

SOCIALIST PRESS



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MAY DAY GREETINGS

Socialist Press sends May Day greetings to all its readers and to all workers and peasants in struggle around the world against imperialism, in particular, those imprisoned for their struggle for democratic rights and socialism.

Reconstruct the Fourth International, World Party of Socialist Revolution!

Inside: The History of May Day

Labour movement must act

NO MORE

IRISH

MARTYRS!



Bobby Sands

Political status for PoW's!

"The Republican prisoners will not compulsorily wear British prison clothes or carry out work for the British prison administration. We wish to have association with each other within the confines of the prison . . . Now that the [European] Commission discussion is out of the way and the confusion deliberately created by its intervention has cleared, the political prisoners, call once again for the people to support our demands.

The British government has the ways and means to concede them. Until they do, the hunger strike continues."

With these courageous words from his hospital bed Bobby Sands last weekend rebuffed an attempted intervention by European 'human rights' Commissioners, which was designed first and foremost to persuade him to abandon his hunger strike—then 57 days old.

In a scathing statement ringing with hatred of British imperialism, he also denounced the underhand role being played by Charles Haughey, the Irish Prime Minister. Accusing him of "cynical manipulation" of his sister Marcella, Bobby Sands went on:

"Mr Haughey led my family to believe that the British government wanted a way out of the dilemma in which they now find themselves, and that the Commission's intervention was a vehicle for getting the British off the H Block-Armagh

hook".

In reality Haughey (like other EEC capitalist governments, important sections of the US ruling class, and the reactionary Vatican leaders) fears that unless defused, Bobby Sands' struggle could ignite a new wave of anti-imperialist struggle North and South of the border.

While hesitating to call openly upon the Thatcher government to concede the prisoners' demands for political status, they have made hand-wringing speeches urging "negotiations", and at the same time attempted to pressurise Sands into a climbdown.

But having seen the way in which the Tories reneged on the verbal concessions which ended the 53-day hunger strike by seven prisoners before Christmas, Sands has resolved that his action will end only if the demands are met in full.

These demands for political status are absolutely justified. They should be supported by the entire British labour movement.

By no stretch of the imagination can Bobby Sands and his fellow republican prisoners be regarded as common criminals. They are political prisoners, jailed for their part in an ongoing war to liberate the six counties from British imperialist rule.

Why else would Sands have received his 14 year jail sentence for the comparatively minor offence of possessing a single revolver?

Why else are the republican militants snatched off the streets by special squads of police and troops, interrogated and tortured in special centres, subjected to special-extended remand without trial, brought before special no-jury courts with special rules of "evidence", and sent down for especially long

sentences to the Long Kesh concentration camp or Armagh women's gaol?

The case is inescapable.

In this situation the most scandalous role in this affair is that played by the leaders of the British labour movement. Shadow spokesman Don Concannon has repeatedly attacked both Sands and the Long Kesh prisoners, as part of Labour's "bi-partisan" policy of collaboration with the Tories on Ireland.

A similar stance has been adopted by other Labour leaders and—more or less openly—by the TUC leadership, whose "Better Life for All" policy is a disguised commitment to British rule in the six counties.

The result of this collaboration is that even after 60 days of Sands' hunger strike those fighting for solidarity on the Irish question in the

British working class remain an isolated minority.

This is the road to further martyrdoms and disasters in Ireland.

British workers must be brought to understand that British imperialism cannot bring "peace" to the six counties. British troops are simply propping up a reactionary, sectarian six county orange statelet through the brute repression of the Catholic minority.

Those fighting to drive out the troops and establish a basis on which the Irish people as a whole can determine their own future deserve the full and active support of the British working class.

Step up the fight in every union branch and Labour Party! Don't let Bobby Sands' struggle be in vain!

*Political status for Irish prisoners of war!

*Troops out now!

People's March focus on jobless total

As the final stage of preparations were being made in the Peoples March for Jobs last week the unemployment figure topped the 2½ million mark for the first time since the 1930s.

10.1% of the workforce is now officially registered as unemployed—to which must be added tens of thousands of married women who are ineligible for benefits and therefore not registered.

And despite glib Tory claims that the fall in output has now levelled off, and signs of a rise in company profits, the rationalisation of industry carried through as a result of Thatcher's squeeze means even an "upturn" would produce few new jobs.

In this setting the Peoples March is an attempt to persuade the Tory government to change course and funnel huge sums of public spending into creating new jobs.

The task is of course an impossibility. The only thing that will halt the attacks of this Tory government is all-out industrial action by the working class.

But in offering a national focus for the plight of the unemployed, the March has won the support of many young workers and militants throughout the labour movement.

Despite attempts by right wingers and the Communist Party to dilute the anger of these workers by drawing in churchmen and liberal elements, the March will therefore play a role in reinforcing hostility to the Tory policy of mass unemployment.

Such hostility needs to be directed towards concrete action to defend existing jobs—through strike action, occupations and the fight for supporting blacking action.

And it must be directed into the labour movement in the fight to organise the unemployed, and build a leadership prepared to fight to bring down the Tory government.

TROOPS OUT NOW!

NEW COUP PENDING IN BOLIVIA?

By Don Flint

Bolivia appears to be on the edge of yet another coup.

Last week, ex-dictator General Hugo Banzer (1971-8) finally broke openly with the crisis-ridden and thoroughly discredited regime of General Luis Garcia Meza.

For his pains Banzer was promptly placed under home arrest while his understudy Colonel Alberto Natusch was also locked up.

Natusch and Banzer stand at the head of a growing movement within the military apparatus to remove Garcia who is now backed by the country's cocaine traffickers and virtually nobody else.

Although Natusch was wheeled out on TV to "deny" both his planned coup and his arrest, it is no secret that a number of conspiracies are afoot, that Garcia's days are numbered and that both Banzer and Natusch are working closely with the US State Department.

They are proposing a "civilian-military" regime to reorganise the dictatorship, provide the conditions for re-establishing diplomatic relations with the United States, opening channels

with the IMF, and re-negotiating Bolivia's crippling \$3.8 billion foreign debt.

Several days before the "arrests" two US Colonels arrived in Buenos Aires, to inform the Argentine high command—Garcia's principal supporters—that a new coup was being planned, that it was "theirs", and the Argentines should stay out of things.

Abject failure

The cause of these complex and apparently contradictory developments lies in the abject failure of the Garcia regime to provide stable rule.

This is not because it has desisted from wholesale repression—it has unleashed an unparalleled campaign not only against the workers and peasants but also against liberalism and all its institutions—but because it has been totally incapable of organising inter-capitalist relations of production, basing its strategy on the boom in the cocaine market.

Cut off from all possibility of credit because of US non-recognition, the bulk of the capitalist class—both the managers of the nationalised industry (70% of the econ-

omy) and the traditional neo-colonial comprador 'lame ducks'—are on the verge of bankruptcy.

They are now agitating for a "realignment" of the dictatorship, not because they want democratic freedoms, but because they need credit.

Banzer is the ideal person to put this programme through—nobody can doubt his dictatorial credentials nor his links with Wall Street and the Pentagon. Equally he is now, as a result of these links, prepared "to come in through the door... having previously entered by the window" (his bloody coup of August 1971).

The imperialists hope that the experience of the last nine months will have stifled an appreciable sector of the masses behind Banzer's slogan of "Peace, Order, Work" so that he can win a poll against the challenge of the aged rightist popular ideologue Victor Paz Estenssoro and the social democrat Hernan Siles Suazo (UDP).

Won elections

The UDP, readers may remember, won the elections last June. It contains the

radical petty bourgeois group, the MIR, and the pro-Moscow CP. Without any doubt, having thrown in its lot completely with the US, the UDP will back any coup that promises a new poll and the futile prospect of formal bourgeois democracy in this backward state.

The limited potential for 'democracy' in Bolivia under capitalism can be assessed from the fact that over the

last three years the effort to establish a stable, elected government resulted in seven presidents, three elections, three successful coups and a dozen that failed, not to mention an economic crisis of unprecedented proportions.

For the working class and the peasantry the electoral road is a cul-de-sac paved by bourgeois liberalism and reformism and blocked by

the military.

While it may temporarily allow some freedoms (freedoms that are essential to the strengthening of the labour movement and the revolutionary party), it has absolutely no chance of survival in the long run. It is the task of Trotskyists to spell out this truth time and time again whilst at the same time fighting for the political indepen-

dence of the working class challenged incessantly by reformism and dictatorship.

Current developments, though from a liberal view 'progressive', are from a revolutionary perspective simply a change of tactics within the enemy's camp—something Banzer or Natusch, or whichever General, will not be slow to demonstrate in practice.

ZIONISTS PROMPT LEBANON FLARE-UP

What lies behind the rapid escalation of bloody civil war which has been developing in Lebanon since 2 April?

Fierce fighting has been raging in South Lebanon between Israelis and Palestinian forces and further North largely between the Syrian forces in the country and the various right wing Lebanese para-military groups.

These battles have largely been portrayed in the Western media as being between the Syrian troops in Lebanon and the so-called Christian forces supported by the Israelis.

In fact one of the major constituents of the Christian forces is the Falangist organisation openly taking Mussolini and Franco as their model and operating continually in direct day to day alliance with the Israelis.

They are led by a racist gangster by the name of Sa'ad Haddad.

Behind the new outbreak of bloody conflict lies the malevolent influence of US imperialism.

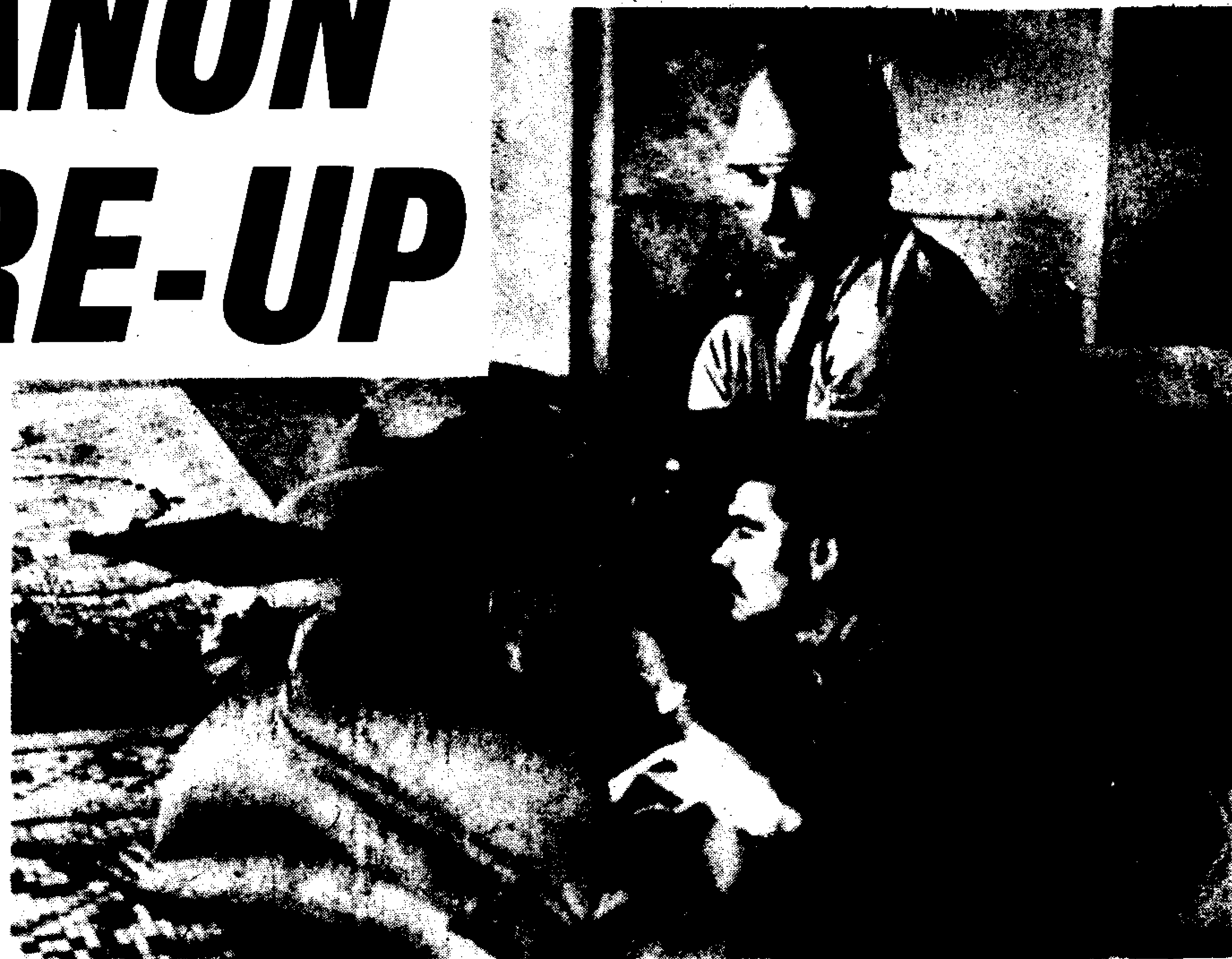
The new strategy of the Reagan administration in the area has been confirmed by the recent visits to the Middle East of US Secretary of State Haig and Iron Maiden Margaret Thatcher.

The purpose of their visits has been to strengthen the position of all the pro-imperialist forces in the area, particularly by supplying arms and support to the various semi-feudal state-doms in the Gulf and to Sadi Arabia.

The various friends and allies of Thatcher and Haig are of course amongst the most reactionary forces on the right, responsible amongst other things for the subjection of women, slavery and much else.

One of the prices the American administration has had to pay for this support has been the provision of the advanced AWACS spy planes to Saudi Arabia.

This move is not popular with the Zionist regime in Israel or with their many supporters in American ruling circles.



Syrian troops in Beirut

There can be no doubt there will have been a quick pro quo with the Israelis to reconcile them to the new position, and this will almost certainly include allowing them a much greater ability to intervene in the Lebanon.

It is important to point out that the state power in Lebanon ever since the civil war of 1975-6 has not really been in the hands of the Lebanese government.

The state itself was carved out by the major capitalist powers in the 1920s, and continued only as a result of the establishment of Israel in the 1940s as a commercial and trading centre for the Arab world.

It reflected a delicate balance between Christian and Muslim groups, which the struggle between Palestinians and Zionists brought to the point of collapse.

State power in Lebanon



Begin

is possessed by bodies of armed men representing various political groups—only a small proportion of them Lebanese.

The two most important are the so-called Arab Liberation Army, predominantly the Syrians who have always claimed political rights in the area, and the fascist forces of Sa'ad Haddad with the Israelis.

An important new factor in the situation is the imminence of the Israeli General Election, now under nine weeks away.

For some time it has been assumed that the ultra-reactionary Likud coalition of Begin will be replaced by the more traditional Zionists of the Labour Party.

The fighting in Lebanon is a part of the desperate efforts to develop an election issue on which to try to build support for the dying government.

Haddad and his fascist forces have continued their attacks on Palestinian refugee camps and guerrilla bases. The Zionists have sent in helicopters and gunboats to help.

These conflicts have no doubt had an effect on developing the battles further North.

The Syrians have used them as an excuse to consolidate their hold in 'Christian' areas in the North, particularly by their shelling in the city of Zahle near Beirut, and in the Bekaa valley where Syrian forces were reported last week-end to be driving out Falangist bands.

Meanwhile, Haddad has been received by Begin in Israel on 23 April like some visiting head of state.

He is said to have had 'full, frank and cordial discussions', and to have agreed to stop attacking the somewhat ineffective UN 'peace-keeping' force.

Statements have been coming out of Israeli ruling circles which seem set to hot up the battles even more.

Thus Moshe Arons, chairman of the Knesset (parliament) defence and foreign relations committee said on the state radio:

"If Israel comes to the conclusion that the Syrians are continuing with their attacks in Lebanon... Israel is going to stop them."

Even more significant was a statement by Major General Ben-Gal, commander of the Israeli army in the Lebanese border area.

In a statement authorised for release by the army he called for 'all-out military support for the Christians... I am for controlled execution, timed to suit us.'

Ben-Gal went on to say that they should consider the possibility of a final political solution in Lebanon with the Christians taking over.

If these indicate the next steps of the Zionists, there can be no doubt that the bloody battles will continue for a long time yet.

A campaign for solidarity with the beleaguered Palestinians and Lebanese socialists is now essential here in Britain.

SPANISH CRACKDOWN

The Spanish Socialist Party last week voted in parliament for a bill which authorises the government to suspend the freedom of speech and assembly, freedom to demonstrate, and to strike; gives police the right to search homes without a warrant, and to hold anyone for 72 hours without trial—along with many other restrictions on democratic rights.

The bill is designed to regulate the declaration of states of alarm, emergency and siege in the event of a "serious change in the normal functioning of democratic institutions" or "anything else related to public order".

