate capping. This will bring the campaigns together nationally.

The third prong of our campaign is making the recipients of services with the providers of services — that is, bringing together local people and their organisations with the trade union movement. This is what we did during the 'Fares Fair' campaign.

We've lobbied national trade union leaders. And we've also established links with the South East Region TUC and the Greater London Association of Trades Councils. The GLC unions have launched their own 'Defend London' campaign, which is seeking to link up with other trade unions outside local government.

Build for Democracy

Attack on two fronts

rather than make cuts. Sufficient Labour voters seemed to accept that strategy for the Labour administrations to keep control.

This annoyed the Tories. First, it meant services and jobs were not cut as much as they wanted. And the idea of an alternative to Thatcher was preserved. Second, no matter how much rates were resented by working class rate-payers, they were resented more by businesses, which provides about 60 per cent of the money raised in rates. True, rates are only a small proportion (some two or three per cent) of all business costs. But they are the only tax that businesses can't get out of paying.

The Tories claim their rate-capping bill will relieve the rate burden resulting from 'over-spending' councils. This is a lie. It is the government that has been responsible for raising rates by cutting council's Rate Support Grant, from 60 per cent of council spending when it was first introduced in 1979 down to 50 per cent now.

Over the country, local government spending has not gone up. It is central government spending which has arisen. The Tories are cutting grants to local government to pay for tax cuts for the rich, nuclear weapons, and the cost of keeping millions on the dole. Since 1978-9 central government has increased its spending by 10 per cent in cash terms (without allowing for inflation). In the same period, local government spending has increased only 80 per cent. But central government has increased its taxes by only 94 per cent, while rates have gone up 125 per cent.

Given the choice, most people would rather see their money go on caring services, than bombs, forced unemployment and tax cuts for the rich. The government is shifting the burden of its policies onto the rates, to fool people into thinking that local government services are costing more.

Even bigger cuts than rate capping are on the way, with the abolition of the GLC and metropolitan (big city) councils. But abolishing the GLC and metropolitan councils isn't just about cuts. The reasons that lie behind this move is to make sure privatisation is rammed through, by means of the new quangos, and even possibly more important, is the fear of the political alternative represented by left Labour councils. You don't have to see Ken Livingstone as Labour's answer to Leon Trotsky to recognise his ability to get left ideas across to a mass audience. This is obviously intolerable to a government whose appeal rests on the idea that there is 'no alternative'.

When Neil Kinnock argues that Labour councils should stay within the law, he walks into Thatcher's trap. Instead of placing themselves alongside Thatcher as targets for the anger these attacks on local government will generate, Labour councils should be at the head of the fight against Tory cuts.

IMPACT OF ABOLITION ON THE BOROUGH RATES

A Labour Party report circulated at the recent local government conference in Nottingham shows that abolishing the GLC will have big ramifications for the rates levied by the London boroughs. Assuming that spending on GLC services transferred to the boroughs continue at the 1983-4 level, the figures show that London rate-payers will be far worse off. In addition, some of these councils are likely to be caught in the Tories' rate capping trap, which make 'over spending' illegal.

	Effect on borough rate in the £	Change in rate for GLC services
City of London	-7.0	-16
Greenwich	+17.0	+38
Islington	+17.6	+39
Southwark	+16.2	+36
Tower Hamlets	+15.8	+36
Wandsworth	+3.7	+8
Westminster	-5.1	-12
Barnet	-0.8	-2
Bexley	+6.7	+15
Bromley	+1.6	+4
Ealing	-2.8	-6
Haringey	+11.1	+25
Harrow	+4.4	+10
Merton	+6.8	+15
Newham	+8.2	+19
Richmond	+8.9	+20

These figures include the effect of the block grant distribution and the proposed extended London rate equalisation scheme.

THE TORY proposals to get rid of the GLC and the Metropolitan councils pose the labour movement with one of its biggest challenges for years. The attack on the GLC goes hand in hand with attacks on other levels of local government and is aimed at breaking any resistance to the Tory assault on local services, democracy and jobs.

For the Tories and the ruling class financial self-interest and political expediency fit nearly together on this issue. Simultaneously they will slash the £20 billion which local government spends each year, while undermining local government strongholds of the Labour Party. That is why stakes in this struggle are so high.

By P McDermott

The Tories are on very weak ground in pursuing this attack. Recent opinion polls have shown only 18 per cent of Londoners in favour of the abolition of the GLC, with a gigantic 60 per cent against. The labour movement is on strong ground in opposing the Tories — it is defending local democracy and jobs and services.

But the fight against the Tories' abolition proposals can only be carried through if there is a willingness to defy the law. The Tories have made it crystal clear that they intend to make com-

pliance with transfer of services to local boroughs compulsory. Non-cooperation will, by definition, be illegal.

Labour councils will only be in a position to defy the law if they build joint campaigns with the unions on a non-compliance basis from the start.

There is no alternative. As David Blunkett put it: 'Labour councils cannot wait, crouching behind dustbins, hoping that someone will bail us out after a general election'.

In the end only massive industrial action will stop the Tories. This action will have to base itself on wide political support within the community, and in the broader labour movement. Organised workers outside local government must be involved from the start.

The responsibility for that fight lies with the unions and the GLC. In London, the fight is divided up between a host of separate campaigns. Each union or sector is fighting its own corner. Thus teachers fight to save ILEA, transport workers to save LT and local government workers try to save the GLC.

These separate campaigns must be brought together. The trade union leaders are hoping to avoid a head on confrontation with the Tories and dividing the campaign fits this policy. A conference of the labour movement in London, which will draw in the unions and the LP to build united action to defend the GLC is therefore sorely needed.



Defy the law!

The body which has the widest support in the community, and the greatest support in the unions, is the Labour GLC. The Labour Group should commit itself to unifying the struggle. Lobbying the Commons and the Lords, linking with Tory wets and the SDP will not stop the Tories.

