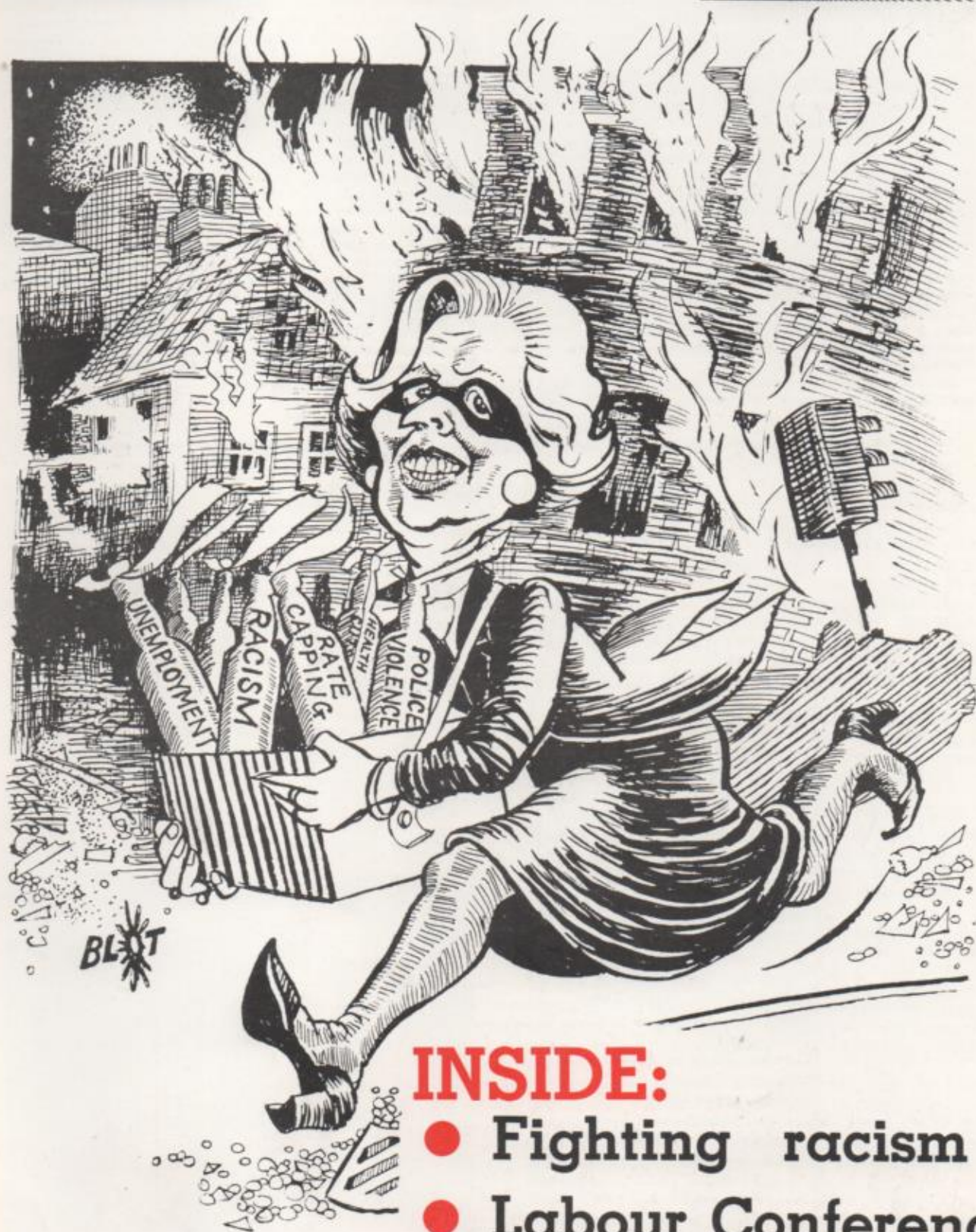


SOCIALIST VIEWPOINT

No. 8. November 1985. 70p



INSIDE:

- Fighting racism
- Labour Conference

Bumper 36-page issue!

About Socialist Viewpoint

This new issue of *Socialist Viewpoint* is once again expanded to 36 pages to make room for a number of important articles from still more contributors. In the month since our last issue went to press we have seen important developments at both the Labour and Tory Party Conferences; new uprisings in the inner cities; and a continuation of the struggles in South Africa and Palestine. All of these issues are covered in this magazine.

A number of questions — Ireland, Palestine, Lesbian & Gay Rights in particular — are covered this month from a campaigning point of view, while we also cover the important conference of Miners' Support Groups in Sheffield on October 12.

Feature articles include (as promised) an examination of state racism in Britain, and background to the recent riots. We also have the promised review of the latest volume of the "official" history of the Communist Party, and a new article in our series on the history of Ireland and the English working class. A brief sketch of the attacks being waged on the Japanese working class should bring surprises to many readers.

A lively look at the struggles being waged by *Socialist Viewpoint* supporters in the Coventry labour movement opens up a new series in which we will highlight the campaigns and activities we are involved in.

Socialist Viewpoint is a magazine committed to the fight for a principled, class struggle programme at every level of the

workers' movement in Britain and internationally. We see the fight for Trotskyist politics taking shape not through introspective sectarian debates in small groups of would-be gurus, nor as simply trailing behind this or that "Left" talking trade union or Labour Party dignitary — but as a patient fight for the independent interests of the working class, and for demands and action which express those interests, in every arena of the class struggle.

With all too little clarity on offer from the various dogmatic left groupings in Britain, we believe that it is possible and necessary to combine debate with policy and programme.

We apologise to those contributors whose articles have been excluded from this issue or cut for lack of space: we are sure our readers will not regret the expanded size of this magazine. But if you feel — as we do — that it offers excellent value, and politics which represent a break from the sectarian posturing and a serious contribution to the class struggle, why not help us sustain and improve it further?

Take a few copies to sell in your workplace, trade union, Labour Party or campaign work. Send us your news and information, articles, cartoons, photos, and letters. Ensure your local activities are publicised on our pages. Check with your local seller or drop us a line for further details.

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"A tribal gathering of the well-heeled and well-oiled..."

Tory looters cut up rough

ONE person, one vote. That often misused slogan is given another twist of meaning by the Tory Party, whose system is so brazenly undemocratic that while 2,500 come to its Conference, only one person casts a vote that means anything — Margaret Thatcher.

Never mind your union block votes, or your wayward Young Liberals, never mind your right wing SDP consensus: Tory "representatives" may speak, and even raise their hands to vote — but they all know that the speeches have been vetted, the resolutions neutered, and the decisions bind nobody to anything. The only speech that matters is Maggie's final day battle cry. Looking for serious debate at a Tory Conference is as naïve as looking for principles in Congress House, Marxism in the Kremlin or common sense in the White House. The Conference is always a tribal gathering of the well-heeled and well-oiled to cheer wildly at the old

arguments and try to outlast previous years' standing ovations for Margaret Thatcher.

This year the security was tighter, the initial mood more one of a conference under seige. But as the representatives brandished their British Telecom share certificates as entry credentials, swapped yarns about jobless scroungers and sympathised with Jeffrey Archer, who exploited his street credibility by declaring: "I know what it's like to be unemployed and owe £400,000," the whole affair barely reached sixth form standards of rhetoric.

Individually unpleasant enough, the collective gathering of crawlers and reactionaries, overloaded with business consultants, lawyers and landladies, frothed over into a boiling lather of undiluted hate at the slightest whiff of blood or gunfire.

Like a seething pack of **Daily Mail** leader writers, nourishing their venomous exasperation and pent-up class hatred for the oppressed, they longed only for a mention of one of this year's hate figures — Neil Kinnock; Bernie Grant; Arthur Scargill; Ted Knight — against whom they could fume.

So it was not surprising that after **three** standing ovations for the tuxedoed bootboy himself, Norman "Frankenstein" Tebbit, wild applause for the privatising zeal of a bulging Nigel Lawson, and Douglas Hurd's pledge to lock up anyone who even so much as irritates an old lady, Peter Walker's cowardly references to unemployment went down as well as a fart in a public library.

The man was dumb enough to say that the Party looked as if it didn't care about the unemployed!

But Tories **do** care, **passionately**: they **HATE** the unemployed, each and everyone of them! They begrudge every brass farthing handed out in benefits to the jobless. They know hardly any of them will ever vote Tory; many live in inner cities, where hardly anyone votes Tory — and lots live in the North, Scotland, and Wales, where there are even less Tories!

Tebbit's line — different from Archer in being more low key on the whole issue — is clear. The next election **cannot** be fought by the Tories on jobs — however





much Peter Walker — chief closer of mines — may whinge into his hankie. Thatcher will offer no new jobs to the 3½ million on today's dole queues.

Instead, the election will have to be fought on the basis of witch-hunting the Labour Party, on pillorying the TUC, and on a vicious "law and order" ticket, given a veneer of credibility by exploiting the new rebellions of alienated, dispossessed youth in the inner cities.

Tory economic policies, cuts and wage cuts, coupled with the brute violence of racism and police harassment, have stripped a whole generation of youth not only of jobs but of status, self-respect, identity and any hope for the future: they have shattered any bonds that might link some youth to society outside their immediate social group.

In a country where the plunder of the poor by the rich has become such an institutional bedrock of government policy, who is to persuade kids who have **nothing** that it is wrong to exploit the few occasions that they have power on **their** side? Who believes that when such frustrations burst loose, some innocent victims will not suffer, and some brutal deeds will not be done?

Having themselves destabilised the slums, ghettos and industrial wastelands, driven youth to desperation and seen them strike back at the police, the Tories now move cynically to exploit the fears of the elderly, the middle classes and others who look on in horror as the buildings burn, wondering where it all will end.

With Labour's refurbished right wing leadership skilled primarily at sticking its own knife into the backs of those in the front line of the fight and preoccupied with masquerading as a reborn SDP; with the Labour Party's youth organisation reduced by the politics of Militant to a dwindling, sloganising handful on the edge of the working class, the initiative stays firmly in the hands of the Tories to shift the ground of battle and catch the workers' movement unprepared.

The Tory speeches — Thatcher, Lawson, Tebbit — showed it, and Walker rubbed the point home: the Tories have **abandoned** the argument on jobs — but they have **not** given up the fight to continue in office, lining the pockets of their friends and business sponsors.

The defence of those councillors who speak out against police violence and harassment; the defence of Liverpool and Lambeth Councils' right and duty to defy the law; and the demand that a Labour government act to free and reinstate the sacked and jailed miners and recompense the NUM for fines and losses inflicted by Tory judges pursuing vicious class law; all have become key dividing lines in the workers' movement.

While one-time "left" toadies join the right wing bootlickers in Kinnock's new gang, Labour's left has urgent work to do, organising and preparing a fight back on these very issues at the centre of the class struggle.



For labour movement action to back South African struggle!

By HARRY SLOAN

"THE Labour Party and the trade unions can take a number of initiatives on their own — by working for a total break of economic links. Workers can refuse to load



South African cops move in.

ships or offload ships from South Africa and they can refuse to buy South African goods."

These words from Oliver Tambo, President of the African National Congress, to this year's Labour Party conference went down with the predictable loud applause.

But this was the sum total of Tambo's appeal for specifically working class action; and there is little sign that any of the union leaders present have any intention of even carrying out this much solidarity action.

Indeed representatives of the courageous Dunne's strikers from Ireland, who toured the TUC and Labour conference seeking support

THE 350 strong section of the British Library Lending Division Institute of Professional Civil Servants has voted to 65 to 62 to boycott requests for material from South Africa.

Garth Frankland, *Socialist Viewpoint* supporter and Chair of the Joint Trade Union Committee, moved the resolution.

He explained that if action was to be carried out in support of the South African workers the time to act is now.

The British Library Lending Division supplies around 20,000 pieces of information a year to South Africa. They are mainly in the field of atomic energy, electronics and computers.

The South African regime will not be able to get this information so easily from other sources. Some weeks ago, the South Africans requested information on 19th century British flogging practice! Gradually the boycott is strangling South Africa's scientific information.

for their 15 month fight and signs of practical British trade union solidarity with the South African workers, came away empty-handed and disgusted at the show of hypocrisy they had witnessed.

The exiled leadership of the South African Congress of Trade Unions has issued a specific and categorical appeal to the trade union movement in Britain and elsewhere for action to:

- Refuse to handle all maritime, air or land traffic to or from South Africa
- Refuse to handle any goods to or from South Africa
- Refuse to handle all postal and telegraphic traffic to and from South Africa.

If these three points were taken seriously by the British trade union movement, it would scarcely be necessary to mount individual appeals to the conscience of shoppers not to buy South African goods: almost the whole supply could be held up at ports, warehouses and depots around the country; orders could be obstructed by postal and banking boycotts; and transport links could be severed.

There is no doubt that the traditional stance of the British trade union leadership has been to make resounding speeches on such issues — and then turn a blind eye both to continued trade, and to occasional appeals from groups of dockers and others for support in enforcing boycott action.

This is understandable to some degree: to block such traffic indefinitely is a recipe for a major confrontation with the employers which few union leaders relish — and many workers might shrink from. Indeed the willingness of workers to take such action requires a high degree of awareness of the importance of the situation: this can occur from time to time when major events take place — and could be much better prepared if there were direct appeals for solidarity by the organised black South African workers.

Perhaps the biggest indictment of the British union bureaucracy and their lack of elementary solidarity is that despite a massive upsurge of struggle, nightly television coverage of vicious racist brutality





Blacks whipped in the streets while British union leaders dodge action.

against black protestors, and despite a categorical appeal for support from SACTU, no union leadership has made any serious attempt to respond with even token supporting action.

It is these same union bureaucrats who are the most adamantly opposed to any direct links between British workplace union organisations at rank and file level and their counterparts in the new non-racial unions which organise hundreds of thousands of black South African workers.

The TUC stand is echoed in the main by SACTU and ANC leaders, for whom the very mention of "direct links" has been enough to induce near apoplexy — despite the fact that such contacts can offer the best hopes of securing the kind of practical solidarity the organisations call for.

It is no accident that the same leaders who oppose direct links also hotly dispute any notion that the democratic revolution in South Africa in which the driving force is the black working class could and should flow over into the proletarian, socialist revolution to overthrow capitalism.

The ANC magazine *Sechaba* argues fiercely against any such concept of a "one-stage" theory of the liberation struggle: Tambo, interviewed by *Labour Weekly*, insists on separating the question of the democratic revolution from socialism:

"Some may say our objectives are socialist but socialists within the ANC accept the Freedom Charter in the same way as do non-socialists. It reflects the objectives of a broad alliance of forces who are agreed on the destruction of the apartheid regime and its replacement with a non-racial, united democratic South Africa."

Tambo has repeatedly (and not least in the recent ANC discussions with white "liberal" South African business leaders made clear the pro-capitalist content of this "broad

THEY WILL
NEVER
KILL US
ALL



alliance" when he has stressed the view that there would be "plenty of room for private enterprise" in an ANC-ruled South Africa.

His allies and co-thinkers in the British trade union bureaucracy were no less clear in their determined efforts to separate the twin aspects of the South African revolution. John Jones from the CP-led TASS took to the rostrum at the Labour Party conference to attack the motion on solidarity with South Africa because it linked the dreaded word "socialism" with "national liberation, democracy and non-racialism".

Even worse from the point of view of the rigid concepts of the union

bureaucracy and the Stalinist-influenced ANC, the motion (from Paisley North CLP) hinted at direct links:

"only through the building of international links with the workers in South Africa and other countries will genuine internationalism be developed which could lead to the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of socialism on a global scale."

Kinnock's Labour leadership let it be remembered, is not for the abolition of capitalism in *Britain*, let alone on a global scale! But the motion was the only one on the agenda, and it was carried on a card vote: it provides a useful basis on which to build campaigns and practical solidarity in every area.

In drawing out debate on the actual policies of the ANC, it is useful to point out that there are other political forces and traditions within the movement of black workers of South Africa, some of which such as the National Forum, hold a much more explicit commitment to socialism and working class politics.

In any event the acute political limitations of the ANC should in no way impede full-scale mobilisation in support of the struggles of South Africa's black working class, and in particular the national demonstration now called for November 2.

It is only by our actions in fighting Botha's allies in the British government and British multinationals, by the fight for genuine class action, that the British workers' movement can prove itself to South African workers.

● *Direct trade union action to block trade, transport and communications to and from South Africa! British shop unions follow the Dunne's strikers example!*

● *Direct links between British and South African workplace union bodies!*

● *Unmask the British firms profiteering from the superexploitation of black workers in South Africa!*

News in brief

● The seven South African businessmen who met an ANC delegation in Zambia six weeks ago have added their support to the demands for the release of jailed ANC leader Nelson Mandela. The same demand has been echoed by the white "liberal" opposition, the Progressive Federal Party, headed by Mr Frederick van Zyl Slabbert, who also trod their way to Lusaka to meet the ANC.

