

Chartist

SOCIALIST CHARTER MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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LABOUR MANIFESTO:

WITH RENEWED SPECULATION about an election date as early as 5th October there is still little indication of what exactly will be the policies for which Labour supporters will be expected to campaign. Though many Constituency Parties are taking the initiative in setting up committees to draft election material for their own prospective candidates, little has emanated from Transport House to guide such activity.

The recent actions of the Labour Government give little cause for optimism. The Tory poster offensive and Labour's response are both devoid of politics. Yet in many respects the issues between the parties and their supporters are, potentially deep and far-reaching.

Despite their attempt to appeal to the unemployed and to soft-peddle issues like opposition to the closed shop and support for incomes policy there is a clear mood of class war in the leadership of the Tory Party.

COLLABORATION

That this is not clearly expressed in specific commitments is a reflection of two things: firstly, the success of the Labour Government in carrying through Tory policies through *collaboration* with the leadership of the trade unions, not *confrontation* and, secondly, a pragmatic unwillingness to put their cards on the table.

Only on Ireland and immigration have the Tories come clean. On the first in a bid to restore their traditional alliance with the Ulster Unionists they have committed themselves to some form of devolved government in the North which would only benefit the Loyalists. On the second, their commitment to halt coloured immigration into Britain is the kind of demagoguery which is likely to have more effect on the ethnic communities already living here than those attempting to enter.

Yet, despite all this evasiveness on the part of the Tories about policies most Labour supporters are well aware what a Tory Government would mean—the *boosting of profits through increased exploitation of the workforce*.

To carry this through—whether through wage control, or mass unemployment through Keith Joseph's monetarist policies—will require the stepping up of anti-union police activities and an attempt to 'discipline' the workforce. This will, of course, be under the general rubric of the 'restoration of law and order' to which the Tories have traditionally been committed.

RECORD

Unfortunately, both for the Tories and Labour supporters almost all these policies have been pioneered by our own leadership. Three and a half years of 'wage restraint', three years of unemployment over a million, full government support for police actions at Grunwick, Lewisham and elsewhere, military strikebreaking against the firemen and the recent industrial civil servants strike this is the kind of record Callaghan will try to fight the election on.

Worse, the recent attacks on striking workers from the leadership of the second largest union affiliated to the Labour Party—the threat of fines and expulsions against AUEW members at British Leyland—not only weakens and divides the trade union and Labour movement in the face of the Tory attack but also confirms the Tory view that trade unionists need to be 'disciplined' and 'controlled'.

The recent decision by six trade union leaders to launch a Trade Union Committee for a Labour Victory and to concentrate resources on 100 key marginals is to be welcomed. But the question remains what policies for victory? Who will write the manifesto?

WHAT POLICIES FOR VICTORY?



Photo: Colin Chalmers

Rally to end Bengali solidarity march at Brick Lane, East London. Why aren't tens of thousands mobilised?

ON SEPTEMBER 24th tens of thousands of anti-fascists and anti-racists will march from Hyde Park to Lambeth's Brockwell Park, at the south end of Brixton's 'front line'. While they are marching hundreds, perhaps thousands more, anti racist activists and local people will be organising and attending the local events in the Park. During the afternoon the two events will converge and unite to the music of Elvis Costello, Sham 69, Misty and others.

It will be a time to celebrate a summer of successful anti-racist activity, to look back to the April Carnival and the succession of local events since then. But it will be a time to look forward very seriously too and ask some

searching questions.

The event will be held in the shadow of a likely imminent General Election: what positions should anti racists take? After the Election the English autumn and winter will put an end to Carnivals until next spring.

Unfortunately, it won't put a stop to the activities of the NF. Nor to the racist attacks on the immigrant communities of this country. What aid can the Anti Nazi League bring to these communities? Why is it that Carnivals can attract people in tens of thousands yet only 4/5000 were mobilised for the national day of solidarity with the Brick Lane Bengali community on August 20th?

The *Chartist* and the SCLV has insisted that the NEC, as the only national elected body in the Labour Party, should take full responsibility for the drafting of Labour's election manifesto.

CONFERENCE

This time, though, a great opportunity exists. Party Conference is scheduled for October. The NEC would have the chance to put their proposals to a full conference of the party for discussion. If this chance is to be taken it means that the election date too must not be left to Callaghan to decide alone.

What policies should such a manifesto contain? How can it answer the Tory threat and hold out new hope to Labour's supporters who have been disillusioned by four years of betrayed hope?

The Tories have attempted to appeal to women on the question of prices, by exploiting the fact that leading suffragettes later became Tories, that they had the first

women MP and the first woman leader. Labour must answer this, not with the benign paternalism of Callaghan's image, but with Labour Party Conference policies of free abortion and contraception on request, defence of the health service through an end to cuts and the phasing out of paybeds and commitments on nursery education and with a real commitment to make the Equal Pay and Sex Discrimination Acts work.

The Tories, in flat contradiction with their immigration policies, have launched an appeal to immigrant voters—especially the Asian shopkeepers, with special canvassing teams and literature. Labour must respond by fighting for the implementation of the 1976 Conference resolution for repeal of the 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts, the support for black self defence and the mobilisation of the Labour movement against the fascists.

In response to the Tory-backed CABIN campaign, Labour must expose the 'lump' in the building industry, defend direct works

How is the momentum of the anti-fascist struggle to be maintained throughout the election campaign, and into the long winter beyond?

In Lambeth, the local anti-racist group ALARM has organised a conference for November 5th to debate some of these questions. Other anti-racist groups will doubtless be doing likewise.

September 24th should be a celebration of our unity and strength, a time to rejoice at the achievements of the last two years of anti-fascist struggle but it should also be a time for some sober reflection about how far we have yet to go.

departments under attack in Tory boroughs, and fight to win support for the policy of nationalisation of the land, banks and building industry without compensation.

SOCIALIST CHANGE

Policies like these, will be capable of reinspiring the support of working people for Labour and for socialist change. A victory for the Tories would be a disaster for the working class, a victory for Labour without a commitment to radical change would be a recipe for another four years of demoralisation and passivity in the working class movement. Only a powerful militant campaign within the party, the trade unions and the working class movement generally for policies such as those outlined above and those put forward by the Socialist Campaign for Labour Victory (SCLV) can serve to both ensure a Labour Victory and to begin the process of transforming the labour movement to prepare an option other than Thatcher or Callaghan.

Chartist

SOCIALIST CHARTER MONTHLY NEWS REVIEW

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HIGH PROFILE FOR TROOPS OUT IN ELECTION CAMPAIGN

WHAT IS BEHIND the *Daily Mirror's* call for the withdrawal of the British Army from Ireland? This is the intriguing question which stands before all anti-imperialists in the British Labour movement.

Suggestions have been made that the *Mirror*, in its 14th August editorial, was 'sounding out' public opinion on behalf of a certain high establishment section of the Labour Party.

Dissatisfied with four years of 'negative' policies and attitudes from the office of Roy Mason, there is talk of the need for new initiatives to break through the present long deadlock.

No doubt considerable anxiety does exist in the higher echelons of the Labour ministries about the war which has been escalating in the north of Ireland in recent months.

Ever since Mason took over the Northern Ireland Secretaryship everyone, high and low, has been informed of the steady 'progress' being made in allegedly beating down the 'criminal' IRA. The Republican Army is now 'nearly beat', 'an isolated rump', a 'splintering group without any base of support amongst the traditionally nationalist Catholic population of the North'.

PROBLEM

The problem is however, every time victory against the Republican movement was announced as being just around the corner, another event whether a mass demonstration or military action would reveal the opposite. Far from being beaten, the Republican movement remains to this day an effective popular and military force in the Six Counties.

Evidence of this continuing support has been readily available to all those whose sources of information go beyond the scant reports in the capitalist press.

Recent speaking tours in this country by members of the Relatives Action Committee provided eloquent testimony of the broad support for the demand of prisoner of war status claimed by 300 Republican prisoners in Long Kesh and other prison camps.

In recognition of this struggle, the British campaign body, the Prisoners Aid Committee, organised a march in July which attracted the participation of 4,500 anti-imperialist militants.

Indeed so strong has been the support for the 'prisoner of war' status fight from amongst the Catholic communities in the North that the Roman Catholic Primate of All-Ireland, Dr. Tomas O Flath was forced to tend to the spiritual needs of his flock by paying a visit to the H-block, Long Kesh, at the end of July.

The comments of this holder of a position of great and esteemed responsibility in conservative Irish society must have read like a treatise in Sinn Fein Republicanism to the British Labour Ministers.

"The authorities refuse to admit that these prisoners are in a different category from the ordinary yet everything about their trials and family background indicates that they are different.

"They were sentenced by Special Courts without juries. The vast majority were convicted on allegedly voluntary confessions obtained in circumstances which are now placed under grave suspicion..." (Times, 23.7.78)

of the abuses of British authority in the Six Counties, the *Guardian* reported on 16.8.78 how "Hundreds await trial in Ulster prisons."

The article stated that 640 people presently held in Northern Ireland prisons awaiting trial for periods of an average of nine months.

Details were given of how one man, a Belfast labourer, was arrested on two separate occasions and held, firstly for seven months and the second time for five months, without ever being brought to trial.

The pious protestations of the normal procedures of justice being applied against the 'criminal elements' represented by the IRA were seen as just so much pro-Government propaganda.

And, to cap it all, the *Sunday Times* produced a closely-argued article giving conclusive evidence that John Boyle was unarmed and shot in the back when he was killed by ambushing British soldiers in a graveyard outside his father's farm.

