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# REJECT PHASE III COALITION



Benn - no fight

Every principled trade unionist and every active Labour Party supporter will have nothing but derision and disgust for the rotten deal hatched up on Wednesday between Prime Minister Callaghan and Liberal leader Steel.

The 'essence' of the agreement, as Home Secretary Rees put it after the Parliamentary debate, is to "work through the economic policies, especially Phase III".

It is to obtain new allies and buy time for the next stage in the reactionary anti-working class policies of this Labour government, to hold the fort on Phase II while new attacks are being prepared.

## SAVE NECKS

This is a deal aimed to save the necks of Callaghan and his right-wing government by going completely behind the back of the working class movement and turning to the junior capitalist Parliamentary party.

It has already been hailed by every enthusiastic wage-cutter and social services destroyer in the Parliamentary Labour Party as part of 'a new alignment in British politics', a further decisive step of the right-wing leadership away from the working class.

Extreme right wing MP John McIntosh declared himself 'delighted' and Reg Prentice found he could change his vote as a result.

The origins of the political crisis of the last week is in the strength and determination of the working class, and at the forefront the toolroom workers of British Leyland to protect their standard of living.

## HOSTILITY

This determination has spilled over into violent working class hostility to every section of the trade union bureaucracy.

Soon after Scanlon was shouted down and humiliated at the now historic Birmingham meeting on 11 March, he supported the management and the cabinet in threatening to sack the 3,000 toolmakers and was met by a developing national strike in their support.

In area after area AUEW branches, district committees and shop stewards quarterly meetings gathered to pass motions of outright opposition to Scanlon's support for management.

It was increasingly obvious that action in support of the toolroom workers could grow to massive proportions—in complete

defiance of the official leadership.

This movement has spurred on the struggle of workers against their union officials. The high priest of wage control Jack Jones has since been besieged in his office at Transport House by dockers, women workers from the Yardley's cosmetics factory, and even students.

## OWN WAY

These events provided the basis for the Tory decision, following the Parliamentary vote on the cuts last week, to go ahead with a vote of censure against the Labour government, and deal with the working class in their own way.

The Tories clearly decided that since Callaghan in co-operation with the union bureaucracy was showing a diminishing ability to hold back the working class, it was essential for them to take over the reins of power.

Rather than risk a defeat inflicted by the working class, the Tories wanted to do it themselves.

They intend to put millions more out of work, to reduce public spending to the bone, and to bring wages down to the levels of the 1930s. With economic policies like these, enormous and violent repression could not be far behind.

This means that a Tory government is likely to return soon with no alternative to Callaghan having been developed in the PLP.

If the fight for a new leadership had been taken up within the Labour Party it would have been guaranteed a response from workers sick of Callaghan's cuts, wage controls and unemployment.

But what did the 'lefts' do in the face of this challenge?

From the very start, there was never any question that a single Labour MP, however 'left' his reputation would threaten in any way the Labour government.

And though four ministers—Shore, Orme, Benn and Scottish Secretary Millan—voted against the deal in the Cabinet, this was not the sign of a fight but of a capitulation to Callaghan.

## IGNOMINIOUS

Even when the ignominious pact had been concluded, not a single 'left' MP was prepared to come out with decisive condemnation.

Norman Atkinson found it 'regrettable' and Eric Heffer said that 'as long as we haven't given too much away, maybe this is a temporary expedient'.

With friends like these workers



Michael Foot—he will head the "joint consultative committee"

fighting the government need no enemies. The fact is that, as the Workers Socialist League statement printed on the back page points out, the 'lefts' should have demanded and themselves set up a new leadership based on socialist policies.

Failing this, they should have voted against the government and for the mobilisation of the working class in defence of jobs, wages and the social services.

The cowardice and lack of alternative provided by the lefts played an essential part in the preparation of the coalition agreement with the Liberals. The union leaders, who were beginning to fear for Phase II, began to hedge their bets against the return of a Tory government.

In the end of course, the TUC leaders thought that the way to hold their members back was to cringe to every coalitionist current.

After the agreement was announced, TUC General Secretary Murray found the 'prospect of keeping a Labour government in power a very agreeable thought'.

It was these moves within the Parliamentary Labour Party and the TUC that provided the basis for the coalitionist agreement that temporarily saved the government and its Phase II.

However fragile and temporary the agreements made with the Liberals, it is important to emphasise that the arrangements which have been made, are, as David Steel put it 'unprecedented'. He emphasised that Callaghan's

long way and gave a lot'.

For the junior capitalist party there will be full consultation on all future government policy, much greater influence on government policy than the Labour Party Conference or any members or supporters in the Labour movement.

The fact remains that the working class has not been bought off or defeated.

There are many more workers who are now moving in the wake of the toolmakers, determined to maintain and improve their living standards.

As the developing national strike, after the sacking threat, showed, the working class itself has not yet spoken on this latest treacherous sell-out of their interests. Labour Party members must now demand a recall conference to repudiate the deal with the Liberals and to elect a new leadership to put forward socialist policies.

This will only be successful in alliance with a continued offensive against Phase II of the Social Contract.

The anger and determination that has been shown by the toolmen, the dockers, the hotel workers and many more, must now be mobilised for wage settlements that protect living standards by allowing wages to rise with the cost of living as determined by the workers themselves.

Election campaign or not, it is only through the fight on policies such as these that the interests of the working class can now be

## IN THIS SPECIAL ISSUE

This special edition of Socialist Press has been produced by the Workers Socialist League to meet the needs of the fast developing political situation.

The unofficial coalition between the Labour Party and the Liberals, precipitated by the toolroom workers' strike, demands close study and a full analysis.

In this issue the WSL examines the manoeuvres the Labour Party found necessary to stay in office, and the way that the 'left' MPs, and union bureaucrats capitulated to the shabby deal.

We also examine in depth the political lessons of the toolmakers' strike (Pages 4 and 5) and the way that it has been misinterpreted by left groups, the Communist Party and the capitalist press (Page 6 and 7).

Leyland's role as an international exploiter is examined in depth on Page 2.

To put the crisis into perspective the WSL also presents the first of a two part survey of the history of wage controls under the Labour Party and the bureaucratic measures taken to introduce them (Page 3).

Finally (Page 8) we publish the text of a statement put out by the National Committee before the election deal was fixed, calling on the Labour 'lefts' to prepare for an election by putting forward a socialist programme and voting against the government if it was not adopted.

PHOTO: Chris Davies, Report



# LEYLAND PASSPORT TO INTERNATIONAL OPPRESSION

Despite the financial catastrophe suffered by some of its subsidiaries (in Spain, Italy and Australia), British Leyland remains a vast international company. And, wherever it operates, it shows the same arrogant hostility to workers' demands as it shows in every dispute in Britain.

In Italy on November 26 1975 Leyland announced the complete closure of its Innocenti workers and tried to sack all 4,500 workers.

Although the company put every possible obstacle in the way of the workers' organisations, especially the elected factory council, the workers occupied the plant.

After five bitter months, during which Leyland refused to pay a penny in compensation to the sacked workers, the occupation ended because of the betrayal by the leaders of the Italian Communist Party. They cooked up a deal with the government and Italian capitalists to 'rescue' the factory—an agreement which left the workers without a thread of security.

## FIRMER CONTROL

Leyland prefers to operate in countries where the activities of the workers are under firmer state control—in places like South Africa and India where a combination of starvation wages and brutal repression of workers by the state in alliance with Leyland management have produced high profits.

In South Africa Leyland has three factories. At Blackheath near Cape Town it manufactures and assembles cars; and at Mobeni in Durban and at Elandsfontein in Transvaal it makes vans and trucks.

Since 1973 Leyland South Africa has been involved in a long dispute with its 800 or so black workers. Through a policy based on lies, hypocrisy and collusion with the racist repression of the state, Leyland has refused to recognise the trade union to which its black workers belong.