● Attempts by South African church leaders to establish an independent leading role in the anti-apartheid struggle fell flat when a call by Bishop Desmond Tutu for a week-long stay-away failed to secure union support and was scaled down into a half-cocked day of prayers for "national reconciliation" and "justice for all". Unions, including the FOSATU confederation, which have remained aloof from involvement in the cross-class United Democratic Front, on this occasion correctly refused to back Tutu's appeal.

● In an important change of tactics, black youth have gone beyond traditional school boycotts: instead they have begun to use schools as a base for agitation and organisation. Anxious authorities in the western Cape have responded by shutting down 450 schools for "coloured" students. Black youth near Pretoria have also switched tactics — while elsewhere thousands of young people are still boycotting their schools.

● Lagging some time after the peak of mass struggle this summer, and still firmly at a tangent from the necessary mobilisation of South Africa's black



trade unions and the linking of workers, students and community organisations, the ANC has called for blacks to seize guns for use in "armed struggle".

Until now the ANC notion of armed struggle has been actions carried out by a distinct body of armed guerrillas, not connected in any way with mass struggles or defending the communities of the black workers. While they still argue strongly in support of this type of armed organisation, and firmly opposing any call for a workers' militia, it is not clear what the ANC now have in mind.

On past form, a number of armed guerrilla actions — designed to win the admiration and enlist the support of the most militant black youth — could not be ruled out. Significantly, despite the heavy bloodshed so far only a handful of those killed have been white: there is little doubt that any major change in this orientation would unleash fearful reprisals and repression from the Botha regime.



(Top) Tutu's call ignored: (above) increased police violence.



**Smash
Apartheid!**
National
Demonstration,
London,
November 2.

Labour's right wing greets new champion



Time to challenge Kinnock!

By PETE FIRMIN and JENNY FISHER

KINNOCK has made it clear where he intends taking the Labour Party in the period up to the General Election and beyond. His project is a Labour Government which is a re-run of the Wilson and Callaghan governments of the '60s and '70s or, despite his vocal denials, of the Lib-Lab pact if there is a hung parliament.

These governments were mildly reformist ones committed to no basic changes in capitalism. In fact they brought in wage controls, "workers' participation" designed to suck shop stewards into selling rationalisation plans to the workforce on behalf of management, reduced local government expenditure and began cuts in the public sector. In short the attempted by "consent" what Thatcher is doing by confrontation.

The basic elements of such a programme were contained in the "New Partnership" economic document of the TUC/Labour Party. The difference now is that after 6 years of Thatcher the situation facing a new Labour government would be not only many times worse, but a society restructured in favour of the ruling class. It would require drastic socialist measures to even begin to reverse unemployment, the decline in health and social services and any fundamental shift in the distribution of wealth.

Major inroads would need to be made into the economic power of the bosses with a labour movement prepared to resist all attempts at opposition to this by the capitalists and their state machine. Kinnock's refusal to support those involved in class struggle shows he has no desire to carry out such a programme.

Yet each time a Labour government fails to resolve this either in the direction of socialism or the bosses' profitability it opens the door to a more right wing Tory government committed to attacking the organised



working class and increasing repression.

It is clear that the Left has a duty to start organising now to win support for policies adequate to the situation and get them adopted as Party policy as well as defending the best aspects of present policy against dilution. Such an organised opposition will be doubly important if Labour takes government and introduces austerity plans — as in France — but we cannot wait until then for such an opposition to be formed.

In addition to the urgency for those opposing the direction in which Kinnock is taking the Labour Party the question is also raised of whether to stand candidates against Kinnock

and Hattersley for Leader and Deputy Leader. Such a challenge, although unlikely to win, would be central to taking the issues to the labour movement as a whole and solidifying the opposition.

Although annual contested elections for Leader and Deputy Leader are written into the constitution (except when in government) as part of the recent democratic gains, they have fallen into disuse in the last 2 years due to illusions in Kinnock and an unwillingness to provide the media with material for sensationalising "Party divisions" (as if Kinnock hadn't provided enough material, or as if they needed concrete evidence anyway). However, there can no longer be any confusion about the road Kinnock has chosen and now is the time to decide whether to mount a challenge at 1986 Conference. Party Conference 1987 will be too late: as the last Conference before the General election it will most likely be a jamboree for the benefit of the media.

Kinnock himself said on the issue of implementing Conference decisions: "I don't propose to make resignation threats and all the rest of it. The big advantage of having an annual procedure for nominating the leader is



Wilson and Callaghan led attacks on wages and unions while in office. Kinnock's policies would lead the same way.

that if anybody thinks they can do a better job they can get on with it."

Not standing candidates in 1986 will be represented as a refusal by the left to take up the challenge made by Kinnock and as not a serious opposition.

If the right to annual elections had been used in the last 2 years, the media would not be able to exploit a challenge to the extent it could in 1986. However, we cannot allow the bosses' propaganda machine to decide our tactics: democracy and the political importance of the situation must be the crucial factors.

There will be those on the left who feel such a challenge would be tactically unwise because if it was lost by an overwhelming margin we would be weaker than if it had not been carried out. This is little better than taking the soft left argument 'we'll lose, so we won't fight'; and putting a "hard left" gloss on it: "if we lose, the left will be weaker, so we won't fight".

Weighed against losing an election must be the opportunity such a campaign would give to organise the Left. It would be impossible to assess in advance the level of support since this would largely depend on the efficacy of the campaign itself. The campaign would need to be at least as good as that of Benn for Deputy Leader in 1981, reaching into all CLPs, Union branches, Women's Section, etc., but more importantly, it would need to remain organised after the campaign.

Others will say that the issue is "policies, not personalities", or that a challenge would deflect from the policy issues. But one without the other is pretty meaningless. There's a strong battle on policies to be had; if we're strong enough to fight it, we're strong enough to challenge the leadership too. Fighting for policies alone isn't a soft option. And what better way to fight for policies than representing them to the movement through leadership candidates who support them?

And Kinnock himself has made the two inseparable. He has made it clear that he will only implement those policies with which he agrees. A leadership which does not argue convincingly for a set of policies is neither going to win popular support for them nor carry them out. Equally those who say organising the Left would put pressure on Kinnock to carry out policies underestimate his commitment to ignoring the decision-making process of the Party. At the end of the day accountability means standing an alternative candidate.

The Left must begin immediately to discuss both the policies which should be fought for and whether to challenge Kinnock and Hattersley next year. An urgent part of that discussion would be how to ensure that a candidate is forthcoming, unlike the last 2 years.

Organising for Irish solidarity

By **BASIL HINTON** (Vice Chair, Labour Committee on Ireland)

THOUGH the two composite resolutions on Ireland were again heavily defeated at this year's Labour Conference, there has been some erosion of the position of "unity by consent".

Many CLPs have now come to realise that to call for a United Ireland and oppose partition is incompatible with the Unionist veto.

The debate on Ireland was another example of the right wing stitch up. The only speakers called from the floor after the movers were both Party spokespersons on Ireland: this after the usual vicious pro-imperialist rhetoric from Alex Kitson.

The withdrawal resolution was lost on a show of hands and the resolution on continuing the dialogue was defeated by almost 900,000 to over 4 million; the trade union block vote again bulldozing everything into oblivion.

No doubt the bureaucrats were delighted that only the NUR supported the motion, though some abstained.

Though LCI members together with a trade unionist united Ireland supporter from Dublin worked hard in lobbying the union delegations, these efforts came much too late to swing key votes. Much more work needs to be done by the new LCI trade union department after the 5 year period of LCI work in the CLPs.

Kitson brought out the old red herring of withdrawal leading to a bloodbath and civil war, ignoring the fact that both have been going on for 16 years.

The LCI fringe meeting attracted about 70 people: a good attendance considering the distance of the venue from the Con-

ference Centre and that a coach had to be hired to transport them to the meeting.

Mary Manning spoke of the 15 month long strike at Dunnes Stores in Dublin, linking the struggle of the majority in Ireland with the struggle of the Black majority in South Africa. She said they are prepared to go on for another 15 months.

Dodie McGuinness, a Sinn Fein Councillor from Derry, said they want to build a United Socialist Ireland, but that the SDLP have degenerated to the point of collaboration with the Unionists and even support the RUC and UDR as "peace keepers". They would again accept "power sharing", the British imperialist solution to the Irish problem.

Dr Maire O'Shea outlined the evils of the Prevention of Terrorism Act which attacks political activists both Irish and British who oppose British rule in Ireland.

She said that British occupation in the Northern 6 Counties is to get Ireland into NATO with its nuclear bases. The Fitzgerald/Thatcher talks trade Southern neutrality for vague moves toward Irish unity.

Ken Livingstone said, rather appropriately for him, that Sinn Fein is more socialist than the British Labour Party. He pointed to the possibility of a hung parliament after the general election, with Ulster



unionists holding the balance of power. He promised that he would withhold his vote from any Labour government co-operation with the Unionists.

Martin Collins, Editor of the LCI magazine *New Labour and Ireland*, said since Kinnock is working for good figures in the opinion polls, he would earn electoral popularity by advocating withdrawal from Ireland as the majority (58%) of the British electorate want it. If the Labour government is to fight unemployment there is 80% of that among the people of Ballymurphy in West Belfast under British Rule.

Collins also used this meeting to launch his newly published book *Ireland After*

Britain: another good guide for wide-ranging debate, he said.

The Labour Committee on Ireland unites party members to campaign for an end to bloodshed and barriers to progress towards a socialist Ireland. This is a vital part of the struggle for socialism in Britain. A country that oppresses another can never itself be free or socialist.

The LCI calls for unconditional British military and political withdrawal from Ireland and self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. In the interim we call for an end to abuses of human rights and for the Party to act on its positions of opposition to the use of plastic bullets, non-jury Diplock courts, the PTA and the use of

paid informers (supergrasses).

The LCI organises press conferences to counter silence and censorship and organises conferences and campaigns all over Britain.

Labour Women for Ireland particularly campaigns against the degrading and sexist strip searching of women in Armagh jail and promotes contact between women activists against British imperialism in Ireland and Britain.

Join the LCI: we ignore Ireland at our peril!

Write to LCI, BM Box 5355, London WC1N 3XX.

Demand recognition of the PLO!

Palestine: another Conference policy bites the dust

IT was no surprise that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was once again swept under the carpet at this year's Labour Conference, and the Party kept an embarrassing silence.

While throughout the year the Middle East has been shaken by momentous events — perhaps the most important anti-imperialist struggle in the world today — Conference for the third year running fail-

ed to put it on its agenda for debate.

An emergency resolution by the FBU condemning Israel's raid on the PLO headquarters in Tunis (which took place on the second day of the Conference) was manoeuvred off the agenda for fear of opening a debate on the Palestinian question.

This evasion is not new: the leadership has consistently proved its determination not only to dodge any debate on the question but also to bury once and for all any past conference resolution.

Most significantly, The Conference resolution passed in 1982, recognising the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people and pledging Party support for Palestinian self-determination has scarcely seen the light of day.

In 1982 it was widely recognised as an important breakthrough. Previously, the Labour Party has been an unstinting supporter of Zionism and the state of Israel.

The 1917 War Aims Memorandum by Arthur Henderson and Sydney Webb predated the Tory/Liberal Balfour declaration; the 1945 Labour Party Manifesto outbid even the Zionists in its call for the Arabs to be expelled in order to make way for Zionist settlements.

Since then, support for Zionism has been the strongest in Labour's top echelons — Foot, Bevan, Wilson, Healey, Callaghan — who have clung to the myth that Israel's founders "espoused the ideals of socialism, justice and community."

It was not until the invasion of Lebanon in 1982 that the tide began turning in favour of the Palestinians. Then the horrors of Israel's genocide in Lebanon triggered a wave of sympathy for the Palestinians, and the Conference that year carried a motion — initiated by the Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine — supporting the right of Palestinians to self

MAIRE O'SHEA IS INNOCENT



Drop the charges!

**Demonstrate:
Birmingham Nov 9
11 am, Sparkhill Park.
Rally 2pm, Digbeth Hall.**

determination, recognising the PLO, and calling for a secular democratic state in Palestine as the long term solution to the Middle East conflict.

Israel's leaders heaped abuse on the extremists and the antisemites in the Labour Party and quickly stirred their supporters and apologists into action. Active Zionists — Kaufmann, Hattersley, Kitson, Shore & Co. — used all the leverage they could muster to quash the new policies.

Their task was made even easier by the lack of concern from those who supported the motion. While the pro-Arab wing of the Labour Right — exemplified by Don Concannon, Chair of the Labour Middle East Council — were not prepared to challenge their political allies in the Party, the left were too heterogeneous to mount a viable challenge.

Benn and Heffer left Labour Friends of Israel, but far from totally espousing the Palestinian cause they still kept some sympathy for the state of Israel and its right to exist under its present form.

Militant, having maintained pro-Israeli priorities throughout, unashamedly echoed Reagan's ranting denunciation of the PLO as a "bunch of terrorists". The rest of the left didn't think the issue a viable or important battleground against the leadership.

Only the LMCIP consistently fought, year in year out, to reconfirm these policies. With the left in disarray, Labour's International Department confidently contrived to scorn Conference decisions and singled out Palestine events for exclusion from the Conference diary. The reason has always been that Palestine meetings will invite speakers who are not members of the Socialist International: the logic of this ruling is that it would "outlaw" representatives of the Palestinians, Irish Republicans, the ANC and most of the liberation movements in Central/South America: it would leave the Labour Party on the side of oppression, counter-revolution and in open defence of the imperialist world order.

Further, the NEC's rejection of the idea of inviting a PLO representative to Conference means that instead, Gad Yacobi, Israel's Minister for Economic Planning, was an official guest at Conference! The warm welcome to Yacobi is the most clear evidence of the support that the Party leadership will continue to give to Israel.

In a recent leaflet, Labour Friends of Israel had nothing but praise for Kinnock's commitment to Zionism:

"The Israeli Labour Party can rely on support from me and my Party for as long as I shall be leader for I know the course they have set themselves... They can do it best with our assistance, our alliance, our support, our words of comfort, our comradeship and our endorsement."

This statement unequivocally sets out the leadership's stance on Zionism. Only a strong and co-ordinated challenge by all supporters of the Palestinians inside the Labour Party and trade union movement can force the leadership to recognise Conference decisions in support of the Palestinians.

The LMCIP can and will provide this challenge. Its activities ought to be supported by every Labour Party member.

The Labour Movement Campaign for Palestine can be contacted at: BM Box LMCP, London WC1N 3XX.



Victims of an Israeli "terror" raid on South Lebanon.

Ten things about the Middle East

1. ISRAEL IS THE ONLY DEMOCRACY IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Palestinians under Israeli rule have been subjected to:

- arbitrary detention and deportation without trial;
- confiscation of land;
- gross discrimination in housing, education, employment and welfare services.

So far, over a million Palestinians have been made refugees. *They cannot return. Any Jewish person from anywhere in the world is entitled to settle in Israel with immediate citizenship rights.*

2. ISRAEL GIVES EQUAL RIGHTS TO WOMEN.

Israel allows:

- no secular marriage;
- no marriage of Jews to non-Jews;
- no divorce of men by women.

Israeli women receive vastly lower pay than Israeli men and need their husbands' permission to do certain jobs.

The position of Palestinian women under Israeli rule is far worse, for Palestinian women are discriminated against as Palestinians and as women.

3. ISRAEL LEADS THE WAY IN TRADE UNION ORGANISATION

The Histadrut (General Federation of Labour in Israel) is Israel's largest employer.

It has actually sacked striking workers. In 1982, it imposed a 2 to 5% levy to help finance the invasion of Lebanon.

Up to 1959 it was closed to Palestinian workers. Now it has a segregated department for 'Arabs'.

Palestinians who live on the West Bank and work in Israel pay dues but receive no protection or services.

4. ISRAEL TAKES A STAND AGAINST TERRORISM

The terrorist acts perpetrated in Sabra and Chatila caused world-wide revulsion and condemnation.



Israeli tanks crunch into Lebanon in 1982: an eye opener for many Zionist sympathisers.

Such acts in support of Zionism are nothing new. 254 Palestinians were massacred in 1948 in Deir Yassin by the Zionist organisation Irgun (of which Begin is a former leader).

Daily terrorism by the Israeli military authorities against Palestinian civilians in Occupied Palestine is a fact of life.

5. ISRAEL STRIVES FOR PEACE IN THE REGION

Israel invaded the Lebanon under the slogan "Peace for Galilee".

Results:

- 30,000 dead
- 40,000 wounded and maimed
- 150,000 made homeless
- and countless houses, hospitals and schools destroyed.

For the sake of 'peace', Israel used US manufactured cluster and phosphorous bombs (internationally outlawed weapons).

6. ISRAEL UPHOLDS INTERNATIONAL LAW

Israel has been condemned many times for continual violations of UN resolutions concerning the rights of the Palestinians. EMPTY WORDS! Another empty gesture has been the setting up of the Kahan Commission following the massacres of Sabra and Chatila. This commission is constantly cited as proving Israel's concern with International Law and public opinion. But although Begin, Sharon and military army commanders were clearly implicated, they suffered no real consequences.

