

# SOCIALIST PRESS



**COUNCILS:  
THE CUTS  
FIGHT**

PAGES 4 and 5  
**HOSPITAL  
RAIDED**

Back page

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## FOLLOW S. WALES MINERS

# TAKE THIS CHANCE TO

# OUST THATCHER!



Heath: brought down



Thatcher: bring her down

The miners—the union that screwed the Heath government in the 1972 pay strike and brought down the Tories in 1974—are once again in the forefront of the struggle to halt the Tory offensive.

After TUC leaders have sat back and watched nearly two years of Thatcher's closures turn industrial Britain into a wasteland of dereliction and unemployment, miners have been the first to force their officials to wage a real fight on jobs.

### Official strike

From 6 am tomorrow morning (Tuesday) 24,000 South Wales miners will be on official strike. They have sought and received pledges of supporting action by transport workers to prevent the movement of six million tons of stockpiled coal.

Kent miners have voted to strike from next Monday.

Other areas must now be brought out at once. In Yorkshire, a ballot has already been held on strike action to defend jobs—and won 80% support, even though few Yorkshire pits are on the NCB's "hit list" for the axing of 25,000 jobs.

White collar staff have pledged full support to the strikes.

But the national leadership wants to slow the pace. Last week's unanimous NUM Executive vote for a ballot was—despite the recommendation for strike action—a bid to hold off action and retain control.

It is essential that by the time this ballot takes place, key areas are already out on strike, with flying pickets despatched to any pits still working.

The defiant action taken by the miners offers the long-needed focus for a struggle on jobs throughout the public and private sectors.

Already there have been tri-



At the battle of Sattley Gates, 1972, miners joined with engineers to halt coke supplies

partite talks between the NUM, the steel unions and the rail unions on a joint campaign against closures and redundancies.

This was clearly seen as simply a protest campaign by the right wing union leaders.

But the militancy of the miners' action has already gone beyond these limits. It is now necessary to transform it into a united struggle to remove the Thatcher government.

Such a fight offers a beacon for countless thousands of

workers abandoned by their leaders to redundancy in private industry and the public sector.

Mobilise now, alongside the miners! Develop and extend their strike into a *general strike* to bring down the wretched Thatcher government!

For Labour leaders, preparing to make routine speeches on Saturday's demonstration against unemployment in Glasgow, the miners' action will be a profound embarrassment.

They will not dare to attack the strikes—but the very last

thing they wish to see is the Tory government brought down by militant working class action which they know full well would flow on into a renewed fight for socialist policies from a returned Labour government.

The Foot/Healey leadership, battered and bruised by the growing fight for democracy and accountability within the Party and weakened by the departure of the reactionary Gang of Three want the time to regroup their forces along with TUC right wingers in order to

beat back the demands of the rank and file.

Now is the best time therefore to press home the fight for:

**\*All out in the coalfields! Don't wait for Gormley's ballot!**

**\*Full support to the miners' struggles! No sackings in the coal industry! Cut the working week, share the work available without loss of pay!**

**\*Steelworkers, railworkers, transport drivers: strike alongside the miners! Mass picketing to extend the struggle into all industries—defy Prior's anti-**

union laws!

**\*Public sector workers, and industrial workers facing cuts, closures and redundancies: fight now alongside the miners! For a General Strike to bring down the Tories! Build councils of action to unite all labour movement bodies in the struggle!**

**\*Labour Party members—step up the fight for active support for the miners: drive out right wing MPs. Prepare to fight against Foot and Healey for socialist policies and a workers' government!**

## GENERAL STRIKE: TORIES OUT!

# El Salvador: test for Haig

The Reagan administration will this week step up its propaganda campaign accusing the Soviet and Cuban bureaucracies of fuelling the guerrilla struggle in El Salvador.

Sabre-rattling Secretary of State General Haig is declaring that in doing so the Kremlin leaders are in breach of the reactionary 1972 "spheres of influence" deal signed by Brezhnev and Nixon.

Behind the convenient and hypocritical smokescreen the US imperialists themselves continue to ferry arms to the vicious military junta in El Salvador and to directly supervise the slaughter of left wingers.

## Decision

Reagan is faced in El Salvador and Nicaragua with a difficult tactical decision. Having come to office roundly denouncing "terrorism" (liberation struggles) he has now to choose whether to pursue further with Jimmy Carter's efforts to buy off the nationalist leadership in Nicaragua and seek a political compromise in El Salvador, or to cut off all aid to the Sandinistas and go all-out to militarily defeat the FMLN guerrillas in Salvador.

A course of outright confrontation would bring Reagan into conflict not only with popular resistance but also with the bourgeois regimes of Mexico, Venezuela and other Central American states, which have looked towards measures to defuse the struggles in Nicaragua and El Salvador and ensure the consolidation of capitalist

coalition governments.

Such a course relies heavily upon the political confusion and cross-class composition of the Sandinistas and the political spokesmen of the El Salvador opposition—the Democratic Revolutionary Front (FDR).

## Coalition

The FDR have recently denied reports that it has held talks with US government representatives in the Honduran capital Tegucigalpa.

The FDR is not an essentially unified body with a coherent politics. It is a coalition of forces, only some of which can drive the revolution forward from the political to the social realm.

On the one hand, there are the bourgeois politicians, tried and tested in the 'first', 'reformist' (and US-backed) junta of October 1979 to January 1980.

These men are deeply immersed in the international social democratic bureaucracy, and while in temporary opposition to the US, represent the reformist variant of imperialist control.

Their growing domination over the FDR may be perceived in a rapid dropping of the FDR's original plan of government, drawn up in May 1980 but never fully published. At that stage the FDR called for the 'destruction of oligarchic and imperialist control', the establishment of the 'social ownership of the means of production' and widespread nationalisation.

Now much of this radical talk has gone. Instead the FDR talks of a 'participatory democracy'. Recently in London the FDR representative emphasised

that their demands were only reasonable: there would be full respect for private property.

The programmes of the petty bourgeois groups in El Salvador have been almost uniformly more radical than those of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua: but now the bourgeois press relays the promises of 'non-socialist' governments, of 'purely nationalist and anti-oligarchic' proposals.

This is not because the masses have become demobilised but because the bourgeois leadership of the FDR has met with considerable success in presenting its project to the 'international community'.

## Political threat

Neither, however, is it a superficial sham.

For while without the support of the guerrillas and the mass organisations, the besuited ambassadors of the FDR would be left with a substantial bank account in Mexico City and little more, they pose a serious political threat by virtue of the increasing acceptance of their positions by the petty bourgeois radicals that head the guerrilla organisations.

While Reagan deliberates whether or not to strike a deal with the FDR and calculates their ability to deliver a stable capitalist regime in El Salvador, the anti-imperialist struggle demands that the guerrilla organisations break from the FDR and put forward an independent programme of action for the working class and peasantry.



Armed clash in El Salvador

# Franco man back

Franco's sometime censorship chief Manuel Fraga, later responsible as Interior Minister for the murder of scores of Spanish workers, is returning to the centre of the Spanish political stage.

Last week Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo, the man King Juan Carlos selected as Prime Minister after Adolfo Suarez' recent resignation, went to Fraga to plead for support.

Fraga now leads the extreme right wing (and grotesquely misnamed) Democratic Alliance—which may have the votes that Calvo Sotelo needs to give him a parliamentary majority.

His own Centre Democratic Union (UCD) which approved his candidacy for the Premiership but elected defence minister Agustin Rodriguez Sahagun as party leader at its stormy congress last week, is six short of a parliamentary majority on its own.

And Calvo Sotelo is by no means certain of all of the votes of his own party.

One wing, the so-called "Social Democrats" say they will support the new government only on condition that it continues with plans for a legalisation of divorce.

But if he agrees to this too readily Calvo Sotelo may lose

the backing of the large far-right dissident wing of the UCD which was mostly responsible for Suarez' downfall.

That is why Calvo Sotelo is investigating the possibility of getting Fraga's support for a new government even further to the right than the last one.

That is the only solution to the present political crisis which would hold at bay, even if temporarily, demands from many army officers for a return to military dictatorship.

## Pretext

Their campaign to return to pure Francoism uses as a pretext the campaign of violence, largely directed against the security services, waged over recent years by the Basque nationalist organisation, ETA.

Last week ETA itself gave a considerable boost to the right wing by killing the kidnapped Jose Maria Ryan, chief engineer of the Lemonz nuclear power plant under construction on the Basque coast.

The killing of a civilian, rather than a member of the Francoist police and army, was received even by many who normally support ETA with great hostility.

A general strike against the killing, called by the Socialist, Communist and Basque Nationalist unions was massive-

ly followed by workers in Euskadi (the Basque country) and there were many protest demonstrations.

It is unlikely that the killing has lost ETA much permanent support.

But there is no doubt that in the short run the killing of Ryan was a gigantic political blunder—especially when opposition to the Lemonz nuclear plant is already vast.

Some of the memory of ETA's cruel blunder appears to have been rapidly expunged by another dramatic event in the war between ETA and the Spanish state.

Last Friday an ETA prisoner died in the custody of the Spanish police.

There is a good deal of evidence to suggest that he was tortured to death.

In an attempt to quell public outrage against this act, Calvo Sotelo's fledgling government has been forced already to concede a public enquiry into the militant's death.

But such steps were insufficient to prevent a weekend of violent mass demonstrations by angry Basque militants which confirmed that ETA's underlying support is unshaken.

It is the first major crisis of the new government. And it could yet turn out to be the last.

# Poland: another one bites the dust

The departure of yet another Polish Prime Minister has been followed by yet another attempt by the Stalinist bureaucracy and the Solidarity leadership to patch together an uneasy truce.

Solidarity has abandoned—or at least postponed—attempts to force the recognition of the farmers' union Rural Solidarity.

Solidarity leader Lech Walesa now says that perhaps this is not the right time for registration of a farmers' union.

Meanwhile, as the Communist Party bureaucracy struggles

to replace the functionaries and parasites ousted from office by the latest wave of strikes, Solidarity leaders appear willing to offer the new Prime Minister General Jaruzelski, the 90-day truce he has asked for.

One fly in the ointment is the upsurge of militancy amongst students, focussed on the central Polish town of Lodz.

A new unofficial students union has emerged, with scant respect for the old Stalinist "union".

"They turned up here but we told them to go away as they were mostly over 40 and were bureaucrats, not students' one militant told the *Washington Post*.



General Jaruzelski

# Tate & Lyle: occupation the only way

A mass meeting of the membership—mainly GMWU—at Liverpool's Tate and Lyle factory voted unanimously on 4 February not to occupy the plant at present.

Local GMWU official Tony Humphries successfully stalled the implementation of a previously decided resolution to take action against the company, such as occupation of the refinery.

## Talks with Tories

The day before in London, GMWU general secretary Basnett and TGWU leader Moss Evans had met with Lord Jellicoe and agreed: an extension of the notices until April 3; the handing over of the company's abortive alternative plans for the refinery; and to continue the talks with the Tory government to reverse

their policy, in line with the EEC, of making Europe self-sufficient in sugar-beet supplies (as opposed to the cane-sugar raw materials from the West Indies currently used at the Liverpool refinery).

The aim of the unions is to get Walker, the Agriculture Minister, to alter the government quotas in favour of cane sugar refineries.

The initial decision to begin the plan of action appears to have been merely a manoeuvre on the part of the stewards in response to the diverting of ships carrying the cane-sugar from the Liverpool docks.

The company subsequently made noises to the effect that the ships would be, when available, dispatched with cane sugar, at some unspecified date.

Basnett and Evans clearly used this flimsy "promise" as an excuse to call off the possible occupation indefinitely. Basnett's flunkey in the area, Humphries carried out this

assignment very professionally.

He told workers that no sit-in or occupation had so far succeeded—deliberately ignoring the partial success at Gardners in Manchester only two months ago—and that direct action would "alienate public opinion".

## Sell-out deal

And of course he added that direct action could always be used "should the talks and lobbying fail."

Basnett's plan is clear: to stall any action, wait for the members' current militancy to turn into demoralisation and then negotiate a sell-out deal with marginally increased redundancy money.

As at Dunlops, two years ago, the initial enthusiasm of the membership at the first mass meetings will be de-fused and dissipated as they are directed away from occupation by the full-time officials and their

apparently servile hangers-on and errand boys at convenor level.

Instead, they will be presented with a mock "campaign" of lobbying and stunts. This is already taking shape as the "action committee" prepares for a jolly day of "action" next week.

Meanwhile, at the Huskisson dock down the road, there is a further strong possibility of job loss at the sugar-handling terminal.

The jobs of sugar cane plantation workers in the West Indies will also be under threat as the Thatcher government switches to increasing home-grown sugar beet, in line with EEC policy.

The closure of the refinery cannot but affect the Merseyside confectionary and food industry, which it supplies, as transportation costs increase.

An alternative, workers programme must be along the following lines.

\*Immediate occupation of the refinery.

\*Union blacking of all Tate and Lyle goods, nationally.

\*A district/regional levy of the GMWU membership to be carried out by the local official Humphries, (against the opposition of the executive if necessary).