For the first time in many years, the conviction that there is something rotten in the Orange State of Northern Ireland has begun to spread beyond the ranks of committed socialist anti-imperialists.

The immediate effect of this is the likelihood that Roy Mason will be smartly replaced as Ulster supremo in the event of Labour winning the expected imminent general election.

In the context of an overhaul at the top it is even possible that a new Labour Government would concede to growing pressure in Ireland and in Britain for a 'fairer' system of trials and perhaps the restoration of special category status for the Republican prisoners of war.

What is most unlikely, in the absence of a mass troops out movement coming out onto the streets of the towns and cities in Britain itself, is any concession to the demand for British withdrawal — even the 'five years hence' version suggested by the *Daily Mirror*.

MESSAGE

For anti-imperialists in the labour and trade union movement the message must be to continue to take up the fight on behalf of the Republican prisoners in the workers' movement over here. In the coming general election campaign the case for prisoner of war status must be brought forward as a campaign to be supported by Labour Party activists and trade unionists, just as they will be supporting campaigns against unemployment, wage restraint and cuts in public spending.

A defeat for the reactionary policies of this current Labour administration in Ireland would have a powerful effect in increasing the independent moods and attitudes of British workers and in encouraging the emergence of a genuine militant socialist wing of the labour movement.

As a final point, the *Chartist* would call on its readers to support the demand already raised by the SCLV to bring the demands of self-determination and troops out now to the forefront of our campaign work in the pre-election period.

Our principal task, at the present time and for the foreseeable future, is to increase that sentiment inside British labour which recognises the independence of the Irish nation from the UK.

An independent Irish nation which has the right to determine its own future without British interference is a powerful call for the strengthening of democratic and socialist tendencies inside our working class movement.

'LEGALISE POLICE POWER' McNee

By JIM BARROW

THE BRITISH RULING CLASS is alive and well and ruling without concentration camps and the apparatus of a police state—except for its army of occupation in the North of Ireland.

This ruling class—the most experienced in the world—has been able to maintain its privileges and power primarily through non-coercive methods. The churches, schools, media, family etc. have all helped create the necessary conditions in which this class has maintained its hold over the working class, largely by consent.

Real increases in living standards provided out of the massively increased production of the post-war boom have reinforced the belief that Capitalism works and can produce the goods.

In these conditions the ruling class have not needed to swamp working class areas with military/police formations weighed down with bandoliers of bullets and tear-gas bombs.

Concessions such as trade union rights, the right to organise politically have been conceded to working people—not freely or without severe limitations—but conceded they have been.

Since 1968, however, the threat to this period of rule by consent has loomed larger and larger. Saltley Gates, the battles of Grosvenor Square, Lewisham, Grunwicks, Birmingham have all pointed up cracks at the edge of the fabric of a society woven over 300 years of capitalist rule.

Similar cracks have appeared before during the period after the First World War, the General Strike and the Thirties. A prime task for the ruling class during periods of mass unemployment and potential dissatisfaction has been to strengthen the coercive arms of the state—the army and the police.

It is in this light that the argument for an expansion of formal

police powers put forward by Metropolitan Police Commissioner David McNee, should be seen.

McNee recognises that thousands of police officers disregard the principle that anyone picked up by the police should be able to see a solicitor.

He recognises that people are being held by the police for more than three days without being charged, are searched, harassed, and if the police feel like it—being beaten up.

All McNee wants to do is to legalise most of these practices. An irritant to the police during the last decade has been the activities of Civil Liberties organisations and sections of the Labour movement in arming people with a knowledge of their rights on arrest.

He complains that: "The general public is becoming far more conscious of its rights..." This naturally makes it more difficult for the police to 'nail' pickets, anti-fascist demonstrators and activists.

McNee's plea to the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure is but a section of a generalised strengthening of the state's coercive side. Recent years have seen the recommended pay rise for the police used in an attempt to stem resignations from the police and to increase recruitment, and the introduction of a new array of legislation. The criminal trespass section of the new Criminal Law Act was used in quasi-military fashion to evict London squatters. Soon nearly 4,000 people will have been held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

Under an umbrella of sensation about Britain being "wide-open to international terror", football violence, attacks on the old and sexual violence against women, the Law and Order lobby have demanded a massive increase in

powers for the police and the courts.

In the face of this, Labour's reaction has been muted. With Merlyn Rees' record as Home Secretary little more than "interest" in McNee's ideas could have been expected.

What is needed is for Labour to implement the manifesto commitment to repeal the Official Secrets Act and broaden this to all legislation that restricts the working class access to information about the workings of capitalism.

Unqualified support for working people and minorities organising themselves on pickets, in defence-groups and in occupations should be also forthcoming.

But this is not enough. Labour has a duty to explain that the violence and degradation of late capitalism is a product of a system rotten-ripe for removal. Until it is and the working class organise to remove that system then McNee and his masters will increase their cries to tighten state control over people organising and acting in any way likely to challenge their privileges and powers.

The ruling class will not effect a sharp reversal from the highly effective formula of rule by consensus and consent in favour of the strong state, with the gloves off.

However, Special Patrol Groups, Army exercises in working class areas, quasi-military functions for the police and further integration of the Special Branch, Secret Security Services and police/army apparatus are on the agenda as the problems of capitalism refuse to go away.

The velvet glove of Parliamentary democracy, 'free press' and apparent freedom will remain but the iron fist of the Capitalist state will become that little more visible. Labour has the responsibility of opposing and exposing these developments in the most determined and vigorous fashion.

TORY MILLIONS POUR INTO ELECTION ADVERTISING

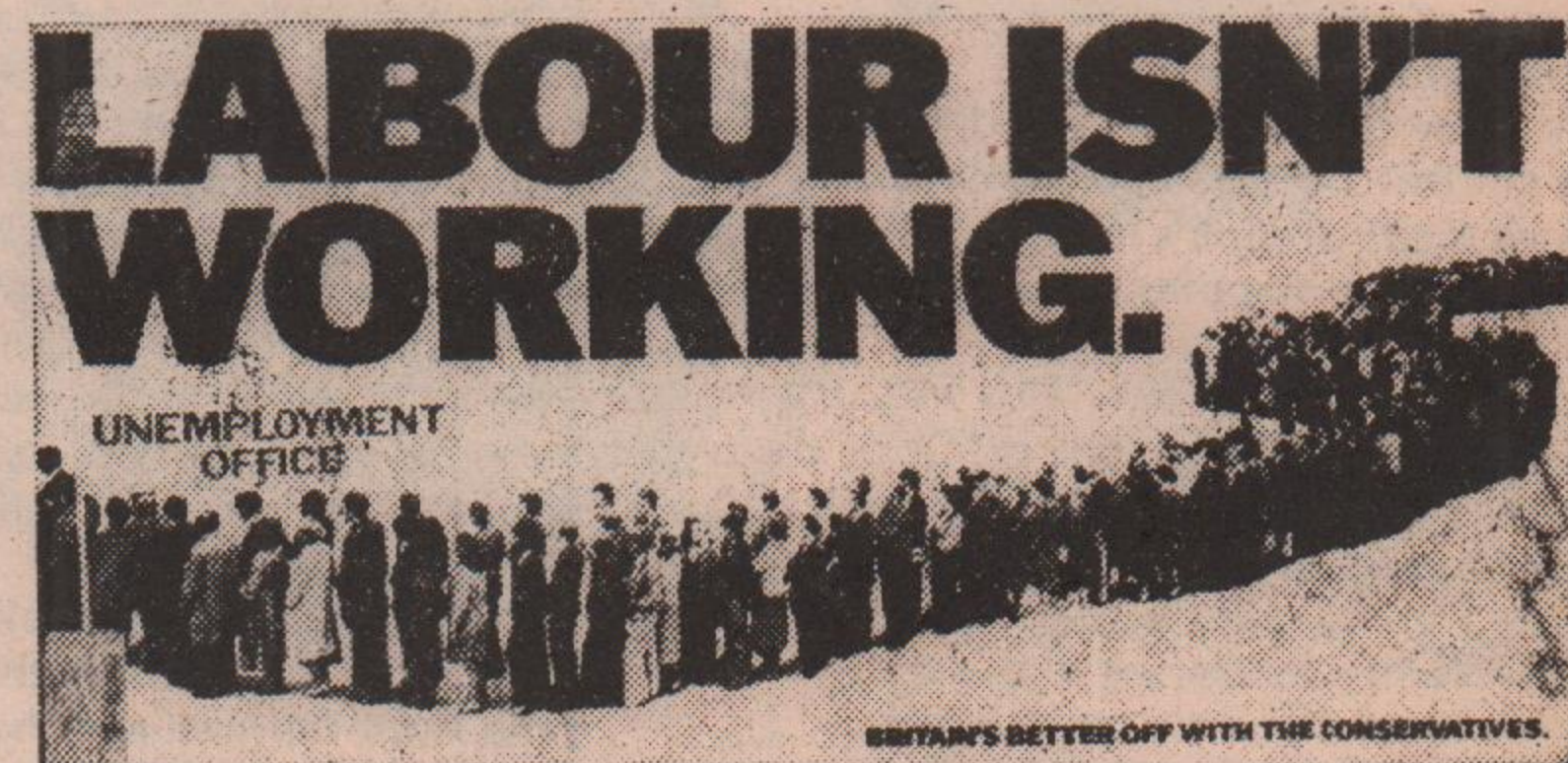
ITS ALWAYS been said that if elections were decided by the money spent or what the press said then Labour would never have been in Government in Britain.