7. ISRAEL RESPECTS THE GENEVA CONVENTION

The Geneva Convention affords pro-

tection to civilians and all armed bodies in conditions of war and occupation. Israel has refused to apply it on the West Bank and to the thousands of Palestinians in its prisons.

Women, men and even children prisoners are held without charge, refused access to lawyers and subjected to the most degrading torture and sexual attacks (all documented by the Red Cross and other bodies).

8. ISRAEL SUPPORTS THE STRUGGLE OF THE OPPRESSED AND THE MINORITIES

Receiving 2.2 billion dollars (1982) from the US in aid — 75% of which is military — Israel is generous in passing it on to others. According to a recent CIA report, Israel is the fifth largest world military exporter. Its arms and experts go to support such minority regimes as the apartheid South African government, Honduras, Pinochet's Chile, and others with similar appalling records on human rights.

9. ISRAEL 'FIGHTS' ANTI-SEMITISM

...by encouraging Jews to forego the fight against fascism and anti-semitism in their countries of origin and go to Israel — a policy of ghettoisation (that any fascist would readily agree with).

10. ISRAEL IS A FORCE FOR PROGRESS

Israel is a created fact. All the above points to one conclusion: settler colonialism can never be a force for progress, whatever some in the Labour Party would have us believe.



THE recent hijacking of the Italian Achille Lauro cruise liner by militants of the Syrian-based PLF appears to have achieved all of its objectives. It has torpedoed the various "peace" initiatives peddled by the USA and Britain — including the visit to London of representatives from Arafat's PLO leadership and King Hussein. It has driven a wedge between Egypt and the USA; and put Palestinian guerrilla action back on the map. In passing, it appears even to have brought down Italy's reactionary "Socialist"-led coalition government. But it has done nothing to advance the interests of the oppressed Palestinian masses.

Breakthrough for gay

THIS year's Labour Party Conference had the first debate on sexuality that Labour has ever had.

After 4 years of stepping up the pressure the Labour Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) got adequate backing for a strong wide-ranging resolution to get on the Conference agenda.

Among other things the resolution demands:

- the removal of all legal discrimination (including the discriminatory age of consent);
- The enforcing of full equal opportunities at local government level;
- and the outlawing of all other forms of discrimination.

It was a major achievement to get a debate at Conference — but the majority for the resolution (over one million votes) was an enormous step forward. To find out how LCLGR managed this, and what significance it will have, Nick De Marco spoke to Peter Purton, Treasurer of LCLGR and Conference delegate from Ealing South CLP.

What was the significance of the victory for the Gay Rights resolution?

The vote was the single most important step forward for Lesbian and Gay rights since the emergence of the Lesbian and Gay movement in Britain. For the first time the issue was taken from the fringes and put in the centre of labour movement concerns.

It means that the Labour Party is now committed to an uncompromising programme of Lesbian and Gay rights. We can now fight our oppression with the full authority of the Labour Party and T.U.C.

It creates the opportunity to begin to win the labour movement to the understanding that sexuality must be an integral part of any genuinely socialist programme.

As this was the first time Lesbian and Gay rights was even discussed at Conference how did you manage to secure such a big majority in favour of the resolution?

Firstly, we launched a well-organised and coherent campaign to get on the agenda, and lobbied massively to secure the votes we needed.

Secondly, we consolidated the alliances we had begun to build with other sections of the oppressed. In particular campaigns for women's rights within the Party and, specially important, the black sections movement.

We had organised jointly with the black sections movement to support each others' demands (e.g. supporting each others' resolutions for Conference) and this process greatly strengthened both our campaigns.

At Bournemouth this alliance became a genuine example of the unity of the op-

rights!



pressed in struggle.

Nor should we forget the unwavering support of numbers of heterosexuals such as MEPs Christine Crawley and Janey Buchan who have been fighting for our demands for many years.

For all this we still might not have won had it not been for the historic developments of the miners' strike.

The support of Lesbians and Gay men for the NUM and the willingness of the miners to take on board the struggles of women, blacks and lesbians and gays created an entirely new situation within sections of the trade union movement.

To have the public support of the NUM gave us the strength to approach directly other trade unions.

What trade unions supported you at Conference?

Among the major unions to vote for the Lesbian and Gay rights resolution were the NUM, NUPE, COHSE, NUR, ASTMS, TGWU, ASLEF, UCATT, TASS and ACTT.

How did you manage to gain the support of the traditional manual unions, like the TGWU?

We persistently lobbied the union delegations and enlisted support of leading figures in the trade unions to argue our case amongst the delegations. We had significant support from the likes of Ron Todd and Peter Heathfield in particular.

The positive responses of the health service unions to the AIDS hysteria made it easier for us to gain their support.

The successful Lesbian and Gay rights resolution from the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) and NALGO at the T.U.C. meant also that we were able to argue that Lesbian and Gay rights was already TUC policy.

Why did the NEC want the resolution remitted?

Fundamentally they got cold feet over lowering the age of consent. I believe this was a cover for the right wing who would much rather have the issue brushed under the carpet. After all one cannot

simultaneously assert opposition to all discrimination and maintain a discriminatory age of consent.

What do you now expect from the Labour leadership?

We can be sure, even judging only by the immediate response of the gutter press to the issue. It would be perfectly in character (given the response of the leadership to ditch other policies which fundamentally challenge the accepted consensus of the British political establishment) for the Party to attempt to backtrack on its commitment. Our struggle now has to be to consolidate our victory across the labour movement and make such a retreat impossible.

What reaction did the resolution get from the gay community, the Labour Party and the press?

The response of the gay press, not noted for its socialist leanings, has been dramatic front page headlines. We expect an influx of Lesbians and Gay men into the Party.

Rank and file delegates were extremely enthusiastic in the support they gave at Conference. Five years ago the bigotry of William Evans, the delegate from Ogmore who spoke in the debate, would have received a much more favourable response than the jeering and heckling which came from CLP delegates.

The unprecedented coverage on TV and in the press showed the importance of the debate. Journalists were forced, for the first time, to explain the demands of lesbians and gay men.

Where do you go from here?

We must step up our campaign in the trade unions. Those unions that supported us must be forced to fight for these policies amongst their membership.

Within the Party we must ensure the new NEC sub-committee becomes an effective vehicle for implementing policy.

Finally we intend to organise a massive drive for organisations to affiliate to and individuals to join LCLGR.



LCLGR
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26 Groups attend Conference

Miners Support Groups: the fight is stepped up!

By ALAN THORNETT

A SUCCESSFUL conference of Miners' Support Groups was held in Sheffield last Saturday October 12. It had been originally motivated by the Oxford Miners' Support Group and was then organised by 7 Support Groups who met twice in London to plan the Conference.

It was a working conference designed to emphasise the continuing importance of the Support Groups and of the issue of the victimised and imprisoned miners to the labour movement as a whole. It was felt by the organising groups that many Support Groups were winding up or running down their activities because there was no national focus to which they could relate and through lack of knowledge about what was going on in the other areas.

Twenty-one Support Groups, including Women's Support Groups, send delegates to the Conference and 5 more groups sent observers. The Kent miners sent a delegation as did the National Rank and File Movement. The Supporting Groups were: Leicester, Birmingham, Oxford, Richmond & Twickenham, Hillingdon, Islington (London), Coventry, Brent, Hammersmith & Fulham, Hackney, Reading, and Durham MSGs; South Yorks Defence Campaign; Leeds Miners Defence Campaign; Waltham Forest Miners' Support Committee; Hatfield, Coventry, and Oxford Women's Support Groups; Camden Trades Council & Labour Party MSG; Sheffield Women Against Pit Closures; Hull Trades Council Disputes Committee; Scottish Central Region Federation of Trades Councils MSG; National Rank and File Movement/Hatfield; NUM; Dirty Thirty; Coventry Colliery; Kent NUM; and NUM Yorkshire.

The Conference was opened by Sammy Thompson, who is vice president of the Yorkshire NUM. He stressed the importance of the Support Groups, both during the strike and now, gave a detailed update on the victimised and imprisoned miners in



Yorkshire and about the very difficult conditions the Yorkshire NUM now faces over pit closures. He was followed by Iris Knight from WAPC and Carole Trelawney from SACTU.

An important part of the Conference was the reports given on their activities by each Group present. For the first time it was possible to get something of a national picture of the state of the Groups. Many of the reports showed a similar picture. Attendance had failed to varying degrees since the strike, the groups had consolidated into a hard core of supporters, yet when they took initiatives, they found that the wider support was still there and could be mobilised.

The reports showed that there is still a viable support movement that can play a significant role in support of the NUM and in support of the victimised and imprisoned miners.

The Conference decided to continue its work by establishing a national co-ordinating committee of Support Groups to be comprised of one representative from each Group. Its first meeting would be in Birmingham on November 9. An information sheet would be produced and a winter fund-raising campaign would be launched for the victimised miners. The purpose the National co-ordination will be to work with the NUM and support the case for coal; to campaign for the reinstatement of the victimised and for amnesty for those in prison; to campaign against pit closures and to raise cash for the victimised miners and their families.

At the same time the Conference voted to support the important initiative which was taken at a fringe

meeting at the Labour Party Conference, organised jointly by Trade Union Briefing and the Campaign Group of Labour MPs to organise a Miners Amnesty Campaign aimed at supporting the victimised and imprisoned miners and publicising the Amnesty Bill. There is clearly great political support for the two groupings to work closely together.

The Conference voted to be present on Monday 21 October when the appeals open in London of Dean Hancock and Russell Shankland and to go into the court in solidarity.

It also adopted a motion from the London Support Groups (which are now well organised) calling for a "day of action" to mark the second anniversary of the start of the miners strike, aimed at drawing attention to the continued support for the miners and the campaign against pit closures.

The conference voted to give support to the National Rank and File movement, but rejected a controversial resolution supported by Rank and File. This called upon the Conference to "call a delegate conference, open to all trade union and labour movement bodies, including the broad left organisations, prepared to build a militant minority movement in order to start the work of building that movement and discussing its programme and strategy."

Finally the Conference discussed the uprisings in the inner cities. A resolution was adopted which drew the comparison between police action in the inner cities and in the miners' strike, condemned the racism of the police, called for a labour movement inquiry into their activities and called upon SERTUC to call a national demonstration through Brixton in opposition to the extension of police powers.

The Conference provided a much needed get-together of Support Groups and should provide the basis for a development in Support Group work and a boost for the campaign on behalf of the victimised and imprisoned miners.

The collapse of Labour's soft left

By PETE FIRMIN
and JENNY FISHER

MANY of us who went to Bournemouth for the first week in October did not go to hear a blistering attack from the Labour Party leader on the miners and Liverpool councillors. We went to work for campaigns and resolutions, many of which were passed; but the successes of which were overshadowed by Kinnock "coming out".

In Tuesday's keynote speech — under the guise of a Parliamentary Report — Kinnock attacked those who fought the Tories. He'd begun by rehearsing nearly every right wing argument against socialism. He waved the nationalist flag, preached about an "enabling state", talked of increasing production, and assisting small businesses. He threw in a few "radical" references to the Third World, support for the Nicaraguan government and opposition to apartheid. Then he rounded on the left, and in a scene rehearsed for the cameras, slammed into Liverpool Council:

Kinnock's speech had the effect of splitting the Conference in two.

The Press loved it; and covered their front pages the next day with "The Courage of Kinnock"; and "Oh, Boy-o". Come the next election, it will presumably be the business-as-usual "Vote Tory"; or at a pinch "Vote Alliance".

The Right loved it, and so did much of the trade union top brass on the delegations: for both, their futures were secured.

The "soft left" had a split second to choose which way to jump; and leapt into the quagmire. They applauded Kinnock into power; and by and large have supported him there. They stood by the myth of Kinnock, the "leftie", ignoring — or supporting — his manoeuvring of the last 2 years; comfortable in being able to distance themselves, under their "left" mantle, from the likes of Healy, Golding, Hammond, etc.

But again, never people to stick to class principles when the going gets rough, they went for the easy option. Indeed, Kinnock's main organised cheerleaders, the Labour Coordinating Committee, began the week with "critical support" in their Bulletin:

"If Neil Kinnock constantly plays into the hands of the media and the ultra left by blowing up the wrong issues, then the Party will continue to be diverted."

Once he'd done just that, the Wednesday Bulletin stated:

"... our instincts say that Neil Kinnock was absolutely right ... He said in public what many had been saying in private."

and:

"The LCC supports the NUM's resolution. But we also support the Kinnock leadership."

Ken Livingstone, new darling of the LCC, said at the Tribune Rally on the Wednesday night that "we have to work with Neil Kinnock and build structures that allow the left to counteract the pressures of the right on him."

These statements appear naïve, yet it is impossible that Livingstone and the LCC would not have noticed that Kinnock is leading the right offensive against the Left and he has made it impossible to support both him and the NUM. They have made their choice.

As Eric Heffer commented on the LCC's statement on the Thursday that "the left is now more dominant in the Party in a way that we never have been before": "it makes you wonder who they think the left are."

That then, is the new unholy alliance against the miners, against the inner city working class, and against our class in general. But there was another alliance, who shared total disgust for Kinnock's stand: an alliance of the hard left, the specially oppressed, and those fighting at Conference for socialist policies.

Of these, Eric Heffer was the most public: he walked off the platform, unable to stomach such a divisive attack on those in struggle.

The NUM weathered Tuesday's

speech, and a renewed attack on them on Wednesday.

Liverpool councillors reacted angrily to Kinnock's insults; the next morning they challenged Kinnock, and the union leaders, to come up to Liverpool, look at the books, and test out the "dented shield" approach. The challenge was taken up.

The Lambeth Councillors reacted angrily: they saw that the attack on Liverpool was an attack on all resolute local authority fightbacks, and realised their fight had been knifed in the back by implication.

Neither the Black Sections activists, fresh from the success of seeing their vote nearly treble over last year's support; nor the campaigners for Lesbian and Gay rights, who were later, through their hard work, particularly in the unions, to see their Composite passed; had had any illusions in the leadership which was against both their struggles.

You had only to look at the position of black Lambeth councillors to see the links clearly: cast adrift by the leadership in their fight to defend jobs and services and in their fight against racism in the Party.

One major aspect holding back black, lesbian and gay, and women campaigners from identifying with the left has been the Militant, who are so openly against positive discrimination of all kinds. Kinnock tried to link his insults with Militant: taint a left policy with being "Militant-inspired", and through anti-Militant hysteria, knock down the policy as well.

But the effect on many was the opposite: a realisation that Militant must be defended if Left policies are to be won; and a greater willingness to ally themselves with the left, despite the left's imperfect record.

The hard left is still strong; and was able to win on policy many times during the week, overturning NEC recommendations to remit or oppose. As well as the NUM composite, the trebling of the vote for black sections, the passing of the lesbian and gay rights composite; a resolution on "Reproductive Rights" removed MP's conscience clause, used to get out of following Party policy on abortion, etc. At the very first session, Conference voted for immediate dismantling of EEC food mountains as part of an answer to African famine, and for cancelling bank debts of the "Least Developed Countries" to the West.

There is a final category of Kinnock supporters: the pollsters have produced fodder for the papers showing Labour in the lead, and Kinnock soaring to the top of the stakes in the "Best future Prime Minister" competition. So far so good. What is lacking, of course, is any effective comparison. If the Party leadership, had been out campaigning for the miners throughout 1984, putting the very good arguments in favour of doing so, how high would Labour support be now?

Black youth fight back!

By JANE GOSS

BLACK people are being slaughtered in Britain. Killed by racist thugs in violent street attacks or burned in their homes by arsonists. Sometimes they are killed in police cells.

The black community — sick of provocation, harassment, stop and search operations, and racist police — fight back. The estate in Tottenham which was the scene of the latest uprising had been sealed off during the preceding week by the police who had been stopping people constantly to check on stolen vehicles. Cynthia Jarrett's son was stopped because he was driving a BMW — in the minds of police no black person should have a BMW therefore it must be stolen.

It wasn't; but he was arrested anyway and taken to the police station. They released him and gave him back his property — except for his front door key which they used to let themselves into the family home, starting off the chain of events which led to the trouble on the Broadwater Farm estate.

What a mockery it is to see the smooth, well-rehearsed police spokespeople wittering on about sensitive community policing on TV, radio and in the press. Any black person living in an inner city area knows the reality of policing — it is neither sensitive nor "community". Witness PC Blakelock who was a "community policeman" — in full riot gear fighting with local people.

The constant harassment by the police coupled with crippling unemployment levels, poor housing and cutbacks in both state benefits and services has stewed together in the Tory capitalist cauldron and is now again boiling over into uprisings of black youth clearly saying as they did to Bernie Grant in Tottenham when he tried to call for calm that "we are fed up with talk; we want action." Handsworth, Brixton, Toxteth, Tottenham. More names will be added as the anger and hostility to Thatcher's scrapheap policies emerge.

