

# Unions seek TUC campaign to defeat Thatcher

By Paul Routledge, Labour Editor

A public campaign to defeat the Conservative Government and restore Labour to office is proposed in a politically highly-charged agenda for the Trades Union Congress in five weeks' time.

Sympathetic industrial action in support of those who defy the 1980 and 1982 Employment Acts now looks like becoming official TUC policy, and left-wing Civil Service union leaders are urging the merits of a one-day general strike.

A significant shift away from last year's mood of "new realism" - a working relationship with Mrs Margaret Thatcher's administration - is evident in the policy motions coming up from the unions in the wake of battles with Mr Eddie Shah, the newspaper proprietor, and with the Government over deunionization at the Government Communications Headquarters at Cheltenham.

Postal workers are also calling for the return of a Labour government, and Mr Bill Keys, general secretary of Sogat '82, insisted last night: "I make no apologies for saying

that the new realism has died a death."

Mr Keys, chairman of the TUC's Employment Policy and Organization Committee, predicted that policy initiatives aimed at reinforcing the unions' opposition to Government industrial relations law would be adopted at the Congress in Brighton. "We will be inviting the movement to defy the law," he said.

Sogat '82, the largest print union, is calling on the conference in September to tell the TUC general council "in conjunction with the Labour Party, to mount, as a matter of urgency, a public campaign to bring about the defeat of this Conservative Government". The traditionally-moderate National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers further calls on all unions and their members to "work for the creation of a climate that will ensure the election of a Labour Government at the earliest opportunity."

Several militant unions have tabled demands for a reaffirmation of the 1982 Wembley conference decision which offered official TUC support for

unions coming into conflict with the Government's labour laws. The general council comes under strong criticism for failing to back the National Graphical Association in its defiance of the Prior and Tebbit legislation, and the TUC's general secretary, Mr Len Murray, is the target of strong condemnation at the hands of the moderate National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (Nacods).

The largest Civil Service union, the Civil and Public Services Association, takes the argument even further, arguing: "It is impossible to appease this Government. They are committed to a merciless attack on trade unions and the jobs and conditions of our members."

The TUC general council must be prepared positively to encourage supportive strike action for unions that find themselves in trouble, the CPSA says, either by calling for shutdowns in the industries where unions are in dispute or organizing action "such as a one-day general strike".

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The strident political tone of the public debate on relations with the Government will be further heightened by a proposal from the left-wing technical and supervisory section of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, seeking to continue the TUC boycott of the National Economic Development Council.

TUC leaders cannot make up their minds whether to stay out of Neddy in protest at the forced deunionization of 7,000 workers at GCHQ, but the mood of militancy being whipped up over the labour laws - including the forthcoming 1984 Trade Union Act compelling unions to change their electoral practices - and the miners' strike could play into the hands of the militants.

Mr Murray's deputy, Mr Norman Willis, has been nominated by 31 unions which command a majority of the 10 million available votes to succeed him. His only rival, Mr David Lea, assistant general secretary, has the backing of only seven unions, mostly on the right.

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