Fortunately that has never been the case. But the Conservative Party will pay very dearly to win the coming election now only weeks away. They are committed to spending over £2 million in pre-election advertising, the bulk of which will be staring at us throughout September from the TV, cinema screens, poster hoardings and the mass circulation press.

According to Tory Deputy Chairman, Angus Maude, only 15 per cent of Tory funds come from industrial companies. To date this amounts to £748,000 last year plus a further £450,000 from the shadowy British United Industrialists. Ron Hayward, Labour Party General Secretary, has calculated that this total—£7,986,000—could be nearer a £12 to £15 million Election Fund given this is an election year.

It will be worth every penny of the £4 million spent for Maggie Thatcher and her reactionary clique to occupy the Cabinet front bench in the House of Commons. If they fail and if Labour is returned then the guillotine will be wheeled out again for the Tory leaders.

Take CABIN for instance. They are the 'Campaign Against Building Industry Nationalisation'. Formed by an alliance of the building trades employers and the civil engineers in July they will be spending up to



Brushing-up propaganda: one of the Tory posters

by MARK DOUGLAS (AGENT, HACKNEY NORTH CLP)

£500,000 on posters and propaganda arguing against Labour Party policy to nationalise the building industry.

It really is a lot of money to be spending on the faintest possibility that Labour under Callaghan would do any such thing! 'Para-politics' is the name of the game. 'Its not political you see—were just anti-Labour!! Saatchi and Saatchi who brought you Mrs Thatcher on her Kent farm and Spitfires flying backwards stand to get most of the £2 million quid; their 'Labour is not working' poster has already been 'amended' by the graffiti—"Britain pissed off with the Conservatives!"

Nevertheless the Tories know the value of propaganda—basically everyone knows that it works—if

you can pay for it. This is one thing Labour and the revolutionary left have never learnt.

As for Transport House they seem pushed to raise just £1 million all told for all of Labour's campaigning. Most of this will be spent on sunny Jim's pout smiling Moscow directions which often led exceptions workers' throats.

right why the 1973 victorious war, That's why the bureaucrats of Smith Square have plumped for smiling Jim—he may pull the decisive 100,000 votes in the key marginal seats to win. That is all that is needed to form the Government—out of a total of 30 million votes—its a crazy system.

The socialist opposition to this 'democratic' charade rests with arguing the case for a fighting socialist programme and tying this in with Labour support—only in this way can we win the long term struggle against the 'bread and circuses' of the bourgeois electoral game.



Break 5% ... and consensus

by PETE TOWEY

HERE WE GO again! For those of you who did not realise it, there is no pay policy at present agreed by the TUC. In theory unions are free to pursue the interests of their members with the blessings of congress, and the TUC has made it known, that as the defenders of working class living standards, they hope this blissful state of liberty will continue for another year.

The difference being that this year the "non-existent" pay limit will be 5% as opposed to 10%. The non-existence of any limit has not, of course, prevented it being shoved forcefully down all (with very few exceptions) their throats.

At the 1977 Congress the General Council made its position clear, it rejected the Government's 10% limit and at the same time "... underlined the need for pay settlements to reflect the circumstances in the companies ... and the relationship to the Industrial Strategy."

However, as the only "Industrial Strategy" the Callaghan government has got is to restore capitalist profitability at the expense of working people's living standards, it is not surprising that this did not prove to be an effective formula for mounting a fight-back. (Ask any firefighter!)

In a press statement issued in July this year the General Council puts forward its view on the Government's call for a 5% limit on pay rises. Even by the standards of TUC documents this statement stands as a masterpiece of soggy,

ambiguous platitudes. It takes a general bleating, pleading line that if the Government would only let them alone they would behave ever so responsibly (from the bosses' point of view) and it would probably work out better for "Britain" (i.e. the Stock Exchange, bankers etc.) and they are peeved at "... the Government's lack of confidence in the ability and willingness of trade unionists and employers [!] to deal with these problems."

The document goes on to reassure the Government that trade unionists "... have no wish ... to see the results of their past self restraint and sacrifices frittered away."

As the most noticeable results of these sacrifices have been drastic reductions in the living standards of the working class and mushrooming dole queues, the TUC general council no doubt considers that this pledge represents cast-iron bona-fides to the government that the trade union movement can be relied on to act as the policeman for the employers interests.

The TUC press statement goes on to raise the question of the shorter working week (as a nice diversion from the nasty business of pay)—a subject where platitudes and romantic fantasies can be indulged in with a freer conscience. And of course they present this as something that union negotiators and employers of goodwill can settle, if left alone, to the benefit of

all, both exploiter and exploited (and, of course, our old friend "Britain").

With the courage of an anæmic mouse the statement advances the opinion that "There is scope for reduction in working hours without loss of pay where revised shift arrangements and other working practices make possible more extensive and effective use of existing plant". In other words, the demand for a 35 hour week should be acceptable as long as the employer can still get 40 hours worth of work. This is a formula for longer dole queues rather than shorter ones.

The general council's cosy view that these questions are part of a longer term approach to collective bargaining is very likely to be rudely shattered by the course of actual, immediate events. Modern productive techniques (especially in the field of electronics, microprocessors etc.) could potentially liberate mankind from 90% of its drudgery.

It is only the limits imposed on technical innovation by capitalism which will not consider huge investments in new techniques unless it is guaranteed commensurate profits, which is hindering the progress of humanity.

In advanced, developed capitalist countries, driven by the ship of competition, it is inevitable that groups of stronger capitalists will attempt to utilise these new techniques for their own short-term advantage. The working class in



Last year's TUC platform.

advanced countries will therefore be faced with a stark choice; will these advances in methods be used to benefit the workers or the capitalists, there is no utopian third road.

The capital investment needed to finance such a massive restructuring of industry will compel the capitalists to extract every ounce of surplus value possible, competition from other nation's capitalists will mean there can be no "super profits" with which to buy off the workers of the capitalists own country. Thus any advance by the workers must be at the expense of their own capitalist class, and vice-versa.

This of course is the crux of the matter. The totally dominant, and sadly largely unchallenged, consensus of opinion in both the trade union movement and the Labour Party is tied hand and foot to the limits of capitalist production relationships.

The TUC press statement on

wage restraint and working hours drips with references to the necessity of maintaining profitability and "Britain's economic situation". The total absence of any alternate view of world reality in the working class movement is, if not the secret of the impotence of the British labour movement, at least the reason why this impotence cannot be diagnosed and cured.

Concrete reality, that most harsh of all schoolteachers, will, no doubt, castigate the British labour movement for its folly. But unless we learn the lessons of the way the Labour government has defused the class struggle by pretending that it does not exist we will be incapable of challenging this capitalist world view.

The struggle of militant trade unionists and socialists at the 1978 TUC should not only be against the 5% pay limit but should be aimed at fighting the dominant view that the world as it is, is the only way it can be.

Civil servants are trade unionists too!

The proceedings of the TUC annual conference—indeed all TUC politics—are dominated by the big 'blue-collar' unions; the engineers, miners, transport workers and power workers. The activities and struggles of white-collar unionists are regarded as being peripheral and of secondary importance. This weakens the trade union movement as a whole in its fight to defend itself as an organisation, apart from any defence it might make of its members' interests. In this brief article KEITH SAVAGE looks at the lessons learned by Civil Servants in the past year. He also considers the needs of the Unions in their coming struggles and the possibilities open to militants within these unions.

CENTRAL

Given their historical priority and traditions, upon which our whole trade union movement has been built, it is not surprising that the unions with the most economic muscle dominate the TUC. There are dangers in any continuing dominance however. In the coming year hundreds of thousands of 'white-collar', public sector workers will be engaged in action to defend their living standards in the face of government imposed, wage-cutting, cash limits. Given their economic insignificance these workers will depend upon the support of their more powerful brothers and sisters.

The Society of Civil and Public Servants (SCPS) shows an awareness of this. In the past year the SCPS and the Civil and Public Servants Association (CPSA) have been engaged in attempts to break government pay policy. Their failure might not be meaningless however. The SCPS came through its annual conference in May with the passing of an emergency motion that could provide the basis for future action. The CPSA came out of its conference with as left-wing an Executive Council as any in the

country. This EC must give a strong political leadership in the coming year.

In 1974 the Civil Service National Pay Agreement outlined procedures to be followed in the negotiating of Civil Service pay. In keeping with the Priestly Commission of 1953-55 on the Civil Service, the intention was that Civil Service pay be based on the pay of those in analogous work outside the Service. The Pay Research Unit (PRU) was to establish what these 'analogues' were paid. Thus Civil Servants and their unions were not to be involved in the political ugliness of free collective bargaining.

During Stages 1 and 2 of the TUC/Government wage agreement PRU was suspended. In the course of these two years Civil Service pay fell behind that of outside analogues to the extent that come April 1978 a pay settlement in the order of 25% was necessary to restore parity. Since the government refused to reactivate the PRU it was left for the unions to calculate this figure.

In the event an offer of 9.9% was made and accepted, though not before the Government declared that they would refuse any union requests to go to arbitration. In the light of the firefighters' defeat, Civil Servants were in no position to force the issue. Any 1979 pay settlement based on the notion of 'fair comparisons' will require increases of about 40%.