\*Demand to see the Tate and Lyle books to ascertain the reality or otherwise of the supposed "losses" and in the case of bankruptcy, for the purpose of taking the firm over under workers' management, as part of the struggle for a planned economy.

\*Fight for a policy of work-sharing on full pay, based on a sliding scale of hours. The same policy must apply to all other workers affected by the Thatcher government's switch to home-grown sugar beet production: in particular solidarity with West Indian plantation workers.

\*For a joint occupation

committee with other workers coming into struggle against Thatcher: the Vauxhall workers and Seamen—as a step towards a Merseyside Council of Action.

Tate and Lyle are one of the most generous contributors to Tory Party funds.

Only the fight to bring down the Tories and bring to power a workers' government committed to establish a socialist planned economy can meet the requirements of Tate and Lyle workers.

## MERSEYSIDE FACTORY CLOSURES—HOW TO FIGHT THEM

A WSL pamphlet which draws on the experiences of Dunlops, BL Speke and Meccano.

Price 30p including postage from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

# REAGAN PLANS TO EXCEED TORY CUTS



Reagan

The world was bad enough with one Thatcher in office. Now it is even more unsafe—with two and a half.

Ronald Reagan is now in office with an administration staffed largely by warmongers—with a generous sprinkling of dim wits.

His advisors are critical of Thatcher not for the extent to which her policies have destroyed British industry (why should they worry about that?) but because she has not gone far enough!

They felt that she should have cut both taxes and public spending far more than she has done. And they intend to imple-

ment exactly such policies in the ailing US economy.

Reagan is set to carry out his election promise of three successive annual cuts of 10% in income tax.

## Missing billions

And he will take steps to raise the missing billions of dollars by cuts designed to shunt the burden squarely onto the shoulders of the poor, the unemployed and the most downtrodden sections of American society.

Reagan's Treasury Secretary has been much more forthright on this policy than Britain's mealy-mouthed Tories. He has openly argued that the rich are

the ones most likely to put the extra money Reagan is giving them into savings or investment, rather than spending it on the daily necessities of life.

The cash is to come from American workers in several key areas—with cuts planned in the Medicaid programme, in disability insurance payments, social security payments, unemployment benefit, food stamps for the poor, child allowance and employment subsidies.

Other cuts are likely to affect the space programme, synthetic fuels research, urban development subsidies and the postal service.

The theory is that siphoning money from the poor and funnelling it into the pockets of the rich will create "real" jobs to replace the thousands that will be lost through such cuts.

But with US interest rates still near the 20% mark, the chances of many employers feeling the urge to borrow

money to set up new factories and industries in the near future seem pretty slim. More likely they will take the money and run.

And with inflation at 12%, the anger of US workers at the attacks on their living standards planned by Reagan can be expected to take a physical form in the shape of pay struggles and unrest in the areas of mass unemployment and urban deprivation.

Plainly the Reagan administration hopes to deflect some of this frustration into a new surge of nationalist fervour and imperialist aggression.

The nauseating drum-beating around the return of the US hostages from Iran has been followed by blood-curdling warnings, from Reagan and Secretary of State Haig against "terrorism", and underlining US preparations for a more aggressive foreign policy.

Vicious South Korean military dictator Chun Doo Hwan

has been feted at the White House in a move that publicly abandons any pretence of concern for "human rights"; steps have been taken to boost the CIA, and increased US military spending seems likely to include development and deployment of the lethal neutron bomb in Western Europe.

## Terror tactics

Rather like the Loyalist paramilitaries in the North of Ireland, Reagan's regime believes in using terror tactics to crush what they regard as "terrorism".

But since in their view *anyone* is a terrorist who fights to oppose their system of exploitation and oppression, this means that Reagan, like Thatcher is committed to terrorising us!

## CND Labour Movement CONFERENCE

### AGAINST THE MISSILES

Saturday March 28, at UMIST Students' Union, Manchester.

Up to 2 delegates from labour movement bodies. Details and credentials from: CND, 11 Goodwin St, London N4.

## Italy—here comes a new crisis

Italy took a sharp lurch last week towards its next political crisis.

The constitutional court decided that six questions were eligible to be submitted to a national referendum.

And that presages a political crisis, partly because some of the referenda will be about the controversial anti-terrorist law and regulations governing military tribunals; but mostly because two of the referenda will be about a question generally considered in Italy to be political dynamite—the right to abortion.

Since 1978 Italy, a country where the Catholic Church still wields immense political power, has permitted abortions—though under conditions which are more restrictive than under the 1967 British law.

And even legal abortions are often extremely difficult and costly to obtain.

One referendum will be about whether this limited right should continue.

The Church and a considerable part of the Christian Democratic party want it to be abrogated completely.

The opposition Communist Party and the lay parties of Forlani's coalition government (the Socialists and Republicans) defend the existing law.

The second referendum will be on the Radical Party's proposal to extend the right to abortion and remove the restrictions of the 1978 law.

Both questions are likely to shatter the political equilibrium of a country which is seldom far from major social upheaval.

## Discontent

In conditions where mass unemployment and worsening inflation are intensifying social discontent, neither the parties of the governing coalition nor the Communists want to allow the class struggle to become more overt.

But the only constitutional way they have to avert the divisive referenda is to have a general election instead—the prospects of which the politicians find just as dire.

So one way or the other Italy is now sliding down a slippery slope towards its next crisis—unless it meets another unforeseen one on the way.

The headlong dash by the French Communist Party (PCF) to fill the space in the French political spectrum left by the banning of the neo-fascist FANE reached a new dramatic stage this week.

In the town of l'Esperance the 'communist' Mayor, one Robert Hue, has launched a campaign to 'drive drugs out of the town'.

## Publicity

At first this seemed no more than the eccentricity of a small town politician looking for some good local publicity. The sinister aspects of his campaign began to appear when we heard his appeal to parents to inform against their children and their children's friends whom they suspected of drug taking or dealing.

It was not until 7 February however that the real significance of the movement became clear.

The local PCF and the Jeunesse Communiste held a demonstration in the town designed to harass a Moroccan family accused by the Mayor of drug dealing.

## Threats

The name and the address of the family were given out in a PCF leaflet, as a result of which they have received a string of threats and their children have been abused and insulted on the way to and from school.

Beseiged by a gang of PCF skinheads the family phoned the Mayor to demand an explanation, only to be told 'If you are innocent, you have only to go outside and explain the fact'.

Local police have confirmed that there is no 'drug problem' in l'Esperance or the surrounding district. The Moroccan family in question had been subject to suspicion last year and their flat had been searched without result.

## Protests

Members of the Socialist Party and of the League for Human Rights have protested strongly against the action of the PCF without result.

While most of the French press sees the incident as a further attempt by the PCF to stir up anti-immigrant violence, L'Humanite, the PCF's daily

paper defends the action vociferously and attacks those who have attempted to defend the rights of immigrants against PCF attacks.

What is clear from this extreme right turn by the PCF is that the growth of support for the Socialist candidate Mitterand has taken them unawares and that they are reacting desperately to find a new base of support.

Revolutionaries must organise with the Socialist Party and the unions to defend immigrants against the Stalinists—who are now a far more serious threat than the fascists.

## French CP's racist attacks

## STUC ducking fight

The threatened closure of Talbot's Linwood car plant, of Scottish pits and the threat to the steel industry brings to a head the mounting crisis facing industry in Scotland.

How will the Scottish TUC react to this crisis? The STUC exists separately from the British TUC and likes to consider itself as being more radical.

About one million trade unionists are affiliated by unions with members in Scotland.

It has its own women's advisory and youth committees. The 44 Scottish Trades Councils affiliate to the STUC rather than the TUC, have a direct voice in the STUC Annual Congress and a seat on its General Council.

Throughout the 1970s the STUC was seen as being to the 'left' of the TUC. There was always a large part of its Congress, usually led by the Scottish Area NUM, committed to opposition to all forms of incomes policy.

During those years the STUC identified itself by leading the struggle for the Scottish Devel-

opment Agency and for a Scottish Assembly.

However, the policies pursued during the 1970s bore the seeds of the current crisis. While many resolutions were passed acknowledging the crisis as a crisis of the capitalist system, the remedies were always reformist ones, designed to ensure the smoother working of the mixed economy.

Investment grants and regional development grants to attract private investment were the main core of the demands of the General Council. It is those companies thus attracted to Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s who are now pulling out or creating large redundancies.

## Import controls

Far from learning the lessons since the Tory government took over, the STUC General Council seems now to be totally disoriented and is turning in all directions rather than give leadership to the workers movement in Scotland.

Import controls are now central to their policies and provide yet another way of avoiding confrontation with

capitalism. The Convention on Unemployment in December put out a clear call for alliances with employers in a chauvinistic campaign of token opposition to the government's policies.

Delegates to the conference for chairmen and secretaries of Trades Councils, again held last December, were told that the main work in 1981 would be to build local committees of the broadest possible nature to resurrect the Campaign for a Scottish Assembly.

Emphasis was to be given to getting bodies such as churches and small businesses involved in these campaigns. Members of the General Council have consistently argued these disastrous policies since then.

At a time when working people in Scotland are looking for a fighting lead to stop closures and redundancies, when Labour-controlled councils need to be encouraged into a policy of refusing to implement Tory cuts, the STUC is avoiding the issue of working class leadership.

## PRESS GANG



"Mr Christopher Murphy, Tory MP for Welwyn and Hatfield, who has tabled a motion protesting at the plan, said it was the main topic of conversation at Westminster. "There is a tremendous uproar."

Not unemployment; not inflation; not nuclear war; not the Council for Social Democracy. And not even Joanna Harris, the soon to be expulsiory inspector.

The debate that is rocking the Commons is over the plan to paint telephone boxes yellow.

This scheme is not part of the programme for socialist revolution—'more red, not less' is our slogan—but has nevertheless touched a raw nerve deep inside the bourgeois consciousness.

The Daily Mail is running a Keep Our Telephones Red Campaign, and every loudmouth with newsprint to spare has added his/her twopence (or rather fivepence) in articles which link the colour of the phone boxes to decimalisation, the British Empire, the golden days of servile workers and their inability to find a taxi on their way home.

The irony is that the 'yellow peril', as it was dubbed by several jaundiced sub-editors, is not the product of a whim, nor is it a disastrous overordering of paint for window boxes ("I said one gallon, you fool, not one million gallons") but an outward symbol of the split in the telephone and postal services.

The Telecommunications division is not only a source of an enormous profit for itself but creates a market in which multinational giants can fish at their leisure.

Even in a recession as sharp as this one, telecommunications is still making fortunes in an expanding market.

The Postal side of the business is also a source of profit for advanced manufacturers of sorting equipment, etc., but not on the same scale.

It also inhibits entrepreneurs who feel they could open businesses delivering business and special mail if the government would break the Post Office monopoly.

That in turn implies the destruction of the 'inefficient' (in financial terms) daily delivery of mail to people's homes.

But divisions are easy to create on paper and less easy

to get over. There are millions of people who have never understood why they should face continued massive increases in the price of stamps and telephone calls when the telephone service records soaring profits.

It is to get over to these millions who refuse to understand the logic of their own oppression that Telecoms decided to paint the telephone boxes yellow.

We could expect from the same papers which now defend the red boxes a later campaign designed to associate yellow with go-ahead excitement and red with lumbering inefficiency which deserves every redundancy it gets.

The campaign has put paid to the details of this scheme which will have to find some other means of expression.

This is the same problem that the Council for Social Democracy has. Now that Sue Slipman has joined it is not just a question of painting over the pale pink but of eradicating a past which once had the thinnest veneer of red.

I wonder how Fleet Street would react to a plan to paint Shirley Williams and Roy Jenkins yellow?

# Camden: dump the right wing councillors!

Socialists in Camden face the task of preventing a cover-up by the right wing majority on the Council's Labour Group.

Council leaders argue that, for the sake of "unity" in the fight against the Tories, the party has to endorse their decision of February 4 to freeze wages, use voluntary redundancy to destroy 600 jobs in the DLO within a year, and to raise rents by £3.50.

Despite the inadequacy of the strategy of the nine 'left' councillors who have opposed these policies, the Camden Labour Left must now go into top gear, rallying support for their stand.

The council's attack has not only provoked conflict between the Labour council and the unions; it has meant that Labour Party policy has been cynically discarded to appease the Tory auditor.

## Ignored conference

The majority in the Labour Group have ignored the decisions of the Camden borough conference in January.

That conference, representing the three constituency parties reaffirmed its support for a policy of 'no redundancies and no reductions in the services provided by Camden Council.'

The conference also threw out a resolution which attempted to limit resistance to 'legal means only'.

The majority on the Labour Group must not be allowed to parade in the labour movement as the spokesmen for the Camden Labour Parties.



Solidarity on march against Camden cuts

The three CLPs and the Local Government Committee must publicly disassociate themselves from the decision of the majority on the Labour Group.

The Labour Party in Camden must concretise this hostility to the Group's decisions by throwing its full political and organisational strength behind tenants' resistance (such as rent and rate strikes) and the unions campaign of mass pickets and guerrilla strikes.

To those who argue that this will split the Labour Party—we reply that the 18 councillors who handed power over to the Tory auditor have forfeited the right to represent the Party. They speak only for themselves.

