

A Socialist ACTION

BUILDING AN ALLIANCE FOR SOCIALISM

BRITAIN OUT OF THE GULF!

HANDS OFF IRAN!

UNITY ON THE LEFT TO FIGHT THE TORIES!



THIS YEAR's Labour Party conference is almost certain to take the Party in exactly the wrong direction.

What is needed is drawing up plans of four years of resistance to the Thatcher government.

This is not just what is needed to defend working people and their families, it is also what is required for Labour the next election.

In four years time it won't be how slick is Labour's television broadcasts, or whether its leaflets are printed in colour or not, that will determine whether Labour wins. It will be how far the trade unions have advanced, how far local government has been defended, how far the struggle internationally has advanced.

Labour lost the last election when the miners strike was defeated — and Neil Kinnock helped sign Labour's death warrant for the election when he failed to support the strike. If the miners had won Thatcher would have lost the election. Because the TUC let the miners be defeated

Labour went down to defeat. If Labour loses the fights outside parliament then it will lose the next election as well.

Top of the list at Labour Party conference should therefore be how Labour defends the unions and Labour councils under attack — starting by supporting the miners overtime ban. Second should be support for the liberation struggle in South Africa. The conference should discuss defending women and the black communities. Support for peace in Central America, and a ringing condemnation of Reagan's policies of supporting the contras, should be a next item on the agenda. The discussion should continue on how to get Britain out of Ireland. A central feature of domestic policy should be to use the chaos in the SDP to appeal to voters who misguidedly voted for it at the last election to return to Labour.

But what will we, in fact, get from the party leadership? First and foremost an attack on hard won democratic rights in the party under the

guise of 'one member one vote' — a move to break any accountability of MPs to their local Labour Parties and to allow Robert Maxwell and Rupert Murdoch to play a decisive role in Labour Party selection procedures.

Second, there will be no mention of those fights actually taking place against the Tories. Arthur Scargill and the miners will be treated as an embarrassing irrelevance at best, and at worst as a threat, to Labour's attempt to rebuild its support. Any council attempting to defend services would be condemned as 'looney left'.

Third instead of discrediting, ridiculing and weakening the Alliance the right wing — led by Eric Hammond, Gavin Laird and members of the Fabian Society — will be seeking to rescue that anti-Labour outfit by voting for proportional representation and discussing in the corridors, Lib-Lab pacts.

We could go on. But the issue is not what to denounce but what to do about it.

Here there is no doubt. The most crucial issue

is to unite the left in the fight against the Thatcher government. Today the most important source of confusion and disorientation in the labour movement is that a number of figures regarded by the majority of the working class as on the left, starting with Neil Kinnock, are breaking up and disorganising any fight back against the Thatcher government. But hundreds of thousands of working class people don't understand that as yet — nor will they sort out who on the left intends to fight, and who intends to fake, without a real struggle being waged against Thatcher. And hundreds of thousands of people will find themselves engaged in fights with Thatcher's government regardless of whether the party leadership wishes them to do so.

It is this unity in the struggle not ritual denunciations, which will sort out the situation in the labour movement. It is what is needed for the fight against the Thatcher government — and for a Labour victory. That is why it should be taken up.

INSIDE: Labour conference special: Tony Benn on socialist policies; Ken Livingstone on left unity; support the miners; the Liberals — 'Owenism without Owen'

Socialist ACTION

Why unity on the left?

SINCE THE election unity on the left has become a popular, and decisive, slogan. Why?

That can only be understood in terms of the three currents which today exist in the Labour movement — and how they interrelate in the fight against the Thatcher government.

Neil Kinnock intends to take the Labour Party far to the right of anything which most people imagined when he was elected party leader. Even more, he is committed to a bloc with a right wing which is breaking even with traditional labourism.

This year's TUC congress and Labour Party conference have defined that right wing both politically, and industrially, more clearly than ever before. At the TUC it voted for no-strike deals. At the Labour Party conference it will vote for proportional representation — that is, in practice, for a coalition with the Liberals.

The Kinnockite majority of the party is verbally against such policies of the new realist right. But it is totally paralysed from fighting against them, among other reasons, precisely because it is in a bloc with this right in running the party. Thus Ron Todd argued against no-strike deals at the TUC congress — and then accepted an 'investigation' which put off the whole matter. The Kinnockite unions, and soft left, reject a coalition with the Liberals but adopt policies which, as Tony Benn has rightly put it, amount in practice to 'ideological coalitionism'. Or put more precisely which make Labour's policies increasingly indistinguishable from the Alliance. A precondition for a serious fight against the right's policies is breaking off the bloc with it in running the party.

That leaves the position of the 'hard left'. This will, as its main task, be waging the fight against the Tory government. But the hard left is also a minority inside the labour movement. It cannot lead it in its own right at present. The demand must be that the soft left joins with the hard left in the fight against the Thatcher government — not in order to 'expose' the soft left but in order to actually wage the struggle against Thatcher. That, inevitably, means the soft left breaking off its bloc with the right — not as an end in itself but because the right has not the slightest intention of fighting against Thatcher.

That is what the slogan 'unity on the left' means concretely today. That is why it is a correct slogan. It serves the interests of both the labour movement and the left — and in the last analysis the two must be the same.



The voice of the 'soft left'?

BRYAN GOULD is being built up as a 'soft left' candidate for the NEC — in particular by the Labour Coordinating Committee. As a certain test of his soft left credentials who do you think he voted for in the 1983 leadership and deputy leadership elections?

Kinnock and Hattersley? Hattersley and Kinnock? Heffer and Meacher?

Gould actually voted for Peter Shore for leader and Gwyneth Dunwoody for deputy leader.

This way out position was so right wing that only seven members of the PLP voted for it — Gwyneth Dunwoody, John Forrester, Reg Fresson, John Gilbert, Bryan Gould, Michael McGuire and Peter Shore.

Bryan Gould has nothing to do with the soft left. He is a right winger being given a left cover by the LCC. Perhaps this voting record should be taken a little note of rather than being confined to pages 347 and 349 of the 1983 Labour Party conference report?

'Owenism without Owen'

THE TIMES political editor, Robin Oakley, spelt out the significance of last week's Liberal Party conference in Harrogate perfectly: 'Amid the clichés about freedom, justice, respect for the individual and apple pie, the Liberal assembly in Harrogate has provided an inkling of what a new merged party with the Social Democrats will be like: it will be an Owenite party without Dr Owen ...'

Oakley went on: 'The most interesting speech of the week came from Richard Holme, one of David Steel's closest advisors, who argued that what the party had to produce was not a better collectivism than Labour but a better individualism than the Conservatives ... It is Owen's path all right, not that of Roy Jenkins and the Liberals of recent years.'

'A similar "new realism" has been apparent on defence. Steel and a few around him would not mind at all if a few of the Liberal Party's unilateralists were to be lost overboard as the new constitution makers sail the new party into uncharted waters ...'

Guide

'The clearest guide to what kind of party the Liberals and Social Democrats are likely to create together has been the behaviour in Harrogate of the politicians who know how to feel the Liberal pulse. (Simon) Hughes, together with the party presidency candidates, Michael Meadowcroft, and the would-be future leader, Paddy Ashdown, have all been delicately tacking across the spectrum. They see now that there is a wider audience to play to. They talk about efficiency as well as Liberal values.'

'They and the activists who have been so insistent that policy must not get mixed up with the constitution-making in merger talks can feel it in their bones. The centre of gravity of the new party, while still mildly left of centre, will be somewhere to the right of where the Liberals have lately been. That, surely, is Owen's legacy.'

'The issue which Oakley got wrong was that it was not Owen who has produced this 'shift' in the Liberal

Party. Owen was simply the occasion which allowed the real nature of the Liberals to come out.

The Liberal Party was rebuilt in the 1950s and 1960s by consciously taking a more left wing tactical line on a series of issues than the Labour Party. It stressed democratic rights, social reform, local government and international issues against the right wing bureaucratic leadership of the Labour Party.

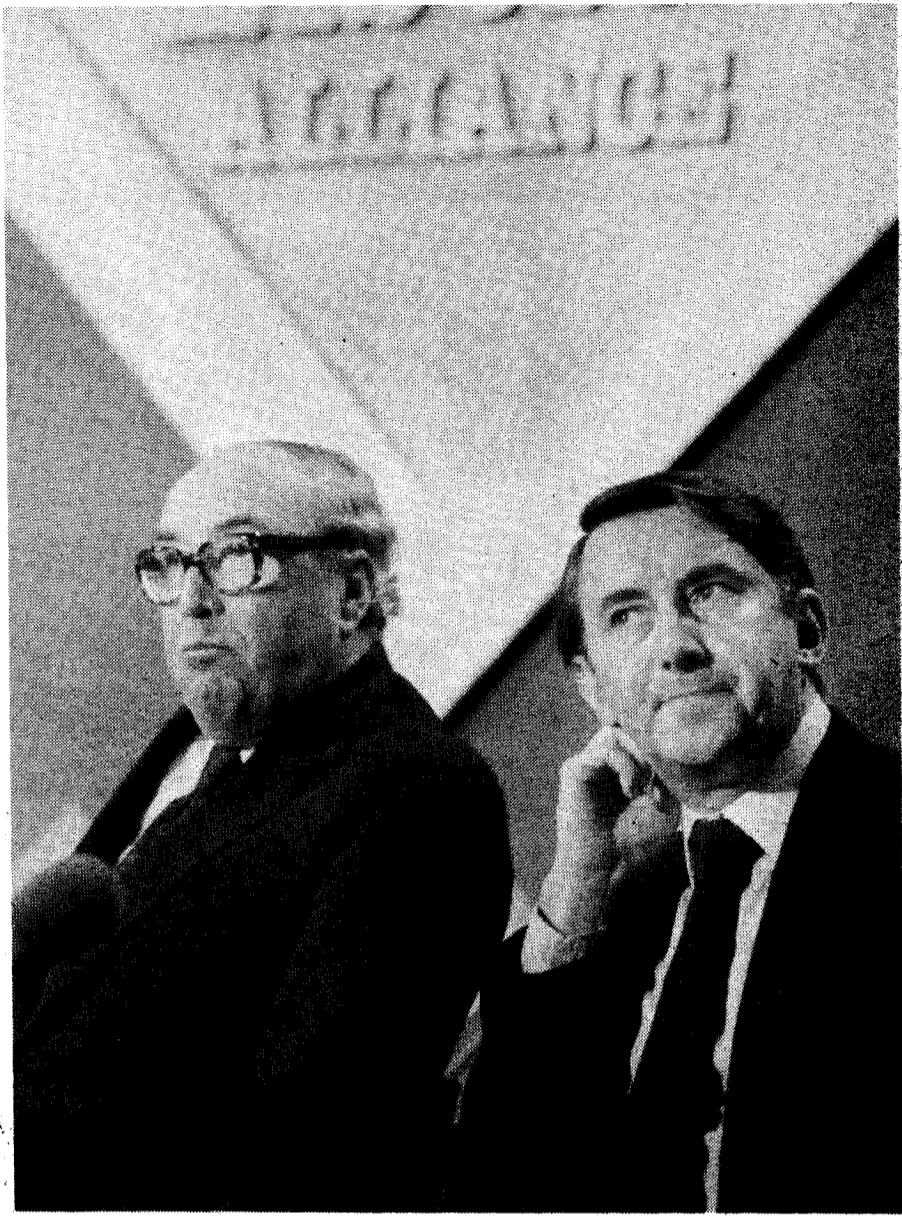
Issues

A much younger David Steel championed abortion law reform. Peter Hain, then leader of the Young Liberals, played a crucial role in organising the campaign against South Africa. The Liberals had a far more advanced position on many issues of democratic liberty than the Labour Party.

But all this was carefully maintained as a tactic within a party which remained firmly in the grip of its leadership. The key index of this is the Liberal Party constitution. It formally enshrines the right of the party leader to veto any item for the party's manifesto — no matter what the Liberal conference votes. Defence of democratic rights most definitely did not extend to defence of democratic rights inside the Liberal party.

The Liberals were organised as 'bureaucratic control tempered by anarchy'. The Liberal Assembly was run on absurdly libertarian lines — any party member could turn up and vote — but that didn't matter because real power was vested with the leader.

The merger, and change in name for the new party is therefore largely a cosmetic change — the old Liberal Party was, in reality, just as much in the grip of its



'right wing' as will be the new one. But it is a cosmetic change of some significance.

Remodel

Steel intends to remodel the Liberal Party. Out will go any potential influence of the unilateralists, radical libertarians etc. In will come the remoulding of the Liberals as a more respectable 'centre' party — on the model of the Free Democrats in West Germany. This is a party much more suited for its real goal — to be a coalition partner for Labour when Thatcher becomes so unpopular the Tories lose an

election.

Steel made that road clear at Harrogate. Naturally there was no talk of a pact with Labour — at present Steel is concerned to win over as many waverers from the Owenite camp of the SDP as possible. But what Steel did specifically rule out was an agreement with Thatcher. And as there is no possibility whatever of the Liberals winning a majority, and as the Tories are not going to become a non-Thatcherite party, that *only* leaves Labour as a potential coalition partner. What Steel is doing, by crushing the so called Liberal 'radicals', is making sure that the merged

party is an absolutely reliable prop to ensure that all interests of capital are safeguarded in a coalition with Labour.

