



Demonstrate against state repression of Lesbian and Gay people
SATURDAY 28 FEBRUARY
Starting 1pm at Oxford Road/
Mancunian Way, MANCHESTER

Weekly paper of the Workers Socialist League * No. 236 * 25 February 1981 * 20p

Affiliated to the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee

MINERS' VICTORY SHOWS WORKERS CAN OUST THATCHER



Rent campaigners in 1973

When last week the miners walked all over the Tory government, inflicting the first major defeat since Thatcher conned her way to office in 1979, they did far more than defend their own jobs.

They knocked the stuffing out of the feeble argument that "workers won't fight this government". They put the boot into the argument that workers should respect the "viability" of capitalist industry. They roughed up Thatcher's ruinous monetarist strategy of imposing cash limits in the public sector. And in their knock-out victory they showed beyond any doubt that this hated government of bosses, bankers, union-busters and racials can be brought down—if a lead is given to the organised working class.

How many times have workers fighting closures, redundancies, or pressing wage demands heard their union officials declare that they are willing to struggle but that "the members won't fight"?

Under cover of such arguments, TUC leaders have sat back for years, and watched closures under Callaghan and Thatcher turn Britain into an industrial wasteland, while living standards have fallen steadily behind inflation.

Yet NUM officials—particularly in Kent, Scotland, South Wales and Yorkshire—prepared consciously for this fight on closures. They campaigned in the coalfields for a mandate for all-out strike action. They secured 86% and 90% support—and created a level of militancy that gave rise to last week's spontaneous walk-outs which in the event went far faster than the leadership had expected.

What a contrast to the miserable fiascos of protest campaigns against closures in British Steel, British Leyland, Bowaters, Dunlops, Tate and Lyle and now at Linwood!

What a contrast to the pathetic surrender of tens of thousands of jobs in the public services—school meals workers;

local authority workers; health workers, and others thrown out of the workforce onto the dole queues or back into the home as NUPE, NALGO, GMWU and TGWU leaders sit idly by!

What a lesson to workers facing such struggles in the months ahead! Only all-out action—linked to occupation in the case of threatened factories—can confront the attacks being waged by the bosses and the Tory government.

And if the miners can fight and successfully rescue 30 "uneconomic" pits, doesn't this point the way forward to every section of workers to cast aside worries about the "viability" of this or that employer and instead take up the fight to defend their own jobs and living standards.

The fact of the matter is that it is not so much individual factories or corporations as the capitalist system which is bankrupt: it is incapable of offering the working class even the elementary right to a job and decent living standards.

The miners have been the first section of workers to fight uncompromisingly in defence of their own class interests and challenge the "right" of the capitalists to cast them onto the dole queues.

They forced an immediate concession from the Tories. Were similar action to be taken elsewhere in industry and the public services, it is possible even more concessions could be achieved.

Water workers pursuing their pay claim for instance may be the next to force Thatcher to retreat (if they can first force their leaders to call a national strike!)

But important as such victories are in strengthening the working class as a whole, the only guarantee of protection for jobs and living standards is the mobilisation of the labour movement for a general strike to bring down the Tories, and to press home the fight for socialist policies from a Labour government.

Only a planned socialist economy can answer the anarchy of crisis-ridden capitalism and develop the productive

forces of society in the interests of the vast majority of people. Until then a threat hangs over us all.

The miners, for instance, have won a verbal agreement that the closure plans be abandoned. But—even if the agreement had been in writing—the employers are bound to continue to seek ways and means of driving up exploitation in the pits.

Meanwhile the Tory attack still affects the miners—with rent and rate increases, cuts in education, public services and health care and sky-high inflation.

There is no doubt that these thoughts were at the forefront of the minds of those miners who wanted to continue the fight even after the Tory climb-down last week. There is a huge feeling for action to bring down the Thatcher government.

At present a major focus of militancy is to be found in the struggle against cuts in local government spending, and the increases in rates and rents that are being inflicted on working class households.

The example of the NUM campaign—going out to rally mass support to a fight—must be rammed home to every left Labour councillor who seeks a way to fight back against Thatcher.

They must be told to go onto the council estates, mobilise tenants into committees, organise the unemployed to support the fight, address meetings of council workers, and fight tooth and nail for all-out resistance to cuts in service and increases in rates or rents.

The miners have just smashed the cash limits on the NCB: now action must be taken to smash Heseltine's cash limits on local authorities. This can only be done through mass-based confrontation.

The Tories are attacking on all fronts. It is on all fronts that working men, women and youth must organise and prepare politically to fight back. Socialist Press commits itself to campaign consistently for the necessary policies and leadership to take that fight forward.

CUTS CONFERENCE: 21 March, LONDON Details, see page 9

REAGAN DIGS IN BEHIND SALVADOR JUNTA

The brutal face of the Reagan administration's foreign policy has emerged within weeks of taking office.

It has been made plain that Reagan regards it as a priority to prop up the bloody military dictatorship in El Salvador which is daily murdering workers, peasants and left wing liberation forces.

Declaring that they will take "whatever steps are necessary" to defend this regime against mounting popular resistance, the US imperialists are now talking openly of a possible military blockade of Cuba to prevent the flow of arms to the rebels in El Salvador.

Meanwhile the flow of American arms, mercenaries and advisors to the junta has been stepped up by Reagan after the temporary disruption caused by embarrassment at the murder of four American women by pro-junta rightists.

Military steps

But it is clear that Reagan will be forced to take even more military steps to reinforce the junta if it is to be put in a position to defeat the tenacious struggle by the guerrillas of the FMLN.

Latest Pentagon studies suggest that the El Salvador army's fighting strength of 14,000 is less than half that necessary to defeat the 5,000-8,000 guerrillas.

This takes no account of the divisions and ebbing morale of the armed forces themselves, in which defections and mutinies continue.

It means that if a military victory is to be secured, Reagan must find means to reinforce these troops—either through a Vietnam-style direct US military intervention, or through persuading the neighbouring Honduran and Guatemalan dictatorships, together with remnants from Somoza's Nicaraguan National Guard, to form a surrogate fighting force.

At the same time he must cut off the supply of arms to the guerrillas, at present funnelled extensively through the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua.

Adventures

The scene is set for a series of grotesque military adventures by US imperialism in Central America, while many neighbouring regimes and European governments look on with considerable unease.

They favour a political solution to the conflict, through deals with the capitalist-led Revolutionary Democratic Front (FDR) which they see as the best means to establish stable capitalist rule.

And they fear that US military intervention—direct or indirect—could spark off a further wave of mass resistance throughout Central and Latin America, jeopardising the position of regimes in the vicinity of El Salvador.

But with Reagan's government intent upon reasserting US military domination within the NATO alliance and on a world scale, such reformist protests are likely to carry little weight.

Meanwhile the *Sunday Times* this week has helped underline the nature of the regime Reagan is so keen to defend by providing proof of the ghastly army massacre of 300 peasant men, women and children near the Honduran border last May.

Blacking

While American trade unionists must step up the fight that has already begun for blacking of military aid to the junta and an end to AFL-CIO support for the regime, British workers too must fight for practical and political solidarity with the people of El Salvador.

Though the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign offers uncritical support to the capitalist-led FDR, and fails to focus on the need to support the left wing guerrilla forces of the FMLN who are in practice leading the fight against the junta, their booklet *El Salvador: The Latin American Vietnam* contains much useful information.

It is available (50p plus p&p) from the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign, 29 Islington Park St., London N1.



California march protests against US role in El Salvador

Reagan cuts hit workers

AT THE very point when the Thatcher government was executing its U-turn on pit closures, Ronald Reagan, the American Thatcher, was unveiling a savage, militarist budget.

Cuts in income tax of 10% in each of the next three years and increased arms spending are to be financed by public spending cuts of £2,000 million this year and £2,000 million next year.

Main victims on all counts are the US working class—employed and unemployed—who face cuts in welfare, job creation programmes, Medicaid and transport subsidies. Government cuts will also increase still further the already high level of



unemployment.

But employers will benefit from generous increases in tax allowances to bring in job-slashing rationalisation and technology.

As members of the Spanish Cortes (Parliament) were preparing to take a vote of confidence on Prime Minister designate Leopoldo Calvo Sotelo, members of the para-military Civil Guard stormed into the Chamber, ordered MPs to lie down on the floor and fired warning shots into the air.

The situation as we go to press on Monday evening remains confused. Leading politicians including Felipe Gonzalez, leader of the Socialist Party and Santiago Carrillo, leader of the Communist Party—both of whom were in the chamber at the time of the attack—are reported to have been taken away by Civil Guards to an unknown destination, along with other leading politicians.

Hundreds of Civil Guards quickly moved into position inside the Parliament building,

while armed police were reported to have surrounded the building and sealed off approach roads.

The Civil Guard, which are part of the army, were refusing the police permission to enter the building.

In Valencia, the local army commander was reported to have immediately instituted martial law, imposed a curfew, taken control of the radio station and banned all political activity.

He claimed to be awaiting orders from King Juan Carlos who was at his palace but had not issued any statement other than to say that "everything was under control".

With the army chiefs of staff in emergency session, it remains unclear whether this action by the Civil Guards is a coup supported by the army generals.

There has been an increasing danger of such a coup as the UCD government has failed to resolve many of the problems facing Spanish capitalism—one

of the most acute being the continuing success of the Basque nationalist forces of ETA in its armed struggle against the Spanish police and army.

The political crisis created by the resignation of UCD Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez and the difficulty in constructing a viable government led by Calvo Sotelo coincided with the most serious crisis yet in Euskadi (the Basque region).

The massive reaction to the police murder of ETA suspect, Jose Arregui, forced the hated Francoist police into a desperate attempt to provoke a right wing coup.

In the face of some of the biggest strikes and protests even the Basque country has ever seen, the government arrested the five police interrogators who tortured Arregui to death and suspended the Madrid police chief and leading police doctor.

In response to this attack on police authority as a concession to mass protest in the Basque

country, the seven top leaders of the Francoist security police resigned.

They did not resign in order to retire shamefaced to their country homes.

They resigned as part of an attempt to pull together the forces of the extreme right to prepare to get rid of Spain's "democracy".

The next few hours will tell whether the events today were the result of the plotting of these police chiefs and right wing generals or whether, as on a previous occasion, this is a desperate move by a small group of extreme right wingers within the armed forces which the leading generals will refuse to support—not because they are opposed to such a coup but because they regard it as a premature move.

Certainly that was their response previously. And the fact that the attack on the Cortes was led by the Civil Guard rather than taking the form of a coordinated coup throughout Spain suggests that this might well be their response again.

However, the crisis facing Spanish capitalism and Spanish bourgeois democracy has greatly deepened since that first attempted coup and military leaders may well decide that the time has finally come for a strong response against ETA and the Basque people.

If this is the case, the leaders of the working class at the head of the Socialist and Communist Parties bear a heavy responsibility. They have preferred to ignore the threat of a coup in the hope that it would not materialise if they proved themselves sufficiently servile to Spanish capitalism.

In pursuit of this aim they have taken a totally unprincipled position in opposition to the struggle of the Basque people and ETA.

At the same time they have done nothing to prepare the mobilisation of the working class against the threat of an army takeover.

*A Socialist Press correspondent is currently in Spain and will be reporting on these dramatic events in coming issues of Socialist Press.