The right wing will receive the support of the Tories at the full Council meeting on Wednesday 18 February. It is they who are the splitters.

If there is to be a unity of the left in Camden the nine councillors must grasp the nettle

and give a lead.

Now is the time to break out of the confines of the council chamber.

They must rally the party behind the unions and tenants' associations.

They must be prepared as a group to defy the right party whip.

And it is time for them to play an active part in building the Camden Labour Left.

There have been promising signs, this week, that the left councillors are prepared to follow such a course.

At a meeting of the 'Policy and Resources Committee' on Thursday 12 February left wingers Livingstone and Driscoll voted against the Labour Group's proposed absorption of the Camden Supplement into the National Pay award.

These two votes added to the Tory opposition (they want to cut wages in the borough, not just freeze them at 1980 levels) temporarily defeated the

Labour Group's reactionary policy.

It was only when the chief executive, Nickson, pointed out to the Tories that they had in effect voted to continue paying the supplement, and could themselves be surcharged that the Tories withdrew in confusion, abstaining on the revote hastily pushed through by Labour's right wing.

The relationship between the left councillors and the Camden Labour Left was strengthened at a meeting last Thursday. A meeting convened by the Camden Labour Left was attended by leading branch officers of NUPE, NALGO and UCATT and five councillors.

At the meeting the Camden Labour Left and unions agreed to endorse a statement of intent by the left councillors to be distributed as a leaflet to the mass picket of the council meeting on Wednesday 18th.

Left councillors were also invited to speak at union mass meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday.

There is therefore a strong basis of Labour movement unity for resisting the Council's cuts.

The only threat to such unity has come from UCATT leader Vic Heath.

## No meeting

Heath has refused to call a mass meeting of his threatened UCATT members and is not going to support the call for a one-day strike on 4 March.

UCATT members must challenge this divisive decision.

It not only undermines the actions of NUPE and NALGO but will actually encourage workers to take voluntary redundancy as they see no prospect of their branch fighting the council.



Deputy Council leader Mills

# The Lambeth backlash

The social atmosphere in the London Borough of Lambeth is becoming increasingly tense.

The forces of right and left are moving closer towards decisive clashes.

The right has taken advantage of the widespread spontaneous hostility to the supplementary rate levied by Ted Knight's Labour council to foster a reactionary mass movement directed against the Labour council.

Last Tuesday saw the largest of a series of demonstrations the main slogans of which are "Knight Out!", "Knight must fall" and other funny and not so funny versions of the same theme.

## Struggle

Last week's march and meeting brought about 2,000 protesters onto the streets and ended with a noisy meeting at which left Labour MP John Tilley and council leader Ted Knight struggled bravely against 600 almost unanimous hecklers and a Tory MP and Councillor were heard in respectful silence.

The meeting was called by a group calling itself the Rates Action Group which had given it massive publicity.

The group is led by local Liberals and Tories but the National Front, which has now moved its headquarters to Lambeth (Streatham) has also

been involved in mobilising the militant anti-Labour protest.

At the same time the local Chamber of Commerce has organised a petition against the rate rise and in favour of direct intervention against Lambeth by the Tory government.

It is hard to look anywhere in Lambeth today without seeing one of the hundreds of reactionary "No" posters which fill shop and house windows.

Most socialists and trade unionists in Lambeth—both supporters and critics of Ted Knight's policies—decided that the place to be in the face of this right wing mobilisation was at home.

They were wrong. They should have been in the meeting or on the streets defending the Labour council against the right and fighting to win some of the workers on the demonstration away from Tory and fascist influence.

The left must not leave the right the freedom to organise unmolested.

Of course the task of defending the Labour council in Lambeth is made more difficult by the policy of rate rises which is rapidly undermining the basis of mass political support for Lambeth council's stand against the Tory cuts.

Some of those who were on the streets on Tuesday might in other circumstances have been demonstrating in support of Lambeth council against the Tories—and so would many thousands more whose enthusi-

asm and commitment has been dented by continual rate increases.

The fight must now be redoubled to defend the Lambeth council but at the same time to reverse its retreat from an all-out confrontation with Heseltine and Thatcher.

That is the way to stop the right having the opportunity to continue to mobilise growing demonstrations of a reactionary kind.



Ted Knight



# Programme of Camden Labour Left

This Conference notes:

1) The savagery of the attacks mounted by this Tory government on working people. These attacks are being made in all areas of life and are unprecedented in their intensity in the period since the war.

The gravity of the context (mass unemployment) in which Heseltine's attacks on Direct Labour Organisations, council housing stocks and all forms of local government expenditure are being made.

The special penalties Camden has already suffered, amounting to some £19.5 million for refusing to pass on these attacks to working people.

2) That given the discretionary powers taken by Heseltine to regulate the policies of local government to his and the Tories' liking, any serious policy of defending jobs, services and living standards will inevitably at some point cross into illegality and a direct clash with the government.

3) That since this confrontation is inevitable it should take place on ground chosen by us, the Camden labour movement, as the most politically advantageous, on which issues can be presented most clearly and on the basis of which maximum unity can be won, locally and nationally, for the fight against the Tories.

4) That the clearest basis for unity is for the Labour Party to campaign publicly, together with the trades unions, tenants and other interested groups on a programme of no cuts in

services, no rent increases, no wage cuts, no increases on the rates in 1981/2 and the maintenance, improvement and expansion of public housing.

5) That 'buying time' through rate increases will attract continued government penalties, raise the cost of living, divide our support and, in the long term, will not save jobs and services.

A further rate increase will be beyond the means of many people who may then see cuts as a means of relieving their burden, and this will conflict with council workers who want to save jobs and services.

6) That rather than dissipate the support we could win to fight the Tories by surrendering on any of the above points and sowing division by raising rents, creating redundancies or relying on rate increases the Labour leadership should commit itself to campaign on the above programme.

This campaign would culminate in a political confrontation, involving a strike of the borough against the Tories, with a refusal to raise rents and rates and to pay interest payments to the City as funds run out.

This process would involve a fierce political and electoral struggle to retain Labour control, denying any cooperation or legitimacy to a rump of Tory councillors or Tory commissioners.

# COVENTRY TENANTS FREEZE RENTS

Coventry Labour Council's imposition of a £2.50 a week council house rent increase has led to a sharp growth in the number of tenants organisations in the city.

As we go to press well over 1,000 tenants are set to withhold the increase which comes into effect from February 6 and is to be followed by further increases in April and November.

Last Thursday angry tenants joined students and staff from Lanchester Polytechnic (facing a £1.1 million cut in expenditure)

in a lively demonstration outside the Council House.

Les Bennett, Campaigns Officer for the Coventry Tenants Federation told Socialist Press:

"Tenants groups are springing up all over the city. So far there are 24 and we are getting new enquiries all the time. We are confident that our next freeze will involve more and more tenants and that we have the council worried."

Some 400 tenants and Polytechnic staff and students marched round the city centre before returning to the Council House.

With next month's council

meeting poised to impose a massive round of cuts there will be plenty of opportunities for further examples of joint action.

## Support

The decision of a growing number of tenants to take direct action has pointed in the right direction.

Les Bennett drew attention to the widespread support for the tenants amongst rank and file Labour Party members. Support for and involvement in direct action against the cuts will be the crucial dividing line within Coventry Labour Party.

# POPLAR: A COUNCIL THAT DEFIED THE GOVERNMENT

## PART ONE

From 1919 to 1925 the Labour council of Poplar in East London defied government pressure and refused to carry out cuts in services, jobs and wages.

In spite of being sent to jail for six weeks, and surcharged the equivalent of £2 million at today's prices, the council was almost totally victorious.

Noreen Branson's book is therefore of great relevance when many of the same problems face councils under attack from the Tories at present.

How did Poplar achieve so much? And what are the lessons for us today?

*Poplarism* answers some of these questions and suggests where further research and discussion is needed.

Firstly Noreen Branson correctly stresses the political history and roots of the councillors in the Poplar labour movement. Almost all of them had a central involvement in the building of trade unions in the borough, particularly on the docks and railways.

Many had been members of Marxist organisations such as the Social Democratic Federation and had opposed the First World War.

### Mass response

Others had been leaders of the Suffragette movement and of the struggle against British intervention in Russia after the revolution.

So when the councillors gave a lead and fought for their proposals in the labour movement they received a mass response and there was a confidence that they would stick to their decisions.

The councillors always started from the needs of the working class. The way in which the cost of the economic crisis was imposed on the working class in the 1920s was naturally different from today.

For instance, unlike present social security payments which are nationally administered, poor law relief payments were the responsibility of local authorities.

This meant that working class areas which bore the brunt of unemployment had to make the highest poor law payments, and had the lowest rateable value on which to do it.

The "viable alternatives" were to cut the rate of poor law relief, to cut services, to massively increase rates, or to cut the wages of council employees.

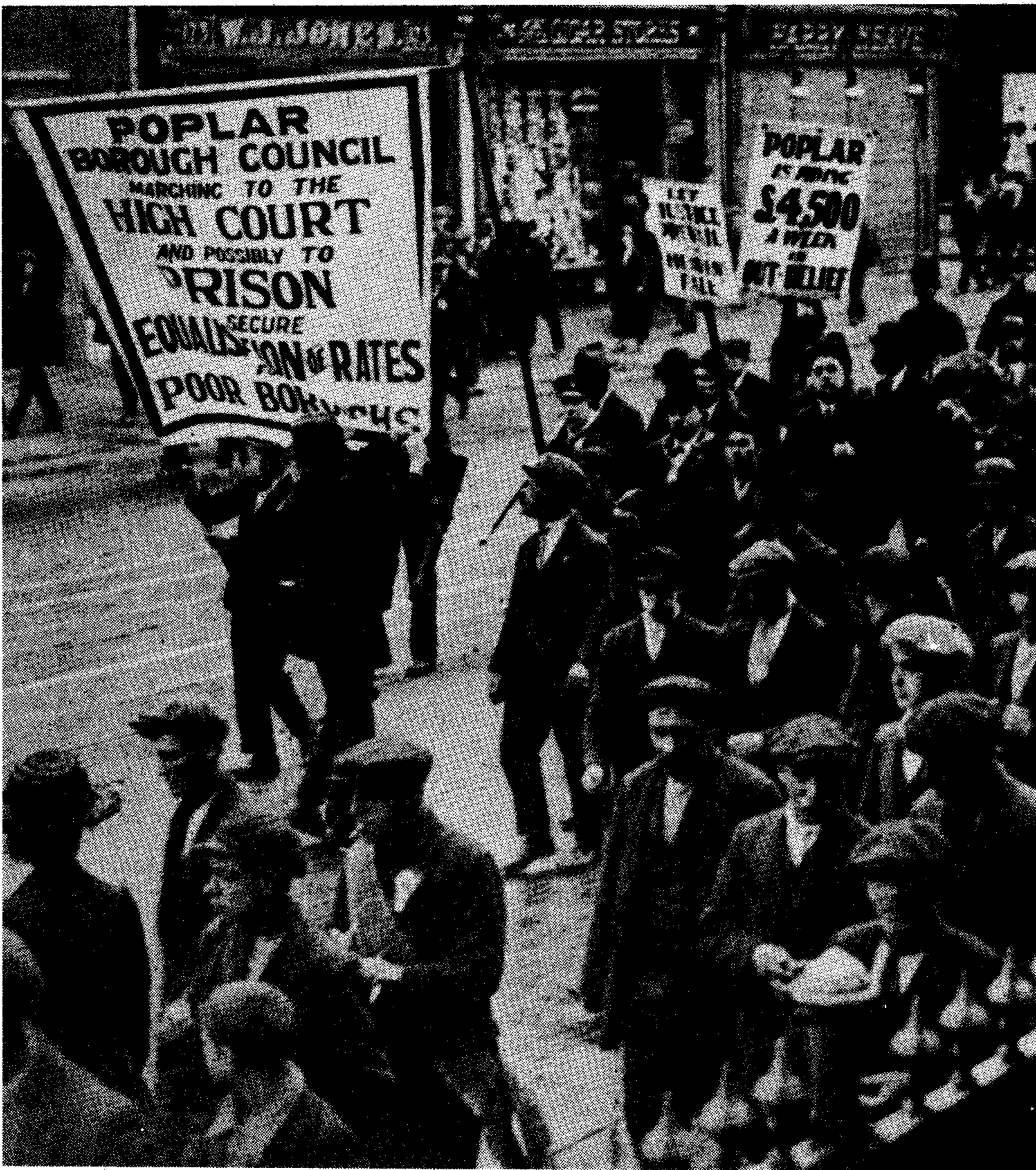
The Poplar Council rejected all these alternatives. They increased the rates of poor relief above the levels in surrounding boroughs and held them there even when average wages declined.

### No cuts

At one stage they even fixed scales higher than those demanded by Wal Hannington's National Unemployed Workers Movement—although this may have been a tactical mistake. Even after the government issued a maximum scale it was still defied for four years.

Poplar did not cut services. Indeed new services were started. New baths were opened. Free milk for expectant mothers was given. A house-building programme was started. And the council tried to ease unemployment by a scheme to improve roads and sewers with a government grant. The grant was refused but the scheme went ahead.

