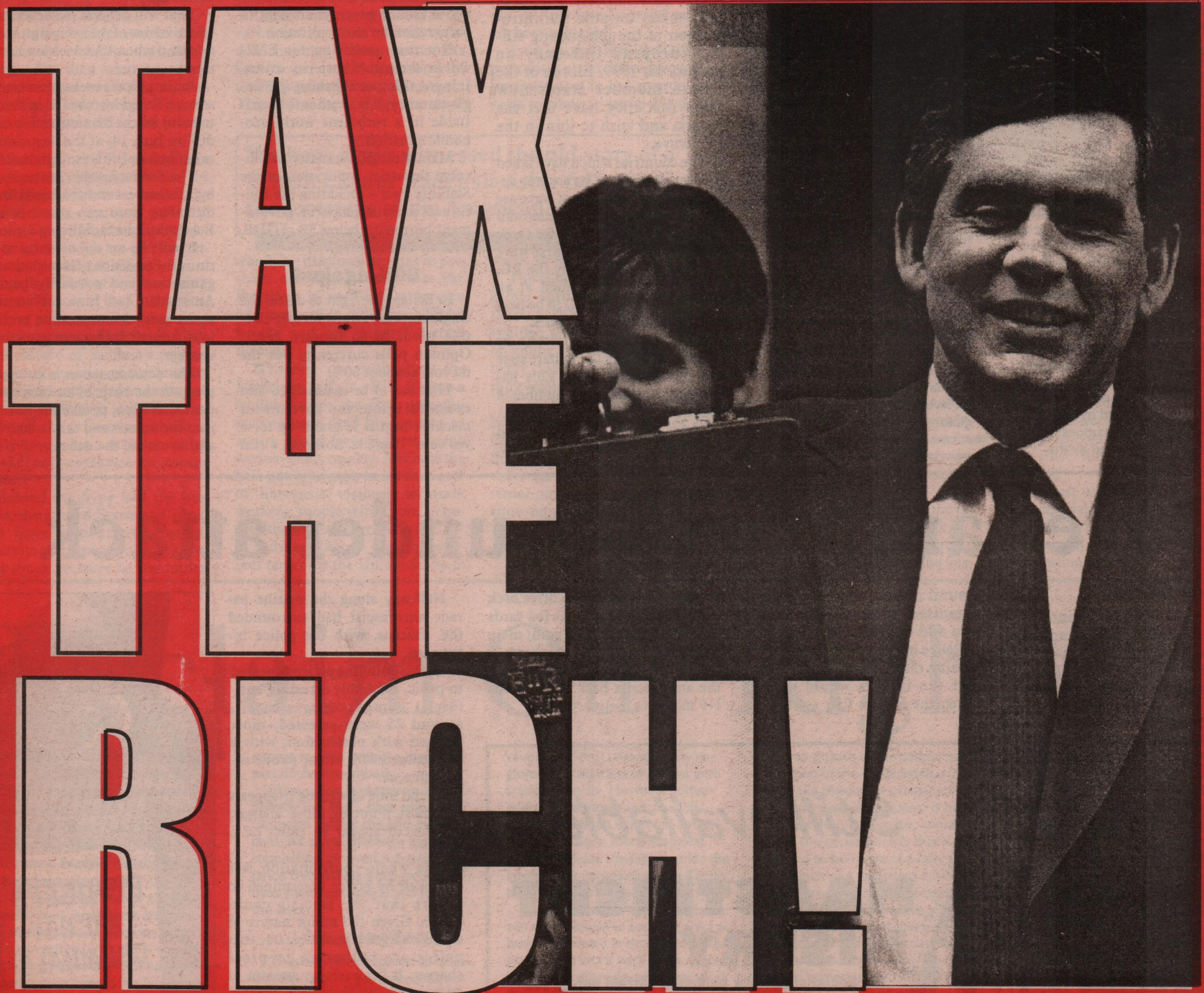


NS 13

Socialist OUTLOOK

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Browned-off campaigners tell Chancellor: "Listen to us, not bankers and bosses"



TAX THE RICH!

NEW LABOUR may have done nothing to improve the lot of the poorest, but the government has been a boon for big business. Profits are high, and taxes low.

As Chancellor Gordon Brown draws up his Budget speech, major building societies, led by the Halifax, are looking for ways to hand out up to £10 billion in "spare" cash to their shareholders.

The government, too, is awash with cash:

Brown has been paying back billions in debts. There is plenty of scope for action on March 17 to repair our crumbling NHS and education system, boost pensions and benefits, tackle the housing crisis and invest in public transport.

Instead Brown seems set to stand firm on his line of austerity, making more "tough choices" at the expense of those in greatest need.

But there are already signs this government can be forced to back down. There have been

concessions to anger over cuts in lone parent benefit, and hints that benefits for the disabled may be reprieved.

And now we have seen ministers fall over themselves in the rush to appease the right wing so-called "countryside lobby".

If they are willing to listen to them, we must make them listen to us!

BUDGET DAY LOBBY: 1.15pm, St Stephen's entrance, House of Commons.

Bolton Seven should not have been charged

Mark Findlay

SEVEN gay men from Bolton have avoided imprisonment after being convicted of various offences including gross indecency, age of consent and buggery offences.

However some of the men were given suspended prison sentences.

Others received probation and community service orders.

They were convicted after videotapes of their sexual activities were sent to the police. The gross indecency law dates from the 19th century, as does the buggery law, although 'updated' by the 1967 Act.

Oscar Wilde was convicted under more or less the same law. This law forbids sexual acts between men if there are more than two persons present.

In addition, three of the men were convicted under the age of consent laws because one of the other men was aged 17 and a half. As a result, their names will be added to the National Sex Offenders Registry as "Paedophiles".

Already they have been harassed and their homes firebombed. Yet no action would have been taken if the men had been engaged in identical heterosexual acts.

The prosecution under the age of consent law for sex with a man aged just under eighteen flies in the face of Labour's manifesto commitments to equalise the age of consent.

It appears that the conviction and sentences were agreed by the Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills, and endorsed by the

Lord Chancellor, Lord Irvine.

Irvine is a member of the Labour government and should be dismissed for this conflict with declared government policy!

This is the first such conviction for several years, including under the last government with its notoriously reactionary home secretary, Michael Howard!

For a long time, many gay organisations have been trying to establish liaison with the police. This has broken down in Manchester as a result of this case.

The lessons of this are to some extent being learnt. The gay community cannot expect the police to take their side. The history of harassment is too long.

The ingrained homophobia is reflected in the continued raids on gay men using toilets and on gay clubs.

Another blow to the community came on February 17 when the European Court of Justice ruled against Lisa Grant in her case against her employer, South West Trains. She was claiming a travel pass for her partner, Jill Persey.

The Court had been expected to rule for her after the Advocate General had given a preliminary opinion in her favour.

Gay community organisations such as Stonewall have for a long time expressed great hopes that European bodies would be more favourable than the previous Tory government, and indeed some decisions (such as over application of the 1967 Act in Northern Ireland) have been favourable.

(Information from www.planetout.com and <http://www.Out-Rage.cygnet.co.uk>)



Saying no to the Euro: marchers unite in Amsterdam last summer. Cardiff is the next key target.

EMU: a step closer

Alan Thornett

ANOTHER important step has been taken towards the introduction of the job-cutting single European Currency on January 1st 1999. Eleven of the fifteen member states now claim that they have met the criteria and wish to join in the first wave.

The countries which have failed to meet the criteria or are not applying to join in the first wave are just Greece, Denmark, Sweden and Britain. The applications for those applying to go into the first wave will now be examined by the EU, and the final list decided at an EMU Council of the EU to be held in Brussels on May 1, 2 and 3.

Most have met the criteria by massive attacks on the welfare state and the working class. This has met huge resistance in a number of countries, most notably in France.

There has also been substantial opposition in Belgium, Germany,

Spain and Italy. The Italian Government introduced a special EMU tax to reduce government debt in preparation for the application.

Not that qualifying for EMU will be the end of austerity drives. It is one thing establishing the single currency, it is another to keep it stable in a turbulent world economic situation.

Maintaining its stability will involve the strict application of the Stability Pact - including the continued maintenance of government borrowing below 3% of GDP, with all that involves.

60% against

In Britain the fight to defeat the single currency in any future election needs to go forward apace. Opinion polls currently put the no vote at about 60%.

That has to be maintained and extended before the government machine begins to crank up for a yes vote. There is, however, a real

chance that it can be defeated when it comes up.

That will depend, however, on the effectiveness of the campaign between now and when that decision has to be taken.

An important mean of raising consciousness against the EU in Britain is to build for the demonstration in Cardiff on June 14, at the last major EU event before EMU is introduced.

The demonstration has been called by a broad committee based in Cardiff. The European marches across Europe will be mobilising for it.

It will be an opportunity to continue the tradition of international organisation and solidarity begun in Amsterdam last June and continued at the mass demonstration at the EU jobs summit in Luxembourg in November.

The demonstration is an opportunity, on the basis of an international demonstration, to take the issue back into the unions and the Labour Party and to extend the debate.

Dover anti-fascists under attack

Simon Deville

THE NATIONAL Front's second demonstration against Romany asylum seekers in Dover on 1 March. The 30 fascists who turned up were met by a militant demonstration of

around 200 anti-fascists, mainly organised by Anti Fascist Action and the Anti Nazi League.

Police made it clear from the beginning that they were determined that the fascists would march. When the fascists first assembled,

anti-fascists managed to drive back the police lines to within a few yards of the fascists, at which point more police and dogs were brought in.

The police then started driving the anti-fascists back to allow the NF march to inch forward.

Half-way along the marine parade anti-fascist had surrounded the fascists, with the police in-between.

At this point the police appeared to panic, randomly arresting anti-fascist demonstrators. In all, around 25 were arrested, most charged with obstruction, with a few charged with minor public order offences.

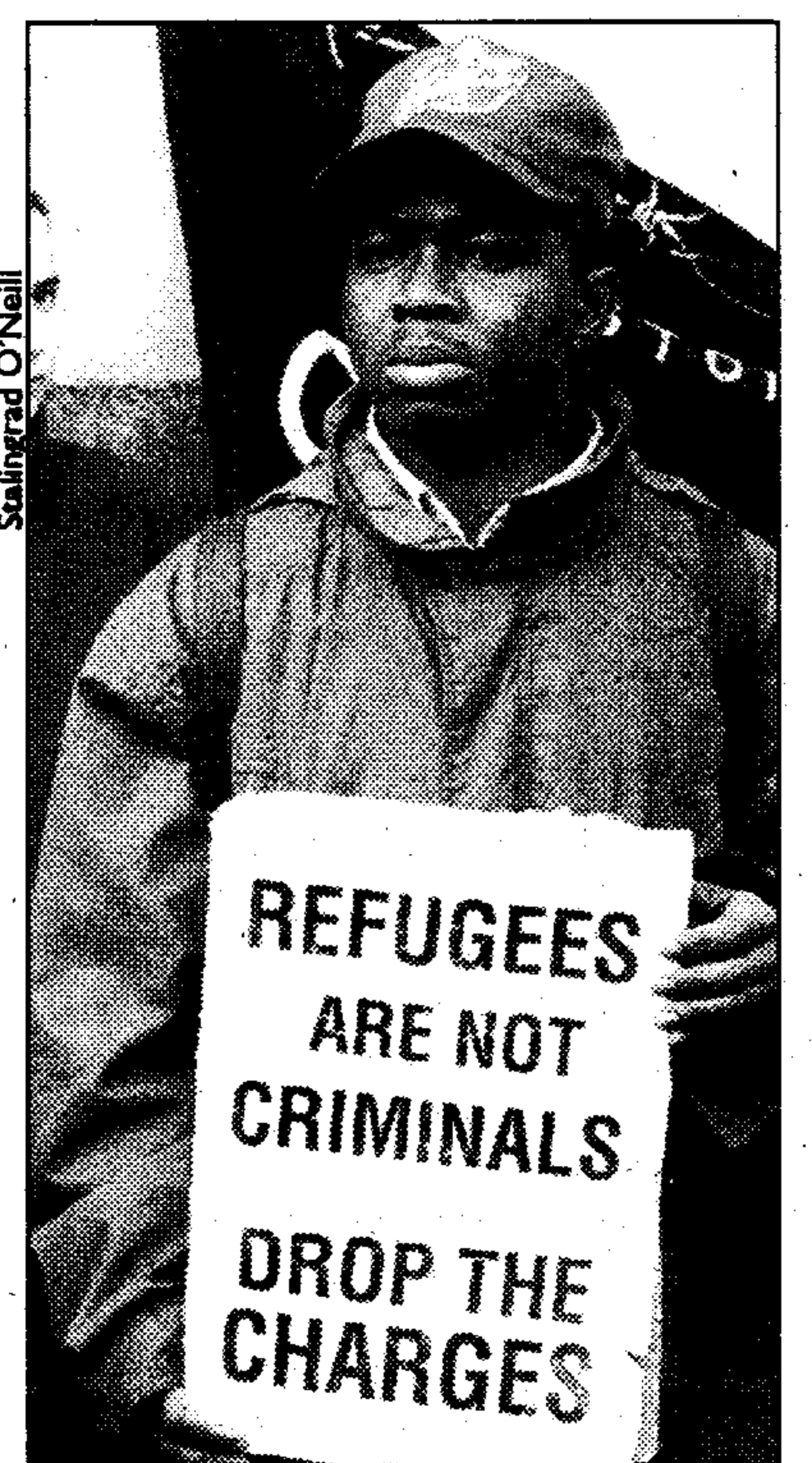
At the time of writing it appears that most, if not all, those charged are due to appear in court on 1 April.

The whole confrontation was provoked by police determined to ensure that the fascists could march. Given the minor nature of all the charges it seems bizarre that police are bothering to press charges. It is clearly an attempt to criminalise anti-fascists.

With council elections coming up this May, fascists will be attempting to organise in a number of areas across the country. All anti-fascists must assert that fascists have no right to demonstrate or organise. We must assert our right defend our communities against fascist thugs.

Show your opposition to the fitting up of anti-fascists at the court hearing on 1 April.

* 9.30 am, Dover Magistrates Court, Pencaster Road, Dover.



VICTIMISED: the trial of the "Campsfield 9" detained asylum seekers on trial for riot and violent disorder at Campsfield House near Oxford has been put back to June 1. Home Office ministers appear to have intervened to ensure that the most serious charges would be levelled at the nine.

Still available

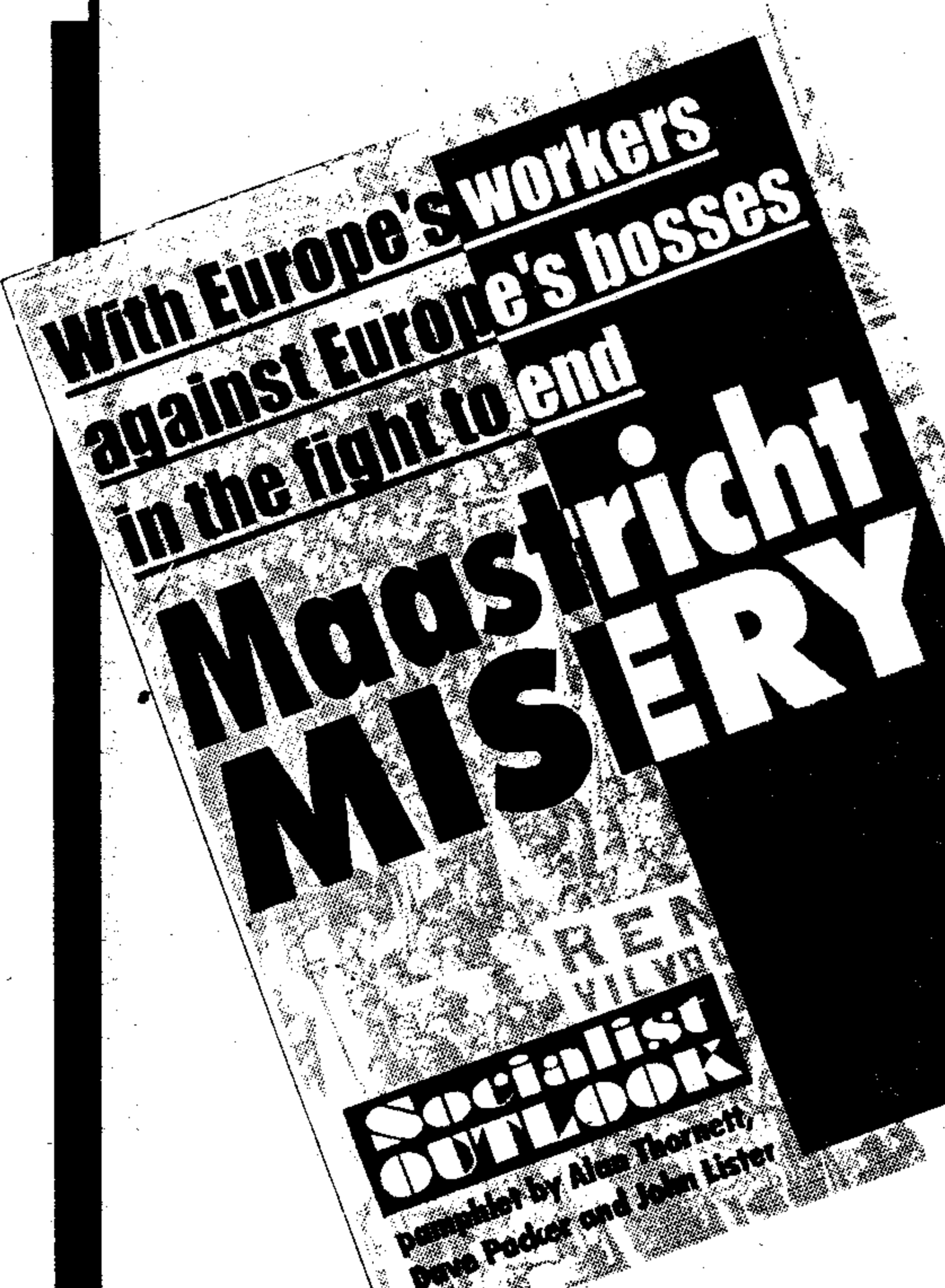
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Starvation: the continuation of the Gulf war by other means

THE THREAT of a shooting war against Iraq has passed for the time being following the deal struck by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

At the level of logic, military action never seemed the most likely option. But then what happened over these last weeks has seemed more like the sort of bad B-movie Ronald Reagan used to star in than anything else.

After all, one of the dynamics in the situation seemed to involve the possibility of the President of the United States, the most powerful man in the world, being indicted – for lying about his sex life, and encouraging others to do so.

The build-up of military hardware and forces in the Gulf region, the glut of supposedly serious media coverage emphasising the barbaric nature of Saddam's regime, and the siren cries of the military industrial complex demanding to test out their new weaponry and drive up the price of oil, could so easily have led to a situation which in the end excluded an escape route.

Behind the hype and the hysteria, the United States and its allies have important strategic interests at stake in the Gulf. However much pressure he was under,

it is inconceivable that an American President would follow a path contrary to the political, military and economic needs of his class.

Clinton may have wanted to divert attention from the sex scandals: but the notion that he has become an unwilling prisoner of the Republican Party is a myth. This lie has been peddled by those

who demonstrate its self-proclaimed role as world cop. The flexing of the muscles may have receded, but no long-term solution in the interests of American imperialism has yet been achieved.

America will find another opportunity, under more favourable circumstances in the months and years to come to stamp her domi-

We have again witnessed the old story of a British Labour leader slavishly following in the footsteps of his American master.

who have illusions, or want to sow them amongst others, that the President is an honourable man whose record in office must be defended and his "legacy" carried through.

Whatever the truth about the Levinsky affair, Bill Clinton would not be the first powerful man to have used his position to acquire sexual favours from young women in his employ. Nor is he the first powerful man to use the cover of 'liberalism' viciously to attack working people with more impunity than the overt right wing.

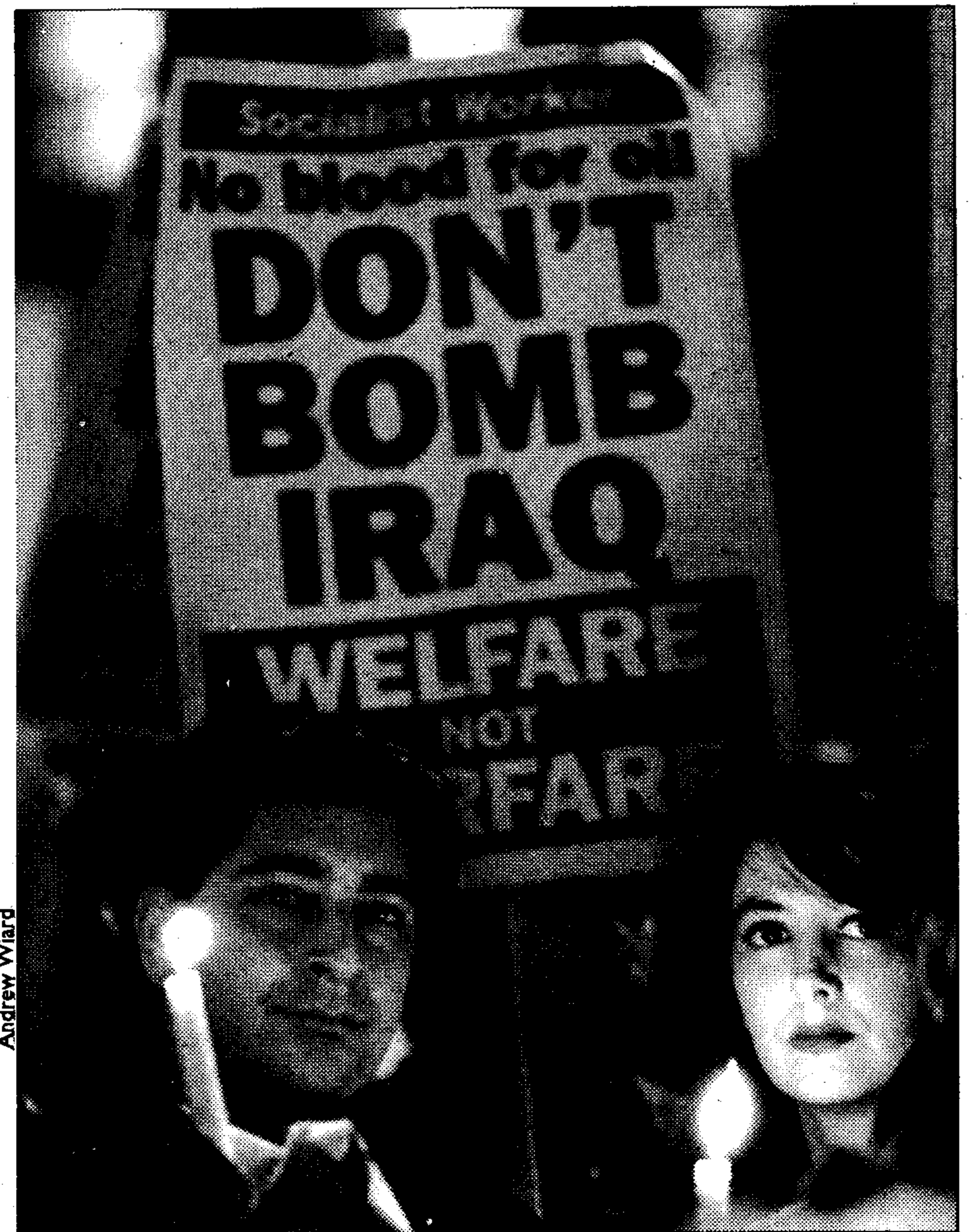
Saddam Hussein was a convenient target for the United States to

nance on the region.