Euro-TUC shuns Turkish junta

However much a gesture, the refusal of the Brussels-based European TUC to go ahead with their planned visit to Turkey is an important step forward in exposing the repressive nature of General Evren's ruling junta.

It was the rejection by the dictatorship of the delegation's request to visit imprisoned leaders of the DISK trade union confederation which was cited by ETUC General Secretary Hinterscheid as the reason for calling off the visit.

He added that it amounted to an admission of charges that the prisoners were suffering inhuman treatment and would be denied proper legal facilities.

Ironically the ETUC have consistently turned down requests from DISK for affiliation. Instead they have recognised the class collaborationist TURK-IS organisation which

has been allowed to continue its activities since the coup.

Reports of persistent torture meted out to many of the tens of thousands of political prisoners are widespread and beginning to be an embarrassment to the country's military rulers and their 'democratic' supporters in western Parliaments.

Inhuman

One case receiving considerable publicity is that of Istanbul's former mayor, RPP supporter Ahmet Isvan, now awaiting trial in the city's military barracks with DISK leaders.

The junta has recently gone to great lengths to deny detailed accusations from Isvan's family of inhuman interrogation methods, denials so unconvincing as to force counter charges of responsibility from within the state security forces.

Abroad, the stepping up of surveillance by the police and intelligence services of anti-junta activists has gone alongside threats to withdraw the passports of exiled dissidents and force them to return to Turkey.

Though clearly affecting forces beyond the organised working class internally it is clear that the martial law government has set itself the primary task of breaking up the DISK trade unions, having already gone much further towards this than was attempted in the generals' previous takeover of 1971.

Turkey's capitalists and their military spokesmen still fear more than anything a working class which they know has not been crushed and will inevitably be forced to defy the harsh measures they seek to impose upon it.

Neither can they take any comfort from the continuing activities of the left-wing

guerrilla groups.

Despite mass arrests and exemplary hangings of their members, the last few weeks have seen them renew assassinations of top police officials.

The national and international ruling class see the present period as a testing ground for Evren's 'Kemalist' bonapartism, which has successfully pulled behind it for the moment many of the petty bourgeois layers which formerly were the base of the mass fascist party.

Assessment

But there is no guarantee Evren's short term 'success' will last.

The US Senate Armed Services Committee have been making an on-the-spot assessment of the situation over the past week, while Deputy Premier Ozal has been making

the acquaintance of Reagan's military adviser.

At the same time he has been meeting the IMF in Washington. Imperialism's support for the Turkish bourgeoisie is total; but the imperialists will need proof that the goods can be delivered.

The Turkey Solidarity Campaign has produced its first 'Information Bulletin on Turkey for the Labour and Trade Union Movement' which is available, free of charge, from TSC, BM Box 5965, London WC1N 3XX.

Women workers in the Six Counties

First of two parts
by Mary Smythe

Catholic women in the occupied six counties of Ireland stand in the forefront of the struggle against imperialism.

They fight as workers, as anti-imperialist militants and as women.

In 1969 when the mass of the Catholic working class came onto the streets, their demands were around jobs, decent housing, wages and control over the decisions affecting their daily lives.

Over the past 11 years unemployment has shot up even further; already abysmal housing conditions have deteriorated and wages have been cut while prices have risen sharply.

While the official overall unemployment figure for December 1980 is a massive 16.3% the level for Catholic workers is 2½ times that of Protestant workers.

This fact is demonstrated in the unemployment statistics for Catholic majority towns such as Strabane—with 42.1% official male unemployment and 18.2% female unemployment.

The overall rates for other Catholic majority towns are Cookstown 30.3%, Dungannon 30.1%, Newry 26.9% and Derry 23.1%.

While the overall rate for female unemployment is given as 11.7%, this is again a gross underestimate as it takes no account of all the married women workers who do not register as unemployed, and obscures the much higher rate of unemployment among Catholic working class women.

In the six counties, 43% of the registered workforce are women. Of the 200,000 women in employment in 1977, an estimated 66,000 were in part-time work.

About 40% of those working are unionised, the vast majority of these being the full time women workers.



Gallaher women strikers march in 1979

By far the most exploited section of the female workforce is the part-time non-unionised women workers, many of whom work at home doing stitching, packing and piecework for the clothing industry.

However, even the most powerful sections of the female workforce—the unionised full time factory workers—earn less than their class sisters in the British Isles and receive only two-thirds of the wages of their class brothers in the six counties.

Conditions in the factories are usually appalling, with health and safety regulations, where they exist, for the most part ignored.

The willingness of the

women workers to fight on wages and for an improvement in their working conditions, even in the face of the blatant sexism and open class collaboration of the trade union bureaucracy, is demonstrated in two important strikes over the last two years.

In November 1978 30 women workers at Keenfoods frozen food factory in Kennedy Way Industrial Estate in Belfast went on strike.

The workers struck over conditions in the factory, wages and victimisations.

Working conditions in the factory were barbaric. The entire factory was extremely cold—the thermometer being removed by management.

The sewage system was such that the sewage seeped onto the factory floor.

No protective clothing was provided for the prawn shellers who required continual hospital treatment for infection from prawn shells lodged in their hands.

The prawns were full of maggots and when the women complained they were told to kill them.

Canteen workers were not allowed on the factory floor after 3.00 p.m., thus prohibiting them from going to the toilet.

Packers were forced to lift 56 lb skips of herrings from the floor to the table.

If conditions were bad, wages were even worse. The

basic wage of the prawn shellers was £12.75 per week. The productivity bonus only came into effect when the workers had completed a near-impossible daily quota of 56 pounds of prawns.

If they failed to reach their daily quota their names were put up on the wall. The packers, whose basic wage was £35.75, had not received a bonus they had won 11 months previously.

Victimisations were commonplace with management physically assaulting workers, singling out any shop steward who complained about dismissals and working conditions.

Harassment

While the women, members of the ITGWU, stood on the picket line and faced harassment from management and the police who tried to smuggle in blacklegs, Paddy Devlin, General Secretary of the ITGWU, negotiated a sell-out deal with the employers.

The women were subsequently forced back to work with a minimal pay increase, a promise of talks on improving conditions and a promise of no victimisations.

Four leading militants in the strike were subsequently dismissed. These workers, in reaction to a sell-out by the ITGWU in a previous dispute, had resigned from the union.

In this strike they rejoined the ITGWU and succeeded in getting the strike made official, only to be betrayed yet again by that same union leadership.

In May 1979 4,200 workers in the Belfast and Ballymena Gallacher tobacco factories went on strike.

A 5% pay increase paid to the craft workers had been denied to the shopfloor workers, the vast majority of whom were low-paid women.

While the bulk of the workforce was comprised of these badly paid women workers, the

union leadership in the factory was drawn exclusively from the higher paid male workers.

While the women workers initiated the strike, carried on for four weeks without strike pay and stood with their children on the picket line, an entirely male strike committee carried on negotiations with the management.

The women were allowed no role in the running of the dispute and were forced back to work with a 3% pay increase—less than the management offer of 3½% during the dispute.

While those women workers who are fortunate enough to have a job face appalling working conditions, Irish working class women as a whole face miserable living conditions for themselves and their families.

In central areas of Belfast, by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's own statistics, 50% of its existing housing stock is unfit for human habitation.

Overcrowding in Belfast affects four times as many workers as in Greater London (for Catholic households the ratio would be even higher).

There are seven times as many houses with no inside flushing toilet and twice as many without the exclusive use of a bath or shower. This excludes the thousands of families forced to move into houses that have already been condemned.

Once condemned, the Housing Executive refuses to accept any responsibility for repairs and discriminates against the occupants regarding rehousing.

These appalling housing conditions are reflected in the large numbers of families burned to death each year as a result of faulty wiring.

They are reflected in the 5% infant mortality rate and the fact that 30% of deaths are recorded as being due to bronchitis—both even in bourgeois circles regarded as indicators of extreme poverty.

NEW TUC BID TO GAG DEBATE ON IRELAND

By John Lister

For those who believe in the right of nations to self-determination, and who oppose colonial oppression, the alliance between the Labour leaders and the Tories on the question of Ireland is a major scandal.

The "bi-partisan" policy implemented by successive Labour and Tory governments centres on repression of the anti-imperialist struggle in the six counties of Ireland through a combination of military and police terror, Loyalist paramilitary violence and legislation designed to outlaw the republican movement. All this is reinforced by tacit and open press censorship and repressive laws in Britain such as the so-called 'Prevention of Terrorism Act'.

But while the defence of such a policy has been voiced chiefly by Labour politicians, they have rested for support not on rank and file Labour Party

members but on the British trade union bureaucracy.

Not a single leading union official in Britain has taken up or fought for a policy of withdrawing British troops from Ireland. Even at the height of last year's hunger strikes by republican prisoners in Long Kesh demanding political status, only a handful of British union leaders lent their signatures to the Charter 80 petition supporting their five demands.

Witch-hunt

But within their own unions and through the General Council of the TUC, union bureaucrats have been ready and willing to witch-hunt socialists and militants who have fought for a full debate on the war of liberation underway in Ireland.

Last year saw such witch-hunts within the TGWU, CPUSA and ASLEF—and the disaffiliation of Tameside Trades Council

by the TUC for the "crime" of convening a labour movement conference on Ireland.

The campaign against this disaffiliation won widespread support—with around 50 Trades Councils and other union bodies backing a call for Tameside's reinstatement. But the fight at the TUC Congress was derailed by the NUJ delegation, who reneged on their official mandate to move reference back of that section of the General Council report.

Encouraged by this, and egged on by Stalinists of the Communist Party (who oppose the struggle against British imperialism in Ireland and instead call on the British capitalists to grant a "Bill of Rights" to the Irish people in the six counties) the TUC has now launched a new, extended witch-hunt.

Five trades councils that have sponsored a labour movement conference on Ireland convened by the 'Smash the

Prevention of Terrorism Act Campaign' have been threatened with Tameside-style disaffiliation.

A circular has been sent to all trades councils telling them not to support the conference—since it challenges the TUC's own pro-imperialist policy.

Crude attempt

Despite hypocritical statements to the contrary, this is simply a further crude attempt by the TUC leaders to muzzle discussion on Ireland within the labour movement—a discussion which they know could only further discredit their own wretched so-called "Better Life for All Campaign".

Socialist Press has political differences with the Revolutionary Communist Tendency who run the Smash the PTA Campaign. We disagree in particular with their uncritical support to the republican movement, and



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their slap-dash use of slogans such as "Bring the War to Britain" which simply confuse and alienate militants and socialists.

But we urge readers and supporters to fight within their unions for maximum opposition to this latest move by the TUC to suppress legitimate political discussion within the labour movement and bureaucratically uphold a bankrupt and reactionary policy on Ireland.

This fight is essential if support is to be widened for the demands for immediate withdrawal of British troops from Ireland and self-determination for the Irish people.

The conference—appropriately entitled "TUC Hands off Ireland" is at Lanchester Polytechnic, Coventry on March 14. Details are available from SPTAC, BM RCT, London WC1V 6XX.

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Danger! Splitters at work

The leaders of Coventry Labour Group have been playing a vicious game with the workers of Coventry in their attempt to get massive cuts approved.

They have said that for every job they "save" in the local authority a job will be lost in the private sector and the choice is therefore £3 million cuts and 35% rate rises or 40-50% rate rises and no cuts—but redundancies in industry.