'Centre'

What is humorous is that his operation is being regarded by some, notably the Communist Party, as a division of the 'centre' of British politics into a 'Centre-right' (Owen) and a 'centre-left' (the Liberals). Both fragments of the Alliance are intent on securing the same goals — buttressing Thatcherism. One is 'Owenism with Owen', the other is 'Owenism without Owen'. There is no other difference between them.

Right wing Labour offensive in Birmingham

'We shall not retain the support of working class voters by advocating the fringe activities which have attached themselves to the socialist movement at the expense of other issues which more directly affect their everyday lives.' This was the argument of Birmingham's council leader Dick Knowles earlier this year in successfully preparing the closure of the council's race relations and women's committees. It was a potent reminder of where Labour's right wing stands on issues like equal opportunities, women, and racism.

Labour lost five seats

in the Birmingham council elections in May and scapegoats were needed. Women and black people suited the right wing fine.

By Mick Archer

This year the Labour group has decided to act before the event. At a group meeting to discuss next year's budget, leading councillors proposed a rate increase of no more than five per cent. City officers said that without savings this year would involve cuts of more than £40 million, or seven per cent, in next year's budget.

In reality the Labour group is already committed to this course. In the last few months vacancies in the social service and housing departments have remained unfilled. Now the council is involved in a bitter pay dispute with

housing department clerical staff, who are demanding an end to poverty wages. Some take home as little as £60 a week and have to claim housing benefit to support themselves.

But to make these cuts the Labour group needs to first silence its critics in the District Labour Party. Although the DLP was suspended earlier this year at the behest of the right wing, this situation could not last indefinitely. The right wing had to win the key positions in the reconvened AGM.

The right wing set about the task with its usual zeal. Right wing GMCs bureaucratically blocked delegates nominated by left wing wards despite custom and practice of each ward having an equal share of the delegation. In Smallheath

and Sparkbrook CLPs they went one step further and simply closed the wards down. Sparkbrook GMC called a 'special' meeting on the eve of the District Labour Party AGM so that it could fill vacancies left by the closure of its Sparkhill ward.

Tactics

At the first reconvened AGM these tactics produced a tie in the elections for the vote of chair. But at the following meeting the right wing succeeded in taking the post of chair, vice-chair and secretary by a margin of about 10 out of 158 votes. The defeated candidate for chair was Karen McCarthy, a long standing DLP activist and prominent member of the local LCC.

Headly with success the right wing has now taken

the fight into the Euro-constituencies and the CLPs. Birmingham East Euro-constituency was forced to adjourn its meeting after barracking by right wingers, while in Sparkbrook fresh charges are being prepared against Amir Khan and Kevin Scally. In Selly Oak the constituency is threatened with disbandment if it does not withdraw left winger Bob Whitehead's membership card.

In the midst of all this the LCC held one of its now regular relaunch meetings. It was addressed by LCC executive member Ken Hulme. Apparently oblivious to what was going on around him, he stressed the twin dangers to the party of the hard left and the right wing. Many of his audience were, it seems, a little dumbfounded.

Unity on the left

KEN LIVINGSTONE is particularly associated with the demand for unity on the left. Last month seven members of Labour Left Liaison and the Labour Coordinating Committee executive issued a statement opposing a pact with the Liberals and calling for unity on the left. Socialist Action asked Livingstone how he saw Labour Party conference and why he stressed the slogan of left unity.

THIS is probably going to be the toughest conference for the left this parliament. The election campaign was professional — which gives credibility to the party office. The techniques were actually taken from those pioneered by the GLC, and therefore by the left, but that won't be acknowledged. At the same time the vote at the election, because professional presentation wasn't filled out with real strategy or content, was bad — which will demoralise people.

Also, as yet, many on the 'soft left' don't understand how far to the right sections of the party leadership are prepared to go. Therefore they do not yet see the need to recreate, on a principled basis, unity on the left and break off the bloc with the right wing.

It is therefore vital that the left doesn't get carried away by events at one conference but has a strategy for going forward over the next years. This means looking *realistically* at the situation that confronts us.

Media

Capital, today, is completely committed to a Thatcher government. There was no wavering in any section of the media on this. This is why it is even more foolish than usual to base Labour policy on appeasing the press and moving further to the right. All that will happen, as during the last parliament, is that the press will praise right wing attacks on the left during the mid-term years and then, no matter how far the party moves to the right, turn round and attack Labour during an election. Meanwhile because Labour has attacked its own supporters, it will have demoralised a section of them and its vote won't go up enough to win an election.

Coalition

This is when demands for coalition with the Liberals/new merged Alliance party, which are already being raised in the far seeing parts of the right wing, would come out in full flood. That approach won't win an election no matter how professional our presentation.

The truth is that if Labour had adopted a more left wing approach during the period leading to the last election — most obviously on nuclear power and women's rights — it would have done better.

Labour would not have won. The gap after 1983 was too great to make up in one election. But I believe we would have won 34-35 per cent of the vote, and won 50-60 seats instead of 25. Most important our support wouldn't have been vulnerable to the scares by the press. By constantly moving to the right we are building on sand and leave ourselves vulnerable to the types of attacks the Tories will inevitably run leading to an election.

The left must emphasise that a bloc with the right wing doesn't simply produce policies which are wrong, but that it produces policies that are unpopular.

There is the danger of the same development as last time taking place



after this election. We can already see it on an issue like unilateral nuclear disarmament. This is where policy becomes interrelated with the situation in the party. Because the right keeps probing to find out what the 'soft left' will accept.

Salami

The right would not come out with its challenge on unilateralism until it was sure it would win on one member one vote (OMOV) — it didn't want to fight on two fronts at once. So it strenuously denied that it wanted to change policy on defence. Now the right believes it has won on OMOV so it is re-opening the defence issue — which Hattersley said he wasn't going to do. It is a pure and simple salami tactic which the right will continue to pursue as long as part of the soft left remains in a bloc with it, and as long as it is not confronted with a united left.

This reflects the real relation of forces in the party. The truth is that none of its three currents — the right,

the soft left, or the hard left — has a majority. This is where I fundamentally disagree with Robin Cook — who wrote in *Tribune* recently that the soft left is now running the party and can do with it what it will. As Anni Marjoram pointed out in a letter to *Tribune* the 'soft left' can't even deliver on women's demands in the party. At the last election it couldn't deliver on nuclear power or, on a real campaign for a national minimum wage. One right winger, John Cunningham, was able to effectively veto any central Labour campaign against nuclear power.

Bloc

The reality is the soft left can run the party in a bloc with either the right or with the hard left. And many actually know it. Talk of 'going it alone' on the soft left comes chiefly from those who favour a bloc with the right.

Jack Straw in the *Tribune* group, although he's not really part of the soft left at all, declared that for the

shadow cabinet he wouldn't take votes from the hard left. But he was careful not to add that he wouldn't take votes from the right either. Because if he had he wouldn't have got elected! So this section of the 'soft left' holds you can have an agreement with Roy Hattersley, or Gerald Kaufman, but you can't have an agreement with Tony Benn!

Members

But the reality is this argument can't be presented openly in the party — because the party membership wouldn't accept it. Labour Party members are discussing whether they are going to vote for David Blunkett or Dennis Skinner — not whether they're going to vote for David Blunkett or Gerald Kaufmann.

But the hard left must have different tactics to the ones sometimes adopted. Sometimes sections of the 'hard left' seem to go in for 'social fascist' tactics — attacking those on the soft left closest to them as the most dangerous. The result is the hard

left isolate themselves. Instead the hard left should be looking, wherever it is principled, to achieve unity on issues with the soft left.

There are many issues to do it on — unionising temporary and part-time workers, on South Africa, on Central America, fighting racism, in supporting women's demands, on Ireland.

The hard left and the soft left should be coming together on particular initiatives. The Women's Action Committee is holding a conference in London in November on women's struggles and policies for example — which involves the hard left and the soft left. The Labour Coordinating Committee favours a policy calling for British withdrawal from Ireland in the lifetime of one parliament — and that should allow working together.

Differences

I am not saying that people should gloss over their differences. I am not going to change my views on Ireland, for example, because someone in the soft left disagrees with them — or because *Militant* or *Socialist Organisers* disagrees with them.

The hard left is making a drastic mistake if it believes that refusing to work together will 'expose the soft left' — or something like that. It won't. If a right wing/soft left bloc runs the party it will simply result in further defeats. That will breed demoralisation and the strengthening of the right — not a growth of the left.

The hard left has to say to the soft left, 'Look there is a choice. You can either form a bloc with the right, which won't get us anywhere, or you can form a bloc with us'. It is only by unity on the left, that the Labour Party and trade unions as a whole are going forward. The left is not built on defeats. It is built on victories.

The hard left sometimes has a quite wrong view of what the 'soft left' is. There are certainly some people who have decided to call themselves 'soft left' for totally opportunist reasons. There are some 'straightforward right wingers who are doing a sort of entry work for the right in the Tribune group in parliament for example. But the great majority of those who vote for 'soft left' candidates in the party are on the left wing.

Opinion

Various right wing members of the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) may call down anathema on left unity but members in the party won't take it. The soft left represents a current of opinion in the party — not a disciplined trend. The majority of its supporters in the party want left unity — not unity with the right. The *Guardian* or the *New Statesman* may specialise in smears, or planted stories, but eventually desire for left unity will cut its way through the party. Provided, that is, the left understands that what the party membership is interested in is not internal fighting but policies which take the labour movement forward.

Take an issue that concerns me — Ireland. We must have a battle in the movement, unfortunately, in order to get through the policy of British withdrawal from Ireland. But I am not taking up the issue of Ireland in order to have a fight in the party. I am prepared to have a fight in the party to get Britain out of Ireland. That approach has to be applied to every issue.

It is only when the left puts forward policies which correspond to the interests of the whole movement that it gets support. These are the lessons the left must absorb.

'Dem Left' discuss left unity

SIXTY STUDENTS attended what turned out to be a sharply contradictory 'Democratic Left' (DL) conference over the weekend of 19-20 September in London. DL, the 'soft left' current which leads NOLS and the NUS, held its conference following the 'left unity' statement issued by leading figures of Labour Left Liaison and the LCC, including Ken Livingstone, Peter Hain and Joan Ruddock.

Both the build-up, and the conference itself, were dominated by this discussion on what political and tactical alliances should be forged on the left. The 'unity' statement was mailed to supporters before the conference.

The keynote speaker on Saturday, Keith Vaz, spoke under the theme of 'Left Unity: The Way Forward or Blind Alley'.

As he explained, Vaz is a member of both the Tribune and Campaign Groups. He gave his reason for supporting a principled unity on the left and aiming for a common agenda. The failure to agree a joint slate between the Tribune and Campaign Group, for example, meant that the shadow cabinet was a poor reflection of the make-up of the PLP, he explained.

While noting some bad omissions from the unity document — particularly on lesbian and gay rights and a Welsh assembly — Vaz concluded by saying that he hoped it would be supported in the meeting. He cited the GLC experience as the sort of positive campaigning which could be achieved by a united left and as 'perhaps the only successful Labour administration there has been'.

Despite this very

positive contribution, the consensus of the meeting was unfortunately against the statement. Against some voices of support from the floor, leading figures of the DL opposed it, usually on the most spurious grounds.

No coherent critique or alternative was argued for. Simply it was claimed that the unity statement was 'purely negative', was 'anti-leadership', and unnecessary because no alliance with the Liberals had ever been mooted. It was also said that we must firstly carefully examine what we mean by 'working class', and even that the statement must be rejected because it was 'macho'.

It is ironic that this refusal to support a principled unity of Labour's left — and so take the high ground in arguing for the same in the student left — was set against references throughout the weekend to the crisis in support for and problems with the image of the DL. The most telling point was made by leading DL figures who contrasted their weakness and the position of the 'soft left' in the Labour Party. Speaker after speaker referred to the DL's failure to keep support due to having a purely negative image as an opportunistic, undemocratic, electoral

machine with NOLS and NUS.

The political alliances being built by some of these figures of Labour's 'soft left' are in sharp contrast to the isolationist stance taken at this conference. Moreover the centre of gravity amongst students, as seen in the turn-out for demo after demo, is way to the left of that in the party.

It is hardly surprising that such disillusion surround the DL. The policies of NOLS — support for British withdrawal from Ireland, for the Labour Women's Action Committee, for unilateral nuclear disarmament, for the South African liberation struggle, for defence of the Nicaraguan revolution, and other democratic left policies — place it firmly in line with the politics of the Campaign Group and Labour Left Liaison. Yet the DL who lead NOLS and NUS reject the unity statement and what it would mean for students.

Students can hardly fail to draw the conclusion that there are those within the DL whose support for these policies is based more on the concern to keep an edge on groups like SSiN (which they succeed in doing) that a desire to ensure they are implemented most successfully.

Nonetheless, NOLS' policies stand. Sunday's conference took an entirely contradictory decision. It should be argued against and reversed in the interests of students and the left as a whole.

Defend local government

THE BARRAGE of legislative attacks by the Tories on local government and the inner cities — introducing the poll tax, outlawing contract compliance, and subsidies to housing, breaking up the Inner London Education Authority, and ratecapping — are designed not only to economically squeeze local government, but also as a major political attack on the labour movement. The Tory Party was decimated in the major metropolitan areas in the general and local elections. The Tories have progressively been driven back and defeated in the inner cities. At the same time local government is a major bastion of public sector trade unionism.

