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Socialist OUTLOOK

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Issue 79 ● 50p ● March 11, 1995 ●

● 30BF ● 5FF ● \$1 ● 2DM ● 1500 lire ● f1

NATIONALISE THE BANKS!



BARINGS Bank, the oldest in the City of London, collapses, revealing that bank employees like Nick Leeson have been routinely risking hundreds of millions of other people's money in crazy gambles on the movement of stock markets.

The Baring family which has creamed off millions from the bank over two centuries of exploitation and speculation now cynically try to wash their hands of the conduct of the executives whom they appointed and gave a free hand to maximise profits, regardless of the consequences.

Of course the cash at risk from their speculative efforts is not all from the Queen or wealthy right wing institutions like the Royal College of Nursing: hundreds of millions in pension funds was invested with Barings, who might just as well have put it all on a horse. Other banks are doing the same thing every day.

Creating crisis

The fact is that the banking system is at the centre of the anarchy of the capitalist free market: it does not just respond to shocks and crises, it *creates* them.

Bankers lay down brutal terms for loans, or pull the plug on firms or whole industries, sparing not a thought for the thousands of jobs at stake, or the communities they are devastating.

Tony Blair calls feebly for more regulation of the City, but then tries to reassure bosses that a Labour will leave their profits and market freedoms intact. That's also why he is so keen to ditch Clause Four.

But there will be more and bigger Barings-style crises as long as the banks remain in private hands, ruthlessly deploying the power of capital in pursuit of maximum profit.

Nothing could more clearly underline the need for the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses, as part of a planned socialist economy. Until it confronts the power of the banks, Labour leaders are condemned to act as their servants.

Defend Clause Four!

Defending education Popular FACE of fightback

MARCH 25 will see thousands of parents, teachers, school governors and school students demonstrate in London on the first national protest against education cuts for many years.

Organising the march is a new organisation FACE (Fight Against Cuts in Education) formed in Warwickshire but drawing support from all over the country.

Socialist Outlook spoke with SUE LISTER, an Oxford chair of governors, and Chair of FACE.

SO: What is the political stance of FACE?

SL: The campaign is obviously political – we are fighting government cuts, implemented at local level by county and borough councils – but it is not party political.

FACE is a very broad umbrella group to keep local campaigns in touch and suggest national events and strategies for fighting cuts. It draws sup-

port from those members of all three main parties who are actively opposed to the cuts.

SO: How wide is the spread of support you are receiving?

SL: We have contacts covering the whole of England, and now Wales as well.

We would like to involve Scotland, too, but we are not sure how far similar problems are affecting them. Groups have been in touch from Newcastle to Devon, and there are more calls every day.

SO: Are these all ad-hoc local campaigns, or organisations?

SL: Both. FACE is now supported by the National Association of Governors, the National Confederation of Parent Teacher Associations and the Campaign for State Education, but it is also supported by a network of local campaigns springing up in towns and cities as angry parents organise to fight back.

SO: It appears that the National Union of Teachers has attempted to hold back support for your campaign, hinting that FACE is some kind of left wing front. What support are you receiving from teachers?

Protests in Warwickshire formed the launch-pad for the FACE campaign



SL: FACE is a genuinely broad campaign, not controlled by any political party or faction.

We are approaching the NUT nationally seeking their support. On a local level many teachers have been very demoralised by the NUT ballot vote to end the fight against the SATs tests, and in many areas it appears that the anti-cuts campaign is pushing the local NUT into activity.

But we are receiving strong support from NUT members and from branches: in Leeds, for example, the NUT branch has booked a coach to go down to the March 25 demonstration, even though there are no education cuts in the city!

SO: Are you piecing together any kind of national picture of what is happening to education? It appears that the county councils are making much bigger cuts than London and the big cities.

SL: This year the county councils face a much tighter cap on education spending after years in which the squeeze was on the inner cities, and many of them made painful cuts.

Now in Oxfordshire, for example, the Liberals and Tories have combined to adopt a cuts budget which will slash educa-

tion spending by 5.8%, on top of which there is the under-funding of teachers' pay, resulting in a cut of well over 6 percent: this means 300 teaching jobs face the axe in the county.

In Lambeth, on the other hand, where I spoke at a rally on Saturday, the cuts come from a different source: the council has decided to cut the council tax. The borough has actually been given an extra £7 million for education, but has decided to make cuts of £8 million instead.

In the big cities, it appears that the cuts are much more a result of the under-funding of the teachers' pay award than outright cuts in allocation: in the counties the big issue is the cuts.

Of course there is also the divisive element of the Grant Maintained Schools, which continue to get a preferential share of the cash everywhere. In Lambeth one opted-out school has £1 million in reserves, and is not facing any cuts: it will earn as much in interest as the state schools are losing in the borough.

SO: A big factor in your campaign is opposition to larger class sizes.

SL: Yes, many areas are facing class sizes increasing towards the 40 mark.

This is not education, but crowd control: the individual needs of the children cannot be

catered for in big classes, and the result would be that the able child will find work too easy and get bored, while those struggling to keep up will switch off for lack of help and encouragement.

Teachers will be less able to respond to the emotional and social needs of the children, such as combating bullying, child abuse and drug abuse. Children only get one chance at education. We have got to fight for the resources to make sure we get it right. And that means fighting now.

SO: How is FACE organising in the run-up to March 25?

SL: We are doing meetings around the country, and urging every group fighting education cuts to contact us.

We may be able to help with literature and posters for lobbies. We can suggest ways of putting our case to MPs and councillors, and advise on phone lobbies and other techniques. But the main thing is to assure local campaigners that they are not isolated, and that through FACE we can find a national focus for the welling anger against the cuts. That's why we want a really big demo on March 25. Be there – and bring people with you!

■ FACE can be contacted by phone on 0589-789104.

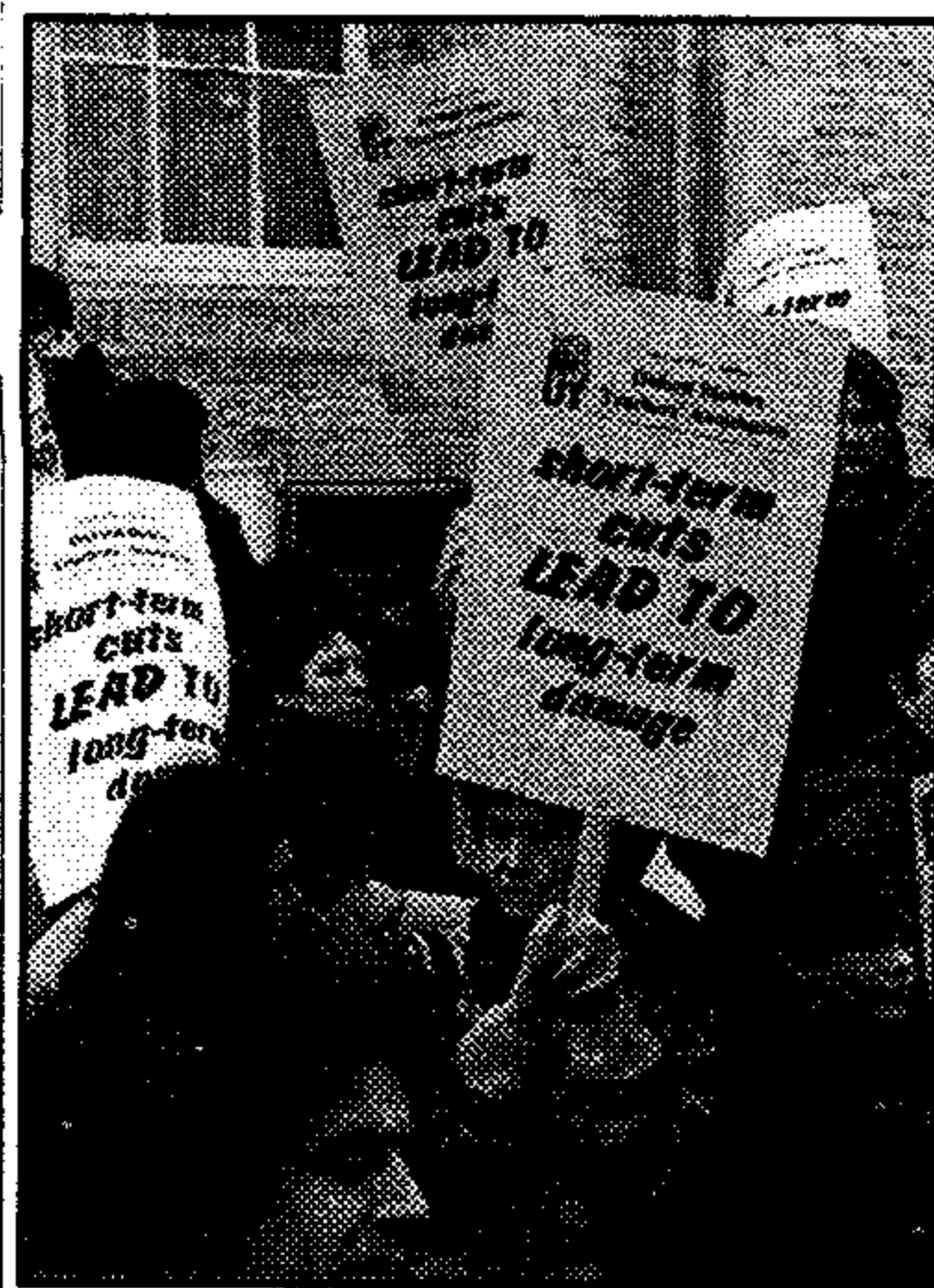
Left teachers must back anti-cuts campaign

CAROLE REGAN, founding member of the Socialist Teachers Alliance and Junior NUT vice-President, talks to Socialist Outlook's ROY LEACH about the future for the NUT and State Education.

RL: Carole, your election in 1994 presented a major breakthrough for the Left. How do you account for your success?

CR: In my election manifesto I made a clear call for support for campaigns such as the SATs boycott and support for restoration of Section 11 funding [Home Office money for ethnic minority children].

Defence of state education was a central theme of my platform and I believe this was a



clear and attractive alternative to my right wing opponents.

RL: Between now and 1996 when you take over the union presidency what do you see as the major issues confronting the NUT?

CR: Without a doubt the funding of education will be the central issue.

We must campaign for funding on the basis of need and

challenge the market philosophy which is being introduced into schools. We must also put pressure on the Labour Party to make a firm commitment to restore a fully comprehensive system – this means scrapping Grant Maintained Status and City Technology Colleges, and bringing them all back under democratically elected Local Education Authorities.

RL: How should the NUT relate to the growing FACE (Fight Against Cuts in Education) campaign?

CR: Of course the national union should unite with any campaign opposing the cuts, but the NUT bureaucracy is afraid of anything that they don't control – hence their refusal to support the national demonstration on March 25.

By ensuring that this demonstration is a massive success we will put pressure on Doug McAvoy, and pull the NUT into the campaign.

RL: What about broader campaigns to defend the Welfare State?

CR: It is clear that the entire public sector is being made to pay for the Tory crisis.

It is essential that we link up all the varied campaigns and reject any notions that one service can be saved at the expense of any other – all of the platform speakers at the Oxfordshire strike rally on February 14 forcefully made this point.

An obvious link that the NUT should be making is with nurses and other health workers who are having their pay held down by government-appointed review bodies. The move towards Trust-level bargaining in the NHS is very much the 'writing on the wall' for education – first of all for GM schools and then the rest.

RL: Do you see any relevance for a union like the NUT, which isn't affili-

ated to the Labour Party, in the current debate about Clause 4?

CR: Of course! If we want a Labour government to be elected it must show a clear commitment to jobs and services which are run in the interests of the majority.

This means democratic control. Fifteen years of Tory damage to the public sector must be reversed and Clause 4 gives a clear and distinct direction for Labour to follow.

RL: Finally, how do you intend to use your presidency of the NUT?

CR: Campaigning! I'm not interested in just spending my time in meetings – I want to help turn the NUT into an active, fighting union which stands up for teachers and state education.

If I'm even only partially successful in this my election will have been worth all our hard work.

Tories in retreat on NHS cuts

By John Lister

THE DECISION of the SE London Health Commission to postpone until 1999 plans for the closure of Guy's Hospital reduces Virginia Bottomley's hospital closure plans to total chaos.

In October 1992 the Tory-appointed Tomlinson Report – set up to recommend a 'hit list' of closures to match London's declining health budget – mapped out plans for the closure within two years of ten key hospitals in London, including four teaching hospitals, Charing Cross, the Middlesex, Bart's and Guy's or St Thomas's.

Tomlinson argued that London had too many hospital beds, and that hospital services could be replaced by expanded 'primary care' from GPs – a theory that has yet to be shown to work anywhere in the world.

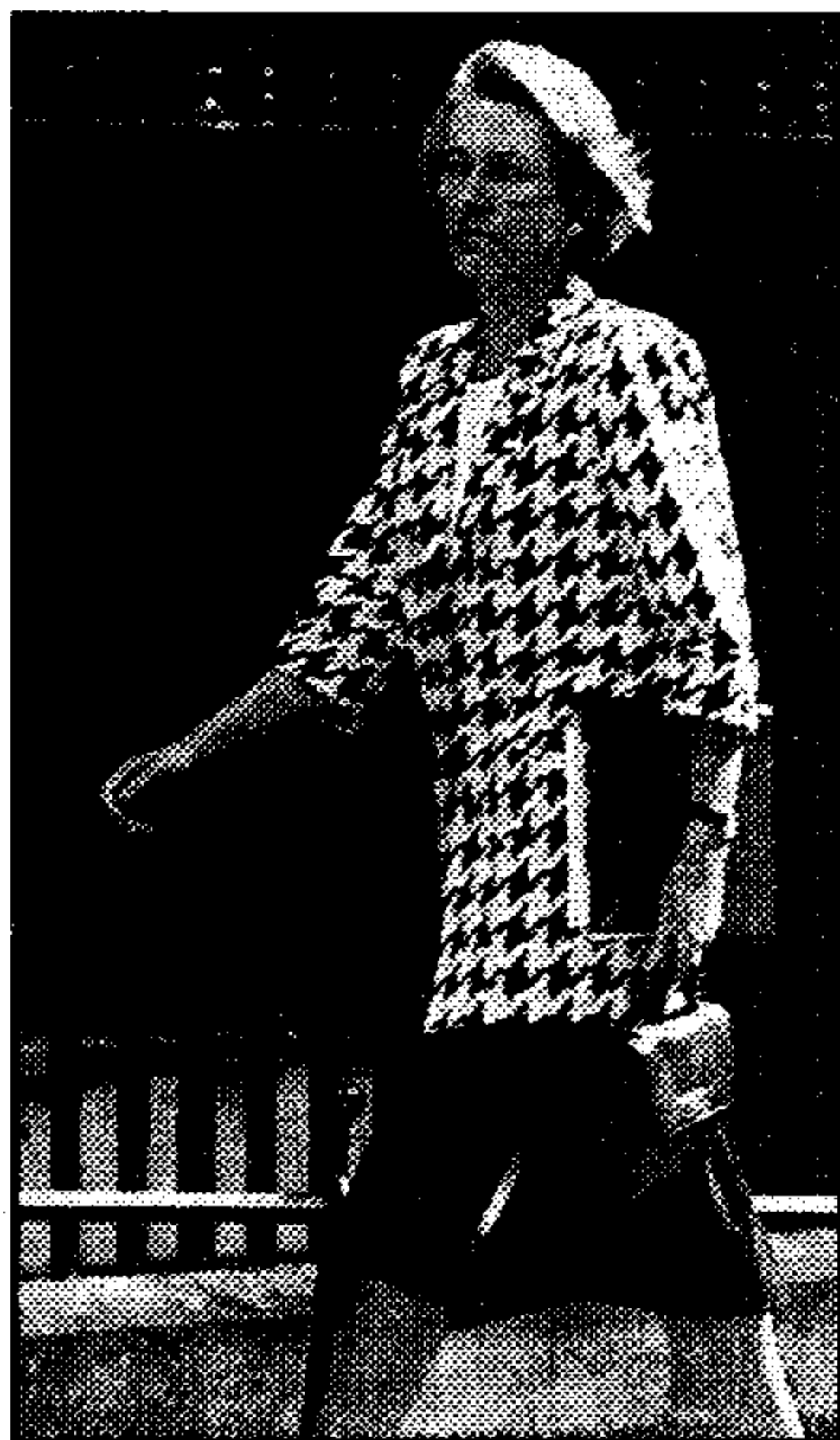
So far, although the Middlesex has been run down in size, the only other closure from the Tomlinson hit-list has been the casualty unit at Bart's, while the Tomlinson Report itself and the sketchy and selective figures on which it was based have been widely discredited.