The alliance that the US put together during the Gulf war lay in tatters at the beginning of this adventure, and there was little hope of gluing it back together as so many shifts had taken place in the intervening period.

With the American build-up, both the Palestinians and the Jordanians had to ban pro-Saddam demonstrations. Many of the Arab states are more worried about internal opposition today and were thus more constrained against throwing their hats into the American camp.

It was hard to remember that



Protests were built against the war drive despite Blair's craven line

Tony Blair was supposedly committed to carving out a new and central role for Britain as part of the leadership of the European union. Instead we again witnessed the old story of a British Labour leader slavishly following in the footsteps of his American master.

The opposition within the Parliamentary Labour Party was not able to build on its recent strides forward over lone parent benefits and attacks on the disabled, but was again reduced to the committed stalwarts.

Fortunately the anti-war movement did not wait for parliamentary leadership. With public opinion less convinced of the wis-

dom of military action than during the Gulf War, sizeable protests were swiftly organised across Britain. The left was generally able to set aside its usual pettiness and work in a united and co-ordinated fashion to protest this dangerous madness.

This time at least the question of sanctions was to the fore on protestors' lips. If a shooting war has been averted, the war of attrition against the Iraqi people which has cost so many lives since the Gulf War is just as criminal.

The best way to ensure that a further imperialist assault in the Gulf is prevented is to build, from here on in, a substantial campaign to stop the war of starvation against the Iraqi people.

Reclaim Our Rights!

OVER and above the defeats inflicted by the Tories and the reactionary character of the trade union leaderships, the anti-union laws are probably the single most important factor holding back the class struggle.

At the end of March a major conference against the anti-union laws takes place. Such an initiative is long overdue.

Every dispute which has broken out in recent years has been hampered by these laws and the restrictions they place on solidarity action.

Many more have not taken place because of the hoops which have to be jumped through before action is 'allowed'. Whereas previously action would have been almost instantaneous, the laws now prescribe long balloting and notice periods which make it easier for bosses to prepare for any action and for union bureaucrats to fend off action by protracted negotiations.

Indeed, one of the major effects of the anti-union laws has been to provide a smokescreen which union leaders can hide behind as an

excuse for not acting in the interests of their members.

Most union leaderships, and especially the TUC, have refused to campaign against the anti-union laws, let alone challenge them by supporting, or even refusing to distance themselves from, action by their members which falls foul of the laws.

No question

They are not prepared to question the Labour government's retention of the laws, preferring to concentrate solely on improving the law on union recognition, as if recognition could somehow be separated from the ability to use it effectively.

There has not been any systematic campaign against the laws. The Free Trade Unions Campaign, launched last year, showed the support that exists on the issue and the possibilities for an effective campaign.

This has been somewhat overtaken by the initiative to call the 'Reclaim Our Rights' conference. This has won the support of wide sections of the movement, including

several national unions, many regions and countless branches and trades councils. However, other parts of the movement, which might have been expected to support, have been more sceptical. This is because the initiative for the conference comes from the Socialist Labour Party.

The SLP's sectarian image, born out of its refusal to support any Labour candidates in the general election and to work with other forces in socialist alliances, solidarity work and other areas, is not without foundation. However, it appears to be adopting a relatively healthy approach to the building of this conference, holding open planning meetings for organisations sponsoring the conference, and inviting a broad range of speakers.

What is important is that the SLP does not succumb to the temptation to use the conference as a 'party building' event rather than to launch an effective campaign. Such a campaign is well overdue, and it could be ruined if one organisation were to come to see it as its personal property.

One way to prevent this happen-

ing is to ensure the broadest participation in the conference, to exert the maximum pressure to ensure an inclusive campaign is built.

The other, legitimate, concern about the conference is that it is planned to be more of a rally than the launch of a campaign which could turn the tide in the trade union movement. There are so many speakers invited that there will be next to no room for discussion from the floor of the way forward, and no provision is made for resolutions on the nature of the campaign which needs to be built.

Repeal

It is not enough to have a statement of basic aims to repeal the anti-union laws, to secure the introduction of new laws which enshrine the right to take action and for unions to write their own constitutions, and to support workers and unions threatened by the anti-union laws.

A lot more needs to be done – propaganda material made available, a campaign of resolutions in each union and to the TUC, a campaign in the Labour Party to raise

the issue of repeal, demonstrations, lobbies etc. The danger is that the conference will be said to have launched the campaign and then very little will happen, although a national demonstration is apparently planned for the autumn.

There will need to be an attempt on March 28 to turn this around. There is also a proposal from the organisers to repeat the conference on a regional basis, this should be supported as a widening of the campaign, but should also be used to discuss more concretely the type of campaign which needs to be built.

The Reclaim our Rights conference should be supported, and every effort made to make it into an effective, broad, democratic campaign which can force the movement to get rid of the anti-union laws.

■ National Conference, Reclaim Our Rights, Repeal the Anti-Trade Union Laws, Sat 28 March, 11a.m.-4p.m. at Central Hall, Westminster, London.

4 TRADE UNIONS

Second Social Justice demonstration called for May 30

A delegation of 20 dockers and WOW activists from Liverpool were among 200 supporters who attended the national dockers' conference on Saturday February 28 at Conway Hall London.

The tremendous solidarity of the dockers, which had carried them through 28 months of bitter dispute, was there in full force. They had been defeated not by the port employers but by their own union.

They made it clear that they do not intend to fade away after the defeat of the strike but to continue the struggle in support of those still in dispute.

The conference adopted a resolution which called on the support groups to continue and for a second Social Justice demonstration to be held in London on May 30.

The resolution also called for increased support for the strikes which are continuing: Magnet, Hillingdon Hospital and Critchley Labels.

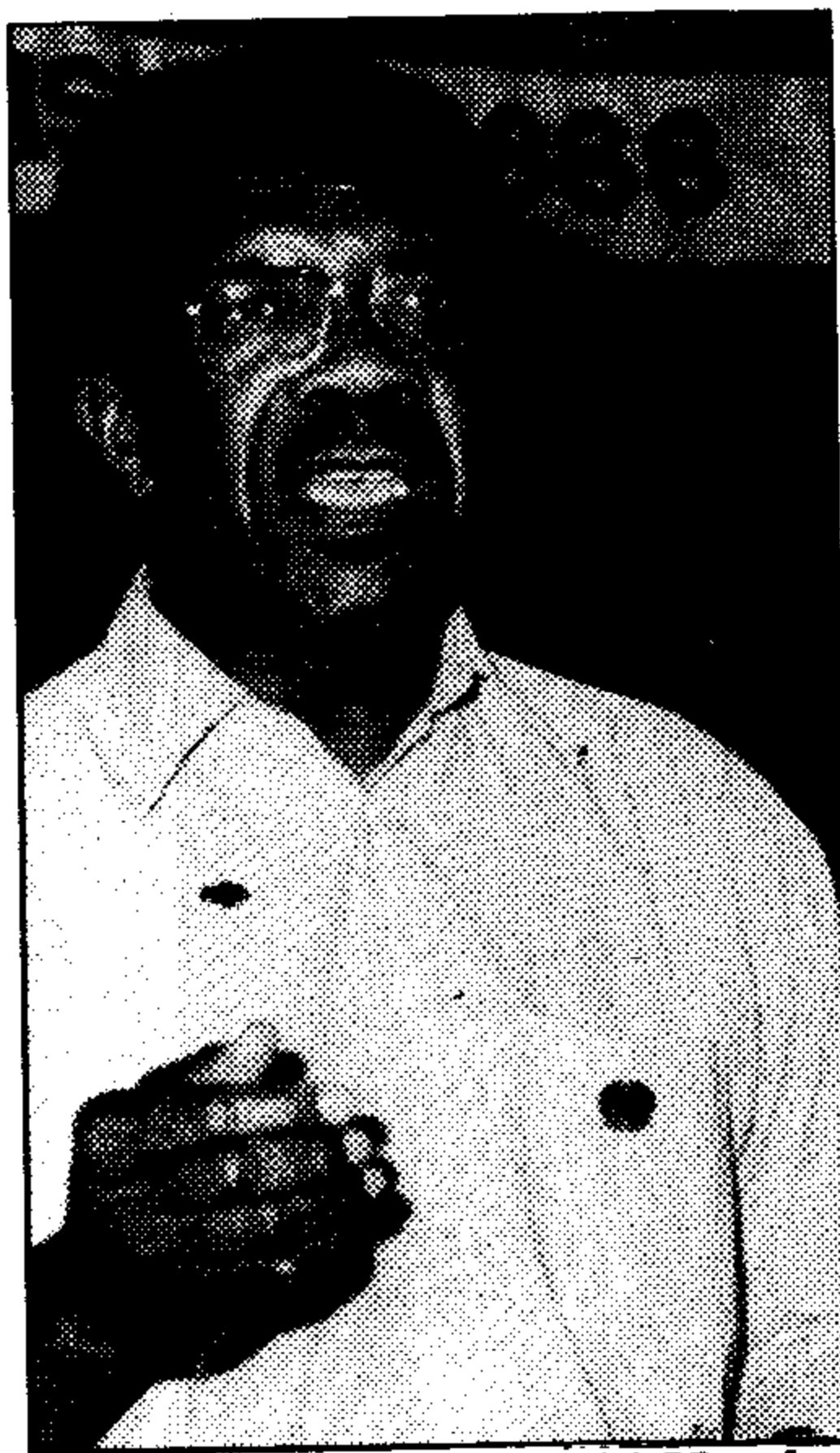
The issue which was inadequately addressed was that of the situation inside the TGWU itself. One of the docks speakers rightly stressed that it was time for the rank-and-file of the TGWU to reclaim their union, but there was no attempt to address the issue in any systematic way or to begin the organisation of a fight-back within the union.

A carworker shop steward from Rover's Cowley plant called on the dock stewards to use their authority to help reorganise the left in the union and build a challenge to General Secretary Bill Morris.

Such a fight-back is urgently needed within the TGWU. Morris has not only ensured the defeat of the docks strike but has used it to strengthen the hold of the right and of the full-time officials within the union.

This has been strongly reflected in the recent elections for the TGWU executive committee, where a number of those who have supported the dockers most strongly have been voted out after campaigns by the right-wing.

The steps taken by the conference, however, were extremely important and provide the basis for the lessons of the docks dispute to be used to strengthen all those currently in struggle.



Architect of defeat: Bill Morris

Critchley strike: solidarity can win!

THE CRITCHLEY Labels strike is still strong after a year on the picket lines. 21 of the 31 original strikers are still picketing the South Wales label printing plant demanding reinstatement and union recognition.

Critchley Labels was formerly BT's in-house label printing operation, including printing the labels which you see on telephone boxes throughout the land.

In 1993 BT, in line with its strategy of concentrating on its core (profit-making) business sold the factory and the exclusive contract to Critchley Labels.

Despite the usual assurances concerning pay and conditions, Critchley quickly moved to cut both. Branch officials were made redundant. Finally the CWU was derecognised, and branch members took strike action for which they were then sacked in February 1997.

The CWU has organised financial and picket line support; Telecom members are paying a 2p levy and there have been several major rallies and demonstrations.

The strikers - mainly women - have become confident and popular speakers at meetings across the land. The next major event will be a demonstration 24 March at the Critchley plant in Stroud,

Gloucestershire.

The problem however is how to win. The CWU has pursued the line of demanding that BT re-employ the strikers on the basis of honouring its 1993 commitments. Despite sympathetic noises BT has only re-employed one striker, while offering some others agency work on worse terms and conditions than they had previously enjoyed at the factory.

On the initiative of Broad Left NEC members the union has also used the issue to initiate a campaign outside the TUC to change the law on recognition and other TU rights.

But important though this is, it will not get our members in Critchley their jobs back, given Blair's attitude and the fact that no legislation would be made retrospective.

The CWU leadership has however so far studiously avoided the issue of solidarity action which could win the dispute. The union's London Engineering Council and several branches have adopted this policy.

80% of Critchley's production goes to BT. A boycott of Critchley products by CWU members in BT could quickly bring the company back to the negotiating table.

CWU General Secretary Election Vote Billy Hayes!

THE FIRST General Secretary election since the formation of the Communications Workers Union out of the merger of the BT-dominated NCU and the Post Office-dominated UCW in 1996 takes place this month.

There are four declared candidates. Three of them, the current joint General Secretaries Derek Hodgson and Tony Young, and Peter Morris are all Blairite right wingers, distinguished only in that they come from different sections of the union.

Hodgson, an old style right wing UCW bureaucrat is the only one with a serious chance of winning since he is backed by the majority UCW component bureaucracy on the 'buggins turn' principle.

Billy Hayes, a national postal official who is being backed by the CWU Broad Left, is the candidate standing against the consensus.

The basis of his "Unity 98" campaign is outlined in a pamphlet against the flexible working conditions which is currently the main employer attack on CWU members in both Post and Telecommunications.

This needs to be developed into a campaign for the shorter working week. He is also supporting calls for more union democracy and for a left programme for the Labour Party, including opposition to the single currency.

Billy has been nominated by over thirty branches from across the union, and is the only candidate capable of rising above sectionalism and appealing to activists



There is a chance to lay the basis for a campaigning left in the CWU

and members across the union.

The campaign in the Postal constituency is having some success in challenging the mistaken and apolitical belief that the General Secretary election does not matter compared with left control of the chairpersonship of the Postal Industry Committee.

Former GS Alan Johnson, now an MP, constantly sabotaged the 1996 Royal Mail strikes against the introduction of flexibility.

The campaign can overcome its false start when Hayes and his supporters attempted to do a deal with the right wing Clerical leadership. Hayes has a very real chance to win and turn the union leadership away from its course of pro-business "partnership".

It could also lay the basis for building a campaigning and democratic organised left across the whole union.

Membership back witchhunted steward

Elkie Dee

Despite having recognition withdrawn by British Gas management, victimised UNISON steward Bernie Hynes has again been re-elected as a staff representative, with 90 per cent of those balloted indicating support in a secret workplace ballot.

Management have shown their contempt for this result by replying to the Branch Secretary that they still refuse to recognise the representative chosen by the members.

Bernie's Industrial Tribunal has started. The tribunal took evidence from only two management witnesses, who are supported by a barrister and solicitor, and has now been extended to a second day on 23 March 1998, when Bernie and the third management witness will give evidence.

Evidence given already, some of which has been contradicted elsewhere by one management witness, suggests that the decision on derecognition was made at national level involving at least one director of the company on or before 14 October 1997.

The Area Service Centre Manager also gave an explanation that he had himself not chosen an Adolf

Hitler outfit to wear at a Christmas party in the canteen; his defence is that it was chosen for him by one of the other management witnesses.

Bernie has been unsuccessful in his campaign to obtain specialist legal representation at regional level or permission to put forward his own witnesses.

Management instigated a disciplinary action against Bernie for using company facilities to communicate with union members. He has appealed against this disciplinary but has been hampered by lack of support for his appeal from the Regional Officer, and UNISON Legal Affairs department appears to have ruled out any support for a further Industrial Tribunal application over the disciplinary action itself.

Letter

Dave Johnson, the Deputy Head of Energy at UNISON HQ, (who appears to be an avid *Socialist Outlook* reader), has relaunched his attacks on Bernie, describing him as both "mischievous" and "dishonest" for publishing a letter to him from management which refers to prior conversations about Bernie.

Dave Johnson is currently receiving praise for a groundbreaking pay agreement in British

Gas Trading, replacing forty years of hard won pay structure with performance related pay. Clearly, the national media and management regards him as him as a super salesman of management ideas and proposals to the UNISON membership in Gas. Hopefully, the BGT members will reject the agreement in their current ballot on the deal.

The internal company procedures have now been exhausted, with derecognition being upheld on the grounds that Bernie published criticisms of local managers to UNISON members.

The current onslaught on Gas members should be seen in the context of the drive to make the industry "competitive", and of global multinational strategies to drive down pay and conditions for gas workers.

This strategy has been rejected by members based at Leicester, but this has not been enough to prevent some national defeats in ballot results. Some members are becoming demoralised.

The approach of the current union leadership will only result in further loss of morale - members should follow the Leicester lead and fight back against the sell-outs being negotiated.

Bitter pill for low-waged, while waiting lists soar to new heights

Labour's prescription for NHS failure

John Lister

THE DECISION to jack up prescription charges by another 15p to a massive £5.80 is just the latest of a non-stop series of retreats on the NHS since Tony Blair's right wing crew were elected.

For over ten years successive Labour shadow health ministers correctly denounced the massive increases in prescription charges forced through by the Thatcher and Major governments as a "tax on the sick": it was the Tories which jacked it up from 20p in 1979 to the hefty £5.65 figure 18 years later, a 28-fold increase far outstripping inflation.

Frank Dobson once even famously pledged a Labour government would cut and phase out the prescription charge (as Harold Wilson's Labour government did - for four years - in 1964).

Now, though 80% of prescriptions are issued free, meaning that the charges result in only a marginal £300 million contribution to the £40,000 million NHS budget, ministers know that the increased charge weighs down most heavily on low-paid workers - those most likely to suffer ill-health as a result of social deprivation.

For New Labour, as with the Tories, raising the prescription charge is an ideological rather than a financial move. It is yet another example of the new bosses' government showing its eagerness to take "tough choices" which further disadvantage the poor and the sick in order to minimise the tax burden on the wealthy.

But the increased fee might not be the end of this process: there are dark hints that one of the outcomes of the financial review of the NHS now being carried out could be the imposition of means-tested charges for the contraceptive pill, and possibly the imposition of new prescription charges on "wealthy pensioners".

This descent into policies as bad

or worse than the Tories would fit together logically with Labour's longer-term plans for the NHS mapped out in the White Paper (ominously entitled *The New NHS*) published before Christmas.

While claiming to scrap the Tory internal market, Labour plans to retain most of its component parts, including the "purchaser/provider split" which in itself massively increased bureaucracy. Self-governing Trusts, which Labour had promised to abolish, will remain as a centrepiece of a new network of quangos which will not only contain the Tories' smaller, less democratic health authorities but a new system of more "local", but completely unaccountable purchasing bodies, "Primary Care Groups", each covering a population of around 100,000 and dominated by GPs.

Doctors' orders

All GPs will be included in the new "Primary Care Groups" (PCGs), not just those who had previously opted to act as fundholders under the Tory reforms. They will gain increasing influence in decisions on the purchasing of care for their local resident population, working initially within a framework drawn up by the health authority.

The new system does not offer existing GP fundholders the scope to retain unspent "surplus" cash in the way they were encouraged to under the Tory market.

But it does offer encouragement for empire-building GPs, leaving them in the driving seat in the

"new NHS".

The catch is that by imposing this new system Labour would for the first time impose cash limits on primary care services, which have until now been demand-led.