## RECOGNITION

The Metal and Allied Workers Union (MAWU) first began to recruit members in the Mobeni plant in April 1973. Within three months 95% of the black workers had joined.

MAWU applied for recognition which Leyland refused, saying it was illegal.

In fact, though under South Africa law black unions are denied any of the facilities given to white unions, they are not as such illegal, nor is it illegal for individual companies to negotiate with them.

Faced with Leyland's refusal the union retreated and tried instead to elect representatives to the plant 'works committee'. Leyland refused to recognise these representatives.

At the beginning of 1974

ment-dominated 'liaison committee'. The workers boycotted it and demanded a referendum of the workers.

Leyland refused and so the union called the first recognition strike for many years. The company sacked all the striking workers and, when the union was forced to retreat, refused to employ anyone who had played a part in organising the union.

MAWU tried to spread its recruiting to the Elandsfontein plant but the Union secretary and other workers organising within the plant were promptly arrested by the Security Branch and threatened with various charges.

## REFUSAL

That was three years ago. The MAWU campaign for recognition has continued. And Leyland continues to refuse recognition.

Union organisers have been incessantly intimidated and victimised. Leyland claims, with unbelievable hypocrisy, that to recognise the union now might set back the cause of African trade unionism.

The truth is that any increase in the power of the black workers

(whose wage in 1974 was £10 a week) would set back the cause of Leyland's profits and might threaten its lucrative deals with Vorster's racist dictatorship.

A very large proportion of Land Rover production, for example, is sold to the South African army and police—and are widely used in internal security operations.

## BLACK ON SUPPLIES

The British Leyland Combine Committee voted last year for a black on supplies going to the South African subsidiary until MAWU gained recognition.

Len Murray, Jack Jones and Hugh Scanlon claim to support this demand. But in accordance with their class collaborationist policies in Britain, they have done absolutely nothing to enforce it.

Meanwhile Leyland is trying to crush the union in South Africa by moving its Mobeni operations to Blackheath in the Cape where MAWU has no strength.

Leyland's activities in India have been even less publicised than those in South Africa. But they reveal the same ruthless hostility to its workers.



Workers in Milan demonstrate against the closure of Leyland's plant at Innocenti.

At Ashok Leyland in Ennore in Madras a manufacturing and assembly operation employs 4,000 workers making old models using old machinery on which the intensity of work is very high. Skilled workers at the plant receive about a fifth of the wage of an unskilled worker in Britain.

A British trade unionist who managed to visit the plant last year during Dictator Gandhi's emergency reports that it is ringed by wire fences and bristling with state police.

## RUTHLESS

There is a police station at the entrance to the plant and the police continuously intervene inside the factory. He reported finding a 'ruthless management hated by the workers'.

There is a long history of violence and intimidation in the factory against trade union militants.

This takes the form of a struggle between the independent unions and the stooge unions run by the Congress Party and backed up by the management and the police.

The stooge unions regularly hire armed thugs to terrorise shop floor militants.

The Leyland management was in the forefront of the brutal strike-breaking actions taken by employers to crush the widespread strikes in Madras in 1972.

## SYCHOPHANTIC

The factory is run by British senior managers backed up by a group of sychophantic Indian middle managers. It was some of these who told the visiting British trade unionist that 'the English managers have told us that what Mrs Gandhi has done in India (the emergency and suppression of trade union rights) the British government should do there'.

Leyland management, like that of other multinational firms in India have been firm supporters of the Gandhi emergency.

Leyland's brutal and reactionary actions in India, like those in South Africa, must be taken up by the workers' movement in Britain.

By Henry Phillips



South African police use British Leyland Land Rovers to supplement their armoured vehicles

# SOCIAL CONTRACT— AN EXERCISE IN COERCION

PHOTO: John Sturrock, Report



Scargill - his collapse opened the way for wage controls.

The latest phase in wage control and reduction of living standards has led to the political crisis which has been the occasion for this special edition of 'Socialist Press'.

However, it is well to use this issue to begin to set out the origins of these arrangements from the very time the Labour government was elected in the wake of the miners' defeat of the Tories at the beginning of 1974.

Ever since then the Labour government has moved consistently to push down wages and conditions.

## HIGH POINT

From the high point of the miners settlement, the Labour government began to try and push back every wage settlement.

On the basis of a loose 'compact' with the unions the Labour government won the election of October 1974 with the aim of establishing a 30% ceiling on wages! The fact that the railmen broke this limit in June 1975 forced the Labour leaders and their capitalist allies to begin to look more seriously at the need for wage controls.

The conditions under which such a policy could be seriously considered by the Wilson government were not long in presenting themselves.

## UNHOLY

Engineered by an unholy alliance of Treasury officials, Labour Ministers and Union bureaucrats, Phase I of the Social Contract was introduced in the midst of the greatest inflationary crisis to confront British capitalism since the war.

Chancellor Healy, speaking to Labour MPs in the Commons on July 1, 1975, argued that:

"We must accept a 10% cut in the standard of living and public expenditure. The alternative is to

The struggles of the working class have made the continuation of the Social Contract an increasingly difficult task for the Labour government. In this, the first of two articles on the history of the Social Contract, IAN SWINDALE traces the way in which TUC bureaucrats and the Wilson government combined to impose wage controls almost as soon as Labour came into office in 1974.

crawl to the International Monetary Fund and accept the terms they impose on us".

But such a proposal, involving wage controls, massive public spending cuts and a doubling of unemployment, could only be imposed if the conditions were first created by the trade union bureaucracy, particularly Jack Jones of the TGWU and Hugh Scanlon of the AUEW.

The first move was made by Jones who floated the idea of a flat rate wage increase for all workers of £6 a week. At the TGWU Conference, Jones argued for this voluntary wage control on the basis that the government would otherwise impose legal pay restraint.

## PEDDLING

Peddling the false argument that workers' wage increases were the cause of inflation, he said that trade unionists should make their contribution to the "national interest" by a voluntary curtailment of wage demands.

For its part of the 'bargain' the government must, argued Jones, maintain employment levels and public expenditure.

Stating that the only alternative to the Social Contract was legally imposed wage controls or, worse still, the return of the Tories, Jones won the vote at the TGWU conference and the first major step in establishing wage controls had been achieved.

But an alternative policy, representing the interests of the working class, was posed right at the outset by the Workers Socialist League.

At the TGWU conference, the only motions in opposition to the Social Contract and for an alternative policy on wages—a sliding scale of wages to protect workers' incomes against inflation—were moved by Alan Thornett from the 5/293 (Cowley Assembly Plant) Branch.

## STRUGGLE

Arguing that the working class were *not* responsible for inflation, Thornett said that the trade unions should do the job they were built for through years of struggle and sacrifice by workers—defend the living standards of the working class.

Within a week of the TGWU conference, and in the light of an announcement by the then Prime Minister Wilson that statutory wage controls would shortly be introduced if voluntary wage controls were not accepted, the TUC General Council met and accepted the £6 flat rate.

## COLLAPSED

The only remaining possible lead was that of Arthur Scargill whose Yorkshire Area NUM had tabled a motion for their conference demanding a £100 a week wage for face workers. Under pressure Scargill collapsed and replaced the word "demand" with the word "seek".

The way was now open, confusion having been sown in the ranks of the working class by the trade union bureaucrats, for union leadership after union leadership to settle within the £6 limit.

Having successfully defended

their living standards against the recent inflationary spiral, with the railmen for example smashing the original 30% ceiling only weeks before the £6 limit was introduced, the full effects of wage control took some months to work through to the point where its impact on working class living standards began to be felt. Consequently the first few months of Phase I were marked by a lack of action on the wages front.

## EMPLOYMENT

Meanwhile, the government, which according to Jones and Scanlon were committed to their part of the Social Contract—maintaining employment and public spending—very quickly made clear that they had no intention of doing any such thing. And the union leaders themselves demonstrated that they had no intention of fighting government attacks on the working class—far from it.