Wages were not cut. In fact Poplar established equal pay for women (meaning a 70% rise for



Poplar councillors march to the High Court, July 1921

some) and a minimum rate which was soon well above other local wages.

Finally they cut rates. On top of their own local rates, local authorities in London also had to raise a police rate which went to the Metropolitan Police and a county rate which went to the London County Council for services centrally provided for the whole of London.

As a protest against the refusal of ministers to consider special assistance to poor boroughs, the Poplar Council declared it would refuse to raise the rates for the police or county.

Every one of these measures was met with disbelief and then hysteria by the Tory press. The attitude of the Labour Party right wing led by Herbert Morrison was hardly more friendly.

All sides were convinced that the only result of Poplar's actions would be that Poplar ratepayers would have to pay up in the end for the council's overspending and pay huge legal expenses as well.

### More efficient

In Morrison's view the job of Labour councillors was to show that they could administer capitalism more efficiently than the Tories. The right wing claimed that Poplar's irresponsible and extremist attitude would lose votes.

In fact the opposite was the

case. Poplar was the only London borough where Labour's vote went consistently upwards.

The government and the press saw Poplar withholding rates as just a stunt. But when they began legal proceedings they discovered that far from suggesting a compromise, the Councillors began to muster the support of the trade unions, the tenants, and the unemployed for a struggle.

The LCC were invited to send in auditors to sell off the council's assets. But they couldn't see much use for a fleet of outdated dustcarts, bath houses, etc. So they obtained a court order for the councillors to pay the rate, and they were held guilty of contempt of court when they were unable to pay.

25 men were sent to Brixton and five women to Holloway for an indefinite period.

Some of the arrests were only made with difficulty. Minnie Lansbury was chairman of the War Pensions Committee. For days the streets around her home were patrolled by ex-servicemen.

Eventually the Sheriff had to make an appointment to arrest her and the four other women councillors at the Town Hall. Naturally a crowd of 10,000 gathered outside.

Only after a speech in which they called for calm and for the preparation of a rent strike if outside attempts were made to

levy the rates was the sheriff allowed to drive them away, still accompanied by the demonstration all down the Mile End Road.

While they were in prison demonstrations continued. The largest was organised by the National Unemployed Workers Movement. 40,000 people fought a pitched battle with police after being refused permission to enter Trafalgar Square.

One result of this pressure was that conditions for the prisoners were steadily improved.

On the grounds that they were political prisoners the councillors demanded they should be let off prison work. The authorities eventually gave into this.

### Formal meetings

The male councillors won the right to meet together daily and to have daily visits from the town clerk and later the acting mayor. They started having formal meetings each day—with minutes which were eventually incorporated in the council minutes.

George Lansbury won the right to continue writing for the *Daily Herald* of which he was editor. The biggest concession was the release of Nellie Cressall who was seven months pregnant at the time of her arrest.

After massive pressure the mysterious official solicitor



Lansbury leaves the Law Courts—1922

intervened to order her release (and promptly went to sleep for another fifty years). She refused to leave Holloway without the others but was forcibly removed.

Herbert Morrison meanwhile applied pressure on them to compromise. He suggested that a conference of London boroughs should be held to draw up proposals and that Poplar should be allowed to send a small delegation from prison.

Lansbury and the others totally rejected this as it would mean negotiating from a position of weakness. They demanded release first and negotiations afterwards. Their firm position was rewarded by the decision of Stepney and Bethnal Green councils to follow their lead and withhold the LCC rates.

Faced with a growing breakdown of local government and mass demonstrations the determination of the government collapsed. All the councillors were released without conditions or promises so that a settlement could be negotiated.

The settlement was that the cost of poor relief should be paid out of common pool to which boroughs would pay in proportion to their rateable value.

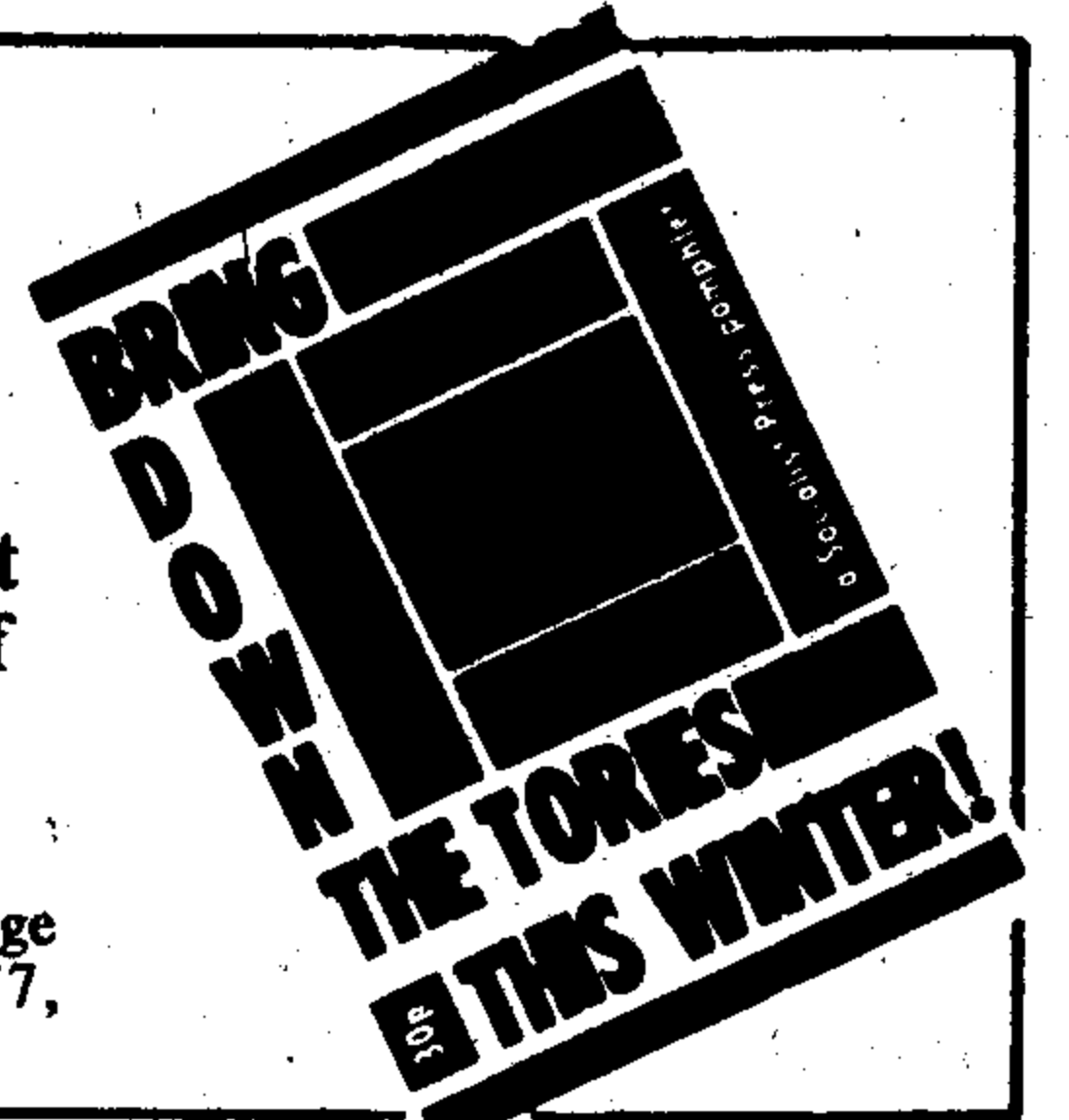
Poplar gained far more than the value of the rates it had been withholding, so that its rates could be kept at the same low level in succeeding years as well.

The only condition was that payments from the pool would be on the basis of a scale of relief decided by the Minister of Health. This set the scene for future conflicts.

## Our policies

Socialist Press pamphlet outlining programme of action against the Tory offensive.

Price 45p including postage from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.



# ABORTION/CONTRACEPTION

By Mary Wilson

The demand that women must have the right to control their own fertility, and to decide for themselves when, or whether to have children must be the starting point for any fight for adequate abortion and contraceptive care.

Only then will women have the basis for making decisions which vitally determine what kind of life they lead.

Nevertheless, despite huge gains in the development of contraceptive techniques and the limited legalisation of abortion, women in this country do not, at present, have this basic right to decide about their fertility.

The questions of abortion and contraception are necessarily interrelated.

For working class women in the 19th century the only method of birth control apart from withdrawal, was abortion. Contraceptives, though used by the middle class, were too expensive for workers on subsistence wages, and abortion, though hazardous, did at least enable the women to take the decision whether or not to continue with a pregnancy.

Today, when contraceptives are more reliable, and more readily available, they are by no means wholly safe or wholly effective. Many women prefer to use a cap, with abortion as a back up if necessary, to using the potentially dangerous Pill or IUD.

Many other women are unable for medical reasons to use the Pill or IUD, and even those who do cannot guarantee they will be free from an unwanted pregnancy.

Abortion, though an unsatisfactory method of fertility control, is nevertheless crucially important.

## Right to choose

Yet neither abortion nor contraception are freely available to women. Throughout the anti-Corrie campaign, many people must have got the impression that if Corrie was defeated, women would have the right to choose on abortion.

However, this is far from the case. The 1967 Act gives the decision to the doctor, and even his/her decision is limited by the constraints and the necessity to justify termination by considerations about the health of the woman or the foetus.

This means that anti-abortion GPs can, and do, refuse to give consent to many women who need abortion. Further, in areas such as Birmingham, anti-abortion consultant gynaecologists refuse permission for any but 'medically necessary' abortions—forcing women to use private and charity clinics or the backstreets.

The NHS does not help alien women who come from countries with reactionary abortion legislation. Thus Irish women, who come to England for the abortions they are refused at home have to pay for private medical care.

Nor is contraception freely available.

In some, but not all health districts, supplies from Family Planning Clinics are free of charge. However these clinics, which generally provide an understanding and helpful service, are themselves facing cuts and closures.

## Difficulties

Hence contraceptive care and advice is increasingly becoming the work of GPs and, as with abortion, reactionary GPs can create difficulties for women, especially for under 16s seeking contraceptives.

As if this were not bad enough, abortion and contraceptive services are likely to deteriorate, rather than improve.

Although Corrie's vicious private member's bill was defeated, Tory MP Stewart who came second in the ballot, may press ahead with attempts to restrict the 1967 Act, either

# THE MOST BASIC RIGHT OF ALL



by narrowing the time limit, or by strengthening the so-called 'conscience clause'.

Although these, and other attempts to reverse the 1967 Act have been made by Tory MPs, the political representatives of the capitalist class, the extent of abortion rights does not directly reflect the needs of the capitalists.

In the period of the post war boom, when there was a labour shortage, abortion remained illegal in Britain.

At present when there is high unemployment, abortion restriction might be seen as a way of reducing the number of women seeking employment by pressuring them into becoming mothers.

## Motherhood

However, a more important factor would seem to be the general ideological view, espoused by the Tories, that a woman's traditional and proper role in society is that of motherhood, and that abortion is an unnatural rejection of that role.

Nevertheless the anti-abortion camp is not homogenous. It comprises Roman Catholics, moralists and opponents of women's rights of all kinds.

The attacks on women's rights to fertility control do not end with legislative changes. The NHS cuts affect abortion and contraceptive facilities no less than gynaecology and health care in general.

Abortion waiting lists are growing monthly, but services continue to be cut rather than expanded. Yet, policy decisions are made in an arbitrary and illogical way.

The expansion of services to institute day care abortion clinics would in fact work out cheaper, as well as being easier for most women, than an overnight stay in hospital.

Yet, despite campaigns, few such clinics have been set up. Meanwhile the growth of private medicine, and its pilfering of NHS resources weakens the state service further.

This grim picture is rendered more horrifying by constant abuses. Sterilisation during abortion or after childbirth, without the woman's consent, or after she has signed a consent form under duress, is not uncommon.

Women from the ethnic minorities are especially prey to this, just as they have been singled out for 'testing' new drugs and birth control techniques such as Depo Provera.

On the other hand, there is a singular lack of information

especially for young women, about the availability of abortion and abortion methods. Information about contraceptives is not much better.

The problems do not end when women do use contraceptives or manage to get an abortion. The types of contraceptives available and the abortion methods used are limited, not totally safe, and insufficiently tested before being made widely available.

This is equally true of drugs administered to women during pregnancy.

Many, though not all, feminists see this as a result of male control of research and the health professions—men who use their position to exploit women and allow inadequate care. While it is true that men predominate in these, as in most other professions, the most important reason why research into and practice of fertility control does not meet women's needs, is because most research is carried out by drug companies on the basis of profitability.

Most contraceptive research focuses heavily on hormones, drugs and invasive devices such as hormone released IUDs, prostaglandins, injectable progestogens and anti-pregnancy vaccines.

There is relatively little research on safer and cheaper mechanical and barrier methods, contraceptives which act locally rather than systemically or methods which require no mechanical intervention whatsoever.