In her first two terms of office, Thatcher concentrated her offensive on driving down trade union rights and tried but failed to cut off trade union funds to the Labour Party. A key goal of Thatcher's third term is to break up public sector trade unionism and Labour's base in the cities. Unions like the NUT, NALGO, the CPSA and NUPE are all in the front line alongside Labour councils.

Rate-capping, cuts in government grants and, above all the poll tax aim to destroy the financial independence of local government and combined with privatisation of services to break up local authority trade unionism.

To fight these attacks is a major priority for the entire labour movement — trade unions and Labour Party — nationally. Policies like the poll tax are massively unpopular.

Popular mass campaigns can be mounted against these policies that link Labour, the unions and the communities whose education, housing and services are to be degraded. This should obviously be at the very top of the labour movement's priorities for defeating Thatcher and rebuilding a majority for Labour.

That this is possible was shown by the effective campaigning of the GLC.

United action against the government's attacks has to include national and local unions, the Labour Party, Labour councils, the black community, and a myriad of other organisations.

Unfortunately the response of Labour councils has been to accept Tory cuts — ruling out the possibility of building up a

campaign against them. Instead they are preparing to implement cuts and not campaigning against them.

Council leaders such as Margaret Hodge, who argues in the *New Statesman* that services will be defended by attacking jobs, conditions and unions, are wrong and deeply divisive. The only beneficiaries of councils unloading the effects of Tory attacks onto their workers will be the government.

By Terry Luke, Islington NALGO Executive (personal capacity)

Similarly, attacks on the NUT by the Inner London Education Authority undermine rather than strengthen the necessary united campaign of teachers, councillors and parents and pupils against the break up of ILEA.

That is why council leaders like Steve King and Martha Osamore in Haringey, who unsuccessfully tried to win policies of no cuts in jobs and services to unite the council, the workforce and the community, have to be supported.

Unfortunately, the London Fightback conference on 20 September, whilst being a welcome initiative to broaden resistance on a London level, did not take an adequate approach. It centred attention solely on Labour councils carrying out cuts, and failed to provide a framework for a campaign against the Tory government, which we have to fight for Labour council leaderships themselves to participate in.

While Labour council cuts have to be totally op-



posed this by itself is too narrow a framework for the fight to defend local government against the Tory attacks. The framework has to be to fight against the poll tax, privatisation proposals, and all attacks on local government.

Local government workers facing cuts have to link their fight to defend jobs and services to the defence of local government as a whole. A campaign against Labour council-imposed cuts will be part of this overall fight.

Students and the attacks on education

IMMEDIATELY AFTER the general election, Thatcher announced that education reform would be targetted as a first priority. Now Kenneth Baker's white paper, *Higher Education — Meeting the Challenge*, originally published in April 1987, looks set to go to parliament in the form of a bill in October or November 1987.

The bill proposes replacing the present University Grants Council with a new 'Universities Funding Council'; replacing the National Advisory Board with a 'Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council'; and forcibly transferring 90 polys and colleges out of the control of local authorities to this new body.

Both the UFC and PCFC are intended to be appointed by the secretary of state for education and are composed of 50 per cent businessmen, with final power resting with central government. These bodies would then have powers to vet the content of courses. Institutions would be required to submit a tender for their activities, in competition with each other — called contract funding.

The proposals for polys and colleges form a major plank of the Tories onslaught on local councils. 'Transferred' colleges will come to own their land, buildings and equipment — previously owned by local authorities — which will be handed over by the government, without compensation.

This proposal, hand in hand with the abolition of the metropolitan councils

and curbs on 'political' advertising, parallels the 'opt-out' scheme for schools in a move to destroy local democracy.

By Robin Laney, Kings College, London

The changes proposed represent a continuation of government attacks on the strength of the NUS.

In 1981 the government changed the funding of university student unions from being a direct percentage of students grants to being in the control of the universities themselves. This removed financial independence from the SUS and dramatically curbed political activity.

The introduction of 'full fees' for overseas students — in fact an exorbitantly high and arbitrary figure — halved the number attending British educational establishments.

These facts, and the proposal to make membership of NUS 'voluntary', are designed to remove the threat of a campaigning student movement able to defeat such proposals by mass mobilisations.

Along with the core curriculum in schools and

testing at 7, 11 and 16, the result of these proposals if implemented will be severely restricted access to higher education for women, black, and working class students. It will mean an education system tied to the needs of industry rather than students. The perennial proposal of student loans instead of grants is again being prepared for consideration.

As neither students nor the NUS have been consulted about the white paper, our only chance of defeating the proposals is the widest mobilisation possible. In this respect it is wrong for the NUS executive not to organise any national demonstration this term, at precisely the time when a bill is expected to come to parliament.

The potential for a massive show of strength was clear at the NUS education conference on 14 September where the NUS campaign, focussing on access, academic standards and democratic control was explained. The conference was oversubscribed, with 250 delegates participating after many had been turned away.

The Manchester NUS has called a demo at Tory Party conference on 8 October. It should be supported and built, as should similar events. NUS should put its backing behind these events, as well as campaigns in colleges with trade unions in joint union committees.

Defend London Strategic Policy Unit workers

THE first impact in London of the Tory government attacks on local government has been the decision to cut the London Strategic Policy Unit.

The unit was established jointly by a number of London Labour councils following the abolition of the GLC to continue some of its London-wide functions, for example on the police, women and race.

The London boroughs financing LSPU decided just before the summer that they were not in a position to continue paying for the

unit. This is a major blow to London, as it is now robbed of any serious London-wide planning and monitoring.

By Jude Woodward

Over the summer it was agreed by the LSPU staff that a campaign to save LSPU was not realistic. They therefore decided to campaign for redeployment of the 300-odd staff among the London boroughs.

Redeployment of those staff in situ, and many are already seeking completely alternative employment, would mean each borough

taking on responsibility for around 20 to 25 staff — and probably less.

Although this redeployment was originally agreed in principle, some of the London boroughs are now dragging their feet, in particular Margaret Hodge and Islington are refusing to come to any definite agreement over redeployment.

Labour Parties and NALGO branches are therefore asked to support the LSPU workers campaign by passing model resolutions along the following lines:

'This ward/GC/LGC/branch etc notes the threat

to jobs posed by the winding up of LSPU. We support the demands of LSPU NALGO/NUJ for a collective redeployment agreement, under which each constituent borough of LSPU will take an equal share of LSPU staff. We recognise the importance of this agreement being reached quickly and mandate our councillors to pass a resolution through Labour group and council/instruct branch officers to reach an agreement through negotiating channels that the London borough of will take one ninth of LSPU staff.'

Government alarm on MacBride principles

TOM KING, the secretary of state for northern Ireland, flew to the United States on 19-20 September in a dramatic effort to stop the growing band wagon of support in the USA for the MacBride principles, which deal with eliminating discrimination in employment in northern Ireland. The MacBride principles have already been adopted by five American states: New York, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island and New Jersey.

King's visit is a last ditch attempt to persuade six more states not to adopt them. These are: California, Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

By Redmond O'Neill

Adoption of the MacBride principles means that state pension funds cannot be invested in any of the 25 major US companies operating in northern Ireland unless they implement the principles. US companies at present account for 11 per cent of manufacturing jobs in the six counties and are the single largest investors.

The principles were drafted two years ago by nobel peace prize winner Sean MacBride. They deal with measures to combat both direct and indirect discrimination in employment against Catholics in northern Ireland.

The growing support for the principles has alarmed the British government to such an extent that they have appointed a full-time diplomat to lobby against them in Washington. Sean MacBride points out that one reason for this is that US state and city legislature, before adopting them, submits British policy in Ireland to close scrutiny.

The British government has been supported in its attempts to defeat the MacBride principles by the Reagan administration. The US ambassador to Britain, Charles Price, last week visited Belfast specifically to issue a statement describing the MacBride principles as 'extremely counter-productive'. The principles have been endorsed by the American Federation of Labour/Congress of Industrial Unions, the US equivalent of the TUC. As a result of their impact in the USA they have helped

to put the issue of employment discrimination in northern Ireland at the top of the political agenda in Dublin and Belfast for the first time in 20 years.

The government has been forced to engage in a major effort to prettify the situation in the six counties where unemployment amongst Catholics is 2½ times as great as amongst Protestants. Major employers like Harland and Wolff and Shorts Brothers are renowned for systematic discrimination.

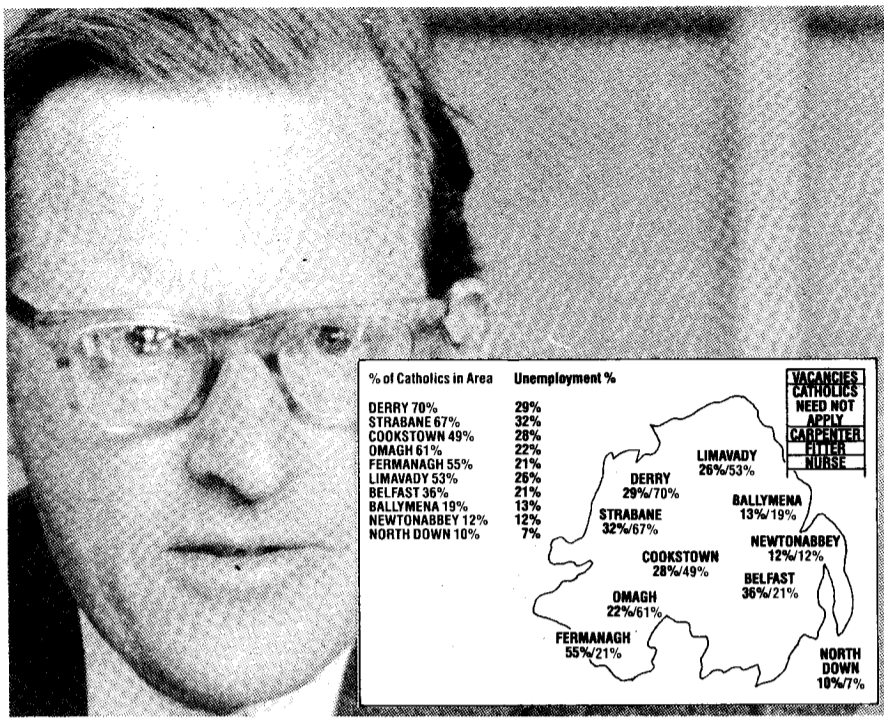
The British establishment's attitude was accurately explained in the *Independent's* 17 September editorial entitled 'What King should tell the US': '... eradicating discrimination in employment cannot be the government's sole aim in northern Ireland. There is a great need to promote investment.

'New employers thinking of setting up in the province will not be encouraged if they think that civil servants are going to dictate to them who they may or may not employ. Nor do existing businesses need extra interference in their dealings with their workers.'

The impact of the MacBride principles in the US has nonetheless opened up the debate on employment discrimination in the trade union movements in Britain and Ireland for the first time in many years. Earlier this year, the Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union was expelled from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), because of remarks by its general secretary, John Mitchell.

Mitchell criticised the failure of British based unions in northern Ireland to combat discrimination and repression. He said at his union's conference that 'not the tiniest squeak has been made about the repression of our people'.

Both the ICTU and its



King: a last-ditch attempt to stop US states adopting anti-discrimination principles

notoriously unionist-inclined Northern Ireland Committee have been forced to criticise British government inaction on employment discrimination and put forward proposals of their own. Neither support the MacBride principles as yet.

Whilst not endorsing the MacBride principles, Kevin MacNamara, Labour's new spokesperson on northern Ireland, has attacked the government's proposals as 'far from adequate'. MacNamara has made detailed proposals of his own.

Recently even Charles Haughey, the Fianna Fail prime minister in the south, publicly endorsed the MacBride principles. This leaves only John Hume, leader of the Social Democratic Labour Party, which the Anglo-Irish agreement was designed to bolster against Sinn Fein, continuing to publicly campaign alongside Thatcher against the principles.

All of these developments are making life very difficult for the Tory government. The claim that the Anglo-Irish Agreement would deliver major reforms for northern nationalists still remains to bear fruit as we approach its second anniversary.

Employment discrimination is likely to be debated at this year's Labour Party conference in Brighton. And the conference against discrimination in employment in northern Ireland called by the

Labour Committee on Ireland for 28 November has received major support in the British trade union movement, with sponsors including Ken Gill, Peter Heathfield and Jimmy Knapp.

IRELAND: CAUSE OF LABOUR?

Employment Discrimination in Northern Ireland:

The Origins
The Facts
The Future

A conference for trade unionists on 28 November 1987
The Camden Centre
Bilborough Street
London NW1
(opp St Pancras Station)
For delegates pack and further information, contact 'Ireland: The Cause of Labour?', BM Box 5335, London WC1N 3XX

Black Sections and Labour Party conference

BLACK SECTIONS have won significant gains in our fight for black political representation. Since our campaign was launched there has been a three-fold increase in the number of black councillors, three black leaders of Labour-controlled councils and the historic election of four black Labour MPs.