CONFERENCE

It was in this knowledge that the SCPS went to conference this year. Motion of Urgency 9 passed at that Conference instructs the EC to 'draw up a detailed and costed contingency plan for industrial action, if possible in conjunction with other civil service unions.' Further, the EC is also 'to seek liaison with other public sector unions on pay strategy based on the following principles:—(1) common

opposition to the imposition of arbitrary ceilings, norms or cash limits on Public Sector pay; (2) Consideration of ways of providing mutual support'.

This seems to indicate that the failure of the TUC to support the struggles at Grunwicks and those of the firefighters have been noted and some of the lessons drawn. (The SCPS EC will be moving a motion at this TUC Conference criticising the General Council for their refusal to support the firefighters).

The broadest unity is crucial—not only to make any victory a possibility, but also to prevent a demoralising defeat, which would be the worst outcome of any prolonged industrial action. Such a defeat would set 'white-collar unionism' back years, as well as having the immediate possibility of securing the defeat of the Left in the CPSA. It might also open up divisions between the economically productive and unproductive workers within the trade union movement.

POSSIBILITIES

The struggles ahead do, at the same time, open up enormous possibilities to militants within the Civil Service.

Militants frequently encounter the residue of 'apolitical' traditions in the SCPS and CPSA. ('Apolitical' being the right-wing 'moderates' word for a parochial unionism based on the negotiations of the Whitley machinery and the denial of the common interests of all workers and their historically established methods of defence). The coming months are bound to generate political debate within the unions and it is vital that militants are prepared for these debates.

There are three key questions. There is an immediate need to force a break with the PRU-based National Pay Agreement. The Government has unilaterally broken with the NPA and it would, in fact, be a step back to see the restoration

SOCIAL WORKERS STRIKE AGAINST WHITLEY

SOCIAL WORKERS have been on all-out indefinite strike in Newcastle, Southwark and Tower Hamlets in pursuit of a salary regrading and improved conditions of service claim. In only one London borough to date, Lambeth, has a settlement been reached with local members of the social workers union NALGO, although here higher grading is conditional upon a "test of competence" which many social workers oppose as divisive and unjust.

The dispute is as much against the Whitley system of negotiation as against government pay policy. By establishing the principle of local bargaining social workers believe they will undermine the Whitley structure. The National Joint Committee and the London Whitley Council have acted as the mechanism for imposing pay restraint—by setting grades—upon social workers.

Through local bargaining NALGO aims to break this system and the cover that it gives to local authorities for accepting government pay policy.

In fact, little improvement has been made in social workers'

gradings for ten years, despite the mushrooming of social problems—the unemployed, sick, elderly, homeless, mentally ill, children in care etc.—produced by conditions of capitalist crisis, and the worsening of conditions through cuts in public spending.

NALGO leaders have been slow to move into action in pursuit of the 1977 Conference policy to oppose national agreements and must now be forced to give a lead and support all local action.

Labour controlled authorities should display their support for the social workers claim by making speedy settlements, which will defy the 10 per cent limit. No Labour council should act as the servants of anti-working class government policies and CLPs and trade unions should ensure the maximum support for the social workers demands.

The opportunity to forge real bonds between local government workers and Labour councils is opened by this action which could really strengthen the movement against the cuts and for a massive expansion of social service spending.

of PRU. The CPSA has already announced its support for a lobby of the TUC calling for an end to incomes policies. For Civil Servants this must also mean the right to wage bargaining direct with their employers.

In the event of any pay claim being rejected there must be no calls for arbitration as we saw this year. We have seen enough examples of the effects of 'arbitration'—at Grunwicks for example—which serves to suggest that the political battles of workers can be won by statutory bodies rather than by the direct action of trade unionists themselves.

Secondly, militants must argue for the end of Whitleyism. The effects of this system of discussion and negotiation can be briefly illustrated by reference to the manner in which staff cuts are presented at the local office level. In reality cuts in Civil Service staf-

ing are the direct product of a Government decision. This is hardly a secret. Opposition to such cuts should, then, take the form of action directed at the Government. However, when Whitley Councils mediate between employers and employees the focus is changed. Staffing levels are here presented as being a product of some statistical calculation based on work done.

Typically, at a Whitley meeting, the question then becomes one of the correct collection of statistical information—as if Government policy did not exist. Whitleyism is a sophisticated diversion.

Thirdly, and finally, Civil Servants must press for the lifting of rules which at present restrict their political activity. In view of the political nature of the forthcoming clashes, and the need to argue freely for a socialist standpoint this will be no abstract freedom.

LABOUR ABORTION CAMPAIGN

Force MPs to act on Party policy

By GRAHAM NORWOOD
LARC Publicity Officer

Party, the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign has a three-pronged platform. Firstly, we want to see the extension of the present abortion laws to give every woman the right to choose whether or not to continue a pregnancy; secondly, we want the National Health Service to provide a full service for women, irrespective of their wealth or place of residence, free of charge and totally safe; thirdly, and most contentiously, we want the abolition of the free vote within Parliament for Labour MPs, who should instead be whipped into line and vote in accordance with Labour Party policy.

RESOLUTION

Support from the rank and file has been most encouraging. The 1977 Party Conference overwhelmingly carried a resolution debated by four LARC members, who explained why the Party should fight for the essential field of women's rights.

The issue cannot be debated again at Party Conference until 1980, but in the meantime the battle will be waged by LARC on other grounds. In November of this year, we and the National Abortion Campaign will be presenting a special abortion conference for trade unionists, with guest speakers including Alan Fisher of the National Union of Public Employees.

And with the prospect of a General Election coming in the near future, the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign will be putting the issue in the forefront of the fight. Reactionary forces such as the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child aim to propagate their views in marginal Labour-held seats: we have already contacted 30 Labour MPs who have progressive views on abortion and hold

AT PRESENT, thousands of British women cannot get an abortion through the National Health Service. For the wealthy, they have a safe and sometimes superior alternative in the recourse to private medicine: for the working-class woman the alternative presents itself more grimly in the shape of the back-street butcherer.

That this situation should prevail in a society which considers itself tolerably civilised, and under a government which considers itself responsibly egalitarian is a condemnation of the very social and economic system which allows religious beliefs and economic possession to predominate over the fundamental socialist creed of equality between man and woman.

REASON

We in the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, fighting for less restrictive abortion legislation to be implemented by Labour governments, feel that only when women are allowed to have goals other than motherhood can they achieve the liberty and freedom we see as an inherent value of socialism. And the working class, through their historic links with the trade union and Labour Party movements, form the only class which has a fundamental reason for obtaining these goals.

It was with that philosophical background that LARC was formed, when in December 1976 an initial meeting was held to discuss the prospect of an organised campaign to debate the abortion issue within the Labour Party's ranks, to fight the anti-abortion MPs and to publicly commit the Labour movement to defence of the 1967 Abortion Act and progressive legislation in favour of a Woman's Right to Choose.

Now, with support from trade unions, grass-roots organisations, constituency parties and 10 per cent of the Parliamentary Labour



Abortion rights campaigners protest in Nottingham last year.

marginal seats. LARC's letters — which have gone to some senior Government ministers as well as back-benchers — emphasise official Labour Party policy on abortion, and point out that recent anti-abortion campaigns in Scottish by-elections have proved conspicuously unsuccessful.

CONTROL

As a matter of course, LARC holds fringe meetings at all the major conferences in the Labour movement, and keeps its members informed of the latest news in a regular bulletin. In this way, we maintain and consolidate a movement which we believe one day will give women the socialist prerequisite of control over her own fertility. It is the combined energy and strength of people such as ourselves which can defeat the undemocratic anti-women institutions and individuals who seek to impose their morality-without-responsibility on the rest of society.

If you agree with the aims of LARC and you wish to contribute to the fight for socialism for all through the Campaign, then contact us at 73 Albion Road, London N16. We also have a new pamphlet out, giving details of LARC, the history of the abortion movement in the unions and the Labour Party, and a look forward to the future strategy for pro-choice believers. It costs 45p, inclusive of postage, and can be obtained from the same address.

We need your help to obtain our objectives. Only then can we claim to have the most basic of equal rights. And only then can we begin the real transition to socialism.

Conference

The National Abortion Campaign and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign are organising a trade union delegate conference on November 25th at Caxton Hall to exchange ideas and discuss ways of extending and coordinating the campaign. Speakers include Alan Fisher (NUPE), Marie Patterson (T&GWU), Terry Marsland (Tobacco Workers), Mel Read (ASTMS). Get your union branch to sponsor the Conference and send delegates. Details from 30 Camden Road, London NW1.

Left: LARC's new pamphlet. Available from Brixton Books, 60 Loughborough Rd, London SW9.

SOCIALIST CAMPAIGN FOCUS SEXUAL POLITICS

This month's *Chartist* continues our campaigns which the Socialist Campaign (SCLV) supports. We have two anti-Campaign for Gay Rights and anti-Rights Campaign. As part of its general victory in the forthcoming general election we promote the work and aims of the of building a strong united socialist

No vote for Gay Rights

JOHN GALLAGHER, Secretary of the Labour Campaign for Gay Rights, explains the aims of the campaign.

No-one can be precisely sure how many people in the United Kingdom are homosexuals, but the most reliable estimates are in terms of two to three millions, which is about twice the size of the coloured population and around the same size as the disabled.

If that figure is reasonably accurate, it means five per cent of the population are, or have been at one time or another, inclined towards homosexuality or bisexuality.

Included in that five per cent are married and single people, men and women, young and old, workers and unemployed, members of ethnic and cultural minorities, professionals and labourers, parents and children.