These methods include the cervical cap, diaphragm, contraceptive sponge, ovulation method and thermal sperm control. Not only are these methods safer, but they tend not to require professional medical care. They are therefore cheaper but don't offer the chance of high profits for drug companies.

## Side effects

Instead the Pill remains the most common means of contraception in this country, despite the fact that it is known to produce side effects and is potentially very harmful for some women.

This bias in the pharmaceutical industry is reflected in contraceptive research outside the industry. In 1976, out of \$70 million spent worldwide on contraceptive research, only \$50,000 was spent on barrier method research.

Safe birth control methods do not receive priority by those who control research spending, while potentially dangerous

methods attract the majority of funds.

The development and heavy advertising of new products which are deleterious to women's health, extends beyond contraceptives to other areas. Deodorant Tampons are the latest death-risk, which have been found to be connected with potentially fatal toxic shock.

Vaginal deodorants, introduced some years ago, have since been withdrawn due to an active feminist campaign to alert women to their health risks.

## Tranquillisers

Equally, many women are prescribed a whole range of drugs—tranquillisers, anti-depressants, etc. in response to anxiety, frustration and other 'disorders' which often result from bad housing, lack of child care facilities and such problems.

Understandable frustration at being forced to stay at home unwillingly, or working in an unsatisfactory job are only too often diagnosed as 'illness'.

Thus many women become part of a growing pool of consumers for drug companies' products.

It is estimated that 67% of psychoactive drugs are given to women and each year one-third of the women over the age of 30 receive prescriptions for tranquilisers, stimulants or anti-depressants.

Capitalist society's failure to meet the needs of women becomes the source of profit for capitalist drug companies. GPs faced with a barrage of drug company adverts are urged to prescribe one brand rather than another. The psychoactive drug market, like the contraceptive market, is big business.

Clearly the present situation affecting women's health and the inadequate birth control methods in particular, demand immediate attention.

If Stewart does go ahead with an anti-abortion Bill, it will require no less a campaign than the anti-Corrie action, to defeat it. Indeed it stands a better chance of surviving than Corrie's, since limited clause Bills are more likely to find favour with MPs.

The National Abortion Campaign is already planning a campaign against the expected Bill, and despite NAC's limitations, resulting from its broad based nature, and its inadequate orientation towards the labour movement, it remains the main focus for campaigners against abortion restriction.

NAC recognises the need to

work for positive legislation to force AHAs to provide abortion and contraceptive services.

Nevertheless, NAC's predominant concern with campaigning over legislation, to a large extent ignores the need for action to stop NHS cuts, and to fight for extension of existing services.

The daily erosion of abortion and contraceptive services by cuts and closures must be the immediate focus for fighting for the nationalisation of private medical resources and the drug companies, which exploit the NHS.

At the same time the question of AHA accountability to consumers of the health services is vital.

Feminists who recognise the inadequacy of NHS services turn to voluntary and self help alternatives and have on a limited basis set up women's health groups.

While understandable, this does not take up the fight to make the state provide adequate services to meet women's needs. In the long term it is vital to transform AHAs into elected bodies, accountable to workers and consumers in the health service and sensitive to the expressed needs of gynaecological as well as other patients.

These changes will not be easily effected, for they conflict with government commitment

to the reduction—indeed destruction—of the NHS.

It also conflicts with the traditional role of the medical profession: doctors, and more so, consultants, are not bound to take account of the preferences and views of their patients, neither are they willing to lose their control over them.

The struggle for a woman's right to choose on fertility control has already led to campaigns for abortion clinics to which women can refer themselves, by-passing their GP. Predictably, this has been strongly resisted by most GPs.

In many ways it seems incredible that in the 'enlightened' '80s women should still not have the right to decide for themselves whether or not to have children, and should be unable to control their fertility safely and effectively.

Reactionary ideas about the extent of women's rights which are part of the whole sexist ideology about women's place in society seek to justify women's oppression.

The fight for a woman's right to choose about birth control, including abortion, is a fight not only against Tory cuts and capitalist control of the drugs industry, but also a particularly sharp confrontation with sexist ideology. Clearly neither fight has been won yet.



Masses oppose Corrie anti-abortion Bill

## ABORTION AND POSITIVE LEGISLATION

NAC/LARC Labour Movement Conference  
LONDON MARCH 14 1981

Details and registration from  
NAC/LARC, TUC Liaison Committee  
c/o 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

# WRP OPTS FOR POPULAR

## FRONT

By Ian McCalman

Class conscious workers will have been affronted by the abysmal, crawling performance of the WRP at the recent "Local Government in Crisis" Conference held in Lambeth where members of that organisation rushed to the defence of the Labour-dominated Lambeth Council when it faced criticism for selling council houses and putting up rates.

In case anyone thinks that this was a temporary aberration on the part of the WRP, the fruits of an effort to create an opportunist alliance with Ted Knight, they will be further enlightened by reading the material produced for their Fifth Annual Conference at the end of January.

"Manifesto '81—Tory Counter-revolution: the WRP Reply" spells out a popular front strategy which will lead Healy and Banda to stretch out the hand of support to forces far to the right of Knight and the Lambeth Council.

The WRP panacea for the crisis is the formation of "Community Councils" which:

"must embrace all sections of the community involved in production, commerce and the maintenance of local services." (p.8).

Just to make it clear that this is what is meant there is a reference further down the same page to "the whole community" being involved.

What is this if it is not a cross-class alliance, an appeal to sections of the bourgeoisie to adopt a 'progressive' stance in face of the Tory attack?

### Implications

The reactionary political implications of this position, which has antecedents in the popular front strategy of the Stalinist parties since the 1930s, are becoming increasingly evident.

Faced with massive Tory imposed cuts in public spending in general and in the rate support grant in particular, Labour councillors find themselves confronted with the decision—either carry out the orders of the Tories or rally the working class in defence of their services.

It is the duty of all socialists to demand that they stand and fight. When they refuse to do so, as is happening, with a few honourable exceptions, throughout the country, they must be exposed for their subservience.

Not so, says the WRP: "The fight is not with the Labour councils but against the Tories because it is the Tories who are to blame for the cuts." (p.10 of the Manifesto, emphasis in original).

What must trade unionists do when they see Labour councils cutting jobs and services?

"They must avoid at all cost fighting Labour councils on sectional issues."

### Capitulation

This advice is nothing short of a disgraceful capitulation and covering up for the treachery of social democracy. For all the talk about dangers of military dictatorship being around the corner, there is not a word in the Manifesto on the break-up of social democracy, the crisis within the Labour Party, which presents revolutionary socialists with unprecedented opportunities. But how could there be, when the WRP is itself rushing towards reformism?

Unfortunately for the Healy-Banda-Redgrave clique, this flight towards the right wing can do nothing to solve their internal problems.

Lack of cadres in the labour

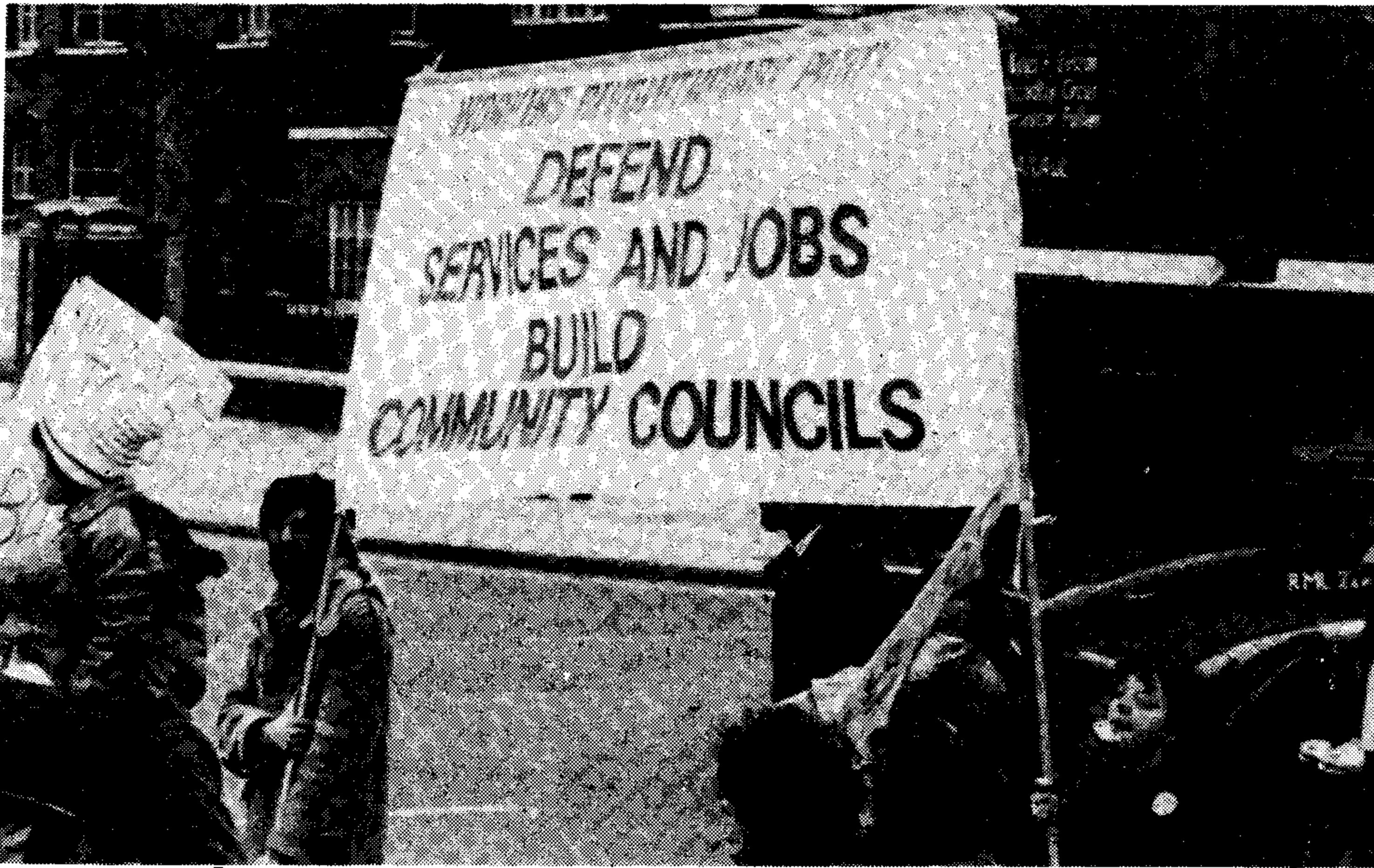
movement means continual declining sales of the *Newline*. By September 1980 the organisation was losing £10,000 per month on the paper and Healy warned (letter of September 19 to CC members) that this would rise to "£12,000 per calendar month" by the end of the year.

Yet, despite a loss on the paper which must have topped £100,000 in 1980 alone, money was still being spent as if it was going out of fashion.

Healy reported, "we spent over £1,000 on the Olympics" and an equal sum on the events in Poland (both no doubt being regarded as of equal political significance). Honda cycles were supplied to branches for making deliveries of *Newline* (see Pledges of Special Congress, June 29 1980), youth centres are being set up, prime site book shops established.

Whatever the financial losses on the paper, the organisation is awash with masses of money. For a group with so few active cadres to be found anywhere in the labour movement, this is certainly a mystery.

Comrade Healy has a penchant for demanding committees of inquiry into the activities of other organisations within the labour movement. Surely it would not be unreasonable to call for the establishment of such a committee of trade unionists and sympathetic financial experts to delve into the mysterious sources of wealth of the WRP?



Four-person WRP contingent on Camden demonstration last week

Nor can the rightward rush stifle the political rifts within the declining organisation. So deep were these, stretching into the editorial board itself, that on August 28 the Political Committee released a statement on "Party Unity" which drew attention to a resolution on "party security, discipline and tasks", passed at a previous Central Committee meeting.

The statement reads in part: "Regardless of political differences and organisational difficulties, which were present right up to the adoption of the resolution, it means the entire membership of the party accept that we can preserve party unity . . ." (emphasis in original).

Just in case any members might entertain illusions about democratic rights, Healy sets them right on that issue:

"We warn that those who have accepted the resolution in words but who violate it in practice automatically place themselves outside the WRP."

Undoubtedly one of the factors causing divisions in the ranks at that point was the gathering conflict between Iraq and Iran. Having heaped fulsome praise upon both regimes, describing the former at one point as "revolutionary socialist", the WRP leadership could now only wring their hands in anguish that their

heroes, Saddam Hussein and Khomeini, were at war with one another over territorial rights.

Central Committee statements, reminiscent of UN resolutions, counselled 'peace'—to no avail. Never did it cross their minds to adopt a Leninist position of revolutionary defeatism. But some members could see there was something amiss here and they had to be sat upon hard.

Just to make sure no one makes a squeal of protest at the Conference, another statement produced for debate was a document on "security" which was simply an attack upon the WSL, reiterating the usual string of half-truths and lies, with the clear implication that the split from the WRP in 1974, which led to the formation of the WSL, was the work of the CIA, the Special Branch (and, no doubt, the KGB into the bargain!)