Any attempt by workers to fight back against the government's policies met immediate resistance from the bureaucracy. Nine members of the Strathclyde District Committee of the Fire Brigade Union were expelled for trying to take on Wilson's pay laws while in the steel industry, union chiefs accepted thousands of redundancies.

## LOGICAL

As the Workers Socialist League argued at the time, the advocacy of redundancies by union leaders was the logical outcome of accepting the Social Contract as the means of defending capitalism in crisis. The fight against unemployment was therefore inseparable from the fight against wage controls.

In an attempt to divert attention from the fact that the government was continuing its attacks on the working class, the trade union bureaucracy came out with an "alternative strategy" with "selective" import controls the central plank.

## SUBSTITUTE

This reactionary nationalist policy could be no substitute for a fight against the Social Contract, instead attempting to tie the working class to their "own" bourgeoisie in competition with other capitalists internationally.

As the WSL argued at the time, import controls lead away from the all-out struggle against the employers necessary to defend jobs.

Meanwhile a ballot of NUM members resulted in acceptance of the £6 by a narrow 3-2 margin and the TUC were forced to defend the Social Contract against an ASTMS resolution opposing statutory

reserve powers to back the £6 limit.

Not content with defending a Labour government ruthlessly forcing up unemployment and cutting wages, the union bureaucracy now took up the fight for higher productivity in the factories, centred on their attempt to force 'participation' on the workforce of British Leyland, now largely government owned and being run primarily in the interests of the privately owned car component firms.

## AVOIDED

It was in November 1975 that the Labour government had to go to the IMF for the first of those loans that Healey had argued six months previously could be avoided if the working class accepted a cut in living standards of 10%.

The price of the loan—£1,000 million—was of course massive public spending cuts and further rationalisation of industry—speed up and unemployment.

## SHATTERED

By now every single argument of the trade union bureaucracy was being shattered by the reality.

Wage controls had been imposed but inflation continued at record levels, the government was allowing unemployment to rocket to well over the million mark, the sacrifices made in order to avert loans based on public spending cuts had resulted in—loans based on further public spending cuts; and far from the danger of a Tory government being averted, the disillusionment of Labour voters threatened a mass abstention at a future election and the almost certain return of the Tories.

## OBVIOUS

Under these conditions it was becoming increasingly obvious that the working class would not accept wage controls for a second year.

By the end of 1975, unemployment had risen to 1.2 million, an increase of 100% since the beginning of the Social Contract, and by February 1976 a further round of cuts were being proposed in a government White Paper.

As resistance began to grow, the trade union leadership were forced to take an increasingly bureaucratic stance in their attempts to police the working class.

Central to this was a systematic attempt in union after union to concentrate power in the hands of 'reliable' full time paid officials of the union at the expense of the elected representatives of the working class on the shop floor, the shop stewards.



# Toolmakers so for Social

The connection between Trade Union democracy and the imposition of wage controls was violently demonstrated last week with the decision of the AUEW Executive Council to support British Leyland management and the Labour Cabinet in their decision to sack the 3,000 striking toolmakers. This unprecedented move, advocated by Hugh Scanlon, was the logical result of 'participation', the acceptance of union leaders that the viability of the company is the primary objective and that the 'Keep Working' front spread in the Company newspaper, *Mirror*, last Autumn.

Supporting the sackings Scanlon knew the enormity of his action. Of the 3,000 toolmakers 63 were shop stewards, and many branch officers and on District Committees. For example, 50% of the Oxford District Committee were involved in the strike and would have been sacked if they had not returned to work.

## POWERFUL BLOW

Scanlon also knew that his humiliating action at the hands of 3,000 toolmakers in Birmingham Town Hall the previous week was a powerful blow for the independence of the working class and that those collaborating with management and government.

He knew that the almost unanimous vote against him had exposed the enormous weakness of the trade union bureaucracy. It had revealed the reality—that their present strength was the strength of management and of government and that they were faced with a determined section of members they were exposed and swept to the side.

Scanlon knew the implications of this development and the effect it would have on

the rest of the working class who would say—if the toolmakers can do it why should we be pushed around? The writing was on the wall.

He knew that since the Labour government rests completely on the TUC bureaucracy, and in particular Jones and Scanlon, that this development called into question the ability of the Labour government to rule.

It was this pressure, to save the Labour government, which led Scanlon to support the sackings in a desperate bid to get the toolmakers back to work and retrieve some credibility for the battered leadership of the AUEW.

## TORE UP CARDS

He gambled and lost. Within hours, strike action developing into national proportions swept the AUEW in support of the toolmen.

Next day skilled workers in a number of plants arrived at work and went straight back home. Other sections were organising. In the Oxford District, for example, Didcot power station AUEW members decided not only to strike but to picket the car plants. Harwell Atomic Research AUEW skilled men, who last year tore up their union cards because they claimed the District Committee was too militant decided for action.

In Bradford a special District Committee meeting was called to organise a strike of all skilled men in the Bradford area. The Birmingham East District Committee condemned the EC action.

## SUPPORTING ACTION

Other sections taking supporting action were toolmakers at Ford, Chrysler, Rolls Royce and AC Delco, while AUEW branches began to move who, in the past, had objected to taking any kind of action.

PHOTO: John Sturrock, Report



Roy Fraser

There is little doubt that the rejection of Scanlon and the strikes in support of the toolmakers compounded the political crisis of the Labour government and became a major factor in the decision of Thatcher to press a vote of no confidence in the government.

Until now the Tories have been content to allow the Wilson/Callaghan Labour leadership to attack the working class on their behalf. But having seen the ability of the Labour government to rule destroyed, they are faced with the necessity of doing the job themselves—difficult as that will be.

That the toolroom strike precipitated a major governmental crisis came as no surprise to the WSL. I spoke in 13 public meetings, during the toolroom strike, in support of WSL policy.

In each meeting I stressed that the toolmakers had thrown the Labour government and the trade union bureaucracy into deep

The toolroom workers have left the Socialist leadership humiliated and discredited in the working class.

In this article ALAN THORNETT, a Campaign Secretary and BLMC shop steward at Cowley and the key role of a leadership that refused to write in a personal capacity, he traces the attacks on workers by trade union bureaucrats and Labour government alike—wage controls.

political crisis and that the strike represented a direct threat to the continuation of the Social Contract and the survival of the Labour government.

In all but two of those meetings that assessment was challenged by members of the IMG who would only concede that the strike represented, along with other struggles "the beginnings of a fight back". The task now, they said, was to "organise the fight back" through the April 3 National Conference, the April 19 one day strike and so on.

The reality was that a section of workers were on strike who had the power to close down a section of the engineering industry covering two million workers. They had a right wing leadership determined to avoid the political issues of the strike and the inevitable confrontation with the government over the Social Contract.

The immediate task therefore, was to tackle the leadership problems, the political development, defence and extension of that strike.

This may not have fitted into the IMG's schema but it was central to the struggle to break Phase II of the Social Contract. If the toolroom strike had been defeated wage control would have been strengthened.

Tackling the development of the strike meant developing a struggle within the strike committee to begin to explain the political issues involved to the mass of toolmakers in preparation for the struggles ahead.

## CONFUSION SEWN

The essential prerequisite for this was a clear and accurate assessment of the strike itself.

It was necessary to refute the confusion sewn by the media about "differentials" and establish that the motivating force of the strike was the Social Contract and the fall in the standard of living and that the strike reflected the mood of the whole working class.

## SEPARATE RIGHTS

There is a dangerous element in the toolmakers' claim—they are demanding separate negotiating rights on a corporation-wide basis. This falls in line with management policy and could be used by management as a lever to impose the corporate principle on all grades of workers in Leyland.

The corporate principle would centralise wage bargaining in the hands of the national officials and hamstring Leyland workers in any effort to re-establish previous wage levels.