Of course the employers have lost no time in taking up this argument and three of Coventry's biggest firms, Courtaulds, Massey Ferguson and Torrington have said they will shut down if the rate rises are too high.

Jaguar and Covrad have threatened that rate rises will have to be paid for by redundancies.

The pressure has been on for workers in private industry to go hand in hand with their bosses and plead for massive cuts to keep the rate rises down.

Companies have quoted how many jobs will go for every 1% rise in rates.

Of course all these figures are fictitious; the rates are only a small proportion of these companies' costs and not responsible for the fall in production; but essentially the campaign has a political purpose to set workers in private and public sectors against each other—rather than jointly fight the council and private employers for no loss of jobs or services.

In Jaguars, the negotiating committee discussed the threatened rate rises and sent a delegation to the council.

Some of the convenors talked of persuading the council to defer rate rises or other dispensation—although they knew in advance this wasn't on.

The uproar when workers got wind of these manoeuvres made the convenors hastily bury them.

The majority of Coventry's 'rebel' councillors are now arguing that for the immediate period they can only defend jobs and services by rate rises.

But this lays fertile ground for the employers and the right wing to campaign against the rate rises and means that the need to mobilise and defeat this government on its local government policy is lost in the murky pool of "which do you prefer? Rate rises or public spending cuts?"

NO POLICY IN COVENTRY!

By Keith White

Coventry District Labour Party's recently-held Local Government Policy Conference ended in complete farce—thanks to cynical manoeuvring by the right-wing.

The two-day conference which debated reports from working parties on topics including finance, education, housing and social services was not empowered to adopt policy which was binding on the District Party.

It had therefore been agreed

that at 4.20 p.m. on Sunday a specially convened District Party meeting would meet to vote on one motion only—that the policy adopted throughout the weekend would be endorsed.

The conference itself was poorly attended with only a handful of right wingers turning up.

At around 4.00 p.m. on Sunday afternoon, however, District Party delegates started to appear in substantial numbers and then proceeded to vote down the motion—leaving the Party with no policy coming out of

the week-end.

A certain amount of confusion now exists as to the position of the District Party. The previously existing policy of no cuts, no rent increases and no rate increases presumably comes into effect once again.

However, the vast bulk of those who had only a few weeks previously voted to adopt this stand argued forcefully for a sufficient rate increase to prevent any cuts and it was this policy which the District Conference adopted.

Only a handful at the conference, mainly from Coventry

South-East CLP voted to stick to the no rate increase position.

And as far as *Socialist Press* is aware only one of Coventry's 'Rebel' councillors stood with them.

Perhaps the most important initiative to come out of the conference discussions was the proposal by the District Party Anti-Cuts Committee to convene a conference open to the labour movement as a whole which would have the job of agreeing a united response to the cuts.

The decision of the right wing to vote down the confer-

ence proposals means that this conference will not take place unless another labour movement body calls it.

Coventry Trades Council has contented itself with organising a lobby of the Labour Group meeting and has laid no plans for fighting the cuts directly.

Whoberley Ward Labour Party last week passed a resolution calling on the South West CLP to call a conference open to all Labour Parties, trade unions, tenants associations and community groups to develop the campaign against the cuts locally.

Camden rebels' letter



1973 march on rents through Camden: now Camden Labour Left must prevent a similar sell-out in 1981

We, the undersigned Camden Labour Councillors were elected, with twenty-two colleagues, to protect and enhance the living standards of the people of this Borough, and in particular those who are most in need of such protection—the poor, the sick and the otherwise disadvantaged.

We make no apology for the fact that, to meet this objective, Camden has been and is a high-spending local authority: it provides the best services in the country and opinion polls and election results have shown that the people of Camden are proud of the achievements that this public spending has brought.

But since the advent of the Tory government, local authorities—and Camden in particular, precisely because of those high standards of provision—are facing an unprecedented onslaught on their programmes, whereby not only are services threatened but the whole concept of local democracy is being called into question.

While thousands of Camden residents wait desperately for Council housing, the government has, by heavily reducing the housing subsidy, cut our housing programme to ribbons, so that not only are we unable to build new homes and modernise our older ones, as we were elected to do, but we cannot even properly maintain any of our existing housing.

Thus, if the government has its way, we shall be forced to watch Camden's housing, its people's chief capital asset, gradually decaying into slums.

At the same time, our rate support grant is being reduced, so that to maintain services to

the people of Camden, we are being forced to raise rates to a quite unreasonable extent in order that the cost of services to the disadvantaged may be shared by the fortunate.

As if this were not enough, we and our colleagues, Councillors democratically accountable to our electors, are now threatened with surcharge and disqualification if we do not obey the dictates of the District Auditor, himself merely appointed by the Department of the Environment and publicly accountable to no-one.

The District Auditor is now asking the High Court to surcharge and disqualify us for seeking in 1979 to give our lowest-paid workers decent wages and conditions (£60 a week—two-thirds of the then national average wage which has now risen to nearly twice their minimum take-home pay).

Besides this, he has effectively told us that, unless we raise rents by at least £3.25 a week and cut our direct labour staff by 600, he will seek a further surcharge.

Thus we are attacked on two fronts, and it is no surprise that, in the face of such threats, many of our colleagues in the Labour Group find themselves unable to resist the pressure. It is not that they believe our policies to have been wrong; it is that they can see no alternative to giving way.

We, the undersigned, on the other hand, wish to make it clear to the people who elected us that we will not surrender. We were not elected to carry out Tory attacks on the living standards of the people we represent.

We respect the people's democratic right to throw us out of office at the next elec-

tion if they so wish—that is what local democracy is all about. But we are not prepared to be dictated to by a non-elected accountant, or by a Minister and Government elected on an express mandate to increase, not to diminish, local democracy:

Accordingly, we will oppose by all the means open to us that proposal to withdraw the Camden supplement, which would mean no wage increase at all for two years for our lowest paid employees in the face of an ever-rising cost of living; we will oppose the proposal to increase rents as dictated by the District Auditor; and we will oppose the decimation of the direct labour organisation since this would mean, besides even longer delays in housing maintenance work, and with 2,000 building workers already unemployed in Camden, desperation for the redundant and their families.

We call upon our colleagues in the Labour Group and in the Labour Party, the trade unions, tenants associations and all those who care about local democracy and the welfare of Camden people, to join with us in this struggle.

Somewhere the dismantling of local government has to stop; somewhere the Tory policy of solving this country's economic crisis by massive unemployment and further impoverishment of the poor has to be confronted; somewhere local democracy has to be fought for. Let the battle start in Camden.

Yours faithfully,
Councillors: Anna Bowman, Tom Devine, Pat Driscoll, Neil Fletcher, Joan Hyman, Ken Livingstone, Sally Peletier, Phyl Turner, John Tysoe, Jenny Willmot.

Camden left fights on

By
Graham
Shurety

Left wing councillors in Camden have pressed further in their fight against the package of cuts proposed by the right wing Labour council leaders.

In an open letter signed by ten councillors—reprinted on this page—they seek to rally the labour movement in a fight to save jobs and services.

At the Labour Group meeting on Monday February 16 the ten councillors went further—and mounted a direct challenge to the leadership.

Though they were narrowly defeated in elections for the three leading positions in the group, they showed that their stand is not mere rhetoric.

And at the full council meeting on February 18 the ten councillors voted against the majority of the Labour Group on all major proposed cuts.

Since the Labour Group has only a six-vote majority on the council, this defiance posed a

real threat to the cuts strategy.

When it came to a vote on the axing of 600 building department jobs, the Tories were forced to abstain on their own motion, which called for even greater cuts, to allow the Labour leadership's proposals to go through.

And the right wing's proposed repairs budget was actually referred back after left wing councillors voted against it with the Tories.

Panicked

It must now go back to the Housing Committee and the Labour Group—where the left wing intend to argue for an extra £8 million to sustain the DLO workforce.

Within the confines of the council chamber the stand by the ten councillors now threatens the rates package needed by the right wing to finance their cuts.

Council leader Shaw has

panicked into calling an emergency group meeting on March 2, in the hopes of cobbling together a deal before the rate fixing meeting of March 4. This will be resisted by sections of the left.

Neil Fletcher, chairman of the Building Works and Services Committee has taken a correct stand on resisting rate increases in such circumstances:

"I am not prepared to vote for a rate which has been constructed in total opposition to the policies of the Group and the Labour Party... what is being proposed is a complete abandonment of any principle at all, and a complete capitulation to the District Auditor... It is not a socialist budget—and it's just not acceptable."

Although this is not the same as the confrontation policy that Socialist Press supporters have been arguing for in the labour movement, it is a principled stand that has to be supported by all socialists.

Such a fight has to be coupled with a struggle to remove the discredited leaders of the group and to unite with those unions and tenants associations who are moving into conflict with the council.

The focus will now turn to the unions over the next few weeks. The NUPE membership took a major decision at a mass meeting on Tuesday to fight the council's betrayals.

A resolution was passed that called, among other things for opposition to increases in rents and rates, union support for rent and rate strikes, a one-day strike on March 4, a 50p weekly levy on members to prepare for future action and a mandate to the JSSC to coordinate future industrial action.

But the campaign suffered a setback last Wednesday when a NALGO mass meeting voted by 700 votes to 400 to accept a right wing resolution from National Officer Mike Blick rejecting the call for strike

action on March 4 and instructing Camden NALGO Executive to negotiate redeployment, early retirement and voluntary redundancy on the council's terms.

Blick had cancelled a meeting in the North of England in order to carry through this move to split the unity of the unions in Camden.

But the sabotage is not so straightforward as it might seem.

UCATT, for instance, has so far refused to participate in resistance to the cuts—but negotiators are rumoured to have been outraged by the paltry sums offered by the council in redundancy payments at a Town Hall meeting last week.

Socialist Press understands a mass meeting has now been convened for March 3 which may well be called upon to take indefinite strike action from 4 March.

This fight must be followed

through by UCATT stewards as part of the struggle to put the whole of the Camden workers' movement on a war footing against the right wing council leaders and the Tory government attack.

SOCIALIST PRESS SUPPORTERS

Public meeting

"Labour Councils and the Cuts"

(Speakers include Lambeth Councillor)

Friday 27 February 8.00pm
Cowley Community Centre
Barnes Rd., Oxford

POPLAR: A COUNCIL THAT DEFIED THE GOVERNMENT

GEOFFREY WESTON reviews the book 'Poplarity 1919-1925' by Noreen Branson, published by Lawrence and Wishart.

Part Two

The establishment of a central pool of finance to cover poor relief was seen by all sides as a victory for the Labour council in Poplar over the Tory-Liberal coalition government, and as a victory for direct action over constitutional action.

This was an embarrassment to Labour's right wing and strengthened them in their resolve both to remove Lansbury as editor of the *Daily Herald* and to start the exclusion of Communists from the Labour Party. Several of the councillors were openly Communist Party members.

This is a subject on which Branson's book is weak. The activities of Communists as councillors was a subject of heated debate in the revolutionary movement of the day.

Conflicts inevitably occurred between Communists within the local government structure and those outside.

For instance, Communists led both the unemployed workers in Poplar and the Board of Guardians which controlled Poor Relief payments!

Strong base

It would be important for us now to know how these conflicts were resolved within the Communist Party.

Another question insufficiently dealt with is the relationship of the working class to the ultra-left Communists around Sylvia Pankhurst.