The bill is put forward now as a direct concession to the Francoist army in the aftermath of the February 23 coup attempt.

And the purpose is not in any way to defend any form of democracy against the coup.

Same attacks

Rather it is to preempt a complete military takeover by introducing "constitutionally" the same attacks on democratic rights which an army coup would involve.

In particular, the bill prefigures such measures as the declaration of a state of emergency in Euskadi, the closure of the pro-ETA daily paper Egin.

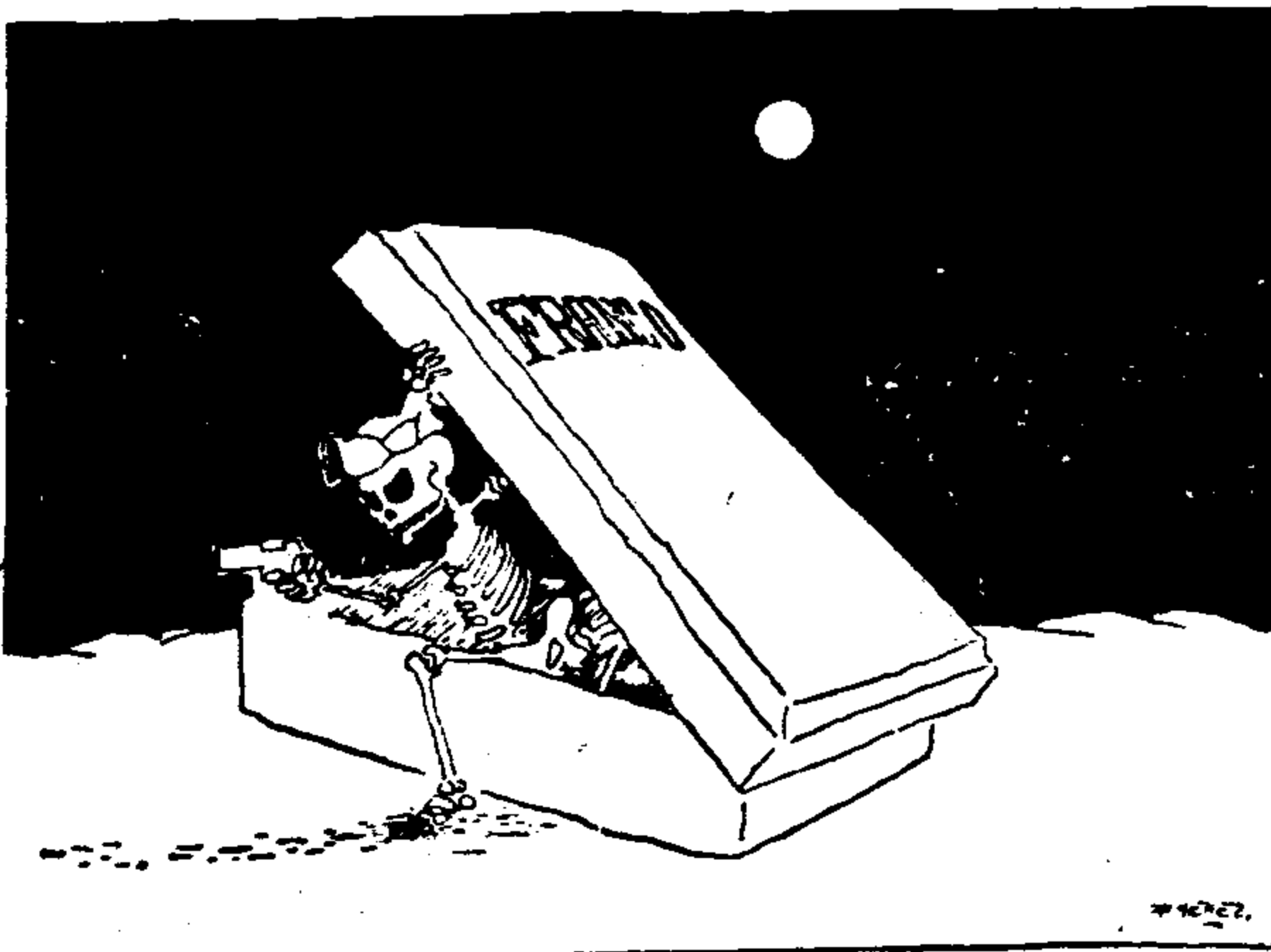
The Socialists voted for



SP leader Gonzales

two amendments proposed by the Communist Party which would have permitted trade union and political party internal meetings during a state of emergency and reduced the political role of the army chiefs of staff.

Other than on those minimal points, Spain's main workers' parties sold out their supporters into the hands of reaction.



Italy: Craxi courted by Tories and Stalinists

"I didn't get where I am today by leading a major political party" Bettino Craxi could justly say.

Craxi is leader of Italy's third party, the Socialists, which get less than one third of the number of votes as either the Communist Party or the Christian Democrats, Italy's Catholic Tories.

Yet at the Socialist Party conference which took place last weekend nearly everyone who was anyone in Italian politics was there.

There was a high powered delegation from the Christian Democratic party, the SP's leading partners in the present coalition "centre left" government.

And from the CP there was no less a figure than Enrico Berlinguer, the General Secretary.

It is a reflection of the extreme instability of Italian politics that such a small party as the Socialists can

generate so much interest and that its leader, Craxi, can seriously entertain the idea of becoming Prime Minister.

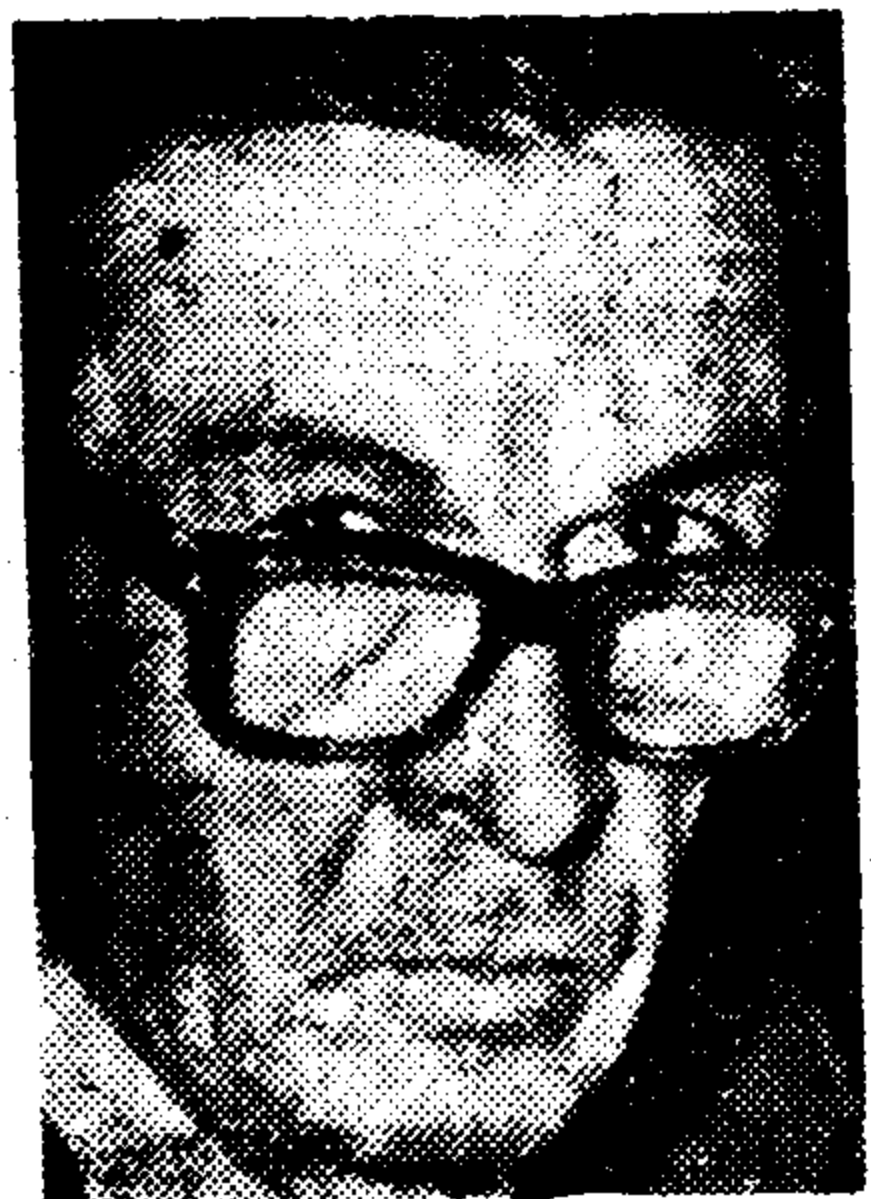
The reason is simple. The Christian Democrats are now too discredited and lacking authority to rule Italy alone. But the SP gives them a majority in Parliament.

But the SP would also very nearly give the CP a majority if they formed a left coalition.

Results

And the CP leaders are now very anxious indeed to end their 33 year exclusion from government in order to show their increasingly radicalised rank and file that their policies of compromise can produce results.

This position as the much courted holder of the balance of Italian politics is much to the taste of the arrogantly ambitious Craxi, who sees it as his way to supreme power (or as



CP leader Berlinguer and SP leader Craxi

supreme as Italian premiers have!).

It is also reflected in the three-way political line up at the party conference.

The far-left of the party wants the SP to join a left government with the Communists.

The less left want to form a government of national unity consisting of



all the "democratic" parties (i.e. everyone except the neo-fascist MSI).

And the right wants to continue in a coalition with the capitalist parties—principally the Christian Democrats—but to get more benefits from it (eventually the Premiership, though it is considered indecent to mention this openly).

This right faction, led by Craxi, has over 70% of the delegates to the conference as a result of appropriate wheeling and dealing.

This is somewhat ironic in view of the fact that the right wing opportunist Craxi (following Ramsay MacDonald, Harold Wilson and many others) rose to power with the support of the left.

Unfortunately for the Socialists they are not held in quite the same respect privately by the two large parties as their public positions would imply.

Craxi inspires more contempt than respect. And he may find in the end that far from balancing between the two big parties he is crushed to death between them and left holding the can for either the policies of the government or the chaos of elections.

But for the present Craxi can still put the fear of death into the other parties, especially the Christian Democrats

by threatening to withdraw his support from the tottering Forlani government and precipitate a general election.

And there is nothing that Italy's "democratic" politicians fear more than elections.

But as to Craxi's personal ambitions, his lust for the premiership will not be satisfied.

In fact in the topsy-turvy world of Italian politics, if Forlani falls, it may not be that the SP is too small to provide the next Prime Minister. It may be too big.

The next Prime Minister may have to come from the tiny Republican Party—or from no party at all.

FRENCH HOSPITAL STRIKES

For four weeks now staff in medical wards in Lyons hospitals have been striking for improvements in staffing complements.

The movement began in the Neurology Hospital and has since spread to three other major hospitals in the city. So far the main effect of the strike has been to reduce the number of ward beds in use, but strikers have taken care not to threaten the health of existing patients. According to them there is a minimum service in operation, similar to the level that might be available at weekends.

The strikers, who include an important proportion of non-unionised staff, express concern at the poor state of the medical ward services in most of the city's hospitals.

In addition they put forward three other claims—for a standardisation of the status of staff in all the medical and casualty services in the city, for an additional bonus and for an extra week's paid leave to compensate for the heavy nature of the work.

Today (24 April) the central hospital administration will consider the strikers' claims, but even if they give their agreement they will need the approval of the relevant civil service department, which is being pressed by the government to hold down health expenditure.

The deep divisions between French trade unions are coming into play to limit the spread of the strike action. The CFDT, the socialist orientated federation has expressed support for the action. The Stalinist led CGT however says that it 'opposes the present form of the movement', and has continued to attack the CFDT over what it claims is its refusal to denounce Giscard's policy to reduce the health service.

The CFDT rejects this charge and promises to publish a full reply. Meanwhile these divisions prevent the mobilisation of a strike which could be pushed forward against the entire health and pay policy of Giscard and Barre.

JO TOSTI—CLASS FIGHTER AND TROTSKYIST

With the premature death of Jo Tosti, some of the lowest paid and most downtrodden sections of the working class have lost a friend and dedicated fighter for their rights.

His work in organising hotel and catering workers into trade unions against bosses determined to hang on to their conditions of super-exploitation led him in turn to challenge the inaction, double-dealing and betrayals which have typified the trade union leadership's attitude to these workers and their struggles.

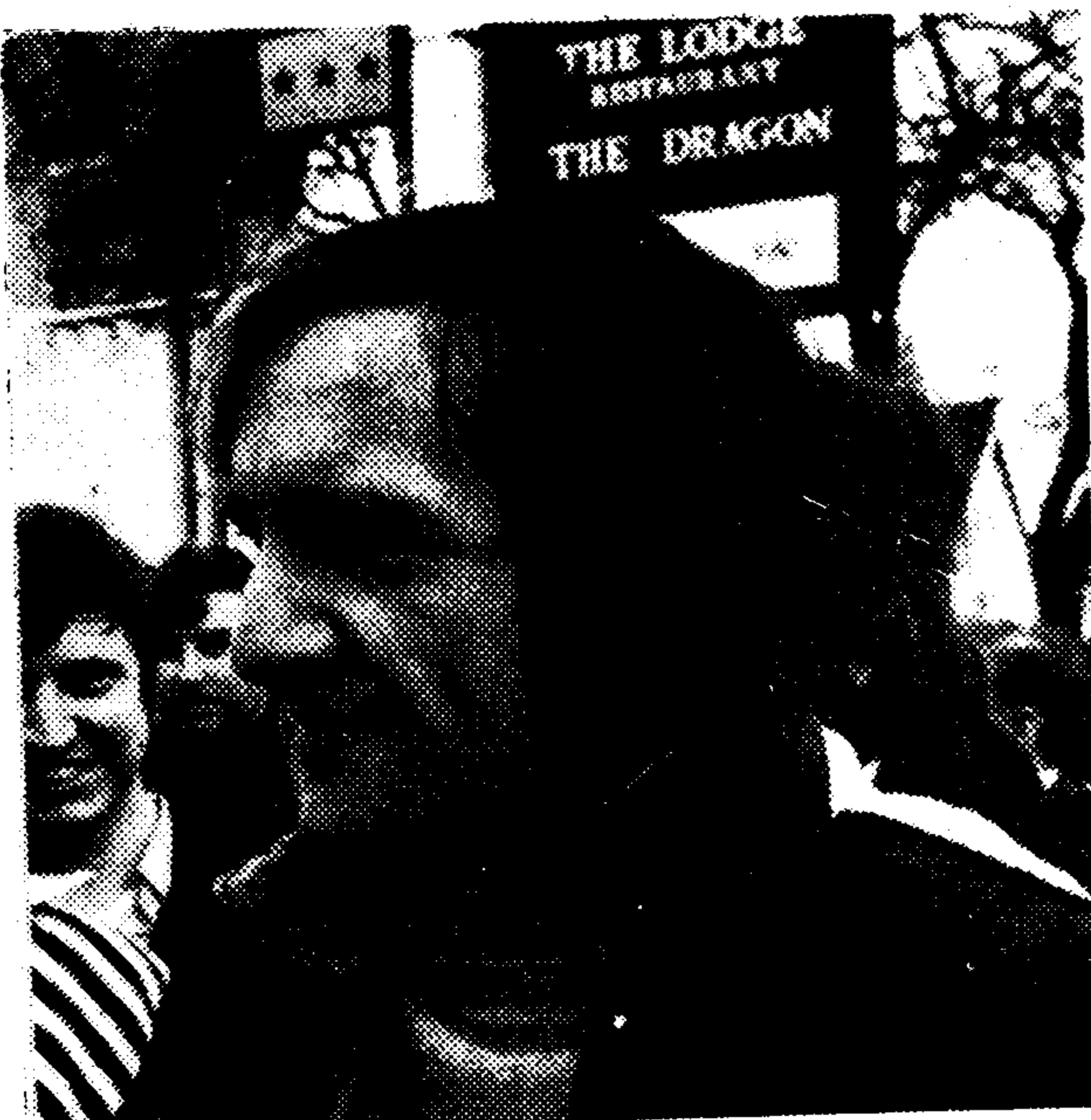
The insight this provided into the overall nature of the reformist bureaucracy which dominates the workers' movement and the powerful link between the defence of basic rights and the fight for socialism contributed greatly to Jo being won to revolutionary politics and Trotskyism.

Experienced

Crucial to this were his own experiences. Twenty years spent in the hotel industry with its long hours, poor working conditions, habitual victimisations and reliance on a high proportion of immigrant labour to facilitate the imposition of pitifully low wages, had convinced him of the necessity of trade union organisation.

A combination of these conditions brought things to a head in late 1976 at the Linton Lodge Hotel, Oxford. Jo Tosti had recruited the workers there to the TGWU and been elected shop steward.