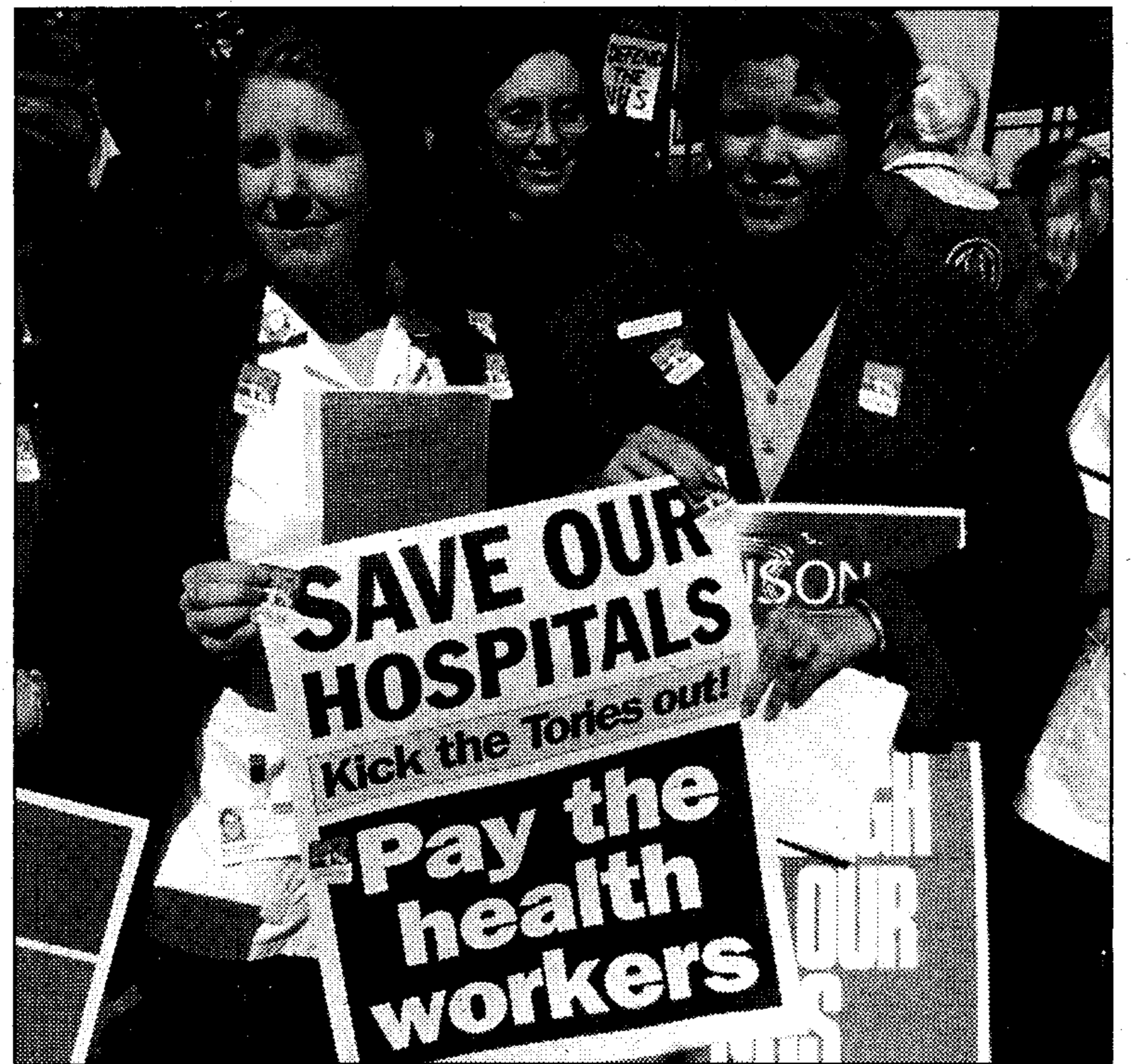
The reality is that many GPs will - as now - be unwilling or unable to allocate the time and energy to these wider responsibilities: the PCGs will swiftly be taken over by a new managerial bureaucracy acting on their behalf.

Decisions will be taken behind closed doors, with no wider involvement of the public, and with only token participation by community nurses and social service staff.

Though the long-term implications are that PCGs will be forced into making "tough decisions" on cuts to balance their books, the new system has even more serious implications for hospital services and up to a million NHS staff.

By placing the control of budgets firmly in the domain of GPs and "primary care", and giving hospital consultants and professionals no direct voice in planning or purchasing decisions, the White Paper is opening up a damaging division in the NHS - and pointing the way to substantial cuts as the burden of "efficiency savings" is dumped squarely onto the hospital sector.

There should be no doubt that bigger cuts are on the way. NHS Finance Director Colin Reeves admitted at the end of last year that the combined deficits of health authorities and Trusts amounted to £460 million, which had to be



One out of three is not good enough!

cleared - £190m by next month, and the remainder by April 1999. This is why health authorities are planning wholesale cutbacks in "elective" services and the "rationing" of care to exclude many services from the NHS altogether.

The service is already lagging far behind rising demand, as the latest waiting lists confirm. Far from cutting NHS waiting lists by 100,000, nine months of Labour government has increased them by more than that amount, with worse to come. There is a huge increase in numbers waiting over a year for treatment, with the Patient's Charter maximum wait of 18 months already certain to be widely breached.

London retreat

To compound the misery, Labour's promise to reexamine the planned Tory hospital closures in London has also proved a largely empty gesture. While Bart's Hospital has won a partial reprieve as a specialist cancer and cardiac unit, the closure of acute services at Guy's and at Queen Mary's Roehampton have received a rubber stamp of approval.

Though the independent review found that Londoners had fewer acute hospital beds available

per head than the rest of England, and urgently needs more beds for mental health sufferers there are no government plans to reopen closed beds or expand in-patient care: instead ruinously expensive privately-financed hospital schemes will axe hundreds more beds in central and south east London.

But while ministers backpedal furiously on Labour's pledges, seeking to cut back the NHS to meet the inadequate cash limits embraced by Gordon Brown, there are growing signs of community-led revolt at local level.

Protests at hospital cuts and closures have mobilised demonstrations of 1,000 in Watford, 6,500 in Canterbury and a staggering 2,500 in the sleepy little Oxfordshire market town of Wallingford. There are vigorous campaigns in Manchester, in Worcestershire and elsewhere.

The March 14 conference called by the Welfare State Network offers campaigners and health union activists an opportunity to share experience, and work through a programme of positive demands to unite in the fight to rescue the NHS from the ravages of private finance and Tory cash limits.

Birmingham anti-cuts campaign keeps on rolling

Bob Whitehead

THE MOST successful Birmingham Community Conference yet was held on February 7.

Sixty five attended a lively, upbeat and confident discussion centred around "Europe, EMU and the Welfare State". Alan Simpson and Lynn Jones, from the Socialist Campaign Group of MPs, Derek Robinson and other speakers combined with ample plenary discussion to chart a way out of the despair with New Labour.

The overwhelming view, confirmed in resolutions passed, was that the specific capitalist project of EMU was the main driving force of attacks on jobs and public services.

We therefore had to mobilise against it, but on an internationalist basis. The resolutions passed committed the planning group to build support for the Cardiff demonstra-

tion.

The existence of the Community Conference was vital in helping the Euromarch through Birmingham last June, but its other main activity has been the production of a local four page bulletin, *Public Service*, with a print run that has recently grown to 1000. The resolution passed invited all interested to write for and distribute it on a wider basis.

The conference committed itself to defend those scapegoated for shortages - ethnic minorities, asylum seekers, the Romany Community, single mothers, the elderly and disabled. Detention centres and prisons should not be used for refugees. The 1996 Immigration and Asylum Act should be repealed.

We called on all Councillors and MPs to oppose welfare cuts by all means at their disposal. We also adopted the "Peoples Charter for Health" drawn up by the Dudley So-

cialist Campaign Group.

Conference noted the sectarian role of the Campaign to Defend the Welfare State and called for a united Budget lobby between it and the Welfare State Network on March 17.

An interesting feature of the conference's recent work has been a debate with the right wing who control Erdington Labour Party, in the pages of the *Sutton Coalfield Observer*.

What started off with an attack by a Councillor on one of our street stalls has opened out into a long running weekly saga which seems to be generating a great deal of interest. Another letter - as agreed by the conference - was duly dispatched and printed in the *Observer* the following Friday.

The strength of the Community Conference has been its inclusive nature. It is centred on a campaign over welfare that all sections of the

left and single issue activists can unite on. It was interesting to see a big turn out from the Communist Party of Britain for this conference, but on the other hand sad to witness the usual boycott by some groups who prefer to go it alone.

One weakness was that there was little time to consider the threat of a renewed Gulf war and the need to link the millions being spent there with the millions being cut from welfare.

However, what started as an experimental, temporary organisation four years ago seems to keep rolling along.

It now needs to turn itself into a mass campaign if its aims are to be realised.

Judging by the public reaction to our publicity and activities the mass mood is slowly moving towards such a possibility.

A Rescue Plan for the NHS Conference

SATURDAY March 14
12noon - 4.30
ULU, Malet St, London WC1
Called by Welfare State Network

Speakers include Tony Benn MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Geoff Martin (London convenor UNISON), John Lister (London Health Emergency)
Details from WSN c/o Camden People's Centre, 183 Queen's Crescent London NW5 4DS. 0171-639-5068

Liverpool Dockers – defeated but unbowed

Neil Murray

IN JANUARY the Liverpool docks dispute ended. For 28 months the dockers fought heroically to get their jobs back, providing an inspiration to other struggles in Britain and to dockworkers worldwide.

They were defeated primarily because the leadership of their union, the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) consistently undermined their struggle. This, together with their own failure to develop an adequate strategy to defeat the leadership, left them feeling there was no way forward.

The dispute began in September 1995 when dockworkers working for Torside docks company were sacked for refusing to break a negotiated agreement and work a ship at short notice without overtime payments.

The Torside workers picketed the main Seaforth container terminal and other dockworkers refused to cross. All the dockers were then sacked by the Mersey Docks and Harbour Company (MDHC).

In previous dockers' struggles in Britain it was almost automatic that workers in other ports walked out in support, at least until the union bureaucracy had managed to restore control of the situation.

This time things were different. Thatcher had scrapped the National Dock Labour Scheme (NDLS), which had been a milestone in ending casual labour on the docks. The scrapping of the NDLS destroyed the stewards organisation and left few ports even unionised.

Legal straitjacket

The straitjacket of the Tory anti-union laws meant that the Liverpool dockers' action was 'illegal' because they had not balloted before taking action. Solidarity action by other workers, including portworkers, would be unlawful because they were employed by other companies.

The TGWU limited its 'support' to paying money into a hardship fund, hiding behind the restrictions of the anti-union laws. This lack of official support made it easier for other union leaders to oppose support for the dockers. Worse, Morris appears to have seen his job throughout the dispute as one of attempting to get a deal with MDHC over the heads of the dockers.

Wherever the dispute was raised the dockers got support from other workers. Support groups were set up in most towns, raising the political issues of the dispute as well as money.

Demonstrations were held in Liverpool and London. The radical environmental grouping, Reclaim the Streets became involved bringing a new dynamic to the dispute. After one of the demonstrations the group occupied the MDHC headquarters building ensuring high profile media coverage.

The dockers formed solid links with embattled strikers from Magnet and Hillingdon hospital. They spread the word about the other disputes and even donated part of their hardship fund to the Hillingdon workers!

As with many other recent disputes, a women's support group, Women of the Waterfront, was established.

WoW provided speakers at many meetings, both in Britain and internationally, and their banner became a regular on demonstrations. Given the hardship faced by the dockers and their families, this support, and that of the dockers' children, was crucial.

Yet much more was needed if MDHC was going to be forced to back down and rein-

state them. The dockers found a ready audience amongst port workers internationally.

Starting in December 1995 with a picket of U.S. docks, the Liverpool workers gathered support across the world. Dockers internationally recognised the merits of Liverpool case and the similarities with their own situation. The casualisation of dock labour is an international issue.

International days of action were held with action ranging from extended meetings to discuss the situation to 24-hour stoppages. Many refused to unload ships which had been loaded by scabs in Liverpool.

The highlight was the story of the Neptune Jade, which sailed in vain from continent to continent in search of a port where dockers would offload it. Dockworkers in the USA are currently facing court action over their boycotting of the Neptune Jade, and the Liverpool dockers are returning their support.

"Flying pickets"

Dockers from Liverpool flew around the world for pickets and meetings and leaders of dockers from Japan, the U.S.A. and elsewhere became regular visitors to Liverpool.

This amazing international solidarity, on a scale previously unheard of, had several by products. Dockworkers in some places, inspired by the Liverpool example, won their own unionisation and recognition disputes.

A virtual 'dockworkers international' was set up within the International Transport Federation (ITF). The Liverpool dockers became committed internationalists. They took up broader issues such as the question of human rights in Turkey and the threat of war against Iraq.

As a result of this international solidarity MDHC made several 'final offers' to buy out the dockers. They came under pressure from big shipping companies to settle or lose their trade.

The dockers stuck to their principles. The response to any offer was to be made by a mass meeting of the dockers, not postal ballots which pick people off as individuals. Weekly mass meetings were held from the beginning.

The best tribute to the dockers would be a fighting rank and file organisation in the TGWU which would seriously challenge the cowardice of its leaders.

The struggle was to get their jobs returned under the previous conditions. That meant all jobs, those employed by MDHC and those employed by Torside.

Not surprisingly, the employers did not like these principles. Nor did Bill Morris. Several times he went behind the dockers' backs to do a deal with MDHC and bounce them into acceptance. Each time they rejected Morris's deals.

The dockers' attitude to the TGWU leadership swung between strident criticism and a refusal to speak out, both from loyalty and the fear of losing what little support they were getting.

For much of the strike they rejected fighting to make the dispute official because they wanted to retain control of their own struggle. This meant that Morris was able to withhold more tangible support while attempting to sell them out.

The crunch in terms of the TGWU came at the union's biennial delegate conference last summer. There was uproar when the chair declared the executive's statement on the dockers' dispute carried. Half the confer-

ence refused to leave until the chair conceded a re-vote which was then clearly defeated. The scale of support for the dockers, once given a focus, was clear.

Morris and the executive still refused to carry out conference policy to campaign through the ITF for solidarity action and demand that the Labour government use its shareholding in MDHC to get the dockers jobs back.

He re-opened negotiations with MDHC without reference to the dockers, or even the executive. Before the dockers knew of this, ballot papers went out to be returned in a few days. The papers stated that the deal would be declared accepted even if a majority voted 'no', if they were a minority of those eligible to vote!

The stewards called a mass meeting and won 'overwhelming rejection of the deal. This verdict was repeated in the postal ballot.

The dockers and their supporters in the TGWU organised resolutions to the General Executive Committee condemning Morris and calling for the conference policy to be implemented. For the first time they organised a lobby of the executive.

Then the chair ruled the resolutions out of order and a challenge to this was defeated. The stewards began to realise they lacked a response to the TGWU leadership's attempts to sell them out.

Earlier they had sought a way out by putting forward the idea of a Labour Supply Organisation which would provide the MDHC with dock labour.

This had many flaws, and would have let



'protect the fabric of the union' was always hollow.

Even remaining within the strict limits of the anti-union laws, Morris and the TGWU leadership could have done a lot more. Appeals could have encouraged contributions to the hardship fund or even levies. The union paper, the TGWU Record, had next to no coverage of the dockers dispute.

Morris did little to get media coverage for the dispute. His most fervent intervention was to denounce John Pilger and Jimmy McGovern who attempted to break the media blackout and were critical of the TGWU.

The TGWU could have built a campaign against the anti-union laws, but Morris has not even criticised the Labour government for failing to repeal them.

But in the end what value the 'fabric of the union' if it doesn't exist to support members defending their jobs and working conditions? If Morris and the TGWU had made a stand by making the dockers' strike official and campaigning widely for support, this could have led to the defeat of the anti-union laws. The law provided a convenient smokescreen for Morris.

"Broad Left" failure

The TGWU Broad Left (BL) was no help. A secretive body almost exclusively concerned with winning union posts, it has had a majority of the TGWU executive for many years. You wouldn't notice as it has never used this to further members struggles or challenge the rightward drift of the Labour Party.

The BL reportedly could not even decide on the eve of TGWU conference which side to support in the debate on the dockers. At the December Executive they were also divided.

The dockers stewards began to challenge the TGWU leadership's stranglehold late in 1997, when Morris's attempt to bounce a deal on them made his role patently obvious. The campaign of resolutions and lobby of the Executive were an attempt to deal with the problem, but the stewards had no answers when the resolutions were blocked.

The only answer would have been to mount a massive offensive within the TGWU. The dockers needed to call their supporters within the union together independently of the Broad Left.

Their failure to do so meant ultimately that not only did they not win, but that other struggles will face the same problem in the future.

As well as saluting the dockers for the heroic and tenacious struggle they put up, reviving the spirit of international solidarity, we have to learn the lessons of their struggle.

The best tribute to the dockers would be a fighting rank and file organisation in the TGWU which would seriously challenge the cowardice of its leaders.

Morris's claim that his concern was to

Labourism in crisis

As part of the debate on the way forward for the left and how to build an effective movement to challenge Blairism, we publish this contribution from MARTIN WICKS of the Socialist Perspectives Group.

THE CRISIS in and in relation to New Labour, resulting from the actions of the government is unprecedented.

We have seen the votes of 47 MPs against cuts in single parent benefit and the expulsion of MEPs Coates and Kerr. These are episodes which indicate the deepening of this crisis.

Blair is not prepared to compromise on his political programme.

He will press ahead with the 'reform' of the welfare state and privatisation. He is prepared to break up the party in his effort to turn New Labour into the 'party of business'. In his conference speech he spoke of the 'historic mistake' of the split in the ranks of radicals. In other words the split from Liberalism was a mistake!

They cannot maintain their mass base of support by destroying the reforms that social democracy introduced in the post-war years. Although we await the results of a series of key government reviews, the direction is clear.

One potentially explosive issue is that of union recognition. They could renege even on their commitment to ballots for union recognition. The CBI wants the target of over 50 per cent for the legal right to recognition to be a majority of the entire workforce rather than those who vote.

There is the problem as to definition of 'workplace', since many firms have divided into 'separate' companies for tax or industrial reasons. If the government concedes on this it would be a real kick in the teeth for the TUC which has placed all its hopes on legislation on recognition rights.

Whether or not there will be a big split, or a more protracted process of fracturing of the party remains to be seen. We should not underestimate the cowardice of the trades union leaders who are critical of Blair but are not prepared to do open battle with him.

The question of a new party of the working class is posed not in the distant future but as something which could emerge over the next few years.

The election of the Labour government, far from 'making no difference', has accelerated the crisis of Labourism, as those who argued for the return of Labour predicted. The reality of the programme of Blair is gradually dawning on people.

Threat

Not only does 'reform' of the welfare state threaten those at the bottom, but the government has begun to carry out what can only be described as a neo-liberal programme. They have swallowed far more of the Thatcherite poison than many people imagined.

The 'honeymoon period' is beginning to break. The phrase we



Police break up protest by disabled people: opposition to cuts in welfare has been led by service users, not the prostrate public sector unions

hear a lot of now is 'we didn't elect Labour to carry out Tory policies'. It says a great deal that old right wing social democrats are way to the left of the Blairites.

The key practical question facing socialists today, is how to mobilise resistance against the government's attacks on the working class and the poor? After two decades of defeats it would be foolish to expect an automatic and wide upsurge in the class struggle.

In building resistance we face a political battle within the unions against those who are seeking to block a mass movement against Blair's policies. Virtually the entire apparatus of the unions is presenting an obstacle to building resistance.

We face therefore, big political and institutional obstacles within the labour movement to mobilising against the political course of the government. The struggle within the unions has to be stepped up.

We need to strive for a complete break with the social partnership agenda, including 'public sector-private sector partnership'. This agenda is underpinned by an acceptance, to one degree or another, of neo-liberalism.

We are told that we live in a 'global economy' which we have to adapt to. In order for 'us' to compete we have to form a social partnership with the employers in order to 'out-perform' foreign companies. This means tying the unions to the bosses coat-tails for it involves accepting productivity and profitability as the key criteria.

Moreover, it tells workers that

they have the same interests as the employers in Britain, and are competing with foreign workers and their bosses. This nationalist poison disarms the working class, especially in dealing with the multinational companies.

Public Sector Alliance

Across the public sector jobs and services are being cut as a result of the government's adherence to the Tory spending limits, and their refusal to tax big business and the rich. Labour Councils are continuing the cuts which took place under the last government. These cuts usually have the worst impact on the poor and the disadvantaged.

We see training for the disabled being under threat, schools being closed in the poorest areas and so on. Workers and service users are left to resist the cuts, isolated in their localities.

There is an obvious need for national action to be organised by the unions, demanding an increase in funding to the public sector, and a return to progressive taxation in order to raise the necessary monies. However, they have singularly failed to organise any national campaign.

In the short term the unions are not going to organise such action. We need, therefore, to popularise the idea of a public sector alliance which unites workers and service users in action against the cuts, and campaigns against privatisation.

This should include organisations such as those of the disabled, tenants organisations: all those resisting cuts. Of course, in many

cases some of these organisations are pursuing a line of 'don't cut our services'. We need to build a campaign on the basis of uniting all groups under attack, and this requires opposition to all cuts, raising the issue of breaking with the Tory spending limits, and increasing public sector funding.

A Socialist Alliance?

Given the offensive which we face, and the weakening of our organisations, there is a crucial need to co-ordinate the efforts of all those forces throughout the labour movement who want to build resistance to the government's anti-working class programme. I am in favour of us joining the Network of Socialist Alliances in order to strive for such co-ordination.

The Alliance was set up with the involvement of the Militant. For them it was a counter-balance to the SLP. However, it is not their creature, and the indications are that they have not really decided what to do in it.

Whilst they have set up some local Alliances, they have not devoted much resources to it on the national level.

They will certainly be discussing what to do now, given the fact that the Network is attracting the involvement of broader forces (leave aside the odd sect like the CPGB).

Although the Alliance is at a very early stage of its development it could become a focus for breaking with the sectarianism which has dominated the British left for far too long; for building practical collaboration between left organi-

sations striving to build resistance to Blair's agenda. We should test out the possibilities by participating in it.

We should propose that the Alliances organise a conference sometime in the autumn on the theme of building resistance to Blair's neo-liberal anti-working class programme.

It should concentrate on a small number of themes connected with the attacks of the government, on which there is broad agreement amongst left organisations, and which also connects with the organisations of those resisting these attacks; e.g. single parents, disabled etc.

I would propose four areas:

- defending the welfare state and opposing means testing and 'workfare'

- defending public sector jobs and services, and opposing privatisation

- opposing the 'social partnership agenda' in the trades unions
- stopping the environmental degradation caused by the 'car economy' and big business

The purpose of this would be to strive to build a practical campaigning unity amongst all those opposed to the direction of the government and prepared to build a fightback.