It includes many more people than the exclusively homosexual man or woman; there are married and single bisexuals, people who simply "like a change" every so often and those who have "experimented" once or twice.

It includes people who are openly known homosexuals and who are perfectly well-adjusted and also those who are not even open to themselves and who live in a world of continual fear and repression.

VICTIMS

Homosexuals are probably the victims of the greatest discrimination of any section of the population:-

- Homosexual men can only "consent", providing no more than two do so in private, that both are over twenty-one; neither is in the armed forces nor merchant navy nor is in care as a mental patient and that they are not in Scotland or Northern Ireland;

- Homosexuals are constantly the victims of illegal or excessive use of police authority — clubs, publishers, pubs, parks, public conveniences, cinemas and meeting places of homosexuals are constantly the object of police attentions and consequent arrests for soliciting, obstruction, insulting behaviour and loitering;

- In many local authorities housing and other facilities are denied to homosexuals;

- Balanced sex education is non-existent;
- Many homosexuals have been denied appointment or promotion in employment simply because their inclinations are known or suspected;
- Homosexuals are frequently victims of attacks from fascist groups, but police activity under these circumstances or even as far as preventing "queer-bashing" is noticeably slow.
- A quarter of a million homosexuals, wearing pink triangles, died in the Nazi concentration camps, along with Jews, trades unionists, gypsies, slaves, etc., but no-one mentions them!
- Rather than extend any practical assistance to homosexuals, in the way of sex education, counselling for those who are alone or afraid

ABORTION

The struggle in the Labour Movement



Gay rights activists picket the Central

ALIST AIGN SON AL ICS

our spotlight on various
mpaign for a Labour Victory
articles. One from the Labour
ther from the Labour Abortion
eneral socialist fight for a Labour
lection, the SCLV strives to
ese campaigns as an integral part
st opposition.

otes in Rights?

afraid, protection from assault or
blackmails or assistance against dis-
crimination, medical and legal
authorities prefer to debate in their
clubs or discuss in papers presented
before August academic bodies as
to whether the condition is normal,
environmental, congenital, heredit-
ary, statistical, under religious prohibi-
tion or contributed to the decline
and fall of Ancient Rome.

● The point immediately above
is also the main preoccupation of the
Home Office who, because the sub-
ject of homosexual law reform is so
contentious, have constituted two
committees in which to lose any
prospect of resolving the other
problems, while their experts
discuss the academic problems.

The Labour campaign for Gay
Rights, which was founded after the
general election in October, 1974,



riminal Court earlier in the year against the prosecution of

LIZ ADAMS examines the recent
proposals to strengthen the family
and questions the motives behind
the Callaghan Government's
concern.

NEXT YEAR is the International
Year of the Child. 1975 was, if you
can remember the momentous
event, International Women's Year.
Perhaps, the year after, in 1980, we
will see a year put aside to celebrate
the family. Both the Conservative
and the Labour parties have
committed themselves publicly to
developing family policies as a
central part of the coming election
campaign.

Amongst the suggestions made so
far are, appointing a Minister of
the Family, or a special 'family
commission' to monitor
government policies. The level of
political interest in the family has
not been so high since the early
days of the welfare state.

The atmosphere surrounding this
renewed political concentration on
the lot of families is encapsulated in
the *Sunday Times* special report in
May—'Vote Family!' Indeed, this is
what both main political parties
will be urging upon us—to recognise
how they are particularly concerned
about families. Why this sudden
interest—and what's in it for us?

GIVEN IN ONE HAND, TAKEN AWAY WITH THE OTHER

One of the main props of the
new approach to family policy is
the battle over Child Benefits
(previously known as family
allowances). The present Labour
government has announced increases
is child benefit to £4 for each child
by next April, with an extra £2 for
the first child of one-parent families.
At the same time, the Tories are
vying for the glory of increasing
child benefits and blaming the
Labour government for dragging its
feet in implementing the increases.

The Conservatives in fact have
always been vociferous in their

campaigns within the Labour Party
and trades unions to improve the
situation of homosexuals.
We call for:-

- Lowering the age of consent
for male homosexuals from 21 to
16, clarification of the clause in
1967 Act regarding privacy and
abolition of restrictions on publishing,
advertising or providing meeting
places or counselling for homosex-
uals;
- Extension of the above points
to Scotland and Northern Ireland;
- Provision of adequate housing,
social, legal, medical, educational
and recreational services for homo-
sexuals;
- Taxation and social security
reforms to take account of stable
homosexual relationships;
- Adoption facilities for homo-
sexual couples and parents;

Family rules OK!

support of child benefits—extra
cash in the hand to help towards
the cost of bringing up children.
But now both government and the
opposition are, apparently, falling
over themselves to give away sums
of money towards the cost of
bringing up children.

Of course, £4 a week, or even
£6, doesn't nearly cover the cost of
bringing up a child. To suggest so
would be an insult—but nevertheless
it seems to be a start. So why
grumble?

One of the reasons to complain
is that, as with every social benefit
implemented, it is given with one
hand, and taken away with the
other. For those who are working,
child tax allowances are being
phased out to pay for the increases
in child benefit. For those who are
not working, and claiming social
security, the benefits are not worth
the paper they are written on
because other social security
benefits they are claiming, such as
supplementary benefits or
unemployment benefit are reduced
to take account of child benefit.

In particular, about 400,000 one
parent families on supplementary
benefits gain nothing at all from
child benefit. For married couples,
child benefit is invariably paid to
the woman—out of her husband's
reduced tax allowances. Mum has
more money to look after the kids
—after all, it is her job, isn't it! Or
is it?

... AND ALSO MOTHERHOOD RULES ...

As this is the first time in this
country that extra cash for children
has been considered seriously as a
policy, and it looks as if the
announced increases are the

● Curtailment of police harass- ment.

We are quite encouraged by the
support we have so far received from
Constituency Labour Parties and
individual members of Parliam-
ent and prospective candidates and
by the high level of debate when
speaking to branches or general
management committees.

Unfortunately, these signs are
not apparent from the Home Sec-
retary, National Executive Committe,
full-time officers or Trade Union
Congress. Resolution after res-
olution from CLPs has gone into
the general-secretary's vast
wastepaper bin, request after request
to meet the NEC on the matter has
gone into an equally vast wastepaper
bin in Research Department, sub-
mission after submission has sat on
desk after desk in the Home Office
and the TUC have a set reply trotted
out for any resolution they may
receive.

All this because we are told, if an
issue as contentious as this is ever
raised by the Labour Party, Labour
will never win another election! This
from the very people who tell us we
must solicit the vote from every
other minority group.

Labour Party and trades union
members can assist our campaign in
the following way:—

- joining — we are not an exclu-
sive club, all gay and straight
supporters are welcome to join,
minimum cost £2.00;
- affiliating your Labour Party
or trade union branch — minimum
cost £2.00 per 100 affiliated
members;
- Inviting a speaker to your
Labour Party or trade union branch;
- passing a resolution embody-
ing our demands;
- campaigning for the dismissal
of Merlyn Rees from the Home
Office because of his atrocious
record generally on every aspect
of civil rights.

For further information:—

John Gallagher, (LCGR)
1, Westbourne Avenue, London
London W3 6JL.



beginning, we should take a look at
the implications.

The Conservatives see it as a way
of deflecting 'excessive wage claims',
amongst other things. Labour see it
as a relatively effective way of
increasing the 'social wage' ...
amongst other things. But we say—
women and children, beware! Apart
from the fact that the extra cash
gain from these increases is minimal,
the whole emphasis on 'family
policies' comes at a time of high
unemployment and continuing
savage cuts in vital public services,
such as hospitals.

Chartist has pointed frequently
to the fact that these measures hit
women first. Paralleled to this now
are these family policies being
advocated by both parties which
provide some compensation for,
and reinforcement of, women as
mothers and wives in the home.
Compensation, it appears, by
paying over cash benefits, mainly
to women for the specific purpose
of child rearing; reinforcement, in
that many women are now having
to stay behind at home being
unable to find either full or part
time work or any form of child
care.

WAGES FOR HOUSEWORK?

Some women have been
advocating for quite a long time
that women should be paid to stay
at home and look after children—if
this is what they want to do. Others
have said that demanding money
for housework and child rearing is a
way of gaining recognition that
these tasks are work.

Whilst these ideas have until now
only been proposed by a small
number of women as a strategy to
liberate women from male
domination, wages for housework is
gaining currency amongst
"respectable" circles. Recently,
Myra Pringle, from the National
Children's Bureau, seriously
proposed paying women to stay at
home; a logical extension of
increases in Child Benefit.

Being paid to stay at home and
look after the kids, and do the
housework is not going to change
our position as women one iota.
Unfortunately, even in countries
like Czechoslovakia and Hungary
where large cash payments were
introduced for child care, these
systems came into force precisely at
times of high unemployment, or



decline in the growth of the
population, so that it was no choice
at all for women. The age old view
held both by most men and by
most women that a woman's place
is in the home enables government
policy to take advantage of their
expendability from the work force.

A WOMAN'S PLACE ...

A woman's place is in the home
and now she's even getting paid for
it. The ideological currency
involved in this kind of policy has
not escaped both parties, in fact it
is at the very basis of their thinking.
And so the Tories were saying in
February: "We need a tax system
which doesn't discriminate against a
woman staying at home to look
after the children. We want to
encourage people to cope for
themselves." Meanwhile
Callaghan was reported in the
Sunday Times as finding the answer
to crime and vandalism in the need
to 're-establish that sense of
personal responsibility in parents,
in the community, one for another'.