Events in Tottenham were termed the "worst riot ever seen on mainland (sic) Britain". Not surprisingly the police were issued with CS gas and plastic bullets — the first time that plastic bullets have been authorised for use in Britain.

The authorisation was given by Kenneth Newman — who came to London from the North of Ireland where he was in charge of the RUC, one of the most vicious and sectarian police forces in the world. Recently the Met were the subject of a report, which the police attempted to deny and discredit which showed widespread racism at all levels.

Newman has of course made no reference to that report. He was quick to go on television to face the interviewers to justify his allowing the use of lethal plastic bullets. He condemned the local youth

club leaders of Tottenham and Bernie Grant and other local politicians for refusing, quite correctly, to condemn the violence. He accused them of using irresponsible language and inflaming the situation. In the next breath he spat out a venomous attack against the "murderous thugs" who had attacked one of his officers and killed him. Even the interviewer was forced to ask him if his language wasn't inflammatory.

Compare how quick the cops have been to solve the killing of Blakelock — one week after his death three black and one white youth, one of them only thirteen, have been charged — with the lack of interest the same police force have shown in arresting anyone for murdering eight months pregnant Shamira Kassam and her three young sons who were burned to death *several months ago* by racists.

The Broadwater Farm Estate, like the other areas which have (and will) erupt are not isolated pockets of hostility and criminal activity. The problems are not due to drug dealers. That is just another attempt to slur black people and an attempt at racist stereotyping which the Tories, the press and media are only too eager to foster.

Black people simply have had enough. The blame for the uprisings lies in the roots of capitalism and particularly in the policies which this Government has been enforcing on the people for the past six years.

In the six years of Tory rule the West Midlands has lost a quarter of a million jobs in manufacturing alone. The unemployment rate in Handsworth is 29.4%; for adult men it is 40%. If you are a black youth in Birmingham you have a one in 20 chance of getting a job after leaving school. Lucas have just announced a further 10,000 jobs lost in the West Midlands.

Meanwhile the Government keeps putting more and more obstacles in the way of people attempting to claim benefits simply to survive. Thatcher is desperately keen to ensure that, like in America, there is a stigma attached to being "on welfare". Housing in inner city areas is being left to rot as the Tories cut back on Council house building, sell off the best stock, and cut grants for repairs.

Black youth cannot get a job; cannot leave home; and cannot live on the derisory state benefits; on top of the poverty, they have racist taunts thrown at them every day by the police. It is no wonder they are arming themselves in anger.

Once the anger takes over it assumes its own logic and it is impossible to control. There are things which happen in the uprisings which we as revolutionaries would not condone or encourage. Neither would we join with those who condemn the youth for violence. Their lives are full of violence every day — organised, carried out and condoned by the state and its officials.

Bernie Grant, the leader of Tottenham Council and a prospective parliamentary candidate has been right to refuse to bow



to enormous pressure to side with the police against the black community. For a Labour politician he has adopted a firm line. The Tories and press are now witch-hunting him in an extremely racist way and trying to put pressure on the Labour leadership to disagree with him publicly and withdraw support for his parliamentary candidature.

Much publicity has been given to the local unions who went on "strike" to call for his resignation. Trade unions are not free from racists — and Tottenham certainly has more than its fair share. There are members in both the local TGWU and NUPE branches who have called for repatriation of black people. It is highly likely that there are NF members in both branches.

These unions need to re-examine the issues and to stop siding with the Tories who would be just as keen to use plastic bullets during industrial disputes. They need to begin to forge links with the unemployed people in their communities. The trade union officers and officials need to make quite clear their condemnation of racists in local branches and expel them from membership.

Scrap the immigration laws!

By DAN WRIGHT

"BRITAIN faces a catastrophe unless the size of its African and Asian population is quickly reduced." In a speech addressed to a Conservative women's lunch in Liverpool, Enoch Powell carried on with his venomous crusade against black communities in Britain.

In a direct challenge to Margaret Thatcher and others, he reminded them of his infamous "rivers of blood" speech in 1968 and claimed that his positions had been vindicated by the recent events. "Let those in positions of responsibility who disagree with my judgement declare their own in equally unequivocal terms."

He is certainly right in his challenge to the government. One can hardly put a cigarette paper between the policies of Thatcher's government on immigration and racism and those of Enoch Powell. However, he would have been better off if he were to complain that he has been made into a political outcast, while his ideas have been put into action by this government.

Since 1979, one of the central political objectives of the Tory government has been the establishment of "firm immigration control". They justify this stand by arguing that firm immigration controls in turn create "good community relations"! In other words these policies define *black people* as the cause of the problem. The line was that there would be less racial tension because there would be fewer Black people!

The sheer hypocrisy behind these arguments has been exposed time after time in the eyes of the black communities who have been faced with deportations, removals, and raids on factories and houses by the police.

Of course we have recently seen in Brixton, Birmingham and Tottenham the police carrying out these "good community relations" by shooting down innocent black women in their homes and beating down black youths in the streets.

Since 1979, the state has reorganised itself around policies of "firm immigration control". The Nationality Act of 1981 and the later Act of 1983 provided a legal basis for controlling black communities. By 1984 external immigration to Britain — at 51,000 — was the lowest for 20 years.

However these changes in legislation were not enough for the government in discriminating against black people.

The Home Office went as far as breaking

their own laws and using the device of delays to restrict the entry of people with legal rights to come to Britain.

According to a confidential Home Office briefing to ministers, recently leaked out to the press:

"In two significant areas a system of queues operates to regulate the flow of immigrants and in the Indian sub-continent applicants have had to wait for up to two years for interviews."

"...Provided the queues do not become too long, this form of administrative regulation can continue."

(*Guardian*, 21.3.85)

Nineteen thousand four hundred wives and children in India are wanting to join spouses already settled here. And only 42 officers are appointed to deal with their applications.

However, in 1984 the numbers accepted to settle in Britain from New Zealand and Australia increased by 1,400 to a figure of 6,000. (Figures from *Guardian*, 10.6.85).

As a result of a court action taken by three black women settled in Britain, Strasburg judges ruled in May this year that Britain's "primary purpose" rules were discriminating against women on the grounds of sex by denying UK entry to foreign husbands of spouses resident here while allowing it to foreign wives.

However, "dogs don't bite dogs". The same judges also ruled that the British government has the right to protect its labour market! The second ruling has given the green light for the government to introduce new restrictions.

In July, the House of Commons voted by 309 to 194 to approve immigration rules that eliminate sex discrimination but make it tougher for both men and women to join spouses in Britain.

New regulations also require that all foreign spouses prove that they have a place to live and can support themselves without drawing "public funds".



The uprising and the aftermath raise many issues for us. Black people often do not relate to "white" political organisations. Millions are disenfranchised from trade unions because they have no job. Most do not relate to the Labour Party because it has done so little and has a pretty appalling record on both fighting racism and on immigration. Revolutionary parties rarely appeal to black people.

Black people organise and agitate outside the main labour movement groups. We need to fight to change the labour movement to force it to examine its own racism and to make it habitable and responsive to black demands. Meanwhile we cannot just ignore what is happening. We must support the fight that is going on now in the streets and give blacks the solidarity which they ask for.

Another inquiry such as that called for by Kaufmann and Kinnock will solve nothing. It will not change the situation for blacks. A future Labour Government could alter some of the material conditions, unemployment, housing decay, etc. But if racism is not challenged and fought and wiped out the conditions for more uprisings and violence will always be there.



The definition of "public funds" for immigration purposes, i.e. Supplementary Benefit, Family Income Supplement and Housing Benefit, has brought with it a new level of discrimination — not only against black people but also against 4 million unemployed and 7 million claiming Housing Benefit.

Black people are asked to produce their passport to show that they are entitled to claim benefit: they may also find themselves being reported to the immigration authorities by a social security clerk.

Far from providing a financial "safety net" for those in need, for many black people the social security system has become yet another arm of the immigration authorities and a racist state.

In defence of these new changes, outgoing Home Secretary Leon Brittan reported the same old hypocrisy in Parliament: "The government has persistently maintained that "firm but fair" immigration control is essential to promote good race relations.

"We came to office committed to take a firm grip on immigration. We have done so. Primary immigration has fallen."

However there is more to it. These policies of control are not only guidelines and quotas but also raised by consecutive governments in order to placate racist prejudices against black people so they can better split the working class.

This hideous and sinister aspect of immigration control policies began to

operate after 1979, in terms of internal controls inside Britain and directed at people already here.

To make internal controls more successful, a number of state institutions and organisations are being increasingly co-opted in to a network of surveillance of immigrants.

In addition to close collaboration between the Home Office and DHSS, the surveillance involves organisations engaged in the provision of education, housing, registration of marriages, health, etc.

A recent *Observer* report on the issue of surveillance revealed that

"Home Office intelligence unit computers store over 300,000 names of people who have settled here. The information stored not only includes financial details of the person in question but also a detailed account of relatives and personal affairs."

(*Observer*, 3.3.85)

The police have been given extensive powers under the changes of immigration rules. They can for example, question anyone about their status, search the premises for suspected illegal immigrants, raid houses and workplaces on "fishing expeditions" and may carry out investigations on behalf of the Home Office to ascertain whether a marriage is "genuine" or one of "convenience".

Redefinition of the rules regarding illegal entrants have led to significant increases in the number of people deported

THE press, politicians and even some labour movement activists argue that Fascist groups like the National Front (NF) and British National Party (BNP) are "on the decline", and that because of the hard right wing policies of Thatcher's government, particularly on issues of race and immigration people are not relating to fascist groups... being a Tory is just as effective.

Black people, especially blacks living in the rundown, economically devastated and depressed urban areas know that this is simply not true. Although the fascist parties may not be

pulling in the votes in elections they are out there on the streets organising..

East London has had particularly horrific racist attacks occurring over the past six months culminating in the arson attack on the Kassam home which killed Mrs Kassam who was eight months pregnant and her three young sons.

Often only the most serious incidents are reported. Attacks like these are not carried out by Tories: they are organised and done by fascist thugs.

In every city black families are living in seige conditions, afraid to go out after dark with many of the women not going out at all. Black people in council accommodation are demanding letterboxes which make it impossible to pour petrol through them or are blocking up the letterboxes themselves.

London boroughs like Tower Hamlets,

Newham and Barking have fascists actively organising and present on the streets selling their filth and harrasing blacks.

Recently black activists have started a new umbrella grouping called Anti Fascist Action to bring together people interested in doing something against these attacks. The founding conference statement of aims says:

"This conference sees the need to build an Anti Fascist front of groups willing to combat Fascist activity in this country. We see the need to oppose racism and fascism physically on the street and ideologically. We support the right of ethnic minority groups and groups under threat to organise for their physical self defence and see the need for us to organise in their support. This grouping should be organised on non-sectarian and democratic lines with equal representation for all groups involved."

AFA appears to be a healthy attempt to build strong co-ordinated direct action against the growing number of attacks.

One of the main differences between AFA and the Anti Nazi League is that AFA was initiated and is being led by black people. Its emphasis unlike the ANL is on direct action which will defend blacks being attacked as well as organising against fascist marches, meetings, etc.

The Anti Nazi League did in some areas organise against fascist activity, under the lead of the SWP, but degenerated into a series of mass events and concerts — one of which continued while a few miles down the road fascist thugs were marching.

The SWP wound it up altogether when they took a central decision to pull out of all their broad groupings.

AFA welcomes affiliations from groups. For further information contact Anti-Fascist Action, PX Box 273 Forest Gate, London E7.

EAST LONDON

- the arson attack on the Kassam family.
- An arson attack in Waltham Forest where an Asian family narrowly escaped death.
- An arson attack in a flat in Electric House in Tower Hamlets; again the family narrowly escaped death.
- In Tower Hamlets a young Asian boy was stabbed in the back in his school.

COVENTRY

- Six people escaped death when inflammable liquid was poured through their living room window.

BRADFORD

- Three racists wielding broken bottles and glasses attacked and seriously injured three Sikh men.

and removed. While deportation applies to those people who have entered the country lawfully and may therefore appeal against deportation order, "removals" only apply to those who allegedly entered the country in breach of immigration law.

According to these new rules, an immigrant who "admits lying" when s/he entered the country counts as an illegal entrant and can be summarily removed with no appeal possible.

All these changes have in turn created an atmosphere of fear among not only those in breach of the immigration rules but, among the black community as a whole. Since it is obviously not possible on sight to tell an "illegal" entrant from a "legal" one, the attitude of the immigration authorities, police, DHSS, etc., is to suspect them all.

The wider implications of these changes are hair raising. Four million black people in this country are put under total and continued suspicion and in a position that wherever they go, DHSS, Housing, Education, Police, etc., they have to prove themselves. And this is the basis and scale of institutionalised racism in Britain.

There are virtually no civil liberties for those that the Home Office thinks are probably illegal entrants. They can be locked up indefinitely. Unless detainees are actually charged with an offence they can't even apply for bail. By contrast bail is granted quite freely in criminal cases where the offence is *much more serious*.

As a result of this new turn towards internal control, in 1983 430 people were detained as illegal entrants, and this figure increased to 1,000 for 1984.

The number of people deported in 1983 was 940 against 830 the previous year. (Removals were not counted in these figures and figures are based on Home Office sources.)

Most of those people detained had spent on average more than 3 months in Ashward and other removal centres before being deported.

In one case:
"the decision of a single civil servant resulted in a man spending almost a year in jail. The man had committed no crime nor been charged with any offence."

(Times, 9.5.85)

He was eventually released after his solicitors threatened the Home Office with a writ.

Confidential Home Office documents recently leaked to the press revealed instructions to officers on how to avoid publicity for the way they work in this area:

In relation to raids it says:
"Responsibility for the operation rests with the police, but officers in charge should not hesitate to bring to the notice of the police any sensitive issues which might attract criticism.

"Where at the briefing stage the use of dogs is proposed, it should be pointed out to the police that ministers have expressed concern and that complaints of an emotive nature are almost inevitable."

More importantly on the question of detaining innocent people, the document warns:

"The immigration officers' power of arrest and detention are under continual scrutiny and attack, particularly when persons are detained and subsequently released because they were not after all illegal entrants. It is preferable to risk an occasional illegal entrant



absconding rather than to put the whole of our practices at risk."

(New Statesman, 28.6.85)

By accommodating to racist prejudices, these type of policies actually affirm and promote these prejudices within the working class and in society in general.

Because they define black people as the problem, all arguments for immigration control are by definition racist and create conditions in which reaction and fascism can breed.

Particularly within the working class, arguments for immigration controls reinforce racism which is detrimental to its class interest.

One has to be completely clear that previous Labour Governments have played an equally reactionary role as the Tories — indeed even more so when one considers that the Labour Party is supposed to unite and defend the interests of the oppressed within class society.

Labour's role is much more dangerous because each time Labour politicians or leaders justify the controls — at whatever level it may be — and adapts towards "consensus politics", this reaffirms racist prejudices within the labour movement.

Labour party NEC statements on immigration in 1983, presented policies in two stages. Under "socialism" they will agree to "freedom of movement of labour": but meanwhile since everybody else in Europe has got controls, Britain under Labour should have "anti-racist, anti-sexist immigration controls"!

This opportunistic formulation, copied from Communist Party-controlled CARL (Campaign Against Racist Laws) and the Joint Committee for the Welfare of Immigrants has also been used to demobilise black communities organising politically

against the attacks of this government. These have been derailed into legalistic forms of struggle and human rights issues.

There is a need to confront the Labour Party leadership on this policy question. Black sections and the anti-imperialist hard left should push forward policies to commit Labour to "no immigration controls".

Yes, this means policies of an "open door". The question is not so much what might happen if Labour introduced such policies; the question is rather whether the Labour Party will identify itself as the Party of the oppressed and refuse to define black people as the problem. Only this way can it free itself from being yet another vehicle for institutionalised racism in Britain.

The trade unions, too, particularly those in the public sector (NUT, NUPE, COHSE, NALGO, CPSA) also play an essential role.

The strength of trade unions depends upon their solidarity; that means fighting the divisions caused within our own ranks not just with statements of opposition to racism but by vigorously taking up the fight to defend workers, directly or indirectly threatened by deportations, by adopting policies in opposition to passport checks, and opposing any collaboration with the Home Office in harassing black people.

There is also a need to form a national campaign based on opposition to all deportations, all immigration controls, and internal controls, and non-collaboration with police and immigration authorities.

Interview with Sitara Khan

By GARTH FRANKLAND

SITARA is a Labour Party member, supporter of West Yorkshire Briefing, and on the Leeds District Labour Party Panel for the Council.

She is above all known for her campaigning against racism and deprivation in education. Sitara helped organise two large demonstrations outside Leeds Education Committee over the failure to make extra provision to overcome the deprivation suffered by blacks in the education area.

SV: What do you think of the position of Asian women inside the Labour Party?

SK: Basically Asian women are non-existent inside the Labour Party. To change this the Labour Party has to campaign to repeal the Nationality Act. Black Sections are also very important. When they are achieved, Asian women will find an important part and be able to develop themselves.