Our successful annual conference in Nottingham raised anti-racist, socialist policies formulated in tune with the demands of black people. The guiding principle is simple: the black communities must lead the struggle against racism. This is accepted by labour movement leaders when they give solidarity to our sisters and brothers in Azania (racist South Africa) but not when it comes to black people in Britain.

The Labour Party must learn lessons from black people about the general election campaign. Nottingham East would have been won if Sharon Atkin had stood, not a candidate imposed by the national executive committee.

The previous year saw Roy Hattersley forced to move the reinstatement of Amir Khan and Kevin Scally — after a 14-month battle he started by getting them expelled from his Sparkbrook party in the first place. Since then he and four other Birmingham Labour MPs acted provocatively in attempting to order black party members not to attend a political meeting in the city.

Let's not waste any more months fighting the same internal disputes and instead join together and turn our fire on the Tories. It's time for the movement to step up solidarity with black people, women, the poor and all other members of the oppressed not attempt to ditch them. Labour leaders should stop fantasising about attracting 'yuppies' while attacking the alliances Labour needs to build with black people,

women, and other oppressed groups as 'chasing rainbows'.

United the working class can put Labour back in government. Divided we will continue to be defeated by the Tories.



By Marc Wadsworth

The Labour leadership's pathetic 'alternative' to us, the Black and Asian Committee, has totally failed. It played no part in the general election campaign, while we were actively involved in fighting for a Labour victory. Black Sections have succeeded precisely because we have begun to deliver where the old white-monopolised Labour Party has repeatedly sold-out on anti-racism.

No one is compelled to join a Black Section. Yet, despite the combined forces of the Labour leadership and Fleet Street opposing us, we have gone from strength to strength in cities like London, Bristol, Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham.

Labour conference debate on Ireland

TWELVE CONSTITUENCY Labour Parties have submitted resolutions or amendments on Ireland to this year's party conference. This should ensure that Ireland is timetabled for debate.

Four deal with discrimination in employment in northern Ireland. They reflect the major impact of the MacBride principles and of the Labour Committee on Ireland's campaign on this issue in the trade unions this year.

The LCI hopes that this year's conference will commit Labour to a campaign against employment discrimination, which will lay the basis for winning a majority for the MacBride principles in the party in the future. At present, a large number of unions, particularly those with members in northern Ireland, are not prepared to take a clear stand for practical measures against employment discrimination and still less on the question of Irish unity and self-determination.

This includes the Transport and General Workers' Union, whose northern Ireland organiser, John Freeman, is a prominent opponent of the MacBride principles. In a letter to the September issue of *Marxism Today*, Freeman categorically opposes the principles on the traditional grounds used against all anti-discrimination measures — that they would reduce job opportunities.

He argues that: 'In Belfast, unemployment is concentrated in the north and west of the city — the bulk of jobs are in the east. Protestants in West Belfast are more likely to experience labour market disadvantage than those who live in East Belfast.

This difference is more significant than those between Protestants and Catholics in West Belfast.'

This attempt to dissolve the discrimination that results in over 30 per cent unemployment amongst Catholic males compared to over 12 per cent for Protestants, does not hold water. The lines of geography precisely trace the lines of the nationalist and loyalist communities and are periodically reinforced by loyalist intimidation.

The location of industry in loyalist areas simply complements the systematic discrimination by public and private sector employers against individual Catholics.

Two resolutions to Labour Party conference, from Sheffield-Hillsborough and Tottenham CLPs, aim to commit the next Labour government to a policy of British withdrawal from Ireland within the lifetime

of the government. This policy, which has won the support of the Labour Coordinating Committee and the National Union of Railwaymen over the past year, has the potential to establish British withdrawal from Ireland as one of the policies which define the left in the labour movement.

This was the aim which the LCI set itself at this year's AGM, to push up the vote for British withdrawal from the 400,000 it received at last year's party conference, towards the one million-plus votes which issues like Black Sections, removal of US bases and so on regularly secure.

Unfortunately, the resolutions tie the call for British withdrawal in the lifetime of one parliament to 'scrapping' or renegotiating the Anglo-Irish Accord. Whilst laudable in itself, this may obscure the increasing support being won for the

policy of British withdrawal within the trade unions and CLPs.

Finally there is a resolution from Nuneaton which aims to suppress the debate within the British labour movement on Ireland by denouncing Sinn Fein as fascist and claiming it has no 'constructive part to play in the resolution of the conflict'. The aim of this is to outlaw the dialogue with Sinn Fein initiated by the GLC and many other Labour councils.

The effect would be to exclude from debate on Ireland the elected representatives of 35 per cent of the nationalist community and the main proponents of the solution of British withdrawal and self-determination for Ireland. Thus the resolution is simply an attempt to introduce censorship into the debate on Ireland which is only just beginning in the labour movement.

'Winning the majority'

The Labour Women's Action Committee is organising a conference in Lambeth Town Hall, South London, on 21 November, to look at some of the key developments of last year and initiate discussion on the policy priorities Labour must have to win the support and involvement of women — the majority of the population.

This will include discussions on part-time work and low pay, on the TUC women's department and women's representation in the trade unions, on local government women's committees, on improving legislation on rape and pornography, and on the review of the Labour women's organisation.

Taking up the low vote Labour won from

women in the June election and how to build up support, the conference will discuss the link between these policies and structural changes within the party.

Registration costs £3 (£1.50). Credentials and background papers available from Anne Kane, London Organiser, 11 Broadway House, Jackman Street, London E8.

Solidarity, policy and proportional representation

TONY BENN announced earlier this month that the Campaign Group, the Socialist Society and Conference of Socialist Economists would be holding a conference at Chesterfield, in November, to discuss socialist policy. Socialist Action asked Benn to explain how he saw the role of the conference, and also his views on one of the key issues that will be discussed at Labour Party conference — proportional representation.

AFTER THE deputy leadership election in 1981 the left took the decision, which I think was correct, that it should play its part in trying to win the election and concentrate on policy.

Second the miners strike became a touchstone. Whatever view you may have about the future of society, if you are not there when the going gets rough you are of no use.

These steps were followed by the article in *New Socialist*, 'Benism without Benn' — which signalled not just a realignment but some sort of break in the left.

The Campaign Group has confirmed the views it took when we decided to go along with the miners and printers. We have also attempted to reopen the debate on policy in the party. For this reason the Campaign Group has produced three major pamphlets — the third of which will come out this week.

The first was *A Million Jobs a Year* — to tackle the question of how you restore full employment. The second was Ben Lowe's pamphlet arguing for withdrawal from NATO, for peace and for non-alignment. The third is on the trade unions — with a forward by Jim Mortimer.

Board

But it is clear that there must be a more general policy response. Therefore the idea was developed by members of the Campaign Group, by the Socialist Society, by the Conference of Socialist Economists, by Jim Mortimer and people of that type, that we needed a conference which would look not at the performance of Tory ministers, not at the internal struggle within the Labour Party, but at the changes that are taking place in the world and how socialists should respond.

We wanted a broadly based conference with as many constituencies as possible, with the Campaign groups, with union involvement. We also wanted it after Labour Party conference so that it didn't get diverted into tactical discussions about how to handle that conference. Indeed the conference is not about internal Labour Party matters.

In addition to opening and closing plenaries, and a large number of workshops, there will be three mini-conferences within the conference.

The first will be on peace and non-alignment and the direction of American policy in the Gulf and Central America. The domestic im-

plication will be that if you can lift the cold war fear from the minds of the British people, then you lift from both of them and us an inhibition about socialism.

The second will be about the shape of the economy, the changes in technology, the centralisation of power, the shifts in the nature of the workforce, and about how unions organise in entire areas which have been neglected. There will be a great deal of discussion about the role of the unions.

The third conference is on the question of state power, civil liberties, democracy, and discrimination.

Strong

We considered that if you are going to defeat Mrs Thatcher you have to attack the clutch of ideas that are behind her. This is all the more necessary because of the vacuum that has opened up in what one might call the 'centre' of British politics — and also in the Labour Party.

If you take first the 'centre' Owen has now, probably, split three parties — Labour, the SDP, and the Liberals (because a section of the radical Liberals won't go along with the merger). McLennan, the new SDP leader, has insisted that the new party's support for nuclear weapons will be part of a merger deal. That whole initiative has collapsed — except insofar as the fragments that are left can be financed, used, and supported to inflict further damage on the Labour Party. That was what they were about in the first place.

Campaign

Second you have from some people in the Labour Party the same responses as after 1959. I mention this because, in some respects, I played the part in 1959 of coordinating the campaign. I ran the television, everybody said it was the best campaign we had ever had, and at the end of it we were defeated! The response was also the same — it was said that we had been defeated, but that the leadership had been established.

Then, almost immediately, the voices of despair began. Douglas Jay said we should change the name of the Labour Party to the Democratic Party. The editor of the *New Statesman*, a man called Johnson, said nationalisation was an albatross which should be dropped. Hugh Gaitskell said we should abandon Clause 4.

I am not saying that there are



Tony Benn at the Notts miners gala. With him are Raquel Dixon from Nicaragua and Ray Chadburn, Notts NUM.

exact parallels, but having lived through that period I do know that very strong parallels exist and that the lessons are relevant. One parallel that does not exist, however, is that Harold Macmillan was well to the left of 1987 Labour Party policy in his commitment to full employment, welfare and detente.

Socialism

The only way to deal with this situation is to have an absolutely open discussion about socialism. The response isn't to do what the Independent Labor Party (ILP) did in the 1930s when it got disgusted and left the party, or what Stafford Cripps did with his Popular Front, or what the Bevanites did with their parliamentary fraction — just being difficult within the House of

Commons with few, or no roots outside parliament or in the trade unions. We must attempt to go to the heart of the matter so as to win the support of the majority in the Labour Party and trade unions — and in so doing to educate a lot of other people fed up with the SDP, fed up with the Liberals, and fed up with the Tories.

We are not proposing a decision making conference. Perhaps the word 'forum' would have been better, because after a forum nothing happens except that they plan another one.

Coalition

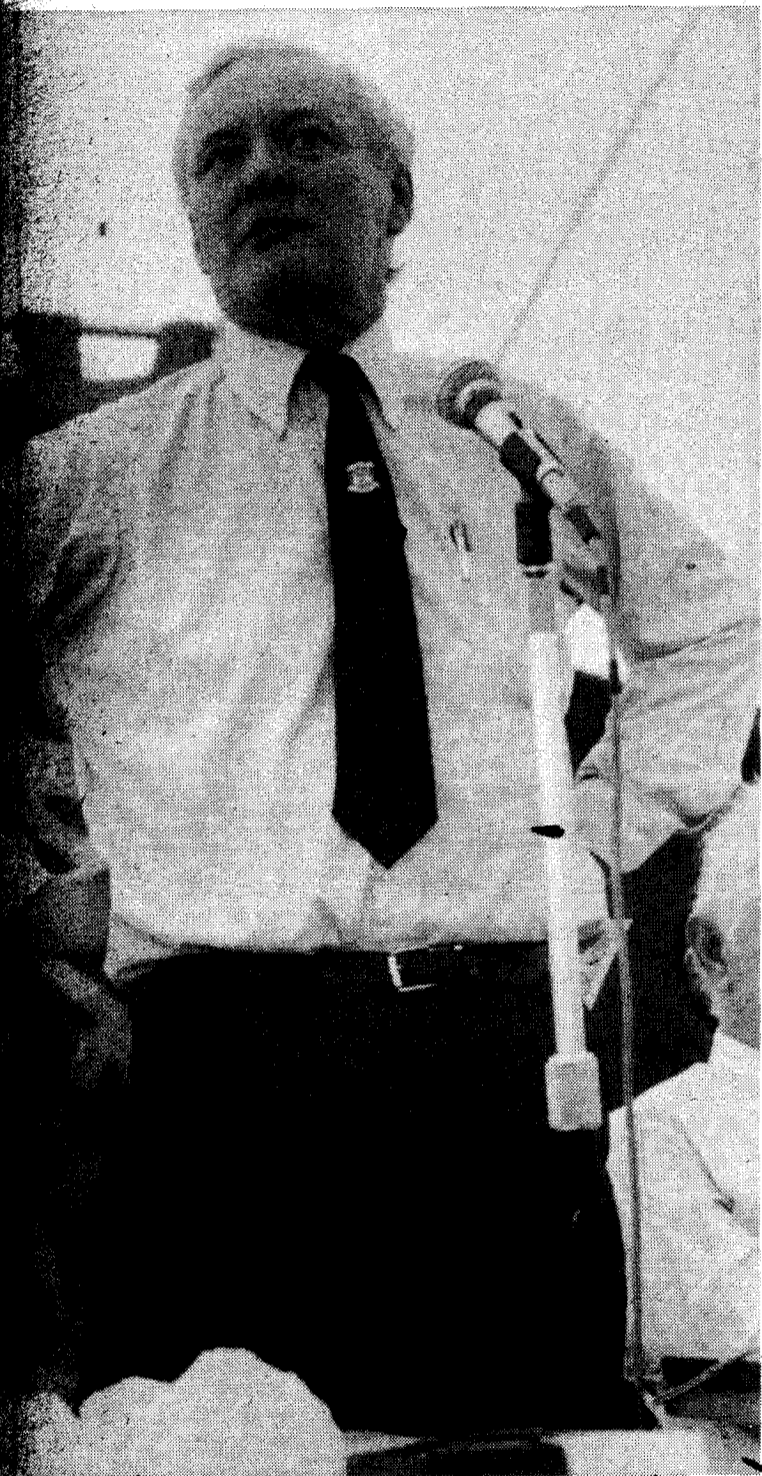
On one question that is going to be discussed at Labour Party conference, proportional representation I have always opposed it. PR would inevitably be followed by

coalition. And coalition does a whole number of things. First it is aimed to prevent the election of a Labour government with radical policies. With PR there would never have been a Labour government — including the government of 1945. Proportional representation must be the shortest suicide note in history.