However, despite all the political
propaganda, most people know that
family life is just not so rosy as the
politicians make out—financially
and emotionally. To tell people
that making "happy families" is
the answer to all our social and
economic ills is the worst kind of
blackmail possible—and a blatant
distortion of the truth. Despite the
fact that one in ten families are one
parent families, that about one in
three marriages end in separation or
divorce, our politicians insist on
holding up the two parent family
not only as the norm, but as if it
were the only type of family living
which exists!

But blithely ignoring the
growing realities of 'family' living,
and loading the responsibility for
continued economic recession onto
individual families is nothing new.
It is only more of the same in the
'tighten your belts' saga—and now,
with a call for wage restraint to
5% ... It is no wonder that
Callaghan is making some gesture to
the many women voters. If
Callaghan really wants to do
something to help families, let's see
him provide jobs, day care for
children of all ages, and any extra
cash payments without strings so
that women can go out to work if
they want to.

IN RECENT issues of the *Chartist* we have attempted to unravel the tangled web of political relationships which constitute the Middle East situation. Looking back to the early years of the century, through two world wars and at the events since 1948 we have attempted to unearth the roots of the present tragic drama of Middle East politics.

We have traced the development of Zionism, both materially and ideologically, from the desperate reaction of a deeply oppressed people to the official ideology of an oppressive expansionist and exclusivist state.

We have examined the effects of the state of Israel on the surrounding Arab countries—the rise of Arab nationalism—Ba'athism and Nasserism and we have looked at the growth of, and differences within, the Palestinian movement. In this article we hope to be able to bring together some of these elements in an investigation of the development of Arab politics since 1967.

DEFEAT

The defeat of the Arab armies in the Six Day War did not produce the kind of radicalisation that had sprung from earlier defeats. Though, as we explained last month, the defeat "introduced the period of the greatest guerilla effectiveness," it was nonetheless short-lived.

The crushing of the Palestinian resistance by the armed forces of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in September 1970—'Black September'—not only set back the struggle of the Palestinian people but also, coming three years after the June War, helped prepare the way for an attempt at an imperialist settlement of the Middle East situation. This was also facilitated by the death of Nasser and a rightward shift in Syria.

In 1971 in Egypt the Sadat regime dismantled the Nasserite bureaucracy, reversed many of the nationalisation measures of the 'Nasserite Revolution' and abolished many of the obstacles to the accumulation of private—local and imperialist—capital.

A month after the massacres of Jordan's 'Black September' had occurred, a military coup took place

Mid-East focus

Arab regimes moving right

by GEOFF BENDER

in Syria ousting the radical regime which had seized power in 1966. The coup came from the right wing nationalist tendency within the Ba'athist movement.

The previous regime had carried through a sweeping series of important reforms against the Syrian capitalists and landowners and initiated a series of anti-imperialist offensives even using armed workers' militias to implement certain of its policies against reactionary opposition.

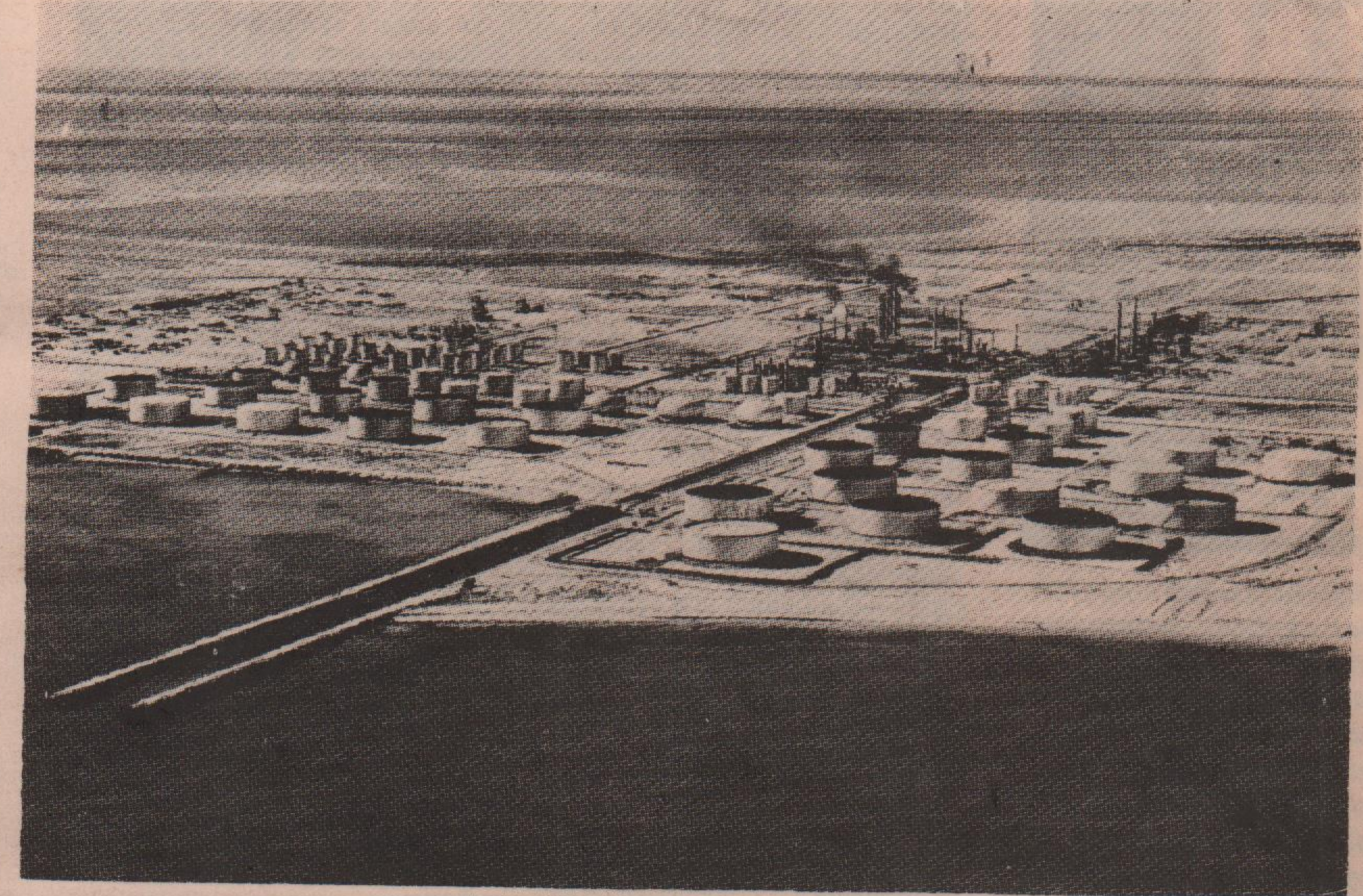
However, these were dissolved and when in 1970 this left team was overthrown by the existing armed forces little more than a palace revolution—a coup—was required.

The victory of the right in the Arab nationalist movements in both Egypt and Syria was complemented by the Iraqi Ba'athists who in 1970 first signed a truce with the leadership of the Kurdish national movement in order to deal with the Iraqi working class more effectively. Then, as the period of the truce came to an end, unwilling or unable to grant the Kurds the self-determination they had promised, they joined bloodied hands with the Shah of Iran to 'liquidate' the Kurdish problem by genocide and enforced assimilation.

WRETCHED HISTORY

The wretched history of the Iraqi Ba'athists is well expressed by the *Revolutionary Communists of the Arab region* in a pamphlet entitled *The Arab Revolution, Its Character, Present State and Perspectives*. They write:

"... A right wing tendency in the



Arab oil has changed balance of power.

service of the bourgeoisie, it opposed all anti-bourgeois measures in the name of the priority of nationalism over socialism. . . it also made deals with imperialism, as shown by its relations with the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1963.

This tendency was distinguished most of all by its Anti-Communism. It took part in the repression of Communists in Syria at the time of the Syrian-Egyptian union in 1958. In 1963, it conducted a campaign of extermination against the Communists in Iraq. In 1968, it organised the reactionary coup aimed . . . at liquidating the Communists and above all the left-wing faction of the Iraqi Communist Party, which was attracted to armed struggle."

The Iraqi Ba'athist regime attempted to restore a left facade after their support for Hussein in 1970 by nationalising (with compensation) some IPC concessions. . . this was more than counterbalanced by the more profitable concessions that were retained in private hands.

RIGHTWARD EVOLUTION

The rightward evolution of the Sadat regime has been widely observed from all sides over the last few years. Concessions to Israel, to the US, the exclusion of Soviet advisers, the increased opportunities for private investment—all these underline the limitations of the Nasserite movement which at its height in 1958 really did crystallise the radical socialist and nationalist aspirations of the Arab masses.

As the *Revolutionary Communists* say: "If Nasserism has a prophet, it has left no Koran (coherent ideology) and, as is shown by the evolution of Egypt since Nasser's death in 1970, can have no caliph."

If, then, since the Six Day War debacle the Arab world has seen a constant shift to the pro-imperialist right why the 1973 victorious war, why the chaos in Lebanon, why the triumphant appearance of Yasir Arafat, gun at hip, in the General Assembly of the United Nations? Can all these really be explained in such a pessimistic framework?

BALANCE OF POWER

The answer to these questions lies in understanding the shifting balance of power in Middle East politics between the Arab nations themselves, and between the Arab

nations and the Imperialist west.

The victory in 1973 may have been achieved with the help of Syrian and Egyptian armour but it brought to light a new and more powerful weapon for the isolation of Israel and the pressing of Arab demands. That weapon was, and is . . . oil. Or rather the price of oil.

