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Massive support for Welsh Day of Action

Class battles are won or lost not in courtrooms but on the picket lines at the point of production: yet last week's decision by the House of Lords to overturn the Denning judgement on the steel strike will have a marked impact on the course of the class struggle.

On the one hand, the ruling that the ISTC is acting within the law in calling out its members in private steel firms alongside the BSC strikers will redouble the morale and militancy of the steel workers.

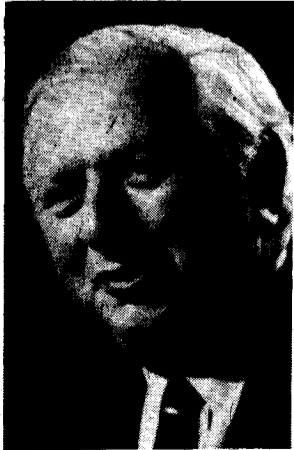
A clear reflection of this was the way in which the ISTC Executive Committee unanimously voted down General Secretary Bill Sirs.

"Stay of execution"

Sirs had proposed that the private steel firms be given a 10-day "stay of execution". Instead the Executive called their 15,000 private sector members out on strike at once.

And the near total response to their renewed strike call is also a gauge of the level of support for the steelworkers' struggle against the Tory government.

But, on the other hand, the Lords' ruling has forced outraged employers into an all-out bid to press-gang their political servants in the Tory cabinet into the rapid legislation of sweep-



Prior

EXTEND THE STEEL STRIKE!

ing new anti-strike and anti-picketing laws.

Under these conditions the Tories are even now hastily preparing amendments to Prior's anti-union "Employment Bill"—amendments which will further attack hard-won trade union rights.

The pressure on the Tories creates them considerable problems. Prior himself admitted that the best conditions to ram home anti-union laws is a period of "relative peace" in which the new restrictions are not immediately put to the test.

Yet the scale of the resistance from hitherto largely "moderate" steelworkers indicates that the Tories can have no hopes of any such peaceful period.

Union leaders

Indeed the fact that the action is not already far more wide-reaching is due not so much to any reluctance of the steel workers and other sections to fight the Tories, but to the reactionary role of the trade union leaders.

They have stretched every sinew since the beginning of the steel strike in their efforts to prevent it spilling over into a General Strike which would mobilise the enormous working class hostility to the Tory government.

Their efforts have focussed in particular on Wales, where

the Welsh TUC had initially called a General Strike of steelworkers and related industries from January 21 aimed at staving off the BSC closure programme.

Massive pressure from Len Murray and British TUC leaders finally forced the Welsh bureaucracy to postpone their all-out action to March 10—by which time they hoped the steel pay struggle would be over.

Frantic bid

Now, with the strike more solid than ever, and with March 10 looming closer each day, Murray is to meet Welsh TUC General Secretary Wright again in a frantic bid to get this extension of the struggle called off.

Yet the steelworkers have gone into battle not only on the issue of wages, but also in resistance to BSC's plan to sack 50,000 workers.

In this they, like other sections of workers, are up against the full weight of the Tory government and its frantic moves to drive up the profits of British industry at the expense of the working class.

Not one job will be safe, nor can anyone's living standards be defended, until this Tory government is brought down, and a government forced into office that will make itself answerable to the working class and carry through a programme of socialist policies.

'We are at war with the Tories'

A Socialist Press interview with Mick Skelton, strike coordinator, Corby Strike Committee.

Would you say this is a political strike?

Yes, of course it's a political strike. We are under attack from an extreme right wing administration and we must fight back. Sure we are demanding more money, better conditions, a stop to redundancies, etc., but we are demanding these things from a government dedicated to depriving us of all these necessities through a vicious economic policy.

The Tories' economic policy is a political policy and by going on strike when that policy affected us directly we were

striking against that political policy. That makes it a political strike. How could it be otherwise?

Would you welcome a decision by the Leyland negotiating committee to recommend strike action to coincide with the steel strike?

Yes, of course we would welcome it. And we'd like to see the miners and railway workers support us too. You see what Leyland workers must realise is that British Steel and British Leyland are giant twins. They are both massive nationalised

industries that are coming under fierce attack from the most reactionary Tory government in generations.

It's not just a question of wanting support from Leyland workers. We must fight together.

Our positions are so similar; our pay offers were almost identical. We decided to stand and fight and we are winning the fight. If Leyland workers joined that fight they would help to guarantee victory both for themselves and us.

If the Leyland workers were to strike alongside the steelworkers there would be upwards of 200,000 workers actually on strike and many thousands more laid off. Would you say that this could be seen as a potential general strike?

Yes it would be and we would welcome it. It would be a mini-general strike situation and it could well bring this government down.

Callaghan has repeatedly stated that this Tory government should only be replaced through the ballot box. What do you say?

This is what he says yes; and, in a way, he's right. Through massive strike action we can force this government to the country, and they would obviously lose a general election so Labour would be reinstalled.

Under whose leadership?