On November 16 he was sacked on the spot. Immediately all but one of the men and women union members walked out in his



Jo Tosti

defence, demanding reinstatement and union recognition.

Soon after (as part of what was to become an increasingly common sight throughout the late 1970s of low paid workers such as at Grunwicks pressing for similar demands) the Linton Lodge strikers were to be joined by workers in the Grosvenor hotel, Sheffield, and Randolph, Oxford and later by women from the Night Out theatre-restaurant in Birmingham—all three part of the giant Trust House Forte empire, and striking for recognition of the TGWU.

History made

No-one could have predicted in November that it would be May 4 the following year before the Linton Lodge strike ended.

But when it did history

had been made. The strikers had achieved a complete victory; full reinstatement for those who wanted to return, including Jo Tosti as shop steward and union recognition.

Victory had been achieved against seemingly impossible odds.

Homeless

The workers had been sacked and made homeless after eviction from their hotel accommodation; but had maintained with never a day missed, a picket line for 5½ gruelling winter months, many for 24 hours: Jo Tosti's example of self-sacrifice and patient leadership was decisive.

That this was amply recognised by the strikers can be seen from events shortly before the final settlement.

Management offered them all their demands with

Pat Lally looks at the contribution made by Jo Tosti in the struggle of hotel and catering workers to improve their living standards and conditions and win union recognition.

one exception—Jo Tosti would not be reinstated.

The strikers voted unanimously to stay out until he too was taken back.

Throughout the period of his own strike Jo had also been central to the fight against the might of Trust Houses Forte, active in bringing together the three strike committees and conducting a national campaign for blacking action by the TGWU.

Though, like Grunwick, these struggles were defeated it was not without heavy blows having first been struck against the blatant class collaboration of the union leaders which had prevented the implementation of policies necessary to win.

Direct action

At the finish, local, regional and national bureaucrats knew they had been in a fight.

Utilising to their limit the official union structures and complementing this with lobbies and direct action to challenge the blocking and sabotage of the strikers' demands, the THF workers time and again rebuffed attempts by their leaders to bury the disputes.

Birmingham TGWU official Alan Law had his 'left' reputation badly dented. Jack Jones, general secretary, had to suffer the indignity of striking hotel workers occupying his Transport House office in protest against lack of union support.

And, when the same union was plunged into another marathon battle for recognition in the central London Garners Steakhouses at the start of 1978, Jo Tosti was in the forefront of TGWU militants whose support sustained that strike for nearly 18 months only for it, too, to end in defeat, sold out by London Region TGWU officials.

Principle

Jo Tosti's qualities of modesty, tenacity and belief in principle above all else remained despite such setbacks, and other failed hotel strikes at the Metropole, Claridges and the Park Lane Grosvenor.

In an industry notoriously difficult to organise, dominated by the institutionalised poverty pay of the Wages Council and sweetheart-style union agreements to enforce them, there are all too few prepared to stand out against such conditions.

Jo Tosti did: and those who knew him will not forget it.

*A pamphlet, 'The Hotel Strikes lessons for unionisation', containing a record of the Linton Lodge and THF strikes, with a foreword by Jo Tosti, is still available, price 60p including postage, from the WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.



NEW!

Socialist Press pamphlet on Southern Africa

Price 60p (including postage) from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

THE STEPNEY RENT STRIKE

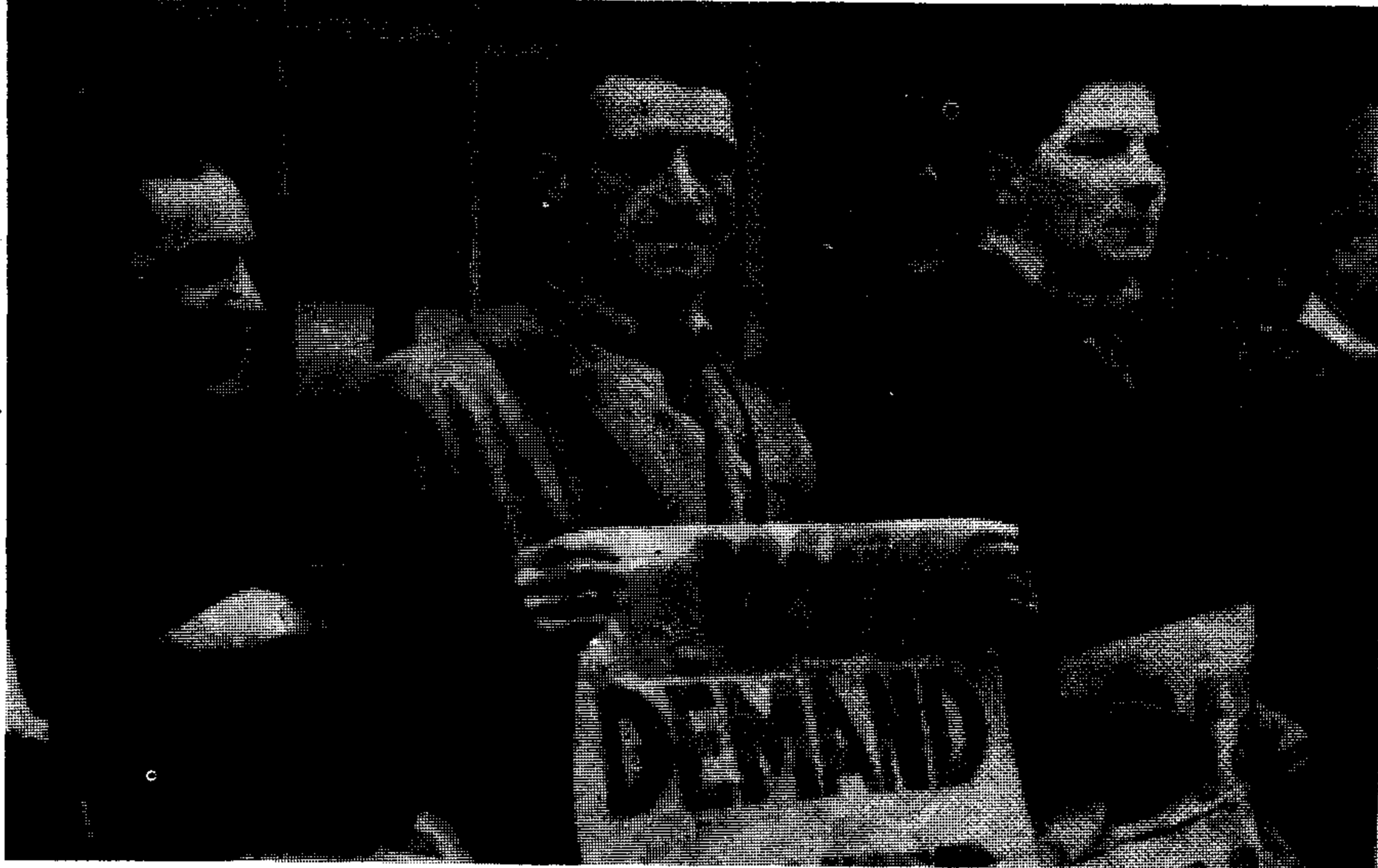
Ernie Stubbins concludes his look at historic struggles by the working class on the question of rents

In the East End of London the Communist Party acquired a very strong reputation for its anti-fascist campaigning during the 1930s.

Although the validity of some of the CP's claims has been challenged by Joe Jacobs, there is no doubt that the CP commanded enormous respect especially from the Jewish population of Stepney and its neighbouring boroughs.

In his book 'Our Flag Stays Red', Piratin, one of the longest serving Communist Party MPs, who represented Stepney for several years even after the end of the Second World War, makes it plain that the CP had reached something of a plateau in its anti-fascist agitation and was looking for a new issue for agitation in order to consolidate its support in East London.

By Piratin's admission there was little or no spontaneous agitation by the tenants in the privately



Unemployed protest in Stepney in 1938

rented housing in Stepney, even though conditions in much of the sector were poor by the standards of the time.

It was Piratin and the local CP that initiated the action, in the beginning demanding that repairs and

maintenance be carried out by the landlords, and later as they became more familiar with the housing situation, calling for rent reductions.

These campaigns were directed against private landlords, most of whom shared the Jewish origins of their

tenants. There is no doubt that the Jewish factor played an important role in the success of the Stepney campaigns, even though Piratin plays down this element.

Pickets and leafletting were organised outside the

synagogues patronised by the landlords, and this moral pressure had an effect especially on the smaller landlords.

This is far from suggesting that the Stepney victories were achieved in a peaceful fashion.

Far from it. Several fierce battles were fought and some blocks were guarded 24 hours a day by rent strikers behind barbed wire defences.

The high point of the struggle came when police and bailiffs stormed the Langdale Mansions and arrested a number of leading strikers.

Within hours a mass demonstration assembled outside Leman Street Police Station, consisting of about 10,000 people. The demonstrators threatened a general rent strike of all tenants in Stepney in support of the arrested strikers. The landlords gave up and made the rent reductions which the strikers were demanding.

Although there was no industrial action mounted in

support of the Stepney rent strikers they had an important ally in a group of workers in the Stepney Town Hall who obtained unpublished information about the rent levels which the landlords were legally permitted to charge.

When it became clear that the current rents were in fact being charged at an illegally high level in many cases the CP and the Stepney Tenants Defence League were able to step up their work considerably and win widespread support.

In his book Piratin states that he could never understand why the rent strike did not spread into other similar areas of private rented housing. Perhaps he is being a little disingenuous here.

There can be no doubt in the first place that the Birmingham and Stepney strikes became a considerable drain on the resources of the CP, with for example three full time CP workers

responsible for keeping the Stepney Tenants Defence League functioning.

In the second place his surprise would suggest that the CP was following a consistent policy of agitation throughout the period before World War 2, which was far from being the case.

Ultra-left

It can be imagined how the CP delighted in raising rent strikes against Labour councils during its ultra-left phase, and then found itself obliged to find some way out of the conflicts that it had started when the 'line' altered.

In fact there was some degree of spread of the Stepney agitation into other areas, but it seems that this was only effective where it was actively supported by the local CP.

IN REVIEW

The Blood of Hussain

By Henry Phillips

So few examples of Asian cinema are ever shown in major cinemas in Britain that the Gate 2 Cinema (Brunswick Square, WC1) presentation of *The Blood of Hussain* is very welcome.

The film, by the Pakistani director Jamil Dehlavi, was shot mostly in Pakistan and the shooting finished only weeks before the seizure of power by the reactionary military dictator General Zia.

The conception of the film, therefore, had a grimly prophetic quality.

It is about such a coup (of which there have been three in Pakistan's short history) and its aftermath.

The film's portrayal of the cynicism and corruption of the military dictator and the time servers around him is presented with subtlety but is still chillingly convincing.

Social elite

Essentially the film is about the Pakistani social elite rather than the masses—who appear only coincidentally.

Its main—and only full character—is two brothers, large landowners.

One of them, a smooth financial operator, becomes a leading figure in the government, the other, Hussain (a kind of hero of the film) becomes an opponent of the oppressive regime.



Zia

He supports his peasants when they are driven off the land by the army and ends by fleeing with them to the mountains where all are eventually massacred by the dictator's troops.

The politics of the film are closely involved with Islam.

Hussain is presented (through a childhood contact with a religious mystic) as an inheritor of the mantle of Hussain, the grandson of the prophet Mohamed who himself fought against the tyranny of a usurping Caliph.

Confusing

That the film aims to present Islam as a progressive and purifying force is clear—though, as in the final

scene when a political demonstration turns into self-flagellation the exact connection seems very confusing.

Uneasy relation

The film also becomes confused because its three elements—a political drama on the coup and the dictatorship, a story of Islamic mysticism and the love life of the English wife of Hussain's brother—coexist often in a very uneasy relation with each other, even though the editing (and indeed all the technical elements of the film) are beautifully managed.

Also the sexual themes of the film are insufficiently explored: the English wife's confident and mendacious double life with Hussain's brother and a senior military officer (tender towards her and murderous towards the people); the brother's reaction to the discovery of his wife's adultery—the rape of a prostitute; and Hussain's marriage with the daughter of a peasant, an event in which she has no say.

All of these illustrate aspects of the oppression of women in modern Pakistan but leave the watcher unsatisfyingly confused about what Dehlavi was attempting to say.

They do show, however, the richness of content in what is in many ways an interesting and moving film.

MACHISMO AND MONASTICISM

Terry Smith looks at Superman II



Well, we all have to make sacrifices.

But spare a thought for poor old Superman.

The 100% all-American alien being from Krypton appears to be one great hunk of guy. His muscles bulge beneath his body stocking and blue tights—and there is even the merest hint of a bulge beneath his flashy red knickers.

But this tough guy to flatten all tough guys can't do what other red blooded American boys are told they ought to be doing—"making

it" with women.

Superman's steel radial heart beats only for the love of Lois Lane—with whom he works, in his daily persona as Clark Kent, a reporter on the 'Daily Planet' (not to be confused with the American Communist Party's *Daily World*).

But no sooner has he revealed his real identity and lured Lois to his angular plastic igloo at the North Pole than Superman runs headlong up against a problem.

For Krypton man-fifteen stone of tensile steel

spring in an indestructible Hollywood casing and stainless tights—is not every girl's cup of tea.

He moves faster than the speed of light: his muscular torso crashes easily through the toughest buildings. Superman for Lois would be the all-time 'Wham, Bang, Thankyou ma'am.'

Worried, he consults his mother's wisdom (Superman's father in the first film was played by Marlon Brando—who demanded no less than 11% of the box office takings for a further appearance, and was replaced by the rather more economical Susannah York).

Mummy is upset. "I hoped you'd never ask me this, son..." she awkwardly begins.

The fact is that for Superman machismo is incompatible with human love and family life. To win Lois, Superman must renounce his superpowers and become as ordinary as any other handsome fifteen stone movie star.

On the sack

Bravely, he makes the sacrifice—to be rewarded by a night on the sack with Lois. But next day things turn sour.

Travelling back they hear that the world has been taken over by three exiles from Superman's old planet Krypton—who are dressed like a cross between Hell's Angels and Cosmic Cossacks.

And—perhaps worse—the now far from super Clark

Kent is punched in the mouth by a redneck in a hamburger joint.

Whatever next? He has been pushed beyond endurance. Lois is left to make her own way back to the office while Superman wanders North in search of his lost machismo.

He finds it safe and sound—a phallic-shaped green crystal—and the world is eventually saved. But for Lois and Superman there is no satisfaction to be found.

Of course it could never have worked. Imagine all those sonic booms as he rushed to do the washing up, and, as Lois points out, it would be like being married to a doctor who is always "on call".

Meanwhile the unfortunate inhabitants of Metropolis only have to clear up the debris after the punch-up-to-end-all-punch-ups between Superman and the evil aliens from Krypton. For them life is remarkably simple.

Clark Kent however must grapple in a different way with the contradictions of life on earth.

The final titles of this breathtakingly well-filmed but grimly cautionary tale declare to the audience:

Coming soon: Superman III. The films and the profits will keep coming—but there is no such luck for Superman!

And there will be no little Superboys or Supergirls to fill his lonely evenings at the igloo!

Healy's unholy alliance in Lambeth

While we would not agree with every opinion expressed in this letter we reprint it here as an authoritative source of information on the moves by the WRP to unseat Lambeth Trades Council President and victimised (by the union) NUT member Vanessa Wiseman.

LETTER

Dear Comrades,

With the worst recession and most reactionary government in living memory, not to mention the revival of racist/fascist violence on a lethal scale, it is perhaps heartwarming that sections of the British left—in true 'Life of Brian' style—retains energy and enthusiasm for fighting the *real* enemy: other parts of the Left, that is.

Nowhere is this more the case, I fear, than Lambeth Trades Union Council, currently embroiled in an almighty row about whether it should defend the democratic rights and status of its own duly-elected officers.

The background for this sorry tale is the February 4 Lambeth Day of Action, actively backed by the local NUT branch (Lambeth Teachers Association).

Rule 8

Under the NUT's draconian Rule 8 against unofficial strikes—one that would do credit to the Stalinist 'unions' in Eastern Europe—the officers of the branch have been suspended from office for a two-year minimum.

Ironically, their employers, the ILEA, have made no threats of victimisation and in fact several Labour members have expressed



Wiseman

support. Two of the suspended ones are Lambeth Trades Union Council (LTUC) officers: our President, Vanessa Wiseman, and an EC member, Hilary Tarr.

Given the circumstances that these sisters fully retained the backing of their

own branch members, who had no wish to elect replacement delegates, it might have seemed logical simply to co-opt them as honorary members and allow them thus to carry on their work for us.

This was indeed proposed, but the idea met

with staunch opposition from the unlikely (?) source of delegates supporting the WRP (Workers Revolutionary Party).

These case-hardened sectarians previously ran the old Lambeth Trades Council, a laughing stock with no credibility in the area, till its long overdue winding-up by the TUC in 1975.