Future

Second it denies the electorate a chance of influencing the future. You vote for the candidates and the party of your choice but then, since none of these parties are capable of succeeding, the real policy on which you are governed is decided after the election. PR means that there is zero vote for any policy followed — because nobody knows what the policy is until after the

Proportional



lection is over.
Third certain forms of proportional representation would destroy the very strong link between the MP and the constituency and any element of accountability. Sixty to eighty people come along each week to my advice surgery. Truthfully, unless you are prepared to address your mind to local problems, and fight for the people coming to see you, you're not rooted in the community.

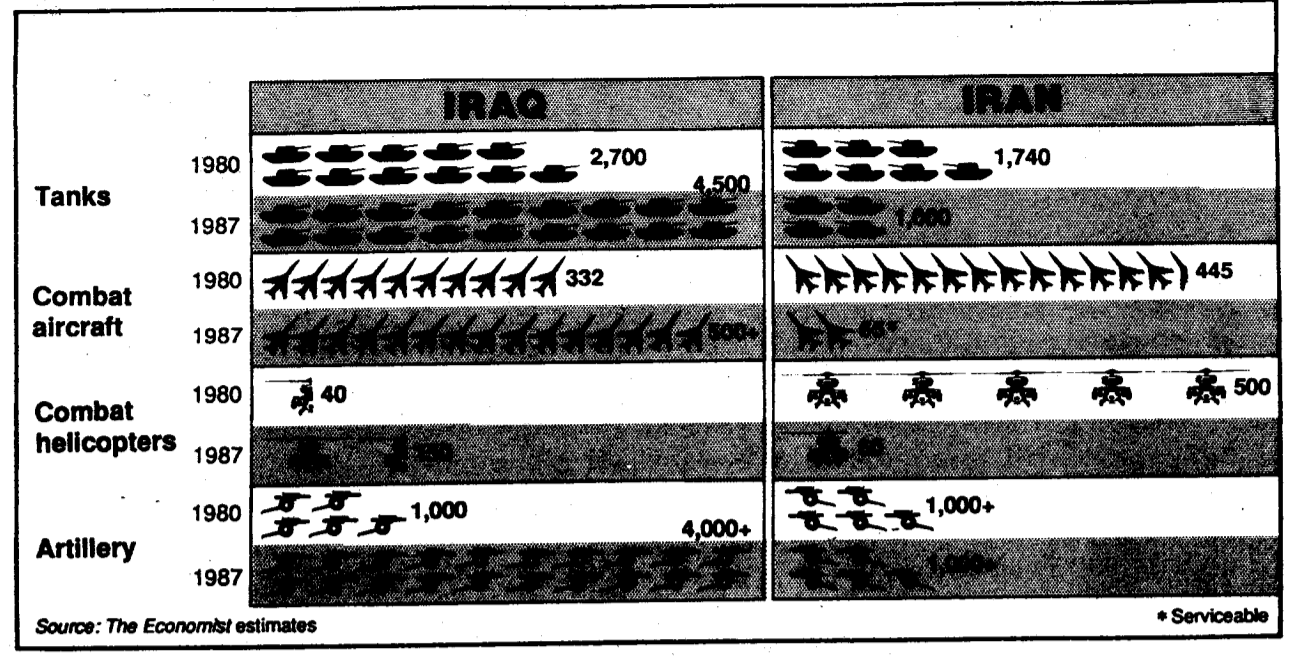
Evade

Fourth, PR allows politicians to evade responsibility. At the end of the parliament they say 'Well I don't like it, but it was the price we had to pay to get the support of this group or that group.' At present you at least can see policy making in the open.

What happens under proportional representation is that the civil service establishment governs. Italy has had 60 governments since the war. None of them had any particular power in the decision making process of society and were particularly powerless in dealing with the economy, or the financial sector, or the civil service.

Wrong

There are people who support PR on the principled grounds that until you win over 50 per cent of the vote you can't change anything. I respect that view but I think they are wrong.



No arms embargo against Iran

RONALD REAGAN and the British government are whipping up hysteria in order to force an arms embargo against Iran through the UN security council. Labour Party conference will also debate and be asked to support a similar call.

Socialists should clearly reject the proposal to introduce an arms embargo against Iran. Its content today is simply to disarm Iran in the context of the huge build-up of US, British and other imperialist warships in the Gulf.

Moreover it is the height of hypocrisy. The United States has supplied arms to Iran. Britain allowed London to be used as the chief base for Iran to buy arms. Their proposal for an arms embargo comes when they have sent their own fleets into the Gulf. The demand of socialists must be for the withdrawal of all US and British warships and military from the area.

It is ridiculous to think that the bloody hands of Reagan and Thatcher can play any positive role in the Gulf. The US and British call for an arms embargo is not for the sake of 'world peace' still less is it for the sake of the oppressed and imprisoned inside Iran — the US has raised no objection to Khomeini's internal policies.

By Jude Woodward

The sole reason for the pressure from the US for an arms embargo is to ensure the outcome to the Iran/Iraq war that it desires, and at the same time to apply pressure on the Iranian regime on a series of questions concerning US policy in the Gulf.

While the Iranian regime is both brutal and reactionary, socialists should give not the slightest support to the efforts of imperialism to impose its policy by force in the Gulf.

Patrol

The bombing of an Iranian patrol ship by a US helicopter last Monday was not a 'snap judgement' according to the Pentagon. It was the logical next step in the military and diplomatic policy pursued over the last months by the US in the Gulf. Its goal is to force Iran to back off from its war with Iraq.

This intervention has had a number of elements — the direct build up of the imperialist fleet, the attempt to impose the UN ceasefire resolution, the call for an arms embargo against Iran, and a series of provocations and incidents in the Gulf itself, ranging from the reflagging of tankers to this direct military assault on an Iranian ship. The US military offensive, with British support, can only escalate.

The military build up by Britain and the US in particular since the end of July, is itself the extension of the policy over the last five years. The chief goal of this policy has been to defend Iraq, and prevent it being decisively defeated by Iran in the war. Alongside this the US has sought to place pressure on the Khomeini regime to pursue a policy that is more conciliatory towards US policy in the Gulf.

Over the last five years, as the table reproduced from *The Economist* shows, the flow of arms into the area

has overwhelmingly been to the benefit of Iraq. The US, Britain and Sweden have had a public policy of not selling arms to Iran since the overthrow of the Shah in 1980. This has not stopped legal and illegal arms sales continuing but always with strings attached and at a significantly reduced rate.

Since 1983 the US has stepped up its campaign for an arms embargo, and successfully 'persuaded' South Korea and Italy to cancel important orders. The chief arms suppliers to Iran today are China, North Korea, Israel and countries in the Eastern bloc. Iran has also received US weapons left behind in Vietnam.

Policy

However the US has not pursued a simple policy of cutting off all support to Iran. As the revelations of 'Irangate' demonstrated, the US is more than prepared to sell arms to Iran in certain circumstances — and these circumstances have nothing to do with the trivial matter of the release or non-release of hostages. The goal is to shift the policy of the Khomeini regime closer to that of the US in the Gulf, or to build up a wing of the regime that supports US policy more directly. Alongside this the US also promotes alternative secular capitalist forces inside Iran — but to apply pressure on, rather than replace, Khomeini at this point in time.

The reason for imperialism's concern about the outcome of the war in the Gulf area. The revolution which took place in Iran tore the Shah's repressive state apparatus up by the roots and destroyed or weakened many of its key elements, including the officer corps of the army, the secret police, and upper echelons of the state bureaucracy.

However the working class itself was unable to impose its own solution to the situation which unfolded in Iran, and the bourgeoisie was able to secure an alternative of its own.

Khomeini's tremendous personal standing as the key exiled opponent of the Shah's regime was the chief strength of the solution imposed. Khomeini was the only force acceptable to the Iranian bourgeoisie who could command the support of the majority of the Iranian population.

However an indication of the weakness of the bourgeoisie is that it had to rely to a high degree on the institutions of the Islamic church to impose its solution — the only serious structures to have survived the revolution intact. The clergy were also able to play an enhanced social role due to the identification of the church with the movement against the Shah.

However the state established around Khomeini is exceptionally weak as an institutional structure, its ability to survive has depended upon a continuous reactionary mobilisation of the population, particularly the petty bourgeoisie, in the ideological framework of Islamic fundamentalism.

This mobilisation was the basis on which Khomeini carried through his counterrevolution, destroying the shoras and working class organisation, rolling back the mobilisation of women by the imposition of the veil and other

repressive laws, defeating the Kurdish national struggle, and destroying democratic rights.

The war against Iraq, which began as a just war of defence against Iraqi invasion, was also rapidly turned to this end — of maintaining a reactionary mobilisation of the population and winning their acquiescence to the destruction of civil and democratic rights. After the initial invasion was defeated the war was prolonged by Iran — becoming reactionary on both sides.

From 1985, and even earlier, it has been clear that Iran was winning the war against Iraq. And this is when the problems for US policy in the region began to intensify.

Khomeini has never been a satisfactory, nor sufficiently stable regime from the point of view of US imperialism. It was an emergency solution to the situation created by the overthrow of the Shah. The hostility to both the US and Britain, which has been a clear element in the popular mobilisation creates important problems for US policy in the entire Middle East.

Confined to the borders of Iran Khomeini is an unsatisfactory, but acceptable, alternative to more deep-going social revolution in Iran. Certainly the US has no objection to Khomeini's repressive internal policies. But exported beyond its borders it threatens to destabilise a number of regimes in the area.

US imperialism is pursuing a policy of, on the one hand, seeking to build up forces supportive to it within Iran, and also to prevent an Iranian victory in the Iran/Iraq war.

Arms supplies, particularly of aircraft, to Iraq now gives it virtually unchallenged superiority in the air. Iraqi planes have been virtually unchallenged in stepped up bombing behind Iranian lines, on Iranian shipping, and on the Kharg Island oil terminal in recent weeks. Most seriously of all the US and its allies have now put their fleets into the Gulf and will, if needed, use them against Iran.

Any arms embargo against Iran is simply to call for it to be disarmed in the face both of a direct US military build up, and in the face of a growing arms superiority on the side of the Iraqis. The call for an arms embargo against both countries is a fake. First the US will continue to supply Iraq. Second the most powerful forces in the area are now the imperialist fleets.

Attack

While continuing to call for a settlement of the war on the basis of previously agreed frontiers, socialists should give no credibility to the claims of the US or Britain to be seeking 'peace' through the UN. Only Iran and Iraq can agree the terms of a peace. Nor should we call on the imperialists to police such a peace through future arms embargoes or other measures — that is a pure cover for their own policies in the region.

The well publicised nature of the Iranian regime is used to cover over the far more reactionary, and far more powerful role of the United States. It is also used to cover up the equally reactionary regime of Saddam Hussein in Iraq.



Philippines crisis deepens

THE DEMOCRATIC opening won by workers and peasants in the Philippines following their overthrow of the Marcos dictatorship is closing fast. President Corazon Aquino has responded to the failed coup attempt led by Col. Gregorio Honasan not by mobilising workers and peasants but by further moves to placate the military.

The two members of her cabinet most opposed by the military high command — Joker Arroyo and Teodoro Locsin — were sacked last Thursday, 17 September. Arroyo was replaced by Catalino Macareg Jr who served as Marcos's justice minister from 1979-80.

Her placatory moves have simply served to embolden the most right-wing forces. Leading right-winger, Salvador Laurel, resigned from the government to increase the pressure for a terror campaign against the mass movement and the rural-based guerrillas of the New People's Army. Coup leader Honasan, still at large in Manila, transmits radio appeals and gives press interviews. In a 15-minute appeal telephoned to a Manila radio station, Honasan reiterated calls for the overthrow of Aquino.

By Nick Adams

Moves to counter the increasing militarisation were announced by Leandro Alejandro, secretary general of the New Patriotic Alliance coalition known as Bayan. But immediately following his press conference call for protest strike action, Alejandro was gunned down. Many popular leaders have been forced underground, sought by the police.

Alejandro is the second popular leader to have been assassinated in the last ten months. Last November leader and founder member of the KMU trade union movement, Rolando Olalia, was murdered. The Olalia killing was also associated with a coup attempt. Massive mobilisations then forced Aquino to sack defence minister Juan Ponce Enrile whose 'boys' were associated with the coup plot. Enrile, now leader of the parliamentary opposition to Aquino, is still closely linked with Honasan.

The coup attempts, the manoeuvres of the Aquino

government, repressive campaigns both of the official military and of the unofficial armies still held by the big landowners reflect the divisions within the country's ruling class over how to deal with the continuing striving for land and labour rights by the country's toilers.