SV: What do you think of the various Local Authorities' initiatives against racism and overcoming Black disadvantage?

SK: They have done quite a lot. The riots of 1981 helped to concentrate their minds a lot. The Local Authorities have not yet however managed to get real equal opportunity on jobs within their own staff.

Some of the policies are cosmetic and exist on paper only. The GLC looks fantastic from a distance. There has been a tendency for Local Authorities to buy off black leaderships but leave the fundamental problems facing black people. Blacks have to continue to pressurize the Local Authorities as independently as possible.

SV: What about the situation in Leeds?

SK: It is even worse than many other areas. The initiatives since 1981 in the Harehills and Chapeltown areas have really been on the lines of constructing community centres. These facilities, based around the different sections of the black community, have tended to increase divisions. They have also tended to divide the black areas off from the white council estates. The leadership of individual black groups has been particularly bought off, but the fundamental problems have not changed.

The way the Council has dealt with the education primary needs project shows how the Leeds Council has failed to fight the racist nature of British society.

Despite the employment of dozens of new teachers, only a handful of them were black. The Authority said there were not enough blacks with teaching qualifications: however a number of examples have come forward of qualified black teachers being rejected. One black woman had 15 years teaching experience and two M.A.s.

There is a continuing failure to recognise overseas qualifications (especially as the qualifications in the Commonwealth are modelled on those in Britain). [Sitara helped organise the two large demonstrations at Leeds Education Committee fighting for changes in the recruitment policies.]

The Committees of the Council should co-opt black members as long as they are not represented on Council. The I.L.E.A. has shown the way in electing a co-opted black woman to chair the important Schools Committee. This makes an enormous difference.

The D.E.S. since the Swann Report has begun to relax its positions on overseas qualifications. Leeds Council should

recruit black teachers with overseas qualifications, and then fight to get the qualification recognised. Of course there would have to be some in-house training.

SV: What do you think of the Honeyford affair in Bradford? [The fight by Asian parents to force the dismissal of a head teacher who has written racist articles].

SK: Deplorable. No, that's not strong enough. Honeyford's position is that white children suffer educationally from being in schools with large numbers of black pupils. However research shows that white children do better under such conditions than in all white schools! This seems to be because having to learn in classrooms with a second language gives them a better grasp of their own language!

On paper, Bradford Council had one of the best race policies in Britain. Nearly one third of the population of Bradford is black. The Bradford Council's inquiry not

only found Honeyford guilty over his article in the Salisbury Review, but also over his actual practice inside the school.

Thatcher's invitation to Honeyford to come to Downing Street is a provocation to all Black people in Britain. In Bradford the local Labour Party has been very supportive — but Kinnock and Hattersley have failed to call for the removal of Honeyford.

SV: What of the future?

SK: The future cannot be separated from the fight in the present. The Labour Party has a moral duty to support the black communities. The blacks have voted Labour for the last 30 years. Space must be created for blacks in the Party.

Kinnock and Hattersley have failed to face up to the issue of black oppression. Black people have their specific needs: and Black Sections are one way of beginning to meet those needs.



Japan: how Nakasone follows Thatcher

By ALAN THORNETT

THE renowned "Japanese economic miracle" which had reputedly provided not only rising living standards but "jobs for life" for Japanese workers is wearing very thin.

The signs were already there when Yasuhiro Nakasone became Liberal Democratic Party Prime Minister in 1980. Nakasone represented the introduction of Reaganite/Thatcher monetarist economic policies. State spending was cut on welfare services while Nakasone set to work on constitutional change to allow closer military alliance to the USA and increased military spending.

In fact Nakasone inherited an economic crisis. By the end of the 1970s the economy was not raising the revenues to meet the huge state spending programmes which had been introduced when the economy was expanding rapidly in the 1960s and early '70s.

The government met the deficit by issuing government bonds. By 1984, the interest payments alone on government bonds came to 10.2 trillion yen, the largest single item in the 1984 budget.

Despite this unprecedented situation, the government never attempted to tap the profits of the big Japanese corporations — which were at the same time running at record levels — despite record failures of medium and small size enterprises.

Instead, like Thatcher, Nakasone's priorities have been further attacks on the working class. There have been two main attacks direct for higher productivity through the well-established "participation" schemes operating in productive industry; and the diversification of production into small and medium sized factories which are not organised even by the scab "yellow" unions which control the big plants.

Their wages are one third less than in the big corporations. Eighty per cent of Japanese workers now work for such companies, where women workers are drawn in on even lower wages. On average the wages of women are only just over 50% of their male counterparts.

The small companies make little pretence of providing security of employment to their workers. But even the 20% of workers in the big corporations find that "job for life" is under attack.



Japanese cars for export.

The companies increasingly use contract, part time or seasonal labour to which they don't have to extend job security rights.

Last year, one of the major employers' organisations made proposals for change in the law to allow workers to be forced out of one industry into another. Companies have in any case been forcing workers to move long distances and suffer reductions in grades and wages — hoping that they will resign rather than accept the new conditions.

One thousand workers at a Nissan Diesel plant near Tokyo have been in struggle since last December. Management offered new jobs for most of the workforce in plants from 12 to 60 miles away from Tokyo. For some of them the moves would have meant leaving home at 6am and getting home at almost midnight. The "job for life" being offered by Nissan didn't mean very much, and the workers chose to fight for their existing jobs.

The other feature of Liberal Democratic Party policy which resembles Thatcherite Britain is privatisation. In the spring of this year (only months behind British Telecom) the public corporation Nippon Telephone and Telegraph (NTT) was privatised. This made it the biggest private employer in Japan with 310,000 workers.

At the same time the Japan Tobacco and Salt Corporation was sold off to private capital. Now a Government report has recommended that the Japanese National Railway be sold off the private business (Japan has both private and public rail systems).

These measures have implications

beyond the economic crisis and raising money to pay off government debts; they represent the other line of attack on the working class through further weakening the already emaciated Japanese trade union movement.

The Japanese unions have been moving rightward for a long time. Since the yellow unions broke the independent unions in productive industry in the early 1960s, the most progressive force in the Japanese labour movement was the socialist-led Trade Union Federation Sohyo (General Council of Trade Unions of Japan) which was comprised of public sector unions.

Sohyo was the driving force of the spring wage offensive (the shunto) which was the focal point of Trade Union activity in the 1960s. In the last 10 years, however, the shunto has run out of steam, the employers have organised against it, and the public sector unions have been weakened. Now the unions have little effect over wage levels and wage increases have been less than those achieved by workers in Europe.

At the same time there has been a fall-off of union membership. 35% of the labour force were organised in 1970; this has now fallen to 29%.

Now an even more dangerous process is taking place. It is called the "reconstitution" of the Japanese labour movement or the "unification of the confederations".

In 1982 an initiative was made to establish a new all-Japan trade union Federation, Zenminrokyo, which would embrace the whole trade union movement. In one of the most negative developments for many years in the Japanese labour movement, Sohyo is to join this new federation.

It will be dominated by the yellow unions in the export-based productive industries.

It has to be said that privatisation does face Sohyo with a very difficult situation: it stands to lose almost a million public sector workers to the private sector when the present round of privatisations are completed. At the same time, some of the unions which have been militant Sohyo unions in the past are in the grip of the right wing drift, and are falling prey to "business unionism". These are clearly factors in the decision to join the new federation.

At the same time the right wing leaders of Zenminrokyo intend to exclude any "left-wing" public sector

unions from the new federation by setting up a new (and very isolated) public sector federation, and pushing them into it. Many of them will be members of unions controlled by the Japanese Communist Party — such as the Japan Teachers Union; the all-Japan Prefectural and Municipal Workers Union; the Medical Workers Union and the all-Japan Transport and General Workers Union. If it becomes isolated, the ICP intend to set up its own trade union grouping: but they will not take that step before the dissolution of Sohyo.

The JCP generally opposes strikes in the public sector since they subordinate everything to both local and national election campaigns. In the public sector, they argue that strikes are wrong, since the public services are public property and to strike would alienate the public!

The situation in the Japanese labour movement is very difficult indeed. The march to the right in the unions and the systematic suppression of the remaining progressive sections of it are a response by the yellow federations to the increasing problem of Japanese capitalism as reflected in the economic crisis.

But there are many militants continuing to fight on a class struggle basis.

Although many of them have been victimised by management and by the right wing, the objective conditions are on their side. Despite the success of Japanese capitalism breaking up the independent unions in the '60s, and the success of Japanese labour techniques in harnessing the Japanese working class both ideologically and physically to the requirements of production; socialism, and a militant struggle against capitalism to achieve it, remains the only future for Japanese workers.

Hopefully, some of the moves now being made to bring together militant activists from the various unions will be successful.



How long a fuse on Philippines powder keg?

By HARRY SLOAN

THOUGH the street battles of South Africa may grab more headlines here, and the mega-debts of Latin America may worry more British and American bankers, don't forget the powder keg beneath the dictatorship of Philippines President Ferdinand Marcos.

The IMF has not forgotten it: the Philippines is fifth among the top debtor nations, and is receiving heavy treatment from the IMF after consistently failing to meet economic targets or reform its flagrantly corrupt and decrepit economic structures.

The current IMF pressure is sufficient to make it unlikely that the Philippines will be able to raise new commercial bank loans: the last \$400m in bank loans was instantly consumed in interest payments on existing debts. One third of the country's \$26bn debts are owed to US banks — and Reagan is clearly worried, as are Pentagon chiefs.

Philippines credit-worthiness has not been helped by the notorious corruption of the elite around Marcos and his wife (and cabinet Minister) Imelda. Opposition members of the National Assembly have tabled an unprecedented motion for the impeachment of Marcos, Imelda and other government figures for siphoning millions of dollars into investments, property and personal bank accounts abroad. The scandal over the assassination two years ago of Marcos' principal bourgeois opponent, Benigno Aquino, continues to rumble on, with top army officers clearly implicated, and only Marcos' hand-picked inquiry team between them and a conspiracy charge.

Though the impeachment will not be carried through the assembly — where Marcos has successfully maintained a 2/3 majority — the move is a clear sign of the impatience of a growing sector of the Philippines capitalist establishment with the antics of this degenerate and expensive dictatorship.

Smaller scale businesses and many of the foreign enterprises in the Philippines have long been hostile to the monopoly control exerted over the key sugar and

coconut industries by just two powerful families — while smaller growers and agricultural labourers face ruin. The sugar industry — once a bedrock of Philippines economy — has been devastated by a slump in prices from 65 US cents a pound 10 years ago to just 3 cents today. Only the vast empire of Roberto Benedicto — with the blessing of Marcos — has weathered this storm, while other farms and mills stand idle.

Sugar is not the only industry to hit the skids. Factories are grinding to a halt as manufacturers run out of even the foreign exchange to export their goods: the economy is actually shrinking for the second year running — only unemployment and poverty are on the rise.

But as in so many comparable situations, the official Philippines "opposition" is dominated by disgruntled capitalists and politicians whose main grievance is that they have not been included in Marcos' privileged elite.

Such oppositionists have little or nothing in common with the interests and demands of Philippines workers struggling against super-exploitation or the dispossessed peasants and agricultural labourers. Led by Salvador Laurel, the United Democratic Nationalist Organisation looks not so much to the downtrodden as to the IMF and the White House for support in pushing Marcos aside and stepping in to "normalise" capitalist rule in the Philippines.

For the US there is much more than bank loans at stake in the future of this former colony. The Philippines harbours the largest US airforce and naval bases outside the United States. The deep water port of Subic Bay — strategically placed for the US Navy's nuclear patrols of South and East Asia and the Pacific — is regarded as literally irreplaceable. The Clark Air Field is similarly priceless as a vast fixed aircraft carrier.

With the treaties for both these facilities up for renegotiation in 1991, and the prospects that Marcos might rig himself another election any time between now and 1987, Reagan and State Department strategists have to weigh up his chances of combatting the growing strength of the guerrillas of the CP-led New Peoples Army, whose forces are now estimated at anything up to 20,000, and who are steady-



Nakasone

by gaining ground in comparison to the Philippines graft-ridden armed forces.

The war against the guerrillas is further destabilising the economy, consuming cash and shaking confidence in the regime: US analysts are pessimistic for Marcos's chances of survival.

As with other pro-US dictatorships — Batista in Cuba, Somoza in Nicaragua, the Shah in Iran — the key question is how to gauge the point at which the old regime cannot be salvaged, but a new "democratic" capitalist order can be installed in its stead; so far the USA has never got this difficult equation right.

Indeed with the strength of the Communist Party's front organisation the National Democratic Front also growing in the cities, and Philippines workers increasingly bold in their challenges to the regime, it could already be too late for the US to change horses with any ease. The strengthening of the CP, aligned neither to Moscow nor Peking, is a reflection, in a land where workers' organisations have always been repressed, of the potential independent struggles of the working class.

But as the crisis deepens, the development in the Philippines of a consistently revolutionary party with a programme to link the struggles of town and countryside, democratic and economic issues to the central fight for workers' power and a break from imperialist and capitalist exploitation is ever more urgent.

**Philippines Support Group
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Fighting for socialism in Coventry

By a Special Correspondent

COVENTRY is a Labour-run city with a population of 330,000. Of its 4 MPs, 3 are Labour and it has had a Labour Council consistently since the Second World War except in the late '60s with the unpopularity of the Wilson government.

The TGWU and AUEW dominate the town with two massive HQs built with the members' subscriptions, and delegates to all the CLPs. In the 1950s and 1960s Coventry was the "boom city" with the rebuilding of the centre after the war and the expansion of engineering and the car industry.

In those days the media complained of the greedy carworkers with their high wages and wildcat strikes.

Coventry is now the ghost town of the Specials' pop song. The car industry has been more than decimated with only Peugeot Talbot and Jaguar left, and these considerably slumped down.

Alfred Herbert, once the largest machine tool firm in Europe has now disappeared. There is now no future for youth in the engineering industry in Coventry — an unthinkable situation even 10 years ago.

The unemployment rate is 20%, reaching 37% in the Foleshill area and 33% in Hillfields — two inner city wards. Recently there have been 500 more sackings in the car industry and a reported 711 to go from GEC, now Coventry's largest privately owned employer.

And the labour movement's response? During a collection during the miners' strike, an ex-carworker put £10 in the box and said:

"We should have had an Arthur Scargill at Standard Triumph. Instead we sold our jobs for redundancy pay. Now the kids have got nothing."

Exactly! The TGWU and AUEW made the deals throughout Coventry that produced unemployment. At the same time the Labour Council (many of the councillors being convenors from the local factories) have implemented cuts in services year after year since Dennis Healy's first squeeze in the mid '70s.

It has been a form of Fabianism in reverse. As the late Councillor Harry Caplan (himself AUEW convenor at BL Self Changing Gears) reported to the District Party in 1976:

"It's going to get worse. We'll either become Tories or Trotskyists, there's no middle road any more."

Very prophetic words! The District Party

is still dominated by an unholy mixture of right wing Councillors and TGWU and AUEW officials with some tame right wing Asian "godfathers" in tow. They are steeped in sell-outs and cynicism.

Embattled against them are the Left, which now dominate 3 of the 4 CLPs. There is indeed very little middle ground in the Coventry labour movement.

On several occasions in the last few years the Labour Party NEC has intervened into disputes in Coventry. Only recently National Agent David Hughes threatened to protect the interests of councillors who were threatened with deselection by socialists opposed to local council policy.

At least one of the CLPs (Coventry South-West) has a policy in favour of the resignation of Neil Kinnock in whom it has no confidence as leader.

According to local labour movement history, the Independent Labour Party (ILP) before World War I had 20 paid up members in Coventry with meeting rooms, a billiard hall and tea rooms in the city centre.

The present Coventry Labour Party, with 2,000 members, high polls in elections and apparent local power has no HQ, no full-time organiser, no Labour Clubs, and very few campaigning, political or social events.

Over the last year one CLP and the District Party, both dominated by the right wing, did not meet at all!

Socialist Viewpoint supporters are very active in the City Broad Left which meets regularly and campaigns particularly on local government issues in support of the 6 Left councillors expelled from the Group.



The Left still needs to organise and campaign more efficiently and raise the level of political discussion in order to prepare to take control locally. At the moment we tend to react only against the latest cuts or insanities of the Labour Group.

To aid this process, *Socialist Viewpoint* supporters locally produce a monthly 6-page duplicated bulletin which we give out free.

This forces us to seek out and to discuss amongst ourselves the key events and issues and to relate them to our national and international perspectives. The bulletin also stimulates discussion with our readers which helps us to develop our politics.

In order to increase political discussion, we have encouraged one of our supporters, Dave Spencer, a West Midlands County Councillor, to go forward for parliamentary selection for the North East CLP. This has involved him speaking on our politics at a number of shortlisting meetings to Trade Union and Labour Party branches.