Pankhurst had a strong base of support in Poplar through her work in the suffragette movement, and her later opposition to the war and support for the Russian Revolution.

But she remained completely opposed to entry into the Labour Party and condemned as 'spreading illusions in reformism' any attempt to get elected as councillors or MPs.

In one sense the question is answered by the mass mobilisation which accompanied the arrest of the councillors.

But later developments around the rate of poor relief did split the councillors from a section of the unemployed.

Poplar continued to pay relief at above the official scale—the difference being paid out of local rates. Various attempts to force them to reduce it failed. The government withheld loans to which Poplar, like every other borough, was entitled.

They issued an "order" that relief above the official scale was illegal. Poplar retaliated by threatening another strike against paying central rates.

Recession

The Poplar Guardians claimed "special circumstances" for every payment which meant that the district auditor had to investigate every case before the payments could be disallowed and the councillors surcharged.

The government seemed anxious to avoid another struggle. The auditors reports failed to appear for years.

Meanwhile the recession and massive defeats of the trade unions had enabled employers to reduce wages. The rate of poor relief was by 1923 considerably more than many employed workers could earn.

The official ministry rate of relief was reduced further in 1923. The rate of poor relief was by 1923 considerably more than many employed workers could earn.

Then the Labour strike occurred against the wage cuts agreed by Ernest Bevin of the TGWU. Poplar Town Hall became the strike headquarters



and the Guardians agreed to pay strikers relief—to the horror of the local press (and TGWU leaders). One in four of Poplar's population was now on relief.

At the end of the strike it was decided to cut the Poplar relief scale, leaving it still above the official legal scale of 9d per day per person.

Although the majority of the unemployed grouped around the Communist Party-dominated National Unemployed Workers Movement went along with this, it led to an angry confrontation with members of the Unemployed Workers Organisation run by Sylvia Pankhurst.

The incident raises important questions. Of course the difficulties were forced on Poplar by the right wing. The success of Morrison in preventing action in other boroughs left Poplar isolated. And the betrayals of Bevin and others over wages put pressure on the level of Poplar's wages and relief payments.

Although the councillors had the support of the Trades Council, the Labour Party, and tacitly the CP for their decision it does seem to represent a watershed.

Legalistic way

Afterwards Poplar's conflicts with the government seem to have been fought in an increasingly legalistic way without the mass involvement of the workers. The reduction of relief payments was a legalistic way of dealing with the situation. The government seemed anxious to avoid another struggle. The auditors reports failed to appear for years. Meanwhile the recession and massive defeats of the trade unions had enabled employers to reduce wages. The rate of poor relief was by 1923 considerably more than many employed workers could earn. The official ministry rate of relief was reduced further in 1923. The rate of poor relief was by 1923 considerably more than many employed workers could earn. Then the Labour strike occurred against the wage cuts agreed by Ernest Bevin of the TGWU. Poplar Town Hall became the strike headquarters

matter of course be made to starve more quickly under the care of the Guardians of the Poor."

The final stage of the struggles was over council wage rates, and the surcharging of councillors for "excessive" wage and relief payments. This came after the failure of the first Labour government in 1924 had further demoralised workers.

By this time Poplar's £4 a week minimum wage was 40% for men and 78% for women above the wages in surrounding boroughs.



Ernest Bevin

The legal proceedings against the Poplar councillors this time hinged on whether the "duty to fix wage rates" given to councils by the Local Government Act meant any wage rates they chose.

Surcharged

The House of Lords decided in April 1925 that it must be based on comparison with the going rate for the job and not on "eccentric principles of socialistic philanthropy or by a

feminist ambition to secure equality of the sexes in the matter of wages."

The councillors were now to be surcharged for wages paid since 1921 and for relief payments since their release from prison. In all about £2 million at today's prices was owed, or about £60,000 each. None of the councillors had any property.

Neville Chamberlain, the new Minister of Health, was not looking for a confrontation, and the Poplar Council negotiated a compromise. Poplar would reduce its wages by 20%.

In return the Minister would cancel the surcharges, the Council could keep equal pay for women and could tie the new wages to a cost of living index.

This kept a permanent differential of 20% for men and 50% for women above other local boroughs and private employers. This was put to the workforce and carried 700 to 2. Local employers of course

resented this deal. When the defeat of the General Strike, strengthened their position, they provoked a new crisis by taking Neville Chamberlain to court and having his cancellation of the surcharges declared illegal.

Control

It was then that the present system of control of local authorities was established. Chamberlain brought in a new Act under which surcharged councillors would be disqualified from office for five years, and surcharges could not be waived by the minister.

However past surcharges including those on Poplar were cancelled. So the employers did not get their vengeance on Poplar. But the ground was prepared for the attacks on the Clay Cross councillors and now the Camden councillors.

But what emerges most vividly from Branson's book is that the legal situation of councillors is not the main difference between Poplar and today's struggles.

Mass movement

Poplar council established and led a mass movement. They sought out and prepared an area of confrontation with the government and stood firmly against attempts to make workers bear the cost of the crisis. Changes in the law or absurd interpretations of the law by judges were powerless against them as long as they had this movement behind them.

George Lansbury may be left to sum up their experience:

"Baldwin, Chamberlain, Churchill, Birkenhead and the rest do not mind Labour and socialist majorities that are content to keep things as they are. They do not mind a Labour government if it is a nice Sunday Afternoon Government that is content to leave untouched the sacred ark of the covenant of capitalism... Our governing class, with the ingenuity and cunning they know so well how to exercise, allow the workers to retain all the outward signs and symbols of democracy. We elect municipal councils and other authorities but after election if they dare to put socialist policies into operation the 'artful dodgers' who rule us scheme and plot to overthrow Labour majorities." "What matters is not what we say but what we do."

Concluded

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.

BRING DOWN THE TORIES THIS WINTER!

Man made language

John Lister reviews Dale Spender's "Man Made Language" (Routledge, £4.95)

Oh well. You can learn something new every day—even if it unsettles your most cherished illusions.

I certainly learnt something when I read Dale Spender's *Man Made Language*.

It is a sustained assault on many of my most treasured prejudices about the English language. It was tempting to put the book down and try to brush it aside. But I stuck at it. She has a point.

When I studied English at school and University I saw it as a treasure house of a language—one combining the very best of the Romance languages and the Germanic heritage: a language of flexibility, of nuance, of subtlety, giving scope for the fullest range of meanings.

Excluded

But Dale Spender points to many nuances and meanings that find no reflection or expression in English. She shows why it is the experience of women down the ages which have been excluded not only from the literature but also the day-to-day use of English.

The English language for instance has no word to convey the agonising experience of childbirth as experienced by countless millions of women.

It has no word that can really embody and convey the horror, the terror, the humiliation, the utterly disgusting nature of rape. Unlike other four-letter taboo words, 'rape' trips readily off the tongue even in polite conversation and has become annexed as a trite image—the 'rape' of the countryside, the 'rape' of the coal industry.

Here and elsewhere English has gaps where there should be words to express the meanings of the daily experience of women.

Instead, as a language, English is the product of male theologians, male translators, male lexicographers, male ideologists, male politicians, male professors, male grammarians and successive male-dominated social orders.

And its development has gone hand in hand with the development of capitalism.

Indeed the rise of the English language to social acceptability amongst the court French and Latin in the 14th



"The grip of brotherhood" also extends to daily language

century coincided with the first emergence of the embryonic British bourgeoisie.

Chaucer, the first major poet in English was a prime product of this new social class (and like most other English poets that spring to mind, a man).

From its very first days, therefore, the English language has been defined, developed, expanded and refined largely by men for men.

This has created conditions where, as Dale Spender points out, the male is the norm in English and the feminine is consistently regarded as 'nega-

tive' in relation to the masculine.

"The semantic rule which has been responsible for the manifestation of sexism in the language can be simply stated: there are two fundamental categories, *male* and *minus male*. To be linked with male is to be linked with a range of meanings which are positive and good; to be linked to minus male is to be linked to the absence of these qualities..."

Spender, p.23

She points to a string of descriptive words in which the female variant has become deni-

grated—often by sexually debased meanings: among them lady, dame, governess, courtesan, madam, mistress, queen.

Most professional titles are automatically construed as male unless prefixed with the qualification "female" or "woman"—doctor, writer, etc.

Spender underlines the disappearance of women's names in bourgeois marriage as part of the submergence of women's identity and experience. And she examines the problems for women in expressing themselves in a language which systematic-

ally degrades them or ignores them.

Spender undermines some hoary old myths—in particular the "theories" designed to show from their use of language that women are by nature "less assertive" than men and the notion that women talk more than men.

In reality much of the research on such questions is itself sex-biased in favour of "the male as norm". In a series of experiments of mixed-sex discussions it was the men who spoke more often than the women and dominated the discussion.

Many of the mannerisms used as examples of women's "inferior" language simply reflect the oppressed position of women in society.

In Chapter 5—'Language and Reality: Who Made the World?'—comes an intriguing section on the use of the term "man" and "he" to mean the human race.

Spender traces the development of this usage from the 16th Century to the present day through a succession of (male) grammarians, and shows from a series of text book references that in practice the term "man" is generally understood not at referring equally to both sexes but as referring specifically to the male of the species.

Women writers

Spender also has an interesting chapter on women writers—their difficulties in penetrating a preserve so heavily dominated by men and the further attacks and denigration that many of them suffer at the hands of (male) critics and publishers.

Her book is challenging. It is enlightening. But in many respects it is also pretty awful.

It is repetitive and extremely wordy in its arguments. The same positions could have been argued in half as many words. And the space saved could usefully have been devoted to expanding the section which to me was the most intriguing and worrying—the areas of experience and concern which are not adequately catered for in English, and the attempts which feminists have made to fill these gaps.

In addition a number of the examples that are given of sexism in language seem very weak. And for some reason

Spender includes an absolutely ludicrous yarn about one woman who wore herself out by staying up all night every night to put her hair in curlers for her husband each morning—scarcely a typical case of the oppression of women!

But the most overriding limitation of the book is its non-materialist, feminist analysis of the development of language.

Bible

It contains a remarkably silly section on sexism in the language of the Bible—ignoring completely the fact that Christianity itself (along with every other form of religion) embodies and perpetuates the oppression of women.

And it pins its main hopes for the future on faith in the development of 'consciousness raising' groups of the feminist movement.

While the appeal of such groups to sections of middle class women is better explained by Spender than in many other accounts, she still fails to offer any means through which women can actually take steps to end the conditions that reinforce their oppression.

Like so many academics and intellectuals who move towards radical politics, Spender regards ideas and ideology and consciousness as the primary issues to be confronted, and the fight against oppression being some kind of grand teaching in which the oppressors are confronted by the ultimate lecture.

She fails to recognise that ideas and ideology flow from material conditions: that it is the material world of oppression which leads to sexist language and not vice versa.

Again and again language is falsely seen as a *conscious* plot by men to keep women in their place.

Few of course would be stupid enough to deny that both 16th century lexicographers and 19th century grammarians felt that a woman's place was in the home as the appendage of a man.

But their use of language flows not from this as a preoccupation, but from it as a *preconception*, one of the body of *assumptions* from which they approached the task of developing the overall ideology of the British bourgeoisie.

For the bourgeoisie today, as in its earliest period of formation, the subordination of women is *itself* a subordinate part of the struggle to uphold the values of private property, ownership and exploitation for profit.