For a couple of years after this their apparatchiks continued to come along in the hope of driving away everybody else with their negative and hysterical vituperation against the unbelievers in the true Healyite word.

Re-affiliated

Recently, however, their presence had diminished almost to nil. That was until the weekend prior to the latest LTUC AGM, when half-a-dozen branches not heard of for several years suddenly re-affiliated themselves—and nominated three prominent WRP-ites for the EC.

Were it not that I have no wish to make myself the target for a libel writ, I might suggest that this bore all the hallmarks of a well-planned *coup*—designed to maximise WRP impact at the AGM without forewarning their opponents.

They succeeded at any rate, in getting their three comrades elected to the EC (for no better reason than the lack of alternative candidates).

Representatives

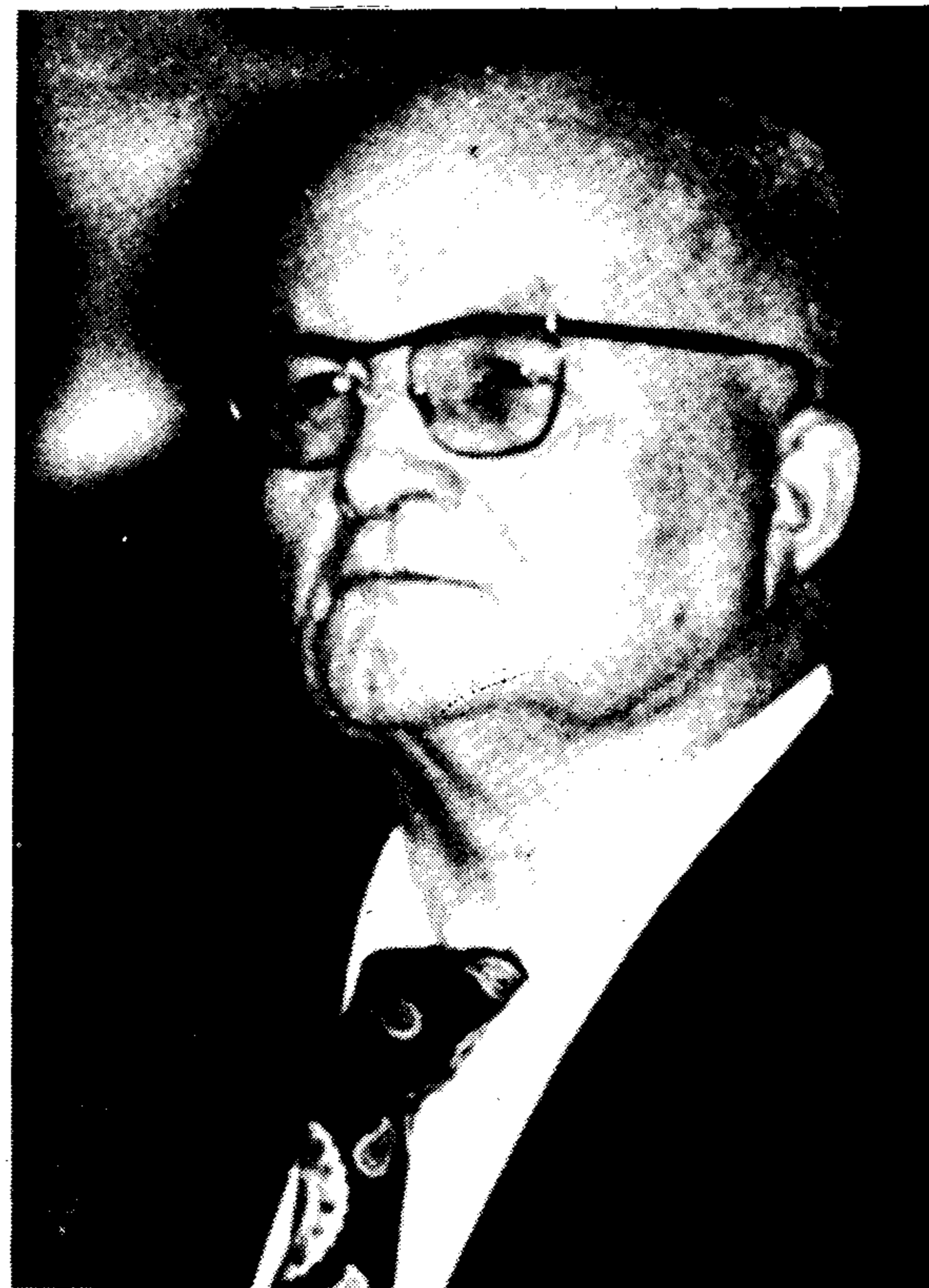
Formally, of course, Trades Council delegates are supposed to speak and vote as representatives of branch policy—not of the political organisations they may happen to be members of.

After all, what possible value do decisions have unless they reflect what affiliated branches are prepared to do?

It is unfortunate that the likes of the WRP in Lambeth use their influence not to promote any kind of fraternal debate or collaboration among trade union activists in the area but to create a polarised situation where everything but their fetish of the moment (e.g. Community Councils) is roundly denounced as some kind of reactionary diversion.

No doubt this reflects the views of the serried ranks of USDAW members in South London, whom they ostensibly represent.

The specious arguments put forward by WRPers for excluding Wiseman and Tarr from LTUC were 1) we should not challenge the internal procedures of the



Healy

NUT, which could only be altered from inside; 2) the TUC would clamp down on us.

On 1) we had a strong implication that the monolithic and centralised NUT regime would be fine so long as the WRP controlled it—it's similar to EETPU where Chapple decides who a local branch can delegate to what.

On 2) it's hard to imagine the TUC coming down like a ton of bricks on us for supporting sisters who were merely going along with LTUC and TUC policy (on

which the NUT honchos are thoroughly out of order).

The joker in the pack, that brought the WRP within an ace of deposing our respected President at the April meeting was the support of most Communist Party members for their stance: an unholy alliance to beat all, given Healy's apologies for the execution of Communist Party members by the Ba'athist regime in Iraq.

This was mainly pushed for by long-time CP stalwart, "rambling" Sid Easton, clearly one of those who has not yet adjusted to the 20th CPSU Congress and thinks the Moscow Trials were probably too lenient.

Bro. Easton enlivened the meeting by an outstanding display of boorishness and general contempt for the democracy of the movement, standing up and bawling abuse incessantly when he arrived to find Vanessa still in the chair, unready to be browbeaten.

Bossed around by a slip of a girl, worse still a Trot! Easton gave us all a break by storming out, threatening to go to Len Murray in the morning to have us sorted out.

After a debate of well over an hour, it was agreed by 3 or 4 votes out of a meeting of 50 to co-opt Wiseman and Tarr as life members (a practice followed elsewhere for CP members).

High jinks will continue, to be sure.

The WRP's objectives on LTUC seem to be twofold: a) to win it to Lambeth Council's previous 'No cuts, high rates' policy—which Knight et al have since unfortunately abandoned, leaving them apologising for the £11 million cuts package; b) to use it as a launch-pad for a model Community Council: a policy now embraced by the CP too it appears.

Of course, were it genuinely possible to construct a broad anti-Tory alliance involving non-Labour Movement forces such as black groups, tenants associations, shopkeepers, and religious groupings, that might be a handy idea. In practice, though, one suspects a rump like the early 70s WRP 'Councils of Action' making a lot of noise but representing no one much bar themselves.

Faternally
Martin Cook,
Treasurer, LTUC,
(in a personal capacity)

New 'Fourth International' hits back at critics

LETTER

Dear Comrade,

Comrade Ernie Stubbins constructively proposed (in *Socialist Press*, 25 March) that the Theses discussed at the World Conference of the Fourth International (International Committee) should be studied. This proposal must not fall on deaf ears.

These Theses can help all revolutionary Marxists to face the tasks which we share here and now in Britain—such as the following:

How can we best relate to developments in the Labour Parties, without falling into opportunism or sectarianism? The cadre of the Socialist Labour Group and of the League for a Workers' Republic, who contributed to drafting the Theses, contain comrades with decades of such experience.

Responsibilities

How can we help workers to exploit the openings for agitation round the marches which the reformist bureaucrats have had to permit?

How can we best lead British Labour to fulfill its international responsibilities to the Polish working class? How shall we best mobilise material aid to those who are actually doing the fighting to bring down the Junta in El Salvador?

There are some obstacles, which Comrade Stubbins fears may obstruct this necessary discussion, and I must do my best to remove

them. The Fourth International (International Committee) has never laid down any particular interpretation of the history of the Fourth International as a "pre-condition" for discussions.

It has never claimed to "be" the reconstructed Fourth International.

Proper account

It has never claimed that the Bolshevik Fraction, the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency or the Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International have been, are or will be the "only" currents to fight revisionism.

As to Lora, the Bulletin Group, one of the components of the Socialist Labour Group, gave some two years ago a proper account of its position. The Bulletin Group published, in English, the documents in which "Política Obrera" accused the OCI leadership of being agents of the imperialist bourgeoisie, and the replies of the OCRFI.

It is the misfortune of Comrade Stubbins and other comrades of the WSL that, when comrades of the Bulletin Group offered to sell them this material, the most vehement opposition and denunciation came from members of the WSL who were later to go off to the Spartacist sect, who had made their minds up after having listened only to "Política Obrera".



Lora

Copies of the documents are still available in English, and they are politically of great interest.

No one "expelled" Lora from the OCRFI. No one ever tried to expel him. Quite the contrary.

Lora walked out of our conference, with almost everyone else present appealing to him to stay to discuss through to the end the political implications of the position of "Política Obrera".

Anyone who says today that the OCRFI "expelled" Lora is either mis-informed or consciously lying in order to obstruct the discussion of our work today. The record exists on tape and can be checked.

Is it really not time that critics of the International

Committee begin to listen to what it has to say for itself?

Criticised method

Comrade Stubbins criticised the method of Comrade Moreno's interventions, interpreting what he said, in effect, as "History is Bunk". Moreno can, of course, speak for himself. But the tape of his closing remarks recorded these words:

"We are not averse to discussion on historical questions, but within the overall framework that the important discussion today is on the present situation, on the Theses. We want, in any case, when this historical discussion takes place to fully intervene in it."

Moreno's explanation of the difference between scientific politics and historical scholasticism will repay further study, and for that reason the Socialist Labour Group is publishing the transcript of the speeches of February 28, which will enrich the discussions about what we have to do now.

Struggle

The Parity Committee worked to produce the Theses over a period of a year. They review the whole experience of the struggle for the Fourth International since 1938. The tape of the opening contribution on 28 February on behalf of the WSL certainly does present a problem of method: it records these words:

"I was handed the Theses of the World Conference as I came in the door. I have therefore not had much of an opportunity to study them in detail. I remain fairly convinced that a number of questions remain unresolved..."

The Theses have now, however, been in that speaker's hands for over a month. When may we expect to hear more precisely what questions this comrade is "fairly convinced" are "unresolved"?

Comrade Stubbins appealed for "an end to sharp practice". I am reminded of a Russian proverb, well-known to Trotskyists in old days, that one "should

not speak of ropes in the house of the hanged"—while I remain convinced that no real obstacle exists to the full discussion of our current tasks between the Socialist Labour Group and the WSL.

Yours fraternally,
Alan Bridges

It is interesting to learn from comrade Bridges that our comrade's contribution at the rally was taped without his knowledge.

A full critique of the FI (IC)'s World Congress Theses is being prepared and will appear shortly in *Socialist Press*. The Theses took a year to write: it is only fair to give us a few weeks to reply!

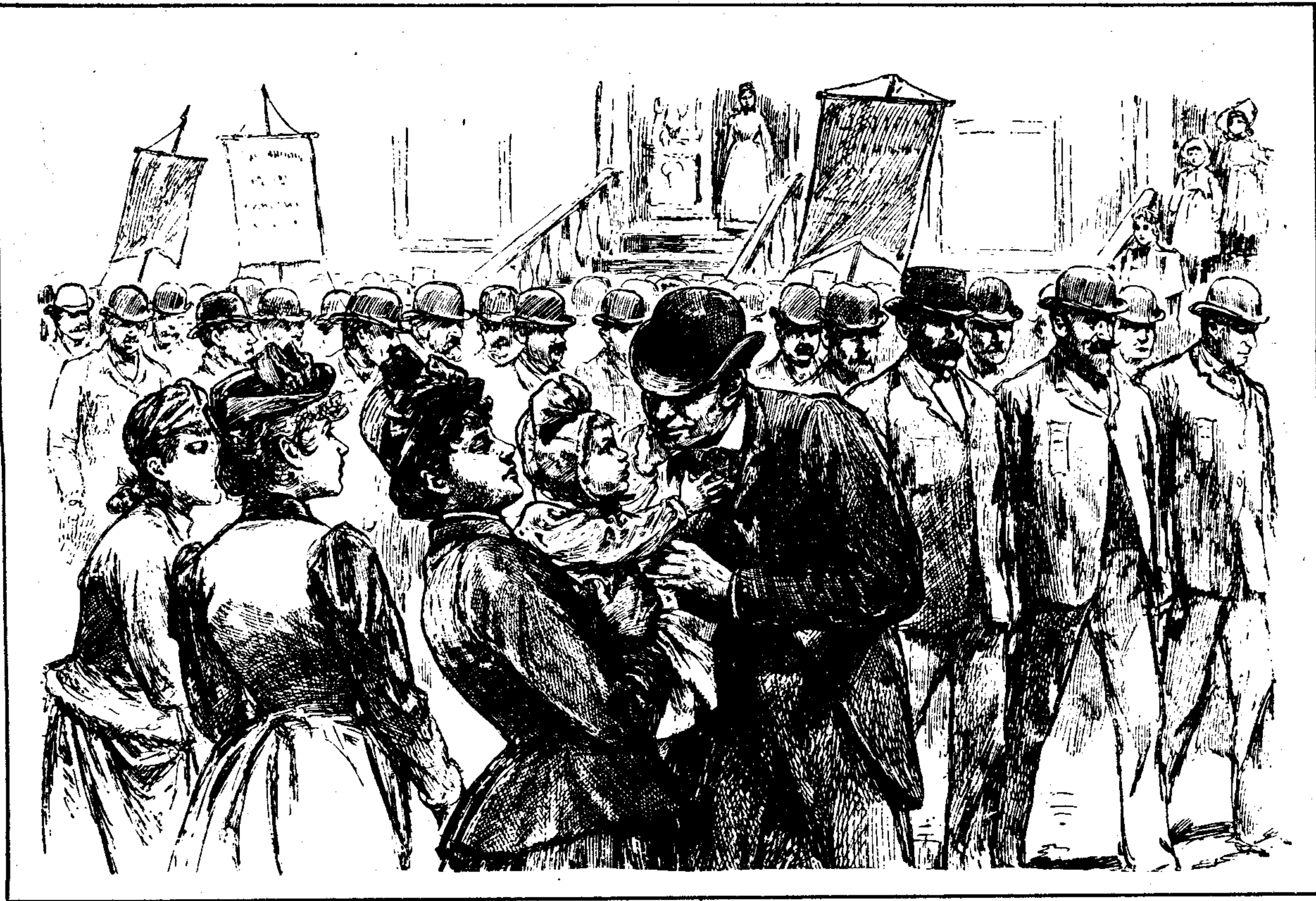
EDITOR



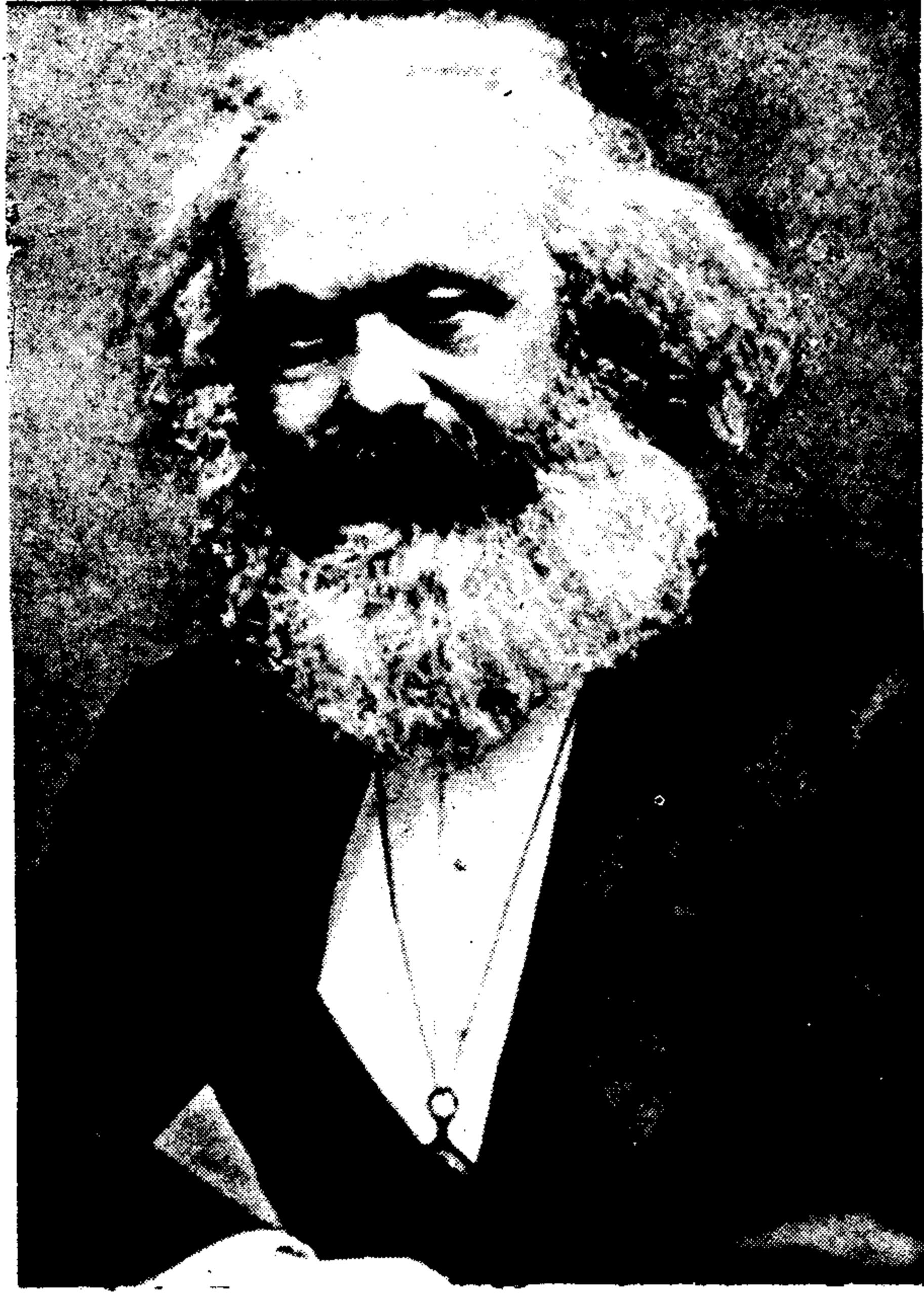
The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle

The founding programmatic document of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee.