The document is a blatant device to stifle any political disagreement, using the usual Healyite methods of insinuating that any critic must be a spokesperson for the interests of the state security forces.

One valuable lesson needs to be distilled from the degeneracy of the WRP. The extreme lurch to the right we are now witnessing is not at all incompatible with the previous swing in an ultra left direction.

The WSL has tried to empha-

size all along that we should anticipate a move to the right by the WRP leadership as being in the logic of the method which led them to their previous positions, both being expressions of an idealist method of thought which begins not from the reality of the material world but from fixed, schematic concepts in the minds of a handful of dogmatists.

Unable to grapple with the changing balance of class forces, they have continued to chant the litany of "Revolutionary Party" and "Daily Paper", whilst plunging deeper into the morass in which they now find themselves.

Many of us who entered revolutionary politics in the 1960s joined the Socialist Labour League (predecessor of the WRP), thus coming to know and respect comrades whom we now see publicly defending Labour councillors when they sell off council houses and put up rates.

We are confident that these sentiments are in conflict with their basic class instincts.

We say to them—break with the Healy clique before you further disgrace yourselves in the eyes of the working class!

## Healy's 'cult of the agenda'

By John Lister

The WRP leadership has never been widely acclaimed for the strength of its polemics against its opponents on the left.

Their line of argument almost invariably depends upon the invention of unacceptable political positions which are then falsely attributed to the unfortunate victim, before being demolished by a tidal wave of insults and abuse.

But the WRP has now sunk so low that it is apparently incapable of arguing a public defence of its position against a public attack, and is now employing lawyers to draft their polemics, and seeking to use the High Court to vindicate their politics.

A recent issue of *Socialist Organiser* (January 24) carried an article by Sean Matgamna under the headline "Gaddafi's Foreign Legion to Knight's Rescue"—attacking the WRP's craven support for Ted Knight's policy of rate increases, and its opportunist links to Gaddafi's Libyan dictatorship and other Arab bourgeois regimes. Matgamna likened the WRP

—with its crazed pseudo-Marxist mumbo-jumbo—to religious sects such as the Moonies, the Scientologists and the Jones Cult which committed mass suicide in the Guyana jungle three years ago.

He pointed to its history of using psychological and physical violence against its own members—as documented in the WSL book *The Battle For Trotskyism*.

And he also raised once again the fact that the WRP is widely believed to be in receipt of subsidies from Gaddafi and possibly other Arab governments.

Apparently the WRP do not wish to contest this last fact—whether because it is undeniably true or because in denying it too strenuously they might antagonise Gaddafi, the Iraqi Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party and other oil-rich "allies".

But they responded at once to Matgamna's other points. Not by an article in their press—but through a letter from the solicitors of Vanessa Redgrave, a WRP Central Committee member, to *Socialist Organiser*.

Redgrave claims that as a publicly-known member of the WRP she has been damaged by the article, and calls for an apology.

She has had the effrontery to commission lawyers to write declaring that the factual account of the expulsions of the founding members of the WSL from the WRP contained in *The Battle for Trotskyism* has been "refuted" in *Newline* articles. The mind boggles at the prospect of the High Court being asked to decide which account "refuted" the other!

Most intriguing of all is Redgrave's insistence that the WRP bears no similarity whatsoever to the Moonies and the Jones cult.

Healy's fanatical, idealist "philosophy" certainly has more in common with such cranky sects than it does with revolutionary Marxism.

What would the High Court make of a group so paranoid that it announced on November 12 that:

"The threat of state repression directed against the party is not part of an ongoing perspective but immediate in its dangers. The countdown can be set from the Fire Brigades Union national delegate conference . . . The Tory plan will be to use bloody provocations in order to introduce special emergency laws and take violent reprisals against the party, its press and organisation."

What would a court think of a leadership that set out to foster a cult of personality like this:

"Light-minded middle class disrespect for leadership must be ruthlessly fought against [!] Backwardness and arrogance will be resolutely combated. Centralised leadership means that great political devotion to the role of leadership must be consciously developed."

(August 24 1980)

And lawyers would no doubt laugh uncontrollably at the even more bizarre 'cult of the agenda'—a fetish unique to the WRP:

"A rather simple way to understand how we dialectically function in the objective world is as follows:

**SUBJECT (man) enters the Objective world through PRACTICE—PRACTICE is here the middle (Transition) between SUBJECT and OBJECT. It is dialectically manifesting theory as the subjective side of practice and the physical changing of the world which is the objective side of practice.**

**SUBJECT—PRACTICE (Theory as subjective practice in transition into Objective Practice)**

**OBJECTIVE WORLD**  
A close examination of the Agenda will reveal that this is the dialectical process which enables us to train our minds to respond dialectically to the development of a constant source of knowledge to guide our practice.

We hope to supply plastic cases to maintain this material clean and easy to handle at branch meetings."

Has Redgrave a material leg to stand on? We await her next dialectical leap with interest.

## Taking over from Economic League

Gerry Healy's Workers Revolutionary Party seems to have taken over the job of the Economic League in witch-hunting militants in factories.

In a money no object exercise last week Healy sent a busload of leafleters from London to the Cowley Assembly Plant in Oxford to flood the plant with a disgraceful personal attack on Alan Thornett—deputy TGWU convenor of the plant.

The lavishly produced four page, two colour broadsheet carried a banner headline—"Thornett—What Every Cowley Worker Should Know". Thornett is accused in hysterical language of being a "scab", "crossing a picket line", "violence" and "thuggery", and of being a police agent.

It is 5,000 words of personal invective, containing barely one

coherent political point.

The distribution of such a document outside a factory should be condemned throughout the labour movement.

It purports to "answer" a WSL leaflet which Healy claims was distributed outside the Cowley plants. He knows this is not true.

The leaflet to which Healy refers was distributed at the WRP's Rally in London last month—condemning the WRP's support for rate increases in Lambeth.

It is true an advance copy was given to the WRP's only member in the Cowley plant—CC member Tom White—since he defends the WRP position in Lambeth and is refusing to support a rent and rates strike on his own estate in Oxford.

The WSL would not polemicise with another group by denouncing them in factory gate leaflets or by personal attacks and smear campaigns.

We will take other groups up politically in our paper and at appropriate political meetings and rallies.

The only beneficiaries from Healy's slanders are the right wing and the management.

The left and the militants in the plant are outraged by the leaflet—any remaining credibility the WRP may have had has been destroyed.

Healy, clearly, is not out to build but to destroy. His answer to serious political criticism is a witch-hunt.

His answer, to his inability to develop anything in Cowley since the mass expulsions from the WRP in 1974 is to try to poison the plant against revolutionary politics to stop anyone building a Marxist leadership.

Healy's hysterical and paranoid sect now plays an entirely negative role in the class struggle.

It is a stain on the banner of Trotskyism.

# Conference to discuss action on the cuts

London, March 21  
Be there!

As Labour councils make their budget decisions for 1981-2, the Tory government is still pressing home its attack both in the local government arena and in health, education and social services.

Labour councils now face a stark choice: to become tools of Tory policies, thus devastating services and cutting living standards; or to help lead a fight to beat back the Tories.

Camden Labour councillors now face a £2 million surcharge for settling above the national rate in the 1979 'low pay' dispute.

In June and September this year, councils that have refused

to carry out the Tories' dirty work will face a clawback of part of their government grant. Direct Labour organisations face massive cuts as government funds are withdrawn. Bigger rent increases are planned for April. And all of this is backed up by Heseltine's Local Government Act.

## Words of protest

In many areas, Labour councils dominated by the right wing have already made their choice. They will meekly administer Tory policies, with only a few words of protest.

In these areas, the Labour Party and trade unions, together with left-wing Labour Group

minorities, will have to decide how to deal with these 'Labour lieutenants of the Tories'.

Two major labour movement conferences, last November and this January, have debated the cuts fightback. 600 delegates in November voted for no cuts, no rate rises, no rent rises, for no council house sales; for Labour and trade union mobilisation to defeat the Tories, and for a fight for socialist policies, including nationalisation without compensation of the banks and industries like drugs and building.

400 delegates at the January conference confirmed these policies and called for regional labour movement conferences to take the fight forward.

But Lambeth council Labour group who sponsored the Con-

ferences, have flouted the Conference decisions. They have raised rates and rents. They are talking about 'widespread savings'. They have agreed to sell council houses. Other left wing Labour Groups have been no better.

The lesson is that militant policies are no good unless there is an organised force to fight for them. The efforts of local groups like Lambeth Labour Left must be supplemented by strong national organisation for militant policies.

The retreat of the national public sector union leaders from organising a fight against cuts, closures and sackings can be checked.

The Longworth Hospital occupation shows how closures

can be fought.

That's why Socialist Organiser and the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement have come together to jointly organise a conference on March 21.

It will hear reports on local struggles against cuts and closures in the NHS, education, nurseries, etc; against rent rises; and against sackings in local government.

The conference will discuss the crisis in local government, looking to the examples of fightback by some councillors in Coventry, Camden, South Wales

and Lambeth as well as to the Clay Cross councillors' fight against the Tory Housing Finance Act in 1972.

It will help organise support for fightbacks against the Tory attacks, and examine the lessons. It will plan national campaigning activity. And it will construct the framework for a strong left wing capable of seeing that the decisions of the broad conferences in November and January are implemented and defended against backsliding.

## Nurseries—the bad news

The fight to save Accrington's Manchester Road Day Nursery is on again—for the second time in a year.

A year ago the Hyndburn Nursery Action Group won its campaign to keep the nursery open—but last week Lancashire's Social Service Committee singled it out for closure yet again, as the Tory County Council carry out more of the Thatcher government's attacks on the working class.

The Day Nursery fulfills a great need in Accrington for one-parent families and for parents with temporary social problems.

## Vulnerable

The attacks are indicative of the way the Tory-controlled Council and Tory government focus their attacks on the more vulnerable sections of the working class.

Following last year's successes in defending two nur-

series, the Hyndburn Nursery Action Group rested on its victories somewhat and failed to hold the group together.

Although the nucleus of the campaign is still there, it inevitably starts from a weaker position than last year, when the group was exhilarated by a victory against the Lancashire Education Committee over the Mount Pleasant School Nursery in Hyndburn.

The campaign is faced with further difficulties as Lancashire County Council attempt to 'buy

off' parents and staff by a) offering alternative employment to staff—on lower grades of course, b) phasing the closure over two years, and c) offering parents a scheme of 'alternative care'—'specially' trained child-minders.

Nevertheless, many anxious parents have expressed their determination to save the nursery.

## —and the good

The campaign by the Leicester Nursery Campaign to defend the Fosse Road Day Nursery has ended in an important victory.

At its meeting on January 21 the Leicestershire County Council decided to drop any plans to close the nursery and instead—in view of the opening of a new Family Centre in the area—to extend the catchment area to allow children from the City's Braunstone Estate to use the nursery.

The news came in a letter to Nursery Campaign Secretary

Jane Atkins from the new Director of Social Services.

The letter asked that the information be conveyed to the next Nursery Campaign meeting which was—not exactly coincidentally one would suppose—scheduled for the following night.

This successful campaign, which involved mass pickets of the nursery, lobbies of the council and a local petition, should be a major boost to other anti-cuts campaigns in the area and to nursery campaigns nationally.

# Oppose censorship of Irish war!

NUJ NEC member  
Simon Collings argues  
the case for a full discussion  
on media censorship.

Labour Movement  
Conference  
Media Censorship and  
Ireland

convened by National  
Union of Journalists  
Saturday February 28  
Birmingham

Details from Ron Knowles,  
NUJ, 314 Grays Inn Road,  
London WC1.

## Letter

### No to paedophilia!

Dear Comrades,

It must be disturbing for many other parents as well as myself to see Socialist Press campaigning in favour of paedophiles (SP 233).

You describe the view of paedophiles as child molesters to be a prejudice and imply that there is something wrong with such a prejudice. In fact many parents are prejudiced against child molesters and will do all we can to defend young people from sexual exploitation by adults and from economic exploitation by the bosses.

Your clap-trap about "democratic rights for paedophiles" and "opposing the oppressive laws related to the age of consent" are a slap in the face for working class parents who do not have child care facilities but have to worry about the safety of their children.

Some of us have had our own childhood experiences of the oppressive sexual drives of adults. Paedophilia is exploitation and I would no more think of defending paedophiles against

conspiracy charges than I would think of defending fascists.

Let young people develop their sexuality with their own age groups and let Socialist Press get back to attacking the exploitation of the working class rather than supporting exploitation.

Yours fraternally

S.D.

Manchester

P.S. The enclosed £5 is a donation to the Fund.

## WE REPLY:

As we made clear in SP 234, neither Socialist Press nor the WSL has a position for or against paedophilia.

But we do have a position of opposing the persecution of paedophiles by the state—and in particular we oppose the 'conspiracy' trials as an attempt to convict people for "offences" which in themselves are not against the law.

Journalists in Northern Ireland are entertained to lunch and drinks and may be fed the occasional scoop if they behave. And if they don't behave they can quickly find themselves the subject of Army non-cooperation.

The pressures which operate on the individual journalist do not stop at the point of information gathering.