Trolleys

Earlier this year a new report commissioned by the inner London health authorities admitted that the reduced number of acute hospital beds in the capital are under severe 'pressure', with many operating at above 90% capacity and some above 100%, with patients lined up on trolleys in corridors.

While laboriously avoiding the word 'crisis', the report recommended a halt to any further hospital closures.

SE London health chiefs admitted that the retreat on the Guy's closure arose largely because of the huge groundswell of public opposition, or, to put it in officialese: "People needed convincing the plan was right".



Shambles: Bottomley

"It has been difficult to discuss how change should take place when many people are still disputing whether it should," said SE London boss Martin Roberts, who will now ask Virginia Bottomley for an extra £18-£25 million to keep Guy's busy casualty unit open at least until 1999.

The retreat follows on the public announcement by New River health authority (Enfield and Haringey) that it had rejected a Price Waterhouse report which proposed closure of Chase Farm Hospital, and the assurance by Hertfordshire Health Agency that it will postpone its planned closure of two out of four casualty units in the county until after the next election.

In each case the public outcry and vocal opposition to the cut-backs has been the key factor in forcing a retreat.

But while these victories should encourage campaigners, there is no guarantee of success: a huge local campaign in North West London is still fighting plans by Barnet health agency to close the busy A&E unit and acute beds at Edgware General Hospital.

Campaigners in other parts of the country, where hospital closure plans based on the now discredited 'Tomlinson model' are being proposed, must also step up the pressure. Hospital services can be saved.

What we think



Frightened of promising to spend money, Labour's front bench cannot even back up NHS cuts fight

Can Blair save Major's bacon?

TONY BLAIR's 'Mission Impossible' appears to be to salvage the crumbling unity and dwindling electoral fortunes of the Tory Party.

He appears to be pursuing this objective on several fronts at once: by embracing the unpopular notion of a united capitalist Europe; by refusing to offer the slightest support or encouragement to those fighting cuts in education and other council services or the NHS; by flirting with (and now apparently dropping) unpopular ideas of regional government in England while still rejecting genuine self-government in Scotland; and by ditching Clause Four, dismantling any relic of radicalism in Labour's economic and social policies.

The combined message is plain: a Blair government would replicate many of the policies that have reduced John Major's government to historic depths in the opinion polls. Far from offering any radical alternative, the Labour Party appears to be challenging voters to find a reason to vote for it.

Absurd

Blair's absurd Commons motion on Europe – supposedly aimed to exploit divisions in Tory ranks – was so fanatically pro-EU as to seem calculated to push the 'whiplash' Tories back into the government lobby, which it duly did.

But the episode has served also to underline the utter servility of Labour to the project of consolidating the bosses' European Union.

So craven is the party leadership's support for greater 'integration' with European capital that sections of the European capitalist class are debating whether the controversial 1996 'Maastricht II' inter-govern-

mental conference should be postponed by a year to maximise the chances of negotiating with a Labour government.

And while Blair – just days before the devaluations of the Spanish and Portuguese currencies – added his two pennyworth to the support for a single European currency, he remains silent on the implications of the resultant Europe-wide economic policy, which would impose even more stringent austerity and cuts in welfare spending.

Already in Germany metal workers in IG Metall are fighting back in defence of living standards (see back page).

Standing back

Perhaps this is one additional reason why Blair's team and their co-thinkers in local government have stood back from the mounting struggles across the country against cuts in education and social services.

Shadow Education Secretary David Blunkett has opposed teachers taking protest strike action, while right wing Labour councillors have once again obediently begun implementing Tory cuts.

Far from backing the movement with a commitment to reverse the spending cuts and ensure a reduction in class sizes, Labour is left trailing limply behind local community campaigns. And on the NHS, where the Tories are openly in disarray, Margaret Beckett is equally ineffective, unable to promise even to keep open Guy's Hospital.

Stranded

Just as Blunkett was left stranded by Blair's single-handed policy switches on private education and on sending his son to an opted-out religious school, so John Prescott was left floundering as Blair publicly

abandoned Labour's promise to introduce a system of regional government.

The 'new realist' technique of deciding Labour's policy on the basis of MORI opinion polls is beginning to cause serious problems as Blair, under fire from John Major for his sham-bolic policy on local government, discovers that his plan for regional assemblies has little or no support in England, except perhaps in London, where Labour shies away in fright from any restoration of the GLC.

Nor does it help Blair's case in fighting for the abandonment of Clause Four to find that in the run-up to Labour's special conference the headlines have been dominated by news of extortionate board-room salaries, bank collapses and the general anarchy of the capitalist market system.

No doubt Mr Blair, like Mr Major, will be relieved that Dutch bankers have stepped in to bail out the bankrupt Barings Bank. But the episode has underlined the fact that a Labour government which rejects socialist policies would be even more impotent than the Tories in the face of such crises.

Council elections

As the campaigning opens for May's local government elections, the early forecasts are that Major's party could come a poor third overall, losing over a thousand council seats.

But this is reckoning without the Blair factor. A few more weeks like the last fortnight could do more to restore Tory fortunes than John Major could ever hope to achieve.

Socialists in the unions and Labour Party have a fight on their hands, against the Tories in blue and Blair's team of reactionaries who are making it harder to kick them out.

Fight Against Cuts In Education

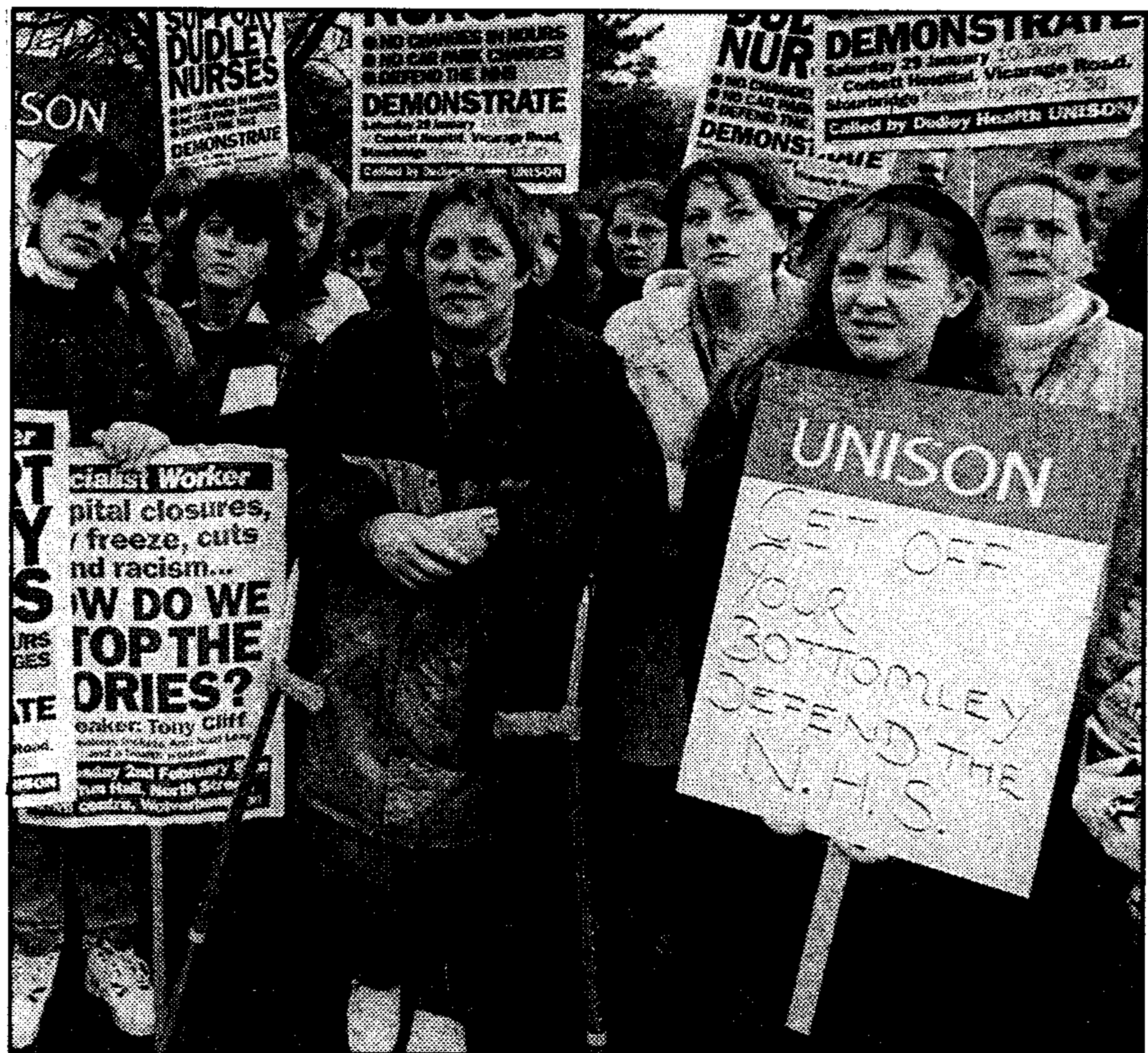
FACE

National Demonstration LONDON

SATURDAY MARCH 25

Assemble 1pm Embankment March 2pm to Hyde Park

EDITORIAL



Birmingham cuts protest

ON SATURDAY 25 March a demonstration in defence of public sector jobs and services is being called by the Birmingham Community Conference.

The march already has the support of UNISON West Midlands region, Birmingham

ham CWU, NUT, NUJ, Trades Council and Socialist Campaign Group as well as the West Midlands Pensioners Convention.

Assemble in Victoria Square at noon for a rally at 1pm. For details write to BCC, 723 Pershore Road, Birmingham.

Behind Birmingham's 'Labour sleaze' allegations

By a Labour councillor

THERE IS a long story behind the suspension of four Birmingham constituency Labour parties. It is an outrageous and orchestrated example of reselection paranoia meeting up with Labour's inexperienced party leader and new General Secretary.

There is no Asian MP in Birmingham. Even the existing Labour MPs agree an Asian candidate should be selected in a winnable seat... so long as it isn't theirs!

In Sparkbrook there is a retiring MP, Roy Hattersley, and the chance to select an Asian candidate. But the constituency is merging with Small Heath where Labour-right MP Roger Godsiff wants to stand again.

Godsiff was selected last time after a protracted campaign in which allegedly misused union votes secured him the candida-

ture. His opponent, councillor Afzal, is supported by neighbouring MP Clare Short.

Under one-member-one-vote, individual recruitment is crucial to selection campaigns. Inevitably, there have been allegations of voting 'fodder' recruitment with membership fees paid for. The party has painstakingly checked Sparkbrook and Small Heath membership against the electoral register.

Grants

A party official illegally compared these details with applications for statutory urban renewal grants when these grants became entangled in the selection battle.

Renewal grants are part of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. Local authorities now have to either close houses unfit for human habitation or give repair grants.

Three years ago Sparkbrook Labour party opened a major campaign to inform local residents of the grants. Councillors

began to complain that applications for this statutory grant was placing a certain stain on the Council's officers and budget.

Roger Godsiff advised constituents to apply for statutory grants.

But details were leaked to the press, alleging that 50 per cent of statutory applications in Small Heath were from households with a party member. In Sparkhill, the figure is 17 per cent.

The *Observer* headlined this as "Labour Sleaze" on 26 February, alleging that Sparkbrook and Small Heath were 'buying votes' by assisting party members to gain housing grants.

The party leadership suspended the four constituencies for the 'crime' of elected representatives helping constituents gain statutory rights.

It is feared that the NEC will impose a candidate.

The suspension is opposed by left and right in the party. It must be ended, giving full membership rights for Parliamentary selections.

Chelmsford bus strikers wait for TGWU support

By Roger Welch

DESPITE two setbacks the fight for reinstatement continues by the 106 Chelmsford busworkers sacked by Eastern National.

The first blow to the busworkers was stuck by the failure of a special TGWU conference for delegates across the Badgerline group to vote to take solidarity action.

The reaction of some of the busworkers in Chelmsford was that this was inevitable given the fear that other Badgerline companies would follow Eastern National's example and sack workers on strike.

The reaction of others, however, was that the TGWU leadership had not fought hard enough to convince the delegates that they would have official backing for solidarity action.

Such action could win not only reinstatement for the bus-

workers in Chelmsford but make it clear throughout Badgerline and the bus industry that bully boy tactics by management were not going to work any longer.

The second problem for the Chelmsford busworkers is a police clampdown on the TGWU free bus service by enforcing by-laws to stop the free buses using bus lanes.

Hurting

This has not stopped the buses from operating, and the service is in the process of being registered so that bus routes can be used. This harassment has obviously been instigated by Eastern National, and substantiates the sacked busworkers' statements that they are hurting Eastern National by taking away their passengers.

Momentum for wider solidarity action is building up this month. The sacked busworkers are travelling the

country to build support - in particular they have up invitations from Sheffield, Oxford, and Hull Trades councils.

A public meeting is being held in Chelmsford at AEU House on the evening of March 17 with Paul Foot as one of the speakers.

Most importantly, a march and rally is taking place in Chelmsford on SATURDAY MARCH 25, assembling at 10.00 am in Central Park (near the rail station).

The march will go past the bus station and trade unionists across the country are urged to come to Chelmsford and through weight of numbers close down the Eastern National depot.

● Messages of support, requests for speakers and donations to Roger Welch, Chelmsford TUC, 87 Mildmay Road, Chelmsford, Essex, CM2 0DR. Tel: 0245-263727. Cheques to TGWU (Chelmsford Bus Drivers Support Fund).

Frame-up in Nottingham East Kangaroo court expels black activist

By our correspondent

LABOUR's NCC, its disciplinary tribunal, has expelled Hassan Ahmed, a prominent left activist in Nottingham East, for five years on a frame-up charge that he attempted "to persuade others to disregard the rules of the Party".

Hassan was accused of proposing at his ward selection meeting in October that they should select unendorsed candidates against the District Labour Party's recommendation.

The minutes show that it was actually David Hunt, a white member with no political sympathy for Hassan, who made the proposal, and that it was Hassan who proposed that the DLP's recommendation be accepted.

True record

Of 22 members present, 20 endorse the minutes as a true record. Not all were Asian. Only 2 claimed otherwise, after charges had been brought by the DLP's Eileen Heppell.

Despite David Hunt giving evidence in person and conflicting evidence from the accusers, the NCC expelled Hassan.

Hassan Ahmed has been witch hunted out of the Party with hardly a murmur being raised by the vast majority of white LP members, including sections of the left and Nottingham South MP Alan Simpson, Secretary of the Socialist Campaign Group.

Heppell's husband is John Heppell, MP for Nottingham

East. Hassan Ahmed was a threat in future reselections.

A conspiracy theory linked Hassan with Issan Ghazni, ex-DLP Secretary, that they were attempting to deselect Labour councillors and take over the City Council! Hassan has just finished a 3 year suspension for organising black sections.