The Labour Group must base itself on mass industrial action and the active support of the wider community bringing together the political and industrial sides of the fight is crucial to success.

The GLC and the unions should demand that the Tories go to the voters of London with their proposals. If they do not — and of course they won't — the GLC, the unions and the community groups should organise their own referendum in May '85, when the GLC

elections will be abolished.

Such a referendum would be an ideal preparation for mass action and defiance of the law, with the labour movement seen to be representing the majority of Londoners and armed with a referendum majority to take action.



Defiance Day - 29 March

Under Fire

THERE'S AN idea that war correspondents and photographers should just write their stories or shoot their film and stay neutral.

Well John Reed with his two books: *Insurgent Mexico* and *Ten Days That Shook the World* shot holes in that theory. How the hell you can be neutral about revolutions I'll never know. It is clear that the directors and writers of the film *Under Fire* are also not too sold on the idea of media neutrality.

The film tells the story of a freelance photographer played by Nick Nolte, a radio reporter — Joanna Cassidy and a war correspondent played by Gene Hackman of *French Connection* fame when they go to Nicaragua. At first Nolte is your non-committed camera man saying: 'I don't take sides; I take pictures.' But Nicaragua changes that. He and Joanna Cassidy see an insurgent people fighting for the right to live without fear and exploitation.

Against the people are men like the American PR man who works for Somoza — every time he opens his mouth you can hear the cash register tinkle. He justifies his boss by saying 'There are

fascists, and fascists.' Then there is the French businessman Jazy who is a go-between for the CIA and the regime, and in the interests of 'public order' can fix the odd execution — on the side of course and very discreet.

Reviewed by
Bob Pennington

Nolte and Cassidy begin to lose their neutrality. He even agrees to take a picture of Rafael a dead Sandinista leader which makes him look alive thus disproving a Somoza claim he is dead. The photographer says 'once in a while one has to change history rather than just recording it.' This is just before the successful storming of Managua by the rebel army.

Although the film is on the side of the rebels it never descends into crude propagandism. It lets the events tell their own story. When the *guardia* shoot down Gene Hackman in cold blood you draw your own conclusions that a



regime of gangsters needs a guardia to thugs to run the country.

The rebels come across as ordinary people and the script writers have done us all a service by not providing a single one of them

with an heroic marxist speech. Even when the film reaches its inspiring and moving end where the people celebrate with their Sandinista flags and sing their songs we are spared a Soviet-film style peroration.

Because it combines the story of a revolutionary struggle with a believable and exciting script it will attract and please an audience much wider than us committed lefties. That can only be to the good.

Marshall's big score

Reviewed by Peter Purton

THE LAST year has seen a big resurgence of gay writing, some very good, some pretty indifferent. Most of it has a shared common feature, that of a comfortable, middle class background for its main characters.

This little story is different, and is worth reading if only for the rarity of insights it gives into lives of working class male gays and the gay male 'scene'. The story line is simple, tracing the relationship between a young white gay man with a black sailor from its start as a casual pick-up to its gradual collapse a couple of years later.

Rather

The strength of the tale is the straightforwardness with which it raises the problems and joys of passion, possessiveness, promiscuity and poverty

on the male gay scene in Manchester and London, interlinked with themes of racism, housing problems and a hostile world.

Strength

These are the external pressures, rather than a repressive state and police, which weigh down on and help to distort the world of the gay male ghetto. At the end, the chief protagonist has moved from idealism to being a survivor and the passage is achieved through writing which, if it sometimes lacks polish, at least carries through the conviction of raw experience.

Not a masterpiece, but a good read, and certainly an opportunity for non-gay socialists to learn something new.

Marshall's Big Score
John Gowing
Commonword Press, 61
Bloom St, Manchester.
£1.20 plus 35p postage.

DIARY

(These listings are free for all major labour movement and campaign activities — up to a maximum of 50 words. 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).

Labour Movement

- **Broad Left Organising Conference** Octagon Centre, Western Bank, Sheffield, Sat 24 March 11-5.30. Credentials from George Williamson, 11 Sutton Place London E9 6EH.
- **Womens Action Committee** half day conference, Sat 25 January, 2-6pm, Sidney Building, All Saints, Oxford Rd, Manchester. 'Labour Women — Action in Manchester', speakers Jo Richardson MP, Ann Pettifor. Workshops, creche. Write to WAC, 86 Watts St Manchester 19.
- **Islington Labour Briefing meeting.** 'Should Labour councils raise rates?' Town Hall, ctee room 4, Friday 17 Feb 7.45.

- **Briefing Women** discuss preparation of 'Labour Women and Feminism' forum. A Womens Place, Hungerford House, Embankment, London. Sun 26 Feb, 2pm.
- **Womens Action Committee** open meeting on womens slate for LP. Sat 17 March, 2pm County Hall, London.

- **Anti-cuts campaigns**
- **London Health Service Campaign.** 34 Dalston Lane, London E8 3AZ 01-249 8086.

- **Disarmament**
- **Youth CND conference** 18-19 Feb, Kingsway Princeton College, London N1, 9.30 am.
- **Trade Union CND AGM,** Sat 25 Feb. Details from TUCND, 11 Goodwin St, London N4.
- **Labour and NATO** Labour Briefing discussion conference. Sat 24 March, 10.30-5pm County Hall, London.

- **Ireland**
- **Labour and Ireland** day school for budding writers, workshops with trained journalists. London, Feb or March, £1. Write to Labour and Ireland, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.
- **International Womens Day** delegation to Belfast. March 9-12, women only delegation and mixed picket of Armagh Jail. Information from London Armagh Group, 374 Gray's Inn Rd WC1.