They extend into the areas of policy guidelines and forward into the editorial process to which material is subject before publication or transmission.

The situation that exists within TV is the more extensively documented. Some programmes have been banned, others postponed before screening and others postponed and then not shown because they had become out of date.

Still others have been shown only after significant editing has taken place. Editorial censorship has repercussions beyond the specific instance of its application, becoming a component part of the environment in which the journalist works.

The threat of censorship, the ideological pressures of training, the codes and guides, the restrictions of the law, not to mention 'career' pressures in a highly competitive field, all serve to encourage a kind of 'self censorship' which saves the authorities the embarrassment of having to intervene too often.

The patterns of ownership and control in the media ensure that this situation continues.

It is true that, for instance, the broadcasting authorities have their differences with government at times, but these differences are never so wide as to admit programmes highly critical of government strategy in Northern Ireland.

One interesting dimension to these patterns of control as regards Irish news is the criteria operated by both the IBA and the BBC that any programme must be suitable for screening throughout the entire network. This is a requirement adopted at the beginning of the seventies after both BBC Northern Ireland and Ulster TV had opted out on certain programmes.

The effect of this policy is to give a certain measure of control over coverage of Ireland to the broadcasting authorities in Northern Ireland: people closely allied with the Unionist establishment.

The comments in the above two paragraphs deal with processes internal to the broadcasting industry. These are, however, inextricably bound up with external pressure exerted by government and the security forces.

The programme, *A Question of Ulster* (1971) has gone down in BBC mythology as an example par excellence of media freedom over the Irish issue. The BBC screened the programme after they had

successfully resisted what is probably the most sustained attempt ever made by government in this country to keep a programme off the air.

In reality this was something of a pyrrhic victory. Since 1971 the media chiefs have drawn their horns in more and more under the pressure of external criticism.

I will give some examples. With the arrival of Roy Mason in office and the introduction of a policy of 'normalisation' skirmishes between programme makers and the authorities became more frequent; a direct response to external forces.

*This Week* was one programme that suffered particularly badly because it had a certain reputation for critical coverage of Northern Ireland.

The clashes began with *In Friendship and Forgiveness* (August 1977). Next came *Life Behind the Wire* (Sept. 1977).

A few days after the programme was screened, Desmond Irvine, Secretary of the Northern Ireland Prison Officers Association who appears in the film, was shot dead. There was no obvious connection between the two events but Mason amongst others drew one.

Then came *Inhuman and Degrading Treatment* (October 1977) which examined allegations of torture in Castlereagh.

In the light of the Irvine killing condemnation of *This Week* was stepped up. The Northern Ireland Office and the

RUC refused to be interviewed and police chief Newman put the RUC on red alert claiming that lives were being put in danger by the programme.

Mason condemned it in the Commons as 'irresponsible and insensitive'. Eight months later the IBA banned a film about the Amnesty report on Castlereagh. The BBC later screened excerpts from what turned out to be a very mild documentary on *Nationwide*.

External pressure on the BBC has followed the same pattern. Only last year Roger Bolton was sacked from his position as Editor of *Panorama* over the Carrickmore film.

Unsubstantiated press reports at the time claimed that a *Panorama* team had made arrangements to film an IRA unit in action with machine guns and rocket launchers.

Nothing of the sort happened—yet the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, told the Commons that she thought it time the BBC 'put its house in order'.

Restrictions on information, editorial policy and censorship within the media and pressure exerted from Westminster, these are what lie behind our 'high level cover up' of the war in Northern Ireland. I believe we ignore these things at our peril. The importance of the public knowing what is going on in the six counties may prove significant for our liberties in other areas.

## Conference Policies to stop the cuts

Called jointly by the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement and Socialist Organiser  
Saturday March 21  
10.30 a.m.—5.00 p.m.

Islington Central Library, Holloway Rd.  
London N7

Details and credentials from CDLM, 169 Barclay Road, Smethwick, West Midlands



# Longbridge: drawing lessons of betrayal

# Ansells: fight bosses' blackmail

A move to stop the tide of official retreats in victimisation struggles was made last weekend as 80 trade unionists met in Birmingham to assess the outcome of the latest show-piece victimisation by Michael Edwardes and BL management—the sacking of six militants from the Longbridge plant.

Labour MP Bob Cryer and victimised London hospitals militant Conway Xavier were among the platform speakers. But the role of convenor Jack Adams and the trade union leadership was drawn out most fully by speakers from the floor of the conference.

## Resolution

The following resolution spelling out the framework for an ongoing campaign in defence of trade union rights was adopted:

This conference recognises that in the present economic crisis the Edwardes style of management will increasingly become the norm in British industry. We pledge ourselves to resist this development and to fight to defend shop floor rights and organisation.

The bosses and the Tories are playing for increasingly high stakes; their attacks on the working class are becoming more severe. The existing union leadership has shown itself unwilling or unable to face the challenge of this new situation. The repeated sell-outs at BL are the clearest example of this.

We aim to ensure that the lessons of recent events at BL are taken into the labour movement at every level. We need a militant rank and file movement within the trade unions; the union leadership at every level must be made accountable to the members. Leaders who show themselves unwilling to stand up to the employers' offensive must be replaced.

The fight against victimisation is central to the fight to defend trade unionism itself and to the fight against unemployment.

We will give our full support to all groups of workers in struggle in defence of jobs, wages and conditions.

We recognise that such struggles are increasingly not just against an individual employer but against the government itself.

This conference calls for a campaign in the trade union movement to call a halt to this process. Full support must be

given to any stewards or workers victimised by management. No inquiry, joint or otherwise. Immediate strike action with the full official support of the unions concerned is the only way to beat victimisation.

This conference resolves to:  
1) Draw up a report of today's conference and circulate it throughout the BL plants and widely within the trade union

movement.

2) To draw up petition sheets and send petitions into the two unions involved concerning the actions of those unions in relationship to the victimisations and the inquiry.

3) To organise a series of local meetings to be addressed by the victimised workers in order to publicise this campaign."



Demonstration in support of Derek Robinson

On Saturday the 1,000 Ansells brewery workers voted unanimously to continue their strike.

This despite the fact that the owners, part of Allied Breweries, have declared they are closing down and will offer only 400 jobs at depots.

The capitalist press has tried to say that here was a group of workers who brought their problems on themselves.

The reality is that their struggle has been similar to many other workers. They have been up against an all-out attack on working conditions and jobs by the employers trying to make the workers pay for their crisis.

Last year the unions in the plant even agreed to go along with a joint inquiry into the manning in the plant and to accept job cuts where the company found overmanning.

This led to the loss of 44 jobs.

This was not enough for management. In January the company suspended the guaranteed week and put the workers on a four-day week. But they wanted to pick who was laid off and when.

The workforce resisted this by all taking Mondays off.

The company then laid off the workforce, who met and said they would not return until the four-day week was withdrawn.

When this took place they said they would return. But the company only agreed to restore 5-day working if they accepted a new ultimatum—involving 96 redundancies, a change in working practices and management's

right to introduce contractors when they wanted.

The workers rejected this with only three in favour of acceptance.

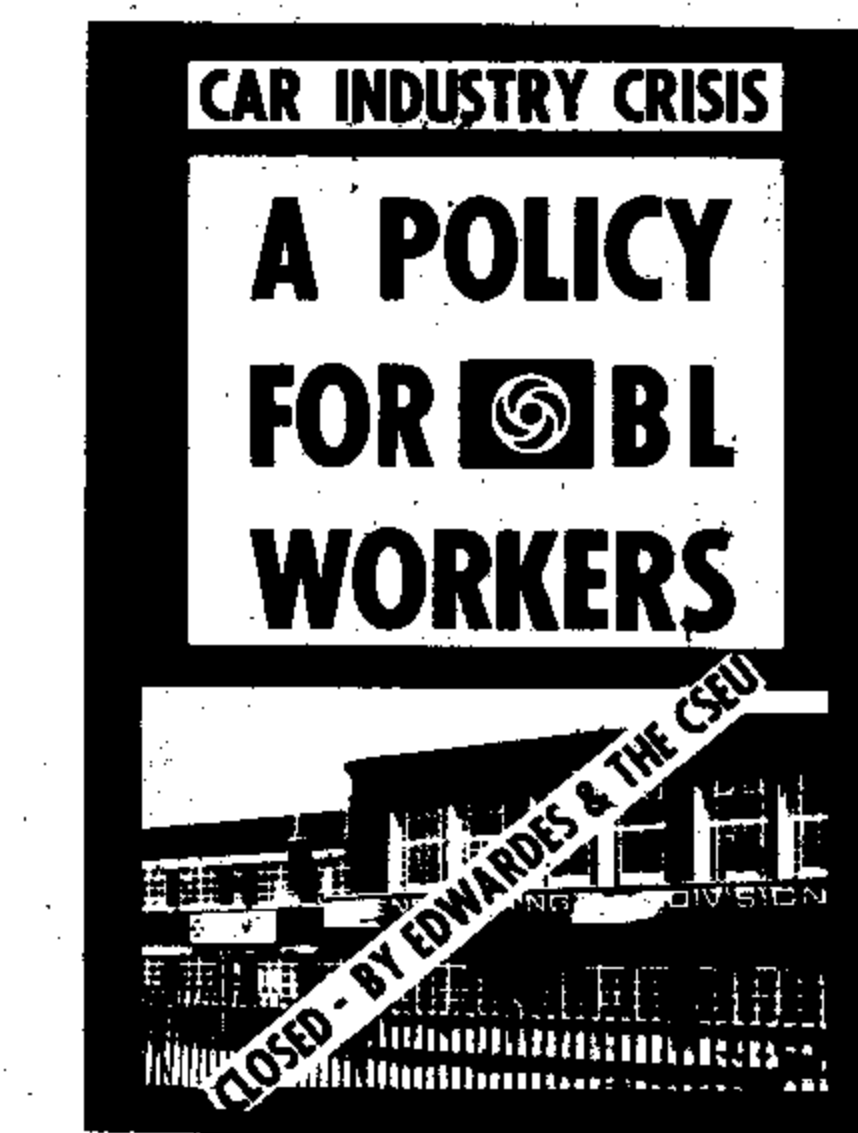
The company then tried to get individuals to sign a new contract: only 28 did.

The company then sacked the whole workforce and tried to recruit from the dole. This was completely unsuccessful.

There are many important issues in this struggle, not least of which is the fight against closure. Management are using the dispute as a pretext to close down surplus capacity.

To fight this it is necessary to occupy the plant and to picket the brewer's distribution points and the pubs themselves to stop alternative supplies.

The TGWU, with a closed shop agreement with the management, has the power to stop this attack. But this can only be done through effective secondary picketing, ignoring the legal limit of six pickets on a line and defying Prior's anti-union laws.



Available, price 42p including postage, from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

## IN BRIEF

With unemployment in Nuneaton now over 8,000 the Trades Council's initiative in setting up an Unemployed Workers Centre is a timely one.

The centre, which is ideally sited in the town's bus station, has been leased free of charge by the Council. The lighting and heating, however, do have to be paid for.

The centre which so far is open on Mondays and Wednesdays has two stated purposes—to give advice and to recruit

the unemployed into the trade unions.

Last Saturday a demonstration was held to mark the opening and 300 turned up to take part.

Sit-in action against redundancy is now underway at two small plants.

In STOCKPORT the Lightning Mixer factory has been occupied by 230 workers since February 2, and preventing access to management.

And at the Lee Jeans factory

near Greenock 240 women members of the NUTGW have been in occupation for ten days against a closure threat.

LONGWORTH hospital work-in supporter Anne Marie Sweeney was bureaucratically obstructed from taking a collection for the campaign outside a S.E. Region TUC Conference on 'Working Women in the 1980s' last weekend.

Her speech from the floor had been warmly received by the capacity audience of 500

delegates. But SERTUC Secretary Jack Dromey had refused to allow an extended contribution and declared himself opposed to focussing discussion on particular struggles—such as Longworth and BPC—in which women workers are fighting for their rights.

As she attempted to collect money for the official COHSE dispute at the end, Dromey told her to "get out" and accused her of trying to "wreck" the conference. She completed a £48 collection outside on the steps.

SERTUC, of course, has done nothing whatever to support the Longworth work-in.

Just as shipping employers seemed about to crack in the face of selective strike action, seamen's leaders called off the struggle to put the claim to arbitration.

5,000 hospital electricians have been given the go-ahead for selective action to press their pay claim.

2,500 Durham water workers have begun a work-to-rule in advance of national action, after rejecting management's 10% pay offer.

## Murdoch's no-lose Times gamble

The buying of the Times and Sunday Times by Rupert Murdoch's News International has cast gloom over defenders of liberal capitalism and reformist trade unionism alike.

Murdoch has for years been a despised and feared figure in Fleet Street, a man notorious for his personal intervention in news rooms.

Fleet Street editors had regarded Murdoch as an outsider—alright for the Sun and News of the World, but not an indication of the state of the 'free press' of Britain.

Now Murdoch has found himself the owner of two of the most prestigious papers in Britain—the archaic loss making Times and the aggressive profit making Sunday Times.

What is more, Murdoch's purchase price of £12 million is less than half the value of the assets he has bought. The Sunday Times building alone is worth £8 million.