In other words the material and psychological oppression of women is for the bourgeoisie today simply part and parcel of their material exploitation of the working class.

And this material situation has found its more or less direct reflection in the mystical "values" and "ideals" of religion, of bourgeois legality, bourgeois philosophy and of course in language—both in its literary and its daily use.

No control

Working class men therefore are in a sense as excluded from language as are women.

They did not create the language: they have no control over it; their experiences are missing from it; and their oppression and exploitation are simultaneously concealed and in part prolonged by it.

While we must recognise the problems and inadequacies of the English language, our fight to find means of expression adequate for the experience of women and the oppressed must be part of our fight to break the monopoly hold exercised by the bourgeoisie over the means of production, education and propaganda.

There is no literary answer to the problems of English as a "man made language": only a *revolutionary* answer.

Dale Spender points to a problem—but only a socialist can show us how to put it right.

STATE INTERVENTION AND SOCIALISM

BOB SUTCLIFFE reviews "State Intervention in Industry", a workers inquiry by Coventry, Liverpool, Newcastle and North Tyneside Trades Councils. Price £2.00.

This book is a symptom of the major changes which are taking place in the labour movement—one expression among many of a growing search by disillusioned but not totally demoralised socialists for a route to socialism in our lifetime.

The disillusion, of course, is with the policies implemented in the last two decades in the name of socialism by eleven wasted years of Labour governments whose cynical leaders only paved the way to Heath, Thatcher, and mass unemployment.

Most of those who had something to do with this workers' inquiry, to judge from the way they write, had illusions in Labour in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Part of what the book does is to document in great detail the Labour government's industrial policies, as they affected firms in Coventry, Tyneside and Merseyside, to show how those illusions were shattered.

Those who claim to have no illusions should welcome the conclusion of this book and should resist any temptation

towards smugness.

Because they also, however revolutionary they may profess themselves, have a lot to answer for in relation to that dismal period—they have to explain why, given the cynicism and reaction of the Labour government, they failed to present a revolutionary alternative credible enough to attract masses of workers to it.

Failed policies

This book helps to lay bare the failed policies of the last Labour governments, and gives detailed evidence to show how Wilson's, Callaghan's Varley's and indeed Benn's 'socialism' failed so often to benefit the working class and ended up as an appendage to the needs of the big capitalists.

This is all documented in relation to the National Enterprise Board, the treatment of workers' cooperatives, planning agreements and government financial aid to industry.

The inquiry rejects not only the sterile and reactionary policies of the Wilson and Callaghan governments but also the whole concept of socialism as being 'nationalisation plus Lord Robens'.

One of their principal concerns in searching for an alternative is the fight for authentic workers' control and democracy.

The report, therefore, is closely connected with the fight for the democratisation of the Labour Party and in an important way, links that fight with the shop floor struggles of the working class over jobs and working conditions.

The authors in fact appeal for politics to be no longer left to the politicians but for workers to participate directly through their organisations—trades unions, trades councils, shop stewards committees and so on.

So all that is positive and to be welcomed in this unusual book. The welcome must be modified, however, by a number of criticisms.

Colourless

First of all, the book will communicate with less people than it could because of the colourless style in which it is written. An absence of stylistic gimmicks is all very well but 150 pages without a single metaphor or a single joke is hard going.

Second, while the report talks rightly about the need for the working class and its allies to form its own organisations of struggle, it is much too apt to think in terms of what to do with existing organisations rather than to start with the purpose for which organisation is required and then propose the appropriate kind of organisations.

Third, the report, reflecting its source, has a tendency to glorify both shop stewards and trades councils. Many shop stewards and trades councils are major obstacles to the fight for workers' democracy and a militant struggle against capitalists, the Tory government and the Labour leadership.

The report would be more realistic if it acknowledged that and gave some examples from the struggles which it otherwise describes in so much detail.

Finally, the book stresses organisations much more than policies in its concluding chapter on the needs for a defensive and offensive struggle of the working class.

If its important critique of Labour's failures is to be built on then it will be crucial to develop in detail policies relating to the ending of



Benn

business secrets (an important obstacle to the workers in every case discussed), work sharing, occupations and so on. On all of this the report as it stands is far too vague and reticent.

It is also important for there to be more thought within the labour movement about how to convert the plan for alternative production produced by the Lucas Aerospace stewards combine from the world-famous propaganda device which it now is into a concrete agitational weapon in the fight for workers' control of production and socialism.

Why we must fight Tories' racist Bill

The British Nationality Bill is an immense and complicated document, 62 pages long. We are printing here an interview given to *Socialist Press* by John Tilley, Labour MP for Lambeth Central, and one of the experts on this racist and sexist measure which the Thatcher government has introduced.

The Bill has now entered its Committee stage in the House of Commons and will be intensively discussed there for at least three months. John Tilley will

be one of the leading Labour spokespeople.

Socialist Press agrees with much of what John Tilley says about this Bill, though we do not believe that despite improvements, Labour's immigration policy has yet fully thrown off the reactionary nature it has shown in the past. We will soon print a review of Labour's *Citizenship and Immigration* document.

Meanwhile John Tilley here provides a very clear guide to the provisions of the Bill on which the labour movement needs to be much more fully informed in order to take up an effective fight against it.

What are the main changes which the Bill will bring about in the law?

I think the purpose of the Bill is to replace the 1948 Nationality Act for two main reasons: first, that Act gave people in Britain, indeed people throughout the British Empire one single citizenship—of the United Kingdom and Colonies.

What this Bill seeks to do is to give a clear *British* citizenship to people connected with Britain and separate citizenships for those who are in the colonies and those people who are in many ways the sort of jetsam of empire, the East African Asians who are stranded at the moment, not able to get into Britain.

That is the first major change in the law.

The second major objective of the Bill is to recognise that the 1948 Act has been amended something like 40 times since then and has made nationality law a mess.

The major amendments, of course, are the 1962, 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts which restricted the rights of people from various parts of the empire, and particularly black people from the empire and the Commonwealth from coming into Britain.

We in the Labour Party support the idea that there should for this reason be a new nationality law; but we feel that this Act is really another Immigration Act which bolsters up the racism and sexism of earlier Acts without providing a good basis for nationality.

There were some proposals under the Labour government. How does the Tory Bill differ from those?

The Labour government Green Paper was a discussion document which aired a lot of the possibilities about the Act and its review. I thought, and many groups did, that some of those possibilities were racist, discriminatory and unfair.

Some of the worst aspects of the Green Paper have been dropped such as the possibility that dual nationality would no longer be allowed. But the Tories have also put in things which weren't in the Green Paper.

We are not defending the Green Paper. Even though it was only a discussion document, I don't think it is some-

thing that the Labour Party should be in any way proud of. And, of course, the Labour Party policy now is a long way away from the Green Paper.

What categories of people will be most adversely affected by the provisions of the Bill become law?

I think there are two approaches to that question. The first one is to say that everyone in Britain is going to be badly affected because the Bill is going to harm race relations in general.

In terms of the injustices done to particular groups of individuals, there are really three categories I would pick out.

First of all, as I said, some children born in Britain will not be British because their parents were not legally and permanently settled here. That means the children of students who are here, people on work permits, people who are declared to be illegal immigrants—even though they may be declared illegal entrants years after they originally came in.

Those children in many cases are going to be stateless. There is a very complicated procedure for them to acquire nationality and I think that many of them are going to fail to do so.

Making children born in Britain stateless for the first time in British history is a major injustice in terms of individuals.

The second group who miss out are the Commonwealth citizens—people who came largely from the black Commonwealth—who have a right under existing British law to register as British citizens; they don't have to pass tests for naturalisation, they have an automatic right to British citizenship when they apply for it.

Those people will only have that right for a couple of years more and then it will be gone.

And the third group—and I suppose this is the worst of all—are the East African Asians. Something like 70,000 who are in East African countries now have gone to India.

These are people who, when their countries became independent were told, *promised*, by Britain that, if they kept their British passport, they could stay as British citizens and that they could have the right of entry into Britain. That



Angry picket of Timothy Raison in Rochdale last month

right, of course, was taken away in 1968 by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act that the Labour government passed.

What this Bill does is to take away the passport as well, because they will become something called British Overseas Citizens, which means they will have no rights at all—no rights of entry, no rights to live anywhere; they can't transmit it to their children, and their children in some cases will become stateless.

Take the example of Malawi: an East African Asian family in Malawi—their children when this Bill goes into law will be stateless because this Bill says quite clearly that a child must have one parent of African origin in order to be a Malawi citizen.

Those people—where they are now their children will be stateless; and I believe that this is a preliminary to the Tories using even the limited entry voucher system under which small numbers of East African Asians are coming into the country now.

Also among those who are particularly hard hit of this group are those who went to India.

A lot of them went to India when they were driven out of East Africa (mainly through the activities of Amin) on the basis of a promise that they would sometime be allowed into Britain.

I pick out those three but there are lots of other little groups all over the world who suffer as well but those are I think the worst hit.



Raison

That supports what you said earlier on about the Bill being racist. You also said it perpetuates the sexism which was in the Green Paper. In what sense is it sexist?

It's very interesting because the Tories will not accept that it is sexist. We acknowledge that

some sexual discrimination which existed before is removed in the Bill—for instance, a woman can now transmit citizenship by descent abroad.

But that makes it all the worse that the Bill actually introduces a *new* sexism by taking rights away from women in the field of marriage. At present a non-citizen woman who marries a citizen man has an immediate and automatic right to become a British citizen.

Now she would have to wait for three years before she could apply for British citizenship. The Tories say that that brings women into line with men; that removes discrimination because men at the moment have to wait five years. We say that taking rights away from women is no form of progress.

It would be unacceptable even if they did have equality elsewhere—which they clearly don't.

Another way in which the Bill maintains a sexist bias is that illegitimate children will only be able to acquire the right to citizenship through the mother.

Foreign women for example who have children in this country—if those women are not legally and permanently settled—whether the man, the father of that child was a fully fledged British citizen will do no good in establishing citizenship for that child.

In that sense it perpetuates the burden of illegitimacy which inevitably is borne by the mother as well as by the child. So it continues sexual discrimination.

What were the concessions which were made by Whitelaw the other week and do they have any significance?

Yes, they do. One was a major one and an absolute one. Previously the Bill as printed said that citizenship by descent, that is citizenship acquired by a child born abroad, could only be transmitted by a citizen who was born in this country, not a citizen who was naturalised or registered.

What that meant was simply this: if say a British couple were born in Britain and went to a Common Market country, say Belgium, and had a child that child would be British. If, however, a couple who were born in Trinidad but as children had come to this country and had been registered as British citizens, by their parents, paid taxes here, obeyed the laws here and so on, that is had been full British citizens here—if that couple had gone to the Common Market country for example and had had a child,

the child would have been stateless, because they couldn't pass on their citizenship because they were only naturalised or registered.