As far as campaigns are concerned, our supporters were involved in the occupation of Bell Green Primary School which was due to be closed by the Council. Although unable to prevent closure of their school, the Bell Green Action Group used its experience to help build a city-wide organisation of defence committees when a further 8 schools were threatened with closure. The building of such organisations, the encouragement of mass action, is central to the renewal of the labour movement.

We have also been part of a Housing survey and campaign in the same Bell Green/Wood End Council Estate. From these we have set up informal political education groups in people's houses, which have been very successful.

We have helped build an END group locally which held a large peace rally on VE Day with some Hiroshima survivors and a speaker from the Philippines Support Group.

We hope here to use the international symbolism of Coventry's destruction and its town twinning policy (with 31 separate towns at the last count) to raise political debate on CND, Nuclear Free Zones and international policies.

In their Trade Unions our supporters are variously involved in the fight against redundancies at GEC and against cuts in the Health Service.

Alongside other union activists, our supporters were responsible for the recent successful campaign to persuade GEC to organise cervical cancer screening. This action (featured in Channel 4's *Union World*) uncovered a number of women who required treatment.

Throughout the miners' strike we maintained a regular presence in the local Support Committee and on the picket lines at Coventry Colliery. We carried out consistent support work, collecting money and food.

All four Coventry CLPs passed resolutions calling for amnesty and reinstatement for all sacked miners and 2 of them chose this as their Annual Conference resolutions.

This was in part due to SV supporters who initiated the appeal sent by the Support Committee to local trade unions and Labour Party branches. In 3 of the 4 CLPs it was SV supporters who moved the amnesty and reinstatement resolutions.

Since the end of the strike, SV supporters have initiated through the local Support Committee a successful Adopt a Prisoner campaign and organised through Coventry South West CLP the only continuing street collection in the city.

Coventry schools:

Judge puts Labour Group "top of the class"

By MATTHEW JONES

AFTER losing the vote in the Council on June 11 by the narrowest of margins, i.e. the Lord Mayor's casting vote, Coventry Campaign Against School Closures went to the courts to try to get the decision overturned.

Our case rested on the fact that the Council's "consultation" on the cuts package, laughably titled "Future Choices" but better known as "No Future, No Choice", was inadequate. Anyone who had been to one of the Council's "consultation" meetings would have been forced to agree. It was obvious that the leadership of the Labour Group had already decided on cuts and the meetings were just a sham and a cover up. In addition they refused to give the relevant information on the schools concerned so that alternatives could be drawn up.

To cap it all they hadn't a clue about how they were going to implement the plan to close the secondary schools. How do you run a temporary split site school with anything up to 2,000 pupils?

One school, St Michael's C of E primary school, took action in the courts before everyone else, because they wanted to stop the Council voting on June 11 on closing the school by making the case sub judice. After June 11 the rest of the Action Groups in the Campaign decided to follow suit and try to get a joint case with St Michael's.

This was important: the Council were given the chance to hang themselves with their own rope and they took it. The cuts package "consultation" received 870 replies from people and organisations; only 43 (less than 5%) were in favour of closing anything.

Our litigation was based on the Brent case* precedent and we argued that the Council had failed to consult properly, failed to listen to the wishes of the people of Coventry and failed to justify closures.

However, we failed to get a joint case between St Michael's and the rest of the threatened schools, so we had to hire a barrister to attend the preliminary hearing for the St Michael's case. On September 23, after 4 days, the judge ruled that there was no case for the Council to answer.

In his statement he agreed that No Future No Choice was a load of rubbish, inadequately documented and costed; but the "consultation" as a whole was satisfactory because of the number of meetings held. Quantity, but not quality.

In reply to the parents' evidence about the difficulty of getting hold of information

on the schools and the closures he had the nerve to say that they had managed to produce excellent documentation and counter arguments to the Council (all of which the Council then ignored!).

The case has its political lessons, besides the obvious one about the nature of the capitalist courts. There is also the comparison of the politics of a highly paid state functionary and Coventry's Labour(?) Council. If he had ruled in favour of St Michael's it could have been said that he showed more concern for Coventry's people than the Labour Group. As it is, Coventry's Labour Group has shown that it has roughly the same degree of socialist politics as a High Court Judge!

The School Action Groups which together with NUPE and the NUT make up the Coventry Campaign Against School Closures, are determined to fight on. On Tuesday October 8, 45 people attended a Campaign meeting. This is roughly the same number who came to the first meeting on March 19.

After 7 months people who were new to political action at the start have learnt a lot about the methods of the Council and the action needed to combat them. The meeting decided to drop the court action and mount a political campaign against the Council including occupations if necessary.

The real key to success in this campaign lies in a joint fight by Action Groups, the Labour Party and the Council unions. With the government's privatisation plans in the offing, all jobs are at risk.

NUPE and the NUT have already delegated representatives to the Campaign; the rest of the Council unions should do the same. A mobilising campaign should be started to inform every union member of the situation and ask for a vote for strike action against school closures and against privatisation.

Whether this will happen or not is another question. The attitude of most of the manual unions varies over sweetheart deals with management over redundancies.

On the teaching and clerical side besides NUT and NUPE, NAS/UWT has problems with its national leadership and NALGO's local leadership can't carry its membership against the management. The next 6 months will see whether we succeed.

***Brent case:** Brought and won by Brent parents against Brent Council for trying to close two comprehensives without proper consultation.

Our legacy from Joe Hill

Songs and class spirit that will never die

By KEITH WHITE

SEVENTY years ago this coming November 19, one of the most famous labour movement poets and songwriters of all time was murdered by the state of Utah, USA.

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"The working class and the employing class have nothing in common. There can be no peace so long as hunger and want are found among millions of working people and the few, who make up the employing class, have all the good things in life. Between these two classes, a struggle must go on until the workers of the world organise as a class, take possession of the earth and the machinery of production and abolish the wage system."

Against the narrow craft unionism of the American Federation of Labour the IWW sought to build one big union. As Joe Hill put it:

**"We want the sailor and the tailor and the lumberjacks,
And all the cooks and laundry girls,
We want the guy that dives for pearls
The pretty maid that's making curls
And the baker and the staker and the chimney sweep
We want the man that's slinging hash,
The child that works for little cash
In one Union grand."**

Joe Hill (born Joseph Hillstrom in Sweden 1879) went to the US in 1902 and joined the IWW in 1910. As a migrant worker amongst migrant workers, he was in an excellent position to understand the people he was trying to reach, and contributed significantly to the "Little Red Songbook", considered by many at the time to be the most important Wobbly publication.

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**His boiler it was leaking and its drivers on the bum
And his engine and its hearings, they were all out of plumb.**

**Casey Jones kept his junk pile running;
Casey Jones was working double time;
Casey Jones got a wooden medal,
For being good and faithful on the SP line.**

**Having died the scab continued his scabbing:...
When Casey Jones got up to heaven to the Pearly Gate.**

He said 'I'm Casey Jones, the guy that pulled the SP freight.'

'You're just the man,' said Peter, 'our musicians went on strike:

You can get a job a-scabbing any time you like!'

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Just like he did to workers on the SP line.

**The angels got together, and they said it wasn't fair
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**The Angels Union No. 23, they sure were there,
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'Casey Jones,' the Devil said, 'Oh fine';

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The song became immensely popular, was printed up on small cards and sold in order to raise funds for the strikers.

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Sometimes, hundreds would be arrested in the campaign for the right to free speech. The idea was to fill the jails, where further singing, shouting and resistance would go on until embarrassed county officials would allow free speech in the streets.

Wobblies from all over the US travelled thousands of miles in response to calls for "Good men needed to fill the jails" of some Western town where the IWW was seeking to organise the downtrodden migrant workers.



Streetcar strike, Seattle 1903

The Left still needs to organise and campaign more efficiently and raise the level of political discussion in order to prepare to take control locally. At the moment we tend to react only against the latest cuts or insanities of the Labour Group.

To aid this process, *Socialist Viewpoint* supporters locally produce a monthly 6-page duplicated bulletin which we give out free.

This forces us to seek out and to discuss amongst ourselves the key events and issues and to relate them to our national and international perspectives. The bulletin also stimulates discussion with our readers which helps us to develop our politics.

In order to increase political discussion, we have encouraged one of our supporters, Dave Spencer, a West Midlands County Councillor, to go forward for parliamentary selection for the North East CLP. This has involved him speaking on our politics at a number of shortlisting meetings to Trade Union and Labour Party branches.

As far as campaigns are concerned, our supporters were involved in the occupation of Bell Green Primary School which was due to be closed by the Council. Although unable to prevent closure of their school, the Bell Green Action Group used its experience to help build a city-wide organisation of defence committees when a further 8 schools were threatened with closure. The building of such organisations, the encouragement of mass action, is central to the renewal of the labour movement.

We have also been part of a Housing survey and campaign in the same Bell Green/Wood End Council Estate. From these we have set up informal political education groups in people's houses, which have been very successful.

We have helped build an END group locally which held a large peace rally on VE Day with some Hiroshima survivors and a speaker from the Philippines Support Group.

We hope here to use the international symbolism of Coventry's destruction and its town twinning policy (with 31 separate towns at the last count) to raise political debate on CND, Nuclear Free Zones and international policies.

In their Trade Unions our supporters are variously involved in the fight against redundancies at GEC and against cuts in the Health Service.

Alongside other union activists, our supporters were responsible for the recent successful campaign to persuade GEC to organise cervical cancer screening. This action (featured in Channel 4's *Union World*) uncovered a number of women who required treatment.

Throughout the miners' strike we maintained a regular presence in the local Support Committee and on the picket lines at Coventry Colliery. We carried out consistent support work, collecting money and food.

All four Coventry CLPs passed resolutions calling for amnesty and reinstatement for all sacked miners and 2 of them chose this as their Annual Conference resolutions.

This was in part due to *SV* supporters who initiated the appeal sent by the Support Committee to local trade unions and Labour Party branches. In 3 of the 4 CLPs it was *SV* supporters who moved the amnesty and reinstatement resolutions.

Since the end of the strike, *SV* supporters have initiated through the local Support Committee a successful Adopt a Prisoner campaign and organised through Coventry South West CLP the only continuing street collection in the city.

Coventry schools:

Judge puts Labour Group "top of the class"

By MATTHEW JONES

AFTER losing the vote in the Council on June 11 by the narrowest of margins, i.e. the Lord Mayor's casting vote, Coventry Campaign Against School Closures went to the courts to try to get the decision overturned.

Our case rested on the fact that the Council's "consultation" on the cuts package, laughably titled "Future Choices" but better known as "No Future, No Choice", was inadequate. Anyone who had been to one of the Council's "consultation" meetings would have been forced to agree. It was obvious that the leadership of the Labour Group had already decided on cuts and the meetings were just a sham and a cover up. In addition they refused to give the relevant information on the schools concerned so that alternatives could be drawn up.

To cap it all they hadn't a clue about how they were going to implement the plan to close the secondary schools. How do you run a temporary split site school with anything up to 2,000 pupils?

One school, St Michael's C of E primary school, took action in the courts before everyone else, because they wanted to stop the Council voting on June 11 on closing the school by making the case sub judice. After June 11 the rest of the Action Groups in the Campaign decided to follow suit and try to get a joint case with St Michael's.

This was important: the Council were given the chance to hang themselves with their own rope and they took it. The cuts package "consultation" received 870 replies from people and organisations; only 43 (less than 5%) were in favour of closing anything.

Our litigation was based on the Brent case* precedent and we argued that the Council had failed to consult properly, failed to listen to the wishes of the people of Coventry and failed to justify closures.

However, we failed to get a joint case between St Michael's and the rest of the threatened schools, so we had to hire a barrister to attend the preliminary hearing for the St Michael's case. On September 23, after 4 days, the judge ruled that there was no case for the Council to answer.

In his statement he agreed that No Future No Choice was a load of rubbish, inadequately documented and costed; but the "consultation" as a whole was satisfactory because of the number of meetings held. Quantity, but not quality.

In reply to the parents' evidence about the difficulty of getting hold of information

on the schools and the closures he had the nerve to say that they had managed to produce excellent documentation and counter arguments to the Council (all of which the Council then ignored!).

The case has its political lessons, besides the obvious one about the nature of the capitalist courts. There is also the comparison of the politics of a highly paid state functionary and Coventry's Labour(?) Council. If he had ruled in favour of St Michael's it could have been said that he showed more concern for Coventry's people than the Labour Group. As it is, Coventry's Labour Group has shown that it has roughly the same degree of socialist politics as a High Court Judge!

The School Action Groups which together with NUPE and the NUT make up the Coventry Campaign Against School Closures, are determined to fight on. On Tuesday October 8, 45 people attended a Campaign meeting. This is roughly the same number who came to the first meeting on March 19.

After 7 months people who were new to political action at the start have learnt a lot about the methods of the Council and the action needed to combat them. The meeting decided to drop the court action and mount a political campaign against the Council including occupations if necessary.

The real key to success in this campaign lies in a joint fight by Action Groups, the Labour Party and the Council unions. With the government's privatisation plans in the offing, all jobs are at risk.

NUPE and the NUT have already delegated representatives to the Campaign; the rest of the Council unions should do the same. A mobilising campaign should be started to inform every union member of the situation and ask for a vote for strike action against school closures and against privatisation.

Whether this will happen or not is another question. The attitude of most of the manual unions varies over sweetheart deals with management over redundancies.

On the teaching and clerical side besides NUT and NUPE, NAS/UWT has problems with its national leadership and NALGO's local leadership can't carry its membership against the management. The next 6 months will see whether we succeed.

***Brent case:** Brought and won by Brent parents against Brent Council for trying to close two comprehensives without proper consultation.

Our legacy from Joe Hill

Songs and class spirit that will never die

By KEITH WHITE

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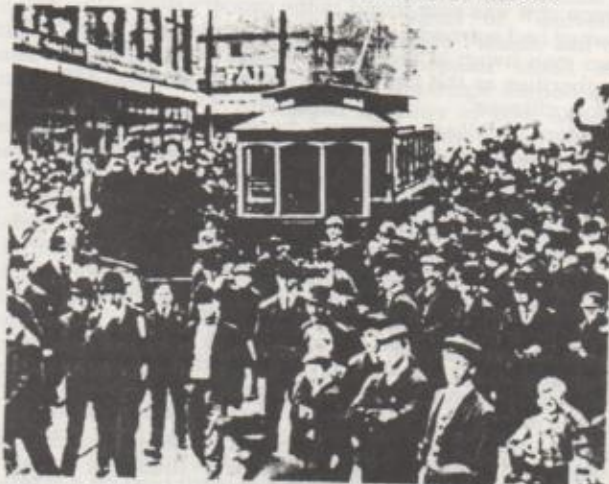
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Streetcar strike, Seattle 1903

In the streets, the IWW often came up against the Salvation Army competing for hearts and minds, and some Wobbly songs were sung to well-known hymn tunes. Perhaps the most famous of Joe Hill's songs "The Poacher and the Slave" was a response to "The Sweet bye and bye."

**"Long hair'd preachers come out every night
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right
But when asked about something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:**

**You will eat by and by
In that glorious land in the sky
Work and pray; live on hay;
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.**

**And the starvation army they play
And they sing and they clap and they play
Till they get all your coin on the drum,
Then they tell you when you're on the bum:**

CHORUS

**If you fight hard for children and wife
Try to get something good in this life
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell.**

CHORUS

**Workmen of all countries unite
Side by side we for freedom will fight
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:**

**You will eat, bye and bye,
When you've learned how to cook and to fry.
Chop some wood, t'will do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye."**

It is fitting perhaps that it was in the vicious reactionary Mormon Church-dominated State of Utah where Joe Hill was murdered by the employing class.

In the few years before Joe Hill's arrest, trial and execution there had been a series of major class struggles in the miners and railroad construction. He himself had been working in a mine and helping to organise against the employers.

Governor Spry of Utah was well known for his total support for the employing class and his desire for revenge after some working class victories. This hatred for such organisations as the IWW was to play a role in Hill's death.

In January 1914, two masked assailants entered a grocery store and shot the owner and his son.

Before he died, the son shot and wounded one of the attackers, who fled empty-handed. Joe Hill was picked up by the authorities a few days later after a doctor came forward to report he had treated Hill on the night of the robbery.

Hill denied involvement, claimed to have been shot in a dispute over a woman, and refused to name her or the man who had shot him.

The bullet had travelled right through his body; but no trace of it was ever found in the grocery store. The dead owner had warned his wife about a potential threat from two men living in the area; but this was ignored by the authorities as the two people were apparently "respectable citizens".

There is clearly no room here for a more detailed description of the process whereby Hill was tried, sentenced and executed. Suffice it to say that despite a major campaign, and an appeal for clemency from president Woodrow Wilson, Governor Spry exercised his "right to revenge" by refusing to commute the sentence.

On November 19 1915, having been given the choice of the bullet or the rope, Joe Hill was shot. Defiant to the last, he called on his executioners to fire.

The IWW respected his wish that he "didn't want to be found dead in the state of Utah" and one year after a Chicago funeral attended by thousands of workers his ashes were divided into many small packets and dispatched for scattering in every State of the USA (except Utah) and many other countries of the world.