Hassan's expulsion shows the corrupt and undemocratic way the Labour Party now operates. The leadership is unwilling to tackle racism or fight for the demands of black communities ravaged by unemployment and poverty.

No confidence

It is hardly surprising that black people have little faith in white Labour Party politicians, and mobilise to support candidates from their own communities.

With the Labour Party still a predominantly white organisation, we should be encouraging black membership - the more radical and energetic the better - rather than expelling and alienating them!

So far the Campaign has won support from Tony Benn and a number of local trade union and LP branches.

Support

A public meeting, called for Hassan's reinstatement, has been organised for Friday 10th March at the ICC with speakers from London and Gorton Anti-Witchhunt Campaign in Manchester.

■ Information: Hassan Ahmed Defence Campaign, c/o 253 Woodborough Road, St. Anns, Nottingham.

HOME NEWS

Welfare State Network campaign conference
From the CRADLE ...
... to the GRAVE
DEFENDING EDUCATION, HEALTH AND PENSIONS
11am-5pm Saturday April 8

Speakers (personal capacity) include:

- ALICE MAHON, MP ● JACK JONES (National Pensioners Forum)
- SUE LISTER (Chair, FACE) ● DOREEN CAMERON (NATFHE)
- CAROLE REGAN (NUT/STA) ● ALAN SIMPSON MP

Manning Hall, University of London Union, Malet St, London WC1

TGWU votes to keep Clause Four

AS WE GO to press the TGWU has told the Labour Party that it supports the retention of Clause 4 of the party's constitution in its existing form.

The consultation process within the union, which is Labour's largest affiliate, showed clear majority support for Clause 4, which commits the party to the principle of common ownership.

Only a minority of responses backed calls for a new statement of Labour's aims and values.

Receiving a report on the outcome of the consultation, the T&G executive called for Labour's special conference on April 29 to be given the opportunity to vote on retaining the existing Clause 4.

The TGWU delegation to the conference will take the final decision on how the union's vote is cast.

TGWU general secretary Bill Morris said:

"T&G members have sent a clear message - they want the Labour Party to retain Clause 4 as it is.

"This reflects the strength of feeling within the union on the principle of public ownership. It is therefore clearly right that the special conference be given the opportunity to vote on keeping the existing Clause 4."

Model Resolution for CLPs and affiliated Trade Unions

"We regret that the NEC is seeking to confine voting at the Special conference solely to the wording proposed by the NEC.

"Conference should have the opportunity to vote on the new statement of aims and values and on the existing Clause IV.

"The last two Party conferences voted to retain Clause IV. We call upon the Conference Arrangements Committee and the NEC to allow special conference to vote on both texts."

Clause Four fight hots up

Countdown to the showdown!

By David Thomas

WITH LESS than eight weeks to go before Labour's Special Conference on April 29 large rallies have been organised in defence of Clause Four.

On the eve of Greater London Labour Party Conference 300 people at Conway Hall heard Doreen Cameron (NATHFE) Mildred Gordon (MP for Bow & Poplar) and Arthur Scargill (NUM) speak in favour of retaining Clause Four in Labour's constitution.

Video

Over £375 was collected and numerous copies of Ken Loach's video and Defend Clause 4 badges were sold.

GLLP went on to vote in favour of Clause Four by 59 per cent to 41

2 per cent with the trade unions voting in favour of the Clause by more than a 2 to 1 majority.

On March 1 at a meeting organised by Ealing Trades Council 200 turned out to listen to Tony Benn and Bob Crowe (RMT Assistant General Secretary)

The March round of General Committee meetings will see delegates chosen for the April special conference. It is essential that the left stands pro-Clause Four candidates in every constituency and passes the Model Resolution on this page.

In the CLP's that have de-



Hard-line for Clause Four: Mildred Gordon

ecided to have an OMOV ballot on the NEC's Statement of Aims and Values we must fight for the ballot to also include the Ques-

tion - "Do you support Clause Four in its current wording?"

The campaign is now at a crucial stage. The weekend of March 11/12 sees the North West Region and the Scottish Labour Party conferences. Blair looks set to win in the North West.

The vote in Scotland will be close. Party members have come under enormous pressure to back Brian Wilson's "new" Clause Four.

Wilson you may remember was the leadership's choice to rubbish Ken Loach and his video made in support of the Defend Clause Four Campaign.

Wilson is so open to democratic debate that he refused even to consider watching the video! No doubt he was too busy arm-twisting.

London thumbs down to Blair

Unions tip balance for the Clause

By Steve McNeill

TONY BLAIR's plans to get rid of Clause Four received a setback at the Greater London Labour Party AGM, the first of the regional party conferences. To a tremendous cheer, Chair Jimmy Fitzpatrick, announced the result of the vote: a victory for the status quo.

Under current party rules the constituencies have 30% of the vote and the affiliated organisations 70% The vote was lost 12% to 18% in the constituency section but decisively carried in the affiliated organisation section by 47% to 23% - giving an overall result of 59% to 41%.

"Emergency"

The left had to fight over the weekend to ensure that the issue was voted on. Ealing Southall CLP submitted an "emergency" resolution calling for a discussion, but no vote to be taken. This was admitted as an emergency by a narrow margin and only finally defeated by less than 1%

The constituency result is ob-



Edmonds' GMB: abstaining

viously disappointing, reflecting the extent of the London Labour Left's decline. This is probably greater than nationally following the right's sustained witch-hunting attacks on the "loony left" for so many years.

The union's opposition to the leadership was led by the RMT's Pat Sikorski who pointed out the significance of the debate in the leadership's refusal to commit themselves to reversing the privatisation of the utilities such as British Rail.

Barry Camfield of the TGWU drew laughter and applause when he derided Blair for main-

taining that the 1918 Clause 4 is not "modern" enough, when he professes support for 2000-year old ideas in the Bible.

The delegation of the newly formed Communications Workers Union was in turmoil.

Despite the fact that the 1994 conferences of both constituent unions, the UCW and the NCU, carried motions supporting Clause Four, the new NEC voted 27-18 to support the Blair leadership, to organise a consultative postal ballot, and to instruct all union delegations to vote for change in the meantime.

To make doubly sure that no rebellions took place, Joint General Secretary Tony Young refused to hand ballot papers to delegates in violation of current

party rules, and also refused requests for delegation meetings.

A delegation meeting was finally forced when delegates protested to standing orders. The delegation majority voted 11-9 to oppose Young's ruling but the chair declared it carried 11-10 on his casting vote!

UNISON delegates also resisted Party General Secretary Tom Sawyer's arm-twisting and voted 12-3 for Clause 4. The GMB abstained in the final vote.

The situation is clearly up for grabs in several unions before special conference, in UNISON, MSF, the CWU postal ballot and even in the GMB. Blair is unlikely to concede a commitment to full employment in the constitution instead of Clause 4.

DEFEND CLAUSE FOUR

LOBBY Labour's NEC WEDNESDAY MARCH 15

9.00-10.00am

Bring banners to John Smith House, Walworth Rd, London SE17

Details 071-274-8962

CLAU SE FOUR

Bosnia on the brink of new war



Women in besieged Tuzla assemble in battle fatigues

By Alan Thornett

Despite the four month so-called ceasefire in Bosnia 200,000 people on the Bihac pocket are on the verge of

starvation and are under constant attack from Serbs from the Krajina area of Croatia.

Within the last few days there are signs of a Bosnian army offensive near Travnic in central Bosnia. The fact is that the cease-

fire has never existed in any real sense but suited commanders on both sides who were limiting their operations through the worst months of the winter.

From the point of view of the Bosnians a protracted ceasefire is in any case unacceptable since

it would freeze the current battle lines into *de facto* borders and hand 70 per cent of their country to the Serbs.

What is clear is that both sides are preparing for renewed offensives as soon as the weather breaks and have used the lull in the fighting which has existed in some places to prepare their logistics.

Despite doubtful rumours of secret arms flights into Tuzla and past bluster from the US about the lifting of the arms embargo Bosnia still suffers a massive disadvantage of weaponry in what promises to be a major escalation of the war.

The wild card in the situation is which way the Croatian regime is going to jump in two months time.

Currently Tudjman, who is under pressure from nationalists within Croatia, has told the UN that their four year old mandate to operate inside Croatia will not be renewed when it ends at the end of April, and the UN claims that that would make their operation in Bosnia itself impossible.

Tudjman

Tudjman talks of recovering the 25 per cent of Croatia still held by Serbs since 1991. The Krajina, one of the principal areas involved, was a strategic area of the country particularly as far as communications were concerned.

Croatia claims, with some justification, that the UN presence has simply frozen the situation and entrenched the Serbian gains from the 1991 war and that the only way they will regain the occupied territories is by their own efforts - although they claim they have not yet decided on the military option.

At the same time Tudjman is seeking discussions with Milosevic, but on the basis of the recognition of the pre-1991 borders - a condition Milosevic is certain to reject.

There is talk of offering Milosevic other territory in exchange for a deal but this would be difficult to sell.

Any deal between Tudjman and Milosevic, however, would be extremely dangerous for Bosnia since it would certainly involve the dissolution of the fragile Bosnian/Croat federation which does at least facilitate supply lines to the South.

If media speculation that Croatia will indeed enter the war against the Krajina Serbs or Serbia turned out to be true it would clearly transform the conflict - although the Serbs are far better armed than Croatia and Bosnia combined.

Much more likely, however, is that Tudjman is pushing the UN to the brink and will in the end settle for a new mandate if he can get it more on his terms.

Tatters

Meanwhile Western policy remains in tatters. The five nation contact group of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the US are presenting yet another "peace plan" (their fifth) to Milosevic under conditions where most of the cards are in his hands and they are deeply split amongst themselves.

They are offering a three point deal: 49 per cent of Bosnia plus the lifting of UN sanctions in exchange for the recognition of Bosnia and Croatia. Whilst Russia is a party to the plan they have already announced that they are seeking closer ties with Serbia and plan to supply the country with natural gas.

Overall Western aims remain the same - to force a settlement which would be massively to the advantage of Serbia.

But their means of delivering it are long gone, and the day of air strikes and NATO threats will not return short of a widening of the war beyond ex-Yugoslavia.

The Serbs want 100 per cent of their demands and will not settle for 95 per cent and Bosnia still cannot bludgeoned into surrender.

The prospect therefore is a renewed war in which the Bosnian army will fight to regain parts of the occupied territories and the Serbs battle on to force them into capitulation.

IWA sends aid ship to Bosnia

INTERNATIONAL Workers' Aid continues to develop European wide. It has held seven international conferences in different parts of Europe and has now sent 20 convoys of aid through to Tuzla in central Bosnia.

All its aid has gone to the miners union in Tuzla which has distributed it to about 12,000 families. It has an international office in Stockholm and a logistics office in Macarska in Croatia.

Campaigns

It has active campaigns or initiatives in Denmark, Sweden (which has 50 local groups), France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Belgium, Greece, Switzerland and a small initiative in Britain. Recent convoys have been women's convoys taking large quantities of women's packs to the women's organisations in Tuzla.

IWA has also built links with Women In Black and women in opposition to Milosevic in Belgrade. Some IWA sections are making solidarity with women



Visoko, on the road near Tuzla

in ex-Yugoslavia the theme of their International Womens Day activities.

The aid convoys (there will be four during the spring) will continue as an expression of direct aid and international working class solidarity from the Labour movement on Western Europe to the trade unions in Bosnia. This work has built strong links between the unions and the many other community organisations involved.

Now IWA is taking an even bolder initiative to meet a situ-

ation where the need is growing all the time - IWA is organising a ship to Bosnia - or more precisely a ship to Macarska with containers for transit through into Bosnia itself.

This initiative comes out of a visit to Tuzla on behalf of IWA by a delegation from the Swedish dock workers' union. It will be another practical way to defend a multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Trade unions

The venture is supported by a range of trade union leaders

in ex-Yugoslavia including: Josip Radovanovic - president, shipbuilding unions in Split, Vedran Dragicovic - president, metalworking unions of Dalmatia, Damir Bacinovic - President, Rijeka shipyard workers, Branco Kuzet - president Rijeka metal workers, Avdagic Mohamid - president of the unions for agriculture, food, tobacco and water in Bosnia, Ismet Bajranovic - president, Croatian metalworkers, Hugic Salam - president, wood and paper workers in Sarajevo, Kojci Ferdija - president - textile, leather and footwear unions Sarajevo, Fikret Suljic - president Tuzla metal workers.

The appeal is particularly directed to transport trade unions and port workers. The ship will leave from Stockholm and visit various European ports picking up containers and then go to Croatia.

• Raise support for this project in your union - even more if your union covers transport or shipping. Further information can be obtained from: Arbetarkonvojen, Box 6507, S-11383 Stockholm, Sweden.



International Women's Day
special 4-page pull-out

Socialist OUTLOOK



Canadian public sector workers fighting for equal pay

Young women: a world to win

By Kathryn Marshall

WHILE visiting my former students' union recently, I became involved with their preparations for this year's International Women's Day. All the old banners and placards from previous events came out and people searched for last year's details so they could simply replicate them this time round.

It's wrong to approach the day like this – though it's great that they are approaching it – because it suggests that women's politics are not sufficiently inspiring and important right now for us to think of new ideas and campaigns to get active around.

Feminists today have had a hard row to hoe because activity within the women's movement is at a pretty low level.

So, young women today are fearful that declaring themselves to be "feminists" is little more than a declaration of revulsion for the male species.

Others say they are feminists because they do have such a revulsion, so low is the level of education about what the women's movement is really about.

Those who are involved in women's politics at colleges or in the workplace feel divorced from any widespread unifying struggle that they can be a part of.

This is not because young women are suddenly no longer angry about the state of the world: it is down to a lack of real political activity.

You only had to look at all the women who recently took to the streets of Windsor against the Criminal Justice Act to realise how much political anger and thirst for change there is.

But students' and trade unions do not highlight the struggles that the women's movement went through in

the 1970s and 80s around abortion rights, when mass action – meetings, pickets, demonstrations – won and defended improvements on this issue.

They don't use the history of Women Against Pit Closures to re-inspire young women, though it could do so very well.

Too often, women's groups are solely discussion clubs on matters which are very important, but which on their own do not galvanise young women into action about changing their lives.

There is also the babble from the capitalist press and media along the lines that women now have "equality."

Yes, women are strong because they have fought to improve their status and quality of life; but we certainly haven't achieved "equality" – as if "equal-

ity" under capitalism would be worth cheering for anyway.

Socialist feminists reject the idea that all our demands have been met.

The history of our movement tells us that it is only by joining together politically that we will see the kind of child-care provision that really frees women to have lives of their own, or the right to abortion that cuts out getting "permission" from doctors, or further erosion of discrimination at work.

So, International Women's Day should not involve a dusting down of last year's banners as though the issues belong in last year. Instead it's a great chance to get across to as many young women as possible that the struggle for women's liberation around the world is here and now.

Let us remind ourselves and everyone else of what can be achieved by women when they decide they are going to change things.



Women in the firing line

Editorial

MANY of the key facts and figures of women's oppression remain hidden: but it is clear that just as it is widening the gulf between rich and poor, the capitalist market system has done nothing to tackle inequality between the sexes.

Twenty years ago, a world conference held in International Women's Year called on the United Nations to collect and analyse key statistics on women's health, education, employment and living conditions.

There was great resistance, and the job has been only patchily and inadequately carried out: but even the limited data available show that oppression and exploitation of women continue unabated.

In many societies women work longer hours than men: in Africa and Asia women work an average of 13 hours more each week; in Latin America six hours; in Western Europe five to six hours.

Around the world, women working outside the home earn an average of 30-40 percent less than men, with no sign of the gap reducing.

On top of domestic chores including the collection of most of the poor world's water, collecting most of its fuel, cooking, cleaning, washing clothes, shopping, bearing and caring for children, women also cultivate the majority of the food crops in the poorer countries.