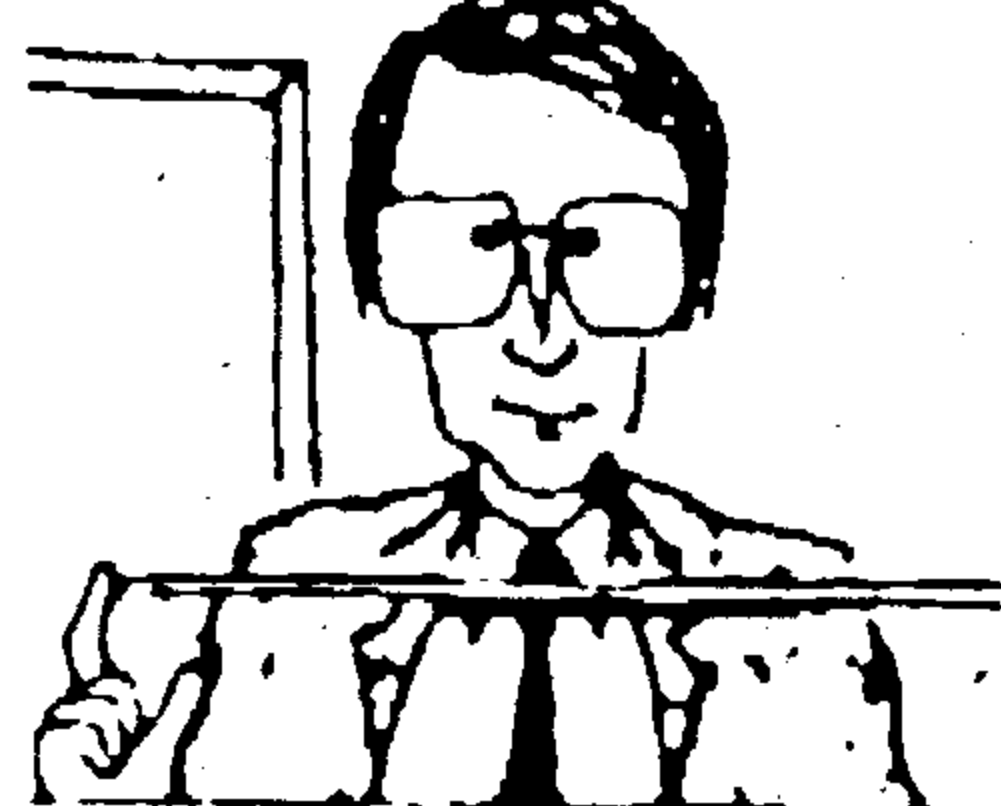
The principle on which we base this approach is simply the struggle to achieve the broadest possible unity of the working class and the oppressed to defend their interests against government attacks.

* This is a shortened version of an article from *Socialist Perspectives* No 7

YOU CAN'T HAVE REWARDS IF YOU DON'T TAKE RISKS



SO RISKS HAVE TO BE ENCOURAGED



FOR STARTERS, OUR ECONOMIC PACKAGE ...



WILL PUT THE RISK BACK IN BEING DISABLED



March 98

Democracy vital in steps towards a new workers' party

TODAY in Britain thousands of socialists and activists are increasingly discussing the need to build opposition to Blairism.

United action to defeat the attacks meted out by this New Labour government is a central part of such a debate, but so too is the question of whether and how to build a new workers' party

This is not a new discussion, but it takes place in changed circumstances. Marxists have always understood that the Labour Party would only form capitalist governments, different from other capitalist governments only to the extent they initiated reforms the better to enmesh or lead the working class into class collaboration.

The Labour Party has always been a capitalist party based on the working class, but herein lay its fundamental contradiction. "New Labour" represents more than just another swing to the right: it is a concerted, and so far successful attempt, to resolve this historical contradiction and transform the Party into a bourgeois party.

This transformation has not yet been achieved, but we should have no illusions about the line of Blair's march. We have analysed the underlying causes of this crisis elsewhere, but the Blair juggernaut has already resulted in widespread defeats of the left, including one failed attempt to fill the vacuum in the form of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Labour Party.

Tragically the SLP is famous today for having an internal bureaucratic functioning which is worse than the Labour Party.

Since the election of New Labour into government conditions are rapidly maturing, for the first time since 1945, for upheavals and ruptures in the broad workers' movement. A process of recomposition and regroupment will be concretely posed in the medium term.

There will be many problems to overcome and many political questions that will need to be debated. Nobody has all the answers in these uncharted waters, and much of what we in *Socialist Outlook* have to say is tentative.

Here DAVE HUDSON discusses an issue the left must resolve.

The SLP experience presents the socialist left with one intractable question: how do we deal with the political and organisational fragmentation, soft splits and dispersal of the left – and the equally important and related problem of sectarianism and petty factionalism?

In our December issue we argued: "A new party means bringing together, in an open and democratic framework and based initially on a limited action programme (not primarily an electoral programme), broad class struggle forces from the Labour and trade union movement, the social movements, radical youth and the far-left.

"It is only size, social and political weight which can impose a sense of responsibility, order and proce-

sure on such an initially diverse political formation, not the bureaucratic jack-boot."

Some comrades are understandably sceptical about the task of bringing together all the left. After all, most of the organised forces seem concerned only about building themselves.

Manoeuvres

Some engage in appalling manoeuvres and raids in order to win a few members, and regularly put the narrow interests of their own organisations above that of the working class as a whole.

Some have felt it necessary to pull back from an inclusive approach to building a new party because of this. In our view this would be an error.



Workers in struggle need leadership from a left united on fighting policies

There are others who for political (and usually bureaucratic) reasons want to keep out most of the organised left forces (all except those who support them!) because they might constitute a serious challenge to their dominance. Most bureaucratic celebrities are infected by this approach, and we should be under no illusion: this was why Scargill kept the Socialist Party and others out of the SLP.

A federal approach to the process of founding a new party is necessary, if it is to be a real party and not another grouplet. A new party to the left of Labour must reflect the diversity of the existing forces.

Fragmentation can only be overcome through a process of debate and common experiences. The comrades who have split from the SLP comrades have made this point many times against Scargill.

Like most new parties, including the Labour Party when it was

founded, a new workers' party will initially take a federalist form.

Exclusion always has a political agenda, as the opposition inside the SLP found to their cost. Organised forces close to Scargill were allowed to organise, while those who did not agree were increasingly excluded. Who is excluded and who is included (the SP or the Lancashire NUM) depends on the politics of those bureaucrats in control.

Policing

In any case, as we all know, exclusions will not work. In practice supporters of far left groups will not be kept out, they will only become secret entrists. They will then require policing and "voiding", leading to the nightmare of an SLP Mark 2.

A mass political party which is based on clearly defined politics or programme cannot be built overnight, because of the historical divisions on the left. Therefore, a party

of recomposition and regroupment is necessary, which by definition is an open and inclusive party of discussion and action. In reality it will initially be a proto-party.

We defend the right of far-left organisations to base themselves on a worked out revolutionary programme and to state this openly. Such a party or organisation will however be small under today's conditions.

Develop programme

To unite all those who wish to fight on a more limited programme of action is a different project – a movement that wishes to become a party, an open movement that will debate the way forward and develop its programme through this discussion and experience.

If such a proto-party or refoundation attempts to exclude some active socialists but not others, then this means that somebody somewhere has decided that they already have the answers and are acting upon them.

One of the problems of the SLP is that it was founded on false pretences. Thousands of active socialists and revolutionaries are members of left organisations or are sympathetic to them. Despite exhibiting sectarianism and often petty narrow factionalism, they comprise an important activist part of the British and European left.

We need an open party with properly agreed ground-rules, the right of tendency, which insists also on responsibility – on loyalty and openness by all the tendencies concerned. Narrow minded "party-building" raids (actually sect-building) must of course be condemned.

Socialist Outlook wants to build a revolutionary party, because we don't think capitalism can be reformed into socialism. We are prepared to debate this and other Marxist propositions with anybody.

We don't think a revolutionary party can be built simply through individual recruitment, or just founded in one go, but can only develop through a process of debate and clash of ideas, linked to experience and recomposition.

Nor do we think that the first attempts to build a new alternative left party in Britain will create a revolutionary party, but we are prepared to loyally build a new left or class struggle party, if it allows democratic discussion, the right of tendency and separate publications.

A new party which includes forces from the Labour Party, ex-CP forces and trade union lefts, which is essential if it is to be credible, is unlikely to be a revolutionary party in the first instance.

This is one reason why the revolutionaries must remain organised to fight for their ideas, and that includes currents like Socialist Perspectives who would surely not like to hand over a new workers' party to another Arthur Scargill.

Principled politics, the right to organise for all tendencies, transparency and full accountability will be essential ingredients in any new workers' party.

Leeds: Labour's purge continues

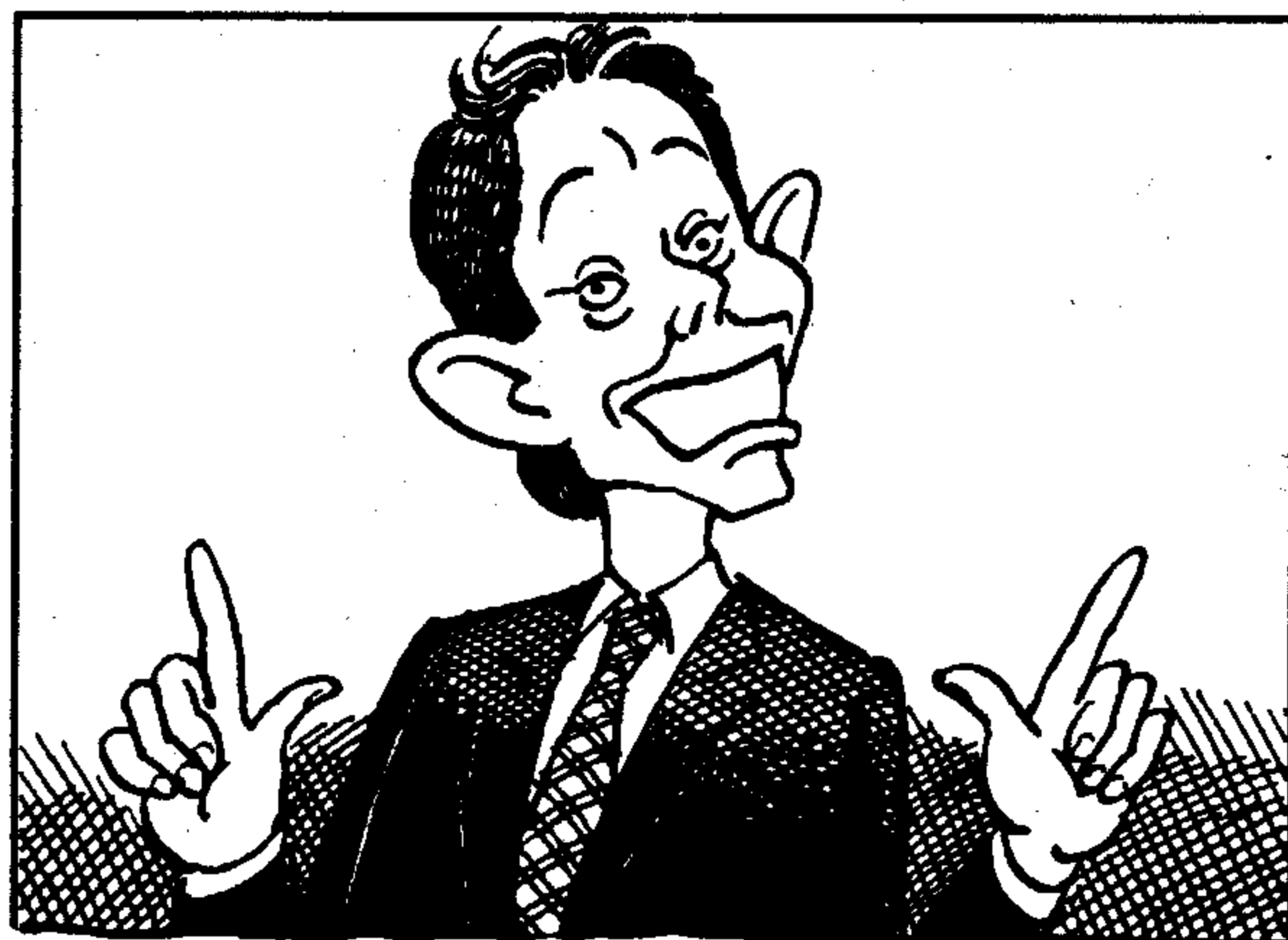
Bob Wood

THE LABOUR Party purge in Leeds, launched over the Liz Davies affair, is far from over.

Following the expulsion of Mike Davies and Celia Foote, three of the branches in Leeds North East have been reinstated, but the Constituency Party and the largest, most active and most socialist of the branches remain in limbo.

Individual members in Leeds North East also remain suspended, including Councilor Garth Frankland, whose main crime seems to have been calling Gordon Brown a bastard in a pub conversation.

The Labour Party machine is now rumoured to be casting its net wider. The latest victim in the Regional Office's unending search for witches is apparently Leeds Campaign Group. The Group has nearly fifty members, many of



them active branch, constituency or district party officers.

This layer of people, at least in Leeds, is not prepared to let the Blair juggernaut crush them entirely, without putting up a spirited resistance.

The party machine's control is not yet finally established, in spite of their 'victory' in Leeds North-

East – hence the need to renew the purge. At the recent District Party AGM, a Campaign Group member was only narrowly defeated for the post of Chair.

The basis of the charges against the Campaign Group, which has not yet been officially advised of the investigation, is rumoured to be that it is a 'cross-party' grouping, with links to the Socialist Party (SP) and the Socialist Labour Party.

The foundation for this absurd allegation is thought to be a public debate organised by the Campaign Group well over a year ago, on the way forward for socialists.

Although both the SP and the SLP were invited, only the ex-

Militant grouping turned up. The speaker for the Campaign Group argued, not surprisingly, for socialists to continue in Labour Party membership.

The overwhelming majority of speakers from the floor supported this, while voicing their concerns over the direction the party was taking.

The only party that any member of Leeds Campaign Group belongs to is the Labour Party. The accusation of 'cross-party' activity is a little strange coming from a leadership that is busy forming a close alliance with the Liberal Democrats.

It is likely that the Group will remain in solidarity with those who have already been unjustly expelled from the party, and with those who may be expelled in the future. It will continue to debate and campaign with others on the left.

As long as it is able, it will surely resist the attempt to turn the party of labour into just another party of capital.

AMERICAN women organised the first ever 'Women's Day' on February 28 1907, to demand political rights for working women.

Then in 1911 Clara Zetkin proposed at the second International Conference of Working Women that it should become an annual event.

The date was changed in 1913 to March 8, which was the anniversary of an important strike by women textile workers in New York in the 1880's.

It was International Women's Day celebrations that lit the spark that led to the February revolution in Russia in 1917.

It's a glorious and rich tradition – enjoy it!

International Women's Day 1998



The organised support of women relatives of strikers has been a key element in Britain's longest and most determined strikes.

THE MASS media have typically attempted to use the conservative pressure of women isolated in the home or taking responsibility for the 'family budget' to pressurise 'their' men not to strike or to stop striking.

The development of women's support groups, primarily composed of women who are relatives of those on strike, poses an important challenge to the way the ruling class tries to attack militant action by workers.

TERRY CONWAY looks at the role of women during the 1984 Miners' strike, the Liverpool Docks Strike of 1995-1998 and the current strike at the Magnet furniture factory in Darlington, a dispute that started in 1996.

A new tradition in the making

Fighting their own corner: the Hillingdon Hospital women strikers have battled on.

The Miners' strike of 1984 was a turning point in British politics. Since her election as Prime Minister in 1979, Margaret Thatcher had wasted little time in attacking working people in every way she could. The massive programme of pit closures was critical for her government.

The strike was to be the central issue of British politics. The stakes were understood by the majority of members of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) who saw that what was at stake was the loss of the thousands upon thousands of jobs and the devastation of entire communities in the many areas where the pit was the centre of local life.

The formation of women's support groups happened soon after the start of the strike on March 9 1984. Women were angry at the way the media depicted them as being opposed to the action – supposedly victims of the irresponsible behaviour of the NUM in taking strike action.

The press played on the fact that support for the strike was weak in the Nottinghamshire area, and managed to identify women there

who were urging their husbands to go to work. With this ammunition they ran headlines on this issue on the third day of the dispute – implying that all women wanted the strike called off.

This so enraged a group of five women in Barnsley, Yorkshire, that they wrote a letter to the local paper.

"We realise that miners and their families will endure hardships during the strike and that no-one relishes the prospect of mounting bills. However those same sacrifices were made by our forefathers who gave their lives to the industry and struggled to protect jobs and improve conditions. Let us take their example and stand firmly together to ensure the future of our community. We wish to object to the assumption made in some sections of the press that all miners' wives oppose the decision to strike."

The letter was printed in the paper by a sympathetic reporter – with an invitation for those who

agreed with its views to get in touch. Within two weeks the group had mushroomed to two dozen, within a few more weeks hundreds of women had made contact.

Similar patterns were being played out across the different coal fields. As well as writing to the press, the groups were kept busy. Many set up emergency advice centres to help miners' wives and children claim benefits if they were not working, as the strikers themselves were not eligible. Then there was fund-raising, organising meetings and demonstrations, speaking at meetings – and of course picketing.

One of the focal points for many was the organisation of a village soup kitchen. The need for such activity was highly practical – the desperate shortage of funds to sustain a long fight.

In many areas there was overwhelming support for the strike not only from trade unionists but from local shopkeepers and some factory owners who understood that without the industry their



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own livelihoods were threatened — and who may have had relatives on strike.

The kitchens became a hive of activity not only for cooking and eating but for discussing how the strike could be furthered.

While it was assumed that the cooking was women's responsibility, being part of a large group catering for hundreds of meals a day was very different from providing a meal in the isolation of your own kitchen for 'your' man. And you didn't have to worry how you were going to pay for the ingredients!

Women were able to talk to each other and to the men much more freely than before the dispute. Roles began to change in other ways too. Christine from Hoyland explains: "I've seen older men, not usually bothered with children, actually nurse youngsters while their parents eat their meal in peace."

Picketing

At the beginning of the strike, women in most areas didn't consider becoming involved in picketing. But as they gained in confidence, through the other support group activities, they decided to try.

One Barnsley woman explained: "At first we were quite nervous at the prospect of having to face with thousands of police, and we were unsure of the response we would receive from the men. However, we were welcomed at every pit we visited, and quite soon we were joined by women from all over."

Two months into the strike, the bitterness generated by scabs was reaching fever pitch. Because the police and the scabs had responded a little more tolerantly to the presence of women on the picket line, the idea of a women's mass picket was born.

The miners were certainly enthusiastic to see their unexpected visitors. "You can do things we can't, they won't 'get'

you, because you're women," they said. How wrong they were. That day fourteen women were arrested at two Nottinghamshire pits, including Anne Scargill, wife of NUM President Arthur Scargill.

One of the enduring images of the strike was the image of a young woman being brutally batoned by a heavily armoured policeman on horseback at the 'Battle of Orgreave', one of the most bitter battles between the strikers and their supporters and the police.

These different activities had a profound impact on the women involved. Some women in the more isolated coal fields might never have left their village before the strike, but during it they travelled to meetings in different parts of the country and spoke in front of audiences of strangers.

A large proportion of the women involved were not involved in paid work and had taken total responsibility for the home and children. Now they were travelling to meetings or pickets, the men had to take their share of responsibility at home. The effect of these changes was varied — some relationships changed for the better, and others buckled under the strain.

One of the unusual features of the dispute was the development of "twinning" — the linking of a particular pit with either a local area support group or a particular trade union branch. Thousands of activists, mainly from the large cities, travelled to mining areas, often on a regular basis. Many became firm friends with people in these areas and there was an exchange of experiences and political ideas that would not normally have taken place.

Women's groups made direct

links with WAPC groups. Women Against Pit Closures activists also visited the women's peace camp outside the Greenham Common US Air Force Base, which was expected to receive Trident nuclear missiles.

Lesbians and Gay men organised



their own groups in support of the strike, as did black people. On these issues too there was a real movement in the thinking of at least some of the strikers and their supporters in the mining areas — a real demonstration of the political ferment the dispute had generated.

The NUM itself was an overwhelmingly male union — there were no women miners in Britain, only a very small number of women clerical members. Before the dispute there had been a bitter row between the NUM leadership and feminists outside the union who had criticised *The Yorkshire Miner*, a union newspaper, for publishing pictures of scantily clad women.

Arthur Scargill and his 'comrades' in the leadership of the Yorkshire NUM dismissed this criticism out of hand.

But by the end of the strike, the "Page 3 girl" had disappeared — and 'Women against Pit Closures' (WAPC) had been accepted into associate membership of the NUM. The involvement of women at the centre of the dispute had other ramifications too.

It certainly made it harder for the Thatcherite press to attack the strike as being led by macho men.

The Liverpool Dockers' Strike

The defeat of the Miners' strike in 1985 had profound effects. It strengthened the Thatcher regime and weakened workers' confidence to take action to defend their rights or their jobs. However when the situation began to shift it was to become clear that at least some of the lessons of the miners' strike had been taken to heart elsewhere.

Since 1989, when the Tories had abolished the national dock labour scheme, there had been mass sackings in most of the other great ports of England. Liverpool was the last bastion of a once great industry with a proud tradition of union organisation — it had to be smashed.

Some women had been attending the mass meetings from the beginning of the dispute, obviously anxious to know what was going on. This fact is presented in most histories of the strike without comment — but it is certainly unusual in most British strikes for 'outsiders' to be present at mass meetings.

This demonstrates the relatively high political and democratic consciousness of the Liverpool dockers.

At one of these early meetings, Doreen McNally got up and started talking about the way that casualisation was destroying her family life. This was to be the spark that led to the formation of Women On the Waterfront (WOW) in the second week of the dispute.

The group was involved in a variety of activities; fund-raising, participating in international and national delegations, picketing at the docks as well as less conventional activities such as taking actions outside the homes of scabs and senior members of the MDHC.

The dockers themselves, at a theoretical level at least, were supportive of the move to set up a women's support group. "I already knew about the tremendous role that women had played in the Miners' strike and other struggles in this country," says Jimmy Nolan, Secretary of the Shop Stewards Committee. "The women have made a tremendous contribution to our struggle."