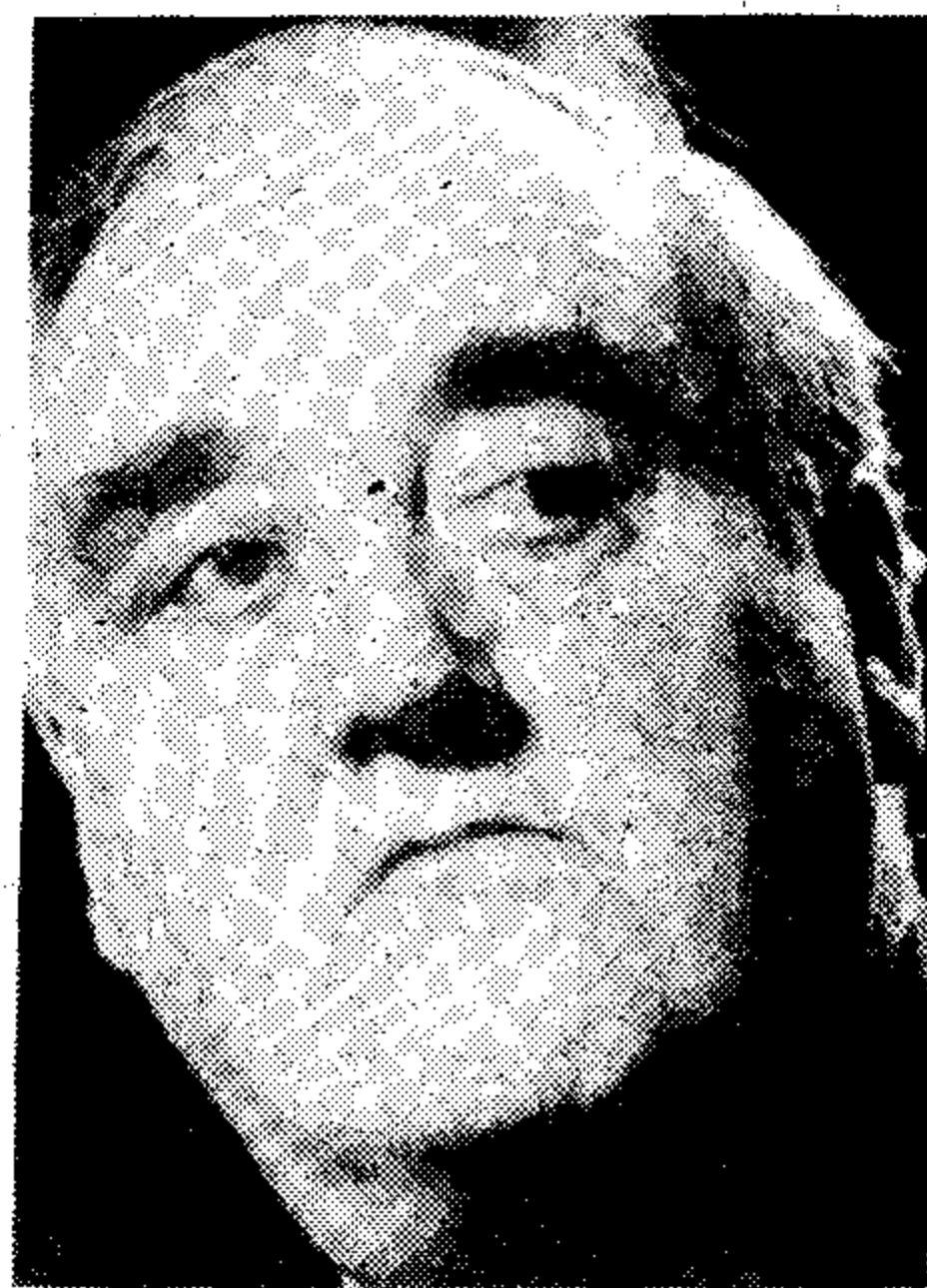
The other group that would have lost out on that is Asian women because there is a perfectly understandable tradition among young Asian women to go home to their home village in the sub-continent, when their first child is due, simply as I understand it, to be with their mothers—a perfectly normal, indeed international, tendency.

But if those women had only been registered as British citizens then if their kids were born back in Bangla Desh, even if they were only going to be there a few months, then those children wouldn't have been British citizens.

That point, which we hammered hard, has been conceded totally by the government; and now citizenship by descent is irrespective of how the parent acquired citizenship so those children will now be full British citizens.

The other concession is a minor one. It says that if a child who was stateless at birth because he or she was born in Britain to parents not legally or permanently settled then, when that child reaches the age of ten, if he or she had lived continuously in this country with only a maximum of 90 days in each of those ten years out of the country, the child would then have the right to citizenship.

Clearly that's a concession, but it's a very minor one because there are so many hurdles that a child would have to pass to qualify.



Whitelaw

What do you think is the overall political objective of the Tories in introducing the Bill at this stage? How much are they making concessions to racist forces to their right as well as within their own ranks?

I think they are. Obviously

it's difficult to know how far this has been thought out by individual Tories; but there's no doubt that before the General Election when they were elected they promised a whole shopping list of racist measures, particularly by Whitelaw is his Leicester speech in 1978.

And partly as a result of that, partly as a result of Thatcher's remarks about 'swamping', they got a big slice of what you might call the racist vote. I think that contributed to the decline of the National Front vote.

I don't think people stopped being racist; I think a lot of them voted Tory. The Tories feel electorally that they have to keep assuaging that group.

How do you see the possibility of opposing the bill, both inside and outside Parliament?

Obviously, the first thing we had to do was to straighten out Labour Party policy. I haven't supported Labour government policies on these issues in the past.

We have had to make it clear, as we have done, that we think the 1968 Act was a mistake, and that it was racist; and, as I've said earlier, that there were lots of mistakes in the Green Paper.

So at NEC level the Labour Party have during the last year been trying to hammer out a new policy which we have set out in a paper called *Citizenship and Immigration*, which largely tallies with what I have been saying—particularly the basis of fair citizenship being the basis of a fair immigration policy, rather than the complete reverse of that.

But I think the key to opposing this Bill doesn't actually lie in the House of Commons. It lies in the community at large, particularly black groups, political groups, civil liberties groups and so on. Also the women's movement. We've been very keen to make them see that there were clear sexist elements in the Bill.

The pressure's got to be kept up all the time, partly because the Bill's going to be in Committee at least three months. We do have a flying start: we're amazed to get a major concession before the committee stage. That shows that the pressure has got to be kept up—at local as well as at national level.

I think we've established the Labour Party's credibility—I put it no higher than that—there was a credibility gap before. We have partly closed that gap in terms of how the black groups and indeed the labour movement as a whole, sees us on this issue. But we alone aren't going to convince the Tories to change it.

TORIES ROCKED BY MINERS' VICTORY

By Bill Peters

"It is one thing to take the reins of office. It is quite another to impose the defeats on the working class that are necessary to make Tory policies stick . . .

The Tories remember all too vividly how workers' readiness to fight every attack on their trade unions and living standards led in 1974 to the premature fall of the Heath government. Callaghan was in turn forced into the 1979 election with his policy of wage controls torn to tatters by the massive pay struggles in both private industry and the public sector."

Socialist Press assessment of the election results, May 9 1979.

Thatcher's undignified collapse last week in front of an unofficial strike of coal miners has now made this assessment a living reality. But why did it take 21 months to happen?

The reality was that the Tory government had gained office not by any retreat or weakness of the working class, but as a result of the historic crisis of the working class—the crisis of leadership.

For five years Callaghan and Healey had implemented Tory policies.

They had set the precedent for each of the anti-working class measures contained in the Tory election platform—anti-union laws; racist immigration laws; social service cuts; reducing the value of wages; running down industry, closing factories and increasing unemployment. These policies lost them the 1979 election.

The Tories therefore had a flying start and a Commons majority of 43 to back it up.

Confrontation

Thatcher took power as a government of confrontation with an openly declared plan of action designed to hit the working class at every level, increase the rate of exploitation and re-establish the unchallenged power of the employers.

The response of the trade union leaders to this was to open talks with the new Tory ministers and to pull back from even the level of struggle they had mounted against the Labour government.

No resistance was offered to the wave of Tory attacks:

*A strict monetarist policy which was to trigger the wholesale rundown of manufacturing industry in Britain.

*Cash limits in the public sector;



Tory monetarists: how will their eager supporters respond to this U-turn?

*A massive series of cuts affecting particularly women workers, tying them to the home and putting the burden back onto the family;

*Anti-union legislation drafted to hamstring the power of the unions.

Tax concessions

Thatcher justified this by saying that "the problem of Britain is a West German standard of living on a Panamanian economy."

At the same time Thatcher strengthened the class base of her government with tax concessions to the middle class and huge pay increases to the army, police, the judiciary and the management of nationalised industries.

Only five weeks after the election Thatcher lifted price controls and introduced a budget which increased VAT from 8 to 15% and introduced a series of measures which increased local authority rates, increased the price of gas, electricity and public transport; more than doubled prescription charges; further increased the cost of dental treatment and put up the cost of mortgages, bank overdrafts and the price of petrol.

As a result inflation rose to

over 20%; but no resistance was offered by the trade union leaders. Thatcher became an example to the ruling class of the hard pressed capitalist world of a stable hard line government clearly and openly representing the interests of the ruling class in Britain.

If anyone doubted the complicity of the trade union leaders with the Tories they only had to look at events in BL.

Michael Edwardes, Thatcher's ideal manager and her mouthpiece in industry, announced the closure of 13 plants and the scrapping of 25,000 jobs. But the leaders of the CSEU actually supported the plan; argued in favour of it as a correct policy and countered any resistance to it in the BL workforce.

Thatcher and Edwardes quickly capitalised on this, and sacked Derek Robinson to initiate a new offensive against the shop stewards' movement.

Steel workers

Thatcher moved quickly to a confrontation with the steel workers. A 2% pay offer led to a strike call—and a massive response from the steel workers.

Thatcher was on the line. She wanted to defeat a major



Pym

section of the working class in action; but the strike had the potential to spread and to bring the Tories down.

The policies of the trade union leaders saved Thatcher. BL workers who had voted to strike were held back from joining the steel workers; the TUC squashed a general strike in Wales in defence of jobs; and dock delegates voted for a strike on the day that the steel workers were sent back to work.

Thatcher had survived, and whilst the steel workers had improved on the original pay offer, BSC was free to proceed with massive job cuts and plant closures.

The Workers Socialist League saw these events as a confirmation that the real possibility existed to bring the Tories down in this winter's pay round.

Thatcher, however, saw things differently. At the Tory Party conference she boldly claimed that nothing could deflect the Tories from their course or stop them achieving

their aims.

"What, then, stands in our way? A prospect of another Winter of Discontent? I suppose it might. But I prefer to believe that certain lessons have been learned from experience: that we are coming slowly, painfully, to an Autumn of Understanding. I hope it will be followed by a Winter of Commonsense.

If it isn't, we shall not be diverted from our course. To those waiting with bated breath for that favourite media catchphrase the U-turn, I have only one thing to say.

You turn if you want to: the Lady's NOT for turning."

In fact the winter started with a victory for Thatcher. BL workers were cynically betrayed after voting overwhelmingly for strike action. The government capitalised on this and introduced their 6% wage limit for local authority government workers.

Again, many of the union leaders ran for cover. NUPE settled for 7½% for local authority manual workers. But in the docks jobs were saved by the threat of a national official dock strike.

It is against this background that the Tories were defeated by the miners last week. The strength of the working class emerged which had potentially existed from the beginning of the Thatcher government.

Edwardes

The apparently strong government fell apart as it would have done if the steel strike had been spread or if Thatcher had been confronted by other sections of the working class at an earlier stage.