Around the world women also face discrimination in education – in some

countries half as many girls as boys become literate – and in health and social services.

An estimated 1,500 women per day die from complications of pregnancy or childbirth, with another 300 a day dying from illegal abortions.

But the problems of inequality and oppression are not confined to the 'third world' countries.

The capitalist market system is increasingly reliant on the exploitation of low-paid part-time workers, most of them women, and the majority of them unorganised in unions.

In the Netherlands, for example two thirds of the women in the paid workforce work part-time. 500,000 women are employed on contracts of 1-10 hours a week, which leaves out of pension and social security entitlements. One Dutch woman in eight is living below the poverty line.

Brutal

A similar pattern is taking shape in Britain, with Thatcherite deregulation and the scrapping of wages councils which once stipulated legal minimum wages now coupled with a brutal onslaught on the public sector services which have traditionally employed millions of women.

The privatisation of support services in the National Health Service (cleaning, catering and laundry) and Compulsory Competitive Tendering in local government have led to the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, the majority of them held by women, and to plummeting rates of pay and conditions.

Twenty years after Labour minister Barbara Castle introduced the Equal

Pay and Sex Discrimination Act, there remains a big and growing gulf in Britain between the pay and conditions of women, who still tend to be concentrated in the stereotype 'caring and cleaning' areas of employment, and men.

Wage-cutting

The new round of council cuts in social services and education will also hit women workers most heavily, as does the imposition of a wage-cutting 1% pay increase on nurses and professions allied to medicine, the vast majority of whom are women.

To make matters even worse, the post-Maastricht crackdown on public spending is also taking its toll on women as users of social and health services and as carers for children and adult dependents at home, and as pensioners.

While the capitalist system, centred on private profit rather than social need, continues to squeeze the working classes internationally, equal rights legislation alone can only achieve limited gains for women.

Despite the pretence of social 'equality', the exploitation of workers by employers is not embodied in any specific laws, but is perpetuated by the economic relations of capitalist society.

That's why feminism consistently carried through leads to socialist politics, to internationalism, and the fight for the overthrow of the whole, rotten system of oppression and exploitation.

And it's why socialists continue to celebrate International Women's Day as a reminder of struggles past and struggles yet to come.

Women's lives in the new global economy

WOMEN'S oppression is an essential tool for capitalists to justify their policies and attempt to shift responsibility for social welfare from collective institutions to the 'privacy' of the family.

Here Mariele Barbosa, Heather Dashner, Penny Duggan, Carol McAlister and Eva Nikell outline a new study, on the world-wide position of women, by the Fourth International's International Institute for Research and Education.

RESTRUCTURING AND integration of the global capitalist economy - including the recent imposition of so-called structural adjustment policies involving austerity measures, privatization of the economy and deregulation of the market, the current moves towards establishing formal trade blocks through NAFTA, the EU and MERCOSUR, have particular impacts on women in both dependent and advanced capitalist countries.

Equally important, these economic transformations and their role in undermining the political strength of the international working class depend precisely on the continuing exploitation and oppression of women. This latter point must be grasped to adequately understand the fundamental dynamics involved.

Broadly speaking, the formal trade blocs with their goals of downward "harmonization" of economic and social policies to remove barriers to the free movement of capital, the search for cheap labour and the maximisation of profits, simply codify and deepen trends already well under way.

Women's work

THE OVERALL implications of economic integration for women's work has been to promote contradictory proletarianization of women on a world scale, forcing them into the workforce and at the same time using their role in the family and society to justify job insecurity and casualization and the return of many private services to the "private" sphere of the family, to be shouldered by women.

Today's international capitalist restructuring involves the development of export-processing industrialisation by multinational corporations whereby parts of the production process (usually those that are low-skilled and labour intensive) are located in free-trade zones throughout the Third World.

These zones represent localised models of what the new trading blocks will create on a broader regional basis. Industries in these free-trade zones depend on the particular exploitation of women's labour to provide the increase in surplus-value and in profits that is the goal of restructuring. As a result, a significant layer of Third World women are brought into industrial production and in fact into some of the most modern sectors of the economy, though under very exploitative conditions.

Informal sector

However, this development has also been accompanied by a huge expansion of the informal sector into which most women workers, including those who have been laid off from multi-national industries because of age or pregnancy, are channelled. In fact, women's work in the informal sector is used to underwrite the "cheapness" and "flexibility" of both male and female labour in the industrial sector and to provide a safety valve for periodic retrenchments in that sector.

This trend toward informal-sector work is accelerated by the increasing commercialisation and export-orientation of local agriculture, a shift which frequently undermines women's role in the more traditional farming economy.

Sylvia Pye Appeal/Fighting Fund

PARKSIDE PIT Camp was established in January 1992 by Women Against Pit Closures and their supporters, throughout the campaign the women occupied much of the pit.

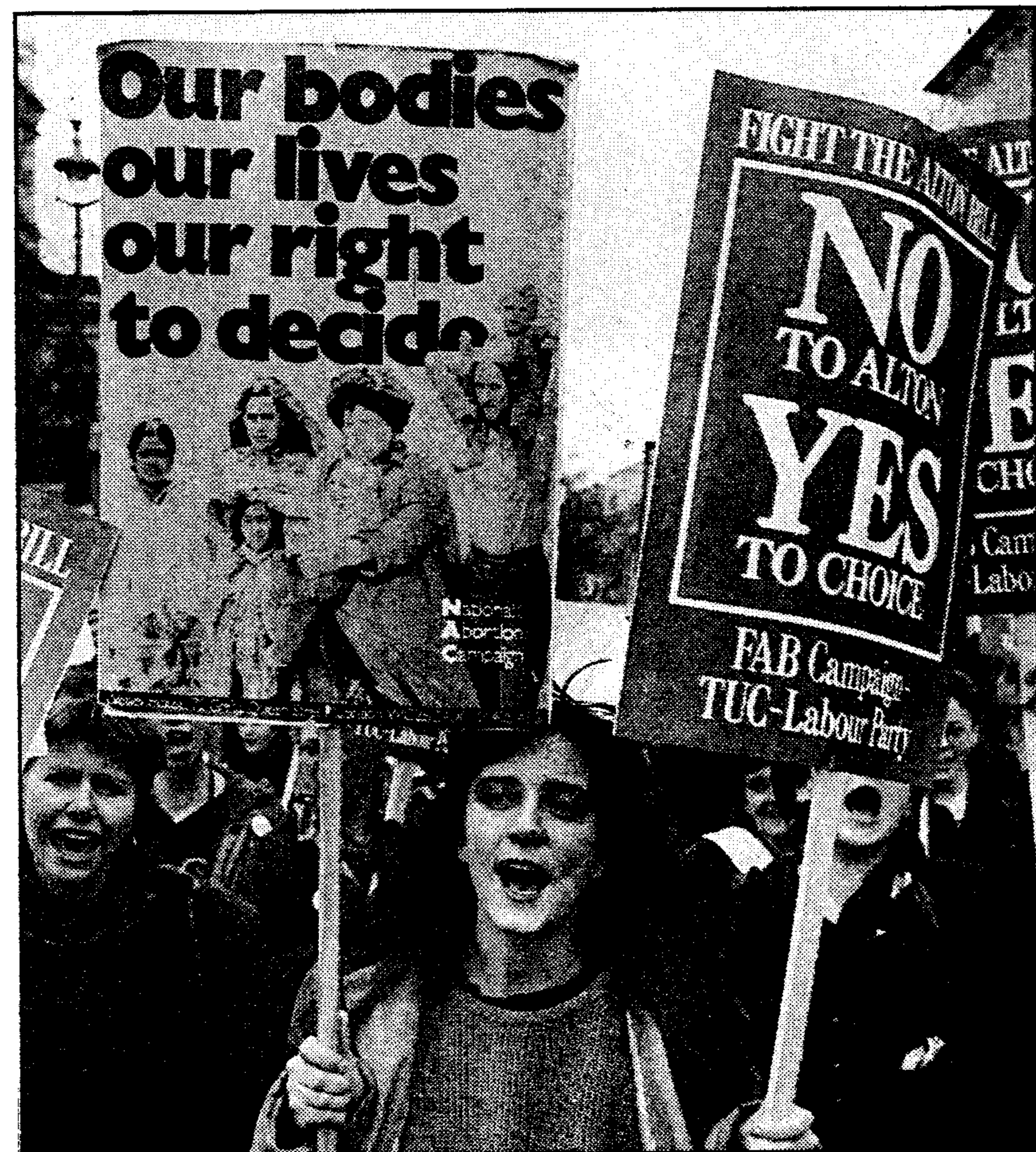
British Coal attempted to gather 180,000 tons of limestone to fill the shafts. Many mass trespasses were held on the pit drive to stop stone for the day.

Twenty months of resistance against the closure of Parkside Colliery ended on August 20 after British Coal had started filling the shafts. Coal Board solicitors demanded £15,877 from Sylvia Pye re-

sulting from the pit camp's eviction, involving 200 riot police and 40 bailiffs.

We want people to distribute pre-printed postcards demanding that British Coal drop all costs against Sylvia Pye. We also have posters, stickers, newsletters, appeal forms and speakers, which we can send to your friends, family organisation or branch at your request.

We also have T-shirts, badges, pens, and postcards of the colliery for sale. A price list is available from: The "SPAFF", c/o Bernie Cavanagh, Common Road Nurseries, Short Street, Newton-Le-Willows, WA12 9J3.



Reorganisation of the world economy involves deeper attacks on abortion rights

In the advanced capitalist centres, there has been a shift of the job market away from industrial work toward service-sector employment, drawing large numbers of women into the low-paid "pink-collar ghetto". This shift has been accomplished without massive disruption by building off the gendered division of labour in the family.

Thus it was women who played a key role in holding families together through periods of unemployment and economic stress, and also women who more readily took up the new low-wage jobs in response to their feelings of responsibility for family survival.

This expansion of the service sector has been combined with a new phase of industrial development in the US, Canada and Western Europe, depending largely on the labour of immigrant women. These women, vulnerable because of the combined factors of gender, race and immigration status, often work in small workshops or at home, signalling the revival of the turn-of-the-century sweatshops and putting-out system.

Fragmentation

Such fragmentation and casualization of women's industrial work, which is paralleled by the trend toward casual and part-time employment in the service sector, is a central component of capital's strategy of creating a "contingent" or "flexible" work-force.

Structural adjustment policies, and the resulting rise in unemployment, have served to drive women disproportionately out of the formal economy while also increasing their need to find some kind of income-producing work. They thus turn to the informal sector where women are increasingly forced to work as day-labourers, street vendors or prostitutes.

In some Third World countries, unemployment has reached such proportions

that men and women are now competing over informal-sector jobs, thus removing even this safety net for women.

The establishment of formal trade agreements will most certainly accelerate these developments, leading to a further "maquiladorization" of women's work in both advanced capitalist and Third World societies.

None of their basic aims - aside from ensuring certain rules for capital flow and investment, while highly regulating things like patents - will be to generalise the elimination of certain regulations of working conditions and labour relations which have not already been eliminated, using the argument that their maintenance would constitute "unfair practices".

Undoubtedly, then, we would see challenges to rights such as:

- The right to safe, decent working conditions. Hazardous conditions in both industry and services where women are concentrated already exist - for example, danger from the use of toxic chemicals in electronics factories, fires in garment sweatshops, and rising stress-related injury for clerical workers using computers.

- Retirement age requirements may be "harmonised" as is already being foreseen in Uruguay, where MERCOSUR could raise women's retirement age by seven to nine years to jibe with Brazil's higher age.

- Maternity leave with pay, as well as child care, both legal rights in Mexico, could be eliminated formally by NAFTA.

- Affirmative-action programmes, a hard-won for both people of colour and women in the US and Canada, could be challenged as an undue burden on capitalists in both countries, "prejudicing" their competitiveness.

In the agricultural sector, NAFTA and the EU will promote the domination of agribusiness, leading to the peasant woman's further loss of economic base.

Health & Welfare

THESE CHANGES in conditions and security of work directly affect women's health and general well-being as well as the welfare of those family members (especially children) for whom women are primarily responsible.

Rising prices and unemployment put stress on women's own ability to provide for basic needs, while cut-backs in public spending and the dismantling of social welfare programmes decrease state support for services such as education, health care and child care. This development is particularly deleterious to women because of their perceived role in both social and biological reproduction. At the same time, the state depends on women to "take up the slack" and provide on a private basis services that were previously provided by the government, thus furthering the process of structural adjustment.

NAFTA in particular threatens to unleash new health hazards for women as it opens the way to challenging existing environmental laws as "unfair trading practices". For example, in certain communities on the US-Mexican border, the problem of toxic wastes is already linked to cancers of the female reproductive system and to severe birth defects such as encephalic children.

Environmental

With the general weakening of environmental regulations, such problems could be more widespread throughout North America. At the same time, NAFTA will pose a challenge to the national health-care programmes of Canada and Mexico while making it more difficult to establish a comparable programme in the US. While this affects the whole of the working class, women, as primary consumers of health-care services and as those mainly responsible for family health, will be particularly hard hit. In the case of the EU as well, health care and other components of state welfare system could be gradually chipped away.

Social gains & basic rights

CLOSELY RELATED to the question of health and welfare is the effect of economic restructuring and the new trade policies on the social gains women have fought for over the past quarter century, and in relation to which they have won at least partial victories.



Sacked Timex workers: 'Flexibility' like this is what employers like about women workers

These include the right to reproductive freedom (including the right to abortion), the right to equal pay, and the right to freedom from sexual harassment and violence.

While the general economic crisis has already generated serious attacks on women's rights, formal trade agreements have the potential to undermine these rights in a more formal and thorough-going way.

This is largely a result of the supra-national and corporate-dominated decision-making structures proposed in these agreements, which will supersede regular legislative and executive actions. This, combined with the focus on "unfair trade practices", sets up a situation rife for the challenging of measures that equalise women's role in the economy.

While the reason for attacking these rights may have a primarily economic basis, we should note that the rights themselves help ensure women's positions in many areas of society. Their significant weakening would, in fact, bring in to question women's basic status as citizens.

Social Charter

The possibility for such a development is particularly clear in North America, where NAFTA provides no guarantees for such rights. In Europe the situation is more uneven, in that the Social Charter that accompanies the EU proposal provides common European principles on these matters, thus promoting stronger measures in certain cases (e.g., Ireland and Portugal) while perhaps undermining existing laws in others (e.g. Sweden).

Sexuality

THE MANIPULATION of women's sexuality is one of the primary ways in which capitalist restructuring uses and builds on women's oppression. This happens in several ways.

First, there are the attacks on sexual and reproductive rights discussed above. In this sense, such attacks can be seen as not only an effect of economic change but also as a way of preparing the way for further restructuring by making women more vulnerable in both economic and social terms.

Second, we can find numerous instances where the entry and dismissal of women from the wage-labour force, as well as the super-exploitation under which most women work, are justified by images of female sexuality. This, for example, is very common in factories where women are alternately represented as "sexually loose" and thus "free" to be exploited, or as requiring stringent controls - including the physical organisation of the work place using the threat of sexual violence - to maintain their sexual purity, thus limiting their autonomy and mobility.

Finally, there are particular instances - such as the expansion of the international sex trade in Europe, Asia and Latin America, the increase in dowry deaths in India, and the imposition of class-based population policies, for example in Singapore - in which women's sexuality is both commodified and controlled in ways that directly further the economic strategies of individual men or capital as a whole.

Ideology

THE IDEOLOGICAL transformations that accompany global integration also have an impact on women.

There is, for example, the manipulation of sexual images and norms we have just discussed.

Also of importance is the ideological emphasis on individualism and privatization that parallels recent changes in economic relations. Because of women's traditional role in the family, such an ideological development affects them differently - and also depends on their often unconscious collaboration to carry out such a broad cultural change.