This is also preoccupying the US government. Washington claims to remain firmly behind the government. Following the defeat of the coup, the White House announced that the president 'is gratified and relieved that President Aquino has resolved the crisis faced by her government over the past two days'.

At the same time there are indications that Washington is hedging its bets and is certainly pressuring Aquino to take a strong line. There were strong rumours to the effect that Enrile hid in the US embassy at the time of the coup and that Honasan has relations with the CIA.

Moreover, according to the *International Herald Tribune* on 8 September, senior White House officials warned against Aquino turning 'her attention to dealing with a fractious military' following the coup attempt.

The US wants stability and that means appeasing the military, many of whose central officers it has trained. US officials say that though just 14 of the 86 Philippine battalions were involved in the coup, almost 90 per cent of the highly politicised armed forces were in sympathy with it.

US bankers meanwhile are increasing pressure for repayment of the coun-

try's \$28.5 billion foreign debt. Such pressure underlay the Aquino government's decision to increase oil prices by 50 per cent. The oil price hike would have had a devastating impact on living standards as transport costs would have been pushed onto an already poor people.

Four million people followed the general strike call, to protest the rises, initiated by the KMU, the largest mobilisation since the overthrow of Marcos and the occasion for the Honasan coup attempt two days later.

The protest became a focus for wide discontent of the popular masses. It was supported by the pro-government Trade Union Congress of the Philippines, by student and other popular organisations, and by the Peasant Movement of the Philippines (KMP).

The KMP has been growing fast. Failure of the Aquino regime to implement a radical land reform have been met by intensified demands from a land hungry peasantry. Those with land are being bled by punitive mortgage payments and exorbitant rents, and find themselves scissored between high prices for fertilisers and irrigation, and low prices for their produce.

Popular demands for land, democratic rights and defence of living standards inevitably strike at the central role of the US itself. Opposition has grown not only to debt repayments but also to Washington's maintenance of the Clark airfield and the Subic Bay naval base used not only for maintaining its domination over the Philippines but over the entire strategic region of the Pacific.

How to stem the tide of the mass movement is the prime concern of both imperialism and the country's ruling class. Cracks have appeared amongst them — but whether it be by government action or another coup attempt, deeper repression is on the way.

What's behind the US-Soviet arms deal?

AFTER MONTHS of speculation, the United States and the Soviet Union look set to hold a summit in the autumn which will lead to the signing of a treaty that scraps all intermediate-range nuclear weapons in Europe. The news was announced on Friday 18 September, at the end of three days of negotiations between Soviet and US foreign secretaries, Eduard Shevardnadze and George Schultz. But what exactly does it represent? CAROL TURNER reports.

THE arms-elimination treaty that the USA and Soviet Union look set to sign would be the first of its type. It would remove from Europe all nuclear missiles with a range of between 300 and 3400 miles.

That means the USA would remove 332 Pershing 2s and ground-launched cruise missiles situated in Britain, West Germany, Italy and Belgium, as well as halting their deployment in the Netherlands. That means scrapping 462 Soviet SS-20s targeted on Europe and 221 more pointing at Japan and China. As the British media was quick to proclaim (after years of a dirty propaganda war against the women's peace camp), it would include the cruise missiles sited at Greenham Common.

The prospect of such a treaty has been piously hailed as 'an historic first' by the Western media. It would also be the first arms treaty of any type signed by Ronald Reagan during the whole of his presidency — just what the doctor ordered to shore up the US premier's flagging political fortunes, and no doubt a not-insignificant fact in determining the timing of the announcement.

Nonetheless, an agreement which led to a reduction in nuclear stock-piles can only be welcomed. Whatever Reagan's intentions, it is a step towards eroding the cold war

climate created by America and supported by Western Europe since the end of the Second World War. It does not undermine the defence of the Soviet Union. It begins to break down the 40-year old myth that the Soviet Union is armed to the teeth and poised to invade the 'freedom-loving democracies' of the West.

Removing some nuclear weapons from Europe would also provide a massive boost to the anti-nuclear movement.

While Reagan has been quick to claim the credit, political leaders in West Europe have been less enthusiastic. Margaret Thatcher reaffirmed: 'I will never give up Britain's independent nuclear deterrent ...'

In an interview with the West German *Der Spiegel* magazine, she explained: 'You must see defence as a whole, and I have already made clear that, in my opinion, we should not disarm much further in nuclear arms.'

The British media too have returned to the theme of a conventional imbalance of weapons. They have also returned to their favourite: dire warnings about the 'dangers of nuclear disarmament'.

Monday 21 September's editorial in the *Independent* played this tune. Under the heading 'Avoiding utopianism over arms', the leader article explained: 'This paper has argued that the double

zero option is inherently flawed because it involves the elimination of an entire category of weapons and so removes a rung in the ladder of escalation upon which NATO's doctrine of flexible response rests.

'The United States,' concludes the editorial, 'will do such deals with the Soviet Union as it believes to be in its best interests. The extent to which such understandings are also in Europe's interests will be largely coincidental. This realisation should now stimulate a reappraisal of Europe's out-dated and distorting dependence on the United States.'

War

Pursuing its European 'third force' position, the *Independent* concludes: 'The more the United States and Russia prepare to discuss the reduction of their strategic missiles, the more relevant the nuclear deterrents of Britain and France become to European security.' The paper expressed fear over the 'decoupling' of the United States and Western Europe.

This is a minority view among the British ruling class, and the leader writer exaggerates the differential between the interests of the USA and of Europe to drive the newspaper's line home.

But the point made is a real one. Proposals for any nuclear disarmament by the United States in Europe inevitable create additional pressures by the West European bourgeoisies for a build-up of conventional arms — which they will have to pay for.

In plain language, Reagan has decided that Europe must pay more of its share of the arms race. This is part of the controversy between the US

and NATO allies over the Gorbachev proposals.

But the US not merely is quite happy to off-load some of the costs of the military build-up onto its European 'allies' but has much bigger fish to fry. Firstly Reagan wants an arms deal to recover some of his domestic political credibility.

Secondly, a key aspect of the discussions with the Soviet leadership was over what are euphemistically referred to as 'regional problems' — which is US code for Central America, South Africa, and the Gulf. The US has undoubtedly demanded a more compliant attitude on policy towards Nicaragua, for example, in return for the arms deal. Gorbachev would be perfectly prepared to sell out quite a few revolutions for an arms deal.

The agreement reflects both the power and the only partial success of the European movement against the missiles since 1979. Its power is that it has forced a bit of a climb-down by the US — and a bigger one by its West European allies. Its limitation is that the movement was not powerful enough to stop the missiles totally — and the people of Nicaragua and South Africa may have to pay the price for that.

The same power that was generated by the anti-missiles movement now has to be directed against the consequences of whatever behind-the-scenes 'agreements' have been arrived at between Reagan and Gorbachev.

This issue will also face Labour Party conference. The emphasis of the party leadership on the NATO commitment and on conventional arms spending is likely to be part of a call for a big conventional weapons build-up in Europe.



What the peace accord means for El Salvador

THE PEACE accord signed in Guatemala by the five Central American governments at the beginning of August has been strongly attacked by US president, Ronald Reagan. On Saturday 12 September, Reagan said on US radio that the plan 'falls short of the safeguards for democracy and our national security'; and in an interview in a US magazine he has described the accord as 'fatally flawed'. The Reagan administration is pushing for continued contra funding. Congress is to be asked to agree to a further \$270 million of contra aid.

But the victory scored by Nicaragua has further damaged the Reagan administration, already severely bruised by the 'contragate' exposures. In the last issue of Socialist Action, JOHN SMITH explained the scope of Nicaragua's victory. In the following article he explains what the accord means for El Salvador and the forces of the FMLN-FDR, the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front-Revolutionary Democratic Front.

FROM the very beginning El Salvador's president Duarte tried to scupper the plan, drawn up by Costa Rican president Oscar Arias, which has become known as the Guatemala peace accord. Now that he has been forced to sign it, Duarte is doing everything possible to prevent its success.

The most spectacular episode in Duarte's anti-Arias machinations occurred in mid-June, just twelve days prior to the summit meeting of the five Central American presidents which was due to take place on 25 June.

After receiving his orders from US envoy, Phillip Habib, Duarte moved to get the meeting postponed. The breathing space would allow the Reagan administration to campaign for its own 'regional solution'. Few people thought that the summit would reconvene at the new scheduled date of 6-7 August.

But Duarte paid an enormous political price for his open acting as Reagan's lap dog. His attempt since February to block the peace moves has taken place against the background of advance both by the military campaign of the FMLN and of the resurgent mass movement.

Additionally, Duarte's inept and corrupt response to last year's tragic earthquake and the accelerating economic calamity was leaving his government with no legitimacy whatsoever. Duarte was forced to sign the accord literally for his own survival.

Having signed it, Duarte then cynically sought to use provisions in the accord for what he knew was the opposite of its intentions, to bolster his stance against a renewed dialogue with the FMLN/FDR.

Duarte's moves were backed up by media reports which claimed that the Salvadorean revolutionaries were opposed to the accord, that it represented a 'big setback' for them, and that they were divided against the Sandinistas.

But the accord conforms to the line of march charted for five years by the FMLN. This is focussed around the demand for a dialogue with the government, for a ceasefire, and the proposals for a 'government of broad participation' as the political outcome of this process.

Such a government of broad participation — known by the acronym 'GAP' — within which the FMLN/FDR would participate alongside all sectors of the Salvadorean people, would exclude the ruling oligarchy and the military high command.

Over the past eighteen months, the demand for a peace dialogue has been taken up by the resurgent trade union and mass movement in the government-held cities. Support for the dialogue is a principal point of unity of the recently formed UNTS (National Unity of Salvadorean Workers), which is the broadest alliance of workers, farmers, slum-dwellers, and students in the country's history.

The GAP proposal was never a ruse or clever manoeuvre. It is a central part of the FMLN's strategic perspective, whose goal for the El Salvador revolution they define as 'the conquest of peace, national sovereignty, and authentic democracy'.

The FMLN estimate that with a powerful revolutionary army, and mass workers and peasants organisations steered

through years of extreme repression and struggle, these classes would be able to exert their leadership of the GAP.

The adoption of the GAP proposal corresponded to a fundamental change in the nature of the struggle since the formation of the FMLN/FDR in 1980. What began as a civil war has turned into a war of national liberation, a confrontation — increasingly direct — between the people of El Salvador and the US.

The government army of 1980 was defeated by the FMLN between 1981 and 1983, but the US government stepped in to take direct command of the war, spending \$3000 million in expanding the size of the armed forces by 450 per cent.

Yet in the face of this army, of 80 helicopter gunships for a country of the size and topography of Wales, the FMLN have not just held their ground. They have extended their military operations to all parts of the country and have, along with the FDR, succeeded in promoting militant consensus of the oppressed classes and middle sectors around their peace proposals.

They have brought the last semi-democratic facade of the US counter-insurgency war — the Duarte government — to the point of near collapse, tearing off its 'democratic' veil and exposing its true nature.

Duarte has been forced to agree to meet the FMLN/FDR in what will be the first face-to-face en-

counter since 1985.

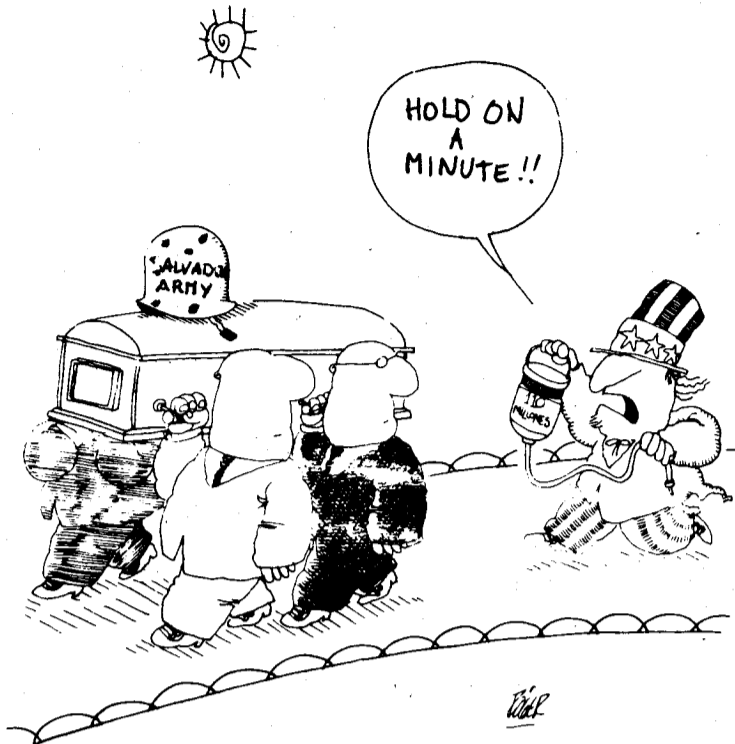
Now Duarte is claiming the mantle of the Guatemala accord to place all sorts of absurd conditions on such negotiations: that the FMLN agree to lay down their arms and recognise the legitimacy of this government. He is claiming that the FMLN be treated in exactly the same way as the Nicaraguan contras.