Joe Hill's last will and testament, scribbled on a scrap of paper during the last visit from the press, summed up his revolutionary outlook:

MY LAST WILL

**My will is easy to decide
For there is nothing to divide
My kin don't need to fuss and moan -
'Moss does not cling to a rolling stone'.
My body? - Oh, if I could choose,
I would to ashes it reduce,
And let the merry breezes blow
My dust to where some flowers grow.
Perhaps some fading flower then
Would come to life and bloom again
This is my last and final will
Good luck to all of you
Joe Hill**

A telegram to IWW leader "Big" Bill Haywood ended "...don't waste time mourning. Organise."

In the last 70 years, Joe Hill's songs have been sung throughout the world and continue to inspire socialists everywhere.

How pleased Joe would have been to have experienced the recent miners' strike and the explosion of songs which accompanied it. Songs, written by participants of the strike, set to well known tunes, poems, and so on played an important part in maintaining and building morale.

And in a number of miners' songbooks and on tapes and records of the songs sung in the strike you will find a Joe Hill song.

How true are these words written in 1925 by Alfred Hayes and later set to music by Earl Robinson:

**"I dreamed I saw Joe Hill last night
Alive as you and me;
Says I, 'But Joe, you're ten years dead.'
'I never died,' says he."**

For more details of the IWW and Joe Hill see:
Philip Foner, *The case of Joe Hill*,
Philip Foner, *The history of the US Working Class*,
Vol. 4 - *The IWW*
Len de Caux, *The Living Spirit of the Wobblies*
James P. Cannon, *First Ten years of American Communism*.



The Wobblies Hall was a centre of organisation for roving organisers.



English workers and the Irish struggle

By DAVID MOSS

Last month the first article in this series looked at the period from the English Reformation to the Act of Union and the links between Irish revolutionaries and the emerging British workers' movement.

EVEN before the end of the War with Napoleon, agitation for Parliamentary Reform and extension of the vote to working class men was gaining ground.

After the Peace in 1815 Radical Reform blossomed into a mass working class movement, fuelled partly by the post-war slump, but mainly as a protest against what many people, of all classes, saw as corrupt misgovernment which had waged an unnecessary and costly war abroad and suppressed liberties at home.

After riots in London and an attempted march to London by unemployed Manchester workers, "The Blanketeers", the Tory government, fearing insurrection, outlawed the Political Unions which formed the nuclei of organisation in towns and villages throughout the country.

"Seditious meetings" were banned, and the Habeas Corpus Act suspend-

ed as it had been against the Jacobins. By forcing agitation underground, support for the Ultra-radicals, who advocated a revolutionary solution, was increased, resulting in an attempted insurrection in June 1817.

Revelations about the role of a government provocateur in this rising swung much sympathy behind the defeated rebels and the Tories were forced to relax their legislation the following year.

By 1819 the movement for Radical Reform had revived under the popular leader Henry Hunt who enjoyed especial veneration amongst the workers and artisans of the towns and villages around Manchester. After attacks on him by Loyalists, as Tory government supporters described themselves, some Lancashire weavers formed themselves into his bodyguard and were on at least one occasion joined by Manchester Irish equipped with shillelaghs.

In London also the Radicals were seeking alliance with Irish workers. A mass meeting at Smithfield in July adopted an Address drawn up by Hunt from "The People of Great Britain to The People of Ireland." "FELLOW COUNTRYMEN!" it began:

"A system of unprincipled misrepresentation has, for centuries detained us in mutual ignorance and alienation from each

other. You have been taught to consider us your Persecutors, and we have been taught to look upon you as the Slaves of Spiritual Despotism and the enemies of Civil and Religious Liberty. It is time that the veil should fall from before our eyes. Oppression, that great teacher of nations, which by making them smart under their own woes, expands their hearts in sympathy for the woes of their Fellow-Sufferers, has at length induced us to turn our attention to your afflictions..."

Both peoples were the victims of two different forms of "Universal Popular Oppression" which had the same effect, "popular insult and degradation, oligarchic despotism, a privileged minority of both nations, raised over the heads, fed by the earnings, upheld and defended by the blood and treasure of the great majorities of both..."

It appealed to the Irish to join in the struggle for universal suffrage, annual parliaments and vote by ballot, not as an alternative to but as the only way to achieve Catholic Emancipation and true religious liberty. The fact that the Act of Union is not even vaguely alluded to reflects the back seat this question had taken in Ireland, where political life was now dominated by the Catholic bourgeoisie and church hierarchy who sought an end to the legal



Reform riots of 1832; only the middle classes were given the vote.

oppressor places himself outside the pale of humanity... The success of the Irish insurgents would give me more joy than does the success of the Greeks.. we feel the lash of the same oppressor."

In the late 1810s the political situation in both countries rapidly changed. After a series of bank collapses in 1825 and 1826, widespread unemployment and wage-cutting wiped out many of the improvements won by the newly legalised trades unions in Britain. Economic distress and unrest revived popular demands for political reform, and again events in Ireland gave encouragement.

Here in 1828 Daniel O'Connell, leader of the Catholic Association, won the County Clare election, although as a Catholic he was disqualified from taking his seat. The following year mounting agitation in Ireland forced the Tory government to pass the Catholic Emancipation Act, allowing Catholics to hold civil and military offices. Obviously this only benefitted the Catholic bourgeoisie, especially as the Tories also increased the property qualification for Irish voters.

The passing of the Act not only sharpened conflicts within the Tory cabinet, contributing to the fall of Wellington's ministry and the return of a government more amenable to parliamentary reform, but it also showed to British reformers the effectiveness of a mass movement. Political Unions were founded to

build a nationwide movement on the model of the Catholic Association in order to pressurise the government into enacting a reform of parliament.

The fragile alliance between middle and working class reformers, already strained by the growing violence of the campaign in some areas, completely broke down on the passing of the Reform Act in 1832. Only the middle class achieved the vote under its provisions, and the Whig government which was returned increasingly revealed itself as the representative of the bourgeoisie.

In particular the resurgent Trades Unions were attacked and effective Factory reform blocked by the new administration. Consequently working class radicals could more clearly identify their enemy as not simply a political regime based on the landed aristocracy but as a social and economic class of owners of capital.

This developing class consciousness was also dawning in a new attitude to Ireland which also stressed the need for social and economic change. In 1832, at the height of the Tithe War, when the military were used against the Irish peasantry resisting their agricultural produce being appropriated to maintain the English church, a Friends of Ireland Society was established in London.

"to demand full justice for Ireland and to support Daniel O'Connell MP in the arduous struggle in which he is engaged for the liberation of his enslaved and

unhappy country."

The following year a Coercion Bill placing Ireland under military law was widely condemned. A meeting of Huddersfield Political Union resolved that "Algerine acts and Russian ukases are lenient and humane when placed in comparison with the revolting bill now in contemplation for Polandizing our heroic, noble and generous Irish brethren." It was stressed that the militarisation of Ireland would strengthen the standing army and that the suspension of civil liberties was a potential threat to the rights of British citizens also.

By 1835 when it had become apparent that O'Connell was doing a deal with the Whigs, in order to win concessions for the Irish bourgeoisie at the expense of the interests of the workers and peasants of both countries, and by suspending his support for the repeal of the Act of Union, the emphasis of working class statements on Ireland changed.

The Poor Man's Guardian, organ of the London-based National Union of the Working Classes, announced in 1835:

"...under the existing laws of England, property is neither honestly acquired nor honestly distributed, that these laws give almost all property to those who produce none of it... the laws are made by the idlers to the exclusion of the producers... Why does not O'Connell teach the Irish these great truths? Why does he not instead of the hollow declamations about Orangeism and the Catholic religion tell the people honestly that sacerdotal religion is kept up by the higher and middle classes for the sole purpose of blinding the industrious classes and disposing them to submit without a murmur to the frauds and despotism of the rich?... The Irish want a full share of the fat hogs they take so much pains to feed and so many thousands of which are shipped off every year to Bristol, Liverpool and London to be eaten by the basest and bloodiest of mankind... They require that the fee simple of the land shall revert to the rightful owner viz. THE NATION... Let O'Connell attend to these matters. Let him secure to every Irish labourer a vote in the national representation so that he may protect his labour against the drones and destroyers who carry off his produce and who show him the gallows if he resist..."

Thus the oppression of Ireland and the national question were linked to exploitation and the class struggle in both countries, already foreshadowing the conflict between O'Connellism and Chartism. It was a compatriot of O'Connell, James "Bronterre" O'Brien, who was the leading exponent of this class analysis in the *Poor Man's Guardian* and it was to be another fellow countryman, Feargus O'Connor, who emerged as the main leader of the Chartists.



Fergus O'Connor

Ireland, forty thousand Irishmen in London were ready to avenge their bretheren."

Alarmed by such statements, an impending demonstration to present the Petition to Parliament and the increasingly militant tone of Mitchell in Ireland — who was now publishing hints on street warfare in his *United Irishman* — the government passed a Security Bill. This created the new crime of "treason felony" which carried the penalty of long terms of transportation for speeches inciting sedition.

On April 10, the day the petition was to be presented to parliament, tens of thousands of troops and special constables were mobilised in London. A massive demonstration of workers gathered on Kennington Common — some bearing the banners "Ireland for the Irish" — ready to escort the petition to Westminster.

Since the march had been proclaimed illegal and the government had made plain they would go to any lengths to prevent what they saw as the beginning of an insurrection, the Chartist leaders, and in particular O'Connor, called it off. In doing so they avoided a bloody confrontation which the unarmed workers would have got the worst of, but as in 1839 they had failed to have any alternative strategy ready for when the petition was inevitably rejected and again they had raised hopes which were not fulfilled.

During the following weeks, angry meetings took place throughout Britain and Ireland. In April the Chartist leaders Kydd and Leach spoke at meetings in Ireland with Mitchell and O'Higgins and Confederate delegates visited Manchester and other towns. Some local Chartist Associations resolved to form a National Guard, like the popular militia

in France, in order to counter the threat of state violence. Others saw it as an armed body to back up the demand for the Charter, or to support the anticipated uprising in Ireland. Especially in areas where the Irish element was influential, members of the National Guard actually began arming and drilling. With news from Ireland of the arrest of John Mitchell these preparations became even more urgent.

O'Connor pledged a week's profits from the *Northern Star* to support Mitchell's wife while he was awaiting trial. He considered Mitchell to be not simply a nationalist:

"...he is the first man amongst Ireland's modern patriots — sham and real — who has boldly unveiled the hideous vices of Ireland's anti-social system and manfully contended for the rights of the labourers and the sons of the soil — their social as well as their political rights."

On May 27 Mitchell was sentenced to 14 years transportation and immediately transferred to the prison ship. Angry demonstrations were called throughout Britain to demand his release.

In Manchester, Bradford, Bingley and London clashes occurred, with police and troops as the authorities tried to ban marches or arrest National Guard leaders. On June 12 a series of mass rallies were planned, and again banned by the government fearing that they were preliminary to an uprising; but outside the town centres, such as on the beach near Liverpool and on the Yorkshire Moors, they went ahead and speakers called for armed struggle for the Charter and to free Mitchell.

A paper published in Manchester by the Chartists James Leach and George Archdeacon, an Irishman, called *The English Patriot and Irish Repealer*, warned the government, "Touch Ireland if you dare ... it is not



"Driving the Charter through Parliament."



Crowds greet the Chartist petition on its way to Parliament in 1842.

Ireland alone you have to deal with."

In Ireland, Mitchell's outlawed *United Irishman* was replaced by the *Irish Felon* edited by John Martin with Fintan Lalor as one of the main contributors. Lalor reaffirmed his belief that Repeal was meaningless without social revolution and the "reconquest" of the soil of Ireland by the peasantry. He called for a rent strike after the harvest the coming Autumn and for resistance to attempts at eviction by the landlords. If the military were called in then they would resort to guerilla warfare.

Since the sentencing of Mitchell, other leaders of the Confederates were convinced of the need for an uprising in the Autumn. Alarmed, the government arrested Martin and other leaders and raided and closed down the *Irish Felon*. On July 22 the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, permitting imprisonment without trial. For those leaders who remained at liberty, particularly Smith O'Brien, Lalor's slogan adopted an urgent relevance. "Let us fight in September if we may — but sooner if we must."

Leaving Dublin, O'Brien and the Confederates who had evaded arrest made for Tipperary, where they attempted to rouse the workers and peasants of the countryside to seize Kilkenny as the base for a revolutionary government. The bands of men they got together were badly armed, untrained and politically unprepared, and after a shoot-out with police at Ballingarry on July 29, O'Brien abandoned the campaign. Lalor, on his way to link up with him,

had no better success in winning support and was arrested.

In that week, from the suspension of Habeas Corpus to O'Brien's uprising, agitation grew in Britain. Thousands of Special Constables were sworn in in Liverpool and pikes and gunpowder seized from Confederates. In Birmingham, Chartists cheered for Mitchell in a mass



Dire poverty in Ireland

meeting in the Bull Ring; and at Stockport a meeting of Chartists and Confederates called for support for Ireland.

As news arrived of O'Brien's attempt, a poster appeared in London with the heading "Is Ireland Up?" anticipating a joint insurrection, but even if one was planned, the premature and short-lived events in Ireland led to its postponement.

August 15 was the date decided for the uprising by the revolutionary wing of the Chartists with the support of the Confederates in Britain. But by now the movement was infiltrated by spies and provocateurs, and 15 of the Manchester leadership, half of them Irish, were arrested before the day.

At nearby Aston and Saddleworth on August 14, National Guards began to march on Manchester, encouraged by a provocateur (who later shot a policeman) but retreated when the military were called out. The police raided houses in London seizing arms and ammunition and arresting a number of workers, one of them W. Dowling, an Irish Confederate. He probably spoke for many of his countrymen when in the dock he stated:

"I do not wish to stand here as an English factionist but as an Irish Nationalist. My object was not to disturb English society but to free my own country."

Lessons of Communist Party history

By TONY RICHARDS

History of the Communist Party of Great Britain 1927-41.
Noreen Branson. (Lawrence & Wishart).

Two Steps Back.
Sam Bornstein and Al Richardson. (Calverts Press).

THE "official" history of the Communist Party was first commissioned by the Executive in 1956. Because the Party's attitude to its history kept changing according to the needs of the moment, it is no wonder that it took James Klugman until 1969 to complete the first two volumes, covering only as far as 1926.

It is even less surprising that — even with the death of Klugman — it took a further 16 years to write this third volume, which covers a much trickier period for the CP to come to terms with, involving many twists and turns.

Klugman's volumes were interesting in that he covered much of the detail of the early agitational work of the CP. In dealing with the CP's treacherous (Moscow-influenced) line of "All power to the General Council" in the 1926 General Strike, Klugman admitted some of the errors pointed out at the time and subsequently by the Trotskyist movement — but presented these as his own assessments, and played down their significance.

Branson's book seems an altogether more conscious cover-up on the history of the period. She writes as a Eurocommunist, able to distance herself from Stalin and say that certain mistakes were made, but then goes on to excuse each of these mistakes as understandable in the conditions of the day.

She attributes all the "mistakes" to the influence of the Communist International (Comintern) which had been set up by Lenin and Trotsky in 1919 to further the international revolution, but which by the late 1920s had been transformed under Stalin and the rising Moscow bureaucracy into a cynical tool for Kremlin foreign



(Left to right) Molotov, Mikoyan, Stalin, Kamenev and Voroshilov in 1929.

policy.

Thus the one period of policy which Branson strongly agrees with is that of the cross-class "Popular Front", after 1935. Ignoring the ways in which this search for alliances with the "anti-fascist", "democratic" capitalist classes conformed to Stalin's foreign policy requirements after the Nazi takeover in Germany, Branson claims that the Popular Front policy was forced on Moscow by the British and other CPs! In this way she tries to keep in with many ageing CP members who went gamely along with the Popular Front as one of many abrupt turns, as well as defending her own, and the CP's current political position.

In this way Branson paints a picture of a basically "honest" party, occasionally "making mistakes", but always fighting for the working class. This avoids any analysis which points to the rise of a bureaucracy in the Soviet Union (and the British Party) whose policies and motivations became directly counterposed to the Marxism of Lenin and the Bolsheviks and the interests of the international working class.

The "Third Period"

Klugman's volumes dealt with the attitude of the CP up to 1926, with its opportunist attitude to the TUC General Council and particularly its "left" elements. This had not simply applied in Britain: internationally the degenerating Comintern had embraced any trade union leader, social democrat or nationalist leader or government (Chiang Kai Shek in China!) prepared to show a friendly face to the Soviet Union.

But in 1928 came an abrupt change. This was the start of what was known as the "Third Period", referring to the third phase of economic/political development since the 1917 Russian Revolution. According to the Stalinist view, the first period had been one of widespread revolutionary upsurge; the second period one of relative "stability" — in which the opportunist line of seeking unprincipled alliances was justified by the argument that revolutionary possibilities were temporarily excluded.