International

- **Sri Lankan Research & Information Group** will provide speakers on the current situation there for meetings. Write to 9 Grays Inn Buildings, London EC1.
- **From War in the Third World to the Third World War** — new pamphlet published by El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, 50p. Order from ELSSOC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1 01-359 3976. ELSSOC have also produced a 1984 calendar showing scenes from life in the liberated zones, £3 from same address.
- **Chilean art 10 years** of struggle. Exhibition at Pentonville Gallery, 47 Lams Conduit St, Holborn London WC1, 25 Jan-18 Feb, 11-6.30.
- **Sponsored day for El Salvador** 24 March. Day of national activities on anniversary of Archbishop Romero's assassination. Details from ELSSOC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.
- **Victor Jara festival** Royal Festival Hall, Fri 2 March, 7.30, featuring Inti Illimani, Isabel Parra, Angel Parra, Santiago Del Nuevo Extremo from Chile. Tickets from Chile Solidarity, 129 Seven Sisters Rd, London N7, tel. 272 4298.
- **Support the Tamil people** Rally 18 Feb, Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London, 7-10pm. Food available, entrance £1.50, £1 unemployed. Eelam

THE

For Marxist books, posters, postcards, badges Feminist literature

London 328 Upper St. London N1
telephone 01-226 0571
Open — Mon, Tues, Sat, 10-6 Wed 12-7
Thur, Fri, 11-7.
Birmingham 137 Digbeth Birmingham B5
telephone (021) 643-5904
Open — Mon-Sat 10-6 Closed Wed.
Mail Order Service — Add 20% for P&P

Advertisement

Solidarity Campaign PO Box 318 London NW1.

25 Years of the Cuban Revolution

- **Britain-Cuba Resource Centre** Information about activities, subs to Granma weekly review and newsletters from 29 Islington Park St, London N1.
- **Womens study tour of Cuba** 4-20 April, information from BCRC, 29 Islington Park St, London N1.

Civil Rights

- **Action Group on Immigration and Nationality** Conference on the case for reform of the law, Sat 24 March, 10-4.30, AUEW House, 43 The Crescent, Salford.

Lesbian & Gay Liberation

- **London Labour Campaign for Gay Rights** new office at 39 Chippenham Rd, W9 2AH 01-286 9692, open Tues-Thur 11am-7pm. (Westbourne Grove tube. Bad access, help available).
- **Labour Movement Lesbians** is a new organisation of lesbians in the labour movement to support each other and

BROADSIDE theatre

"BRITS"

is looking for male and female performers and musicians of all races for a new play about imperialism and racism.

We are a part-time socialist and feminist collective. At present we can only pay expenses.

Please write giving full details to: 20 Pamela House, Haggerston Road, London E8

organise initiatives on issues that affect lesbians. Further information from Sarah c/o Feminist Library, Hungerford House, Victoria Embk, London WC2.

Miscellaneous

- **GLC workshops** Employment and training for the future. 23 Feb Cooperatives. Black Women's Centre Brixton, 41A Stockwell Green, London, SW9, 7-9.30 pm. 8 March practical workshops

for women on computer use. Room 97 County Hall. 22 March Migrants in the NHS, County Hall. 5 April Migrants, black women and trade unions, County Hall.

Abortion Rights and Facilities Conference University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1 25 February 1984. 10-5 Registration from NAC, 47 Waldrum Park Rd, London SE 23.

Advertisement

New pamphlet: Politics in the 1980's — The British Crisis.

Articles reprinted from *Socialist Action* and *International* — John Ross, British politics in the 1980's; Alan Freeman, How Labour Can Win; Steve Marks, the 1983 Election; John Ross, Facing 1984; Alan Freeman, Rebuilding the Labour Party. Available from PO Box 50 London N1, price 35p, (plus 16p, p/p).

Advertisement

INTERNATIONAL

November-December issue out now
Price 75p

In this issue:
Andrew Gamble on the 'special relationship' between Britain and the States
Ken Livingstone, on a strategy for the Labour left
John Ross, on why the left must reject unity with European imperialism against America
Chris Palmer on Grenada
Jude Woodward on sectarianism towards women plus reviews

Order from *The Other Bookshops, 329 Upper St, London N1* or *137 Digbeth, Birmingham.*

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

.....

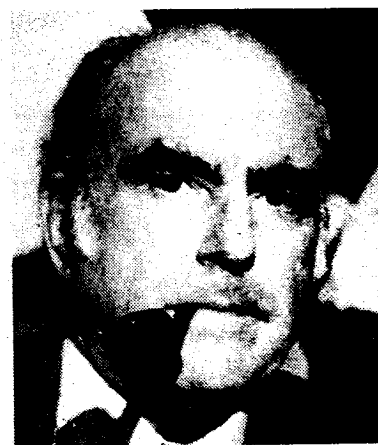
Tel

Age Union/CLP (if any)

Fighting for a socialist Europe



Richard Balfe



Mitterrand (France) and Papandreou (Greece) lead Socialist parties already in. Will they support their colleagues Gonzalez (Spain) and Soares (Portugal) in their applications for EEC membership?

BETWEEN NOW and the Euro-elections on 14 June, Socialist Action will open our pages to the debate inside the labour movement on what attitude socialists should take towards the Common Market. RICHARD BALFE, Member of the European Parliament for London South Inner, kicks off with his argument that socialists should use the EEC and its institutions as yet another means of fighting for socialism internationally and combatting the Tories in Britain.

THE COMMON MARKET is exactly what the name implies. It rests fairly on the capitalist principles of the free movement of goods, capital and labour. The Treaty of Rome says little and cares less for the aspirations of working people. But this should not cause us to turn our backs on either international socialism or the need to fight for the best deal we can get whilst we remain in the European Economic Community.