If the Tories were to fall now, obviously it would be Callaghan. But if they survive another year, say, it should be Tony Benn leading a Labour government. I would like to see Tony Benn as Prime Minister in the near future.

I think when the media use the word 'political' they're probably referring to a section of the workforce actually threatening the existence of a government. Would you agree?

Well, yes I would and it looks very much like this is what it's come to.

It was Tory madness which led to this confrontation and we have responded to the challenge as we had to. Now it's them or us.

And this is a solid strike which is gaining strength and intensifying all the time. We never received any instructions to stop the flying pickets after Denning's ruling; if anything we increased our activities.

No, it's not going to be us that gives in. You see we are fighting a war: a war against the Tory government. And in a war somebody's got to lose and somebody's got to win.

We must win. With help from other sections of the British workforce we shall win. And that could well mean that the Tories lose everything.



Thatcher—can be brought down by General Strike action

As the Tory cuts, sackings, closures and price rises hit home, countless thousands of workers, youth, housewives and unemployed are looking for a lead in the struggle to defend themselves and their families.

The Welsh Day of Action last week saw some 200,000 workers on strike in solidarity with the steelworkers' job struggle: such action must be built into an all-out General Strike!

This is why we call on workers throughout the trade union movement to fight for the extension of the steel strike into a General Strike that demands the removal of the Tory government.

We call for resolutions to

union leaderships and the TUC demanding a General Strike be called: and at the same time calling for the setting up in each area of councils of action to lead and extend generalised strike action independently of the TUC leaders.

When Len Murray last week warned the Tories that the TUC was "at breaking point" he meant that it is finding it hard to restrain the militancy of the membership.

The task in the coming struggles is precisely to break the hold of these conservative leaders, and to forge a revolutionary leadership capable of mobilising the full strength of the working class in defence of its interests.

GENERAL STRIKE! TORIES OUT!



INTERNATIONAL

Bani-Sadr seeks to rebuild Iran's state machine

"This is not an election but a new revolution".

Abol Hassan Bani-Sadr is clearly not one to underestimate the significance of his landslide victory in the polls for Iran's first president under Khomeini's 'Islamic Republic'.

With three-quarters of the votes cast in his favour, Bani-Sadr defeated his closest rival, Admiral Madani, by 5-1, with no other candidate winning even so much as 5% of the total.

Ayatollah Khomeini gave his blessing to this result from his hospital bed, and called for all Iranians to rally behind the new president.

For his part, Bani-Sadr is now actively campaigning for the first elections to the new legislative assembly early in March. He aims to secure a majority in this parliament through building a political 'front' based on the supposed 1800 groupings and organisations throughout the country which supported him for the presidency.

Central authority

Undoubtedly a main theme of this campaign will be the need to build a unified central authority and end the situation of 'dual' and 'parallel' government which Bani-Sadr has, like Bakhtiar, Bazargan and Khomeini before him, attacked.

This course will bring Bani-Sadr into direct conflict with a varied range of forces that have not welcomed his election.

"The people chase me", he boasts, "despite the scandalous bias of the radio and television, the insidious campaigns of the leading papers, the unspoken hostility from the head clergy, the fight against me led by the Islamic Republican Party (in reality by a band of fascist clerics in its midst who wrongfully make use of the Imam Khomeini's name), even despite a political campaign of filthy slanders."

Now fighting has flared up again in Kurdistan between nationalist militants on the one hand, and both the Islamic militia of the Pasderan and units of the state army.

But before seeking to resolve the national question, Bani-Sadr hopes to sweep another obstacle out of his road to power by ending the occupation of the US embassy.



Anti-American demonstration in Tehran

He has already singled out the 'Islamic students' for specific criticism because of their attack on the regime's attendance at the Islamabad Islamic Conference, which they—not incorrectly—characterised as a 'counter-revolutionary conspiracy' to aid the interests of US imperialism.

Outlived usefulness

But the occupation has outlived its usefulness to the Khomeini regime in providing a temporary diversion from the mounting popular opposition to the exploitation and oppression which survived the destruction of the Shah's dictatorship in both the old and many new forms.

Now, in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the presidential elections, the regime must act to destroy this alternative pole of attraction and centre of authority.

Bani-Sadr himself has never made any secret of his opposition to the occupation, and it seems certain, to judge from the information which has been thrown up by the escape of the six US diplomatic staff from Tehran, that leading figures from the Khomeini regime have been involved in constant discussions with the US imperialists through the medium of the Canadian embassy on how to extricate themselves from this embarrassment.

Now the conditions exist for a concerted move to release the hostages in exchange for a patently farcical "enquiry" by the US administration into the history of its crimes against the people of Iran.

Bani-Sadr's opponents have been quick to make advantage of this looming threat, and the Islamic Republican Party has called loudly for the 'Islamic students' to publish every document in their possession so as to

unmask all collaborators with US imperialism, and defeat the conspiracy against themselves and the 'revolution'.