Available, price 80p including postage, from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX



Chicago workers demonstrate on May Day 1890.



Marx

THE HISTORY OF MAY DAY

In today's mass unemployment, it is appropriate to recall that the history of May Day as the international day of the working class is closely bound up with the fight for the shorter working day.

This fight first gathered momentum in the USA at the beginning of the nineteenth century—almost from the outset of the factory system in the USA.

The American working day—shaped in part by the brutal exploitation of negro slave labour—had traditionally been defined as from "sunrise to sunset"—giving a day as long as fourteen, sixteen and even eighteen hours of labour.

From the 1820s-1830s strikes of workers demanding a reduction of the working day to ten hours became increasingly common.

A major strike in 1827 of building trade workers in Philadelphia demanding the ten-hour day led to the formation of the Mechanics' Union of Philadelphia—regarded by many as the world's first trade union.

Bakers' strike

In 1834 bakers walked out on strike in New York in protest against a working day of 18-20 hours in duration.

Towards the end of the 1830s the movement for the ten-hour day had grown sufficiently to pressure President Van Buren into decreeing a ten-hour day for all workers employed on government work.

This spurred on the fight in other industries. And amidst this agitation came the new demand for the 8-hour day.

The 8-hour day struggle spread not only within the USA, but was taken up and actually won by the Australian building trade workers in 1856.

In the USA delegates from 60 trade unions met in Baltimore in 1866 to form the National Labour Union. At the head of this union was William H. Sylvius, who was in touch with the leaders of the First International in London.

Sylvius persuaded the NLU to establish links with the First International. And it also adopted a resolution pledging itself to struggle for the legal restriction of the working day to 8 hours throughout the USA.

Political action

The 1866 convention also voted for independent political action and to seek the "election of men pledged to sustain and represent the interests of the individual classes."

From the initiative of the NLU came a proliferation of "Eight hour leagues". Their agitation secured the 8-hour day for public service workers from several state governments, and a similar law passed by Congress in 1868.

But the tragic and premature death of Sylvius contributed to the crisis and decline of the NLU. Future struggles in the USA would be led by other formations.

The struggle for shorter hours was possibly more advanced in the USA—but was far from a national phenomenon. Elsewhere, in the world, particularly in Europe, similar struggles were developing.

Legal limit

In 1866 the Geneva Congress of the First International voted for a resolution which declared that:

"The legal limitation of the working day is a preliminary condition without which all further attempts at improvements and emancipation of the working class must prove abortive... The Congress proposes 8

hours as the legal limit of the working day."

Marx and Engels, the leaders of the First International, had indeed been impressed by the movement in the USA.

In the first volume of *Capital*, published in 1867, Marx calls attention to the 8-hour day demand adopted by the NLU.

"In the United States of North America, every independent movement of the workers was paralysed so long as slavery disfigured a part of the republic. Labour cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the black it is branded. But out of the death of slavery a new life at once arose. The first fruit of the Civil War was an agitation for the 8-hour day—a movement which ran with the seven league boots of the locomotive from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from New England to California."

"For 'protection' against the 'serpent of their agonies', the labourers must put their heads together and, as a class, compel the passing of a law, an all-powerful social barrier that shall prevent the very workers from selling, by voluntary contract with capital, themselves and their families into slavery and death."

In place of the pompous catalogue of the "inalienable rights of man" comes the modest Magna Charta of a legally limited working day, which shall make clear "when the time which the worker sells is ended, and when his own begins."

(*Capital*, Vol. 1 pp284-6) The First International made it clear that its own adoption of the 8-hour day demand was a move to extend "the general demand of the workers of the North-American United States" into "the general platform of the workers of the whole world."

But the International itself soon ran into crisis, and was effectively disbanded when its headquar-

ters were moved from London to New York in 1872.

Not until 1884 were there significant further moves towards the international struggle for the shorter working day.

Chicago

In Chicago the fourth conference of the Federation of Organised Trades and Labour Unions of the United States and Canada (later renamed the American Federation of Labour) voted for a resolution declaring the objective that:

"Eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labour from May First 1886, and that we recommend to labour organisations throughout their jurisdiction that they so direct their laws as to conform to this resolution by the time named."

This ambitious resolution was carried by an organisation representing not more than 50,000 members in 1884. It therefore directed towards a campaign to mobilise unorganised workers in the workplaces in the fight for the 8 hour day.

The reference to organisations "directing their laws" to conform to the resolution relates to the question of preparing to pay strike benefit to workers in dispute from May 1 1886.

Militancy

In taking such a decision the Federation was reflecting the greater militancy and class consciousness that had emerged in the US working class in the wake of the mass strikes of steel and railroad workers in 1877. The strikes had been defeated by state violence, but formed the first ever national-level struggles by US workers.

Now the Federation began in earnest to prepare for action on May 1 1886, calling on its rival organisation, the Knights of Labour

to support the stoppage.

There followed a period of rapid growth of the US labour organisations with the Knights of Labour reaching 700,000 members.

Yet the Knight's leadership was at work behind the scenes attempting to sabotage the strike, advising members not to take part. This antagonised the militant rank and file and increased the prestige of the Federation.

The sabotage by the Knights' leadership failed to prevent over 500,000 workers taking part in strike action in 1886 in pursuit of the 8 hour day. At their centre were the workers of Chicago, with further stoppages in New York, Baltimore, Washington, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Pittsburgh and Detroit.

In Chicago an 8-hour Association had been formed to prepare the strike, composed of left wing labour unions including those affiliated to the Federation, the Knights and the Socialist Labour Party.

Brute force

A demonstration on the Sunday before May 1 was attended by no less than 25,000 workers.

But the strike was met by the brute force of the employers and the state.

Police on May 3 attacked a meeting of strikers at the McCormick Reaper Works, killing six and wounding many others.

On May 4 came a huge protest demonstration in Haymarket Square. But just as the peaceful rally was about to disband, it too was attacked by police.

A bomb was thrown into the crowd, killing a police sergeant. In the ensuing battle seven policemen and four civilians were killed.

Four militants were framed and hanged for the affair—and other Chicago union leaders jailed.

Taking the signal from the Chicago bosses, employers throughout the country cracked down on the strikers.

Stoppage

But two years later the now renamed American Federation of Labour voted to mobilise again behind the 8-hour day demand. A further national stoppage was called for May 1, 1890.

Conservative US union leaders who had attempted to restrict the strike action in the USA surprisingly approached the Congress of the Second International on July 14 1889 proposing that the US stoppage should become an international day of action.

The Paris Congress adopted the following resolution:

"The Congress decides to organise a great international demonstration, so that in all countries and all cities on one appointed day the toiling masses shall demand of the state authorities the legal reduction of the working day to eight hours as well as the carrying out of other decisions of the Paris Congress."

Since a similar demonstration has already been decided upon for May 1, 1890 by the American Federation of Labour at its convention in St. Louis December 1888, this day is accepted for the international demonstration. The workers of the various countries must organise this demonstration according to conditions prevailing in each country."

This final proviso in the resolution was a concession to the reformist elements, particularly in the British delegation to the International, who had no real intention of being bound by international discipline, and were gradually to gain the upper hand in the Second

Red Guards in Petrograd

International, until the point of their combined betrayal of the international working class by their collaboration with their "own" capitalist classes in the First World War.

May Day 1890 was widely celebrated in Europe—bringing clashes between workers and police in Germany, and demonstrations in many other capitals. In New York and Chicago major demonstrations were held.

The 1891 Congress of the Second International underlined the 8-hour day demand as central to May Day, but added calls for other improvements to working conditions and for peace among nations. The Congress

Horrors of the First International betrayed v
ments.



May 1917: by 1918 May Day was a holiday in the first workers' state.

stressed the importance of the "class character of the May First demonstrations", which were seen as a way of "deepening the class struggle".

No doubt recognising this aspect of the demonstrations the British labour movement leaders persisted in abstaining from strike action, and (together with the German Social Democrats) voted to postpone their May Day demonstration until the first Sunday after May 1.

But while the reformists attempted to turn May Day into simply a day of rest and recreation militant workers and the most principled sections of their leadership responded to the opportunity to demonstrate the strength and independence of the

international working class. Lenin in 1896 wrote from prison a May Day leaflet for the St. Petersburg Union of Struggle for the Liberation of the Working Class, one of the early Russian Marxist circles.

2,000 copies were distributed to workers at 40 factories. A month later a wave of textile strikes broke out, with some workers reportedly citing the May Day leaflet as a stimulus to action.

Lenin saw May Day as a focus for "the irrepressible struggle for the political liberation of the Russian people", and for "the class development of the proletariat and its open struggle for socialism."

New slogans were added

to the 8-hour day demand as international themes of May Day demonstrations—including "International Working Class Solidarity"; "Universal Suffrage"; "War Against War"; "Against Colonial Oppression"; and "Free Political Prisoners".

In Russia it was the mass demonstrations by Russian workers on May Day of 1917—in the aftermath of the massacre of strikers in the Lena goldfields—which indicated for Lenin that there was a renewed upsurge in the working masses, recovering from the repression that had followed the failed 1905 revolution.

Like Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg responded to May Day from the standpoint of independent, international expressions of the strength of the working class.

But the Second International after 1907 issued no further directions in relation to May Day. Its parties miserably betrayed the working class on the outbreak of the imperialist world war in August 1914.

And on May Day 1915, Social Democrats in Germany, France and elsewhere came out against strike action, arguing that workers should stay at work to defend "their" country.

Only the Bolsheviks in Russia and principled minorities within other social democratic parties held the line for internationalism in the face of the jingoism and war hysteria of the bourgeoisie.

Internationalists

At Zimmerwald (1915) and Kienthal (1916) conferences of revolutionary internationalists and other anti-war elements were held, and Lenin struggled under the slogan of turning the imperialist war into a civil war against capitalist rule.

In Germany, under the

leadership of Karl Liebknecht, a huge May Day demonstration was staged in Berlin at the height of the war in 1916.

And in the USA the Socialist Party defied the American declaration of war in 1917 to organise an anti-war May Day protest—with a march some 20,000 strong in Cleveland that braved a vicious assault by police in which one worker was killed.

But it was Lenin and the Bolsheviks who most decisively and dramatically put the politics of revolutionary internationalism into practice in the tumultuous events of 1917.

The overthrow of Tsarism and the establishment of a bourgeois coalition Provisional Government in February of that year was followed by rising agitation from the Bolsheviks after Lenin's return to Russia in April.

Seize power

Against those "Old Bolsheviks"—(like Stalin) who wished simply to seek reforms from the new capitalist government, Lenin argued for the necessity to press home the struggle for the seizure of power by the working class.

May Day 1917 was to be the last May Day celebrated by the Russian working class under capitalist rule and formed a rallying point in the development of the strength of the Bolsheviks prior to the triumphant insurrection in October that smashed the capitalist state power and established the world's first workers' state.

The victorious Bolshevik government made May Day an official holiday: and, learning the lessons of the political collapse of the Second International, it took immediate steps, even in the midst of a demanding

struggle against invading imperialist forces, to establish a new, revolutionary Third International.

The Third (Communist) International—or 'Comintern'—was formed in 1919. Its platform was in explicit contrast to the reformist, collaborationist politics that had disfigured and crippled the Second International.

One centre

The 1918 May Day declaration of the new Bolshevik government in Russia had underlined the failure of the Second International to form an "organisation of international proletarian action with one centre and with one international political orientation".

It pointed out that: "The Second International was merely a weak union of workers' parties which were independent of each other in their activity."

The Bolshevik leaders explain the reason for this weakness:

"Under the influence of the party bosses made up of intellectuals and the labour bureaucracy, the socialist parties . . . concentrated their attention on very useful parliamentary activity which was in its essence national and not international or of a class character. The organisations of workers looked on their activity not as a means of class struggle but as an end in itself."

Calling for the formation of a new International the declaration goes on to stress that:

"The lessons of the past and the demands of the present epoch powerfully dictate to socialists from all countries: 1) a radical change in their policy, 2) putting forward appropriate slogans for May Day."

In the first instance the

following steps are necessary: 1) concentrate efforts on the formation of the Third Revolutionary International; 2) subordinate the interests of each country to the general interests of the international proletarian movement, and subordinate parliamentary activity to the interests of the struggle of the proletarian masses." (Trotsky: 'First Five Years of the Comintern', Vol 1, pp21-22).

The rise of a parasitic bureaucracy headed by Joseph Stalin within the isolated Soviet workers' state and the bureaucracy's growing conservative grip on the apparatus of the Comintern was to lead to both the Soviet CP and the Communist Parties internationally abandoning the final points of this proposal.

Stalin's "theory" of building "socialism" in one country was a rationalisation of his own national chauvinist position, and a repudiation of Lenin and Trotsky's internationalist stance of fighting to further world revolution even if necessary at the expense of revolution in your "own" country.

'Peaceful coexistence'

And Stalin's search for forms of "peaceful coexistence" with capitalism was to lead him to direct the Communist Parties—particularly after 1934—into increasingly parliamentary forms of politics—to the extent today where mass CPs in Italy, Spain and France as well as other smaller CPs openly repudiated the Leninist call for the dictatorship of the proletariat, and pursue a brazenly reformist political course.

This bureaucratisation within the USSR and political degeneration of the Comintern were both fought

at each stage by Leon Trotsky and the Left Opposition and later by the forces of the International Left Opposition.