The first WOW meeting was attended by sixty women, who heard two women from Women Against Pit Closures talk about their experiences during the miners' strike. They set up a committee and held weekly meetings as well as running their own office.

Their meetings were attended by a steward who kept them informed of what was going on while a number of them attended the dockers' mass meetings which had a standing item of a report back from WOW.

Women's activity was seen as an integral part of the strike.

Probably a higher percentage of women involved in WOW had paid jobs than the women involved in the Miners strike. Doreen McNally, often WOW spokeswoman, is a nurse. She explains her own history:

"My father was badly injured on the docks and I think that was part of the reason I went into nursing. At that time there was no union for nurses only the Royal College of Nurses (a professional body, hostile to strikes and unions) which you could join when you qualified.

"My father had always been a strong trade unionist and believed everyone should be in a union so he contacted someone in NUPE (the National Union of Public Employees, now part of UNISON) and we arranged a meeting with some colleagues. I was one of the first nurses in Liverpool to join a real union."

Nevertheless for all those involved there was a massive change in their horizons and self confidence. Joan says: "If anyone had told me that I would be addressing meetings all over the country I would have said 'not me' but you have so much anger at what they have done that you don't think about it. You want to tell people the truth'.

Sue explains what the strike has meant both for her and her relationship with her partner:

"The dispute has changed me dramatically... Before I was content being a mother and a housewife but now I want to go out into the world, I think I've found

myself again and when the dispute finishes I want to stay politically active and get a job. There have also been changes in Colin's and my relationship.

"Before we were very traditional - he went to work and earned the money and I took charge of the house and the housekeeping. Now this has changed. Colin is much more involved at home - he has to be because I'm away so much. He takes the budget, cooks meals and looks after the house. Now we share our roles and are both very supportive of each other's union, political and outside activities."

Not just at the weekends

Individual dockers reacted differently.

Billy admits: "Personally at first I wasn't too keen on the idea of there being an active women's group but that soon changed the women have been vitally important to us

"Prior to the dispute I suppose I

dockers comprised a tiny proportion of the TGWU, which did give some financial support, though not official backing.

Much of the focus of the dockers' Shop Stewards throughout the dispute has been on international solidarity - resulting in some dramatically successful days of action in ports across the globe. But there was little focus on fighting for action within the TGWU. All of these features set partial limits on the development of WOW.

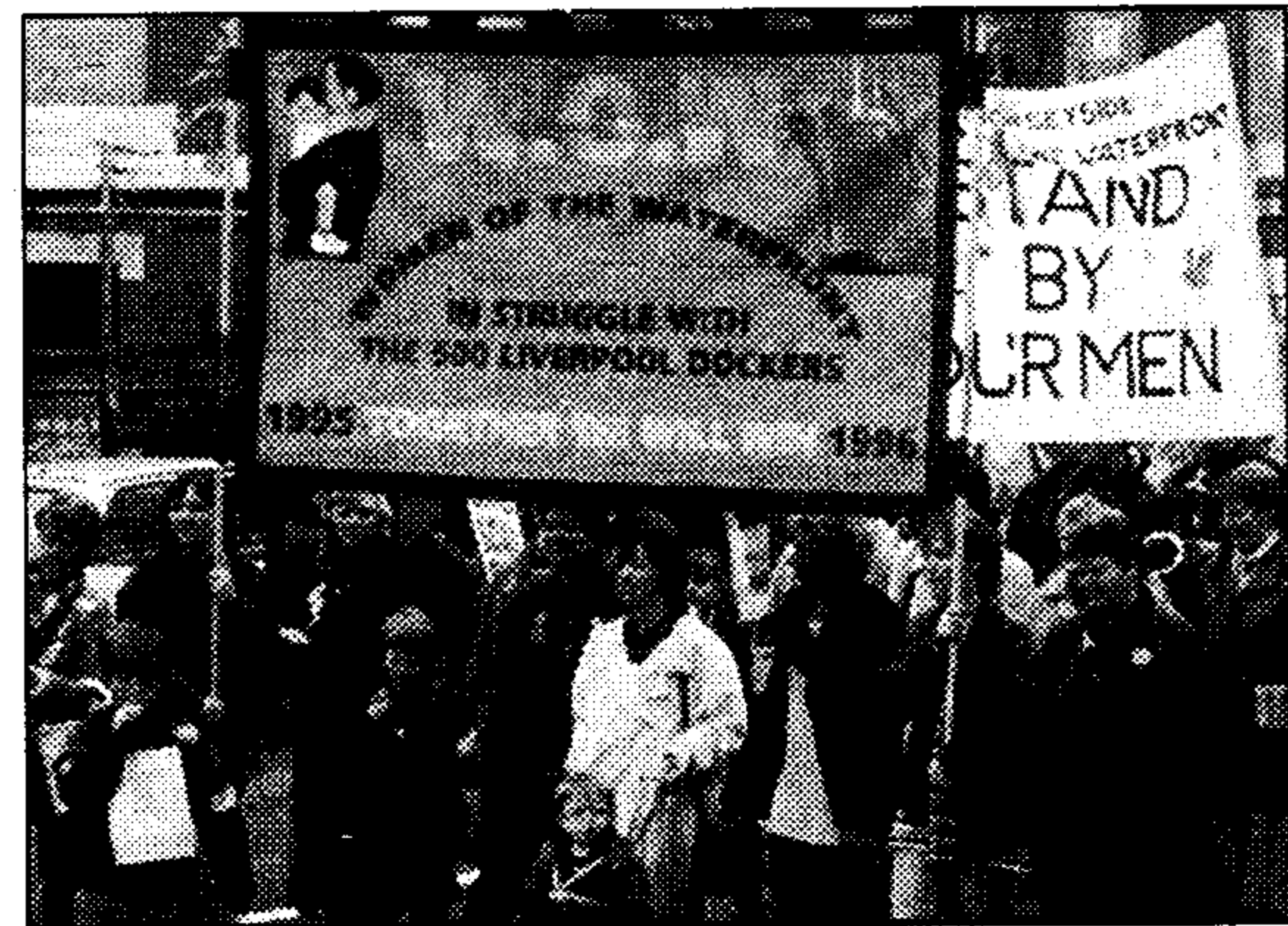
There were other differences too. The British women's movement in general was much weaker in 1995 than in 1984. There were fewer direct links therefore between WOW and women's groups than during the time of WAPC. This impacted on the level of political discussion that women involved in the docks dispute had access too.

And while women's activity was integrated into the Liverpool dispute, in some ways their profile was not as high during the miners' strike. So for example on the second anniversary demonstration, Doreen McNally from WOW was the only woman on a platform of over 20 speakers - and spoke last.

Only time will tell the extent to which the lives of the women involved in the dock strike have been irrevocably altered by the dispute.

Although WOW was capable of mobilising significant numbers of women for its activities such as family pickets, the activists who regularly attend the meetings and are involved in delegation work represent a minority of the dockers' wives, partners and families.

It is only within these, the most involved, that we could expect to see the substantial changes in confidence, attitudes and lives that occurred during and after the



would be what you would call an old fashioned male chauvinist. I always thought that the place for women was in the home, looking after the kids, which is a hard enough job"

Another striker, Keith, comments; "I'd never been in the kitchen before... I can use a tin opener now! I make the beds and vacuum-clean the carpets during the week, not just at the weekends."

The parallels with many of the comments made and situations described by those involved in the miners' strike are clear.

But there are important differences. Some are clearly a function of the differences between the two disputes. The dockers' dispute is much smaller and more isolated than the miner's strike was.

The general level of confrontation between workers, employers and the state has been less intense and there has been much less generalised support from a range of groups in society.

The dispute is confined to one geographical area - the Port of Liverpool, where the miners' strike had a much wider spread. The financial situation has also been very different. In Liverpool the men were sacked, so were eligible for benefits much more easily than the striking miners.

In the miners' strike the whole union was taking action and financial resources were hugely stretched - whereas the Liverpool

miners' strike. Though, of course, the experience and consciousness of women involved in solidarity movements is as complex and varied as that of the strikers themselves.



Despite this unevenness, the involvement of women in the Liverpool dock strike suggests that something significant has changed in British politics.

The Magnet strike

Our final example of a women's support group relates to the current strike at Magnet. 340 workers were sacked in September 1996 for going on strike for a modest pay rise.

The strikers, mostly men, belong to a range of different unions which have formally supported the dispute but done nothing effective to help win it.

According to Ian Crammond, Secretary of the strike committee, a women's support group was quickly set up, based on groups like WOW and WAPC. Women have been involved in a whole range of activities - picketing, speaking at meetings, fund-raising and organising leafleting of Magnet showrooms to persuade people not to buy the shoddy goods now being produced by scab labour rather than as previously by skilled craftsmen.

Like the Liverpool women, a favourite occupation has been high profile actions against leading shareholders - in this case Bersfords, the parent company of Magnet.

While there is a caravan provided by one of the unions which provides food for the regular pickets - and is staffed by men, this is not sufficient on mass picket days.

Then the women's support group produces additional hot food - to the great delight of everyone standing freezing by the gates.

Lynne Fawcett from the Women's support Group explains some of the things that have motivated her and others to get involved: "I have three children of my own in their 20's and I'm extremely lucky they are all working. What Magnet have done - I'm terrified the same thing could be done to them..."

"When you take men's jobs

away their whole self esteem and self worth collapses. The motivation goes out of your family life; you lose your security; and the knock on effect for the whole town is less money, less prospects and more poverty. There's enough poverty in Darlington already - we don't need any more... We're not going to take much more of this..."

As in the other disputes we have looked at, the involvement of women in the dispute at Magnet has often been a morale booster for the strikers, with the women's determination and sense of humour raising confidence when spirits have been low.

In some families, the women have become more involved than the men - with big implications for the division of labour in the family.

The Magnet dispute continues. Whether the formation of the women's support group in the end contributes to the winning of the strike remains to be tested out. If not, it certainly won't be because of any lack of courage.

and determination of the women involved.

A new tradition

The organised women's liberation movement in Britain remains very weak today. But many women who have come into contact with this new wave of working class women's organisation since the 1984/5 miner's strike have been inspired by it.

The lie has been given to the idea that many of the ideas of feminism - for socialisation of the roles of the family and for equal participation in political life for women - are of no relevance to working class women.

The chance for the bosses and for governments to use women as ammunition against strikes in male dominated industries has been seriously weakened. Promising this legacy is a fitting way to mark International Women's Day 1998.

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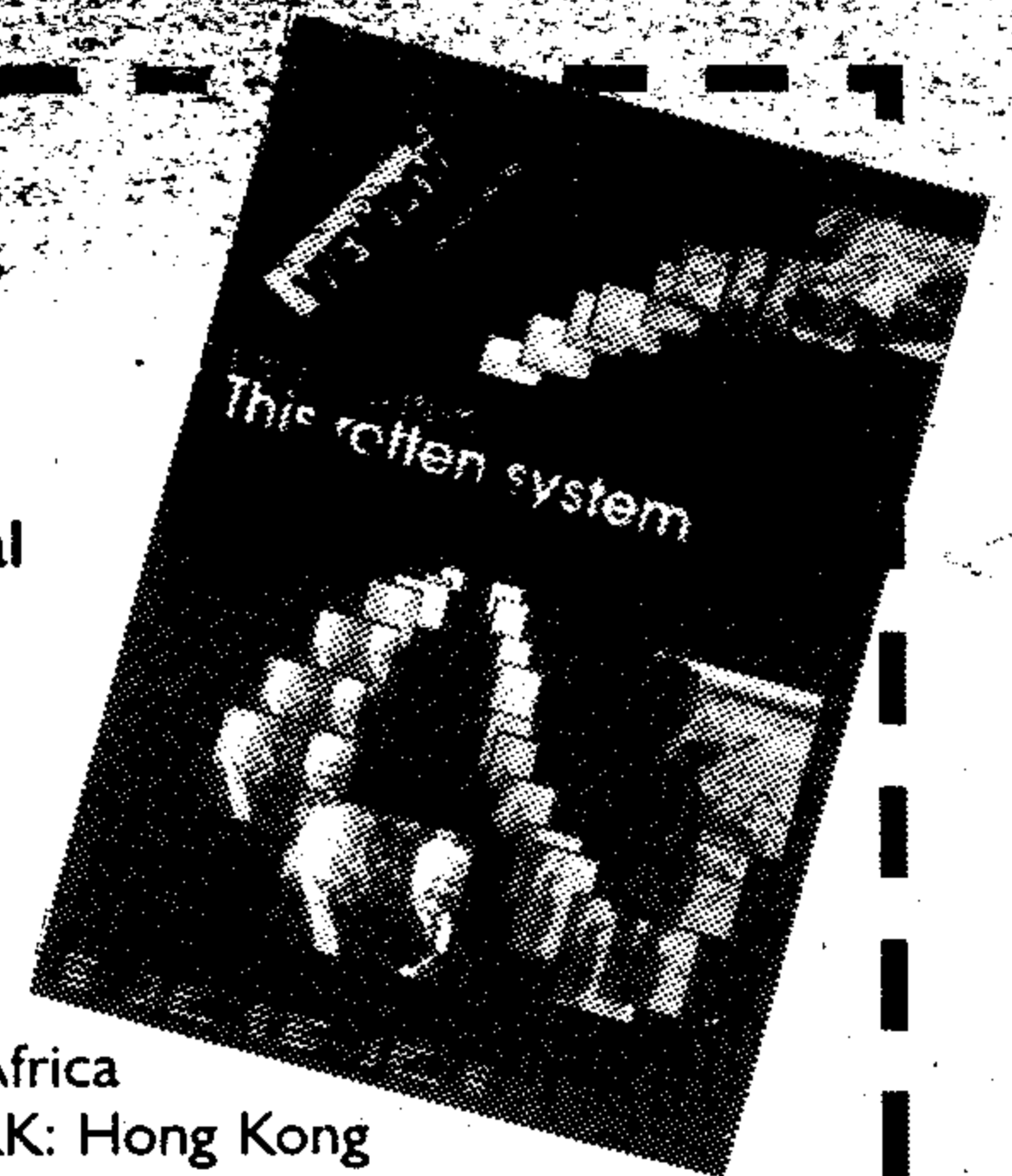
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Setting the agenda for working women

Marian Brain

"RECRUITING for Women's Equality" is the theme of the 68th TUC Women's Conference (Scarborough, 11-13 March).

The many important issues on the agenda include employment and trade rights, the right to strike, provision and quality of childcare and the pay of childcare workers, women and poverty, lone parents, maternity benefits, and black and Asian women.

Women are less likely to have permanent, full time jobs, or to work in workplaces with union recognition. They are more likely to work in small workplaces. This makes it harder to secure individual rights or to benefit from collective bargaining.

It is especially important for women that the Labour Party is not allowed to break its election mandate on union recognition, and that we oppose exemptions to employment rights and union recognition legislation which effectively discriminate against women.

A key resolution calls on the TUC Women's Committee to campaign for employment rights and union recognition for all workers from day one, whatever their hours, length of service or form of contract, or size of workplace. Small workplaces should also not be exempted from the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Critchley Labels dispute (covered elsewhere in this paper) illustrates many of these issues, as well as demonstrating the importance of the right to strike.

A resolution to Conference reaffirms that the freedom to take industrial action is a fundamental civil liberty and calls on the TUC Women's Committee and the General Council to actively oppose any attempt to outlaw or restrict strike action in any sector of the economy.

In the context of current debates

in government circles as to what constitutes a majority of the workforce in relation to union recognition and strike action, we need to insist that this is a majority of those who vote.

The whole question of childcare is a major concern for working women. This was one of the main demands raised by the second wave of the feminist movement in the late 60s and early 70s; indeed, we raised the demand of free 24 hour nurseries.

We should argue for free childcare, which is available 24 hours, with the flexibility and variety to give women the choice they need.

This is an area where the government is likely to make changes, but will women get what they need from New Labour?

The range of issues involved is shown by the number of amendments to the childcare resolution moved by the British Orthoptic Society. This welcomes the government's commitment to expanding after schools clubs and calls for the encouragement of other affordable types of childcare to cater for parents with flexible working patterns, such as NHS employees.

One set of amendments calls for the development of a national childcare strategy and for employers to be involved, noting with concern their current lack of support and assistance.

The Community and Youth Workers' Union expresses concern that after school clubs will be staffed as cheaply as possible and by youngsters, particularly young women, on the New Deal, who may be coerced into this option.

Their amendment calls on the TUC to campaign for adequate vetting, training and qualifications, together with appropriate salaries, for childcare workers.

The Musicians Union calls for childcare costs to be a tax deducti-

ble expense.

A Fire Brigades Union resolution asserts that women continue to be the section of our society most likely to live their lives in poverty. They are paid less than men, their pensions provision are poorer than those of men.

"Many women face poverty as a result of benefit cuts. Conference therefore calls on the TUC Women's Committee and the General Council to support campaigns which aim to highlight and redress the poverty which persists as a daily reality for millions of women, young and old."

An amendment from the Communication Workers Union calls on the TUC to campaign for the reinstatement of lone parent benefits.

Another motion on lone parents, from the TGWU, highlights the consistent opposition of women trade unionists to the scapegoating of lone parents by the Tory government, and the need for the government to support all families in the UK.

But it makes the mistake of welcoming the new government's recognition of lone parents, and also praises the New Deal commitment to help lone parents find work.

This ignores the compulsion, albeit indirect compulsion, involved. Nor do we see this government opposing the continued ideological offensive against lone parents in the media.

In light of the discussion on disability and maternity benefits, and the implication in government statements that it plans to abandon the principle of universal benefits, we must call on the TUC Women's Committee and the General Council



Andrew Ward

To fight for equality, the TUC must take up a radical, campaigning line, supporting women in struggle

to campaign for benefits to remain universal, not means tested.

An USDAW resolution calls on the Women's Committee to continue to lobby the government for a simplified, strengthened and improved system of maternity rights, with a consolidation of all existing law (currently spread over some 22 pieces of legislation). A central demand is that of Statutory Maternity Pay for all women, without minimum pay or service thresholds.

Harriet Harman's absurd comments about there being women

who are entitled under present rules to £20,000 a week SMP should not be allowed to obscure the reality of government plans. Most women don't even earn £20,000 a year, and very few indeed would receive this amount in benefit.

To achieve cuts in benefits and keep public spending down as it wishes, the government would need to attack a far wider layer of women. Harman's rhetoric should be exposed for what it is: but we must also fight very hard to keep our rights as working women, as these are clearly under threat.

The First Division Association resolution welcomes the public commitment of the government and the Prime Minister personally to equal treatment for and greater representation of black and Asian people in all areas of government and public sector employment. (Let's hope this pledge survives all those public spending cuts and job losses).

However, the FDA also notes the concentration of black and Asian women civil servants in the lowest two grades, and that they still too often face race and sex discrimina-

tion in recruitment and promotion at all levels.

It calls for the TUC and affiliated unions to press the government for top level commitment and resources to speedily implement government policy to secure real equality for these women.

In keeping with the theme of Recruiting for Equality, each delegate and observer to TUC Women's Conference has been asked to take part in a survey by giving a questionnaire to five women who are not currently union members, in order to establish why not - what would the unions have to do to recruit them?

Completed questionnaires will be discussed in a workshop session one afternoon.

The use of workshops to increase women's involvement and participation in the conference is not a bad idea in principle.

This should not be done, though, at the expense of unions submitting motions and debating policy.

In the last few years the women's conference has lost half a day's discussion of motions and replaced by a "free debate", where delegates could put forward their own ideas, not bound by their union's policy on an issue.

This form did not work: no more people were brought into the discussion. However if we are going to move away from motion based, policy making conferences, for part of the time, this should be done by adding half a day to the conference, not by taking time away from being able to set policy.

If the Women's Committee is going to make a reality of recruiting for equality, then the whole organisation and organisations are going to have to change and become democratic and fighting organisations that are prepared to stand and commit themselves to struggle to improve the lives of working people.



Women's Day in Wirral

Wirral and Liverpool Trades Union Councils invite you to celebrate International Women's Day 1998 on Saturday March 7.

MARCH through Birkenhead (meet main gates, Birkenhead Park 12 noon)

Conference 2pm - 4.30pm at Wallasey Town Hall, Brighton St, Wallasey.

The event is organised to remember both the beginning of women's struggles for equality and a more just society and to celebrate achievements and successes gained by millions of women throughout the world.



We aim to provide an opportunity for women from different backgrounds and experiences to come together and find out about and discuss ongoing campaigns and issues affecting women in particular.

There will be speakers on defence of lone parents' rights, including Ann Cryer MP, and on the Magnet dispute.

EVENING SOCIAL 8 pm till late with live music from the Dockers Band and disco. Free buffet and creche in the afternoon.

For further information phone Wirral TUC on 0151 512 1868.