This danger must be strongly pointed out and the policy opposed within the toolmakers' committee. It could not however influence our attitude towards the toolroom strike itself. With the strike ranged against the Social Contract and giving the possibility of striking a blow against wage control for the whole working class, the dangers of corporate bargaining in British Leyland become secondary.

The crucial task, and one taken up by the Workers Socialist League, was to call for full support for the toolmakers' struggle and pose an alternative policy to the wage-cutting Social Contract—the sliding scale of wages. Recognition of the real nature of the strike as a struggle against the Social Contract coupled with a fight to have wages linked to inflation so that workers' incomes are compensated on a point for point basis for increases in the cost of living were the only way to survive in this situation.



# und deathknell Contract

Contract hanging by a thread, and the TUC efforts to hold back struggles of the

andidate in the TGWU election for General points the political lessons of the strike, to face the real implications of the struggle. connection between the anti-democratic and the central platform of the TUC and

In fact, historically, the toolmakers' struggle has developed in step with the rising hostility of the working class to wage control.

Socialist Press made the following point in a lead article last April dealing with the strikes of toolmakers at Triumph, Rover, Tractor and Transmissions and SU Carburetors which had lasted four weeks. (They had been instructed back to work by the AUEW Executive and Tractors and SU had rejected the instruction).

"But the strength within the working class—the same strength which defeated the Tory government and removed them from office; the same strength that defeated the Industrial Relations Court; the same strength that forced through last year's railwaymen's pay claim; that strength has not been confronted or defeated by the employers. It emerges still in the continuing pay strike at BL's Tractors and Transmissions plant, in the SU strike, and in the surprise decision of the Coventry AUEW District Committee to reject the Executive instruction."

## LETTERS PASSED

The issue remained very much active whilst letters were passed between the committee, the management and the union. On December 6, a successful one day token strike was called throughout British Leyland as a shot across the bows of the management.

On February 18 1977 the call went out for an indefinite strike demanding recognition of the Toolroom Committee as a negotiating body, a demand which the toolmakers saw as leading quickly to cash on the nail. The strike received the solid support of 3,000 of the 4,500 toolmakers within Leyland—not 50% as claimed by the management. The main plants not supporting were Llanelli and Swindon.

The massive backing given to the Toolroom Committee from the start of the strike again reflected the working class. It was the rejection of the official leadership and the searching for an alternative leadership which could lead a fight on wages.

From the first day the strike met the bitterest hostility from the entire official leadership of the trade union movement.

## INSTRUCTED BACK

The strikers were promptly called upon or instructed back to work by every group of bureaucrats who could be got together: the Executive Council of the TGWU; a unanimous vote of the 21 unions in the Confed; meetings of BL conveners from both the AUEW and the TGWU; a special Sunday meeting of the Cars Council—the top 'participation' committee, the Cabinet of the NEB and the House of Commons. All told the toolmakers to go back.

The first action to flow from this official activity was organised sabotage. At the gates of the Cowley Body Plant, drivers from the section, Cowley Assembly Plant, Transport Department, were pressed by the TGWU conveners and TGWU Branch officers to cross the toolmakers' picket.

When they refused I was called in front of the District Secretary and conveners and with other transport section stewards that the policy of the TGWU was to cross the picket.

When this failed a TGWU Branch official told the toolmakers "If you don't remove



Photo: Chris Davies, Report.

Hugh Scanlon

yourselves from these gates we will bring TGWU members out to move you".

At the Castle Bromwich Body Plant when Cowley drivers refused to cross the picket they were told by TGWU conveners that Cowley transport "would be blacked throughout the Midlands area".

The second thing to emerge was a list of suggestions from the NEB to Varley designed to deal with the strike: close down the whole combine until workers agree not to strike; close one plant as an example; sell off the volume car section.

These suggestions were entirely ridiculous. The combine was already closed down, all the plants are integrated and the termination of volume car production would collapse the economy of the Midlands and is politically impossible for a Labour government.

All Varley could do was to make the standard threat to cut off finance. The result was that the strike hardened and the political crisis of the government deepened while Callaghan placed the ball in Scanlon's court.

Scanlon, having at first refused, now agreed that a meeting could take place between the AUEW Executive and representatives nominated by District Committees—"which could include toolmakers". This was seen by the government, the employers and the trade union bureaucrats as the move which could end the strike.

## RIGGED MEETING

Scanlon rigged the meeting from the start. The toolmakers' stewards arrived to find that there were 11 of them and 12 others. When the vote was put for a return to work and for Scanlon to meet the 3,000 toolmakers at a single mass meeting it was carried with a majority of toolmakers voting against.

On returning to their districts the minority of toolmaker stewards who had voted with Scanlon were heavily attacked by their members and when the full 63 stewards met the next day they voted unanimously to recommend rejection of Scanlon's terms at the mass meeting due to be held the following day, (Friday).

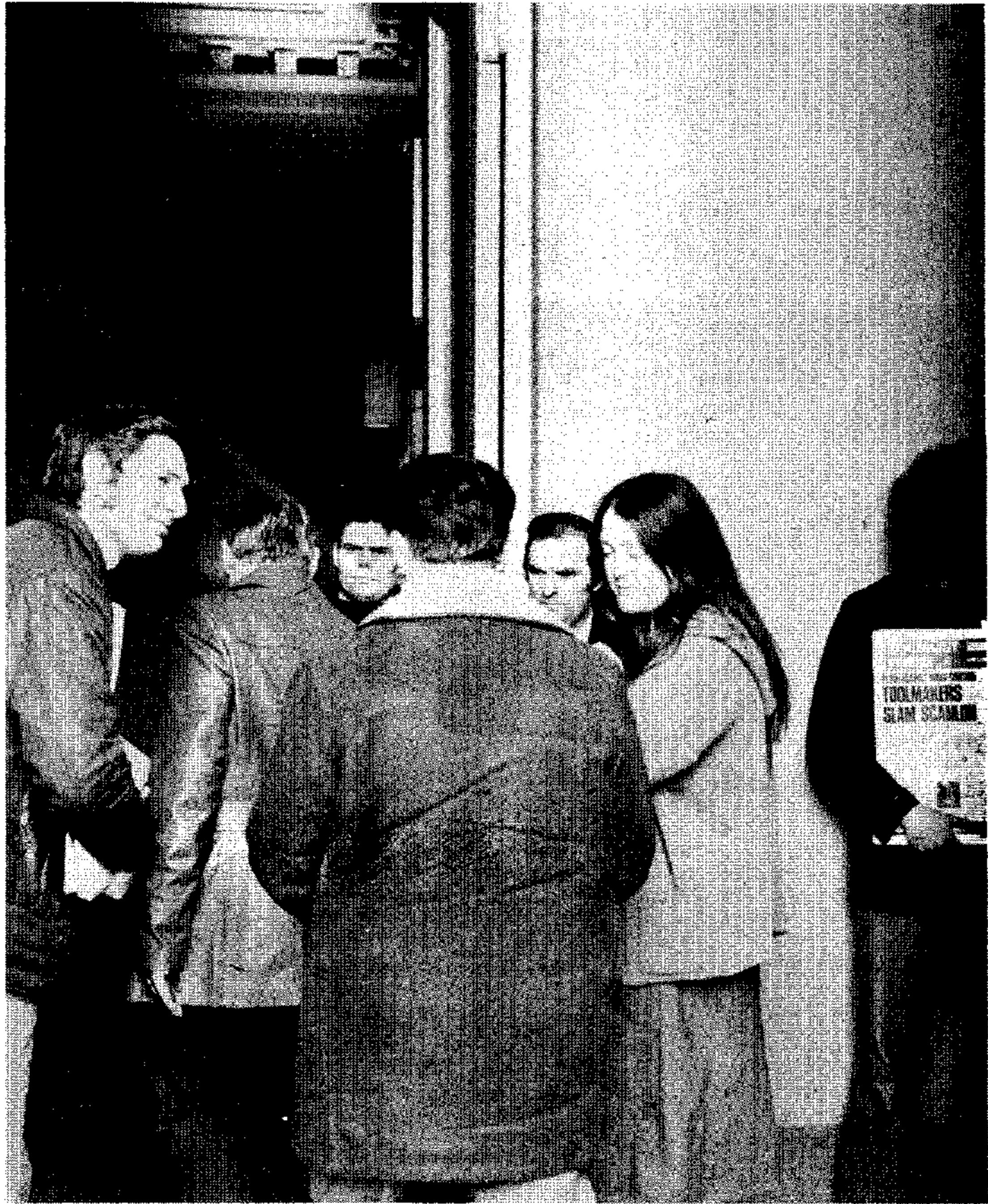
The media was shocked. The strike was still on!