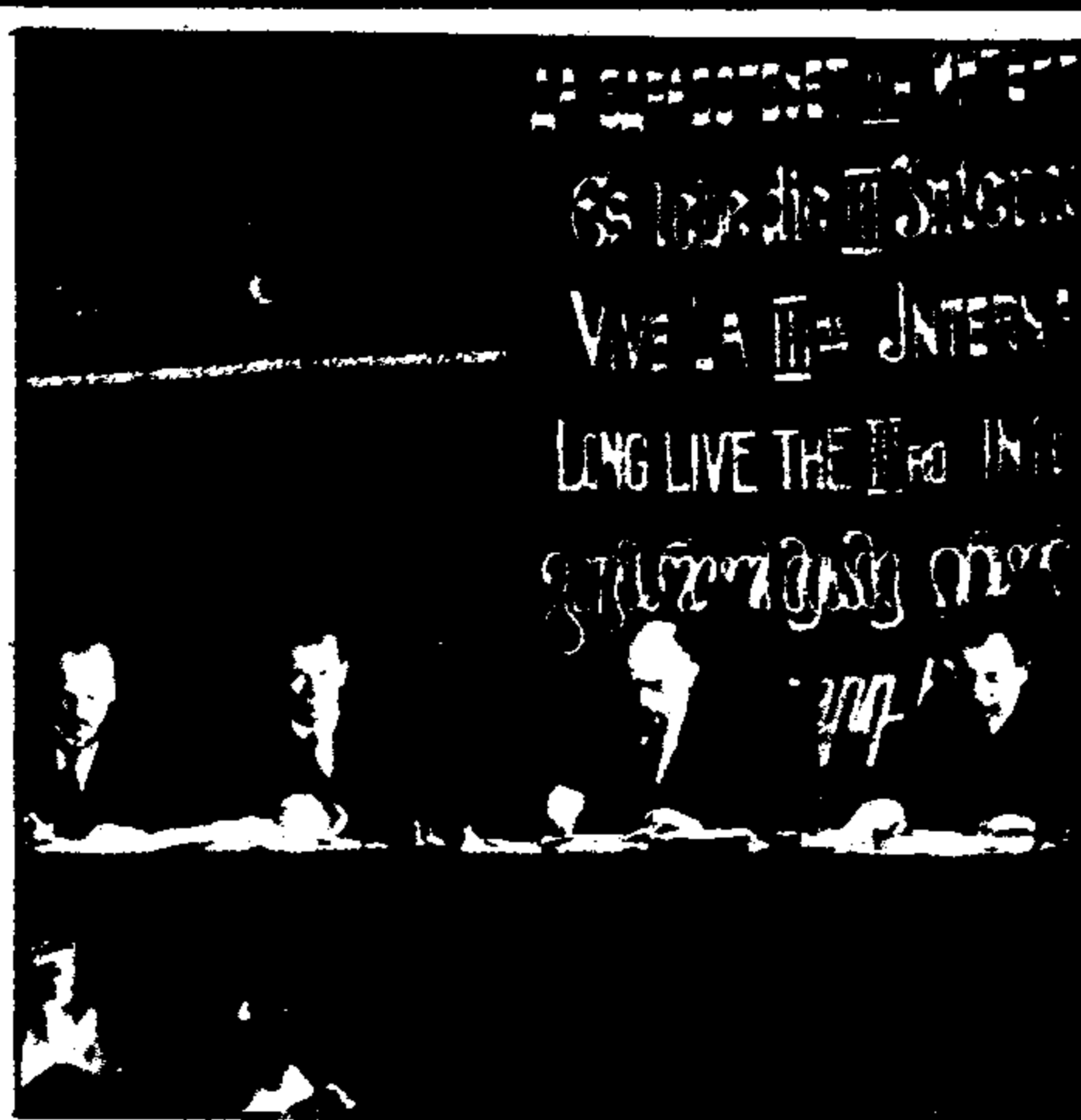
It is on the basis of their struggle to hold high the banner of proletarian internationalism against the betrayals of the reformist Second International and against the Stalinists who took over and eventually dissolved the Third International that the Workers Socialist League bases its programme and perspective today.

Heritage

In the fight to reconstruct the Trotskyist Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution the WSL struggles alongside our comrades in the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee. We stand by the revolutionary heritage of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky, the first four congresses of the Communist International, and the founding documents of the Fourth International of 1938.

From this standpoint we extend our May Day greetings to the millions of workers and peasants in struggle against imperialism and against Stalinist repression on a world scale—and look forward to the building of mass revolutionary parties in every country of the world to carry through the struggle for proletarian power and a world federation of socialist states which alone offers a future of peace and prosperity to the vast majority of the human race.

By
John Lister



Lenin at First Congress Third International



Trotsky



Members of the Left Opposition 1927



World War — in which the parties of the Second class by supporting their "own" capitalist govern-

Occupation the only answer to nursery closures!

HELEN FLACK of Leicester Nursery Campaign interviews Jill and Pauline, two parents, fighting to keep Beal Street Play Centre open.

Why did you take the step of occupying the Play Centre?

Pauline: Because the social services were closing Beal St. down. We felt there was a need for it to stay open.

Jill: Well, in an area like Highfields you need somewhere like this because parents just don't have anywhere else to take children to and there is a social need for it in the area.

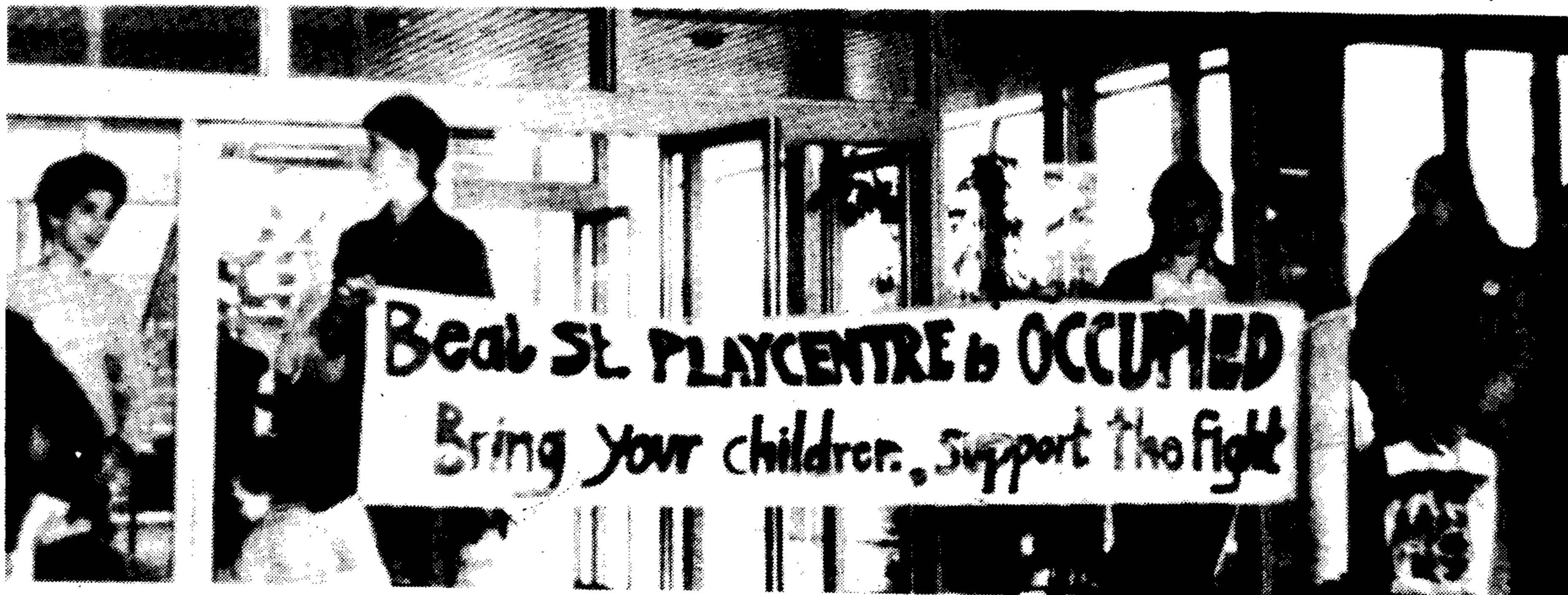
What did you do when you occupied? Were there any problems?

Jill: A group of the parents came in, and put a notice of occupation on the desk of the lady in charge. Mr. Rice, Director of Social Services, came over and the local policeman came round, checked the notice and went away again. The staff stayed for about an hour—then they all left quietly and that was about it.

Pauline: We had a committee meeting a bit later on when we discussed the rules of the building. No drugs and no alcohol, checked the legal notices were up and really it was quite quiet.

Have you had much support?

Pauline: We've had a lot of support from trade unions and other organisations and from people in the area—and generally anybody who cares for the under 5s.



How do you run the occupation since some of you are working?

Jill: Well, as Pauline says, we've had a lot of support from trade unions and from individuals who've put their names down on the rota and put in a few hours every day wherever it's been possible.

We've had lots of support from unemployed teachers who've been helping with the nursery classes.

The County Council have offered you the building and suggested you run a self-help scheme. Do you think this is feasible?

Jill: No, not in an area like Highfields. People just do not have the money to run a scheme like this on their

own. There's a lot of unemployment here. It's a multi-racial area. There's so many problems in the area that we need the help of Social Services to do it. It's just not possible for us to do it on our own.

Pauline: Well with the low wages in the area and unemployment, the children haven't got educational toys at home and also haven't got grassland to play on and run around so Beal Street is ideal for them.

The Director of Social Services arranged with the Leicester Mercury for some of you to visit the Phoenix Nursery in Nottingham to see how a self-help nursery is

run. How did that go?

Jill: oh, very interesting. As far as self help goes they're doing very well. But they are only running it on a temporary basis and they said to us when we went over, that they don't think there's any possibility of them managing to find the finance they need indefinitely because of the vast cost of staff alone. So I just don't see how they can manage to do that.

What are they going to do then?

Jill: They're hoping that after the elections take place the Labour council are going to take it over. What they're going to do if they don't, I just don't know. I just don't see how they are going to

fund that nursery.

Have they got any guarantee from the Labour Party?

Jill: Well, if you can have a guarantee. They have been promised that they will get some help—how much help, I don't know.

Did they support our occupation?

Jill: Yes, fully, yes.

If the County Council completely refuse to reopen Beal Street, what will you do



next?

Pauline: We'll try the City Council and see if they can help in any way. If not we'll keep fighting. I don't quite know. (Howls of laughter). Shall we arrange our Xmas party now?

Jill: We take each day as it comes, don't we, and just hope we win in the end.

If you are asking for the City Council to take it over, have you had any support from Labour councillors on the city council?

Jill: Verbal support, yes, a lot of verbal support. But they've not committed themselves to anything as yet. We're hoping they're going to do so in the near

future.

Do you think there is a chance of the County Council offering any more? Jill: Well we're hoping they're going to see sense and give us what we want. The honest answer is I think they're going to pass the buck.

What would you say to other parents whose nursery is threatened with closure?

Jill: In a word, occupy. I think also parents should send their kids to nurseries and put their names on the waiting lists so that we make sure the Social Services have no excuse to close them down like Beal Street.

Press Gang



Trevor Lock has moved house.

Lock is the policeman who was on duty at the Iranian Embassy last May when it was held under siege.

Afterwards he became an official hero and his police work entirely consisted of giving lectures.

But there was always something a little suspect about our Trev which put the faintest question mark over his hero status.

Firstly although he had a revolver on him throughout the siege he never shot anybody. Even though virtually everyone was foreign.

At the inquest he muttered something about not being able to shoot one of the guerrillas who was lying on the floor with his hands up. The SAS man who burst into the room had to shout 'Out the way, Trev' and bravely pump bullets into his back himself.

A decent pall was pulled over this hesitation of course. No one ever mentioned it. But there was this faint question mark about whether you can accord hero status to someone who has never executed anybody. Not even in cold blood.

Then again Trev was a bit funny about all these receptions. Kept going on about

wanting to be a copper back on the beat. Found it harder and harder to accept his medals as they were poured on him month by month. Kept up with old neighbours. Told photographers to piss off. Nothing obvious of course. But suspect.

This proved a difficulty. Of course the real heroes were the SAS. They were the action men, playing Sherlock Holmes to Lock's Dr. Watson. But unfortunately the press cannot name SAS men. They are so popular and well loved etc that if you told everyone who they were they would be drilled full of bullets.

Still that's the kind of society we live in today.

So all the frustrations of the reporters who wanted to probe the everyday lives of the professionals had to be focussed on a policeman who had every appearance of having blundered into the Diplomatic Squad (not so-called because of their diplomacy) by mistake.

His wife confined her intimate domestic revelations to saying how she wished they could stay out of the papers, despite the help given to her by our good samaritans of Fleet Street who camped outside her house with notebooks and cameras in case she thought of anything to say

in the middle of the night.

Anyway, suddenly old Trev's not there any more. Pushed off to some unknown location and transferred to the traffic police, hoping that nobody will start a siege at his set of traffic lights.

A neighbour interviewed on radio said that the Locks had complained about harassment by the press and said that their lives had been ruined since the siege. He also muttered something about the Lock children having come under pressure at school.

Boldly and fearlessly the campaigning newspapers spoke out. Hero Trev had quit and to blame was... society as we know it today. Brixton, Derry, all the extremists who have sapped our confidence in law and order.

His children had been beaten up. His car had been scratched with the word PIG. His life had been made a misery by anti-police extremists who have (apparently) taken over every corner of our lives.

There was not too much space given to the complaints about the press. But then that is just another example of the slight suspicion about Trev. Never did quite know which side his bread had been greased.



Even as Anwar Ditta (pictured above, centre) and her family celebrate the successful outcome of her struggle against the Home Office to bring her children back into Britain, the threat of racist immigration laws is growing.

This week the Tory Leader of the House of Commons announced the

imposition of a "guillotine" to forestall further debate on the reactionary Nationality Bill and ensure its enactment this year.

Meanwhile other Asian women under threat include Jaswinder Kaur from Leeds (pictured here on the right of Anwar Ditta) and Nasira Begum (to Anwar's left).

A campaign has also been

launched in defence of Nasreen Akhtar, who lives less than a mile from Anwar Ditta. She, together with her three children, is threatened with deportation after the break-up of her Islamic marriage—which never received the seal of approval of the British Registry Office.

These campaigns high-

light the vicious inequality, racist and sexist oppression meted out by restrictive laws on immigration. The labour movement must mobilise in solidarity with such victims and fight for the repeal of all immigration controls.

How Coventry youth fought back

COVENTRY'S 300-strong anti-racist defence meeting last Saturday was mobilised by supporters of Barricade.

JUDITH BONNER and ASH GANGARAN (Coventry NE LPYS) told Socialist Press how they had taken the initiative after the murder of Fatman Singh Gill.

"Barricade comrades got back from the Bridlington LPYS conference on

Monday night.

News of the murder spread quickly. And on Tuesday night a YS meeting of about 20 youth—mainly Asians—got together to discuss how to respond.

We all agreed on a consistent and major presence at the Precinct every Saturday. So we started by organising for a rally the following Saturday.

But that wasn't enough.

We needed to get some sort of self-defence group organised to patrol the Precinct and possibly other areas of the City.

Leaflets were printed, advertising a meeting on black self-defence to be held the evening after our first show of strength in the City Centre.

They were distributed to the Asian community at Temples, meetings and other

gatherings.

And we also took our ideas to the Upper Stoke Labour Party ward meeting on Thursday night. We got full support.

It is a shame that the ANL and Socialist Workers Party did not take up that call with the same vigour as did the branch of the mass party which they are forever condemning as a waste of time.

LPYS Conference report

By Andrew MacDonald, Aylesbury LPYS delegate

MILITANT OFFER ANYTHING — EXCEPT ACTION

The Labour Party is growing in size and now has its highest individual membership since the war.

Growing too is the Labour Party Young Socialists. This year's annual LPYS conference was attended by 2,300 delegates and visitors and there are now over 300 active YS branches. Infact it was the biggest Young Socialist Conference since 1964 when the organisation was very different from that of today.

Then the Socialist Labour League (forerunner of the WRP) held a majority in the organisation which claimed a membership of 25,000 at its peak.

After the bureaucratic closing down of the YS and the witch-hunting of the SLI out of the Labour Party the membership slumped.

In 1970, when the Militant tendency first gained a majority on the National Committee it had a pitiful 800 members.

This has now grown to an estimated 8,000 members today—but of course not all of them are supporters of the Militant group.

The 20th Annual Conference of the LPYS held over the Easter weekend in Bridlington saw no significant change in the policies of the Young Socialists.

Outraged

But as one delegate said, "in the labour movement actions speak louder than words".

One of the things which outraged many of those present at the conference was the fact that a debate on gay rights was bureaucratically ruled off the agenda.

Six resolutions had been submitted on this subject after some deplorable incidents of gay-baiting at last year's LPYS summer camp.

But the Standing Orders Committee nevertheless ruled it off the conference agenda while other subjects on which fewer resolutions had been submitted were discussed.

The LPYS has yet to vote on a position on homosexuality. But when this was sharply taken up, it was met by the most vile gay-baiting imaginable at a labour movement conference. (Comments like "don't support the opposition they're just a bunch of queers" were uttered by one Militant supporter).

So a petition was organised which was signed by over 50 delegates and 200 visitors and presented to the new LPYS National Committee, calling for a proper discussion on gay rights at this year's LPYS summer camp.

This campaign quite obviously needs to be supported in the Young Socialists alongside a challenge to the Militant's backward and puritanical views on drugs and sexuality, which are quite alien to a revolutionary youth movement.

A composite resolution put forward all the demands for equal rights for women, maternity leave, nurseries, abortion and equal pay—but



Angry youth march against the Tories, but need concrete policies

left out any mention of special means of organising women who are doubly oppressed as both 'wage slaves' and 'slaves of slaves'.

Supporters of the Women's Fightback campaign argued that the LPYS should organise an LPYS women's conference to discuss these questions—but this was defeated.

Again, this is evidently the norm in the LPYS, because YS members were selling 'plunderwoman' plastic bags—which carry a cartoon of Thatcher with exaggerated bosoms and bottom on it and attack Thatcher purely on sexual grounds.