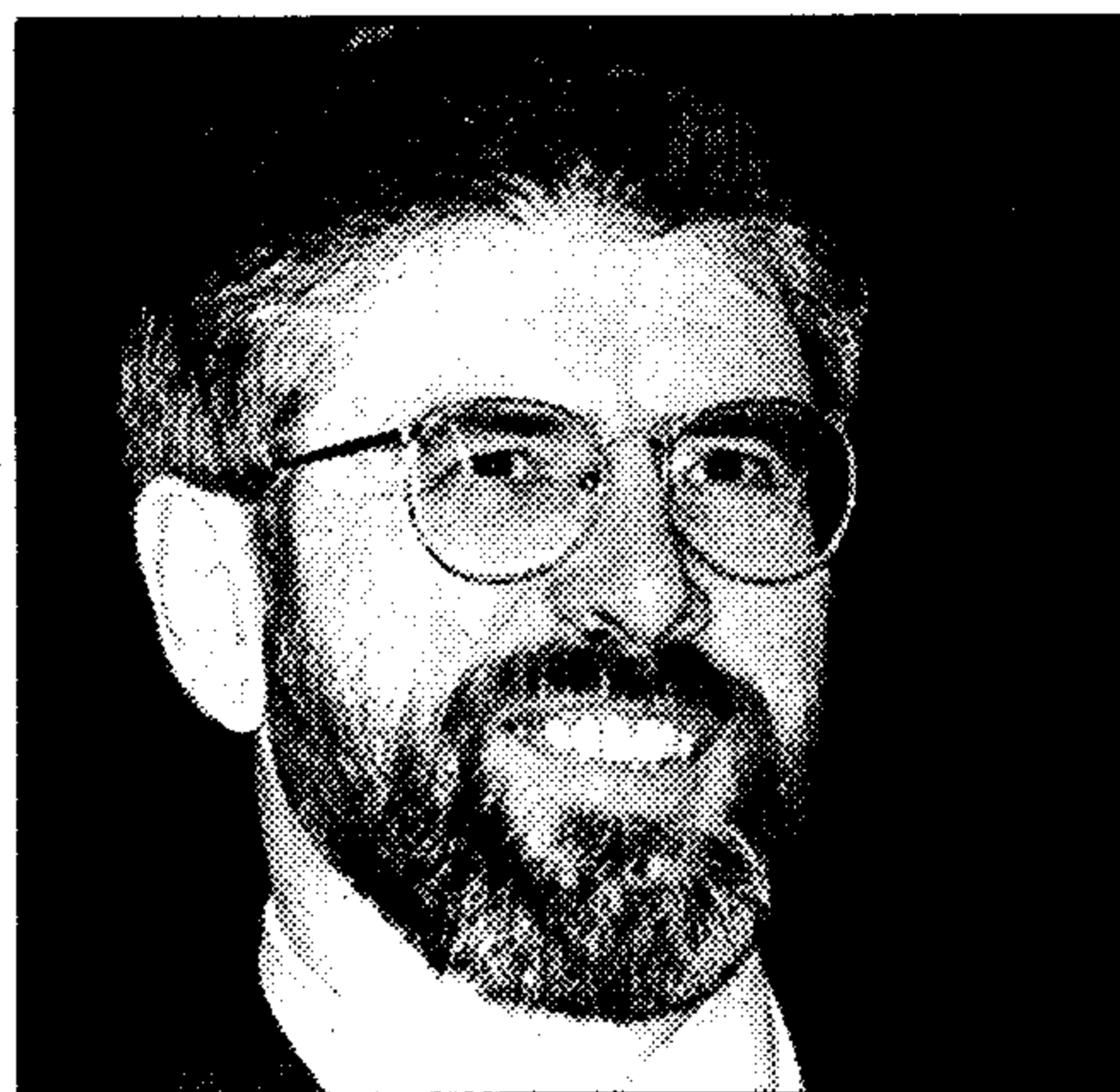
Birmingham focus on Irish women

Celebrate International Women's Day (March 7) with Birmingham Trades Council at the Union Club, 723 Pershore Rd, Selly Park, B29 11pm - 5pm.

Special guest will be Lily Fitzsimmons, Belfast Community activist and author of *Women and Ireland - Unsung Heroes of Ireland in Conflict*.

When agreeing to speak Lily said: "I am delighted that women trade unionists in England are interested enough in the Irish situation to ask me over to speak. We are at a crucial stage in our struggle for self-determination and I look forward to this discussion and debate.

"I hope that in some way the lessons that I have learned can be passed on to the younger generation and contribute towards their struggle for peace."



Sinn Fein expelled from talks as London bows again to Unionists

Paul Flanagan

ON MONDAY January 16 the British government formally indicted Sinn Fein with breaching the Mitchell Principles, pointing the way towards Sinn Fein's expulsion from the talks.

It didn't take New Labour long to assert of democratic politics is a world apart from the politics of threat or actuality of violence.

Mo Mowlam insists that the expulsion is necessary to protect the integrity of the talks process. How strong New Labour's commitment is to the application of high-minded universals can be measured against a background of incessant warmongering against Iraq.

Ignoring for the moment this political hypocrisy, it is likely that the IRA was behind the two specific killings mentioned on the government's charge sheet.

On Monday January 9 Brendan Campbell, a commonly mentioned drugs dealer, was shot dead. No group claimed responsibility for his killing but it was no secret that he had been involved in a sort of one-man vendetta against the IRA for some time.

Four weeks before his death he had been shot in the chest and the local assumption was that the IRA were going all out to get him. A few months earlier he had allegedly thrown down the gauntlet to the IRA by throwing a hand grenade at Sinn Fein's headquarters.

The next day, Robert Dougan, a leading loyalist with the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), was shot dead. Police believed he was behind a long running attempt to burn Catholic families out of their homes in the Blacks Road area of West Belfast.

Over a two year period one particular home was petrol bombed 45 times. The RUC claimed they had a good idea who was instigating these sectarian attacks but were unable to bring the ringleader to justice.

Killing spree

This second alleged IRA killing occurred shortly after loyalists had just eased down on an intense sectarian killing spree which had 9 Catholics dead and 24 injured in 10 days. The intended message to the loyalists from Dougan's killing was clear - they should not think that Sinn Fein's participation in the talks meant that loyalists could run around killing Catholics with impunity.

The IRA probably calculated that their retaliation against the loyalist death squads would be overlooked by the British government - these talks are supposed to be "not worth a penny candle" without Sinn Fein.

Republicans gambled that the routine British approach to loyalist violence - "no claim no blame" - would be applied to the IRA, provided that they refrained from directly attacking the State forces. Not for the first time during this peace process, the IRA spectacularly misjudged the situation.

Pressure to expel Sinn Fein from the talks process at one of the most crucial junctures with the issue of the cross border institution was due to be discussed came from the RUC.

This is the same RUC that had had to be embarrassed into attributing responsibility for several sectarian killings to loyalist factions. Trimble's Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) had jumped for joy when the RUC indirectly blamed the IRA for the two killings.

The UUP itself had entered Stormont for its first plenary session with Sinn Fein on September 17 1997 flanked by delegates from the loyalist death squads.

They presented a common front and de-



Keeping up the fight: demonstrators in London mark the anniversary of Bloody Sunday

clared they would all continue to participate in the talks but would not talk face to face with Sinn Fein.

On September 23, the first day of the real talks, Trimble put forward a blunt motion that Sinn Fein should be thrown out of the talks over a recent IRA statement articulating reservations about the Mitchell Principles. From the beginning it was central to the Unionist negotiating strategy to force Sinn Fein out of any substantive talks settlement. The two killings handed Trimble, the Orange Dancer, a golden opportunity.

Trimble has had a victorious two months. On January 12 the Irish and British governments published their new "Proposition on Heads of Principles" document.

The unanimous press opinion was that Trimble had pulled off a coup in getting the two governments to shift from what was once thought of as the basis of a settlement - what had been agreed in February 1995 between Major and Bruton in the "Framework" document.

Just before Sinn Fein entered the talks process in late September a senior spokesperson had let slip that the 1995 proposals were in

put together by their most vaunted nationalist "ally", Irish Premier Bertie Ahern. In a ironic aside, arch-republican basher Bruton ruefully reflected on the fact that if he had agreed to such a pro-unionist deal with Britain, he would have been denounced by Fianna Fail for selling out the nation.

Accounts in the Irish press of the diplomacy behind the making of the new agreement described Ahern being put under intense pressure by Blair "to trim back on Irish aspirations on the North-South body."

Stephen Collins, one of the cabal of trusted Irish journalists, reported that "The talks went on all through Sunday night... Eventually Ahern agreed to change the reference in the Framework document to the body having 'delegated, executive harmonising or consultative functions' to a formula which referred to 'a north-south ministerial council to bring together those with executive responsibilities in Northern Ireland and the Irish government'. The change was an important one because it kept the Unionists on board".

Sinn Fein angrily exclaimed that the new agreement resulted from the successful playing of the Orange card by the Unionists. Sinn

"Sinn Fein being booted out of the talks process is of course a travesty. All the remaining parties have used threats and violence to get their way."

fact the very minimum they could try to sell to their supporters.

Soon after the announcement of the new agreement the media talked of a warm glow emanating from the Unionist camp. The vague language of the original Framework deal pertaining to a probable cross border institution with executive powers was replaced by a more explicit commitment to the Unionists.

They are guaranteed a northern Assembly with a final veto over any proposal that might arise from any future cross-border institution. The much derided 1995 Anglo-Irish agreement was to be replaced by a new much more ambiguous agreement based on a Council of the Isles, a new Unionist controlled Assembly with real powers and important changes to articles two and three of the Irish constitution.

One Unionist described the mood at a party committee called to assess the Heads document as "very hearty".

The blow for Sinn Fein was all the harder since the Heads of Agreement document was

Fein had got it wrong, it was the British who had successfully played the Orange card. Almost by definition the Unionist party is the Orange card.

During the first three weeks of January the Unionists, their many friends in key positions in the press and the loyalists created an air of crisis around the peace process.

Former Unionist party candidate, now political columnist with the *Irish Times*, Frank Millar, was just one of those who talked up a crisis of Unionist confidence in the peace process; "the crisis of confidence in the unionist community has assumed massive proportions and is now directly threatening Mr Trimble's position - and thus the whole peace process."

Gary McMichael on behalf of the loyalist UDP declared that the talks were at a "very dangerous stage" and there was potential for an escalation of loyalist violence.

Mr D Ervine on behalf of the loyalist PUP told Mowlam that the peace process was in danger of "imminent collapse", the PUP threatened to leave the talks process within

days if concessions to Sinn Fein did not stop.

In unison with the warlike rhetoric, the rate of sectarian killings began to quicken. Mowlam then went into the Maze prison to speak to those loyalist prisoners who had voted to break with the talks process. Some Protestant clergy pleaded with Mowlam to address the lack of confidence people now feel in the process.

Mowlam told an English journalist that "the unionists feel hard done by, there is a serious perception and I have to deal with it". New Labour somehow persuaded the loyalists to stay true to the process.

The British used the much publicised crisis of Unionist confidence to put diplomatic pressure on Dublin to shift the Framework proposals even further to the right.

So the peace process has yet again exploded back in the faces of Sinn Fein. They are being dumped out of the talks that they spent 3 years trying to get into, and the British with able assistance from the dogged Unionists are pushing the whole process ever more to the right.

Worst of all, the trusty friends of Sinn Fein, Fianna Fail and the SDLP and Clinton are siding with Blair on all the key issues. Commenting on Sinn Fein's critical reaction to the 'Heads' document the SDLP said "what the hell did they expect?"

A vain attempt undertaken by Sinn Fein to separate John Hume's opinion on the latest deal from that of Seamus Mallon, the supposed leader of the 'conservative' faction within the SDLP negotiating team, badly backfired when Hume rushed to the media to say that Mallon's largely sympathetic response to the new agreement was identical to his own and to condemn Sinn Fein.

The current misfortune of Sinn Fein being booted out of the talks process is of course a travesty. All the remaining parties have used threats and violence to get their way.

Booted out

If the Mitchell Principles were applied in an even-handed way the loyalists would have been booted out along time ago. The "respectable" Unionists would have been thrown out for orchestrating the mass intimidation of Catholics around Drumcree 1, 2, and 3 and for their threat to make more trouble this summer.

The British too could be indicted - however the Mitchell Principles don't apply to the state forces. Just as well, for they would have to explain away the numerous crimes and human rights infringements regularly inflicted by the RUC.

They would be taken to task for Garavagh Road and the Ormeau Road, for the death of Robert Hamil, kicked to death by a loyalist gang right in front of the RUC.

What reason would they give for the 500 detentions carried out under emergency powers in 1997, or the killing of Dermot McShane by the British army, or the use of plastic bullets, or the massive rise in official complaints levelled against the security forces since the IRA ceasefire?

The sudden expulsion of Sinn Fein from the talks will at least prompt some of the supporters of the peace strategy and nationalist unity to pause and think again as to where the whole thing is inexorably moving to - a strengthening of partition, a new Unionist-controlled assembly, and a hardening of sectarian rivalries.

Socialists need to be ready both to listen and to articulate an alternative to a peace process which many times over has been shown to be fatally flawed.

Stalemate in the Gulf

UN SECRETARY General Kofi Anan's diplomatic coup in Baghdad may have averted a war for the time being, but the underlying conflict in the Middle East remains, and could escalate at any time in the future, reports ROLAND RANCE.

THE LATEST agreement, when confirmed by the Security Council, may even remove some of the constraints on US action in a future crisis, and weaken the opposition to a war.

At one level, it is not obvious what the US wanted to achieve from this crisis. Indeed, the lack of any clear western goal or strategy was one of the reasons why Clinton was unable to build a coalition similar to that which attacked Iraq in 1991. The purported aim was to ensure Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions, particularly in regard to inspection of alleged weapons sites.

However, it is inconceivable that the world was on the brink of a massive war – possibly a third world war, according to Boris Yeltsin – in order to determine the nationality of the convenor of a team of inspectors.

Nor can the escalation be explained simply by Clinton's need to distract attention from his domestic problems and sex scandals however pressing this was for him. After all, many Republicans were equally gung-ho for US intervention.

Obstacle

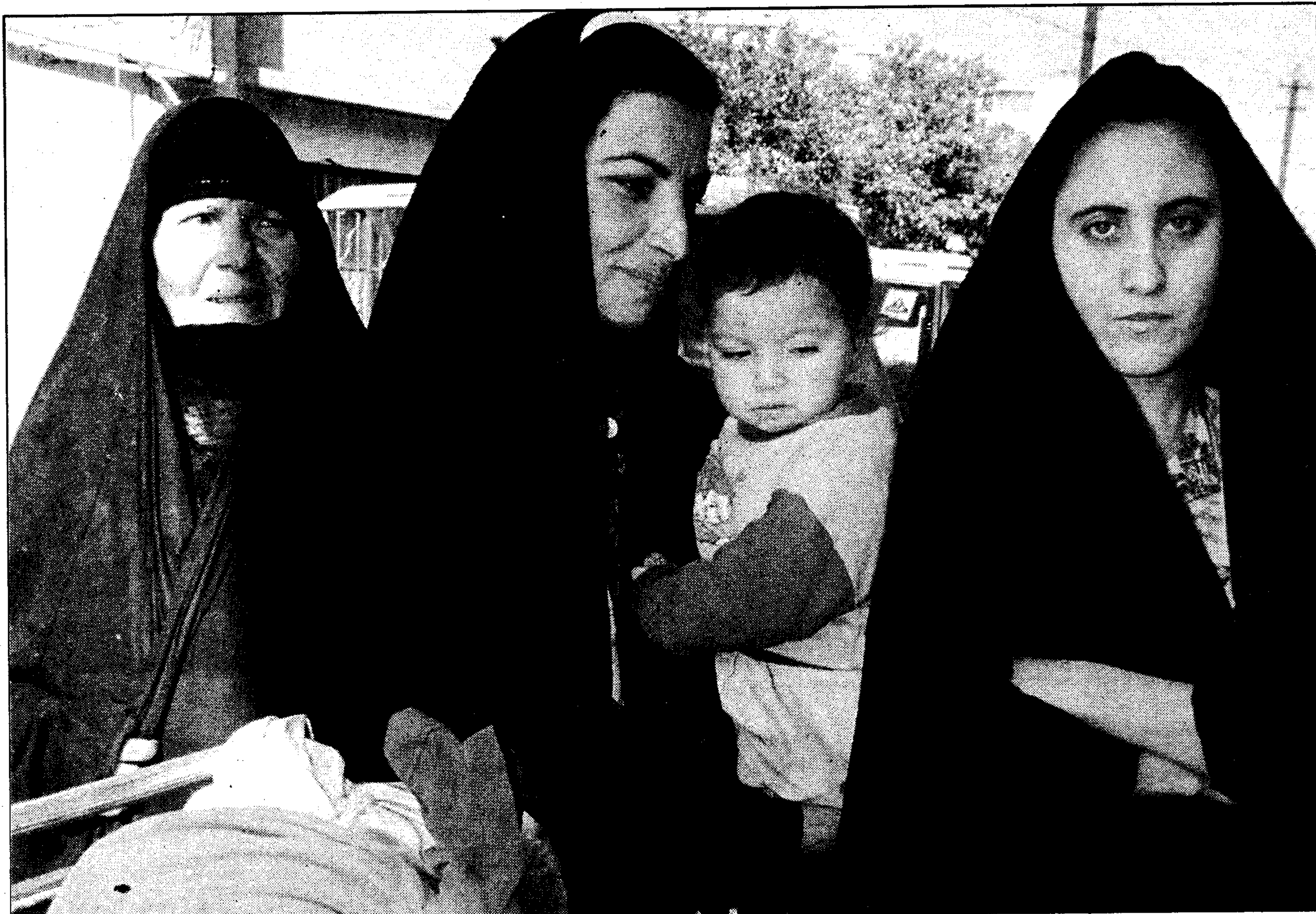
There are, however, clear US strategic interests in the region, which explain why Saddam Hussein, once a necessary ally, is now seen as an obstacle. Originally built up by the west in order to confront the threat of the Iranian revolution, by 1990 Saddam had established a regional hegemony and a massive army.

His genocidal war against the Kurds, and his blood thirsty control over the people of Iraq, did not then concern the western governments, which continued to supply the arms and equipment needed for this slaughter. But Saddam failed to understand his role as a western stooge.

His occupation of Kuwait – apparently following strong American hints of support – provided the pretext for the massive attack, which decimated his army and reduced much of the country to rubble.

However, when it became clear that the Ba'ath regime was threatened by popular risings in the north and south of the country, the US recognised that its interests were better served by a military dictatorship, even under Saddam, than by a popular, nationalist or Islamic regime.

Since the end of the Gulf War in 1991, Iraq has been strangled by international sanctions. Although allegedly intended to prevent Iraq from developing its arms industry, these sanctions actually ban the import of such items as paper clips,



Iraqi women queue for food in Baghdad: the opposition to a new attack on Iraq has been strengthened by awareness of the misery caused by sanctions

girdles, flowerpots and toothbrushes. According to official UN figures, more than a million Iraqis have died as a direct result of these sanctions. Nearly one million children are chronically malnourished.

The ban on most industrial, medical and chemical imports means that water supply and sewage treatment facilities have collapsed, while diseases such as cholera, typhoid and polio have risen massively. Malaria has reportedly

reached epidemic levels. The likelihood of a mass uprising from the Gulf to the Atlantic in the event of a renewed attack is a threat to all Arab regimes. This factor does not seem to have played much part in US strategic consideration, though Norman Schwarzkopf warned about the danger of a "new Vietnam".

The main US concern is in building a new system of regional alliances. The central pillar of this will be the growing alliance between Israel and Turkey. Following a treaty last year, the Israeli air force now conducts "training missions" in eastern Turkey.

It is not clear whether this is linked to Turkey's war against the Kurds and its occupation of parts of Iraq, but it clearly puts Israeli planes within easy reach of all of

people against Western aggression, have made it impossible for the leaders of the Arab and Middle East states to support a coalition, as they did in 1990-1.

At the moment, under the increasing sway of Islamic movements, the Arab masses are not challenging for power. But it is clear that, since 1991, the balance of forces in the Arab world has shifted significantly in their favour.

No longer the indispensable bulwark against the Iranian revolution, Iraq is becoming a minor irritant between two strong powers, Syria, most of Iraq, and parts of Iran. This is a significant increase in Israel's strategic capacity.

Meanwhile, the new Iranian President, Khatami, is putting out diplomatic feelers towards the US, which is interested in exacerbating the tensions within the Islamic regime.

small, hostile states. Socialists must be clear that such a development under western military auspices, even if disguised as an expansion of autonomy towards Kurds in the north and Shiites in the south, would not be in the interests of the inhabitants of the region, of whatever ethnic or religious community, but would represent a strengthening of imperialist control.

The Islamic movements, which are waging a bloody civil war in Algeria and are growing in Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, Kurdistan and Turkey, offer no real alternative to the masses of the region.

Backward

They represent, particularly in their oppression of women, a backward and feudal response to the contemporary crisis of the Middle East.

But we must recognise that they are growing fast, as a reaction to the failure of bourgeois nationalist regimes to improve the situation of the masses.

While socialists can find no common cause with such obscurantist forces, it would be equally mistaken to ally with the reactionary regimes in an attack on the fundamentalists.

It is only through the mobilisation of the masses, on a programme of opposition towards imperialism and its feudal and dictatorial allies, towards religious fundamentalism, and towards religious and ethnic sectarianism, that socialists can hope to avert the current slide towards further disasters in the region.

And this, too, is must be the response of socialists towards the latest Gulf crisis.

According to official UN figures, more than a million Iraqis have died as a direct result of the sanctions. Nearly one million children are chronically malnourished. The ban on most industrial, medical and chemical imports means that water supply and sewage treatment facilities have collapsed, while diseases such as cholera, typhoid and polio have risen massively. Malaria has reportedly reached epidemic levels. And this is in a country which was once almost the wealthiest in the Arab world.

reached epidemic levels.

And this is in a country which was once almost the wealthiest in the Arab world, with developed public services and the alleged ability to build nuclear, biological and chemical weapons of mass destruction.

This pressure, however, has not weakened Saddam's hold on power. Indeed, by weakening and demoralising the bulk of the population, it is likely to have harmed the prospect for any popular uprising. And the obvious suffering of the Iraqi people has been a further factor reducing support for the US and Western moves against Iraq.

The mass sympathy in the region for Iraq, and the popular perception of Saddam as a hero defending his

ing from the Gulf to the Atlantic in the event of a renewed attack is a threat to all Arab regimes. This factor does not seem to have played much part in US strategic consideration, though Norman Schwarzkopf warned about the danger of a "new Vietnam".

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which the US dreams of developing as its new alliance against progress and popular rule in the Middle East.

It is in this context that recent hints by senior US and British figures, that the break-up of Iraq might be their preferred solution, need to be assessed.

When the British and French drew the current borders of Iraq, in 1922, they were at pains to deny it full access to the Gulf, carving out Kuwait on the south of the Shatt al-Arab and expanding Persia on the north. Even then, there were proposals to establish three states, rather than one, in the area.

Israel, too, has long determined that its strategic interests would best be served by dividing Iraq into

Iraqi left: "Lift the sanctions!"