Finally, there is the possibility that both NAFTA and the EU will play a role in undermining both memories of and aspirations for progressive national struggles. This in turn could have special implications for women, since it is through such struggles that women's demands are frequently raised and secured. For example, to prepare the way for the implementation of NAFTA there are already pressures to revise the official histories of the Mexican revolution.

Such revisions would serve to weaken the collective memory of the gains of the revolution, including those of particular importance to women, such as rights to maternity leave, child-care and health care. The Irish struggle provides another example, in that the dampening of its vigour because of the renewed ideology of a common Europe could also dampen the aspirations for women's emancipation connected with the goal of national liberation.

Growing US abortion rights movement

TERRORIST attacks against US abortion clinics have escalated rapidly in recent months. A massive nation-wide march for women's rights in Washington, D.C., on April 9 will show that women won't be scared into backstreet abortions.

On December 30, two workers at Boston-area abortion clinics were murdered and five others injured by an anti-abortion gunman.

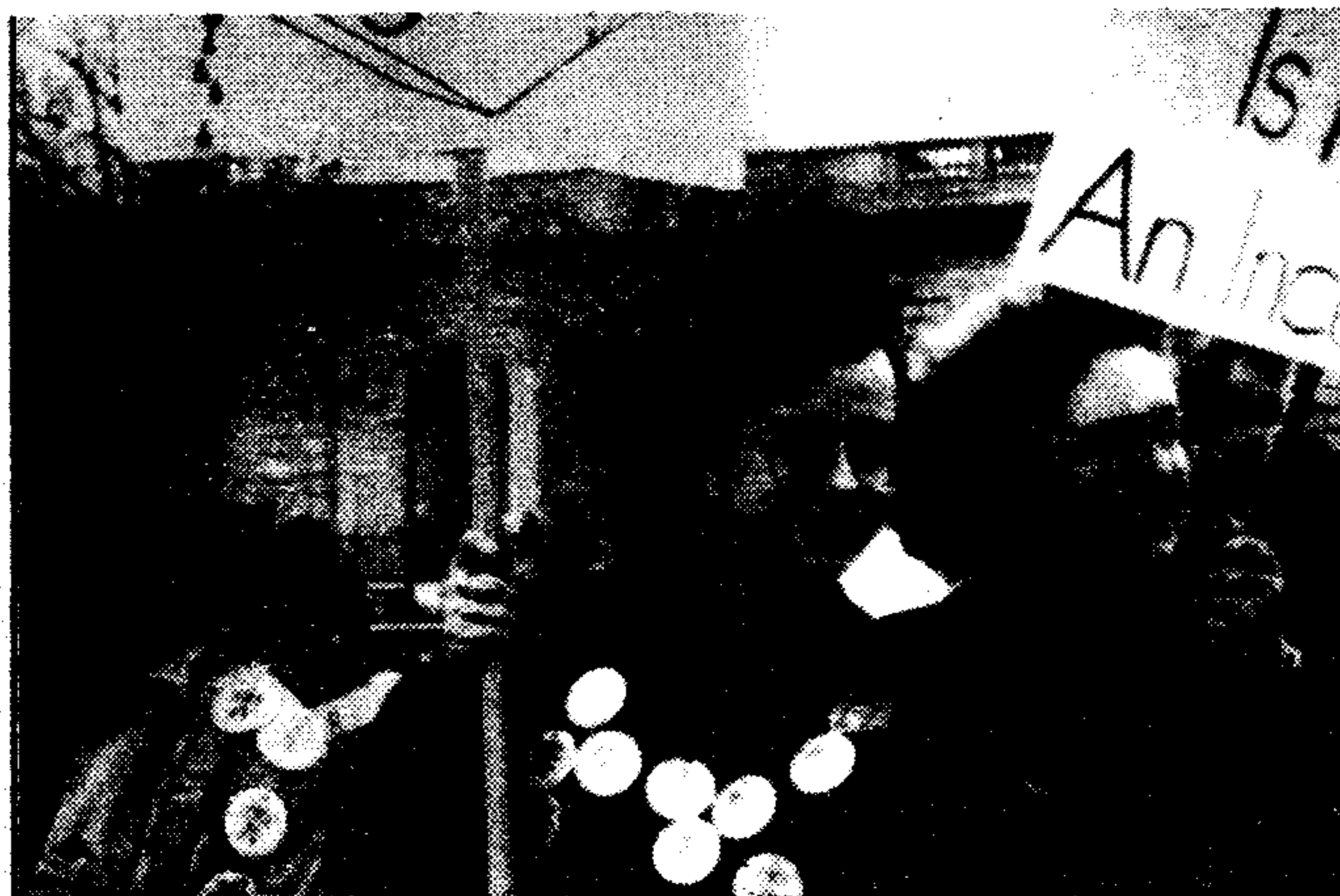
It brought to five a two-year death-toll which has topped off a decade of repeated clinic bombings, arson attacks and mass assaults by anti-abortion zealots in the US and Canada.

One thousand people attended a candle-lit vigil outside the Planned Parenthood clinic that night. Two thousand rallied at the Statehouse the following afternoon.

Over 8,000, mainly young people, joined a Boston celebration of the January 22 anniversary of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* federal court ruling which established women's right to choose abortion. Other actions took place nationwide.

Limited

Abortion rights have been repeatedly limited in recent years. Federal funding has been withdrawn for abortions for women with low incomes. Forty-one of the fifty states refuse to use local funds for



Mass action can defeat anti-abortion offensive

abortions. Only one county in eight has abortion facilities. Two-thirds of states have special rules restricting young women's right to choose.

In the last year, most US women's clinics had some form of violent attack. A quarter of clinics received death threats.

The April 8 demonstration, organised by the National Organisation for Women, helps to develop the mass action needed to defeat the anti-abortion offensive.

The zealots can be isolated by the weight of public opinion and the police can be forced to seriously attempt to prosecute the attackers.

Most importantly, the pro-choice movement can develop the kind of independent strength, organisation and mass support that can defend women's right to choose without relying on the police or the capitalist politicians.

■ Jacqueline Boyle and Mary Scully in Boston contributed to this article.

The Feminist, the Fatwa and Fundamentalism in Bangladesh

By K. Govindan

TASLIMA NASRIN has long been unpopular with Muslim fundamentalists and secular liberals for her atheist and feminist views which she expressed in a regular newspaper column.

Her forced exile in Sweden since August of last year and meetings she has addressed around Europe have informed many on the reasons she left Bangladesh.

The publication of her fifteenth book *Lajja* (Shame) in 1993, conveying her dismay at the oppression of the Hindu minority and the erosion of secular values, focussed fundamentalist ire upon her.

A little known fringe group called the Council of the Soldiers of Islam declared a fatwa (religious opinion with legal effect) offering 50 000 takas for her death. This was seized upon by the fundamentalist Jaamat-e-Islami party, when it and associated groups launched agitations and mass demonstrations demanding her death and state action against her – resulting in the banning of *Lajja* – though not before it sold 60,000 copies.

The controversy was revived in May 1994 when, in an interview with the Indian newspaper *Statesman*, Taslima Nasrin was quoted calling for the revision of the Muslim holy book, the Quran.

This was equivalent to doubting the divinity of the text and challenging its adherents belief in its infallibility. Nasrin said she had been misquoted. She claims instead that she had urged reforms in the Sharia (Muslim laws and regulations), which discriminate against women.

Blasphemy

Scandalised by her audacity 100,000 fundamentalists demonstrated in the capital city, Dhaka, against Nasrin and for the enactment of a blasphemy law. While the Bangladesh government had dragged its feet on providing police protection to Nasrin, and has taken no action against those who have physically assaulted her and made death threats, they



The mullahs "would kill everything progressive in Bangladesh if they are allowed to prevail"

speedily began legal proceedings against her!

Nasrin is currently charged under the 'secular' criminal law with blasphemy. Her trial was due to begin this month but has been postponed; the maximum penalty is two years imprisonment and a fine.

The least understood dimension of this affair is that the attacks on Taslima Nasrin's intellectual freedom and the real threat to her life is part of a wider trend in her country.

When the government led by Begum Khaleda Zia of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), herself a woman, acceded to fundamentalist demands and was backed by the major opposition party the Awami League led by another woman, Sheikh Hasina Wajed, both feared giving ground to the Jaamat-e-Islami.

A fatwa madness has gripped Bangladesh. The death threats are aimed at women's groups and other non-governmental organisations.

Bangladesh has a large non-governmental

sector employing hundreds of thousands of field workers and having a real impact on the lives of millions.

Two of these NGOs in particular have been targeted by fundamentalists and accused of being un-Islamic, the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and the Grameen Bank.

Both these organisations pioneered schemes to alleviate rural poverty through adult literacy programmes, health education and credit for women's co-operatives.

Challenge

What the mullahs fear is that as more women become literate and economically independent they are beginning to challenge reactionary values and ideas in their homes and villages. To maintain their authority these clerics have forbidden women from working for NGOs; prevented children from attending BRAC schools and launched a moral crusade against 'western' values.

In many instances women have been forced to commit suicide, schools have been burned and NGO activists threatened as a result of the hysteria induced by these fatwas.

All of society is in turmoil. Opposition parties have boycotted Parliament for over two years and in their latest move have resigned their seats en-masse.

Meanwhile there are numerous mass agitations from demonstrations, to pickets, to one day general strikes which regularly paralyse life in the commercial centres of Dhaka and Chittagong.

The opposition is calling for the formation of a caretaker government in which all parties would be represented, and immediate elections.

Nationalism exhausted

Nationalist politics – based on an amalgam of mixed economic policies, anti-imperialist and pro-Islamic rhetoric has been exhausted. Its historic standard bearers the BNP and Awami League stand discredited.

Neo-liberal policies reign supreme and as prices rise, wages are frozen and unemployment and with it popular discontent grows.

There is no confidence in Left parties which are in ideological confusion following the collapse of stalinism and pro-capitalist reforms in China and Eastern Europe.

Meanwhile fundamentalist groups, like the Jaamat-e-Islami, reviled for a generation because of their support for Pakistan in the 1971 war of independence, have overcome that distrust.

They are flush with petro-dollars from religious foundations in the Middle-East and their model of an Islamic state, 'neither capitalist nor socialist', is deceptively seductive.

In the preface to *Lajja*, Taslima Nasrin warns:

"The mullahs who would murder me would kill everything progressive in Bangladesh if they are allowed to prevail"

Campaigning for the unbanning of *Lajja*, the dropping of blasphemy charges and Nasrin's freedom to write and live, also means campaigning against religious fundamentalism and answering its false solutions with a democratic socialist feminist alternative.

The struggles we celebrate

By Gill Lee

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day was born out of the struggle in Europe for votes for women. Following huge demonstrations organised by women in the United States on that day, the International Socialist Women's Congress of 1910 set March 8th as an international day of action in favour of women's suffrage.

The unifying theme was "The vote for women will unite our strength in the struggle for socialism".

On the first women's day in 1911 meetings were organised in Germany, Austria, Denmark and Switzerland. Alexandra Kollontai described how:

"Germany and Austria ... were one seething trembling sea of women. Meetings were organised everywhere - in the small towns and even in the villages. ... This was certainly the first show of militancy by the working women. Men stayed at home with the children for a change and their wives,



The strike by Asian women at Burnsalls continued the history of struggle

the captive housewives, went to meetings." In Austria 30,000 women and men took part in the largest street demonstration.

The movements for votes for women were broadly composed. In England most of the suffrage movement demanded the vote for women on 'equal terms with men'. Due to property restrictions this would disenfranchise most working class women.

Revolutionaries like Sylvia Pankhurst opposed this and demanded universal male and female suffrage, nothing less. This division between 'bourgeois' feminists and revolutionaries was deepened by the now looming First World War.

In 1912, the year after it was established, International Women's Day was to be a focus for peace in the Balkans as well as for women's right to vote.

At an extraordinary congress of the Socialist International in Basle Clara Zetkin, the German revolutionary Marxist leader called for women's right to vote and for peace:

"Socialist women of all countries fight against the war. War is only the maddest form of mass exploitation through capitalism. It is the sons of the proletariat who kill each other. Women and mothers deplore such a crime. War threatens all that mothers have taught their children about solidarity and

international community.

"Women are willing to make many sacrifices. They know it is necessary to fight and die in the struggle for freedom. Both fights, the fight against war, and the fight for freedom cannot be fought without women. Wage war on war."

Collapse

In 1914 World War One began, only days before the third international Socialist Conference should have taken place. The Second International collapsed as its reformist leaders sided with their own capitalists against workers of other countries.

In Britain the majority of the suffrage movement – the suffragettes led by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst – sided with the British ruling class. They abandoned all mobilisations around women's right to vote and joined the war effort.

Sylvia Pankhurst and the marxist wing of the movement for votes for women threw themselves into the movement against the war.

In 1918, with tens of millions dead in the War, British women aged over 30 were given the vote

in an amendment to an adult suffrage bill which extended the vote to all men.

In Russia in 1917, International Women's Day was chosen as the pretext for a mass protest of women workers, mainly from the textile factories in the Vyborg district.

Angered by the lack of basic food supplies, they went on strike and picketed out other workers, under the rallying call of *read!*

This new upsurge in struggle triggered the February Revolution, which subsequently laid the basis for the first successful workers' revolution in October.

For over 80 years women around the world have continued to celebrate International Women's Day as a focus for their various struggles against exploitation and oppression.

The colours of the British suffragettes were purple and green. These colours are used in this country as the colours of International Women's Day. Through them we remember the women who fought for the right to vote, and those who have fought other struggles of great importance to women around the world.

“We need a network of grass roots organisations and a Europe-wide anti-racist manifesto”

As Labour's Jack Straw lends his weight to the Tories' racist immigration laws and the spectre of racism stalks much of Europe, how should anti-racists organise to fight back? Socialist Outlook spoke to UNMESH DESAI of the Newham Monitoring Project.

SO NMP was involved in the launch of the Anti Racist Alliance. What did you hope it would achieve?

UD We felt it was important to develop an independent mass anti-racist movement that could draw on the experience of grass roots campaigns and place these on the national agenda.

There was, and still is a vacuum on this front. The other national organisations were either sectarian or fronts for far left organisations. ARA was seen to be a breath of fresh air, but that has not proved to be the case.

SO Why do you think the ARA project failed?

UD It had an obsessive aim not of becoming a mass movement, but of allowing individuals to promote their own agendas or careers within the Labour Party and the trade union movement.

This took priority over the needs of grass roots cam-



“TUC must lead a fight for policy of ‘Equal rights for all’ in working class areas”

paigns. It is important to recognise that both wings of ARA were guilty of this.

The split cannot be seen simply as a division of personalities between Marc Wadsworth and Ken Livingstone, but as the outcome of a wrong political method on both sides.

The lessons of ARA are firstly that a mass based anti-racist movement must be independent of any particular political party, it must develop its own agenda; and secondly that it must have an orientation towards all progressive forces within the Labour Party, the trade unions and so on.

The worst aspect of ARA is that it dragged the name of anti-racism through the mud. Both Wadsworth and Livingstone appeared throughout the media denouncing the Welling “Unity” demo. This could only aid the

state in its fight against the anti racist movement.

SO What possibilities do you see with the National Assembly Against Racism?

UD We are supporting the National Assembly because a lot of the people involved are genuinely concerned with the sectarianism of ARA and want to build a serious national alliance of anti-racist activists.

Of course there are still those who simply want to push their own agendas, but we must attempt to unite the forces of the anti-racist movement.

The Assembly must recognise that the vast majority of anti-racists aren't part of the structures or apparatus of any existing organisations. Groups such as Newham Monitoring Project on a local level, play a crucial role in campaigning against racist attacks and police harassment, but also in fighting fascism politically, ideologically and physically.

The importance of this has been shown in the local elections last May and in the by-election last January. Despite the problems that NMP may have, it still remains an example of why we need groups like ours around the country, and that is what we should shape the National Assembly in practice.