Quite rightly many young women took physical exception to this, and tore them up!

Typing error

At previous LPYS conferences, calls to affiliate to CND have been voted down.

The same looked likely this year until a miraculously produced National Committee statement (which said "nuclear war is not posed as an immediate threat") revealed a last minute typing error (to hoots of derision) and the proposal that the LPYS should affiliate to CND was rapidly inserted!

Many delegates were still unhappy at the LPYS leadership's half-hearted attitude to the anti-war movement and supported an alternative composite motion calling for: no Cruise in Britain; no successor to Polaris; unilateral nuclear disarmament; British withdrawal from NATO and opposition to arms spending.

But a National Committee member spent her 20 minutes from the platform arguing against the composite on very dubious grounds.

In particular she argued that Britain should not withdraw from NATO (claiming it wouldn't make any differ-

ence).

The recent events in Brixton were centrally brought up at the conference and there was a unanimous view that the rioting was not a race riot but a riot against the state authority which in its most direct form in South London is the police force.

It was agreed that there should be a labour movement inquiry into the events and not Scarmans proposed one-man whitewash job. And there was a call for the local labour movement to begin organising street committees and defence squads to prevent the massive police harassment in the area.

Supporters of the Militant tendency remained firmly in control and did not even come close to losing a single vote.

Even so, despite the Militant's overwhelming, bureaucratic and monolithic majority a significant revolutionary opposition emerged in the shape of supporters of Barricade and Red Youth.

Their limited number of delegates didn't prevent them from making a substantial impact on the conference sessions, being the only consistent opposition apart from the unprincipled, right wing, anti-Trotskyist alliance — "Clause 4".

Fringe meeting

A fringe meeting on Saturday evening organised by Barricade (youth paper in sympathy with *Socialist Organiser*) which had a fraternal speaker from *Red Youth*, (paper of the Socialist Youth League, in sympathy with *Socialist Press*), attracted about 100 delegates and visitors and a Labour CND meeting attracted the combined opposition of about 200 people the following evening.

Some of the Militant tendency's politics appear to offer formally correct Marxist positions with which

we would agree. But these are presented within an overall political perspective which is reformist.

Thus the first morning of discussion on unemployment and general economic policy saw many correct points made about the attacks of capitalism on working class living standards.

But when it came to the sharp point on *how to fight back*, the conference rejected a call for "all out General Strike to kick out the Tories" and adopted instead a call for a "24-hour general strike".

Spending cuts

Again on the debates on the Tory cuts in public spending the conference voted for a composite resolution calling for "opposition to the cuts by all possible means" and no rent or rate increases.

But the majority voted *against* a resolution which would have committed the LPYS to supporting the Lambeth conferences against the cuts and the present wave of rent strikes actually taking place.

Whenever a delegate urged some form of direct action Militant supporters would counterpose it with their cure-all—the nationalisation of the top 200 monopolies and the return of a Labour government committed to socialist policies.

Democratise police

But the view was expressed by Militant supporters and platform speakers that the LPYS should advance demands for the democratisation of the police. They argued that only the massive police presence in the area should be withdrawn.

And they are also in favour of unionisation of the police and armed forces. The conference voted for

these positions and against an emergency resolution from Weymouth LPYS and a resolution from Coventry NE calling respectively for complete police withdrawal and support to black self-defence groups.

The debate on Ireland saw a long list of Militant supporters (ending up with leading member Tony Saunio, the LPYS representative on the Labour Party NEC) vigorously and scurrilously denounce any support whatsoever to the republican movement and in particular Bobby Sands MP.

They argued the reactionary line (which they share with the Stalinists of the Communist Party) of equating the Republicans, and Unionists as "twin evils".

The election of Bobby Sands as MP took the wind completely out of their sails as they tried to argue the republicans (especially the Provisionals) had "no working class support".

Pro-imperialist

Their objectively pro-imperialist policies were challenged by another emergency resolution congratulating Bobby Sands' victory and calling for POW status for republican prisoners.

As one conference delegate speaking in favour of the emergency resolution pointed out:

"When Arthur Scargill spoke this morning [as a fraternal speaker] and said he is prepared to go to jail to defy the Tories' Employment Act, the conference quite rightly gave him a huge cheer."

But when Bobby Sands MP says he is prepared to die fighting British imperialism, the YS slanders him, denounces him and implies he is a murderer!"

So despite Militant's anti-capitalist rhetoric on Ireland they stand on the same side as Thatcher and Labour's right wing leadership, pursuing their bi-partisan

policies of cringing support for Britain's military repression.

And the Militant's own Irish newspaper 'Militant Irish Monthly' had only one tiny article on the hunger strikes in 12 pages!

The Labour Committee on Ireland, the only body in the Labour Party fighting for Troops Out Now held a fringe meeting during one of the lunch breaks, but the conference voted against affiliating to this committee.

Militant's utter sectarianism was demonstrated when the National Committee recommended opposition to a resolution urging support for the Rank and File Mobilising Committee which has played a leading role in defending and extending democratic reforms in the Labour Party during 1980/81.

Even while the LPYS will maintain its nominal affiliation to the Committee, the grounds on which the LPYS NC recommended opposition was that it gave too much credibility to it!

Later on, though, the conference passed a resolution *increasing* the LPYS

age limit from 25 to a laughable 30 years old.

As one delegate, speaking against it sarcastically commented, "why not 40, 50 or 60? Why bother to have a youth organisation at all?"

In the final afternoon session many visitors' patience with the bureaucratic handling of the conference finally ran-out after an emergency resolution on El Salvador was not taken, despite repeated attempts to have it put on the agenda.

They came down to the platform where the NC were sitting and peacefully attempted to stick up El Salvador posters beneath them.

This was met with strong arm treatment from stewards and rabid denunciations from the platform: but it only showed once again that many YS members are unhappy with the way YS is run.

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STUC demands concessions to Sands

The STUC Congress in Rothesay passed an emergency resolution urging "... immediate government action to ensure the hunger strike in the Maze prison in Northern Ireland is ended and the life of Bobby Sands MP is saved ..."

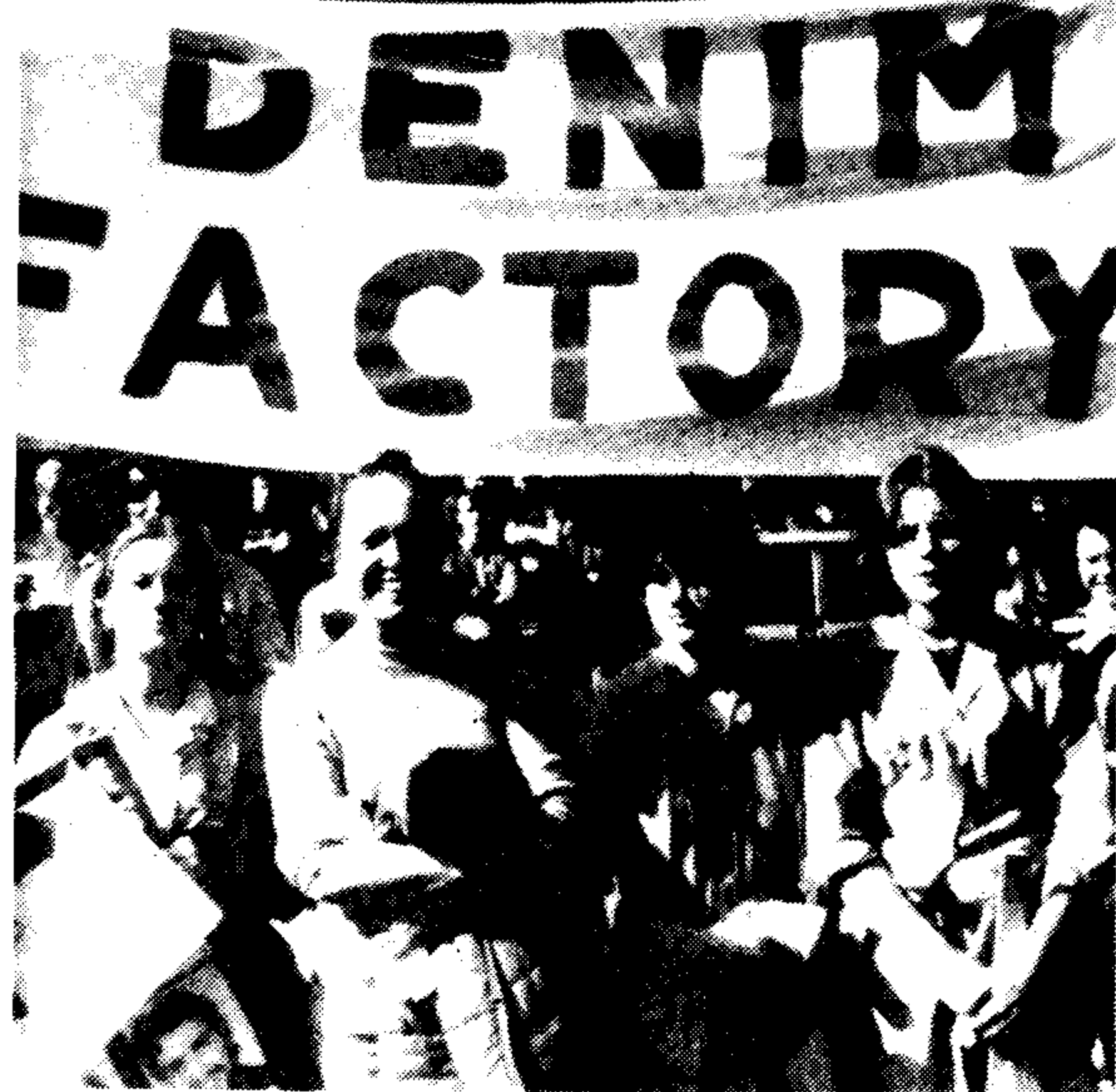
Hugh Wyper, Scottish secretary of the TGWU, in moving the resolution stated that the prisoners' demands on prison clothing and prison work had wide support amongst many sections of the trade union movement and wider sections of society who see them as humane demands.

He called for unanimous support for the emergency resolution and asked that there should be no debate on it in order that other questions be put aside and the life of Bobby Sands MP be seen as the single issue at stake.

Edinburgh and District Trades Council and Stirling and District Trades Council, who were seconding, waived their right to speak and the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority.

Despite such an important statement of support for Bobby Sands from a major trade union congress this resolution went largely unreported in the bourgeois press.

In an earlier debate on Ireland Alex Kitson, deputy general secretary of the TGWU, pointed out that the



Derry workers walk out in support of Bobby Sands

TGWU had 130,000 members in Northern Ireland and it was now time that the trade union movement took a stand on the conflict in Ireland.

Both he and Hugh Wyper pointed out that the main sufferers in any escalation of the conflict would be ordinary working people.

Alex Kitson stated that as chairman of the Northern Ireland Study Group in the Labour Party he had visited the Maze prison (Long Kesh) and what had most struck him was the youthfulness of the prisoners. Most of them were under 30.

He called for a conference of trade unionists from Britain and Ireland to discuss a solution to the differences

and saw education, housing and unemployment as the questions that had to be tackled.

Kitson didn't mention the national question and dismissed the demand for withdrawal of troops.

Despite this, these statements from senior officials of the TGWU show the pressure building up from the election of Bobby Sands as an MP. It is up to activists in the Labour Party and trade unions to mobilise support for the demands of political status, withdrawal of British troops and self determination for Irish people. The small step taken by Scottish trade unionists at the STUC is something which has to be built upon.

STUC sympathy for Palestinian cause

A resolution from Dundee Trades Council was remitted to the General Council after discussion had taken place.

The resolution reads: "That this Congress, recognising the injustice and oppression being suffered by the Palestinian people under Zionist occupation and suffering as refugees throughout the Middle East, declares its support for 1) the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination within an

independent sovereign state; 2) the British government to recognise the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

There was obvious support for the Palestinian cause from Congress delegates. A fringe meeting chaired by Dundee Labour MP Ernie Ross was well attended.

However the General Council asked that the resolution be remitted to be given discussion by individual organisations over the year as most did not have a declared position on Pales-

time.

It was stated that the General Council had a great deal of sympathy for the motion.

Success in implementing all these decisions depends on grass roots activity in ensuring that pressure is brought to bear that they lead to action and not just stay as paper resolutions.

STUC slammed for ditching jobless march

On the first day of the Annual Conference of the Scottish TUC at Rothesay last week, the General Council was confronted with sharp criticisms of some aspects of its conduct over the last year.

Fighting the cuts

The STUC Congress passed a composite resolution moved by NALGO which called upon the General Council to "convene a meeting of affiliated unions in the local government sector and local authorities who are opposed to the government's policy of cutting local government expenditure to agree determined action to secure a reversal of government policy."

Conference went on to pass unanimously the resolution moved by Stirling and District Trades Council calling on the General Council to "approach the Scottish Council of the Labour Party with a view to convening a joint conference to discuss a united response to the government's attacks on local government and other public services."

Solidarity with Latin American struggle

Congress passed a number of resolutions on Latin America.

These gave support to the El Salvador Solidarity Campaign; asked the General Council to prepare a campaign against any government action in support of the Salvadorean regime; called for maximum support for the people of Bolivia and Chile and demanding that the Tory government refuse all aid to the governments of these countries until such time as freedom and democracy are restored.

Resolutions also called for no manufacture or transport of arms to Chile and the withdrawal of the British ambassador from Chile; a trade boycott of Chile; solidarity with the trade union movement in Chile struggling to establish free and representative trade unions and support for the Chilean TUC as well as the reopening of the refugee programme.

The first of these came from Ian Wyles, speaking in his capacity as Chairman of Stirling and District Trades Council.

Questioning the Council Minutes, he asked the leadership to explain why the projected march of unemployed youth from Glasgow to Perth, scheduled to culminate in a rally outside the Tory Party Conference on May 9, had been cancelled less than two weeks before the STUC gathering.

"Problems"

Replying on behalf of the General Council Jimmy Milne claimed that responsibility for calling off the march lay with the Youth Advisory Committee and that the main reason was "organisational problems".

This furtive evasion of responsibility for calling off a march which could have breathed new life into the campaign against unemployment in Scotland stands in sharp contrast with the platform declamations about fighting a possible 20% of the workforce being on the dole in the next few years and with the standing ovation for the workers in occupation at Lee Jeans.

Refuted

Bill Day, Secretary of Perth Trades Council, when interviewed on this issue, indignantly refuted Milne's claim that "organisational problems" were to blame. "The march was planned

prior to Xmas by the Youth Advisory Committee. Dougie Harrison, on behalf of the Committee, came to Perth Trades Council and asked us to organise accommodation and food for 100 marchers, all of which was done by mid-February.

Sponsored

In the meantime nothing emanated from the STUC concerning sponsorship of marchers—but we went ahead anyway and sponsored a marcher.

We are confident that other trades councils were doing the same. We even booked the Cooperative Hall for the marchers and when the Fire Officer said £1,500 was needed for emergency lighting, the local Coop decided to go ahead and have that done.

The local Railway Club agreed to provide food and refreshment. The "organisational problems" were well in hand.

Protest rally

Then less than two weeks ago, out of the blue, came a circular from the STUC calling it off.

The decision was said to be taken by a meeting of the Youth Advisory Committee but I know for a fact that only four people were present, one of whom was Harrison—who could not be described as a youth.

Now, in place of the march, there is to be a protest rally in Perth on May 9; but we have been told by

the STUC that it should not pass close to the City Halls where Thatcher will be speaking.

The whole affair underlines for me the lack of conviction of the STUC in fighting unemployment as a whole, never mind youth unemployment. I am disgusted with the cynical way in which it has been handled."

Another source of disquiet was revealed at the first day of the conference when Roland Sheret, Secretary of Stirling Trades Council, questioned the account given in the book of minutes concerning the strike at Ayrshire Marine Construction.

Beware!

Sheret said that his trades council deprecated the way in which Milne, the General Secretary, had used the capitalist media to attack the workers involved in the dispute at Hunterston and he asked what now was the state of union organisation on the site and what had happened to all the stewards and men who had lost their jobs.

After the usual mixture of evasion and bluster, Milne stated, "In a similar situation in the future the General Council will behave in exactly the same way."

Trade unionists beware! Don't say you have not been warned.

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Right-wing carve-up at NUT conference

The National Union of Teachers Conference ended on Thursday after an unprecedented event had occurred—a speech in opposition to motion 73, "That the best thanks for the Conference be given to the President Mr. J. Chambers for his able conduct of the chair".

A delegate, Tony Clark, from the Rhondda Valley criticised the President's biased role, especially in the handling of the debate on an amendment to the Annual Report: c' the Executive.

The burden of that amendment was that AGM's of Divisions should be open only to Divisional delegates and not to all NUT members as is the case in many Divisions at the moment.