This attempt to manoeuvre the FMLN into a position of opposition to the peace for which they have been fighting, to create divisions within the FMLN/FDR under the guise of so-called 'symmetry' — is already coming apart. The call for Duarte to negotiate is coming from a wide array of forces. This is because the parallel with the contras in El Salvador is not

the FMLN, who are unaffected by the accord's proposed cut-off of external military funding, but the Duarte regime itself.

He is as much as creation of Washington as are the contras. The US imposed Duarte upon El Salvador's rulers. On several occasions, strenuous backing from the US was necessary to scotch coup plots stemming from within the extreme right-wing military High Command. Now, with Duarte distancing himself from Washington, factions within the administration may even come to regard a military coup as a last-ditch means to scuppering the regional peace process.

Either way, the days of the Duarte regime are numbered.



'forced to sign ...'

'NAPOLEON Duarte was forced to sign the Guatemala agreement because of the very deep political-military weakening of his government. The country finds itself immersed in the biggest social, political and economic crisis in its national history. Duarte finds himself in the middle of growing popular discontent and a popular consensus for peace ...'

'Duarte, in his moment of greatest weakness, naively attempted to isolate and defeat the FMLN with a simple diplomatic manoeuvre (something) neither he, nor his troops, have been able to achieve and never will ...'

'The Duarte government does not have the capacity to bring forward a true national democratisation process. It has been unable to resolve the present labour conflicts or to control the army responsible for the death of over 60,000 compatriots and for massive violations of human rights ...'

'The people demand the formation of a government of national consensus in El Salvador ...'

Statement of FMLN General Command, 11 August 1987.

US, France behind Chad aggression

MASSIVE military assistance by France and the US has allowed Chad to carry out a raid on Maaten-es-Sarra in Libya. France has 1200 troops in Chad and runs the Sparrowhawk air 'defence' system which includes Hawk missiles, Mirage F1 fighters, Jaguar fighter-bombers, reconnaissance and Transall transport aircraft and radar units.

The French personnel



and hardware have been decisive in the war efforts of the Chadian regime of president Hissène Habré

which has over the last years targeted both opposition forces within the country and Libya. Chad

disputes Libya's right to the Aouzou Strip in the south of the country.

It is now clear that Washington is encouraging Habré to intensify attacks on Libya. The US have provided Habré with Stinger missiles for its aggression against Libya. The Stinger is a light, effective, shoulder-launched anti-aircraft missile which the CIA has also provided to the Afghan contras.

Libya displayed to the world's press 18 such launchers that it had captured following its defeat of the Maaten-es-Sarra raid. Un-

til then, Washington had strongly denied that it was supplying Stingers.

Following the regaining of the Aouzou Strip, Libyan leader Col Gaddafi declared that the war was over. But, under Washington's urging, Chad rejected the peace moves. The US's bellicose designs have been backed up by a simultaneous diplomatic offensive. Last week a UN committee agreed on Chad's initiative to hold a general assembly debate on 'aggression against and occupation of Chad by Libya'.

World in action

Nicaragua

NICARAGUA has become the first country in the western hemisphere to adopt a sweeping law guaranteeing the political, economic, language, cultural and religious rights of Indians and Black people. The law established autonomous governments on Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, where most Nicaraguan Indians and Black people live. Nicaraguan leader Tomas Borge described the law decision as 'historic'. He said it was a 'kick in the gut of the Buffalo Bills and the scalp collectors', the hope for victims of racism 'from the North Pole to the South Pole.'

The majority of the country's three million people are Spanish-speaking mestizos, concentrated on the country's Pacific coast. On the Atlantic coast, there are 182,000 mestizos. There are also 75,000 Miskito Indians and 9,000 Sumo Indians with their own languages; and 26,000 Creole Blacks, 1,750 Garifonas and 850 Rama Indians who speak English. Divisions amongst these communities were fostered by the country's pre-revolutionary leaders. The autonomy process initiated by the Sandinistas has gone a long way to winning them to the revolution and uniting the entire country against the contras.

Palestinians

AT LEAST 41 people were killed in a terrorist air raid by Israel of the Ain Khilwe district of south Lebanon. Ain Khilwe, with a population of 50,000, is the largest Palestinian district in the area. The Israeli air force has bombed the south Lebanon region 20 times this year. Contrary to Israeli claims that the strikes are against 'terrorist' — that is, PLO — bases, dozens of civilian homes have been bombed.

Washington, however, has given immediate cover to Israeli charges of 'terrorism'. Last week, the Reagan administration closed down the PLO office in the US capitol justifying its action in similar terms.

New Caledonia

The overwhelming majority of indigenous Melanesian Kanaks — some 83 per cent boycotted a referendum in the French Pacific colony of New Caledonia concerning the country's independence. The results of the 'referendum' were a foregone conclusion designed to give a democratic facade to France's continued colonial rule. A 57 per cent majority of New Caledonia's population are European 'Caldoche' settlers, and the French government has been encouraging further settlement.

The claim of French government minister for overseas territories, Bernard Pons, that the 98 per cent majority in favour of staying part of France was 'a great victory' was really more wishful thinking. Only 58 per cent of those eligible voted. Films showing police clubbing pro-independence demonstrators further underline the flimsiness of the government's case. Only repression can maintain their colonial rule. Voting returns in the referendum were subject to huge regional variation. In Hienghene, were Jean-Marie Tjibaou, leader of the pro-independence Front de Liberation Nationaliste Kanak Socialiste (FLNKS — Kanaki socialist national liberation front) is mayor, the turnout was 13 per cent. Several polling booths failed to record a single vote. The FLNKS had called for the boycott. The referendum has been condemned by governments of other Melanesian islands — Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon islands — and by Australia.

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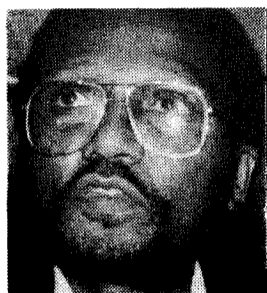
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Ban apartheid coal

FOUR HUNDRED and twenty-eight delegates crammed into Sheffield's City Hall last Saturday for a conference jointly organised by the NUM and the Anti-Apartheid Movement. The conference was called to organise action against the importing of South African coal, leading to its total banning. The list of conference participants included 103 delegates from NUM and Women Against Pit Closures organisations, 126 from other unions (including five national unions), 84 local anti-apartheid groups, 38 delegates representing 14 local authorities, and 77 Labour Party and other organisations.

One of those unable to attend was Cyril Rampaphosa, general secretary of the NUM of South Africa. Ramaphosa was denied a passport by the South African authorities. Pretoria said that in order to travel, Ramaphosa should apply for a passport from one of the designated 'homelands'. Doing so would not only have been against his principles, it would also have resulted in the miners leader becoming an alien in South Africa, unable to carry out his duties as the NUM general secretary. The conference condemned the travel ban imposed on Ramaphosa and adopted a '12-point programme of action against South African coal'. JON SILBERMAN reports.



'National action needed'

JIMMY NOLAN was at the conference representing Liverpool dockers who recently refused to handle a cargo of uranium because it came from Namibia. He welcomed the conference and resolutions that had been adopted by the unions for sanctions. 'Now we need some action on a national basis' he said.

SOUTH African unions were represented by MATE DISEKO of SACTU. 'The eyes of people in South Africa are on this conference' he said. 'The demand for sanctions comes from within South Africa itself — it was reaffirmed by this year's COSATU congress'.

ANC executive member, FRANCIS MELI answered a question from a miner at Silverwood colliery concerning the ANC's policy in relation to talks with African intellectuals. The statement they'd made in Dacca this summer helped to weaken the apartheid regime. Meli said that unless people fully understood what the ANC was doing they couldn't be expected to give whole-hearted support.

Meli emphasised the close relation between the struggles in South Africa and Britain. 'By engaging in solidarity with the struggle against apartheid you help to liberate yourselves'.

SWAPO representative, PANDULENI ITULA reminded conference to remember the other side of apartheid — its illegal colonial occupation of Namibia.

He spoke of the recent miners strike in Namibia and the tremendous repression faced by the newly formed unions. This conference, Itula predicted, would be very important, pointing to the successful campaign to win the release of Namibian trade union leader, Ben Uulenga.

ROSE KNIGHT, an NUR member, spoke of the coal boycott work done by her anti-apartheid group in Doncaster. 'Last November we organised a demonstration jointly with the miners — and we marched past Gunners Wharf, an unregistered port where South African coal is coming in. The key thing is to be constantly mobilising out on the streets'.



'Deep crisis of SA coal'

EXECUTIVE secretary of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, MIKE TERRY said that the 'South African coal industry is in crisis'. He applauded the action campaign of the NUM, pointing out that 'the French government took action only when the CGT union federation refused to unload the coal'.

'Shell may be the world's largest multinational company. But the people can speak and force even that company out of South Africa and Namibia' he said.



'Inspired by Winnie Mandela'

BETTY HEATHFIELD representing Women Against Pit Closures told the conference not to 'underestimate the power of women in this or any other struggle'. She paid tribute to the large numbers of women from the mining communities present at the conference.

The anti-apartheid struggle is special to coalfield women, she said. They had been 'inspired by South

African Women like Winnie Mandela who had given her husband to the movement; and Ruth Mompoti, forced into exile, who answered Thatcher's claim that sanctions would hurt the black majority with the words "how more hungry can my children be, and how much more can my children suffer?"

'Build for 24 October'

DOREEN WEPPLER, NUR, showed conference a copy of a union pamphlet reporting her and NUR executive member, Geoff Revel's recent trip to South Africa, during the rail strike there.



'We learnt a great deal from the fighting spirit of those people' she said. Wepler is secretary of Rail Against Apartheid, a rank and file-based campaign in the rail industry supported by the NUR executive. She called on all delegates to build the forthcoming national demonstration for sanctions on 24 October and ensure that trade union contingents were as strong as possible.

SARAH GOFF, representing Nottingham AA, spoke of the 300-strong demonstrator in Worksop to protest South African coal the previous Saturday, 12 September.

Led by a banner which read 'British miners — solidarity with South African miners', the march followed a labour movement conference earlier this year and has, said Goff, paved the way for a new AA group based on coalfield communities.

From the chair NUM general secretary, PETER HEATHFIELD, spoke of the importance of building on the conference to develop an action campaign. Heathfield said that we should be more than a 'revolutionary movement'.



Scargill condemns Ramaphosa travel ban

IN HIS opening address to conference, NUM president Arthur Scargill strongly denounced the travel ban imposed on South African NUM secretary, Cyril Ramaphosa. To loud applause Scargill proclaimed that this 'outstanding leader' of the working class had more right to a South African passport than the white racists who had denied him travel access.

Arthur Scargill told the conference of a huge campaign that had been launched internationally to gain a passport for Ramaphosa, and that as a result of this pressure, the racist regime had said that it will now issue a passport. Scargill conveyed a message from Ramaphosa that the moment the passport was in his hands he would honour his invitation to speak in Sheffield.

'The fact that comrade Ramaphosa is not on this platform' Scargill went on 'makes this conference more important. It's now our responsibility to put into operation those requests — yes, those demands — of our brothers and sisters in South Africa for sanctions

against their regime.'

Scargill chronicled the appalling conditions faced by South African and Namibian miners. 'The coal, the gold and the diamonds they produce is stained with blood' he said, as he spoke of the 48,000 miners who have lost their lives in the industry this century, and the daily violence faced by ordinary men and women.

'Union organisers are not allowed within a mile either of the camp or of the mine itself. Namibian leader, Ben Uulenga, had been arrested immediately on his return from Britain.'

He paid tribute to the miners who in the space of five short years had built such an outstanding trade union. Scargill said that the decision of the South

African miners to call their union the NUM after the British union was a striking confirmation of the principled course adopted by both organisations: of the historic strike of the British NUM in 1984-85 and of the historic strike of the South African NUM just concluded.

Arthur Scargill said that the recent miners strike had given an indication of the real strength of the South African people. 'As the result of that strike, there can be no doubt that the South African NUM has gained in status both nationally and internationally'.

Scargill spoke of the special responsibility of the British labour movement because of the enormous £12 billion worth of British investments 'helping to keep apartheid afloat' and he spoke of the importance of the international campaign to boycott Shell.

'You have to be optimistic and you have to have vision' Scargill said in arguing that mass action campaigns are effective, as

the anti-missiles movement and the women at Greenham Common had proved. 'By imposing sanctions, we know we will be speeding the day when apartheid is confined to the dustbin of history.'

Scargill said that the demand for sanctions had to be backed up by trade union action now. He cited the examples of the Liverpool dockers who recently refused to handle Namibian uranium, and of the 'magnificent' Dunnes strikers in pointing to the sort of action necessary.

'Each step we take, each decision that we make, each action that we undertake helps speed the day when our brothers like Cyril Ramaphosa and (NUM president) James Motlatsi can appear on a platform like this without having to beg for permission to travel from the country of their birth.'

'It helps speed the day when we can have on this platform probably the greatest of our members — albeit an honorary member — Nelson Mandela.'

'Those who suffer decide the means of their liberation'

TUC general secretary, Norman Willis, opened his remarks by saying that 'trade union success is about action. This conference will be judged on its actions, not by its speeches.' He said the goal of such action had to be mandatory and comprehensive sanctions until apartheid is ended — and that includes ending the grip on Namibia.