The opening of the "Third Period" was marked by cataclysmic predic-

tions that the stability had broken down, and that the final phase of all out struggle of "class against class" had begun. It was linked in this way with a sharpening economic crisis in the capitalist countries, and a lurch towards ultra-left, sectarian politics by the Communist Parties. But its main starting point had been the needs of Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy to rationalise an abrupt about-turn in domestic policy within the USSR.

Stalin's former supporters and chosen allies, the rich peasant Kulaks, had developed their wealth and power within the Russian economy — while industry had lagged behind. Trotsky's warnings of the dangers this posed, and the need for a rapid industrialisation, had been ignored and then suppressed.

But in 1928, the Kulaks' more or less open threat to the planned economy finally forced Stalin into a belated, and brutal, switch of policy. From urging the peasantry to "get rich", Stalin began calling for the "liquidation of the Kulaks as a class". In their thousands and millions they were driven from their land and massacred. A panic programme of crash industrialisation was begun — with dire consequences for Russian workers. This was the real basis of the "Third Period": and internationally the Communist Parties were forced to take the same line.

Social democrats, uncritically supported until 1928, were suddenly denounced as "social fascists", worse than fascists because they operated under cover in the labour movement. The same union leaders tail-ended in the British General Strike, together with their unions, were equally branded "social fascists". All kinds of ultra-left "Red Unions" were formed in various countries.

In Britain the policy of forming new unions was only carried out to a limited extent, with a separate Miners' union in Fyfe and a Garment workers' union in East London. However, the same sectarian attitude prevailed and affected CP work in all unions. The Minority Movement of opposition to the British union leadership, led by the CP but initially embracing independent forces, became a meaningless rump.

CP members were already being expelled from the Labour Party in the period following the General Strike. But many Labour Party branches had refused to expel, and were being disaffiliated in a major fight with the leadership. The resistance had formed up in a "National Left Wing Movement", which was strengthening CP influence in the Labour Party.

The switch to Third Period politics brought all this to a grinding halt. CP members were told to leave the Labour Party even if they had not been expelled. The National Left Wing Movement was disbanded, and its supporters told simply to join the CP. The CP also dropped its demand

for affiliation to the Labour Party.

This chapter is well worth reading, because it shows much of what the CP actually did do. Branson reveals this quite clearly because she is opposed to the CP policy in that period. The material is also interesting because it shows many similarities between the Third Period CP antics and the more recent politics of the Workers Revolutionary Party and other ultra-left groupings today.

Branson's explanation of the turn however is interesting:

"Most writers tend to associate the introduction of the new line with the rise of Stalin. There is certainly evidence that Stalin agreed with it; there is little that he was responsible for initiating it. When under pressure, an isolationist and ultra-left posture has often been the outcome. In the late 1920s it had become clear that the previous strategy had failed. The majority of the workers accepted the leadership of the social democrats, who had betrayed them and in every country were hounding the Communists as enemies, in practice, defeating them. In such a situation, the symptoms of what Lenin once referred to as "Left Wing Communism, an infantile disorder" are only too likely to appear. It has been proved many times in the half-century since 1928 that you do not need a Stalin for this disorder to reveal itself."

In other words, Third Period ultra leftism is "explained" simply as an understandable response to attacks from the right wing in the labour movement. But though Branson mentions that the line was imposed on the Communist International, she fails to explain what changes within the Comintern made it possible to impose such an anti-Leninist line. As she has said, Lenin and the Bolsheviks had

fought against such ultra-leftism in a similar period. Now Stalin was imposing it upon the degenerating International.

The conditions of isolation of Communist Parties like that in Britain are well described; but this only explains why the Comintern line once adopted was imposed relatively easily. It does not explain how it was adopted in the first instance. In fact it was a line which took no notice of the conditions of party-building in any of the countries where CPs were operating. It took no notice of their development, and actually intensified their isolation.

The biggest problem of all for Branson in accounting for this period is that the rise of the Soviet bureaucracy under Stalin; its opportunist and conservative line of foreign policy in the second period; its short-sighted economic policy of appeasing the peasantry and the contradictions it produced; and its crazy switch to ultra-left sectarianism, were all consistently opposed within the Soviet Union and the Comintern by Trotsky and the Left Opposition, who counterposed at each point a Marxist line of policy to the positions adopted by Stalin and the bureaucracy.

The most crushing indictment of the Third Period line came in Germany, where the policy was carried out to extreme lengths, dividing the best organised working class in the world in the face of the Nazi attack.

Denunciations of the mass social democratic party as "social fascist" blocked any fight for a United Front between the CP and SPD against the actual fascists. Indeed the CP even went so far as to stand on joint platforms with the Nazis against the social democrats. The Nazis were openly described as the "lesser evil" to the social democrats who were "Nazis in disguise". In this way it was

argued it did not matter if Hitler did take over, because he would soon be exposed and "After Hitler it would be our [the CP's] turn."

Of course this was not the case. When Hitler did take power in 1933 the working class was so divided there was hardly any action against him. He moved ruthlessly against the whole workers' movement; the first people arrested and murdered were CP members: SPD militants were not far behind.

If the Comintern had been a genuine Communist International at this point, their reaction would have been to analyse this catastrophic failure and admit the ultra-left errors. The clearest indication that Lenin's International had become completely bureaucratised under Stalin was the fact that it continued to defend the Third Period line and its record everywhere, including Germany!

It was this which led Leon Trotsky and the International Left Opposition to call for a break from Stalin's parties and the building of a new, revolutionary Fourth International to retrieve and revitalise the heritage of the Bolshevik Revolution.

The Popular Front

The turn from hysterical "class against class" sectarianism to the abject cross-class politics of the Popular Front did not take place until 1934-35, embodied in the decisions of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern, whose fiftieth anniversary is today being celebrated by CPs the world over.

The Popular Front line is one of seeking to ally the Communist Parties with anyone and everyone who will verbally denounce fascism. In place of a united front of workers' parties, each retaining their independence but agreeing to strike together on a common limited objective, the "unity" is between "democratic" forces, and the programme reduced to those demands which the most conservative elements will accept. Anyone who raises class politics within a Popular Front is denounced as a "sectarian" or an "ultra left".

Branson presents the switch to this line as a reaction to the lessons of the Third Period. This is a downright lie. Not a single Comintern party — least of all the British CP! — drew a single negative conclusion or explicit criticism of the Third Period. Nobody said they had been wrong. And far from the national CPs piling on the pressure for a change in Comintern line, the line was changed in response to the needs of Kremlin policy, and national CPs again obliged to swing into line.

Branson describes CPs suddenly feeling the need for joint actions with others ("social fascists"?) against fascism. She writes of joint demonstrations spontaneously taking place. Of course there is no doubt that Hitler's victory did create new material conditions: but the Third Period policy had never matched real conditions before!

The main question is why the Comintern adopted the Popular Front as its new official policy. The answer is that Stalin and the Kremlin bureaucracy endorsed it, as a line which fitted their new foreign policy requirements: if not, they would have continued with their old policy.

Stalin certainly recognised that once Hitler had established himself he might (as he kept saying) invade Russia. So Stalin began looking for allies against Hitler — and turned not to the European working classes, but to the "democratic" European capitalist governments! Stalin wanted to ingratiate himself with these bourgeois politicians: but this was impossible with the Third Period "class against class" policy: the policy had to go — and with it any line of class independence or working class action. Enter the Popular Front — a line which, with incidental interruptions, has become the stock in trade of every Western CP since 1935.

This episode is predictably the weakest section of Branson's book: and yet it is the best part of the book by Bornstein and Richardson. In the chapter "Showing the Flag" they describe how the British CP policy emerged to the right of the Labour NEC — and on some instances to the right of the Liberals!

The CP presented Chamberlain as the main enemy. They were for supporting any candidate in elections who was "progressive" and opposed to Chamberlain.

"The struggle of the British people against the Chamberlain government is a struggle for its very existence as a democratic and unconquered people."

Bornstein and Richardson highlight the CP's infamous support to a dissident Tory, the Duchess of Atholl in an election. They show consistent CP support for Tory candidates against those Labourites whom they considered could not win or who opposed a Popular Front. The most notorious of these instances was in Aylesbury.

The authors also show how the CP worked inside the Labour Party to force upon it a non-class Popular Frontist line. The NEC, right wing as it was, rejected the appeals of the CP, including requests to affiliate, on the basis that the Labour Party (unlike the CP!) was a class party.

None of this is shown up by Branson. The reason is clear: switch the name "Chamberlain" to "Thatcher" and you can see an almost exact echo of the Popular Front policy today. Today's CP Executive has presented "Thatcherism" as a new type of Toryism, and looks again for an alliance of all, from whatever party, who oppose her.

Branson had all the material available. She must have deliberately chosen not to reveal the full logic of the present CP Executive's position. She also defends completely the disastrous application of the Popular Front policy in Spain, which brought the eventual defeat of the Spanish



The Popular Front brought disaster in the Spanish Civil war.

working class. In the search for an alliance with the "anti-fascist" capitalist class in Spain, peasants were forced to hand back land they had seized to the old landlords, workers' control and class action against France and the capitalists was sabotaged and broken up, and the bourgeois politicians were given the decisive voice in running the civil war. But Branson and her co-thinkers would do it all just the same again if given the chance.



ASARAN!
CONQUISTAR MADRID
TUMBA DEL FASCISMO

Trotskyism

The period of the Popular Front and the crushing of class politics in the Comintern Parties was also the period of the notorious Moscow Trials, in which Stalin crushed almost all the survivors of the old Bolshevik leadership. The majority of Lenin's Central Committee was framed up and put to death, along with countless other Soviet class fighters.

Branson doesn't defend the

Moscow Trials: but she does defend the CP for its attitude at the time. She claims that Communists had seen the disruptive actions of Trotskyists, and this was why they accepted the Trials.

A former British CP member disappeared in Russia at that time. Rose Cohen was the wife of a leading Russian CP member, Petrovsky, who had been the Comintern's representative in Britain. Petrovsky was executed as a "spy". Branson goes to great trouble to claim that British CP leader Harry Pollitt raised Cohen's case in Moscow — but she uses as evidence a letter by Stalinist veteran R. Palme Dutt... to the *Times Literary Supplement* in 1966! This is the equivalent of recent claims in the *Morning Star* that British CP leaders *did* raise criticisms of what was going on in Moscow — only they did so "in private"!

Why then did the CP never mention the Cohen case at the time? Why did the CP accept at face value everything that happened in the Trials? Why did they not even question the execution of people who had been their personal friends — like Petrovsky?

They went further than this — and called themselves for the expulsion of Trotskyists from the labour movement, declaring that they should be treated like fascists. Branson does concede that this treatment of political opponents as agents of the class enemy was "horribly misguided". But, fearful of falling skeletons, she does not venture too far into that cupboard.

The War

In 1939 Stalin signed a pact with Hitler's Germany. Branson defends it, showing no connection between this squalid deal and the politics of the Comintern.

When war broke out, the Comintern declared it was an "imperialist war", in which neither side should be supported. The British CP was a bit slow off the mark. Following the Comintern's previous line of cross-class alliances against fascism they had at first supported the war declared by the "democratic" British imperialists. This was promptly changed when the Comintern intervened, and from 1939 until June 1941 when Russia was invaded by Hitler's troops the British CP denounced the war as an "imperialist war".

During this brief 2-year period, the CP favoured the continuation of the class struggle in Britain. From 1941 to 1945, however, they reverted to support for the "democratic" Churchill and the National Government, with its strike-breaking, and speed-up.

From the Eurocommunist point of view, much of this part of the book is a repeat of the book "The Communist Party and the War" which was published last year. Both take the view that the "class war" period was wrong. Both explain this line as resulting from outside intervention.

Branson goes on to argue that this problem was resolved by the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943.

In reality, the war was an imperialist war from start to finish. The job of Marxists was to fight for the revolutionary overthrow of their "own" capitalist class within that situation. Once Russia entered the war, Marxists should have aided its war efforts and speeded material aid by class struggle means, but *not* at the expense of surrendering their own political independence to their own capitalist class.

Bornstein and Richardson detail this period of the CP's history very well, showing the lengths to which class collaboration went in the 1941-45 period.

History — for them and for us

Branson's summation of this period is that:

"The British Communist Party had a considerable list of past achievements to its credit during the 23 years of its existence."

This sums up her attitude. The CP has to explain how it got where it is today. It is no answer to point to a handful of "understandable" mistakes in isolation from the politics of the Comintern and the emerging bureaucracy of the USSR. It is even less of an answer when one of these periods which many would regard as a "mistake" — the Popular Front — is singled out for support because that represents the present politics of the CP.

For us, history must be seen as a way of understanding a changing world. We are opposed to today's politics of the CP: we understand that these politics of class collaboration did not arise yesterday: but neither are they the politics on which the CP was founded or on which Lenin and Trotsky led the first successful workers' revolution. They emerged as the politics of a rising bureaucracy in an isolated, encircled, economically backward workers' state. They developed as part of an international Stalinist movement and became ossified in a party in which all Marxist culture was crushed in the late 1920s and 1930s.

The more a party swallows abrupt twists and turns, the less it examines mistakes and betrayals, the more consciously it must begin lying and distorting its own history to cover up, and the more it must school its members in lying and distortion.

Branson's history is well suited to such a method and such a Party.

As an excellent antidote, the book by Bornstein and Richardson is a useful contribution, laying bare many lies and distortions. Any reader concerned for an accurate picture of CP history is also recommended to study Robert Black's presentation of extensive source material in *Stalinism in Britain* and the essays on the early CP contained in *Communism in Britain* by Woodhouse and Pearce (both available from *Socialist Viewpoint*).



The first question is: "Which side are you on?"

Solidarity first!

By TONY RICHARDS

WHEN Neil Kinnock made his shabby Conference speeches attacking Liverpool Council and the miners, his line of argument echoed a common attitude in the labour movement towards solidarity.

Kinnock insisted that the miners could not be supported because they had not held a ballot: and his criticism of Liverpool Council centred on their tactic of issuing redundancy notices.

I think the tactic of redundancy notices was wrong, while the NUM was right: but that is not the issue.

The fact is that Liverpool Council has been fighting in defence of jobs and services: for this reason they must be defended against the Tory attacks in the media and elsewhere, while reserving our right to criticise particular tactics. Even those who disagreed with the NUM tactic on the ballot had a class duty to defend the miners against the Tories.

This issue — which side are you on? — must be the first question in front of the labour movement whenever a struggle erupts against the employers or the government. As socialists our opposition to British imperialism means that we have an obligation to defend those who fight for national liberation, even if we disagree with some or with all of their tactics and

policies. If you do not solidarise with the struggles of the oppressed you have no right to be taken seriously in your criticisms.

The same is as true for organisations as it is for individuals. For some sectarian left groups, the issue is whether any particular campaign or struggle fits entirely with their political analysis: only if they are satisfied in this way will they support. Many go on to picket lines or demonstrations, or intervene in campaign conferences simply to further their own particular line or attract members to their own current — ignoring the interests of the class struggle as a whole. Strike support committees can be thus turned into sterile debating chambers which alienate militant workers and produce little in terms of practical support: international solidarity is likewise turned away from mobilisation and action, towards polemics and wrangles.

It is not only small groupings who act in this sectarian fashion. *Militant* supporters for example in many areas refused throughout the miners' strike to join the miners' support committees: instead they set up their own — seeking simply to raise the profile of *Militant* and recruit members rather than solidarise with the miners.

For the first four months of the strike the SWP did the same. Yet it was the non-sectarian support groups — embracing a wide range of political views — which made a real

contribution to the miners' strike.

Yet, as Kinnock shows, the sectarian approach to solidarity is by no means the exclusive preserve of the left. For years, solidarity work on South Africa has been hampered by the dominant role played by the Stalinist-led exiles in SACTU, who have continually opposed any form of links with the rising black trade unions which did not go through SACTU itself.

There are many who believe on the other hand that in engaging in international solidarity work — on Ireland, Nicaragua, South Africa or elsewhere — socialists must abandon any criticism, and simply endorse the tactics and politics of the existing leaders of the struggle — Sinn Fein, the Sandinistas or the ANC.

Just as we cannot abstain from struggles because bureaucratic leaders will try to sell out, we should not abandon our right to criticise and argue for our point of view. Solidarity does not mean subservience. "March separately; strike together" remains a healthy guide both to united fronts and to basic solidarity.

Unfortunately the sectarian and bureaucratic traditions have long histories and are deep-rooted in the labour movement. There is little hope of arguing "Militant" into a change of attitude.

But many on the left can learn the lesson. When we rightly attack Kinnock for scabbing on the miners, let us also ensure that we approach struggles in a principled way. First we get into the fight on the side of the oppressed; and from this position of active commitment and solidarity we raise our criticisms, put forward our tactical suggestions, seek to advance the class struggle and construct within it a new leadership which can push aside the likes of Neil Kinnock.

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