Set up in 1956 the EEC was tailored to suit the needs of its original six members. A free industrial market for Germany; an agriculture policy for France and Italy; and the protection afforded by a large trading bloc for Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg.



By Richard Balfe, MEP

Of the four countries who joined after the EEC was set up, only Ireland with its strong rural structure has fitted easily into the Common Market. Denmark, Britain and Greece have all had their difficulties. All retain a strong body of Socialist opinion which feels that market membership is a mistake.

Greece and Denmark being small countries have been easier to satisfy than Britain. Britain has undoubtedly done worst. Virtually every year that we have been in the EEC we have paid a large sum of money.

In addition, our trade balance has worsened. This is not to say that the major responsibility for the de-industrialisation of Britain does not rest with Mrs. Thatcher, but that EEC membership has also harmed our industry.

However, the debate about the EEC often resolves itself in the crude financial terms. Phrases like 'our money' recur without anyone questioning where our money goes.

The truth is that the money which comes back to Britain from the EEC has a marked tendency to go to farming and agricultural big business. In other words, the EEC redistributes from the shopper to the farmer.

Even Britain's rebate — all £457 million — should be kept in perspective. Compare it with the additional costs of the Falkland Islands. The *Evening Standard* (14 December, 1983) estimated that £624 million was spent in 1983; £682 million will be spent in 1984; and £552 million in 1985 — roughly £1 million per head for the 1800 people who live there.

The European elections on 14 June will be our first opportunity as a country to vote against Mrs Thatcher. Many people find the EEC boring. They even question the legitimacy of voting.

But the numbers voting are the same order as the GLC elections, and we are putting up a tremendous fight to maintain *that* body.



Chancellor Helmut Kohl an ally of Thatcher in Euro anti-working class alliance

General Elections will always poll highest. But no one challenges the validity of county councils or borough elections. Even Mrs. Thatcher has not yet challenged Ken Livingstone's position as Leader of the GLC.

We must be sure we fight the Euro-elections on the issues which effect working people. Almost every item in the supermarket is regulated or controlled by the Common Market in some way. Yet our food policy is in the hands of Tory farmers.

The Conservatives in the European Parliament are led by Sir Henry Plumb, who used to run the National Farmers Union. The Conservatives hold the chair of the powerful agricultural committee but they have been singularly ineffective in defending the interests of British consumers.

Unemployment has also grown in the last five years. Thirteen million people are now unemployed throughout the EEC. One million of these have been unemployed for over two years. Whilst some countries, notably France and Greece, have made efforts to tackle unemployment, it is obvious that the western economies are bound together and that the United States is the biggest influence.

Side

The fact that Thatcher and Kohl have chosen to side with President Reagan against the workers of Europe, has undermined any attempts to re-inflate and create jobs. America is borrowing from the west to finance its military budget. This is keeping our interest rates high and maintaining the recession.

The European Parliament is just one of the many forums socialists can use to campaign for a new industrial strategy. The parliament is often misunderstood. On the one hand people jeer at it for having no powers. Then they rail at it for blocking Britain's rebate.

The truth of the matter is that very few parliaments have powers. A determined prime minister can generally run a country with the assistance of a Cabinet.

The job of the European Parliament is to raise issues and begin debates at an international level. The socialists

in the European Parliament have campaigned effectively on a whole range of matters: the deployment of cruise and Pershing missiles, plastic bullets, Nicaragua and South America, and South Africa.

Within the powers afforded us, we have fought to reform the agricultural policy and — with the unanimous support of the TUC — to extend the rights of workers to more information and improved health and safety at work.

The Women's Committee has continued to fight for equal opportunities. Indeed this has been one of the few areas where a real advance has been achieved. The British government has the distinction of having been taken to the European Court of Justice on equal opportunity matters more often than any other government in the EEC.

The Euro-elections are part of the ongoing fight. Socialist politics is not about an election every five years. It is about a constant challenge to the establishment. Elections are just *one* way of maintaining that challenge.

We must use every forum available. We must try to turn every fight into a step along the road to the sort of socialist world we want to build.

Who pays, who gains: 1983

West Germany	-1,710
United Kingdom	-1,112
Belgium/Luxembourg	-231
France	-4
Denmark	+192
Netherlands	+217
Greece	+312
Rep. Ireland	+447
Italy	+830



The World Economic Crisis

Weekend conference on the world capitalist economy today.

with
Ernest Mandel

3/4 March, Caxton House, St John's Way, London N.19
Admission £2 a day, £3 for the whole weekend.
Tickets only from *International*, 328 Upper St, London N.1.

BLOC conference

Organising the left

THE TRADE UNION conference which the Broad Left Organising Committee has called for 24 March in Sheffield will be an important opportunity for the left in the unions to assess the stamped to the right led by the TUC.

Since the General Election in June '83 the right bureaucracy has strengthened its grip on the trade unions, and is moving to tighten its hold. So far, the left has failed to come to grips with this threat. The steps towards a 'new realism' in the *Strategy for the Future* document by Len Murray is not some minor tactical move by the TUC.

The betrayal of the NGA and the refusal to organise a fight over Cheltenham is not just one more typical sell-out in a long history of sell-outs.

The actions and policies of the TUC since June 1983 have been directed towards a fundamental restructuring of the British labour movement. Since 1979 defeats, recession and official misleadership has taken a heavy toll in the unions. Membership has fallen even more rapidly than unemployment has risen. The number of shop stewards has been halved. Strike days are in massive decline.

Few sections of workers are willing to take on the Tories in head on confrontation — a reluctance which will be increased by the NGA defeat. The slogan 'General Strike to kick out the Tories' is right now an ultra-left pipe dream. Even in unions like the NUM the left leadership is having difficulty in building opposition to the Tory attacks. In the TGWU the right are making gains, and may win the leadership.