Willis, who had recently been to South Africa, answered the claim that South African coal was cheap. 'It may be cheap in terms of rands and £s, but in terms of the cost borne by society, it is the most expensive in the world'.

Coal is key to the South African economy, Willis explained. 'It's South Africa's second most important export after gold. The total production of coal in 1986 was 177 million tonnes; 45 million tonnes were sent for export, a half of which went to Europe.'

'Wherever Britain may be in the league table of coal importers from South Africa, we shouldn't be in that league at all. One tonne is too much' he said.

Whereas governments in Norway, Denmark and France had moved towards stopping imports of South African coal, the record of the British government on sanctions is 'deplorable' Willis charged.

To the suggestion that there was no adequate substitute for South African anthracite, Willis replied that 'Swaziland is capable of producing anthracite just as good as South Africa'. By changing to Swaziland anthracite, he said 'we would not only be dealing with South Africa but also lending assistance to the beleaguered Front Line States. The courage, tenacity and skill of the people in the Front Line States needs our support.'

Willis countered those who said that sanctions weren't the best way. 'Those who suffer have the right to demand the means of their liberation' he said. Sanctions are demanded by the liberation organisations and trade unions in both South Africa and Namibia. 'We don't impose action on them — they demand it and our job is to give it.'

'Their battle is our battle. Their freedom is our freedom.'

Programme of action

CONFERENCE adopted a detailed action programme against South African coal. Its implementation will be led and monitored by the NUM and AAM. The following are the areas covered by the programme:

- Raise the demand — coal sanctions now!
- Coal communities action against apartheid
- British government and EEC must act — coal sanctions now!
- Stop South African coal imports now!
- British mining houses out of South Africa and Namibia — South African mining houses out of Britain!
- No technology and equipment, recruitment, or research for the apartheid mining industry
- No agents for apartheid coal
- No apartheid propaganda
- Local authority action against apartheid
- Solidarity with the Namibian and South African miners

South Africa is the world's third largest coal exporter after Australia and the USA. The UK receives 1.6 per cent of South Africa's coal exports. In turn, South Africa is the second largest importer of British mining equipment. The chief British ports dealing with South African coal are Exeter, Avonmouth, Dundee, Ipswich, London, Trent, Goole, Colchester, Ramsgate and Southampton. The port of Derry in the north of Ireland is also heavily involved.

At least 16 South African pits are directly or indirectly controlled by foreign-based corporations. The following five companies produce over 25 per cent of all South Africa's exports: Consolidated Gold Fields, Royal Dutch Shell, BP, Lonhro, Burnet and Hallamshire, and Total.

To counter opposition to the mining houses and their agents in Britain, the South African Chamber of Mines has established an office in London.

Copies of the full action programme and background material from which the above information is taken are available from AAM, 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW.

Support the miners

THE MINERS have started their action. The entire labour movement must now rally behind them. Old links should be renewed. NUM members should be given platforms to explain their case. Their struggle against the coal board's new disciplinary code is vital not only for the coming battle in the pits but also for the entire struggle against the Tory government's attacks. **JON SILBERMAN** reports.

AMID calls for tougher action, the NUM started its overtime ban last Monday, 21 September. At first, the ban will be limited to coal cutting and development work in overtime, the union's national executive decided by a majority of 12 to 9 at its 17 September meeting.

Commenting on the decision, NUM president, Arthur Scargill said that this 'is the first form of industrial action that is going to be applied and the decision of our members in the individual ballot vote allows us to step up the action as the days and weeks go by if we feel it necessary.'

Scargill was soon reporting on 'mounting support for a more intensive overtime ban'.

Durham miners leaders expressed serious reservations about what they described as the 'soft option' adopted by the national executive. They called for a meeting of the executive in Brighton on the eve of Labour Party conference to stiffen the action.

Durham

Durham NUM secretary, Davy Hopper called for a limitation on weekend working, and a total ban on mid-week overtime work and holiday working. 'There is general condemnation in the coalfield of the current action as ineffective' he said. The Durham area council will be recalled on 5 October to consider the situation.

A meeting of the

Yorkshire executive on Tuesday, 22 September, also called for 'tougher action'. Yorkshire president Jack Taylor reported that 'the members believe that if you're taking action against the Board, it should be effective.'

Escalate

'My view is that eventually it will escalate — it should be as quickly as possible. The Yorkshire area would be balloting on 21/22 October for action short of a strike, he said, adding 'if it comes to a strike, so be it'.

Yorkshire, with 34,000 members, is the overwhelmingly largest area in the NUM. But reports from the significantly smaller NUM area of Notts indicate a similar pressure amongst union members for a tougher line.

Pressure

Lancashire area president, Roy Jackson reflected the strong pressure in that area in a call for stepped up action if the board hadn't moved within a fortnight.

Scargill said this 'clearly demonstrated the frustration and anger of our members, who see British Coal's new disciplinary code as a charter for removing activists and all of our members who disagree in any way with the board's dictatorial management'.

A meeting of the Scottish area affirmed the executive's stand. Scottish area secretary Eric Clarke said that he hoped 'this



'Still fully backing the miners'

MEMBERS of Lancashire Women Against Pit Closures (left to right: Margaret Mitchinson, Sylvia Pye, Dot Kelly, Irene Pennington and Marge Short) have rebuffed suggestions that coalfield women are any less in support of the NUM than they were during the strike. 'Once women are told what the code entails' they told Socialist Action, 'they're sure to support the miners. The code takes away basic rights — action can be taken against someone for things completely away from the pit. The complete right to say who works is put "under the discretion of management".' They described media claims of 'unnamable wives' who opposed action against the code as 'propaganda'.

Commenting on the cracking 74 per cent ballot majority in favour of action in the north-west, they pointed out that 'we didn't have that level of support during the strike — so a new unity has been forged in Lancs.' What would this unity mean? 'The ball is now in the Board's court' they said, pointing out that the Women Against Pit Closures group would be there to give support. 'We've been ticking over meeting fortnightly. We're now ready to move into action.'

philosophy prevails'. But the coal board appeared to be in no such conciliatory mood. They have told Arthur Scargill that in view of the overtime ban they had unilaterally suspended the industry's guaranteed five-day working week agreement — the first time this has happened in 40 years.

Coal boss Sir Robert

Haslam warned that suspension of the guaranteed week could mean miners being sent home if they refused to carry out 'normal' working because of the ban.

Policy

The board rejected the NUM's last ditch attempt to resolve the matter by

negotiation, refusing talks at ACAS. Instead they insisted that they had the right to decide whether or not a miner works at a pit, irrespective of an industrial tribunal finding in the miner's favour. A condition of talks was that the existing disciplinary arrangement which has existed for 40 years should be ripped up.

'It's about getting rid of union leaders'

'THE CODE has been introduced mainly to sort out leaders of the trade union movement' Bob Burnett, president of Barnburgh NUM told Socialist Action. 'It's quite apparent the way they've sacked Ted Scott at Stillingfleet in the Selby coalfield. The Board denies that he was sacked under the code but he was sacked for carrying out union policy, implementing Yorkshire's policy of no weekend coal production — and that's what the code's designed for.'

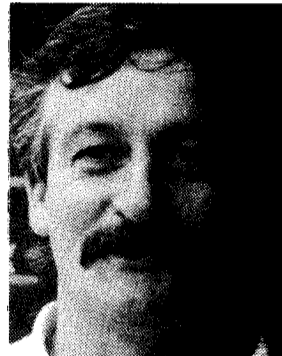
'Ever since the strike, the Board have been looking for ways of attacking union activists. I was suspended for two weeks the day we returned to work after the strike. The Board said that I wasn't the type of person they felt fit to be employed in the industry, falsely claiming that I had serious charges pending against me.'

'As Haslam openly admits, the code would give them the ability to victimise anyone they decided wasn't "fit" to be employed.'

'That means people who want a strong and effective union, which is what we try to have at Barnburgh. When Frickley took strike action, the pickets came over. We told them they wouldn't need to come again.'

Burnett said that the reason that the Board particularly needed the new code now was because of their plans for flexible working and privatisation. 'They see Arthur Scargill carrying the union's flag against this. If they can take action against union leaders and frighten the rest of the workforce through mass sackings of officials, the Board feels it can carry out their privatisation plans.'

This also goes for dealing with opposition to the six-day working — it's all part of their master plan. Pits in Selby now produce 60,000 tonnes per week. If they go on to six-day working, they'd produce more on the sixth day than Barnburgh produces



Bob Burnett

in a week. That'll obviously means more pit closures and the concentration of production in highly profitable pits. The code is aimed to attack the leaders of the opposition to this plan.'

Bob Burnett said that following the overtime ban decision of the national executive, the Yorkshire Area Council had reluctantly called off the firmer policy it had taken over Ted Scott's sacking. Under the original area ban, all overtime other than for safety was ruled out.

'There's strong feeling that the position of the national executive needs beefing up' he said. 'The new area ballot will allow us to step up the action. I was one of those who — perhaps wrongly — favoured calling off the action during the Frickley strike to allow a united national campaign. But the national campaign we had in mind was stronger than what's been adopted.'

'The present ban must be just the first step to much stronger action.'

NUPE nurses for Nicaragua

SIX nurses from St Mary's hospital in Paddington, London, are going to Nicaragua. They will be taking medical equipment along and have been raising funds for purpose. A Billy Bragg benefit brought in a much needed £1800.

The nurses are financing their own fares. They will be staying for

three months and helping to build a new health centre.

Staff nurse Annie Squires explained 'We felt that by visiting and working with the Nicaraguan people we would discover the truth and it would help the Nicaraguans realise that they are not alone in their struggle'.

Wapping enquiry call

AN enquiry into police violence at the first anniversary demonstration during the News International dispute has been called for in an authoritative report published by the Haldane Society of socialist lawyers.

The report contains substantial evidence to back up the enquiry call: 120 statements, 200 photographs and 25 reports from legal observers.

The main charges in the report are that police used truncheons and makeshift weapons

at random, that mounted police charged people taking shelter at speed and without warning, that they smashed windows of first aid vehicles, and that journalists and photographers were singled out for attack.

Commenting on Home Secretary Douglas Hurd's rejection of demands for a public enquiry, one of the report's authors, Tony Gifford QC said 'He acted not as a police authority, but as a police mouthpiece'.

United!

STRIKING engineering workers from Sarmcol in South Africa visit the picket line of Senior Colman strikers in Sale, near Manchester, where they are greeted by strike leaders Tony Lowe (right) and Graham Wyatt (to his right).

The Sarmcol strikers, members of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) have been on strike for two-and-a-half years against the British-based multinational, BTR. They are on a two month tour of Britain, organised by the TUC, showing their play about the strike 'The long march'.

One of the touring strikers is NUMSA executive member, Khayo Madlala (centre right in the photo). He told Socialist Action that they had been overwhelmed by the enthusiastic welcome they'd received in Britain.

Engineering workers formerly employed at the British BTR sub-



siary, JE Hanger in London — itself the scene of a long strike — had expressed their solidarity and given financial support. The South African strikers would be visiting other BTR workers.

Contact with the Senior Colman strikers was first made at the Notts miners gala and renewed during the TUC congress in Blackpool.

The Manchester workers are finding increased support for their

cause. Twenty Labour Party organisations locally have 'adopted' strikers families. Some have started street collections while local busworkers are organising an outing for strikers' kids and provided transport for travel to the miners gala.

● Messages of support and donations to Senior Colman Strike Committee, AEU House, 43 Crescent, Salford M5 4PE.

Dock labour scheme threat

ANOTHER attack on the dock labour scheme is threatened. The Grimsby Landing Company is moving to break away from the scheme in its attempt to make 30 registered dockers redundant.

The TGWU is insisting that the company finds alternative work for its employees. The union has totally rejected the company's plans to use the Temporary Unattached Register to reintroduce casual labour into the

docks. The T&G only accepts use of the TUR in disciplinary cases.

Last month, the union's 13,500 dockers voted by two to one in favour of national strike action following a similar move by the Clyde Port Authority at the Greenock container terminal. The 24 threatened dockers were found alternative employment. Unless a similar solution can be found in Grimsby, another national ballot will be held.

London teachers against Baker

LONDON teachers have voted to maintain their fight against Baker's legislation. They have maintained their position despite harsh measures imposed by their employer, the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). In docking the pay of teachers who refuse to give cover for absent colleagues ILEA

has shown its determination to carry through attacks on teachers rather than join with them to fight the Tories.

By a majority of three to one, the Inner London Teachers Association voted to continue to refuse cover in defiance of Baker's diktats.

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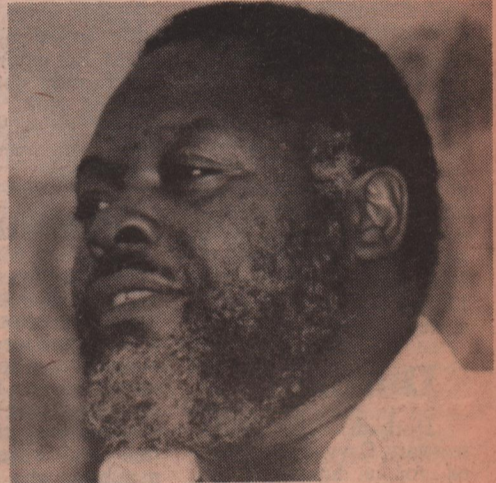
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