US military force is aimed not at defending the oppressed Kurdish or Iraqi workers, but at securing US interests in the Gulf

According to *The Guardian*, "leaders of the exiled Iraqi opposition" believe that Kofi Annan's agreement with Saddam Hussein will "prolong the suffering of the Iraqi people" (*Guardian*, 24 February). This view is not shared by all Iraqi exile activists.

At the Trafalgar Square rally on February 28, Socialist Outlook interviewed Shirin, a member of the Workers' Communist Party of Iraq.

SO: Do you support the use of international sanctions against Iraq?
Shirin: No, we have opposed them from day one. They do not serve the interests of the people of Iraq.

They are only in the interests of the USA, to give them an excuse to intervene. This intervention is neither to protect "peace and security" in the region nor to oppose the dictatorship of the Ba'ath regime, but only to promote US and western interests in the region.

We call for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the sanctions.

SO: What is the current situation in Iraq and Kurdistan?

Shirin: It is very bad. Every month, 5-6,000 children die as a direct result of sanctions, which prevent them from receiving food and medical supplies.

Kurdistan suffers from double sanctions – from the UN and from the regime. The area is like a huge refugee camp, under UN control. There are no jobs and no salaries. The people do not support anyone – not the UN, not Saddam Hussein, not the PUK and KDP.

Unfortunately, the Islamic movement is growing stronger. But so is our party, the Workers' Communist Party of Iraq.

SO: What is the Workers' Communist Party of Iraq?

Shirin: The WCPI is a Marxist-Leninist party.

In 1991, popular committees, led by communists, were established across Kurdistan during the uprising against the Ba'ath regime. This Councils Movement was repressed when the nationalists took over.

We understood that, despite our strong support we were not organised, and there was no party to speak for the working class.

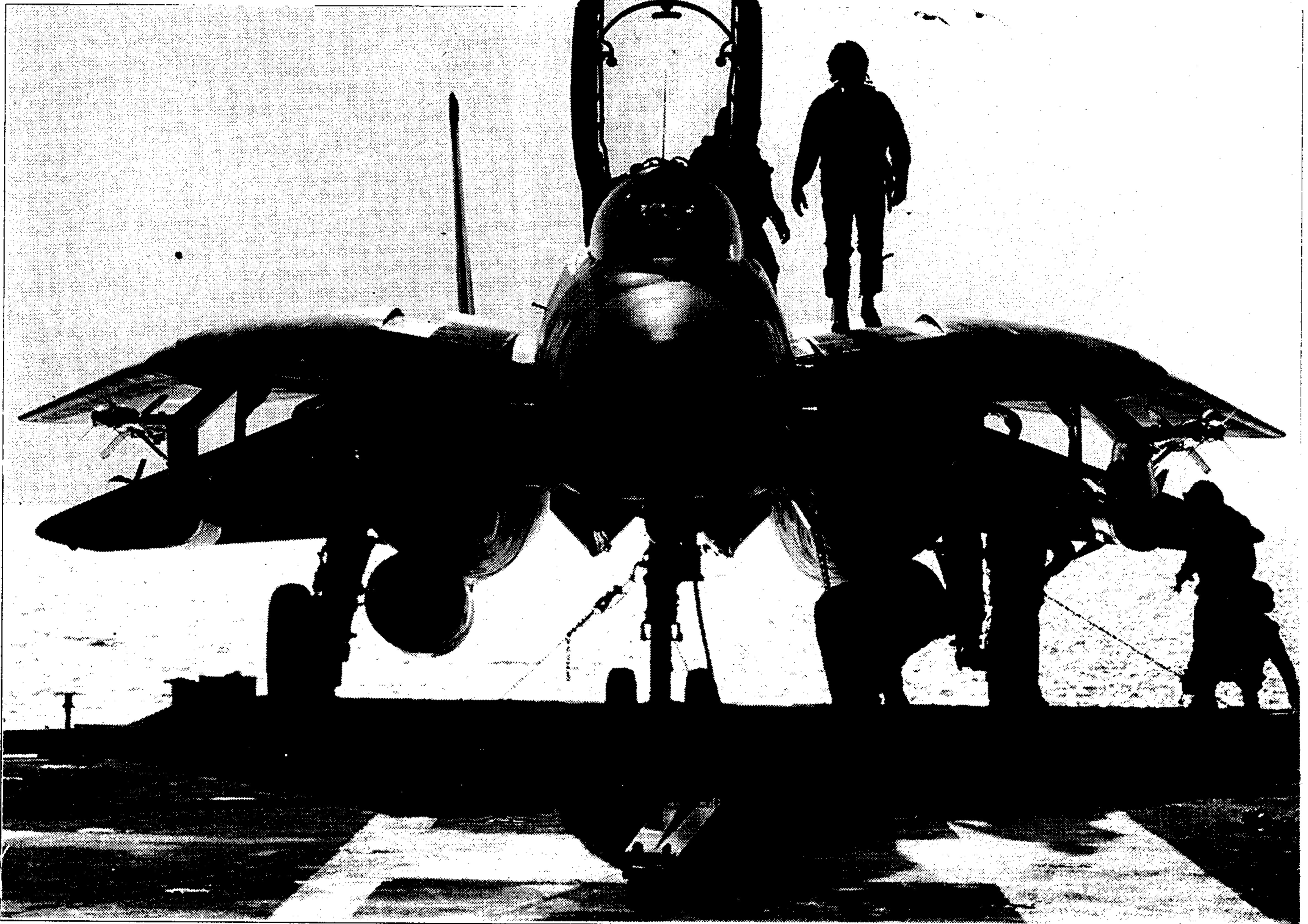
So in 1993 four small groups which had co-operated in the Councils Movement merged to establish the WCPI. The largest was the Communist Current; the others were the Unity of Communist Struggle, Workers' Attention and the Communist League.

We have several hundred members in Iraq. Most of the active members are in Kurdistan, where it is easier to operate than in the rest of Iraq.

We also have many members in exile, in Britain and Europe, the USA, Canada, Australia and elsewhere. We are linked to the Workers' Communist Party of Iran, with whom we share a programme.

SO: How are your comrades active?

Shirin: We have a radio station, which attracts popular support. We publish regular periodicals: *Workers' Commu-*



nism, in Arabic, and Forward!, in Kurdish.

We campaign for women's and children's rights, against the current situation in Kurdistan and Iraq, and in support of political prisoners.

SO: Are you active in the whole of Iraq, or only in the Kurdish areas?

Shirin: Well, it is much easier for us to operate in Kurdistan. The repression and fear in Iraq is too great.

At the time of the referendum to confirm Saddam Hussein in power a few years ago (he won 100 per cent of the vote), some of our comrades were arrested for distributing leaflets calling for a 'No' vote.

Eleven were sentenced to death, and were

Kurdistan since the nationalists took over.

About three years ago, one of our party leaders, Rebwar Ahmed, published an article against this in *Forward*, which enraged the Islamists, who issued a fatwa. The PUK banned *Forward*, and the women's journal *Equality*; eventually a Kurdish court rescinded the ban.

A few months ago, the PUK attacked our radio station in Suleymaniye. Although we do not have a strong military force, we were able to defend the station against them thanks to the widespread popular support for us in the town.

Both these examples are from the PUK-controlled areas; the harassment in the KDP-controlled areas is even greater.

SO: Are your relations with the PKK any better than with the bourgeois national-

in their army. Many families of children kidnapped by the PKK come to us for support.

SO: What solution do you propose for the Kurdish question?

Shirin: In principle, we oppose the creation of any further borders, which divide workers and make our struggle more difficult.

However, we want a free referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan, under international supervision, to decide whether it remains as part of Iraq or becomes an independent state.

We believe that, as long as the Ba'ath party remains in power, we would prefer an independent state for the people of Kurdistan. I stress, for the people of Kurdistan, with all of the minorities, and not just for the Kurdish people.

But this would only be a temporary situation. If there is a change in Iraq, and the establishment of a more secular regime, we would oppose borders between the people.

Our position is that, wherever we can establish a workers' state, we will do so. We believe that, in Kurdistan, there is a possibility of this.

SO: How can workers outside Iraq help your struggle?

Shirin: We need the international solidarity of workers with the people of Iraq, to help us to overthrow the regime.

As I said, international pressure helped to remove the death sentences against our comrades a few years ago. The sanctions, which are destroying the lives of people, must be removed, and there must be no US bombing or intervention.

In addition, the people of Iraq are not responsible for the country's debts, and should not be forced to pay them.

The money was not spent in the interests of the people, for instance on schools and hospitals. It was used for military equipment and palaces.

"We want a free referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan, under international supervision, to decide whether it remains as part of Iraq or becomes an independent state. We believe that, as long as the Ba'ath party remains in power, we would prefer an independent state for the people of Kurdistan. But if there is a change in Iraq, and the establishment of a more secular regime, we would oppose borders between the people."

only reprieved after a strong international campaign.

In Iraqi Kurdistan, under the rule of the UN and the bourgeois nationalist parties, things are a bit different. In particular, the people can see the failure of the KDP and PUK, and we are gaining support.

But we have problems here, too. The Islamic parties are growing, and this leads to strong pressure on women in particular. About 4,000 women have been murdered in Iraqi

ist parties?

Shirin: Well, the PKK is mainly a Turkish party, though it is based in Iraq. It is a nationalist party, which offers a nationalist solution to the problems of the Kurds.

As such, it serves the interests of the bourgeoisie rather than those of the workers.

We have been campaigning against the PKK's forced conscription of children to fight

“Speak French to Kohl and capital”

Germany's unemployed take to the streets

Thousands of protesters took to the streets of towns across Germany on February 5, demanding the government do something about unemployment. The demonstrations were a conscious imitation of the actions taken by the French unemployed movement – one of the first times we have seen militant action spreading across national frontiers in Europe.

Veronica Fagan from *Socialist Outlook* interviewed Daniel Berger from the RSB, German organisation of the Fourth International about these important events.

SO: Why do you think that it has been possible to spread the mood of the actions in France to Germany at this time?

DB: The Euromarches really changed the mood for many trade unionists. They got the impression that even if you are in a defensive situation you can do something. You can fight back even if this does not create new jobs in the short run, you are not really helpless.

After the 1995 strikes many people said we should do what the



Getting the message? German Chancellor Helmut Kohl

French do. After the lorry drivers strike in 96, this effect was even stronger. That is why we created the slogan “We must talk French to Kohl and capital”. Everyone understood this to mean we must do as the French do.

There were other placards on which workers had written ‘It is better to have a French situation than American conditions’. These sort of slogans have been popular over the last year and this prepared the ground for what was to come.

When the actions in France in December 1997 started they got a lot of coverage in the press and TV. This helped to popularise what was happening in France but the media tried to undercut the political message.

They presented the French occu-

pations as something interesting but also said that it wasn't really a demonstration against the state, just asking that something would happen which after all everyone agreed. Even Kohl could agree that something must be done about unemployment.

This attitude was maintained even when the Co-ordinating Committee for the Unemployed in Bielefeld launched its call on January 20 for demonstrations across Germany on February 5. The Head of the Unemployment Service in Germany said “I understood what they want and I fully agree with those who are demonstrating”. This was calculated to undercut the dynamism of the movement.

The trade unions have done nothing about unemployment for years. They did give financial support to this committee in Bielefeld, especially IG Metal gave money to fund 4 workers there. They also co-ordinated information and advice to the unemployed – you could say it was a type of social work. They never called any demonstrations or campaigned on the issue.

As I said earlier, the Euromarches really changed the mood and trade unionists began to feel that the leaderships should do something. When the French protests started in December, people felt that something should happen here too.

There was a vacuum here. When it became clear after Christmas that the French movement would go on the pressure began to mount. It was only a question of time that some-

thing would happen, though there was also an issue about who would take the initiative. Fortunately the Bielefeld group decided to make an appeal to other local groups to do something.

They got positive feedback from many local groups – there are hundreds of these throughout Germany though they only do advice work – and then they published their call on January 20.

In this situation the German TUC, the DGB, was forced to come in and support it. They did not do anything to mobilise for it but their paper endorsement made a big difference to the size of the actions.

SO: How widespread was the support on the day? What attitude did the unions take?

DB: On February 5 most of the demonstrations happened during the day time so that those with jobs could not go, never the less about 40,000 participated. In some areas the demonstrations were in the afternoon so that people could go after work. There were no strikes but in some towns where there is local resistance there was high participation from the employed too.

In Mannheim for example where there is a big Swedish/Swiss company, ABB, which has just announced mass redundancies and there had been various actions already over this. 1500 workers from the factory came after work and went to the demonstration.

In most towns the trade unions supported the actions only in a passive way but in some places it was possible to do more. In Weissbaden for example where I come from, we have a good standing in the union movement and we were able to get the local DGB to give active support.

The actions in more than 200 towns were the main news headlines that evening. The biggest demonstrations were in Berlin and in Erfurt in the east. This is quite astonishing because in the 90s the mass redundancies in the East were so great that from 9 million working people there are only 6 million left today. The others either went to the west or are now unemployed.

You have 10 per cent unemployment in western Germany but 21 per cent in eastern Germany. The effects of these mass redundancies was widespread demoralisation in the east. On February 5 there were large demonstrations, not only in Berlin and Erfurt but also in Dresden, Leipzig, bigger than those in Western Germany.

This expressed two things. One that there is a higher rate of unemployment in the east and there is no possibility of work ‘on the side’. This is possible in the west because the rate of unemployment is much lower, but in the east you can't hide.

The size of the protest in the east is partly a result of the objective situation but it also means that people are being active again which they haven't been since 1990. This gives us hope that there might be a

turning point at least in eastern Germany and I think also in western Germany.

SO: What are the plans for future action?

DB: The call is to do it every month until September on the day when the official figures for unemployment are announced. The dates are already fixed but two things are not clear.

The first is how to build up a movement that will prepare the actions and make sure that they just don't become routine. We need to develop new forms of action, not just do what everyone expects.

The second problem is what happens after September. The people that planned it tried to orient towards the General Election. We think it is important that this does not become the dominant dynamic – that people think once there is a Social Democratic government they will not need the movement any more.

If that is what happens then the movement would have to be built from the beginning again when new attacks come. We use the British and French examples to explain why this is necessary. We are concerned that the more it is linked to the election date the more the independence of the movement could be undercut.

SO: Can you say what the demands of the movement are?

DB: The Bielefeld committee published a very short call and they said we don't want to be neglected any more, we want the politicians to do something rather than just talking and we want money to be spent on the unemployed not on neo-liberal projects.

But there were no concrete demands and this made it easier for the trade union bureaucracy to support it and even for the head of the Employment Service to appear sympathetic.

Different local committees added their own concrete slogans and the mood of the mobilisations on February 5 was very different from this.

For our part we launched an appeal through the Euromarch committees to have a day of action on January 23, saying that we need to do as the French do. We did this when it was not sure what other actions might be called, in advance of the call for February 5.

Of course what we did had a smaller impact than what came later – but there were mobilisations in about 10 towns. We put forward two main slogans; For a 30 hour week and 200DM more for everyone on benefit. (You can't argue for a 35 hour week because that already affects many workers).

The slogan for more money was a reason for some of the trade union bureaucracy to be critical because they said that the state couldn't afford it. They are already beginning to think about how they will run the state after the general elections.

Greek students fight education reforms

Susan Moore

STUDENTS in Britain are not alone in facing attacks on their living standards and their ability to study. Across Europe governments are trying to cut back on spending on the welfare state in order to meet the Maastricht convergence criteria.

Last term, Greek students made it clear what they thought of the government's proposals.

In September 1997 the Education Minister, Arsenis pushed through a series of reactionary education reforms. He argued that higher education is no longer the responsibility of society – it is up to each individual to decide whether they want to study.

Graduates will lose their right to be employed in the subject they studied and will no longer be guaranteed higher wages or better conditions on the basis of their qualifications.

Those that want to become teachers will have to undertake an additional year's course on top of

what was previously demanded – one term of which will be working as a teacher but without pay.

At the same time, with funding for higher education under attack, the university authorities were moving to introduce new courses which moved away from specialist education into generalist education. Courses were also to be lengthened by 50 per cent.

There was widespread resistance to these attacks from both university and high school students.

Hunger strike

Two unemployed members of the teachers union in Salonika started a hunger strike on October 10 which acted as a focus for other activists. On November 11 students at the school of Mathematics in Salonika, the biggest and most conservative University in Greece went into occupation.

The occupation quickly spread to other departments, to other universities across the country and to a number of high schools. Unfortunately much of the left opposed the occupations – including the Greek

Communist Party.

Comrades of the Fourth International in Greece have played a leading role in these actions.

The struggle was organised through open committees elected from the General Assemblies – a method proposed by the far-left to maximise the self-organisation of students. In some places the numbers attending these meetings are higher than those who vote in student elections.

As well as occupations there were a series of massive demonstrations throughout December. On December 5 students clashed with the riot police. Alliances are also being built with teachers who are also under attack.

Many people have become radicalised through these actions and the government is not going to have an easy time to impose these changes.

(Based on information from Spiros Sgouras, activist in Greek section of the Fourth International and student of at Thessalonika University).

The frightening success of the Countryside Alliance Ruling class hits the warpath

Dave Bangs

BOOSTED by a massive media promotion for over a week beforehand, the Countryside Alliance demonstration claimed a turnout of 250,000 in central London on March 1.

In size, it dwarfed recent labour movement mobilisations. The first march last July attracted 120,000 people.

The ostensible reason for the demonstration was to oppose MP Michael Foster's anti-hunting bill. Indeed, it was the British Field Sports Society which was the backbone of the mobilisation.

Different hunts, area by area, took on the chartering of special trains. Agricultural colleges mobilised fleets of coaches, and reactionary local papers publicised march organisers' contact numbers under front page headlines.

75 per cent of the public has long opposed hunting with hounds. Yet when a parliament friendly to abolition is elected, it is the hunters whose mobilisations draw the numbers, not the abolitionists whose last counter-march drew only a few thousand people.

Partly this failure is due to the timidity and "respectability" of the big animal welfare/anti-hunt organisations.

But the real strength of this reactionary movement goes much deeper than that. Many ruling class people feel that an attack on hunting is a direct attack on them as a class.

Hunting with hounds is replete with a symbolism of Britishness, of the continuity of class rule, and of their right to exclusive use of the countryside as their playground.

Those same landowners and



farmers who were indignant at the very suggestion of a "freedom to roam" over our countryside (which Labour now looks set to drop) assume exactly that freedom for themselves with a pack of hounds at their front.

The clash between town and country which the march organisers highlight is in fact a clash between working people and the ruling class, as any hunt saboteur knows who has had "go back to your concrete jungle" or "get back to the smoke" shouted in her/his face.

Our problem is that the class struggle in the countryside has been won decisively by the ruling class. They see it as "their" countryside,

and a place in which poor people or other cultures have only bit parts as service workers or quaint country characters.

Of course, working people still do live in the countryside (and new patterns of migration are bringing huge numbers of better off working and middle class people back into rural areas). But they offer no coherent political alternative.

This means that the ruling class is unchallenged in its cultural hegemony there. And the key images of rural life which they purvey – of Brideshead-style stately homes, of thatched cottages, of class peace and social harmony ("no blacks, no muggings") and of ancient tradi-

tions, are seeing a new burst of life.

The march was thus able to organise a far wider coalition of interests. Farmers – bruised by the beef crisis, falling agricultural incomes, rising attacks on subsidy and on their destructive farming practices – turned out in force.

And opponents of Prescott's developmentalist solutions to housing pressures organised hard, too. In West Sussex, Prescott's sanctioning of an extra 12,500 new homes in a county where two thirds of the landscape is of National Park standard, and where strains on wider resources, roads and services are already at breaking point, has caused deep outrage – most of

which has been captured by the right.

We ignore this huge reactionary mobilisation at our peril. Only 9 months into a Labour government, it is the ruling class – not the workers' movement – which is massively on the move to defend its interests.

Lenin said (to paraphrase) that until the industrial workers saw that the flogging of a Siberian peasant thousands of miles distant was their business, there would be no revolution.

The left must update this. Unless we see that the cruel harrying to death of a fox is our business, then the ruling class will continue to run circles round us, too.

A week of Freedom

The 15th International Youth Summer Camp, organised by youth organisations in solidarity with the Fourth International will take place in Denmark this summer.

Each year hundreds of young militants from across Europe and beyond gather for the Fourth International Youth Summer Camp.

The camp offers a unique opportunity to meet socialists from other countries united in their commitment to create a better world, to discuss the similarities and differences of our struggles, to better

equip ourselves for future struggles and equally as important – to have fun.

The theme of this year's camp is to reclaim freedom. The ruling class never tire of promoting their ideas of "freedom" – the free market, free democracy and so on.

We are committed to winning real freedom – freedom from exploitation, sexual freedom, freedom from oppression and freedom to live our lives as we choose.

Capitalist "freedom" simply means the freedom for the rich and powerful to exploit and oppress the

majority of the world population. Our freedom can only be won through collective struggle and solidarity.

We have to show people that socialism and freedom are part of the same thing. That's why we want to 'reclaim freedom'

Throughout the week we will combine these ideas on a number of levels, from the content of discussions, workshops and forums, through to the very organisation of the camp itself.

We see lesbian and gay liberation, feminism and black liberation as central aspects of the struggle for socialism and liberation. We will integrate aspects of all of these into the whole of the week, organising discussions on how young militants are fighting oppression across the continent, and how we can work together.

Another important aspect of the camp is ecology – the first and biggest windmill in Denmark is in the centre of the camp. The free market has an extremely destructive effect on the environment. In order for us to have any kind of future an ecological approach must be incorporated into a system of collective planning.

The development of a capitalist EU threatens to drive back the struggle for liberation, with the destruction of welfare rights and a concerted offensive from the ruling class. We aim to develop our understanding of how to deal with the banks, the multi-nationals and the various governments in the context of the increasing integration of capitalist Europe.

Overall we will discuss our perspectives for bringing about revolutionary change in society, how we can link up across national boundaries, across different social movements, the trade unions and the labour movement and create a dynamic mass movement that can create the kind of society we want.