Scanlon's manoeuvres turned what would have been a hostile meeting into a near riot. Only appeals from the strike leaders secured Scanlon a hearing at all. When the vote was taken there were only 11 prepared to back Scanlon.

The vote was a turning point in the political struggle in Britain. The group had been attacked from within the government and it was clear that the political repercussions would be far-reaching.

The vote also placed the ball back in the courts of the management and the government, who after a lengthy meeting with the 21 unions in the Confed announced that a unanimous agreement had been reached with the trade union to send the toolmakers money refused to return to work.

In Scanlon's words: "That means if the company dismisses our members we will not approach the company saying they have done wrong".



Toolroom workers going into the Birmingham meeting before voting to return to work.

Promptly, and correctly, Roy Fraser, on behalf of the strike committee said:

"We do not think there will be any breaking of our ranks... We are now running into a type of industrial relations attitude of the 1930s. This will affect every worker in this country if Leyland management succeeds in this type of coercion".

The strike committee voted to recommend the continuation of the strike and to call for support from other skilled men both inside and outside British Leyland if the sackings were carried out.

## FLOWING IN

The following day, Wednesday March 16, a full meeting of the 63 toolroom shop stewards was held. Already support was flowing in from other skilled sections. But there was a change in the meeting. Derek Robinson, leading Communist Party member, AUEW convener at Longbridge, chairman of the Cars Council and a toolroom steward was at the meeting.

There were three positions voiced at the meeting: (1) acceptance of the strike committee recommendation; (2) to make a fresh offer to management and the AUEW—to recommend a return to work on condition that a three sided meeting took place between management, the AUEW Executive and the toolmakers' representatives to discuss the toolmakers' pay grievances; (3) Robinson's position of an immediate return to work on current management terms, in other words, complete surrender.

It was the first stewards' meeting Robinson had attended since the dispute started. The effect of his intervention was to strengthen support for what appeared to be the better position. A motion to make a new offer to management was carried with the votes against.

Later that day, both management and

AUEW Executive compromised with the toolmakers. The Executive dropped their opposition to the unofficial committee nominating its representatives and the management dropped their opposition to discussing the toolmakers' pay grievances in isolation.

The deal was a sell-out. The concessions made by management were worth very little. The meeting was held without top management or national union officials in attendance and described as "low key".

But the toolmakers went back far from defeated. They were not intimidated, and had gone back believing that important gains had been made. They followed the committee in which they had so much confidence.

## LAST CARD

It was a sell-out because their leaders took them back at the point where all was possible. Fifteen of Leyland Cars' 18 models were at a standstill. The last card had been played by the management, the government and the bureaucrats. The working class was coming forward to defend them against the sack. The demands could have been won in full.

The leadership retreated when the reality which they had avoided from the start was inescapable—a political struggle to bring down the Social Contract.

It is a great tribute to the strength of the working class that despite the sell-out the struggle still shook the government and will have a profound effect on the future of the Social Contract.

It is the only way that management can survive and they know very well that the only way is to call for the strike to resume. There is little doubt that the support would be forthcoming from the toolmakers. The issue is the Social Contract.

## Toolmen in focus

The importance of the toolroom workers' strike can be seen by the vigour with which it was attacked and defended. On these pages we analyse how the other left groups saw the issue and how the Stalinists and the capitalist press reacted. We include some comments from toolmen interviewed by 'Socialist Press' and a brief history of their committee.

## TEN YEARS ON

The roots of the toolroom committee stretch back ten years to a pub in Chipping Norton where the first delegates came together after Castle Bromwich was taken into the Pressed Steel empire.

From Castle Bromwich, Cowley, Swindon and Autobody Dies of Luton delegates gathered at the King's Arms into what became known as the Chipping Norton Committee.

### EMERGENCE

Its emergence as a serious industrial and political force came last year at the time of the strike by toolmakers at Triumph, Rover, Tractors and Transmissions and SU Carburettors, all within the Leyland group.

All these factories as well as the Longbridge plant, Llanely and Rearsby Engineering now joined the committee, which switched its meetings from Chipping Norton to The Good Companions in Birmingham.

And it was here that their claim for the right to separate negotiations took shape.

From the beginning the leaders of the toolmen were obsessed with going through every correct constitutional step. They wrote to the management, they wrote to the union, they visited MPs.

But the union bureaucracy, dead set against allowing negotiations for any section of workers to bypass their control, refused to support the claim to meet management separately.

And Leyland themselves, far from wanting another group negotiating separately wanted to direct all claims through the bureaucrats they had come to know and depend on.

As a shot across the bows the toolmen staged a one-day strike on December 6.

It was a shot the company, the bureaucracy and the government were to ignore, but it was the signal for the political crisis that was to follow.

When the all out strike began in February the bureaucrats still did not understand what had happened. The AUEW National Executive instructed to return to work was ignored, officials were excluded from meetings and not a single toolroom steward attended a special meeting called by the Birmingham District Secretary, Bert Benson.

The pressure that had built up under the dispute and which took it to the point of a near general strike throughout the AUEW was the same pressure that gave Scanlon the biggest humiliation of his career.

The toolmakers' committee had been ignored at Scanlon's peril.

In looking at the record of the International Marxist Group in dealing with the recent toolroom strike it is clear that we are taking up not an isolated incident but a method.

Red Weekly did not report the four week long toolroom strikes in March 1976, the most important action against the £6 limit, until after they were over, and then only as a summary.

When the Rubery Owen strike took place in November last year, marking the emergence of struggle against Phase II of the Social Contract, Red Weekly did not mention it at all, commenting after the event on the resulting EETPU strike.

The toolmakers' strike which started on February 18th this year was not mentioned in the edition of Red Weekly published on February 24th. The next edition centred on differentials and got even that wrong.

How can such an amazing position arise from an organisation considering itself Trotskyist? The arguments at the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement Organising Committee over the draft resolutions for both the first conference and the recall conference provide a part of the answer.

Soon after the committee was formed in July 1976 WSL members on it advocated the convening of an Autumn conference on Wage Control and Union Democracy—a conference which would take up the cuts, unemployment and all attacks on the working class but

essentially drawing the connection between bureaucratic abuse and the imposition of wage control from above.

The IMG opposed this perspective, arguing that the working class were in retreat, were not fighting on wages and therefore that we should direct our main thrust towards the social service cuts.

This resulted in the Workers Socialist League carrying through the first conference almost single handed with the IMG attacking it in their press and sending a token delegation.

### NEW FORCES

The conference, nevertheless, made an important contribution. It drew in new forces, discussed the problems of programme and leadership confronting the working class in this period and above all rammed home three points: that the working class had never accepted Phase II but had it foisted on them; that struggles would emerge against wage controls towards the end of the year; that we had to prepare to fight for leadership and programme within these struggles.

This became the springboard for the recall conference. When discussions began last December wages strikes had broken out at Rubery Owen in Darlaston and Salisbury Transmissions in Birmingham.