Edwardes would have collapsed in a similar way had

the challenge come in BL.

The implications of the miners' victory are far reaching. A decisive move from the ranks of the NUM, supported by many officials at Area level has thrown the Thatcher government into disarray in the face of an unofficial strike.

As a shamefaced John Biffen—once Thatcher's high priest of monetarism—admitted at the weekend:

"What we have seen demonstrated over the last week is something which we have long known—and that is the capacity of certain sections of organised labour to exercise extra-parliamentary authority."

He admitted that other sections of workers had the miners' ability to force the government

As we go to press (Monday) it appears that water workers are following the example of the miners in pursuing their pay demands. Lancashire water workers have ignored the advice of their officials to hold their fire and voted to strike from tomorrow morning against the employers' 10% offer.

Such action could well force the pace of union negotiators who meet on Wednesday to discuss the next step after the overwhelming rejection of the offer by the 32,000 manual workers.

to change course: and he also admitted that in the face of such action Prior's anti-union Employment Act was powerless to hold workers back.

This is the lesson that must be taken into the whole labour movement. Workers fighting closures and redundancies; civil servants fighting on wages; local authority workers and tenants in struggle against Heseltine's cuts must follow the path of struggle mapped out by the miners. There is a real chance that the divided Thatcher government can be brought down.

In the wake of their humiliation they are reeling on every front. Thatcher's economic whizz-kid Walters has opposed the government's line on the strength of sterling: Leader of the House Frances Pym has hinted enigmatically at "tactical turns"; Lord Thorneycroft has joined the ranks of the doubters; and ex-Minister Norman St. John Stevas has stepped up his criticisms of Thatcher's "extremist" policies, in line with Geoffrey Rippon and other back benchers. Only the Institute of Directors has attacked Thatcher for taking too soft a line with the miners.

The Tories are divided; they are vulnerable; they can and must be brought down. And the working class has shown it has the strength to do it.



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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

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.

Campaign for conference

As struggles erupt against rent and rate increases and cuts in local government services, and in the aftermath of the raid which broke up the three-month occupation at Longworth Hospital, a discussion on direct action to fight the cuts is particularly appropriate.

The conference launched for March 21 jointly by the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement and Socialist Organiser is designed to offer a forum for discussion on precisely the political and practical questions to be tackled in mounting all-out action, to halt the cuts.

Labour councillors engaged in anti-cuts struggles in London, the Midlands and the North,

tenants' leaders, direct works shop stewards, NUT militants, nursery campaigners and a speaker from the Longworth occupation will be among the platform speakers in the conference, which will seek to draw the political lessons out of recent and current struggles.

In this way it is hoped to provide the basis for a strengthened campaign for action to build on the gains of the cuts conferences convened by Lambeth Labour Group in November and January.

The tickets are £1.50 for delegates and employed workers and 75p for the unwaged. Transport is available from all areas. A crèche will be provided at the conference.

We urge readers to attend, and to fight for delegations from their trade unions and Labour Parties.

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: SO/CDLM
Cuts Conference, c/o 66 Brookesley Street,
London E3

Will leaders call water strike?

With their national officials due to meet on Wednesday February 25, it is clear that a heavy majority of Britain's 32,000 manual workers in the water industry have voted for rejection of the employers' second, 10% pay offer.

But despite this clear mandate for strike action there are worrying signs that officials of the GMWU, NUPE and TGWU may stall on an all-out stoppage.

They have issued anguished pleas to the employers to improve the offer prior to Wednesday's meeting. And there is speculation

that they might try to diffuse and split the militancy of the membership by calling only regional action.

In the aftermath of the miners, the water workers are best placed of all to carry through the next defeat of the Tory government. Only their own leaders can stand in the way of such an outcome.

WORKERS SOCIALIST LEAGUE/
SOCIALIST ORGANISER

Joint Public Meeting
AFTER WEMBLEY
The fight for democracy in the Labour Party

Speakers
John Bloxham, organiser of Rank and File Mobilising Committee and Alan Thornett, WSL

Friday 6 March at 7.30 pm
Waltham Club, Norfolk St
off Beverley Road, Hull

Ansells bitter jobs fight

Ansells workers fighting the proposed closure of their brewery have won the support of TGWU-organised pub managers representing 50% of Ansells West Midlands landlords.

The managers have agreed to black supplies of beer other than that produced by Allied Breweries—the combine that owns Ansells.

This gives the TGWU the opportunity to force the pace in the dispute, which is the outcome of Allied Breweries' attempt to rationalise production at the expense of 1,000 jobs in Birmingham.

Pickets are already outside "rogue" pubs which have sought outside supplies of beer in order to keep going.

Paisley rent strike

A MASS meeting of 1,000 angry tenants in Paisley last week voted to launch a rent strike from March 28. The Labour-controlled council has announced rent increases of 50%—way above even the amount demanded by Heseltine and the Tory government.

Elsewhere in Scotland there are moves to rent strikes in Dunbarton and Irvine, while in Dundee the Labour Council is standing firm on its refusal to sell council houses—despite growing threats of legal action.

GREENOCK OCCUPATION

THE occupation by 240 women machinists at the Vanity Fair (Lee Jeans) textile plant in Greenock is now in its third week.

The women, members of the Tailor and Garment Workers Union are fighting the closure of the plant. They have received some financial backing from Lower Clyde shipbuilding workers—but still need practical and cash support, which should be sent to Ellen Monaghan, 55 Cambridge Road, Greenock.

Where was Scargill?

In the aftermath of last week's whirlwind struggle by the miners a number of questions are still being asked.

Many miners plainly felt that the struggle should have been pressed home until a written agreement was forthcoming: and in Yorkshire and elsewhere many others queried the conduct of Yorkshire President Arthur Scargill.

Socialist Press spoke to Steve Shuckla from Markham Main NUM, who clearly reflected the mixed feelings within the coalfields:

"The only reason the Tories backed off is in the face of the threat of a General Strike, because all sections like steel, railways, and so on, were behind us.

It might have been a spark which brought the government down. But they want to beat other sections first—then take on the miners.

Only two weeks ago the government said it was between the NUM and the NCB—but now they've come in.

It demonstrates the strength of the miners: and the unimportance of large stocks of coal if we've got other sections of workers behind us."

SP: What role has Scargill played?

"None! He had an 86% mandate for a strike, yet he kept quiet while the Welsh miners



Scargill

were all out—making us into scabs. And we shouldn't have gone back until we had written, binding agreements."

SP: Are you saying Scargill should have defied the 15-8 vote on the Executive and instructed Yorkshire miners to come out?

"Yes I am. We voted with our feet, as did other areas. We came out after the government climbdown because we wanted to make sure there was no return to work without cast iron agreements.

Scargill sold us out. If he was any sort of socialist he wouldn't have let our Welsh brothers stand alone.

This is the way I see it. Other people from other areas may see it differently."

"We cannot vote for these policies"

Graham Shurety interviews Camden councillor and supporter of Camden Labour Left Phyl Turner about the statement he signed with nine other Camden councillors and the way forward in the fight against the cuts in Camden.

What conditions prompted you to write your public statement [reprinted on page 4]?

We have reached a point in the Labour Group where unity has broken down. Camden's Labour Group has always tried to find some kind of unity in the face of the Tories. But the policies now being put forward are so anti-working class that those on the left simply cannot vote for them.

Auditor

They are being carried not necessarily because those on the right or centre of the Party support them, but because of the external threat of the District Auditor and the courts.

So on their part it is a matter of self protection and expediency. There is now no middle way in local government. We cannot on principle move to the leadership's position and there is no way they are going to support us.

There is a split which has to be made public. The statement reflects that and must now be used to organise around.

What impact do you think this stand will have in the Labour Party?

I hope that the three CLPs in Camden will reaffirm their support for the policy of the Camden Labour Party Borough Conference and call on the rest of the Group to support it.

Whether any of the Labour Parties will go so far as to call

on those who don't support it to stand down is hard to say—there is always in a crisis like this a tendency to back away from the implications of such a fight over leadership positions.

There will be a lot of people who will be saying that however much we dislike it the Tories would be much worse and for God's sake don't go over the cliff.

In the statement you call on all sections of the labour movement to support you in the struggle against council policy. What course do you see that struggle taking?

As well as pulling the Labour Party behind us it is important that the left take up the fight against the right wing at all levels in the Party. I am chairman of the Policy and Resources Group which has the task of drawing up the Party's policy on finance for next year's council election manifesto. That manifesto must challenge the government's right to impose their reactionary policies on workers.

Risk

As such it will inevitably involve the risk of councillors being forced into an early confrontation with the government. It will therefore play a major role in determining what sort of candidates stand in May 1982.

Up until now there has been little participation of the left in the process of policy formula-

tion. This must change. As regards the struggle of tenants against the Council's rent and rate increases, I expect sporadic rent and rate strikes, but these are extremely difficult to organise and sustain.

For example, once the Camden Council had caved in against Heath's Housing Finance Act, only a handful of tenants were prepared to put their livelihoods in jeopardy and remember, unless there is a strong mass tenants' movement, tenants as individuals are placing themselves at risk. This was the situation in 1972 when the Council itself was saying "we will not require you to pay that increase [i.e. we will not evict you for non-payment] even though we have been forced to implement the Bill." That will not be the position today.

Fluid situation

The position of the unions is very confused at the moment. I honestly don't know what the outcome of their present positions will be. It appears to be a very fluid situation.

It looks as though the national leadership of NALGO has undermined the possibility of a fight back.

If we get to the point where NUPE rejects the Council's proposed productivity scheme and it is imposed on the workforce over the head of the union there could well be a confrontation between the NUPE membership and the Council.

IN BRIEF

ONE MOTION the Scottish TUC seems reluctant to debate at its forthcoming congress comes from Moray Trades Council. Tucked away at the end of the list under the heading 'Miscellaneous', it declares:

"This Congress instructs the STUC to initiate a campaign for a General Strike, in order to bring down the Tory government and replace it with a Labour government committed to socialist policies."

The STUC plainly want to separate this motion from that tabled by the GMWU which appears under the Economic section. This calls, unlike the other motions, not for pressure to reform the Tory government but for "a radical socialist

programme pursued vigorously by the next Labour government."

FOLLOWING a successful fight to keep Fosse Road Day Nursery open, the Leicester Nursery Campaign is now focussing its attention on the Beal Street Nursery in Highfields which is threatened with closure.

The campaign is in an early stage, but already local tenants and housewives have lobbied councillors who came to look at the nursery and a further lobby and public meeting is planned for next week.

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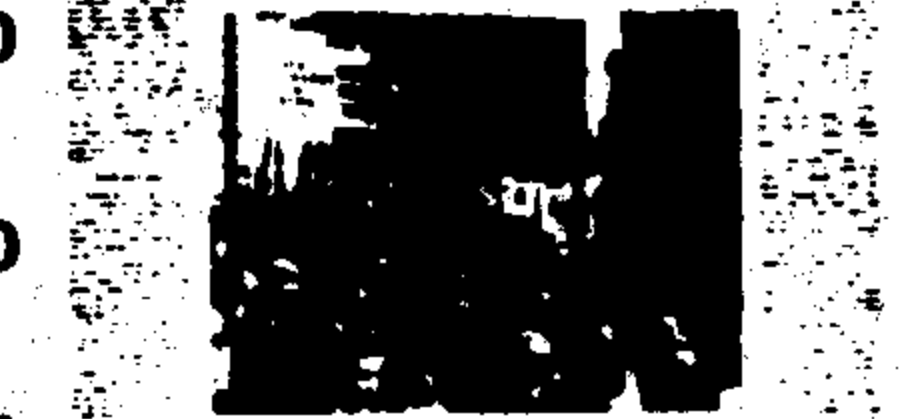
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We cannot overstate the seriousness of this situation. The monthly fund is essential to the publication of Socialist Press. So let's go all out to raise the outstanding £400 in the next week.