Significant

As such it represents a limitation on the rights of local associations and is especially significant for the Inner London Teachers Association which since its inception in 1967, has had an AGM open to all members.

In 1978 the members were excluded from attending the AGM not by rule change but by a decision of the then President who informed the ILTA secretaries that the members would not be allowed to vote at the AGM.

The dispute has continued since then. While addressing conference from the rostrum on Wednesday Mr. Roy Porter, a delegate from Greenwich and a CP member, spoke to this amendment, displaying a contemptuous attitude to the London teachers, using highly inflammatory and slanderous language.

He spoke of 'mob rule' and even went so far as to accuse the ILTA teachers of bringing non-teachers along to the ILTA AGM.

Far from calling Mr Porter to order, the President allowed him to continue speaking and called conference to order!

When the attacks continued a young teacher, a first time delegate to conference could take no more.

She called out, ignoring the President's warning and

was consequently ordered from the conference hall.

In a disgraceful episode the conference became so carried away by hysteria it did not even show a willingness to allow a speech to be taken against the amendment.

Instead the President moved to the vote. As a result the amendment was agreed by conference.

The Executive informed conference on the following day that Divisional Secretaries would be receiving letters to "explain" what the rule change that they had just agreed to, *actually* meant.

How many delegates realised at the time of voting that they were voting away the democratic rights of their members?

Most alarmingly the President, by various bureaucratic manoeuvres, prevented conference voting on an excellent resolution on racism which among other things called for the repeal of the 'Sus' law and the disbandment of the SPG, in line with TUC policy.

This episode was the culmination of the succession of attacks made on the left throughout the conference.

In all, the conference failed to carry many of the policies that the left feel are essential if the NUT is to take up the fight against the cuts in the education service and if the union is to resist redundancies among teachers.

Those policies accepted by conference on preserving educational standards in school are devoid of any concrete action proposals.

Conference, on an executive recommendation, rejected a call for a national



Chambers

one-day strike in the event of an announcement of any compulsory redundancies by any authority.

And it even threw out, again on executive advice, a recommendation to encourage all divisions and associations to affiliate to the TUC Campaign for Social and Economic Advance because the same resolution included reference to teachers participating in the campaign against all cuts in public services and not just cuts in education!

Conference also failed to pass a strengthening move on 'no cover' action for unfilled vacancies.

It was however a major victory that the conference was unwilling to permit a two-thirds majority for the executive motion which would have effectively declared war on the left in the NUT (referred to in last week's *Socialist Press*).

By denying the executive the right to put their motion, conference prevented the witch-hunt which the

executive wanted.

Had the executive resolution been passed it would have been impossible for criticism of the suspensions to be raised at local association or divisional level.

The Haringey Teachers Association have taken an important initiative in calling for a conference on Union Democracy and the Fight against the Cuts.

'Mistakes'

They are seeking support for this from associations up and down the country who deplore the union leadership's role in suspending teachers whose major 'mistake' was to take seriously the union executive's rhetoric about 'building an alliance similar to that which brought into being the 1944 Education Act'.

Another important development arising from the mounting criticism of the present executive's inadequate policies is a

campaign which is being built to encourage an alternative group of candidates to stand in opposition to the present executive members in next year's union elections.

It was the union executive which also throughout conference spoke against strengthening resolutions.

They opposed a strong resolution on sex discrimination which called for free contraception facilities and abortion on demand; gay rights and the setting up of a women's national advisory committee elected by women and consisting of women.

The Executive also weakened the resolution on comprehensive education, putting forward an amendment which preserved the right of head teachers to organise the curriculum and to arrange the groups on which teaching takes place rather than endorsing the main resolution which argued for mixed ability teaching.

3,000 back Renfrew rent strike

The refusal of council house tenants to pay the recent iniquitous increases in rents and rates is gaining momentum throughout Strathclyde, especially in the Renfrew District where 3,000 people are now involved.

A growth in understanding of the political issues posed by the struggle is expressed in the resolution adopted by 230 tenants at a recent meeting in the Glenburn estate in Paisley.

The meeting called upon the local Constituency Labour Party and the Paisley MP, Allan Adams, to back their campaign. They also sought support from trade union branches and shop stewards committees and requested that the Renfrewshire Federation of Tenants Associations organise a mass public demonstration of

tenants alongside the Labour and trade union movement in the area.

Another strong point in the resolution is the call for the establishment of tenants defence committees to protect those taking action from any possible harassment.

There is a growing gap between this forward movement of tenants in Glenburn and those in the Federation leadership who wish to restrict the development taking place.

Fearful of the implications of the growth in the scope of the struggle and lacking confidence in the capacity of the working class to fight, they now seek to confine the movement within "safe" channels.

When the Glenburn proposal for a mass demonstration on May 1 was laid before the Federation, Ron Rigby, AUEW convenor at the doomed Talbot plant, moved against this initiative

and proposed instead a lobby of the Regional Councilors in the evening of the preceding day, a motion which was then accepted by the committee.

There was an agreement in principle to have a mass public demonstration at a future date but that was not fixed.

Feeding upon the hesitations of some in the Federation committee, George Kerr, the Chairman, and his supporters have tried to steer the development in Renfrewshire into the clutches of the Scottish Tenants Organisation.

The spineless nature of that body was revealed at its Annual Conference held in Renfrew on Saturday April 11 when the main invited speaker was to be Malcolm Rifkind, Tory spokesman on housing!

Rifkind rejected the invitation with contempt.

To have even extended an invitation to such an

arrogant representative of the ruling class, engaged in an all-out attack on council housing, and in the midst of a rent strike reveals an abject, crawling attitude towards the enemies of the working class that is truly appalling.

Instead of hearing Rifkind, those who turned up for the AGM were addressed by Donald Dewar, Shadow Spokesman on Housing and a noted right-winger.

Flabby

The flabby nature of the STO is further revealed by the programme placed before the conference, "A charter for Scotland's housing", which even omits any mention of resisting council house sales.

The way forward for those engaged in the struggle in Renfrewshire does not lie in being drawn into these

This has struck a serious blow at the pay campaign as increasing numbers of members are becoming more and more frustrated at the low level of action being sanctioned by the bureaucracy.

The union leaders have continually boasted in the media of the high level of co-ordination and efficient organisation which has gone into the running of the action so far.

This is undoubtedly true, but it has produced a correspondingly stifling effect on spontaneous action.

It has made the average member rely on defensive walk-outs and weekly payment of the strike levy as their only points of contact with the campaign.

Now is the time to step up the action and go all out for the 15%.

Thatcher knows that the civil servants are capable of dealing her a crippling blow. She has already used troops to break the strikes.

Nothing less than an all-out response will bring her to her knees, and at the same time give a lead to other sections of workers fighting on pay and job cutting.

Go all out for 15%

The eighth week of the civil service workers' strike will be marked by extensive action by air traffic controllers, though the total number of those out on selective strike action will remain about the same (roughly 3,000) as other sections will be instructed to return to work.

Two important meetings took place this week which further emphasised the stalemate that has been allowed to develop.

First of all the union bureaucrats agreed to meet up with Lord Soames, Tory Cabinet minister for the civil service.

The only concession Soames offered was discussions on the cash limits for 1982, an offer which even the right wing leadership of the Council of Civil Service Unions was not able to grasp at.

The second meeting was a full assembly of the nine union strike committees. This body rejected increasing demands from the rank and file to escalate the action.

dead-end politics, shaped by the Stalinist ideas of peaceful coexistence with the ruling class, but through extending the scope of the rents struggle and broadening the basis of support within the trade unions and the local Labour Party.

Within the latter there are those who are prepared to openly align themselves with the struggle. Regional Councillor John McDowall has gone on record as saying, "I am ashamed of the majority on Renfrew District Council who are victimising the very people who elected them".

It is only by pursuing a struggle along the lines indicated by the Glenburn resolution that the campaign will have any possibility of success and that the best elements in the working class movement in the area will be won to principled socialist positions.

LABOUR AGENT DEFENDS UNION BUSTER MAXWELL

The seven week old strike at Pergamon Press Oxford, where 9 NUJ members have been sacked for withdrawing their labour in pursuit of a claim covering wages, hours and other conditions of employment, continues in the face of employer Robert Maxwell's seeming determination to remove the NUJ from Pergamon.

Acquiescence

What allows Maxwell to pursue this end with such apparent intransigence remains the acquiescence of the local and national trade

union and Labour Party leadership, manifesting itself now in the response of Labour Party agent, Bryan Keen, to the Oxford CLP decision to back the strike.

Not neutral

Answering enquiries from the local press, Keen said that Maxwell—a General Committee member of the Oxford CLP—"wasn't accountable" to the Labour Party for "what he does at Pergamon" and added that in his opinion the Labour Party shouldn't get involved.

Mr Keen also revealed that he was not neutral on the issue—Maxwell helped him buy his house!

In response to this Labour Party members must insist that Maxwell cannot

attack union rights with impunity and that this is a dispute in which the Labour Party is already implicated.

The resolution of support carried at the last GC of Oxford CLP called on all Labour Party members to do all they could to secure the reinstatement of the sacked nine.

Keen's statements to the press fly in the face of that decision. Someone should perhaps draw this to his attention the next time Oxford CLP discusses the "threat to democracy" posed by *Socialist Press* readers!

Meanwhile as Oxford Labour right wingers continue to shield Maxwell, backing has been forthcoming from elsewhere in the labour movement.

Civil servants in the library service, asked to consider possible blacking action, have in some cases already begun to implement a ban on ordering Pergamon publications.

Solidarity continues to grow within the NUJ itself. But from the print unions—who hold the key to life or death for trade unionism in Pergamon—there remains only a stubborn refusal to implement the blacking action that could bring Maxwell to his knees.

Financial support is needed by the strikers, and messages of support from Labour Parties and trade union bodies—particularly in the print and publishing field—should be sent to the Strike Committee, c/o 5, Union Street, Oxford.

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THE EIGHT!

STRIKE

Strike now to stop Edwardes!

Next issue

The Workers Socialist League is holding its annual conference this coming weekend. Consequently we shall not be publishing a paper next week to enable our editorial staff to attend the conference.

Our next issue will therefore appear on Thursday 14 May.

TURKEY SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN

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TORIES CRUSH RIGHT TO MARCH

The blows and kicks of the Metropolitan Police against pro-Bobby Sands demonstrators have given the sharpest possible lesson on the meaning of state bans 'against the fascists'.

Abstract theoretical points have a way of being quickly transformed into real physical attacks on workers and socialists.

That was exactly what happened in Kilburn on Saturday April 26 when 38 people were arrested and

several more put in hospital as police attacked a demonstration in support of political status.

Ill prepared

The demonstration had been ill prepared and the ban announced scarcely 48 hours earlier had cut the numbers to no more than 500.

Under 'normal' circumstances, to attempt to march through the police with such numbers would have been wrong.

But these were not normal circumstances. The

Irish march was only the second to be affected in London by the ban, apart from the fascist march itself—which took place, heavily defended by police, outside the GLC limits. The ban had to be challenged.

As police lined both ends of the road the demonstrators poured through a garage forecourt and began to run up Kilburn High St. Within 100 yards they were cut off and surrounded. The demonstrators then sat down in the road (a mistake) and police trampled in.

Out of the 32 arrests at Kilburn, about half happened during this brief confrontation. The rest came as the demonstrators were retreating in disorder to the tube station followed by arrogant and angry (they had been caught off guard) police raining blows on the back ranks and arresting at random.

March of sorts

The demonstrators made their way in ones and twos to Downing Street from where they were driven to the Embankment.

Then, with about 250 lined up, a march of sorts took place along the embankment for about a quarter of a mile before police broke it up.

A further six arrests were made in these last two phases of the demonstration.

Notably, none of the 40 odd arrested have been charged under the section of the Public Order Act which deals with the state bans. All the charges are for obstructing the highway or the police or threatening and insulting behaviour.

Socialist Press has long argued against state bans on the fascists as being inevit-



Police break up Saturday's demonstration

ably used against the left. The relish with which the Met enforced the ban on the political status march demonstrated the truth of that in a way which left

several demonstrators in hospital.

State bans will not stop the fascists. Only the mobilisation of workers against the fascists will drive them

off the streets.

The month-long ban in London is a major attack on workers' rights. It must be challenged.

Vote Mitterand in round 2

The neck-and-neck finish of the first round of the French elections has brought a distinct possibility that Socialist Party leader Francois Mitterand might become the next French President.

He polled 26% of the votes cast—the highest ever achieved by an SP leader. His support grew largely at the expense of the Stalinists of the French Communist Party, which plummeted to 15.3% of the vote—the lowest since 1936.

Divisive campaign

CP leader Marchais has conducted a scandalously sectarian, racist and divisive campaign while Moscow has made it clear that it favours a return of Giscard d'Estaing to another 7 year term of office.

Giscard took 28% of the votes, with his main right wing rival, Jacques Chirac, now likely to throw his 18% of the vote behind him in the second round.

Turn out

Arlette Laguiller of the left wing Lutte Ouvriere took a respectable 2.3% of the poll—some 600,000 votes for a candidate regarded as a Trotskyist.

French workers must now turn out to vote on May

10 for Mitterand as the only workers' party candidate, while preparing for the inevitable struggle for their demands whichever candidate is elected.

NEXT ISSUE
 Special feature on France



Mitterand

Coventry anti-racist defence

In Coventry last Saturday night a major step was taken towards the building of a genuine workers self defence against a growing number of racist attacks perpetrated by the fascists and their fringe.

The murder of Satnam Singh Gill in the crowded Coventry precinct on Saturday 18 April caused a furious response in the black community and the labour movement.

Even though this outrage followed the knifing of two black youths in separate incidents, a matter of days before, there has been the usual attempt by the

police, press and community relations officers to pass it off as an example of the lack of discipline amongst youth.

The action meeting on Saturday attended by over 300 people recognised the need to turn away from the pacifist and protest orientated politics offered by the community elders and reformists of both the black and white labour leaderships.

Massive presence

Avoiding the dangers of building a counter-attack on the fascists in isolation, the meeting turned to militants in the trade unions and Labour Party and youth in the schools to build a massive presence in the

precinct on Saturday May 2 as a first step in building a working class leadership in the working class community that realises that it is only the independent strength of the working class that can destroy the fascists and the bosses' system that spawns them.

*Build a labour mobilisation to drive the fascists off the streets of Coventry.

*Build a permanent organisation for defence against attacks by the bosses or their fascist henchmen in every ward, union branch, school and college.

How it was organised—p.4

Police rig New Cross inquest

Relatives of the 13 black youth who were killed in January's New Cross house fire are bearing the brunt of brazen police harassment.

As the inquest opened they, and the crowds who filled the public gallery, were subjected to intimidation and searches by five coach-loads of police.

Almost at once it became clear that the relatives' lawyers would need to fight an uphill battle against police attempts to 'prove' that the fire was caused by people inside the house itself.

After an overnight delay they succeeded in having police witnesses excluded until such time as they gave evidence—denying them the customary police privilege of listening to earlier witnesses' statements.

But the lawyers failed to obtain copies of the statements allegedly given to the police by the victims' relatives.

And immediately the witnesses began to give evidence it became clear that the main preoccupation of the police had been to browbeat them into making statements they did not agree with.

"The police wrote it down, and I just signed it"

declared an angry Armza Ruddock, in whose house the blaze occurred, and who lost two of her children in the fire.

Though her statement had been signed eleven days after the blaze, she explained that it followed the death in hospital of her daughter Yvonne and while she was waiting for her 22 year old son to die of his injuries.

She emphatically denied that in these circumstances she had made a statement praising the performance and bravery of the police, the fire brigade and the ambulance service.

"At that time the police and firemen were giving themselves credit for what they did", she said.

But Armza Ruddock was not the only one to deny the truth of statements written down by the police.

Mr Leslie Morris refuted a large amount of the four statements he was alleged to have made to the police. He complained of their behaviour, their accusations and innuendoes—which had accused him of having an affair with Mrs Ruddock.

"One little child was in custody for eight hours", he stated.

Morris refused to answer further questions on the

statements, which he said had been pieced together by police after interviews lasting as long as three hours at a stretch.

"After you've been questioned for three hours it's not easy to read every word. There are quite a few things in it I would say are inaccurate whether I put my signature to it or not".

Later the Coroner, Arthur Davies, called on the police for an explanation of why one witness, Andrew Hastings—the only white guest at the house party—had been held for questioning by police for 16 hours, without food.

Meanwhile attempts have continued to minimise the significance of the metal tube, containing remains of a highly inflammable sugar/sodium chlorate mixture, in the front garden of the gutted house.

The Coroner has declared his view that this is no more than a 'red herring'.

A police scientist has stated in turn that the fire could not have been an accident—while insisting that no firebomb could have been thrown through the window.

The "inquest" into the deaths of 13 black youths is thus being turned effectively into a trial of the victims themselves and the survivors of that terrible fire.