Where broad lefts have won the leadership, in the now POEU and previously in the CPSA, they failed to turn these victories into real advance. The BLOC Conference must have a genuine discussion on these questions.

Any idea that this conference can be about removing the Tories and replacing them with a Labour government should be slung out of the

window. The struggles ahead are defensive struggles. They will need to deal both with the Tory attacks, and with the right wing. The left needs to counter the new realism of the right with a realism of its own.

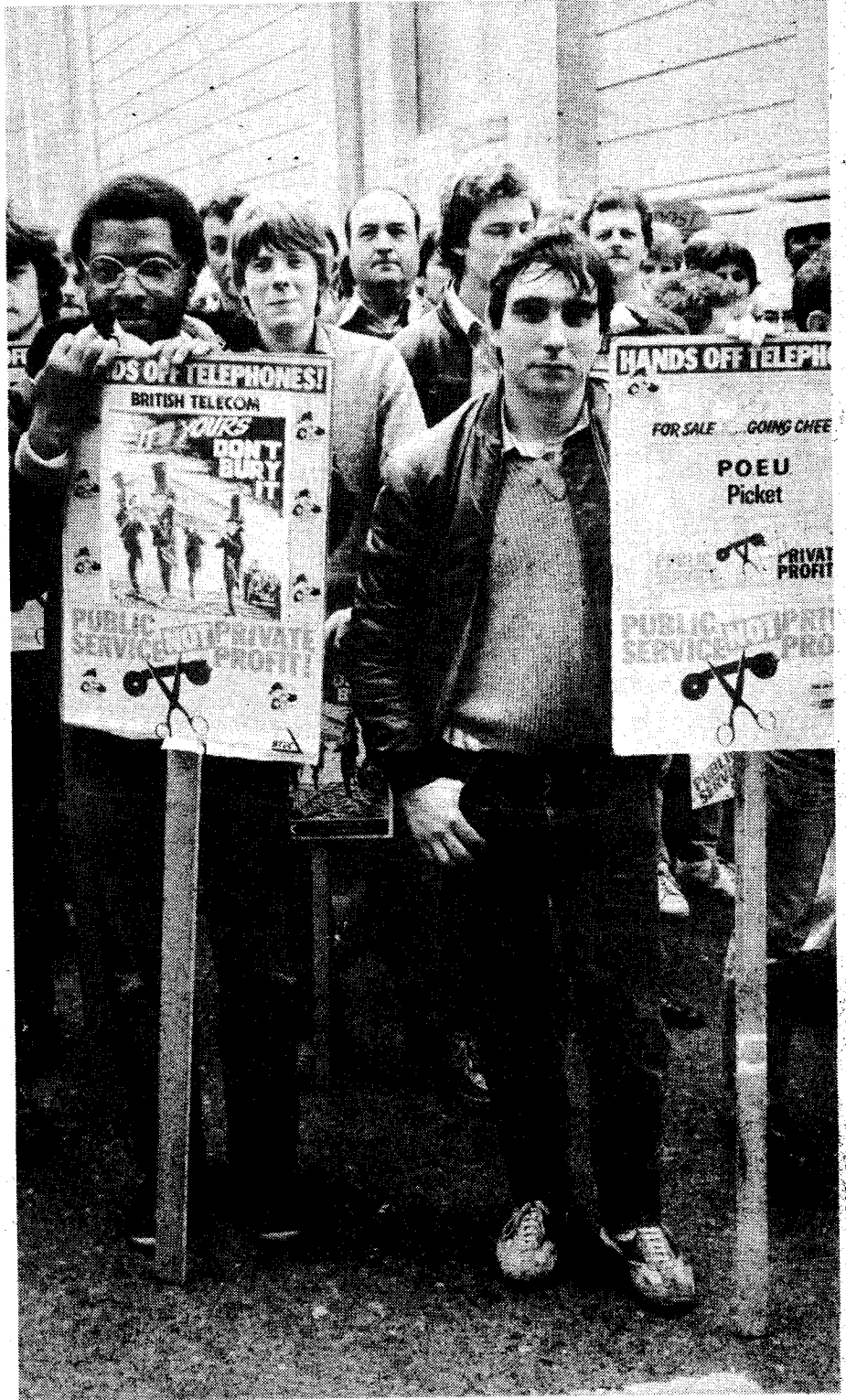
By Pat Hickey

The first thing to note is that the Tories, despite their big majority, do not have a popular majority — they were returned to power with only 42 per cent of the vote. On some of the issues which they are now trying to tackle they do not have mass support. One of these is the abolition of the GLC and the Metropolitan Authorities. Cheltenham is widely seen as an attack on democratic rights. A large part of the population is opposed to further attacks on the unions. But the Tories will press ahead with their plans. The weakening of the unions and the elimination of Labour as the main party of opposition is a central part of the plans of the ruling class.

If the British capitalist economy is to be saved, then the political and organisational weakening of the working class is essential. The policy of the right-wing leaders is to retreat before these attacks. The coalitionist line of the Eurocommunists and their allies helps to give political cover for the retreats of the right.

The right is organising to fight for their positions right from the top to the bottom of the labour movement. We must do likewise. The BLOC Conference offers an opportunity to begin the fight to organise the — very large — minority who oppose the surrender of the TUC leaders.

It will not be enough for the delegates at the BLOC Conference just to make anti-Tory speeches



spiced with rhetoric about general strikes. The Broad Left must put defence of the political levy along with defence of the GLC and the Metropolitan Councils to the fore when it discusses what to do in

the unions.

The left will not build a mass base in the unions just on sectoral issues. Such a movement will only emerge and grow into a powerful force which links the left in the unions and

the Labour Party if it takes up the main national political questions facing the labour movement.

The delegates to the BLOC Conference have the chance to start doing this.



Ireland — a key issue for Labour's international policy.