ARA failed to mobilise a single demonstration against the British National Party. We need a movement that can mobilise both national and local events – and not just carnivals.

Of course we need trade union and parliamentary work, but we also need to mobilise a fight against racism and fascism, and against institutional racism.

We need the kind of anti-racist movement that can respond to a family that is being at-

tacked at two o'clock in the morning. If we can't respond to the needs of that family, we can never build a movement from above.

We must talk about police racism, and the National Assembly has got to address that issue because it's not just a question of fighting fascism but challenging police and state racism. That's something which is lacking.

In Britain we must recognise the failure of the system to defend isolated black families against racist attacks and harassment, the failure of the criminal justice system in dealing with racism. We must also address the futile attempts to make racism a criminal offence. Would attacks by mixed race or black people on white people be included in this legislation?

Huge administrative powers have been given to faceless bureaucrats. An asylum seeker who isn't charged with any offence can be held far longer in a police station than can someone accused of murder.

Impoverished

We must recognise that the slogan of ‘rights for whites’ has some appeal to impoverished white working class communities, precisely because the ‘traditional’ parties have failed them.

The overwhelming majority of the people who vote BNP are not fascists; for them the BNP simply represents an outlet of frustration. Rather than attempting a legalistic censorship we must win these people back to our movement.

We must fight fascism physically, politically and ideologically, and we must educate working class communities. But when you talk about banning groups, where do you draw the line?

The Kurdish PKK is banned

in Germany because it is a ‘terrorist’ organisation. There is no doubt that the majority of people in Britain see the IRA and Sinn Fein as terrorist organisations. Would they be banned under the same law?

SO What can we do to fight against Fortress Europe and against racism and fascism on a European level?

UD What is needed initially is a network of grass roots organisations, exchanging information and organising joint activities.

For example if German fascists were to visit this country, then German anti-fascists could give us advance intelligence so we could sabotage their activities in this country. The European far-right do this: why can't we?

What is also needed is a European-wide common anti-racist manifesto setting out a clear ideological, political agenda, so we can then start pushing elected representatives, both in the European parliament and in the media, to counter the dominant type of nationalism and xenophobia that rules Europe today.

Fortress Europe is based around the whole notion that ‘you've got to suspect them all if they've got a black face’. This is how an ‘illegal’ immigrant is identified.

The only way that this can be challenged is through a solid, unified movement in each country which shares information, and can hold joint campaigns and promote a common set of policies which it can popularise throughout Europe. All that is being done at present is a few good, brave MEPs trying to battle against the wind.

In this country it is important that we raise an alternative ‘equal rights for all’ slogan. The TUC has got to promote this slogan through practical measures, especially in the working class communities where the slogan of ‘rights for whites’ has gained an audience.

The problems we faced in this country 10-15 years ago are now occurring throughout Europe. We have anti-racism of the lowest common denominator, up against racism of the highest qualitative level. Tory minister Charles Wardle's resignation is but a symptom of the continual bubbling of the race issue at a national level.

Racism remains at the centre of not just British party politics but of any project to construct a new Europe. It is the one thing that unites politicians from left, right and centre.

■ The Newham Monitoring Project can be contacted at PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7. 24-hour emergency line 0181-555-8151

FIGHTING RACISM

Free Satpal Ram!

After more than eight years of wrongful imprisonment, Satpal Ram has finally had his case referred back to the Court of Appeal.

The application for the appeal was entered in June 1993 but refused by the Home Secretary in September of that year.

Pressure from sustained campaigning by the Free Satpal Ram Campaign and from Satpal's many supporters across Britain and from abroad, combined with the impact of the High Court's judgement at Satpal's judicial review in December has forced Home Secretary, Michael Howard, to reverse his reckless decision.

The Free Satpal Campaign demands that the next step for this hapless, discredited minister must be to announce that the Home Office is not contesting the case for the Court of Appeal.

Satpal's actions were entirely in self-defence and he would never have been convicted of murder had it not been for the inherent racism of the criminal system. Satpal is just one of many victims of a racist judicial system. An appeal is no guarantee of justice. After years of campaigning the M25 Three lost their appeal.

■ Campaigners are calling for letters to be written to the Home Secretary, urging him not to contest the case. Contact the Campaign at 101 Villa Rd, Handsworth, Birmingham B19 1NH

Would legislation be enough to implement Clause Four?

Is there a parliamentary road to socialism?

By Neil Murray

AMONG the many issues raised by the debate around Clause IV of the Labour Party's constitution is whether socialism can be achieved by peaceful, parliamentary means.

Socialism has to be clarified. It is not just the 'social justice' of the social democrats, or bureaucratic nationalisation of a few industries - bankrupt or otherwise - by the capitalist state.

Socialism, to use the words of Clause IV(4), is "the common ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange... under popular administration and control".

It means at least the 'commanding heights' of the economy being taken out of private hands and run by a system of councils of workers' and consumers' delegates, accountable and recallable, co-ordinated into a national system. This would allow the economy to be planned in a way unthinkable under capitalism, determined by need, not private gain.

Same problem

Could parliament legislate such a system into existence? We do not need to suspend belief and hypothesise about Tony Blair's Labour Party being will-

ing to take such steps. The factors involved would be the same, however determined any party or its leadership might be.

In Britain, we are told that, while other countries have civil wars, revolutions, putsches, etc, we do things differently here - the existence of a stable parliamentary democracy means society can be changed peacefully without such violent ructions. This is based on several myths. Firstly about British (or, more correctly, English) history.

Civil War

The present relationship between parliament and the monarchy is based on the settlement which arose after the revolution of 1640 and the Civil War which followed, which marked the transition from feudalism to capitalism.

But we do not need to go so far back for examples. When the British parliament looked like granting 'Home Rule' to Ireland in 1914 the army revolted (known as the Curragh mutiny) to thwart these plans and ultimately produce the division of Ireland which exists to this day.

Spycatcher and subsequent revelations have shown that sections (if not the whole) of the secret services set out to destabilise Labour governments in the 1960s and 70s, even though they were hardly particularly radical. Contrary to the myth, every

indication is that the ruling class would fight to the last to retain its control of society.

This rarely comes to the fore in Britain because radical, let alone revolutionary, change is so seldom sought. As far as parliament is concerned the debate remains on the trivial level of the best alternative options for running capitalism.

When we look outside parliament, we see how the full force of the state is mobilised against movements seeking even superficial or minor changes.

The central demand of the miners' strike of 1984-85 to keep the pits open was not revolutionary in itself, but the police, courts and secret services as well as the media were all mobilised at tremendous cost to make sure they were defeated. This scenario has been repeated throughout the history of the labour movement whenever a threat was perceived to capitalist order.

Thus, a party really committed to bringing about socialism has to forewarn the working class of the reaction to this, and mobilise it to resist and carry through these changes.

The working class would



Armed bodies of men: the military moved in to crush Allende's reformist government in Chile

need to be sufficiently armed to defeat and disarm those standing in the way of change.

Chile slaughter

Any failure to do so would lead to the kind of slaughter that occurred in Chile after 1974, when Salvador Allende's supposedly radical government refused to believe that the army would act against it. Instead of

preparing for the clash to come, it called on its supporters to "remain calm".

Socialists do not glorify violence or revolution, as our opponents often argue, but recognise the reality that, as Marx put it, no ruling class in history has ever peaceably given up power. Friederich Engels argued bluntly that the essence of the capitalist state consists of 'armed bodies of men'.

Facade

Behind the democratic facade of 'Liberty, Fraternity and Equality', he warned, lurks the threat of 'Cavalry, Artillery and Infantry'.

Those who try to convince us that change can come about peacefully, that we should obey the law (whether on Poll Tax or anti-union laws) otherwise the ruling class will not obey laws passed by a Labour government, are not only betraying the struggle in the present, but also showing that they will be unwilling to challenge the dominance of the capitalist class in the future.

'Reform or revolution' is not a choice between two different routes to the same end, it represents a choice of two very different end results.

Ten years on: key lessons from the 1984-5 miners' strike

TUC betrayal paved way for Blair

By Alan Thornett

THE ISOLATION and eventual defeat of the miners' strike ten years ago starkly illustrated both the depths of treachery to which the leadership the TUC were prepared to sink, and the weakness of the British left.

From the outset the right-wing majority on the TUC preferred to see the miners defeated rather than the politics of class struggle to win out.

The "support" offered by the left of the trade union leadership was ineffectual at best. There was no real attempt to mobilise action and break the NUM's isolation.

On the far left criticism was far too often limited to calls upon the "rank and file", without putting demands upon the TUC and union leaders.

The left in general contributed to the problems inasmuch as it failed to provide any serious political perspective on how the rank and file could pressurise their local leaderships.



Scargill: asked too little of TUC

Yet if the miners' strike teaches us anything about the British labour movement it must be that for the advancement of class struggle and the education of workers it is necessary to force open big divisions in the bureaucratic bodies.

Scargill was the key factor

in the survival of the strike on a number of occasions and the voice of the most militant and committed of the rank and file miners.

But while he fought tenaciously against the government, Scargill's mistake was not to ask too much of the TUC and the Labour leadership, but that he asked *too little*. He did not fight them hard enough.

His reservation meant not only that the union leaders were let off the hook at the time their political backing was needed most, but that after the event they were able to vindicate their sloth by saying that they'd done all that was asked of them. The problem remains: not enough was asked of them.

Kinnock

The same can be said of the Labour Party leadership. The failure to confront Kinnock's record on the strike made possible the consolidation of the emerging "moderni-

sation" project.

With hindsight we can see how the right of the Labour Party were able to cynically use the defeat as "proof" of the redundancy of class struggle methods. This gave them a spring-board to launch the offensive against the left.

They directly benefited from the defeat and were not slow to exploit their advantage.

Although in Kinnock the spin doctors found a second-rate, and - in their terms - rather uncouth, mouthpiece, they were nevertheless able to use him to lay a firm foundation for their project.

Blair is the direct political beneficiary of the spade work done for him since the mid 1980s by the middle-class circles within the party who cut their anti-class struggle teeth on the miners' strike.

Seldom, if ever, has there been a national strike of such scope and importance, one so open to the left's input through the national network of support committees. Yet it failed to contribute much of use: it simply echoed Scargill's own tactics.

And this was a strike that was overtly *political* in a way most trades union disputes are not. It was fought on the basis of challenging the profit motive - the so-called "viability" argument.

In other words, both the miners and those who supported them had to be convinced that there was an alternative framework to the market on which to build an economy.

Ideological fight

It was a sophisticated and explicitly *ideological* battle; one for which there was a significant support among working class people. One that should have been built upon far more than it was.

One of the clearest lessons from the strike therefore is the need for a political leadership in the workers' movement that rises above opportunist self-interest and rigid "schema" politics to offer tactical and strategic initiatives geared to the actual needs of the struggle.

This leadership is still in need of being built today.

'Rent-a-vote' bureaucrats took cash from bosses

Union officials for hire!



Whose round is it anyway? TUC's John Monks cultivates closer links with top bosses

By Dave Osler

EVER GET the feeling that not all trade union leaders are on our side? Damn right. Some of them are literally bought and paid for by the bosses.

Throughout the eighties, a company called Industrial Research and Information Services Ltd (IRIS) gave a rightwing general secretaries six-figure annual hand-outs from big business to fund internal union machinations, with senior Tory peers acting as the link men.

Significantly, many key players had pivotal roles in the miners' strike of 1984-5. Bill Sirs general secretary of the steel workers union was a director of IRIS at a time when local-level deals between the ISTC and the NUM were essential to maintain the supply of coal to British steel mills.

Another known IRIS supporter, Ken Cure of the AEU, sat on Labour's national executive committee during the entire dispute, while Sirs was on the general council of the TUC. Through these two men IRIS had access to the internal deliberations of the highest bodies in the labour movement – essential intelligence in the strikebreaking effort against the enemy within.

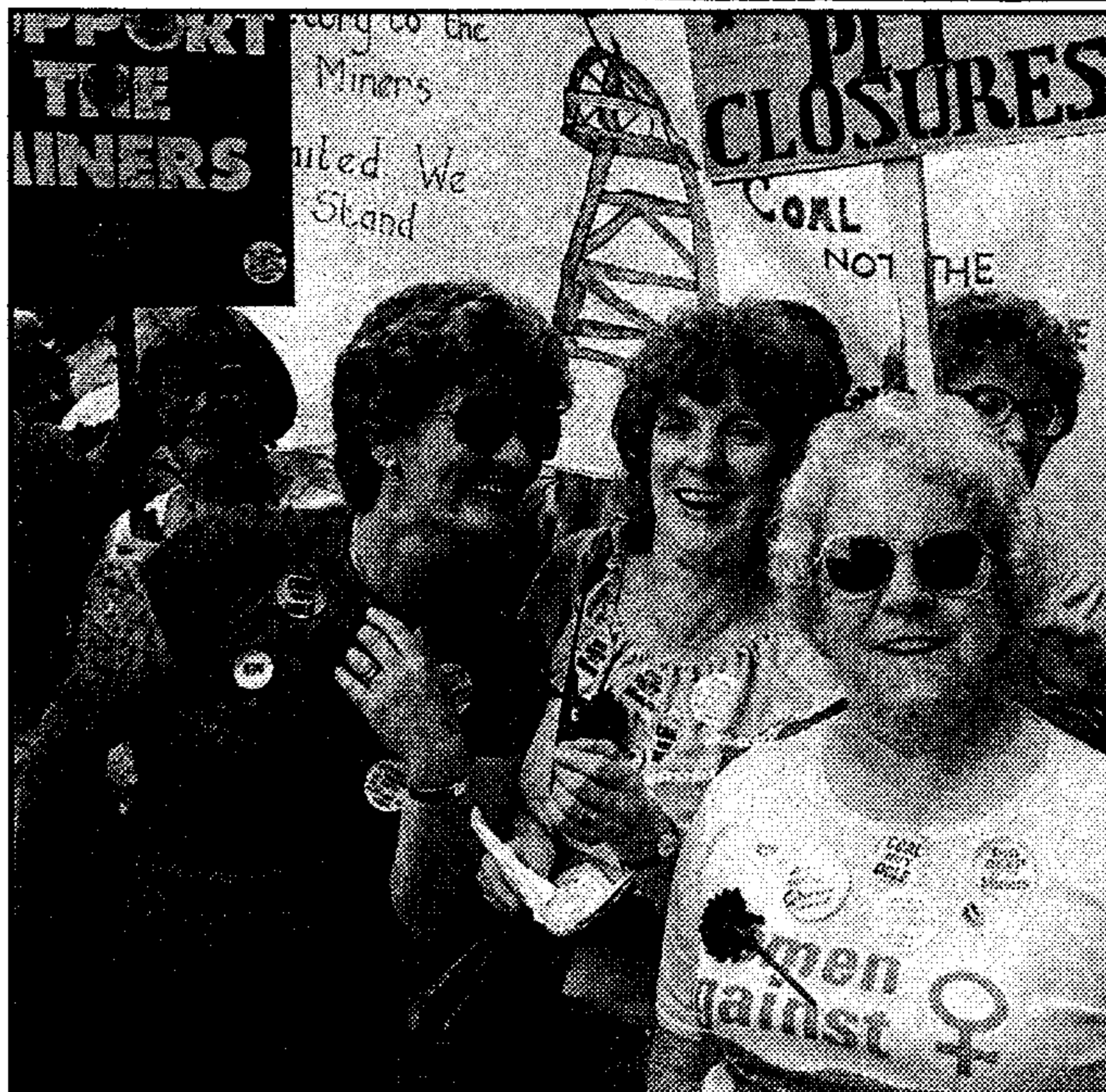
Top firms

Among the companies indirectly paying for IRIS through tax-deductible charitable donations were: Allied Lyons, Bass, Boots, BP (partly state-owned), Cadbury Schweppes, Cunard, GKN, Glaxo, Grand Metropolitan, Guinness, Hanson Trust, ICI, Metal Box, NEI, P&O, Rugby Portland Cement, Scottish and Newcastle, Unilever, United Biscuits, Whitbread, TI Group and United Newspapers.