1998 also marks the 60th anniversary of the Fourth International, and so marks an ideal time for us to



celebrate the history and traditions of our organisation at this year's camp.

Whilst we are all working hard to make this an interesting and useful political camp, we will also make sure there is plenty of time to enjoy the social and cultural aspects of the camp, with a socialist cabaret, exhibitions, numerous sporting activities and parties throughout the week.

Join us in building the biggest and best delegation from Britain yet, and help us to create a socialist world, free from exploitation and oppression.

Fourth International Youth Summer Camp

25 - 31 July, Denmark

It will cost about £250 per person to get to the camp and to pay for registration there. *Socialist Outlook* will be trying to raise money to help young people who want to go but can't afford it themselves. Contact us to get involved in fun fundraising with us.

If you do want to come you should start saving now – send cheques made payable to 'Liberation' to the address below – it will make it much easier when it comes to July.

For more details contact *Socialist Outlook*, PO Box 1109, London N4 2UU.

A lop-sided history of women's movement

The New Feminism, by Natasha Walter (Little Brown, £15.99) Reviewed by Terry Conway

I WANTED to read 'The new feminism' having read various pre-publication reviews which suggested it was a debate with the feminism of the 1970s and critical of this tradition for an over-emphasis on personal politics, ignoring the material barriers to women's liberation.

Like other women who became radicalised at this time, I felt annoyed that our struggles and ideas were being misunderstood, but at the same time I wanted a clearer picture of the issues that were animating younger women today.

When I started reading I was more impressed than I expected to be. A plethora of statistics is set out, making clear the extent to which millions of women suffer discrimination today.

As I continued however, the shortcomings became more apparent.

In dealing with the past, and in particular the history of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain in the 1970s, Walter is hampered by the fact that the documentation of those discussions and campaigns is patchy and partial. Certainly the picture that emerges is more than a little lop-sided.

Its true that Walters points out

a fact I had not picked up from the reviews - that at first the second wave women's movement had been 'primarily concerned with righting social and economic disadvantages' (p60).

However then she goes on to say, within the same paragraph that 'it eventually seemed to collapse under the weight of its insistence on the importance of women's personal experiences' (ibid).

Walter then goes on to develop a critique of identity politics - somewhat superficially but generally on the right lines. What is missing however is any recognition of the fact that there were political differences between feminists, most crucially between socialist and radical feminists.

Downplayed

Her 'history' of second wave feminism downplays the contribution of socialist feminists and suggests, falsely, that the development of identity politics was supported by all.

Nor does she take on board that as the organised Women's Liberation movement began to fragment, shortly after the election of Margaret Thatcher in 1979, many socialist feminists increasingly chose to put their energies into the trade unions and Labour Party, carrying on the fight for women's equality and representation in these forums.

There are other weaknesses too.

The struggle for women's right to control our fertility, for free

abortion and contraception on demand is virtually absent from the book. The various battles over these issues were central to the concerns of the Women's Liberation movement of the 1970s and to socialist feminists particularly.

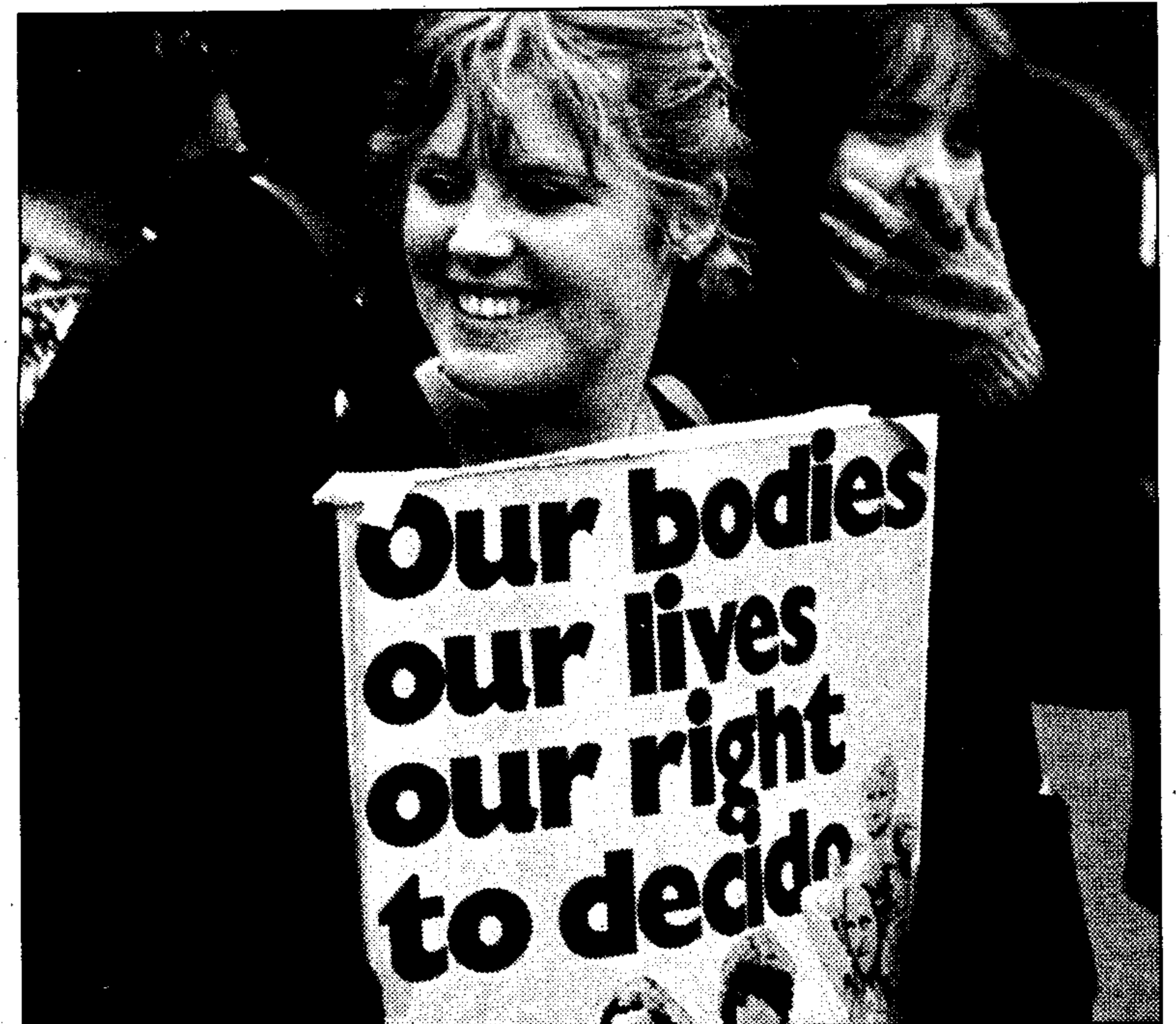
The campaigns in defence of abortion rights and against various attempts to restrictively amend the 1967 Abortion Act were key milestones in fighting for trade unions in particular to take on board a fight for women's rights that went beyond what were traditionally seen as trade union issues.

More importantly the fight for a woman's right to choose is far from won today - yet this central issue finds no place in Walter's five goals for future campaigning.

But Walter ends up pandering to homophobic stereotypes. She presents a critique of radical feminism and the notion of 'political lesbianism' that sometimes accompanied it, but without any analysis of the social and political discrimination and oppression faced by lesbians, and the way that this interacts with the material disadvantage faced by all women.

Lesbianism becomes defined as man-hating - while female heterosexuality is not defined by her as woman hating!

The most dangerous aspect of this book, however, has not been picked up in any of the reviews I have read. In practice, whether or not this is intended, the book argues for a 'feminism' which is in many ways congruent with the ideas being put forward by Blair's



Struggles for abortion rights have been key milestones

New Labour Party.

Perhaps the title of the book; 'the new feminism' is more thought through than I assumed?

Walter argues that previous strategies for women's emancipation at work for example have been based on a false dichotomy - either that 'women should be left to pursue their powerless, cyclical careers, but should be given special treatment from employers and the state to compensate them for the worst effects of inequality' (p227) or that they should be encouraged to 'remake themselves in line with the traditional masculine pattern' (ibid).

Neither, she argues, is an adequate way forward, and instead we must follow a third path in which we recognise the 'crying need to make work more flexible'. Sounds familiar: isn't that what New Labour is so fond of telling us?

Natasha Walter is undoubtedly sincere in her anger over women's inequality. Her book presents many useful reminders of the reality of our lives.

The fact that she pushes women such as Barbara Follet forward as role models would not matter so much if it was combined with an understanding that it is primarily through the collective action that real improvements have and can be won.

Women have been successful in winning at least some men to support such struggles by raising demands that either improve men's position at the same time - or at least do not worsen it.

Socialist feminists need to be debating and engaging with the ideas put forward here because they are sophisticated - and therefore more dangerous than those of many other opponents.

Hard lessons that must be learned

Lifelong Apprenticeship: The Life and Times of a Revolutionary by Bill Hunter, Index Books and Porcupine Press

Reviewed by Charle van Gelderen

AS THE TITLE of this book implies, Bill Hunter has been a revolutionary socialist for most of his adult life, nearly all in one or other of the all-too-many British Trotskyist groups.

Because of his long and active participation in the movement, this is almost a short history of British Trotskyism, its triumphs and failures.

This volume covers the years 1929-1959, and the greater part of it is contemporaneous with my own active role in our movement. For many years we were comrades in the same organisations.

During this period, which covers decades, we had some agreements and some differences. These differences must be born in mind when I deal with some of the incidents where we both were involved.

Early in the book, in Chapter 3, Hunter discusses the problems with "British exceptionalism". This is a theme which recurs frequently

throughout the book and it has undoubtedly been a constant obstacle to full participation by British Trotskyists in the building of a viable International.

It is a pity that Bill did not perceive this weakness in the Workers International League's (WIL) refusal to participate in the unification which preceded the Founding Conference of the Fourth International in 1938 and thus prevented the valuable contribution which, undoubtedly, they could have made.

The problem was to recur again when Gerry Healy's SLL, of which Bill was then a leading member, refused in 1963 to follow the lead from the American Socialist Workers Party to re-unite with the International Secretariat after the Pabloite split. This led to my own break with Healy.

Isolationist

It is this isolationist attitude to the building of the Fourth International which is perhaps the main cause of the weakness of the movement in this country. Ernest Mandel characterised it, in reference to the (British) SWP as "putting up the roof before erecting the walls", but the same method applies to almost every other group which has split from the International on some pretext or another.

Bill makes a passing reference to Healy's later witch-hunt against Joe Hansen with a promise to return to it in the second volume. This was surely one of the most shameful incidents in the history of British Trotskyism, and I look forward to his retrospective review of his role in this sad affair.

One of the best sections of the book is his appraisal of Gerry Healy - his strengths and weaknesses. Properly harnessed and disciplined, Healy could have played a constructive role in building the British Section of the Fourth International and the International itself. Unfortunately, he learned more from Stalin than from Lenin, and this was to lead to his eventual downfall.

I cannot deal at length here with the dispute round Pabloism which was to lead to a tragic split in 1953. Pabloism wasn't born with the document *The Rise and Decline of Stalinism*.

His views had been outlined in theses adopted at the Third International Congress of the FI, which were not opposed at the time by either the American SWP or the British Section lead by Healy.

At the Caxton Hall meeting where the split came to a head, only Betty Hamilton and I pointed this out. In his final contribution, Lawrence, the leading British supporter

of Pablo's views pointed to me and said "my only consistent opponent".

"Pabloism" did not come out of the air. It was not such an outrageous break with the traditions of Trotskyism as its opponents tried to make out. It was certainly a completely wrong assessment of the world situation and the perspectives of the revolutionary movement.

Nevertheless it could just about be hinged to the paragraph in the Transitional Programme where Trotsky wrote that under some quite exceptional circumstances and without their will, the Stalinists could find themselves at the head of revolutions (as was to happen in China and Vietnam).

This would not undermine the need for the Fourth International to guide these revolutions on the road to socialism.

Pabloism could have been fought inside a united Fourth International - and indeed the line was eventually corrected. This brought back James P. Cannon and the American SWP.

But Healy, with Hunter's support, preferred to build his own empire.



One paragraph of Trotsky's 1938 Transitional Programme was used to justify Michel Pablo's theory that Stalinist parties could become "revolutionary" under mass pressure.

Pablo became the main enemy, the devil incarnate, at the cost of the real fight against capitalism and for the building of the Fourth International.

It is an historic irony that some of those who were in the front-line in the fight against "Pabloism", such as Healy himself and the Banda brothers, hastened to embrace Stalinism in the Gorbachev period. Ernest Mandel and the main leaders of the FI continued to fight for its principles and to build it.

Perhaps Volume Two will show us if Bill Hunter has learned from this sorry history. Certainly his own failure to fight for re-unification with the FI and its British section after the downfall of Healy does not give grounds for optimism.

Socialist OUTLOOK

Where we stand

In the nineties, millions of women and men have taken part in mobilisations against the evils of capitalism and the bureaucratic dictatorships.

This reflects the fact that humanity face widening dangers. Ecological, military, social and economic devastation faces millions of people.

Many more people recognise the barbaric nature of capitalism. In a situation where the inability of the social democratic and communist parties to provide socialist solutions is becoming clearer, the task of creating new leaderships remains ahead.

Socialist Outlook is written and sold by socialists committed to this struggle. We are the British supporters of the world-wide marxist organisation, the Fourth International. We stand for the revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy world wide.

The overall goal which we pursue is the emancipation of all human beings from every form of exploitation, oppression, alienation and violence. Socialism must be under the control of ordinary people, democratic, pluralist, multi-party, feminist ecologist and anti-militarist and internationalist. It must abolish wage slavery and national oppression.

The working class is the backbone of unity among all the exploited and oppressed. The working class and its allies must uncompromisingly fight against capitalism and for a clear programme of action in order to gradually acquire the experience and consciousness needed to defeat capitalism at the decisive moment of crisis.

The movements of women, lesbians and gay men and black people to fight their particular forms of oppression make an essential contribution to the struggle for a different society. They are organised around the principle "None so fit to break the chains as those who wear them".

The whole working class needs to fully commit itself to these struggles. Furthermore we fight for a strategic alliance between workers and these Organisations which respects their legitimate autonomy.

By simultaneously building revolutionary organisations in each country and a revolutionary international we aim to guide and encompass the global interests of the workers and oppressed. By building a united struggle against exploitation and oppression we aim to ensure the survival of the human race.

Get your facts right on Hackney carve-up

AS THE HOME of scandal, the London Borough of Hackney keeps hitting the headlines, so it might still be worth commenting on Lizzie Bloom's article in your December issue.

There are several factual errors in the article. For example, Michael Barber is not a Minister, he's a high-profile civil servant, and he was never "Director" of Education in Hackney, he was Chair of the Hackney Council Education Committee for a while before 1990 (when Hackney took over the education service from the old ILEA).

More importantly, there are two judgments in the article which appear to reflect the local NUT analysis of the government's intervention in Hackney education, but which I believe are incorrect and disorienting.

Firstly, if one reads what Ministers actually said when they announced the original Ofsted inspection of Hackney Education in June 1997, it is unambiguous that their target was the management of the local authority, and not (directly) teachers or schools. My view is that they took advantage of Hackney's lamentable reputation to show that they were "tough on education", and to gain an electoral advantage at the May 1998 London local elections.

I don't know why they appointed the right-wing Tory businessman Richard Painter to chair their hit squad, but the best guess I have heard is that they hoped he would carry weight with the local Tories and Liberal Democrats, who run the borough following the ignominious collapse of the Hackney Labour Group (which split acrimoniously in 1996).

However, Painter is a powerful businessman, with an evident habit of getting his own way: when the hit squad reported in

November 1997, he wrote their report without discussing it with his advisers, and - perhaps as a result - in local government legal terms it was indefensible.

As a result, the dominant Chief Officers in Hackney were easily able to defy the hit squad recommendations about the structure of Hackney's education department, and Labour ministers backed down, but it is simply untrue to say that central government "supported" the Chief Officers' "Transforming Hackney" project.

I mention these points not only because it is vital for revolutionary socialists to get their facts right, but also because it is important for us to grasp the detailed mechanisms by which bourgeois society works.

To get those wrong would have serious adverse effects for our po-



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litical activities. In the case of Hackney NUT, for example, misunderstanding the Inspection/Hit squad exercise as a direct attack on schools and teachers helped produce the fiasco of a "mass picket" of the Council on 26 November 1997 which only five or so people attended.

**Tony Whelan
Hackney**

Time to talk tough?

Back in October in a brief report in Workers News, I criticised the Euro-March and its core leadership in the United Secretariat of the Fourth International, supported by their British comrades in Socialist Outlook for needlessly adopting weak slogans. They refused to fight for the various mobilisations to adopt class based demands, to put a clear opposition to the Single Currency and to Maastricht.

Well those rightist slogans just got junked for those of the Communist Party. For a demonstration at the Cardiff European Union, Heads of Government meeting in June, 'it has been agreed' that the main slogan will be - wait for it - 'No to a big Business Europe, - Yes to a People's Europe!'

Reportedly *Socialist Outlook* does not intend to fight to change this central slogan and is willing to build it (through the Euromarch Network)

on this Popular Frontist Slogan:

Trotskyists need to be centrally involved in building opposition to the Single Currency, to Maastricht and the Bosses Europe. European capitalism is re-structuring itself at the expense of workers, through Euro-Austerity and a Europe wide attack on the Welfare state in the name of meeting the convergence criteria for the Single Currency.

But being involved in that fight is not the only question. How should Trotskyists intervene in order to win workers to a fight for a Socialist Europe?

We must reject this seemingly flippant acceptance of Popular Frontist slogans agreeing only when and where to 'strike together' in Cardiff, but stating clearly, for all workers to see, that we 'march separately' in building action on the basis of our politics and our demands.

What say the Trotskyists of *Socialist Outlook*?

**Pete Bloomer
Birmingham**

WHAT'S ON

MARCH

TUESDAY 10

Lobby of Parliament against cuts in disability benefits.

THURSDAY 12

Launch meeting of Labour Union News. 'How do we fight back?' with Jeremy Corbyn, Alan Thornett, Sheila Cohen, Jill Mountford and Geoff Martin. 7.30p.m. Conway Hall Red Lion Square, London WC1.

SATURDAY 14

* 'A Rescue Plan for the NHS' Conference called by the Welfare State Network, 12 noon University of London, Malet St., London WC1.

* Magnet picket, Ilkley.

* Steering Committee of the Network of Socialist Campaigning Groups. For details contact John on 0181 985 0891.

* Memorial meeting for Nick Robin. 6.30p.m., Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1.

MONDAY 16

Eve of Budget Lobby of Parliament and Rally 2p.m.-7p.m. assemble St. Stephens Entrance House of Commons. Called by UNISON and the Campaign to Defend the Welfare State.

TUESDAY 17

Budget Day Lobby of Parliament 'A Budget for Welfare, not Cuts', called by Welfare State Network. 1.15pm St Stephens Gate, House of Commons. Speakers include Tony Benn, Jeremy Corbyn.

SATURDAY 21

Defend Lay Democracy. Meeting open to all UNISON members called by Northern and London Regions. 12 noon - 4p.m., Mayfair Banqueting Suite, Newgate St, Newcastle upon Tyne.

* National Network of Socialist Alliances meeting. Koco Buildings, Spon End, Coventry, 10a.m.-4p.m.

SUNDAY 22

Meeting for sponsors of the Cardiff June 13 demonstration. Cardiff. For details contact 01222 390273.

FRIDAY 27

Mass picket Magnet kitchens factory, Darlington.

SATURDAY 28

Reclaim our Rights conference to build a campaign against the anti-union laws. 11a.m.-4pm. Central Hall Westminster, London SW1.

APRIL

THURSDAY 30

Rally and Lobby of Parliament 'Stop Privatisation of LUL, Renationalise the Railways'. RMT national mobilisation. 2p.m.-5p.m. Central Hall Westminster.

MAY

SATURDAY 2

'No to Benefit Cuts, Defend the Welfare State' Mayday demonstration Birmingham. Assemble 10.30a.m. Chamberlain Square. Rally 1p.m. Trade Union Club.

Socialist Outlook 300 Club

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NO to a Bosses' Europe!

EURO PROTEST CARDIFF JUNE 13

The next stage in the process towards a single European currency is the Summit meeting to be hosted by the British government in Cardiff on June 15 and 16 (details inside, page 2).

A Committee has been formed in Cardiff to organise a major counter-demonstration on Saturday June 13, on a broad platform of internationalist opposition to the European austerity programme.

The Euro Summit Demonstration Committee is already backed by a wide range of organisations on the left of the Welsh labour movement, and is seeking wider support and sponsorship from the British and European labour movement.

Make sure your union branch, Labour Party or anti-cuts campaign lends its backing to the march and sends a delegation.

Further details from Euro Summit Demo Committee, CCTUS, 131 Crwys Rd, Cathays, Cardiff CF2 4NH. 01222-390273.

* For a People's Europe – Defend the Welfare State! The convergence criteria for monetary union demand that all EU governments must cut public spending. A single currency must not be created at our expense!

* For Full Employment – with Secure Jobs on Decent Wages! “Labour flexibility” is the buzz-

word of the moment and supposedly the cure for all economic ills. In reality it means an increase in low-paid work and permanent jobs being replaced by temporary contracts and unemployment.

* For National and Regional Equality across Europe! Implementation of the Maastricht Treaty is leading to a

concentration of wealth and power in the richer regions of Europe. Poor regions and nations like Wales are being left behind.

* For a Green Europe in a Green World! The countries of Europe and beyond share common rivers, seas and air. Pollution knows no frontiers. But the governments of Western Europe

and North America have failed to act decisively to tackle CO₂ emissions, industrial pollution and nuclear waste.

* Against Racism and Social Exclusion! Racism and intolerance are on the rise across Europe as black people and other minorities are made scapegoats for the economic crisis.