Weekend conference: British foreign policy

An open letter from Ken Coates (Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation)

THE ATTACK on detente, and the acute worsening of the arms race persuade us of the need to develop a more specific approach to an alternative foreign policy as well as continuing work for ultimate non-alignment.

The European Nuclear Disarmament Conventions, first in Brussels and then in Berlin, have helped arouse a European-wide discussion on the implications of the bloc-division of Europe, as well as much close communication between peace movements.

Here in Britain, the Labour Party is for the simultaneous dissolution of both NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organisation. CND, for its part has flatly opposed British membership of NATO since the early 1960s.

Recent events make it necessary to look again at this entanglement. Although there have in the past been frequent failures of communication between the United States and its allies, it is doubtful whether there has ever been so many failures as have taken place during the last months.

The invasion of Grenada was a particular affront even to conservative opinion in Britain. All over Europe there is widespread support for the Sandinista government of Nicaragua but in spite of specific appeals from such statesmen as Willy Brandt, an open CIA war has been carried on against this tiny country.

The confrontation in the Middle East is especially dangerous, and it is quite clear that the American decision to

carry through direct attacks on Syrian forces was announced without any prior discussion, to the consternation of the European allies.

War

Unfortunately, there are, around the world, numerous other war zones in which this kind of forward policy by the United States' government could easily drag those associated with it into conflicts they do not want. As the new missiles are placed in Western and Eastern Europe, it is quite clear that the main danger to this continent is that war could spread from one of these other zones of battle.

It is for this reason that we are proposing a weekend study conference on British Foreign Policy, in an attempt to create workshops which can help a realistic policy for greater independence. This conference will be held at Nottingham University on Saturday 14 April and Sunday 15 April, 1984.

Among those participating will be Tony Benn, Stuart Holland, and Michael Meacher from the Labour Party, and leaders of the European peace movement as well as trade union disarmament campaigners.

The cost of participating in the Conference will be £5. Those who wish to reserve overnight accommodation in the University, with meals included, may do so at a further cost of £20.

Further details can be obtained from the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, Bertrand Russell House, Gamble Street, Nottingham, NG7 4ET.

Pain in the AES

THE TALE of the mis-design of the water pumps shows only too well how easy it is for men to perceive the world from their viewpoint. This fact is being made strongly at the moment about the Great Debate of 'why Labour lost: what it is and how to fight it'.

From the Alternative Economic Strategy to Farewell to the Lads and the proudly unhouse-trained Kinnock, men have never discussed themselves so much. Of course, they do tack women on to their great pronouncements about the world, the universe and everything, if only to get the boring old feminists to leave them alone.

But while the 'chewy' left wallows in masculine melancholy, a new leadership is beginning to emerge from the shadows of the patriarchy. A leadership which seeks to defend to the last the marxist orthodoxy of the male point of view.

It is in this overall framework (sic) that I bring you two examples of Marxism for Men.

Militant comrades aren't renowned for their anti-sexism but one of them went a little too far at Hounslow's Local Government Conference on rates and cuts last Saturday. While explaining how Liverpool council showed the way forward, he said that Hounslow councillors should follow Liver-



pool's example and 'sign over all their property to their wives in case it was seized'!

Meanwhile, in the latest issue of *New Socialist* Paul Foot has written a vitriolic review of Dave Edgar's play 'Maydays'. But Paul also reveals something of the views of the SWP when

he writes: 'When revolutionaries leave their revolutionary parties, they do not go to "traditionalist Toryism". They go to the Labour Party or more probably into organisations which fight for single issues such as nuclear disarmament or women's liberation'.

North of Ireland delegation

FOR International Women's Day in 1984 the London Armagh Group are organising a weekend delegation to Belfast and Derry, including a picket of Armagh, the women's prison.

The delegation will leave on Friday 9 March and return on the Monday, at a total cost of £50. Registration must be completed by 25 February. Write to the London Armagh Group, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1 or phone Isabel or Maggie on 01-289 3878 (days).

Occupation against council cuts

TWO DAYCARE nurseries in the Wakefield district have been occupied since Christmas by parents and children to prevent closure. This bold act has put them in the forefront of the fight against cuts in the district and has sent shock waves through the local labour movement.

The chairperson of Wakefield District Council is Sir Jack Smart — Labour leader of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities. On 16 November, without any prior discussion, he announced to the council's Labour group a draconian package of £4.5 million cuts — much to the alarm of 11 left councillors.

But the majority were happy to pass these cuts on the nod — a package which includes closures of libraries, nurseries and old

peoples' homes, rises in school meals charges and redundancies.

By Matthew Creighton

The most drastic measures were the closure of an old people's home and of the only two daycare nurseries in the district, one at Wakefield and one at South Kirby. These are not child-minding units. They cater for children and parents

under severe stress.

Some of the children have suffered non-accidental injury and most need specialised and dedicated care. When the closures went ahead — despite a vigorous public campaign — the parents, including many single mothers, occupied.

They have the support of local trade unionists, the NUPE and NALGO branches concerned, local Labour Party members and councillors. The occupations provide a vital focus for local opposition to the cuts and for the wave of disgust at the way in which leading councillors have carried them out.

Their attitude to

democracy is exposed by the way they forced a decision on the Labour Group only hours after the cuts were first proposed. Their lack of concern for the needs of parents and children is shown by their failure to obtain a report on the kind of cases dealt with by the nurseries. It took eight weeks after the closure decision for entirely inadequate alternatives to come forward.

It has become clear that part of the reason for the closures is the value of the nursery sites if sold to private developers — the Wakefield site for housing and South Kirby site for industry as part of the Langthwaite Grange enterprise zone.

Only a year or two since Sir Jack and his allies commanded regular and large majorities on the

District Labour Party, the same body passed an overwhelming vote against cuts and the nursery closures.