The use of the oil weapon—the raising of oil prices—strengthened the hand of the Arab armies against Israel, but at the same time, it strengthened the most reactionary and feudal of the Arab regimes—Saudi Arabia. It may have given the Arab nations an unprecedented presence and a voice in world affairs, but it silenced the voice of the Arab and Palestinian masses.

Despite the tragic consequences it had led to in Jordan, the Fatah policy of non-intervention in the affairs of 'host' countries, of diplomatic pressure on Arab governments was strengthened by this new Arab voice in world affairs.

It is in this context that we can understand how it was that one year Yasir Arafat could address the United Nations amidst speculation about "West Bank ministates" and the next the Palestinians can be pounded into submission by Arab guns at Tel al-Zataar where Assad's forces snatched defeat for the Palestinian-Leftist alliance from the jaws of victory.

In doing this Syrian troops opened the way to the recent massive Israeli incursion into Lebanon and set back once again the struggle for the liberation of Palestine and the unity of the Arab people.

OIL POWER

Oil power is wielded, almost invariably, by the wealthiest, most corrupt and most reactionary of the Arab leaders. Through this power they are able to influence both imperialism and other Arab leaderships and, through the US as intermediary, or more recently, through the pathetic figure of Sadat, are able to bring at least some pressure to bear on the Zionist state itself.

Yet one thing is abundantly clear, neither they nor the other Arab leaders in thrall to them dares risk the kind of radical popular 'revolutionary' movements of the hey days of Nasserism, let alone the kind of much more thorough-going revolutionary Arab socialist movement which alone could begin to challenge the power and might



PLO leader, Yasir Arafat, diplomatic success at U.N.

of the Zionist state, offer the Palestinians a way forward towards their goal and have the possibility of cracking the pro-Zionist consensus in Israel.

LACKING

There are many of the elements for such a movement in the Middle East today—the Palestinians who refuse to go away, who refuse to be forgotten, the slumbering giant of the Egyptian working class—the most potent force in the entire Middle East when it begins to move, the Palestinians living under Israeli guns in the occupied areas of the West Bank, the urban and rural poor workers and peasants of Syria, Lebanon, Jordan.

What is lacking is an adequate political tradition capable of relating to all these disparate forces, suffering under different forms of oppression, capable of showing the basis of the unity of their struggles and articulating their needs and interests.

The Communist Parties of the Arab world could have done so once upon a time. Yet they remain tied to Stalinist conceptions and Moscow directions which often led to their self annihilation as the Soviet leaders preferred blocs with anti-Communist Arab nationalists than with their own devoted supporters. Today a Communist movement across all the main Arab countries scarcely exists. It is sorely needed.

SERIES CONCLUDED



Beirut cartoon of President Sadat with US top-hat and Dayan eye-patch

Soares's tightrope snaps at last

By MARTIN COOK

FOUR AND A HALF years after the captains' revolution of April 25th (the "revolution of the carnations" that overthrew the half century old Salazarist dictatorship), Portugal looks for the first time on the verge of open right-wing rule.

Since the elections of 1976, Socialist Party (PS) leader Mario Soares has loyally been doing the capitalists' dirty work for them — gradually dismantling the "socialist conquests" of 1974-75 to the approval of the International Monetary Fund.

However, with the withdrawal of the conservative Centre Social Democrats (CDS) from the government, Soares lost his parliamentary majority and was duly sacked by President Ramalho Eanes in late July. Eanes has eventually plumped for an 'independent' technocrat, Alfredo Nobre da Costa, to form a new non-party regime which will probably be something of a stopgap.

Nobre da Costa, a 55-year old former industry minister, has a reputation as an efficient administrator but with little political skill. If so, he is unlikely to last too long in the present troubled situation where none of the four main parties can command a parliamentary majority.

The Socialists, under pressure from their rank-and-file and smarting at their undignified ejection from office, seem likely to vote against the new cabinet when it is formed. However, the Communist Party (PCP) at the last count were hinting they might tolerate it.

PROVOKED

That the right wing has provoked the current political crisis, has hardly been because of Soares's lack of willingness to pursue pro-capitalist policies. Indeed, from the point of view of the IMF/EEC/NATO etc., his coalition was probably a better bet than an openly reactionary government that would risk stirring up a militant response from the undefeated working class.

On paper, the issue was over land reform — CDS leader Diego Freitas do Amaral complaining



Portuguese President Ramalho Eanes



New Portuguese Premier Nobre da Costa

that land seized by communist farm workers was not being returned to its former owners quickly enough. In reality, the move was a frantic step by the CDS to avoid being outflanked and losing its support among right-wing peasants and farmers to the so-called Social-Democrat Party (PSD).

The PSD (formerly the Popular Democrats) used to put on a 'radical' image to appeal to the enlightened and liberal middle class in Lisbon and other cities.

But with the leader of its right-wing — Francisco Sa Carneiro — now firmly on the top, the PSD is making demagogic appeals to all the reactionary elements in Portugal who yearn to turn the clock back to the days of the Salazar/Caetano dictatorship.

The Socialists had picked the smaller CDS as coalition partners so that they could retain a dominant position. But pressure from the PSD-dominated farmers' union forced Freitas do Amaral to take an inflexible line over the land reform issue, to retain credibility with his own supporters.

In a backward country such as Portugal, land reform was a good 200 years overdue. Especially so in the Alentejo region to the south of Lisbon, where 3,000 massive latifundia (estates) took up 3/4 of the land.

This land was worked for the incompetent (often absentee) land-

lords by a militant Communist-led workforce. During the rule of the radical officers in 1974-75, they ignored appeals to wait for legislation and occupied over one million hectares which were converted into 450-odd collective farms (UCPs), run on democratic and socialist principles.

SLANDERS

Despite the slanders of the right-wing, far from causing chaos these agricultural co-operatives were very effective in boosting production and productivity — for example, by bringing unused land into cultivation. Since 1975, however, they have been hamstrung and sabotaged by the denial of bank credits — available with ease to big landlords and private firms. (Although 30 per cent of the workforce still work on the land, Portugal has to import 50 per cent of her food!). However, for the ruling class and the PS leaders, the Alentejo was the Red Peril incarnate — the PCP's firmest stronghold.

One agriculture minister (Cardoso) was sacked for being too soft on the collectives (later quitting the PS). His successor Antonio Barreto, set to work with gusto to hand back about a third of their area — effectively

wrecking them. Police, even tanks, were sent in to enforce these measures, provoking so much hostility from the Communists that Soares had to soft-pedal and bring in a third minister, Luis Salas.

The Portuguese economy as a whole is in dire straits — rather worse than in the "chaos" of 1975. Last year exports paid for a mere 41.5 per cent of imports; apart from tourism, etc. this colossal trade gap was mainly filled by loans from the IMF and other bankers.

One of the conditions was drastic devaluation of the Escudo. Even against the UK pound, the rate has dropped from E. 56.00 in 1975 to E. 87.00 today! The result is savage inflation, now well over 30 per cent, so that most workers' real wages have fallen to the level of about ten years ago. No wonder PS Finance Minister, whizz-kid Vitor Constançao, is such a pin-up in New York, London and Bonn.

UNREALISTIC

The Socialists can hardly claim socialism is a far-off unrealistic prospect. Over 60 per cent of industry (including all the native monopolies) is already state-run. And the Portuguese constitution, written under the pressure of the

left Armed Forces Movement (MFA), actually commits the country to a socialist transformation of society, under workers' control!

Unfortunately, the army itself is now relatively stabilised and those now in power have no intention of putting the socialist constitution into effect. Again under IMF pressure, several enterprises under workers' control have been handed back to their ex-owners who had sabotaged production or fled the country. It can only be a matter of time before many of the nationalised firms are sold back to the capitalists at knock-down prices, or extravagant compensation is paid (under a recent law) for the totally bankrupt parts.

After nearly three years of constant retreat, the Portuguese workers have been gradually losing this war of attrition, and the 'socialist' conquests of the '74-75 struggles are threatened more and more.

The fascist and terrorist right operate almost with impunity, the ex-PIDE secret agents are free again, while revolutionary leaders such as Otelo de Carvalho and other officers, and 18 members of the far-left PRP (Proletarian Revolutionary Party), face trumped up charges. Before rolling back all the workers' gains, the bosses and the state are clearly testing the ground.

RESPONSIBILITY

The main responsibility for any fight-back in defence of what has been won must rest with the Communist Party, the dominant organised force in the workers' movement and the trade unions. Up to now, un-nerved by the collapse of their alliance with the 'Goncalvists' army officers and the MFA/POVO strategy, the Party has been playing a restrained, defensive role.

Alvaro Cunhal and his supporters have been afraid to push Soares too hard for fear of there being worse to follow. Now that the Socialists are no longer the No. one agency of reactionary attacks on the Portuguese revolution, the perspective of a PS-PCP fighting defensive alliance may become a more credible option for the Portuguese left to aim for.

REPUBLICANISM AND THE GENERAL ELECTION: LABOUR MUST RESPOND

OVER THE PAST few months an important debate has been taking place in the Irish community in Britain, mediated mainly through the columns of the 'Irish Post'.

This debate is important firstly because Irish people, and especially the Republican element, have been effectively silenced in this country: by the 'Prevention of Terrorism Act' and by prevailing British attitudes. The Irish have always played a major part in the development of trade unions and socialist ideas in Britain, from the Chartist Movement of the 19th century through the formation of the Labour Party and the great strike movement of the early 20th century.