Send your donation to:

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Foot: same old line

Over 50,000 workers and youth demonstrated their hatred of the Tory government in the Labour Party's demonstration through the streets of Glasgow last Saturday.

They marched from Blythwood Square to Queens Park, where the vast crowd heard Eric Heffer declare that the aim must be to overthrow capitalism, and Michael Foot tell them to "rise like lions"—to vote Labour at the next election!

Foot has always insisted that the purpose of the Labour Party's agitation on unemployment—with huge marches in Liverpool and Glasgow—is not to mobilise action to bring the Tories down but to "bring Mrs Thatcher to her senses."

At a crowded public meeting in Paisley the night before the march, he had spelled out his political positions more clearly.

Under questioning, he expressed his opposition to the expulsion of the Gang of Three and their supporters from the Labour Party.

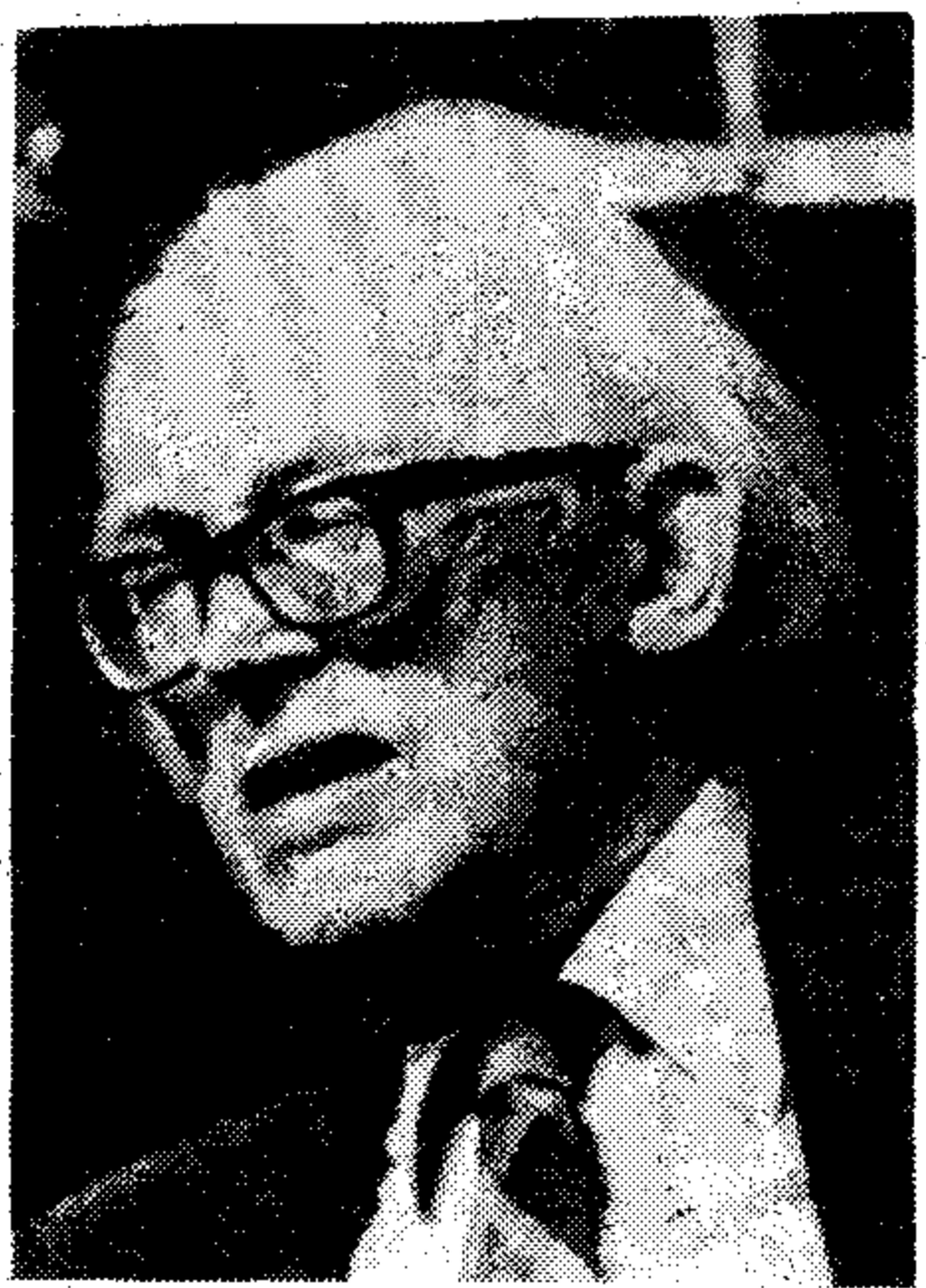
And he admitted he was also opposed to campaigning for a General Strike to bring down the Tory government.

Foot's style of rhetoric and leadership are very different from those of Callaghan. Last Friday for instance he addressed a mass meeting of 600 workers at the threatened Talbot plant at Linwood, calling for an "iron combination" of the industrial and political wings of the labour movement to "defeat the Tories".

But he made it quite clear that he sees Thatcher remaining in office until the end of her term—offering Talbot workers only hopes of "victories" over the government "in the months and years to come".

Behind the facade of arm-waving, oratorical flourishes and populist gestures designed to secure his base of support, Foot is putting forward simply the same wretched politics of Callaghan before him.

Mass action to defend jobs at Linwood and topple the Tories will come—like last week's miners' strike—only despite Foot and his shadow cabinet co-thinkers. The task is to construct a political leadership that is capable of mobilising and advancing such action in the next period.



Foot

Labour's right wing arm for battle

Nobody can have been more relieved at last week's Tory climbdown to the miners than Labour leader Michael Foot.

The miners' strike must have been one of the most frightening developments in his political life. For it raised before his eyes the dread vision of a mounting tide of class struggle driving the Thatcher government from office—and returning a Labour government headed by Michael Foot!

Wracked by crisis

With workers throughout the country clamouring for alternative policies to tackle mass unemployment, plunging living standards, homelessness and social service cuts, Foot knew that such a government would have been wracked by crisis from its first day in office.

He is painfully aware that he has no policies to meet the needs of the working class—since he, like Callaghan before him, sees the task of a Labour government as no more than managing a bankrupt capitalist system.

But he also knows that already Labour activists, to prevent a repetition of the miserable betrayals of the last Labour government has erupted within the Party in the form of the fight for accountability and party democracy.

Defeats

Buffeted by successive defeats and weakened by the defection of the Gang of Three and their hangers-on, Foot, Healey and the right wing of the TUC have only just begun to cobble together the basis of a fight to reverse the democratic reforms of Blackpool and Wembley and restore their authority.

Had they been catapulted into office in the next few weeks they would have been caught with their political trousers down.

Thatcher's retreat gives them a breathing space. And there is every sign that the new—laughably misnamed—"Labour Solidarity" grouping of right wing anti-democrats will use every available minute to press home their underhand campaign.

Central to their demands is a reversal of the electoral college formula for the election of the Party leader, and a dilution of the reselection procedures for MPs.

Tribunites

A number of the now hopelessly divided Tribune Group have lent their support to this nefarious campaign, which will exploit every available bureaucratic trick and sneaky manoeuvre in order to thwart the wishes of Labour Party activists.

It is clear that in the period ahead it is those reactionaries who have decided to stay in the Labour Party and fight—using the Militant group as a stalking horse in their witch-hunt against



Leading anti-democrats: Hattersley and Healey

the left—rather than the isolated Gang of Three who pose the chief danger to the labour movement.

In virtually every area the supporters of the Council for Social Democracy have found themselves ostracised by Labour activists as they rush pell-mell into the soggy arms of the second-string capitalists in the Liberal Party.

But meanwhile in the Labour Party itself, many political co-thinkers of the CSD have remained behind as 'moles' to maintain the struggle against socialist policies.

This underlines the necessity to step up the work of the Rank and File Mobilising Committee for Labour Democracy (and the other campaigns which have helped tip the balance towards

rank and file control in the Party) to defend and enlarge upon the gains of Blackpool and Wembley.

There is little doubt that the additional 70,000 members who joined the Labour Party in the last year did so in order to fight for a genuine alternative to Tory policies.

They can only be offered such an alternative insofar as

socialists take up the fight not only against the reactionary policies of the last government but also against the nationalist "Alternative Economic Strategy" put forward by many sections of the Labour left.

And this fight demands the fullest democracy for socialist tendencies within both the Labour Party and the trade unions.

New stage in fight to save Longworth

The threat of a resumed occupation at Longworth Hospital hangs over the heads of the Oxford Area Health Authority this week.

In the aftermath of the savage AHA raid which snatched four patients from the hospital and closed down the top floor, the staff have temporarily suspended their three-month work-in and 24 hour picketing.

But they have issued a warning that these policies be reimposed at the first sign of a further attack on the hospital.

Although the staff had voted to maintain the occupation immediately after the raid, the continued inaction of COHSE on a national level had left them with little confidence that they would receive the kind of supporting action that they need to reopen the top floor.

And instead of working to strengthen staff in the wake of the raid, official Ernie Brook proceeded with negotiations with the AHA. Management responded by declaring that

they intended to go over the heads of COHSE to send a Planning Team to meet Longworth staff—effectively withdrawing recognition from the union.



A section meeting was called to discuss this situation—at which Brook proposed, with no advance warning, that the work-in be suspended so that he could carry on talks with the AHA "without duress".

A majority of the small meeting felt that there was no alternative—but Occupation Committee members walked out in disgust.

The Occupation Committee has subsequently resolved to pursue the campaign; to meet regularly and to maintain and strengthen the many links now established with unions and supporters in the area—since it is not likely to be very long before the AHA moves again to attack the hospital.

Campaign room

The closed top floor has been made the new campaign committee room as the struggle goes on.

Messages of support, donations, etc., should be forwarded as before to: Myra Bungay, 13 Bowbank, Longworth, Oxon.

Meanwhile angry Oxford ambulance drivers are continuing to withhold cooperation from the AHA as a protest against the way in which two NUPE drivers were manipulated by management into crossing the Longworth picket in the

absence of their stewards. They have mounted their own inquiry into the incident.

STAFF from Longworth, occupation supporters and two COHSE members from the St. Benedicts Hospital occupation in London formed a vocal lobby outside the General Committee of Oxford Labour Party on 16 February to back an emergency resolution from St. Clements ward calling for the expulsion from the Party of Lady McCarthy.

McCarthy is the vice-chairperson of Oxford CLP. But she is also chairperson of the Oxford AHA—and thus directly responsible for the smashing of the occupation in defiance of the stated policy of Oxford GC, and the use of police against the labour movement.

In the event McCarthy's right wing cronies who run the GC rallied behind GC Chairman Bill Conboy who refused to allow the proposer even to explain why the motion should be heard.