When these votes were ignored by the Labour Group, the DLP went on to pass a vote of no confidence in them by a similar majority.

One of the most powerful arguments in the Labour movement has been that Wakefield's cuts package directly contradicts the Labour Party NEC's policies and advice to Labour Groups. Sir Jack, being Labour leader of the AMA has a particular responsibility to observe this but so far the Tories have come off pretty lightly.

The Labour left's campaign should now look outwards rather than focussing just on votes at the DLP.



Photomontage: CATH TATE

Labour councillors give Thatcher an easy time

Left Labour council attacks workforce

ON FRIDAY 10 February 1000 council building workers in Hackney, East London packed into a local hall to hear shop stewards describe latest events in their clash with the local Labour council.

The issues raised are extremely serious for the labour movement. Local workers feel that the council has acted in an anti-working class way — including the use of force to evict workers occupying one of the council's properties.

While this may not be unusual in one of Labour's old 'rotten boroughs', Hackney has recently been controlled by the new breed of young Labour leftwingers.

In mid January about one hundred building workers of the Direct Labour Organisation and tenants occupied the St John's Area Housing Base and began to work on much needed repairs to the estate.

They were protesting at the council's privatisation through sub-contracting, its failure to provide a proper repair service for tenants and to force it to implement Manifesto pledges on decentralisation.

The council leaders immediately stopped the wages of the shop stewards involved in the work-in. A week later, another occupation at the Bowling Green Walk Supply Depot was ended when senior management used a sledge hammer to break down the door in a dawn raid.

Jim Wilson, Secretary of Hackney NALGO

which supported the occupations wrote to council leader, Anthony Kendall, deploring these 'anti-trade union tactics' and demanding that the council use 'negotiation not confrontation to end the dispute'.

By Frank Gorton (Hackney North and Stoke Newington Labour Party, trade union liaison officer)

The council then proceeded to place a new set of demands on the workforce including the demand for sworn affidavits from the workers stating what work had been done during the period of the occupation, and asking the TGWU and UCATT to issue councillors with an indemnity against surcharge before they would pay the workforce.

As Rob Jones, Hackney South trade



Kingsmead, one of Hackney council's housing estates

union liaison officer told the mass meeting: 'Asking the workforce to indemnify the council against surcharge is no different than what was done with the Taff-Vale judgement, and more recently the NGA dispute in making the trade unions financially responsible for the consequences of an industrial dispute.'

It is clear that the coun-

cil is out of step with the local Labour Parties who have issued statements of support for the council workers, along with the tenants associations and the town hall trade unions. The feeling is that the council will have to be brought into line quickly if it wants the support of its own workforce in the battle with the Tories over rate capping.

This point was emphasised by the shop stewards who called on the workers to gear up the union at its base to prepare for the next stage of the fight with the council. They were urged to join local Labour Parties and fight within them to force the council to honour its commitment to the needs of its workforce and tenants.

Rabbit squad picket in Brum

A PICKET was mounted on 7 February outside Washwood Heath dole office in Birmingham. Over fifty claimants turned out, who are members of the Unemployed Workers Association. They were joined by members of the Society of Civil and Public Servants and the Civil and Public Service Association.

They were protesting against the 'Rabbit Squad', the Regional Benefit Investigation Team who have been looking at alleged benefit fraud since early January.

The CPSA and SCPS have refused to cooperate with the Rabbit Squad which has not been doing too well as a result.

Previous occupation, age, sex or race can be enough for a claimant to become a target for the squad. Pat Lavery, a CPSA official explained, 'The Rabbits' tactics could frighten off genuine

claimants. They cause unnecessary tension between claimants and staff. Welfare rights groups are having to help people harassed and intimidated by the squad'.

By Bob Smith and George Wright

Their aim is to persuade people to withdraw claims, even if there is no positive evidence of fraud. They operate on a cost effective basis. So reality is not important to these

'investigators' recruited on a temporary promotion basis.

A thousand extra staff in Customs and Excise could bring in £100 million a year in lost value added tax alone. But of course the Tories are more interested in making out-casts of the four million 'scroungers' on the dole. A blind eye is turned to the real scroungers of big business.

When the Rabbit Squad move to Chelmsley Wood they will get a 'warm welcome'. This is near Birmingham Airport, where 12,500 'scroungers' recently applied for 60 unskilled, low-paid jobs.

• Further information, contact Birmingham Unemployed Workers Association, tel. 236 2716.

Sixteen year old dies in acid vat

EARLY on Tuesday morning, 7 February, Charles Tyrer of Kingstanding, Birmingham was found lying face down, half buried in sludge at the bottom of a six foot deep acid vat. He was sixteen years old.

Six firefighters, an ambulance driver and a worker who tried to revive the body needed hospital treatment for acid burns. The tank contained methylene chloride, used for industrial paint stripping.

Charles Tyrer had joined Alustrip Nechells, Birmingham as a general labourer two months ago. He was working nights illegally — according to the Factory Act, eighteen is the minimum age for nightwork.

This exposes the contempt for health and safety legislation, even from quite large firms.

Tory union bashing and the pathetic failure of the TUC to back struggles for basic union rights make young people particularly vulnerable.

The record of the Manpower Services Commission is no better. So far nineteen young people have died on their schemes — the Youth Opportunities and Youth Training Schemes, where youth get no opportunities and

little training.

By Bob Smith (Birmingham Unemployed Workers Association)

On Saturday 11 February, the Birmingham Trade Union Resource Centre held a demonstration of 200 young people opposed to YTS. Dave Nellist MP addressed the rally and raised the death of Charles Tyrer.

The Trainee Action Group is holding a meeting on young workers' rights on Saturday 25 February. This will take place at the Trade Union Resource Centre — 77 Frederick Street, Hockley, Birmingham — at 12 noon and is open to all young workers.