IMG delegates said that we should not get too excited over "small strikes" and pointed towards the November 17 anti-cuts demonstration as the major development. They pointed to the fall in strike figures as evidence that the working class were in retreat.

WSL comrades pointed out that the class struggle cannot be measured in a crude empirical and simply quantitative way. The form was a reduction in strike figures, the content was a political explosion beneath the surface

### EXPLOSIVE

In proposing the conference resolution WSL comrades pressed for this explosive element to be its central direction and that programmatic proposals be orientated towards a rapid development of struggle.

When the toolmakers struck against the Social Contract the IMG refused to recognise its importance.

In the pre-conference public meetings they presented it as "the beginning of a fight back"



PHOTO: John Sturrock, Report

Derek Robinson

Arguing for an organised intervention into the April 3 conference, called by the BL Joint Shop Stewards Committee but inspired by the Communist Party, Red Weekly describes it (on March 3 1977) as "a real opportunity to co-ordinate the battle against the treacherous attacks of the Labour government".

Yet that conference will oppose fights on Phase II, will be less 'representative' than the IMG claim and bureaucratically controlled.

### CORRECT

It is correct of course to organise an intervention into the April 3 conference, but to pose it as more important than the CDLM conference which is aimed at supporting sections fighting Phase II is grotesque.

The one day national strike called by the Communist Party for April 19 for "free collective bargaining in August" is a similar diversion. Defending it on the British Leyland Combine Committee, Derek Robinson said:

"We have to have this token strike. If we are not seen to do something we will be overtaken by our members".

Yet Red Weekly on March 17 says the one-day strike can be turned into a movement which will sweep away Phase III.

### FIGHTING

The Workers Socialist League will be fighting for a different perspective at the CDLM conference. We have fought for the working class to be at the conference, represented by those sections now fighting government policy. If we can bring the most advanced element from those struggles to the conference it can not only discuss programme under conditions of a living movement but can make a material intervention into those struggles through the development of leadership.

That the IMG can be so wrong on the wages issue and so wrong on the toolroom dispute is closely linked to their attitude towards the conference.

# Differentials no—Wages yes!

"Differentials? I don't mind them getting more than me if we were getting a decent wage."

"But we're not getting a decent wage and that highlights the questions of differentials".

Trevor, a 25-year-old toolmaker at Cowley put the question of differentials in a nutshell.

His take home pay is £44 and the real comparison he makes is not with other toolmakers but with the £30.35 he took home when he started four years ago—a sum worth more than in real terms.

The meeting at Cowley, like that at Birmingham the day before, had just voted for a return to work.

"If we stayed out we'd become martyrs. The management and the government are trying to put the unions against one another."

### IMPORTANT

"British Leyland pay lip service to good industrial relations; but they've had a hell of a long time to sort it out. With the union behind it they would have gone ahead with the sackings. Then it would be up to all workers to support us".

Not all toolmakers saw the talks in that light. One shop steward said:

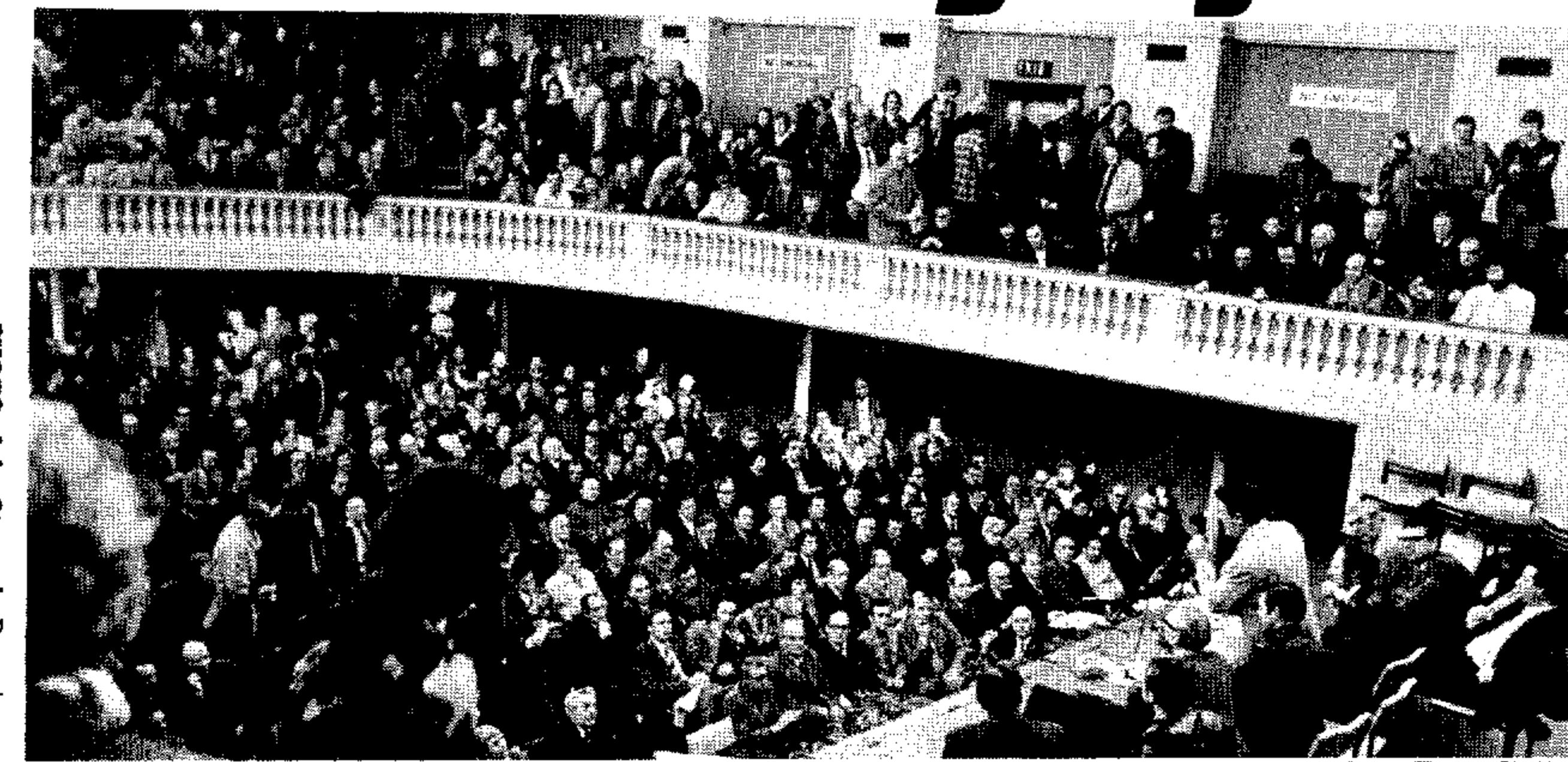
"Scanlon's changed since last week by now inviting the workers' representatives to go with him."

"They can't get out of it now. Something really must be done now otherwise they'll have another strike on their hands."

"The way I look at it, Scanlon is on his last legs. But it's the same with all these union officials."

"They've been taking on new workers in Cowley in the last three weeks. Cowley won't close down; there's too much at stake."

"I don't think they would have dared to sack us. Not once they realised that other workers, not just toolmakers, were in frame. They



Toolmakers meeting in Birmingham Town Hall

company and the union had to do something in the end because the whole thing was so well known."

The feeling against Scanlon was universal. An ex-convenor told us his view of the Birmingham mass meeting to which Leyland 'bused' workers from other plants.

"Scanlon began on completely the wrong foot. He began by saying 'colleagues'; he didn't even say 'brothers': the whole place just exploded—that was before he had said another word. I've never been so disgusted with him in my life—it was disgraceful. I'd go so far as to say that the whole executive should be suspended."

Another toolroom worker said: "The meeting was chaotic. It certainly opened my eyes. The members were very bitter. This whole thing has been going on since 1965."