IRIS was originally an offshoot of Common Cause, an unstable coalition of former socialists opposed to Stalinism, union officials braced off by the activities of left activists, Tory rightwingers and military men; all on a platform of shared anti-communism.

One of the prime movers was C.A. Smith who represented the Independent Labour Party, a leftwing breakaway from the Labour Party, in talks with Leon Trotsky in the thirties.

But another leading member



While miners and Women Against Pit Closures fought for jobs, IRIS-sponsored bureaucrats sat on TUC and Labour leaderships

was Major-General Richard Hilton, a former military attache in Moscow, who later joined the National Front.

Probably formed in the late forties, Common Cause was officially launched in 1952 and still exists today. Most of the left wingers quit in 1956, prompting those remaining to establish IRIS to bolster their credibility in the labour movement.

Offices were initially based at the National Union of Seaman's HQ in Clapham, in those days virtually a company union. The following year IRIS published an influential pamphlet, The



Well-placed right winger: Ken Cure also sat on Labour's NEC

Some £116,000 went directly to IRIS. Similar sums followed in subsequent years. This funding probably exceeds the fundraising capacity of every trade union broad left put together.

Communist Solar System, with a foreword by Labour's great nationaliser, Herbert Morrison.

IRIS was funded by Common Cause until 1963, when it became autonomous. Papers recently released under the 30 year rule explains for the first time how this was achieved.

A massive state subvention followed a personal approach to the then Prime Minister, Harold MacMillan, from Lord Shawcross, who as Hartley Shawcross was a Labour cabinet colleague of Morrison's in the 1945-51 governments.

Shawcross quit parliament in 1958 to become a director of Shell. He was chairman of the Press Council under the last La-

bour government before defecting to the SDP in the early eighties, and currently sits as an independent in the House of Lords.

After the story of IRIS's state funding broke in January, he told a reporter from the *Mail on Sunday*: "It is 32 years ago and a long time to remember." In fact, his involvement in fundraising for IRIS can be documented as recently as 1985.

Shawcross told Macmillan of IRIS's "undercover" work in unions where Communists were influential. IRIS had influenced NUM internal elections, he boasted, and now needed to hire five full time organisers in the AEU engineering union.

Although IRIS was financially backed by Shell and Ford, Shawcross said it nevertheless lacked "sufficient funds". Could the government provide money?

'Supermac' then detailed Home Secretary Henry Brooke to consider the request, and discussed the possibility of bringing conspiracy charges against Communist activists and introducing anti-union legislation after the next election.

IRIS was given £40,000 from the intelligence services budget, worth something like half a million pounds in today's money. In a thank you letter to Macmillan's successor, Alec Douglas-Home, the following year Shawcross indicated that IRIS had raised £35,000 from the company donations, making it an extremely well-to-do operation indeed.

IRIS became a limited company in 1968. Records at Companies house show that directors have included former general secretaries of NALGO, US-DAW, AEUW, NAS/UWT, ISTC and the old seafarers', agricultural and woodworker's unions, frequently linked as members of the TUC general council.

Also on the list is Ray Gunter, Wilson's Minister of Labour from 1964-1968 and, briefly, minister of power in 1968. Gunter became notorious during his earlier stint as chairman of Labour's powerful organisational sub-committee, using the position

to block leftwingers getting selected as parliamentary candidates.

It is likely that some of the others mentioned in this period were Labour and Conservative MPs, although the names are too common to be certain.

More recent converts to the IRIS cause include Bill Sirs, general secretary of ISTC from 1975-1985 and a member of the TUC general council throughout his term of office.

Sirs joined the IRIS board at the start of the miners' strike in January 1984, going on to become its chairman. According to accounts filed with the charity commission, Sirs was given a payment of £3,000 from the Industrial Trust, the charity which acted primarily as a fundraising conduit for IRIS, in the 1990-1991 financial year.

Also on the board was British steel director Sir John Boyd, general secretary of the engineering union AEUW between 1975-1982.

Keeping up the supply of coal to Britain's steel mills during the pit strike was a top priority for the government. Both Sirs and Boyd were in obvious positions of influence.

The Industrial Trust was established in 1985. Trustees included Tory peer Baron McAlpine of Moffat, who has extensive business connections in nuclear power, and Lord Robens, who as Alf Robens was a former Labour minister and chairman of the National Coal Board in the sixties.

On the Trust's council were Glaxo chief executive Sir Austin Bide, BP managing director Peter Cazalet, Bass chairman Derek Palmar and Sir Duncan McDonald of NEI.

Front

The trust was basically a fundraising front for IRIS. In its first year the trust raised £131,871. Some £116,000 went directly to IRIS. Similar sums followed in subsequent years.

This funding probably exceeds the fundraising capacity of every trade union broad left put together.

Thanks to unwelcome – albeit ineffectual – attention from the Charity Commission, direct donations from the trust to IRIS stopped in 1988-1989. Most of the money raised went instead to the Kennington Industrial Company, which simply passed the bulk of it on to IRIS.

Somewhat incredibly the Charity Commission eventually found that "on balance" the trust had used its funds to carry out its stated objectives, and that "there is no evidence of any connection between the trust and the Conservative or any other political party".

FEATURE

WHERE WE STAND

FACING MASS unemployment, rampant employers equipped with savage anti-union laws, and a war on hard-won education, health and welfare services, the working class in Britain faces a real crisis – an avoidable crisis created by the historic failure of its official leadership.

Socialist Outlook exists to fight for a new type of working class leadership, based on the politics of class struggle and revolutionary socialism, to tackle this crisis.

The capitalist class, driven and politically united by its own crisis, its requirement to maximise profits at the expense of the workers, has been given determined, vanguard leadership by a brutal class-war Tory high command.

The Tory strategy has been to shackle the unions with legislation, and to fragment and weaken the resistance of the working class and oppressed, allowing them to pick off isolated sections one at a time, using the full powers of the state.

In response, most TUC and Labour leaders have embraced the defeatist politics of 'new realism', effectively proclaiming total surrender on every front, while ditching any pretence that they offer a socialist alternative. Every retreat and concession they have made to the employers and the government has simply fuelled and encouraged the offensive against jobs, wages, conditions and union rights.

New realism is the latest form taken by the politics of *reformism*, seeking no more than improved conditions within the framework of capitalist rule.

Socialist Outlook rejects reformism, not because we are against fighting for reforms, but because we know that the needs of the working class – for full employment, decent living standards, a clean environment, peace and democracy – can never be achieved under capitalism.

Nor, as we argued long before the collapse of Stalinism, could these demands ever be achieved under the bureaucratically deformed workers states and degenerated USSR, whose regimes survived only by repressing their own working class.

We are a *marxist* current, based not on the brutish totalitarian parodies of state marxism, nor on the tame, toothless version of 'marxism' beloved by armchair academics, but the *revolutionary* tradition

of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky.

Our socialist alternative is not based on parliamentary elections or illusions of peaceful legislative change. We fight to mobilise and unleash the power of the working class – the overwhelming majority of society – to topple the corrupt and reactionary rule of capital and establish its own class rule.

We struggle against fragmentation by building solidarity, working to link and unite the various struggles of workers, the unemployed, of women, of pensioners, of the black communities and ethnic minorities, of lesbians and gay men, of students, of youth – and of those fighting imperialism in Ireland and throughout the world.

Socialist Outlook is above all an *internationalist* current, in solidarity with the Trotskyist Fourth International, which organises co-thinkers in 40 countries worldwide.

Unlike some other groupings on the British left, we do not believe a mass revolutionary party can be built simply by proclaiming ourselves to be one. Too often this degenerates into sectarian posturing and abstention from the actual struggle taking shape within the labour movement, playing into the hands of the right wing.

Nor do we believe that the demands of women, black people, lesbians and gays or the national demands of people in Scotland and Wales should be left to await the outcome of a socialist revolution. The oppressed must organise themselves and fight now around their own demands, which are a part of the struggle for socialism.

But propaganda alone, however good, will not bring socialism. The fight for policies which can mobilise and politically educate workers in struggle, must be taken into the unions, the Labour Party and every campaign and struggle in which workers and the oppressed fight for their rights.

To strengthen this fight we press for *united front* campaigns on key issues such as fighting racism and fascism – in which various left currents can work together for common objectives while remaining free to debate their differences.

If you agree with what you see in *Socialist Outlook*, and want to join with us in the struggle for socialism, readers' groups meet in towns across the country.

Contact us now, get organised, and get active!

FeedBACK

Socialist Outlook welcomes readers' letters. Write to Feedback, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU. Letters over 300 words may be edited.

Importance of veal protests

I VERY much appreciated your short article (*Socialist Outlook* 76) on the extraordinary upsurge around live animal exports. It was good to mark the issue. I disagree with your "angle" however on several points.

To say that "the issue is immaterial" is completely wrong. These demonstrations are only one end of a long line of protests going back to Napoleonic times (and beyond!!) and giving us laws against cruelty to animals in the 1820's, and laws against cock fighting and baiting in the 1830's and 1840's.

Human sensibility towards animals has increased over a whole historical period – just as arbitrary cruelties have been suppressed in human relations: judicial torture, wife beating, child beating etc., in the metropolitan bourgeois democracies.

I don't know that "the core of these protests is people with well paid jobs" etc.? My campaign group is in Hove, next door Shoreham protests. One Group member is also prominent in the Shoreham protests: he is a working class Labour Councillor and engineering

shop steward and his hero is Arthur Scargill.

The impression I get is that a very large proportion of the protesters are women and schoolchildren (a local schoolmaster says its a real hot issue in his school – otherwise politically apathetic); and that fractions of youth that have radicalised around environmental issues... roads, animal welfare, travelling etc..

Joseph Newman, Portslade, E. Sussex

Get off the veal wagon!

MOTORWAY TRAGEDY - lorry crashes on M62 - 133 sheep killed, 2 people slightly injured, 2nd February. So where's the tragedy?

Is it that 133 potential Sunday lunches ended up splattered on the hard shoulder?

Or is it that *Socialist Outlook* has jumped on the bandwagon by attempting to subject this petty-bourgeois fad to serious analysis?

Aidan Day (*Socialist Outlook* 76) equates the powerlessness felt by the English middle classes in Tory Britain with the "experience" of veal calves. This would be laughable if it wasn't so sad.

To interpret every radicalisation as inherently 'positive', because it's better than nothing, indicates the low levels of class struggle and of political culture on the left.

Aidan Day is wrong to say "the issue is immaterial." The "issue" here is the quality of life of tomorrow's dinner before it reaches the plate.

The ruling class in Britain is currently launching a massive offensive against the working class – attacks on the welfare state, trade union rights, privatisation of services, unemployment, homelessness, etc..

That people should be devoting time and energy to such a triviality and that a Marxist newspaper is devoting valuable column space to such a diversion – that is the real tragedy.

Heddwyn Jones, London E17

Jewish question

DAFYDD RHYS' article on the Jewish question (Comment, *Socialist Outlook* 77) raised several issues.

"He (Trotsky) saw that the expected assimilation had not occurred and that the Jews had developed further the Jewish language and created a vibrant Yiddish press. He decided therefore that the Jews could be called a nation and that they therefore had the right, if they chose to exercise it, of a homeland of their own."

But even in Trotsky's day this argument was problematic, since it could have led to the conclusion, not that there was a Jewish nation, but that there was an Ashkenazi Jewish nation in Russia.

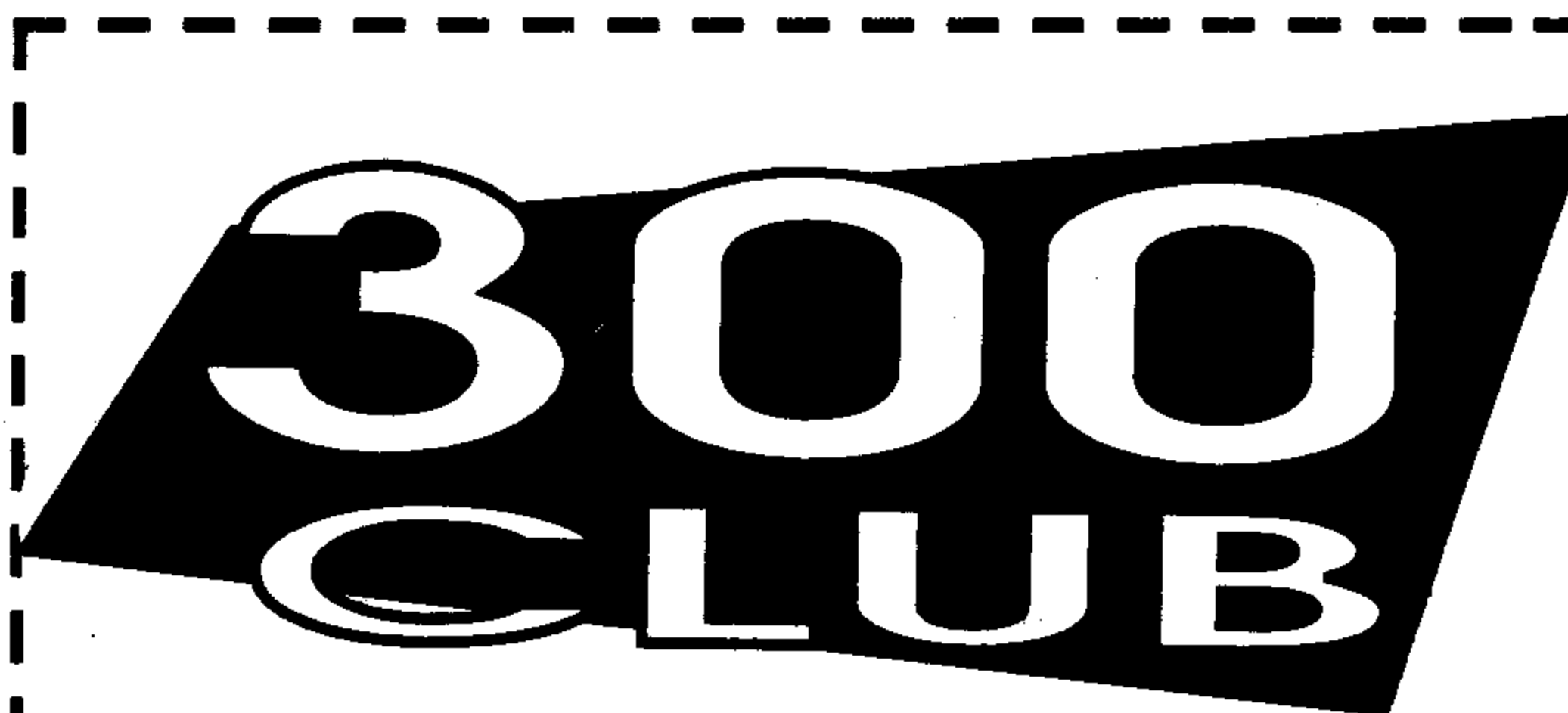
Where did this leave e.g. Ladino-speaking Sefardi Jewish communities in the Balkans? Support for Yiddish was justified then because in general the right of people to use their native language is a democratic right, but some of the demands of the *Bund* would have been inappropriate in relation to any minority in the Tsarist empire.

But is there a single historical example where a community has turned itself into the majority of the population of a territory without either assuming the role of settlers or because of the military intervention of some outside power, as with the Turkish Cypriots?

Nowadays most Jews outside Israel have become assimilated on a linguistic level, though not necessarily on any other level. Yiddish has become rather marginal.

Can it really be prevented from becoming more marginal? A Jewish identity which based neither on practising a different religion nor speaking a different language from the majority of the population seems rather weak. In the absence of a serious upsurge of anti-semitism (which cannot be ruled out) is there not an objective dynamic in the direction of assimilation?