The Monopolies Commission has a brief under the 1973 Fair Trading Act to defend the

'public interest' which can be translated as preventing too obvious a stench arising from Fleet Street.

But although this was a classic case for the Monopolies Commission (Murdoch and Victor Matthews between them now own four out of eight national dailies) reference was blocked.

Trade Secretary Biffen said the Thomson losses ruled out an inquiry (although the New Statesman has convincingly alleged that the figures were cooked).

Harold Evans, Sunday Times editor, who is often praised for his outspokenness, courage, etc., has been grovelling all over Murdoch for weeks.

Sunday Times journalists withdrew their threat of a High Court action to force a reference to the Monopolies Commission although (perhaps because) they looked like winning.

The fact is that the pistols pulled by Thomson ('buy the lot or we close down') and by Murdoch ('my terms now or I pull out') have stripped away

every cosy reformist hiding place.

Print union leaders quickly agreed to more than 500 jobs being axed and then appeared together to talk of 'compromise' and sticking to promises.

## No lead

This is the reality disguised by talk of 'editorial standards'! The workers have been given no lead from the unions and have shown few signs of knowing how to fight against the takeover.

Even the inevitable journalists' alternative bodies were organised and led by respective editors who went touting for finance capital.

What was needed was a fight against any capitalist ownership of the papers. Not even the hint of such a proposal emerged from the print unions.

Even the Sunday Times article concluded "If (Murdoch) . . . became disillusioned by industrial militancy, he could close the newspapers tomorrow and fire the staff—and still end up with a handsome profit."

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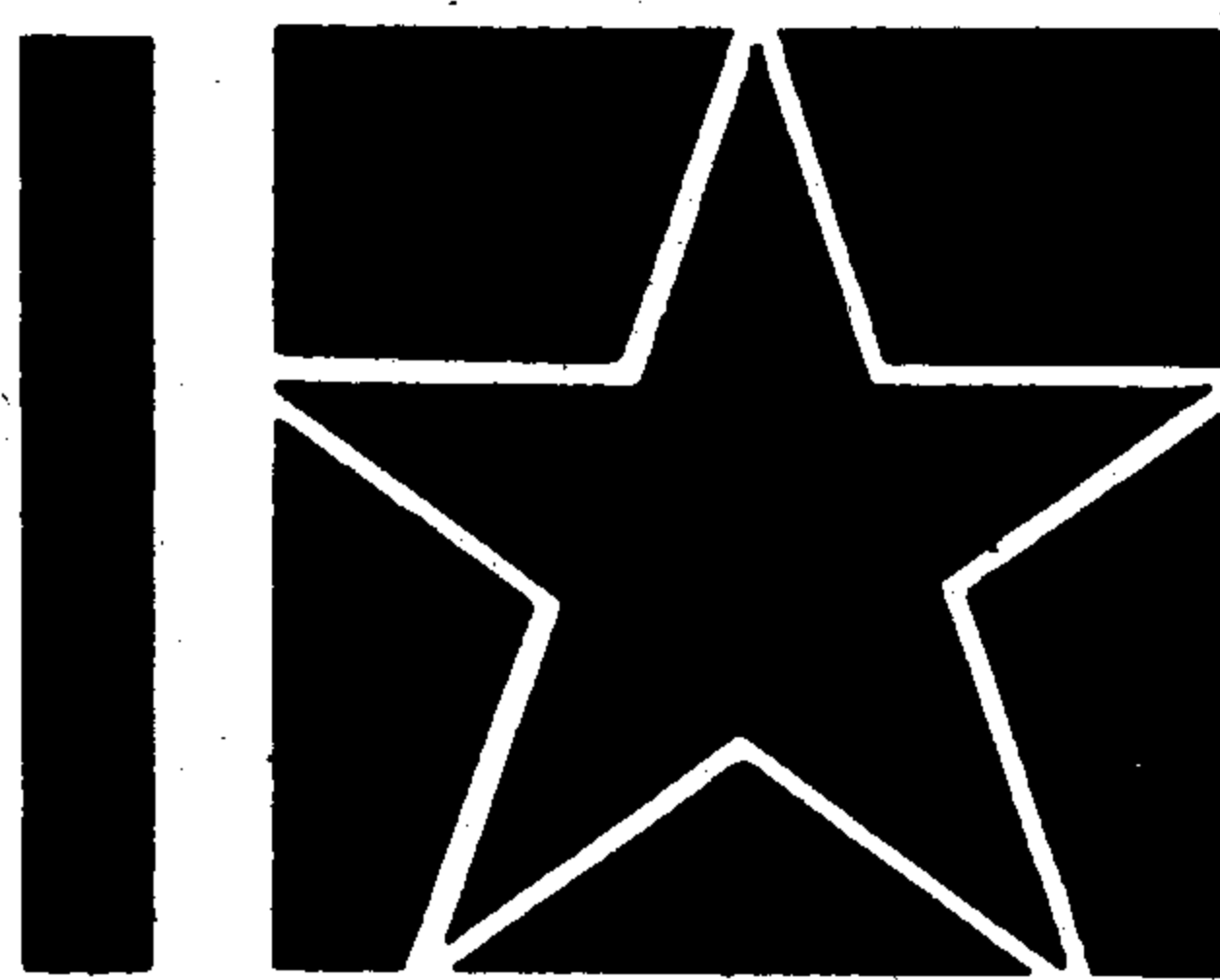
Reinstate Conway Xavier!

Longbridge: new sell-out

RIGGED 'INQUIRY' WON'T REINSTATE THE EIGHT!



Strike now to stop Edwardes!



# JOIN THE WSL!

Please send me more details about the Workers Socialist League.

Name . . . . .

Address . . . . .

Send to: WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

# SOCIALIST PRESS



## FUND

As we went to press we had received £416.80 towards our February fund target of £850. Not a bad effort, but we are still left with over £400 to raise in the next twelve days if we are to complete our fund on time.

So let's not waste any time. Send us a donation today. Our address is:

Socialist Press Monthly Fund  
BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

# LONGWORTH RAIDED!

Country roads sealed off by police cars. Busloads of police held in reserve. Telephones cut off. A snatch squad arrives, manhandles the picket, lifts the gate off the hinges, busts into the quiet country hospital, bundles out four confused and distressed elderly patients, and shunts the others downstairs. They rip out fuses and smash the hospital boiler in a frenzied move to shut off power and heat.

"It was just like an SAS operation" said COHSE steward Myra Bungay in the aftermath of the traumatic raid last Tuesday on the occupied Longworth Hospital in Oxfordshire.

### Enthusiastic

It was carried out by the Area Health Authority with the enthusiastic help of its chairperson—leading Labour Party member Lady McCarthy.

McCarthy had set her sights on smashing the work-in by fair means or foul since it began in early December.

She had been angered by the growing militancy of the COHSE members at the hospital and their steadfast resistance to her planned cuts in the health service in the Oxford Area.

These cuts include the closure of the top floor at Longworth as a prelude to total closure—in an area already 200 geriatric beds short of requirement.

The night before the raid McCarthy had learned that COHSE members at Longworth voted unanimously to reject an AHA deal which simply postponed the loss of beds for a few weeks.

This rebuff, following on the failure of an earlier AHA attempt to snatch patients from the hospital under the guise of "taking them on holiday"

prompted the go-ahead for the raid.

The full destructive savagery of the AHA management emerged as they set about rendering the top floor of Longworth unusable—at considerable hazard to the remaining patients—smashed up the pickets' shelter by the gate, and tore down and destroyed posters, petitions and other material in the occupation room at the hospital.

### Threatened

When pickets refused to obey management instructions to leave the gate they were threatened with police action.

A mass picket of over 70 pickets quickly assembled, drawing wide support from the Oxford labour movement, while police, despite urging from the AHA, were reluctant to intervene.

As the dust settles after the raid, the AHA has been daunted to discover that the occupation committee remains strong and is actively campaigning for trade union action to force the re-opening of the top floor that proved so hard to close.

COHSE members at Oxford's Littlemore hospital have been approached and asked to black the admission of female

geriatric patients until the beds at Longworth are restored and filled.

While there is a sympathetic response to this policy at Littlemore, staffing levels at Longworth have been driven so low by the AHA that official COHSE action is needed to increase them.

Meanwhile the St. Clements ward of Oxford City Labour Party has spearheaded the struggle against McCarthy—whose actions flouted not only socialist principles but also the specific policy of the CLP, to support the Longworth work-in.

An emergency motion has been tabled calling for McCarthy—a General Committee member—to be expelled from the Labour Party.

Trade unionists and Labour Party members throughout the country should take up this call. The Longworth struggle has become the prime focus for the fight against the cuts in the NHS.

It must be defended against both the attacks of McCarthy and the inaction of the COHSE bureaucracy which has left the struggle isolated on a national level.

Messages to Myra Bungay, 13 Bowbank, Longworth, Oxon.



COHSE members and supporters shout their disapproval at an AHA lobby prior to the raid.

# Gang of 3 rush to Liberals

Further evidence of the contempt and loathing the bulk of Labour activists have for the right wing Gang of 3 and their hangers-on emerged last week as more Labour Parties voted to call on their "social democrat" MPs to resign.

But the attachment of these

parasites to the ideals of "democracy" does not extend, apparently, to submitting themselves to a fresh election on their present political positions.

### Free publicity

Small wonder. After the initial flurry of favourable opinion poll findings—prompted by the never-ending tide of free publicity in the Tory press and mass media—it is becoming

increasingly clear that the "social democrats" have a very limited prospect of success at the polls.

They are able to count on little support from traditional Labour voters. And they have no party machinery of their own. This, as much as anything else, drives them faster than they might have wished into the open arms of an increasingly arrogant David Steel.

No doubt the Gang's explicit

rejection of socialism is one of the features that helped lure the first prominent members of the Communist Party to break ranks and declare support for the Council for Social Democracy.

Sue Slipman—an Executive member of the CP for four years and a former President of the National Union of Students—joined the CSD, along with ex-Stalinist Penny Cooper, a former NUS treasurer.

"My politics have not

changed," argued Slipman, who professed her adherence to the reformist strategy embodied in the CP's "British Road to Socialism".

Of course Slipman is right. The CP has for years worked happily in NUS with Tory forces if anything even more reactionary than the CSD.

Slipman and Cooper have cut and run to the Liberals: how many more Stalinists will follow them?

# Hunger strikers fight on

Recovering from a near-successful assassination attempt, Bernadette McAliskey has accused the RUC of refusing three applications for a firearm to use in self-defence.

She told the Dublin *Sunday World* that she had been forewarned by the RUC that the UDA planned to murder her.

In the event she was unarmed when the Loyalist gunmen smashed their way into her home and shot her down together with her husband Michael.

Her courage in continuing to expose the reality of the "security forces" in the sectarian statelet of Northern Ireland is matched by the courage and tenacity of the six republican hunger strikers who fasted nearly to death before Christmas.

Returned from the prison hospital recovered from their 53-day hunger strike, they were placed in clean cells in the 'H' Blocks of Long Kesh.

But, in common with their comrades who have sustained the blanket protest in pursuit of Prisoner of War status, the six men at once joined the 'dirty' protest.

410 republicans are now 'on the blanket' in Long Kesh; and a new hunger strike is scheduled to begin next month.

The British labour movement must be mobilised in their support.



Bernadette McAliskey

# Occupy Linwood!

In miserable contrast to the stand by miners against pit closures, shop stewards and union officials have outlined a pathetic programme of belly crawling in their efforts to "save" the Talbot plant at Linwood.

A poorly attended mass meeting last week bore testimony to the lack of enthusiasm for the feeble protest campaign outlined by convenor Jimmy Livingstone.

Instead of an immediate stoppage of work and preparations to occupy the doomed plant, Livingstone stressed the intention of stewards to work on in an exemplary way to complete work on the outstanding stocks of cars—tidying up before the closure!

Instead of fighting for immediate supporting action by TGWU members in other Talbot plants and for blacking of Talbot cars and components, Livingstone insisted that there would be no "provocative" steps or any form of industrial

action until the time-wasting disputes procedure has been exhausted.

In reality Livingstone's course of action will exhaust the membership—with endless futile pilgrimages to Peugeot management in France, the Foreign Office, the Scottish Development Agency and others.

### Procedure

Like any union bureaucrat, Livingstone sticks woodenly to the formalities of procedure—while management merrily tear up agreements and implement measures that threaten 4,800 jobs at Linwood and a further 5,000 jobs in the component industry!

The Linwood "action group" that has now been set up is an ominous echo of the wretched protest campaigns run by union bureaucrats at the doomed Dunlop plant at Speke on Merseyside and the Bowater paper plant at Ellesmere Port.

Like them, it embraces a gaggle of MPs, councillors,

bureaucrats and even bosses from the Scottish CBI.

Like them it is focussed on "responsible" moves to persuade Talbot management to hold their fire—at least for a year.

Like them it offers no perspective for Talbot shop floor workers to act—placing reliance exclusively on top level diplomatic manoeuvres.

Both plants are now closed.



PHOTO: John Sturrock, Report

Linwood workers picketing during earlier pay dispute