

Back Morris against Blair's stooge

Inside the unions

By Sleeper

THE ELECTION for leadership of the Transport and General Workers' Union is set to become one of the bitterest and hardest-fought contests the British union movement has seen for many years. Politically, it is the most crucial union election of the last twenty years.

The incumbent general secretary, Bill Morris, faces a strong challenge from Jack Dromey, the union's national secretary for public sector workers. In essence, Dromey's challenge represents a bid by the New Labour machine to colonise the second biggest union — and punish Morris for daring to oppose Tony Blair over Clause Four.

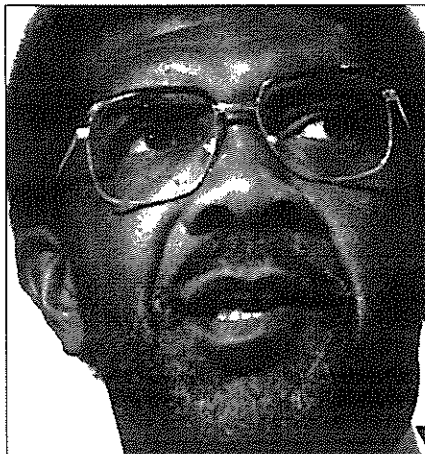
But, like most internal T&G battles, the issues at stake are clouded by personal antagonisms and behind-the-scenes wheeling and dealing. Morris, the first black general secretary of a British union, was elected in 1991 with the backing of the union's secretive and semi-Stalinist Broad Left. But many of those who backed him then have become disillusioned with Morris' authoritarian style and political instability. Relations between Morris and deputy general secretary Jack Adams have deteriorated to the point where the two now communicate only in writing.

The union's 'hard left', based in Merseyside, has been alienated by the abandonment of several long-running disputes and the sacking/forced resignations of some popular officials. The final straw for many on the T&G's left

was Morris' decision to go for re-election a year early, without consulting the General Executive Council — a move that was probably intended to pre-empt the left standing a candidate in 1996.

Into this hot-bed of bitterness and discontent steps Jack Dromey, ex-CP fellow traveller, 'hero' of the Grunwick dispute and now born-again "moderniser."

He also happens to be husband of Labour's employment spokesperson Harriet Harman. In 1991 Dromey announced that he would stand for the deputy general secretary position against the Broad Left candidate Jack Adams. Then he withdrew, on the grounds that there were no political differences between him and Adams. Then he decided to stand after all.



Bill Morris

This 'in-out-in-out' performance earned Dromey the sobriquet "Hokey Cokey Man."

Shamed and discredited within the union, Dromey began to cast his eyes towards the Parliamentary Labour Party as his next career move. It was Tony Blair who persuaded him to stay with the T&G, "where you can do more good."

Publicly, Dromey's pitch is now to attack Morris for not having held a membership ballot over Clause Four (the T&G held a branch-based consultation, like most other unions) and to accuse him of jeopardising the chances of a Labour victory by criticising Tony Blair.

Dromey has also appeared on TV and radio backing Blair's climb-down over the minimum wage — in defiance of T&G policy.

However, behind the scenes, this shameless careerist has also been busy building bridges to disaffected sections of the left. He has promised the Mersey-

side "hard left" the reinstatement of sacked official John Farrell in return for their support. Meanwhile, the T&G's Ireland Regional Secretary, John Freeman, has been persuaded to throw his weight behind Dromey. Freeman is an ex-Stalinist who "delivered" his mainly Six-Counties membership to Morris in 1991.

The willingness of some on the T&G 'left' to support Blair's man, speaks volumes about their pettiness, venality and lack of politics. Dromey's campaign — run by Mike Craven of the lobbying firm Market Access International and backed up with a weekly glossy bulletin *T&G Challenge* — is a blatant attempt by the Blairites to hegemonise the union. Serious leftists must vote for Morris, whatever our criticisms.

"Serious leftists must vote for Morris, whatever our criticisms."

Budget Day campaign underway

By Gerry Bates

ABOUT 100 delegates attended the 13 May conference, "Organising to defend the public sector." The following motion was agreed unanimously. It provides an excellent basis for taking forward the struggle to defend jobs and services.

"This meeting believes that co-ordination of resistance to the relentless attacks inflicted by the Tories on the public and voluntary sector is an urgent priority for the public sector trade unions.

We agree that as a starting point a cross-public sector Day of Action should be organised. The main demand for this public sector Day of Action should be for an immediate reversal of the cuts in public services. We reject the argument from the Tory and Labour front benches that public sector strikes are harmful.

To this end we agree to:

1. Encourage and support public and voluntary sector workers opposing cuts, privatisation and wage restraint.

2. Establish and support local and regional co-ordinating groups representing public and voluntary sector workers and user groups.

3. Provide full support to NHS workers' pay campaign.

4. Support the RMT national demonstration on the 10 June 1995.

5. Support the demonstration called by Fight Against Cuts in Education on the 30 September 1995.

6. Campaign for a national demonstration and one-day strike in the lead-up to the Autumn budget. We will go back to our respective organisations and propose that they support the Day of Action. We call upon the TUC to organise this Day of Action. If it will not, we will fight for the greatest number of trade union and other bodies to support it.

7. Sponsor a lobby of Parliament on Budget Day itself.

8. Work with community and service-user groups locally, regionally and nationally.

9. Reconvene this meeting in September."

Significantly the conference received support from the national leadership of the RMT and FBU as well as from all the main organised left groups.

Every serious socialist and trade unionist should try to build this initiative. Contact: Newcastle UNISON, Room 145, Civic Centre, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE1 8QH. Tel. 0191-232 8520 x6980.