With the Labour government's strengthening of Britain's hold in the six counties of 'Northern Ireland' the treatment of Republican prisoners in Long Kesh and elsewhere increasing concern and involvement in opposition by Irish people here must be welcomed by the British labour movement.

CONCERN

But that this concern and involvement should be channelled into a debate on whether to vote labour or not is a serious indictment of British workers' indifference to the situation in Ireland. The Irish, with a tradition of labour voting, are moving towards a complete rejection of the British left: indeed, in the recent Moss Side bye-election, the Manchester Civil Rights Association called for abstention on the basis of

by P. Chalk, Haringey UTOM

Labour's policies in the North.

Similarly, a major article in the 'Irish Post' of 13.5.78 by Tom Gallagher, called 'Hard Labour for Ireland' analysed Labour's history on Ireland and concluded:

'Labour's willingness to court politicians as reactionary as the Loyalists has surprised many. Perhaps being aware of labour's past record on the Irish question will not diminish that surprise. Without a shadow of doubt, the party has been pro-Union.'

This judgement was based on Labour's failure to challenge positions in the government of 1924, its ignoring of the issue in 1925-31, the Labour 'Northern Ireland Act' of 1949 which virtually formalised the existence of the sectarian state and the 'capitulation' of Labour in 1969 and during the 1974 Loyalist strike.

However, although Gallagher mentions the existence of opposition tendencies within the Labour Party, from the 1921 Commission which came out emphatically against partition and the 1945 'Friends of Ireland' group of MPs which campaigned against the Union he confines his analysis to the record of government policies and to the leadership of the party.

This attitude has tended to be repeated in correspondence to the 'Irish Post' with calls for a liberal or Tory vote to demonstrate disillusion-



AN PHOBLACHT

ment (very few), for a separate Irish candidate (with no clear policies) and for abstention.

The idea of putting pressure on Labour by these means is attractive to those who despair of the British working class.

The fundamental problems with this approach are that it contains no long-term strategy of opposition to British involvement in Ireland and that it totally ignores the nature of the Labour Party.

Whereas it's true that Labour's

leadership does not question the existence of partition and the ruthless suppression of Republican ideals (and this has been the case since 1924) there exists within the party a growing current of opposition to Labour's policies.

This is reflected in the growing number of constituencies either with a clear policy of British withdrawal or organising meetings or conferences prepared to discuss the question in depth.

Most importantly, many Labour

Party members prepared to actively campaign against Labour's policies on Ireland and call for withdrawal are coming together in the 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory'.

PRIORITY

The campaign will ensure that the question of Ireland will not be swept under the carpet. A priority will be the organisation of meetings and a request for commitment from those constituencies and candidates who are sympathetic to state their opposition to the British occupation.

For those Irish people who are more and more seeing the need to re-enter British politics, the possibilities of such a current in the Labour Party are important. For example, on the question of the prisoners in Long Kesh, the opportunity of getting constituency labour parties to campaign must be taken up as it was in 1920 during the War of Independence when over 100 meetings were organised up and down the country in sympathy with Irish Republicanism.

In the long-term, only the development of a socialist opposition will seriously challenge Britain's position in Ireland. And it is the Labour

Party, which contains all shades of left opinions, that offers the best possibilities for such a development.

However, Labour Party activists must be sympathetic to scepticism of their commitment to Irish unity and make it a priority to raise this issue during the general election campaign.

Battle for Labour democracy

Regional round-up



Hull: is this the end for Sir Leo?

SIR LEO SCHULTZ has been on Hull council for an incredible fifty-two years. For the best part of that he has been leader of the ruling Labour group. His name has become synonymous locally with a style of local government found in too many safe Labour industrial heartlands.

He is at the centre of a ruling caste which survives by concentrating power around itself, denying access and information to its individual opponents and — secure in the control of key committees — abrogating to itself the right to interpret, flexibly, Labour's imprecise local government rules. In short, they rule by a method which might be called closed government.

Last month we reported that the Labour Group of councillors had tried to ignore the City Labour Party's decision to suspend seven prominent councillors for their defence of South African investments. We are pleased to report that Labour activists have hit back sharply and openly.

CANCEL

By a single vote margin, the August meeting of Hull Central Labour Party's management committee resolved to cancel Sir Leo's nomination for the panel of Labour councillors in the City council elections next year.

This threat to Sir Leo, which made headlines and TV coverage was answered in his dotting sounding board, the Tory Hull Daily Mail:

"It now seems they have the temerity to remove me, but this is not the end of the road. I will look after myself and these people will be made a laughing stock not only here in Hull but elsewhere in the country."

Sir Leo's chequered career is an education in itself for Labour supporters. In 1975 local authority electricians marched through the

THE QUESTION of Labour Party Democracy is not simply something to be manoeuvred off the pages of conference resolutions to be watered down by the National Executive.

At the roots of the party throughout the range of constituencies rank and file activists are fighting to win the party back from self-important councillors, monolithic local "mafias" and break open some of the sterile routine parochial debates which have been allowed to dominate the party.

A recent spate of battles inside constituencies and district parties have illustrated that the question of Labour Party democracy is much larger than the issue of re-selection of MPs.

Down in the Forest of Dean four members of the West Gloucester Party have been barred from holding office for a period of up to two years following a three year fight over rule-breaking and accountability.

The four, George Hardy Membership Secretary of the Whitecroft Party; Gillian Ireland, Secretary of the Drybrook Party; John Ireland, President of the Forest of Dean Trades Council and

By JIM BARROW

secretary of the local ASTMS branch and Mick McLaughlin, Secretary of the Whitecroft Party had been banned without being given a hearing.

The irony was that their complaints about undemocratic procedures in the party area were basically upheld by the NEC.

Since 1975 a fight has been going on in the area to make 13 Labour councillors more accountable to the party. These councillors never formed a Labour group and never attended District Party meetings.

Gill Ireland and George Hardy ran a local tenants association and submitted a dossier of housing mismanagement to the ombudsman. Out of 6 cases sent 5 were judged to be maladministration leading to injustice. The Chairman of the Housing Committee was a Labour councillor.

George Hardy said of the subsequent inquiry into the state of affairs in the Forest of Dean: "We were appalled at the conduct of

the hearing which was a disgrace to the Labour movement."

He complains of prejudiced comments by the enquiry team, failure to inform the four that they could face disciplinary action and the lack of opportunity to defend themselves.

The Regional Organiser has been sent in to attempt to form a Labour group and clean up abuses of rules.

At the bottom of the fight lies the fact that the Labour councillors wanted to enjoy the prestige and power of disbursing housing and decisions according to their "conscience" and without the tedious problem of arguing for policy in a group or with elected delegates from the ward parties.

The 'Forest Four' are demanding that the suspensions be lifted and are asking all sympathisers to write to the National Executive Committee to protest against the Executive decision.

Anyone interested in offering more concrete help should contact "Justice for the Forest Four", c/o 25 Lakeside Avenue, Lydney, Gloucestershire (tel Lydney 3107).

TORY MAYOR IN LABOUR STOKE

In Stoke-on-Trent the Labour councillors came in for a full-blooded attack in the City's District Party when they announced that they intended giving the office of Mayor to the Tories.

The sheer arrogance of some councillors when they presented this fait accompli to the District Party enraged rank and file ward members and a strong protest letter to the group and a demand that the accountability of the Labour group should be examined.

In the North of the City the odd state of affairs in the Stoke North CLP are to be investigated by the West Midlands Regional Officer.

Here the MP, John Forrester, who lives outside the constituency, soldiers on as a City councillor, and

paid (at £1 a year) Secretary for life (or until he does something outrageous) although the constitution has not been changed to remove the office of Secretary from the list of officers to be elected annually.

In a city where the constituencies hold their GMCs once every three months there is clearly scope for an opening up of the party to more democratic procedures and real political debate.

In other areas too the Chartist has recently reported rows over selection and reselection in Stockport South CLP and Wood Green CLP respectively.

In Liverpool the attempt of the right wing to get their nominee

smuggled into the leadership of the Labour group was crushed by a vigilant City Party.

The political struggles reported here are not necessarily being waged by coherent groups with thought out political programmes and platforms. For the most part the struggles are being led by a motley crew holding different political positions to the left of J. Callaghan.

But it is a struggle to open up the party to democratic procedures and debate within which the question of workers democracy v. bourgeois democracy can be raised by revolutionaries along with other important questions which are being posed within the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory.

NOTICES

Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

ORGANISER No.2

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UTOM demo against Mason

The United Troops Out Movement are organising a national demonstration for Saturday October 7th, 1978, in Barnsley at 1pm. That week is the tenth anniversary of the Civil Rights march to be battoned off the streets of Derry by the police; the beginning of the present campaign against British rule in Ireland.

UTOM have chosen Barnsley for the demonstration because it is the constituency of Roy Mason, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. Roy Mason is in the position of responsibility for British rule in Ireland. Torture of prisoners, upder-cover Army assassination squads, and over 300 prisoners naked on the blanket in Long Kesh are what Mason stands for.

UTOM are appealing to people from all over the country to actively support this demonstration. All out in Barnsley on October 7th.

The demands of the demonstration are: Troops out now Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole Prisoner of war status now for Irish POWs Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act End media censorship of Britain's war in Ireland

Demonstrate against British imperialism in Ireland, and for Troops Out Now: Saturday October 7th, 1978, 1pm. Barnsley, South Yorkshire.

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