German social democrats support 35-hour week

WILLY BRANDT, chair of the West German Social Democratic Party (SPD), last week launched the party's campaign for a 35-hour week. The SPD leaders argue that the 40-hour week is 'untenable' and should be replaced over a number of years with the 35-hour week.

During this period, they argue, wage claims should be held down to help finance the reduction in the working week.

By contrast, the giant IG Metall union has demanded a 35-hour week with no loss of pay. It has let it be known that it has assembled a 'war chest' in case a prolonged strike for this demand takes place.

Socialist ACTION

CHERNENKO: SAME AS BEFORE

'I AM THE victim of power struggles at the top. If Andropov had not won out in the struggle to succeed Brezhnev, nothing that I had been doing would have attracted displeasure or been taken as unusual.' With these words, the former director of Gastronom One ended his final plea to a Moscow court last year.

The director was charged with corruption in a case that stretched beyond the luxury Moscow food store itself, into the heart of the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party. The Director's pathetic plea fell on deaf ears and he was sentenced to death for economic crimes against the state.

Is it any wonder that such friends of the Gastronom director as Moscow party boss and politburo member Victor Grishin lobbied feverishly for Constantin Chernenko to take over as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party? Behind the official facade of mourning and solemn music following Andropov's death, the entire Brezhnevite mafia will have been revelling in gastronomic feasts to celebrate the end of a threat far more menacing to them than the fearsome US arms build-up that is

frightening the mass of Soviet citizens.

By Oliver MacDonald

Whatever else may be said about previous leaders of the Soviet Communist Party, they differed from Chernenko in one significant respect. They were not nonentities. Chernenko was picked up by Brezhnev at the start of the 1950s in Moldavia, the Western republic which the Soviet Union had re-annexed from Rumania at the end of the war. Chernenko was a party secretary there who ingratiated himself with Brezhnev to such an extent that he became part of the latter's retinue.

By the end of the 1950s Chernenko was running Brezhnev's own personal secretariat, and by the late 1970s the ageing general secretary was powerful

enough to bring his pliant secretary right into the politburo. Thus, the sole basis for Chernenko's rise was his loyalty and usefulness to his boss. He never achieved anything on his own.

Chernenko's rise was part of the pattern during the 1970s whereby Brezhnev packed the upper echelons of the state and party apparatuses with his own cronies, most of whom came from his old stamping ground of Dnepropetrovsk in the Eastern Ukraine. Their sole qualification was often little more than their personal loyalty to their godfather. Chernenko, as head of the Central Committee's General Department, overseeing appointments, was the organiser of the mafia's rise to power.

Brezhnev

The late 1970s and early 80s were glorious days, an Indian summer, for Brezhnev's clients. The economy may have been going to pot, the Americans may have turned ugly, but so what? At



Chernenko represents Brezhnev era of corruption

Photo: Morning Star

last their years of service to their leaders — all that hard graft and intrigue — had paid off. If their hands trembled it was only from age. They had absolutely nothing to fear as their fingers fumbled around in the till. Good old Shchekolov, the Chief of Police, was a solid member of the mafia, and that dangerous man Andropov had to stick to state security against threats from outside and below and not meddle in such fields as corruption and economic crime.

Then came those dark 15 months of the Andropovshchina. First to fall was Brezhnev's man in the KGB, Tsvigun, driven to suicide by the heartless Andropov for corruption. Then for the first time since the forties, a powerful Central Committee 'comrade' was expelled from the party for corruption — and it was none other than police Chief Shchekolov. And with him went Medunov, the Krasnodar party boss who had made Brezhnev so comfy down there during those long summer holidays in his dotage.

Reagan

Then there was poor old deputy premier Novikov, an authentic Dnepropetrovsk veteran if ever there was one. All he had done was to sabotage the foundations of the huge plant for building nuclear power stations, Atomash, by siting a dam nearby — Atomash, whose construction began in 1974, must now be moved elsewhere along with the whole new town of Volgo-Donsk built round it to house the 100,000 workers. But Andropov lacked any party spirit and did the most awful thing.



Andropov — old gang glad to be shot of him

Photo: Morning Star

He sacked Novikov.

If you asked the Brezhnev mafia, Andropov died not a moment too soon. He had cooked up a thoroughly vicious plan to get rid of the 79 year old Tikhonov as Prime Minister this March, along with a whole host of lesser, and even younger cronies. Now life can move at a more leisurely pace.

Here is the Soviet leadership in 1984. The Reaganites are on the rampage in the third world, the

West is re-arming at a gallop, the unemployment figures are still rising in Western Europe, the labour movements of the capitalist world are under attack. And the state officially claiming to be the rallying centre for anti-capitalist forces throughout the world is dominated by a corrupt, authoritarian gerontocracy clinging to life and power. The younger technocrats whom Andropov tried to promote and who might more suc-

cessfully have dealt with the cynicism, anger and frustrations of the Soviet masses find their path once again blocked.

Thus Chernenko's accession makes a convulsive struggle within the Communist party more likely as the younger and more reform-minded officials lose patience. But meanwhile the aged cripples of the Kremlin shuffle around, trying to keep their balance and remember what day it is. It is not a pretty sight.

SUBSCRIBE

RATES:
Inland
6 months £8;
12 months £15
Overseas
(12 months only)
Europe £17; Air Mail £24
(Double these rates
for multi-reader institutions)

Special free book offer!

Take out a years inland subscription and we will send you free one of these books:

Thatcher and Friends by John Ross
Hard Times by Bob Sutcliffe or
Over our Dead Bodies —
Women Against the Bomb

Introductory offer
for new
readers: Eight
issues for
just £2!

Name

Address

Please send me as special offer

I enclose cheque/PO payable to Socialist Action for £

Send to: Socialist Action Subs, 328 Upper St, London N1 2XP.