"Scanlon had a really uncomfortable time. He just gave all the same old excuses. Because of his attitude he really asked for it."

Talking to the toolmakers also

the first to stay on strike, the second to go back.

It showed that the toolmakers went back strong, united and undefeated.

Only a tiny proportion of the 3,000 was prepared to vote for a return to work despite all the efforts of Scanlon, so long as the leadership was set to stay out.

Scarcely a larger number were prepared to vote to stay out after the committee said go back—although many had severe doubts about the kind of meeting that had been set up.

### SUMMED-UP

Their feelings were summed up by one toolmaker waiting to go into the Birmingham March 17 meeting at which Longbridge and Castle Bromwich workers voted almost unanimously to go back to work.

"If the committee says go back we'll go back. Our committee is asking for one thing and in reply Scanlon is giving another. But we'll

do whatever the committee says."

The leadership, having stood up to the combined weight of government, NEB, and Scanlon, was trusted absolutely by the membership. If Fraser had called for an indefinite strike or a return to work, he could have won either.

One Birmingham toolmaker, asked what he thought about the talks which had been set up, replied: "The opinion I get is that it is unacceptable and what was already rejected last Monday. I think there will be a bit of kicking up about it but I think it will be passed".

Another thought the talks were a way for Scanlon to give in while saving face.

"Scanlon cannot say he'll meet with the committee. He can't say that. But if our committee is not there you can more or less guarantee a load of dissatisfaction".

Another toolmaker who overheard this chipped in: "If we are not there when the talks begin we'll all be back out on strike"

# MORNING STAR-DUST

"The strike has achieved an important step forward towards its objective by the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions' agreement to set up working parties including toolroom representatives to work out with the management how their problems could be solved.

"As we indicated in our editorial on Saturday, under these circumstances the continuation of the strike can only lead to further divisiveness between one section of workers and another at British Leyland."

(Morning Star, Wednesday 16 March).

So said the Morning Star, the morning after Scanlon had backed the Leyland management threat to sack the toolroom workers if they did not end their strike.

## CRITICISM

Read in isolation it could give the impression that up to that point the Communist Party paper had given some support to the toolroom workers.

The opposite was the truth. This editorial was merely a continuation of their position of opposition to the toolroom struggle. The only criticism made of Scanlon's part in the sacking threats was that these: "aggravate the situation, and simply do not carry conviction".

Early reporting of the strike was deliberately non committal. On the day it started, February 21, the Morning Star wrote:

"Opinion is divided on the merits of the strike as some Leyland workers think it can divert from the main fight for a return to free collective bargaining. They believe separate rights to negotiate toolroom wages could fragment the manual workers' bargaining position throughout Leyland."

The other half of the "divided" opinion is of course not mentioned.

The opinions they quote are those of leading members of the Communist Party. In Oxford one of their number, Mick Soanes was busy moving resolutions in opposition to the toolroom workers. Derek Robinson, the convener at Longbridge had opposed the strike at the meeting of the BLMC Combine Committee one week earlier, as he had opposed all struggles against Phase II.

## BOLSTER

On February 28 the Star quotes the strike leaders as saying that their action is not against the Social Contract and to bolster this describes it as being about "the effects of the Social Contract".

The same issue carries their report of the CP-run Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference two days earlier.

This conference, which refused to allow any resolutions in support of the toolroom workers to be put, heard Derek Robinson declare that differentials could only be granted once there had already been a return to free collective bargaining.

"I don't accept that all we need to do is to bash the trade union leadership."

The first clear public statement of the Morning Star's position came from their Industrial Correspondent, Ken Graves, on March 2 where he discussed the effects of separate negotiating rights.

"Such a 'solution' would inevitably fragment the bargaining position of Leyland manual workers... Currently it diverts from the key fight to change that disastrous economic policy by initially forcing a return to free collective bargaining."

After the rigged meeting with the AUEW executive, at which toolmakers were in a minority, the Star commented on the return to

# 'No fight till we say so'

work call:

"Yesterday's talks produced the best possibility that has emerged so far of securing a return to work".

And after the strike committee recommended rejection:

"Such a hard line is against all expectation, as it was thought that meeting the AUEW executive members—one of the strikers' demands—would defuse the situation and open the way for a return to work".

(Morning Star, March 11)

## HOWLED

When Scanlon was howled down at the Birmingham meeting it was a major weakening for all bureaucracy, forcing the Communist Party to come out with an open call for a return to work on March 12.



PHOTO: Chris Davies, Report

Ken Gill

Ken Gill, the Stalinist General Secretary of TASS, and therefore someone the Communist Party considers to carry some weight, attacked the strike as divisive.

In summing up the strike on March 18 the Morning Star tried to repair some of the damage done to the AUEW executive, saying they had "acted with commendable haste to accept the olive branch of the strikers".

Then after all their attacks the paper has the hypocrisy to describe the strike in this way:

## SYMPATHY

"The strike has major significance in that it aroused a groundswell of sympathy with the strikers and total opposition to the Government's pay policy which caused the strike".

In looking at the Morning Star's coverage—and therefore the Communist Party's approach—it is clear that the only aspect of the strike they supported was the move towards corporate bargaining.

The CP supports the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions' plans for corporate bargaining. In addition the Confed's own position was not just against the toolroom workers but against all strikes.

## DIVISIVE

The Communist Party, in describing the Confed meeting as an important step forward, then supports this position of opposing all strikes in Leyland or against Phase II as being divisive and a diversion from persuading the TUC to persuade the government to end wage control.

In short the role of the Communist Party today is to defend the trade union bureaucracy.

# SPECIAL CASE OF HYPOCRISY



Press-gang close in on Fraser

If there was one quarter from which the toolmakers gained support as a special case it was among the hard boiled editors of Fleet Street.

True they were treated to dire warnings of the collapse of Leyland, and large parts of British industry. True the capitalist press praised the courage of Scanlon when he travelled to Birmingham for his public humiliation. True the toolmakers were told to go back to work.

But what they did not get at the hands of the demon butchers of Fleet Street was the kind of treatment that is usually handed out to workers who bring major industrial plants to a halt.

No witch-hunts. No red baiting. Instead a kind of grudging respect.

The only exception was the Daily Telegraph which felt obliged to lay the blame for the strike at the door of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions which had met in London the previous weekend.

Even the Telegraph was forced to retract this the following day. If the toolmakers had not denied that the Stalinists were involved then no doubt the Communist Party would have been quick to scotch the rumour that they were behind a struggle on wages.

## SMEAR

But the Daily Mail? The Express? What happened to their highly trained smear writers? Why were they running cosy pieces on Roy Fraser gardening? Roy Fraser having a quiet pint? Roy Fraser behaving as if he were human?

They key to this was the role which the Press allocated to Fraser, the toolroom committee and the other 3,000 strikers.

They were to become the next to bottom support on a ladder to one conclusion. The wages of the workers must be kept down, but the wages of the managers and the middle managers must be allowed to rise.

The watchword was to be reward for "skill and responsibility".

The Express, under a streamer which described the toolmakers as "The non-political, non-militant team whose pride in their work has dealt a crippling blow to the Social Contract", turned on the charm.

"Pictured together they look more like a bunch of men off to see the Birmingham-Villa match than militant extremists plotting the downfall of the British economy."

"A reasonable enough impression for they see themselves as reasonable, ordinary British craftsmen."

"Highly skilled men whose beef is that the trade which for 30 years made them the kings of the industrial Midlands today earns them little more than an 18-year old on the Leyland assembly lines."

The Daily Mail pictured Fraser on their front page under the headline "The Outlaw" and started their story thus:

"The great industrial juggernaut of Government, management and unions turned on Roy Fraser and his striking toolmakers yesterday."

"The men were told that if they do not go back to work on Monday they will be fired—and the unions will not help them."