Campbell McGregor, Glasgow and Chris Brooks, London N4



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What's HAPPENING

To advertise your event in *Socialist Outlook*, write to 'What's Happening', PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU by first post on Friday March 17.

MARCH

Thurs 9

CRISIS in the NHS: Birmingham *Socialist Outlook* forum with John Lister 7.30pm Union Club 723 Pershore Road Selly Park.
INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books Nia Centre Hulme Manchester.

Sun 12

SAMINA Yasmin must stay 2pm Deepdich Cty centre Rochdale
CLAUSE 4 *Socialist Outlook* forum with Steve French, Leicester.

Weds 15

TASLIMA Nasrin speaks 7.30pm Conway Hall, London WC1.
OXFORD Defend Clause 4 public meeting with Arthur Scargill 6.30pm Town Hall.
Defend Clause 4 lobby of NEC

meeting to discuss new Clause 4 John Smith House 9am - 10am.

Thurs 16

DEMONSTRATE against the Job Seekers Allowance meet 12 noon Harcourt House Oxford.

Thurs 16 - Sun 19

INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books West Yorkshire Playhouse Leeds.

Friday 17

BADGERLINE strike public meeting 7.30pm AEU House, Primrose Hill Chelmsford with Bob Arnott and Paul Foot.

Sat 18

SMTUC committee meeting 1.30pm Calthorpe Arms Gray's Inn Road WC1.

MEDIA versus the people One-day conference hosted by NUJ

and CPBF 10am - 5pm Congress House Great Russell St. WC1

Tues 21

MASS lobby of Southwark College evening body 5.00pm - 6.00pm Waterloo site The Cut SE1.

Weds 22

SOUTHAMPTON *Socialist Outlook* Clause 4 public forum.

Thurs 23

SOCIALIST Outlook Clause IV forum with Peter Purton 7.30pm Red Rose Club Seven Sisters Road North London.

SOCIALIST Outlook Clause IV forum with Steve French Brighton.

Thurs 23- Sat 25

INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books Camden centre Bidborough Street WC1 Entry £1.

Fri 24- Sun 26

SCOTTISH Dimensions a History Workshop Journal conference at Ruskin College Walton Street Oxford. £22.50/£5 from the college. details 01865 284333.

Sat 25

BIRMINGHAM March for jobs and services 12 noon Victoria Square.

DEMONSTRATE For Justice! Protest against police inaction on racist attacks! meet 1pm Altab Ali Park Park Whitechapel Rd E1 details: CAPA 0171 729 1404.

NEWHAM anti-racist and anti-racist day. 2pm-12 midnight Old Town Hall Stratford Broadway Details: NMP 0181 552 6284.

BADGERLINE national demonstration meets 10am Central Park Chelmsford BR

FULL Employment conference 11am - 5pm Congress House Great Russell Street WC1 tickets £2/tree.

Weds 29

AFTER the Soviet Union Leeds *Socialist Outlook* public meeting with Duncan Chapple 7.30pm.

Thurs 30 - Sat 1

INTERNATIONAL bookfair of radical Black and Third World books Partick Burgh Hall Glasgow.

APRIL

Sat 1

UNION Drive '95 national demonstration called by the NUJ in Sheffield.

GROUNDSWELL - a national forum for independent unemployed and claimants groups. 11am - 5.30pm East Oxford Community Centre, Princes Street Oxford, OX4 1HU For details write to Oxford Unemployed Workers' & Claimants Union at the Community Centre telephone (01865) 723750 Fax 724317.

Sat 1 - Sun 2

LABOUR Party Women's Conference, Derby.

Sat 8

'FROM the Cradle to the Grave' Welfare Education Network Conference on education, pensions and the NHS. 11am University of London Union, Malet St. WC2.

Sat 29

DEMONSTRATION in Manchester against deportations called by Okolo Family Defence campaign 12.00 noon All Saints' Park Oxford Road.

Sat 29 - Sun 30

LABOUR Party special conference, London.

MAY

Sat 13

SOCIALISM, Social Democracy and revolution *Socialist Outlook* dayschool London. Speakers include Francois Vercaemmen, United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Tickets £6/£3 from *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

Sat 27

DAY of Action by Campaign to Close Campsfield.

AFRICAN Liberation Day march 1.00pm Kennington Park London SE11. Rally at Trafalgar Square Details: 0171 924 9033.

JULY

Sat 9

CRIMINAL justice after the Bill a day conference sponsored by the Haldane Society of Socialist Lawyers. 9.30am - 4pm Camden Town Hall opposite St Pancras BR. £3/£10 from 20-21 Tooks Court EC4.

Fri 22 - Fri 29

INTERNATIONAL Youth Camp in southern France. Send £35 deposit to 'Liberation Publishing Association', PO Box 1109, N4.

Campsfield refugees are fighting back

By Bill McKeith

IVORY COAST refugees have responded to the government's increasingly oppressive immigration controls by publicly campaigning against government policy, even though some of them face victimisation.

Members of the Ivorian Action Group, most of whom have asylum applications pending, demonstrated twice in five days outside campsfield Immigration Detention centre at Kidlington, Oxford. They were supporting the demands of two Ivorian detainees for the right to asylum.

Sita Kamara and Anna Marie Saunan started their hunger strike on 8-9 February. Sita was detained last July when she was 17, Anna Marie in September. Sita was active in the Ivorian student movement, SESCO, and in consequence was assaulted by three government thugs.

On Monday 27, Sita was told she'd be deported in the morning. In desperation, she ate soap and Calamine lotion. This stopped the removal. She was, however, removed to the Bee Hive holding centre at Gatwick Airport on Thursday in preparation for her removal.

At the same time, six to eight other detainees who protested at her removal and their own detention were removed to various prisons. One common space room had been wrecked in the protests. Early on Wednesday, Group Four carried in sackloads

of riot helmets and shields.

Including an International Women's Day solidarity vigil, there have been seven demonstrations at Campsfield in 12 days in support of the Ivorians and the release of all detainees.

A Wednesday 1 March demonstration was called by IRAG and supported by the new Students Against Campsfield Group set up at Oxford University following a student meeting addressed by local campaigners, Nigerian refugee Andrew Adekun and Jeremy Corbyn MP.

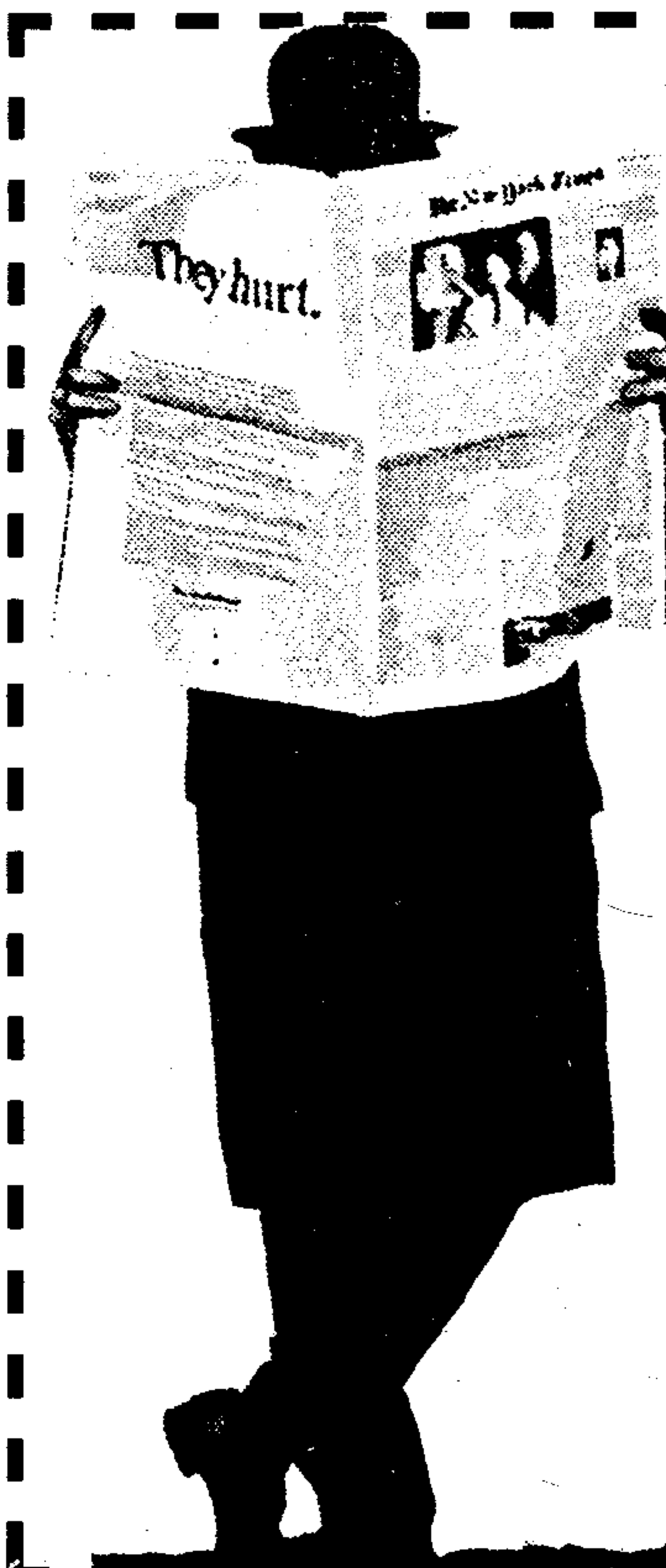
The determined resistance of the detainees and the supporting action of campaigners outside the 20 foot razor-wire topped fence are a powerful response to recent a government race-hate mongering moves. These have included Charles Wardle's resignation in order to lead off on further attacks on refugees and migrants; Home Secretary Michael Howard's announcement that 50 extra Immigration and nationality Department employees would be hired; and the DSS rule denying migrant workers their benefit payments.

The Campaign To Close Campsfield has proposed 27 May be a national Day of Action at detention centres and prisons holding immigration detainees around the country.

● **Next 'Last Saturday' march at noon, 27 March.** Contact IRAG c/o Greenwich CRE, 115 Powis Street, Woolwich SE18 6JL or CTCC c/o 111 Magdalen Road Oxford. Tel: (01865) 724452, 726804 or 722357.

Socialism, Social Democracy & REVOLUTION

SOCIALIST OUTLOOK is holding a special day of discussion and debate for defenders of Clause 4. To be held in London on Saturday 13 May, the school will examine the historical record of social democracy, the relationship between revolutionaries and the reformist organisations, and the future of the Labour Party. Discussions will cover nationalisations, why marxists call for a Labour vote, and other important issues of concern to those fighting for socialism in the 1990s. OPEN TO SOCIALIST OUTLOOK SUPPORTERS. FOR TICKETS, SEND A CHEQUE FOR £6 WAGED, £3 UNWAGED TO SOCIALIST OUTLOOK FUND, PO BOX 1109, LONDON N4 2UU



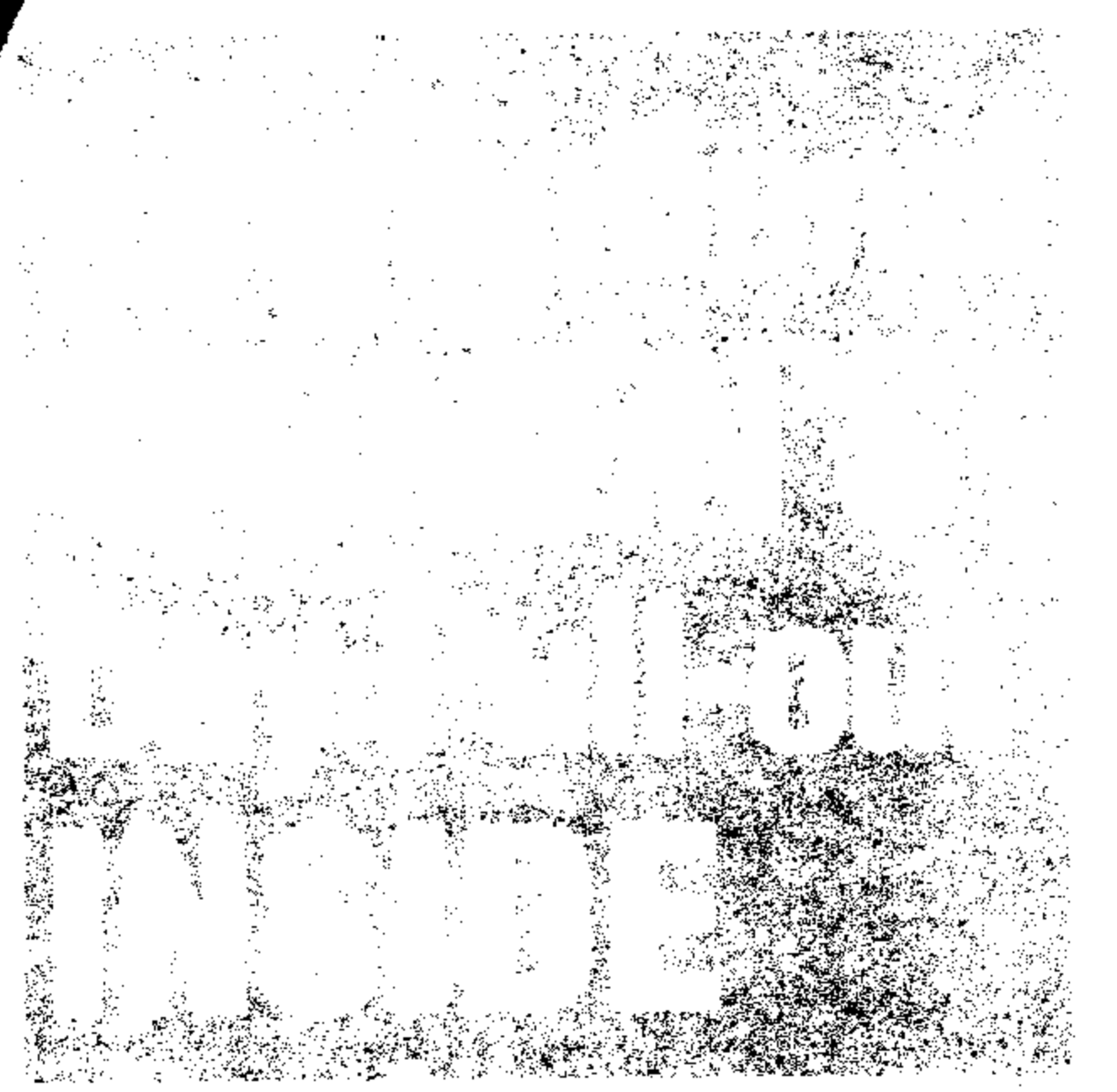
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SOCIALIST OUTLOOK

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German strikers challenge bosses

12,000 German engineering workers in 30 plants in Bavaria have been on strike for almost two weeks, demanding a six percent pay rise with no strings.

But as we go to press talks have reopened with the leaders of the giant 3.1 million strong IG-Metall union: employers are pressing for drastic concessions in the form of 'flexibility' in return for any pay increase. This formula is grimly familiar to British engineering workers.

And German bosses have raised the stakes, threatening that if no settlement is reached by March 8 they will lock out workers at one plant for every one closed by strike action - obliging the union to pay strike benefit to members locked out.

Other sections of German workers are also in line behind the engineers demanding big pay increases, including 1.5 million building workers, chemical workers and 450,000 bank workers.

Like workers in Britain, German trade unionists are angered at sky-rocketing corporate profits while pay increases last year averaged just two percent and inflation three percent.

Worried that they could lose ground in the competitive world market, German bosses are determined to hold the line.

Though the strike so far is strong and solid, German workers have little reason to believe their right wing union leaders will be as eager for a fight.