Inside the same issue in an editorial headed "Why we still support the toolmakers" the Daily Mail said:

"We believe passionately that the skills and talents Britain needs must be adequately rewarded . . ."

"The toolmakers are not asking for the earth. They are asking that their skill be recognised and rewarded, something which is accepted as routine in successful car factories of our foreign competitors."

"Their demand, their just demand, goes to the root of Britain's economic ills".

In fact the differentials between toolmakers and production workers are a myth. For years toolmakers earned less than production workers and in some plants they earned about 50% of the production line rate.

In the end the demand was about wages. No talk about differentials could hide this.

The toolmakers saw their main chance to get more money was to claim parity with the highest rates in Leyland Cars for other toolmakers. The difference this could have made to some wages is more than £9 a week, within the main car producing plants and up to twice that if the wages of the top toolmakers in Leyland are compared.

The principle of parity with the highest—which led to a claim including dangers of corporate bargaining—was not an abstract principle but arose from the demand for more money.

In contrast to this the Tory Press wanted only to push the line that skilled workers are 'entitled' to more than unskilled workers, a logic that militates against struggles on the basis of the best that can be won, and appeals to some phony idea of natural justice under which editors and managers would benefit and the working class—toolmakers and all—would be left scrabbling for the crumbs.

## WRECKERS

The reporting of the strike can be seen as an attempt to take some of the heat out of it. If the toolmakers had been played up as 'wreckers' it would have been that much harder for their leaders to argue that they were not out to break the Social Contract. The class lines of the struggle would be laid down in black and white.

Added to this was the desire to foster an illusion among skilled workers that the Tory Party was the party of differentials and therefore the party they should vote for.

In an article in the Times on Wednesday March 16, the Conservative spokesman on employment James Prior MP, wrote:

"Our Conservative trade unionists stressed at their conference the paramount importance of productivity, of differentials of skill, and incentives for hard work and responsibility."

## STRUGGLE

The astounding way that Prior writes about "our Conservative trade unionists" as if that reflected a real base within the working class on which to build reveals the true nature of the special case treatment.

In this way the toolmakers' struggle, which reflected the feelings of the working class was turned on its head to become a reflection of the feelings of the class of managers which constantly supports wage controls, but which itself becomes accidentally caught up in the machine.

It's a very special case of hypocrisy.

# SWP-BLOWING IN THE WIND

On March 5 the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) argued in their paper, Socialist Worker, that the toolroom strike was about three things.

1. Against the renewal of the Social Contract in August.
2. For parity.
3. For the right to negotiate now a deal for when Phase II ends.

To say the toolroom dispute only concerned Phase III is to ignore the feeling on wages which lay behind the strike—a feeling so strong and sharp that it resulted in the greatest humiliation any trade union official has ever suffered.

All this merely for something in August?

On the contrary, that anger and

the support the toolroom workers received could have led to a widespread strike against the Social Contract now.

In the same issue as the SWP give support to the toolroom workers they carry a truly amazing uncritical account of the conference of the Stalinist-dominated Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions—a body which on the last occasion it met physically bounced the SWP (then still called the International Socialists) out of the meeting!

Now the LCDTU is "the most important unofficial rank and file conference for years".

Their comment on the Stalinist Derek Robinson, AUEW convener at Longbridge, was that he was "facing several ways at once. He

was against criticising Jones and Scanlon. But he was also leading the campaign to destroy the policies that they had forced on the movement".

This is an incredible statement when you consider that Robinson and the Communist Party argued in the Morning Star that the toolroom strike was divisive.

The SWP's comment on the so-called divisiveness of the strike is correct. They point out that it is a spearhead for other struggles. However their memories are very short.

The tuners' dispute in Leyland which similarly challenged the government's pay policy in 1975 was described in Socialist Worker at the time as being—divisive!

The IS/SWP are blown as ever by the winds of the moment.

# Toolmen force Tory power bid



PHOTO: John Sturrock, Report

Fraser with toolroom workers after the Birmingham meeting.

## WSL NATIONAL COMMITTEE STATEMENT ISSUED MARCH 23 1977

The decision of the Tories to put down a motion of no confidence in the government comes after a period of nearly six months in which they have declined to make such a move.

It therefore has to be seen as a calculated decision taken on the basis of the events that surround the toolmakers' dispute. That is, it has to be rooted in the developments in the class struggle.

The major factor in this was the determination of the toolroom workers, a determination which brought out all the strength of the working class and its willingness to defend its wages. This determination reached its

highest point with the humiliation of Hugh Scanlon at the mass meeting in Birmingham Town Hall where he, as one of the two main props of the Social Contract, was swept aside by this relatively small section of workers.

Arising out of this, the desperation of Scanlon and the AUEW Executive Council in backing up the Company's threat to sack these workers brought such a response in the working class that it is clear that within days there would have been a national strike which could have brought down the Labour government. This movement showed the hostility of the whole working class to the Social Contract.

The Tories realised that there was a danger of the Labour

government being removed by a working class *in action*, so they have chosen the lesser evil of going for government under conditions of a *Parliamentary change*.

The usefulness of the Labour government to the Tories was obviously based on their ability to use the trade union leaders to police not only Phase II but a Phase III and now that their ability to do so is in question, the Tories have decided to go for their removal.

The point is that even if the government is not removed on Wednesday it is nevertheless still on the way out. But they are going out with *no parliamentary opposition* by any 'left' MPs to

pose alternative policies. In fact, the 'lefts' have at no time challenged the Callaghan-Healey leadership.

It is in this light that the WSL calls on the 'left' MPs to prepare for a General Election with alternative policies by declaring that they will *vote against* the government on Wednesday unless the Callaghan-Healey leadership resigns and is replaced by those fighting for an alternative socialist programme against the Social Contract—pay controls, cuts and unemployment.

We support the demand that the Labour Party NEC calls an emergency recall Labour Party Conference to adopt a socialist

programme and break from the class collaborationist Social Contract.

In the event of an election we will call for a vote for Labour, at the same time demanding that constituencies campaign on an alternative programme to that of Callaghan and Healey and we will demand through the Trade Unions and the Labour Party wards that the Labour candidates commit themselves to this alternative programme.

It was the wages struggle that created this governmental crisis. We must take this into the election period and not allow this fact to become submerged under all the talk of saving the Labour government at all costs.

20.3.77.

## TOOLMAKERS SELLOUT LIKELY

Leyland toolroom workers must be having second thoughts about their decision to return to work last week.

The talks set up between the AUEW, toolmen and the Company were a complete washout. The toolroom workers are still being denied the separate negotiations they demand.

But Roy Fraser, the Toolroom Committee Chairman has been

offered one of six places on a Leyland working party to investigate the whole structure of manual workers' wages throughout the Company.

He was later quoted as saying that he did not foresee that the full Toolroom Committee, meeting on Saturday would be asked to vote for immediate strike action at this stage.

The working party to which Fraser is invited could

take Leyland workers a step nearer corporate bargaining and Fraser could find himself aligned with Scanlon and the rest of the bureaucracy, ordering other groups of workers back into line.

Although the outcome of Saturday's meeting cannot be predicted for certain, it looks extremely likely that the membership are not going to be asked to fight on—a position that would be a complete sellout by the leadership.

WORKERS SOCIALIST LEAGUE  
PUBLIC MEETING  
SHEFFIELD

"Down with the Coalition!"  
Sunday 3 April at 7.30 pm  
Prince of Wales, Division Street

## STALINIST SHOWS HIS COLOURS

WHEN A MOVE TO condemn Scanlon and the rest of the AUEW executive for their attacks on the toolmakers was put to the Birmingham Shop Stewards Quarterly it brought a massive response.

In fact just one voice and one vote was raised against the resolution moved by George Oaks.

That opposition—arguing that the toolmakers were putting jobs at risk and dividing the working class—came from Jim Cotton.

Jim Cotton is the Chairman of Birmingham City Communist

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