But the president had already stolen their thunder by announcing that he intended to relieve the Ayatollah Khomeini [sic] of the SAVAK records, and then criticising the summary trials and executions of the Shah's agents before they could give information on their accomplices.

"Can it be," he suggested, "that there are people who have infiltrated the revolutionary movement and now fear the publication of the SAVAK documents?"

Leader

Khomeini is a member of the 'Revolutionary Council' and a leader of the Islamic Republican Party.

But the IRP's present tactics expose its desperate crisis. After

its candidate had been forced to withdraw from the elections, the ayatollahs who lead the IRP gave their support to Hassan Habibi, who trailed a miserable 3rd, with less than 5% of the vote.

In an interview with *Le Monde*, Bani-Sadr assessed this result as a defeat for a large section of the high-ranking clergy and argued that the IRP was 'dead from the day of the elections'.

His own plan is clearly to exclude the Islamic clergy from government as an organised force, and this is an essential part of his moves to restructure the state apparatus into an efficient tool.

"The new president will not tolerate the continued existence of decision-making centres other than the State", he proclaimed.

Disbanded

Once the parliamentary elections had been held, the 'Revolutionary Council' would be disbanded. The local 'Islamic committees' would be dissolved as soon as regional government and the police had been reorganised and purified of their imperial past.

The Pasderan themselves would be abolished once the military had been reformed and transformed into a 'truly popular army'.

As for SAVAK, Bani-Sadr declared he would establish an intelligence service which will have as its sole task the gathering and analysis of information, not the hunting down and oppression of citizens.

This ambitious programme will encounter serious opposition from both the right and the left.

The process of constructing a reliable state apparatus will of course involve Bani-Sadr in more than simply an attack on the power of the Islamic clergy: he will also be forced to tackle the organisations of the working class, above all the strike and factory committees which still remain in existence and positions of authority.

Where the new government does not move directly to disband these committees, its aim will be to pervert them into class collaborationist 'joint management committees' with employers and the state.

Bani-Sadr puts himself forward as the champion of the oppressed layers of Iranian society, but his radical petty bourgeois nationalism cannot tolerate the revolutionary challenge posed by the independent class interests of the proletariat.

It is not just the Pasderan that he will seek to disarm but also of course the militants of the Fedayeen and the Mujaheddin.

The Mujaheddin have already experienced a foretaste of the attacks to come from Khomeini's 'spiritual son' when their leader Masoud Rajavi was barred from standing in the presidential elections.

This move—designed to head off the danger of Rajavi drawing massive support from Kurdistan and other areas—possibly even challenging Bani-Sadr himself—led last week to a massive 100,000-strong protest in Tehran.

The Iranian Stalinists of the Tudeh Party have shown what leadership they are prepared to offer Iranian workers in the new struggles to come.

There are already signs of a new, unholy alliance against Bani-Sadr developing between the chief Islamic bigots and the Stalinists.

After the Mujaheddin, Fedayeen and Tudeh party had condemned the Iranian participation in the Islamic Conference, they were joined by the theologians of Qom who warned of the 'Americanisation of Islam'.

This slogan was promptly taken up and brandished with great delight by the Stalinists of the Tudeh Party, who later announced their critical support for Bani-Sadr—but only as long as he followed the uncompromising line of the Imam Khomeini!

Hampered

But in their latest manoeuvres around the reactionary bigots of the Islamic clergy, the Iranian Stalinists will certainly find themselves hampered by their position of support for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Neither the IRP nor Bani-Sadr shares this enthusiasm—though the Iranian resolution to the Islamic conference attempted with a certain ingenuity to maintain a position independent from both 'superpowers' by blaming the US imperialists for creating the conditions in the Middle East which led to the invasion (which itself was strongly condemned).

Tunisian despot under attack

Two years after the general strike and proletarian insurrection which shook its foundations, President Bourguiba's one-party parliamentary dictatorship in Tunisia has suffered another form of violent attack.

Ten days ago, a commando group entered the country from the Western border with Algeria and launched an attack to capture the town of Gafsa.

Their first targets were the military and police headquarters and barracks. The attack seems to have taken the Tunisian armed forces completely by surprise, but after twenty hours of fighting and heavy losses they regained control of the town.

Later, an organisation proclaiming itself the Armed Tunisian Resistance, claimed responsibility for this 'great historic event' which marked the 'starting point of a movement whose final goal is the liberation of our people from the dictatorship of the Destour (Bourguiba's party—the only

legal party in Tunisia) and the neo-colonialist domination of Tunisia'.

The Algerian regime was quick to deny any complicity in the raid, and suspicion swiftly fell on Tunisia's other neighbour, the military dictatorship of Libya.

Algerian involvement had never seemed very likely: relations between the two regimes have grown much closer recently as they have been brought to share an increasing range of common interests by international developments and pressures within their own borders.

Hostility

On the other hand, Gaddafi's regime has moved to a position of deepening hostility to the Destour dictatorship and has long been heavily involved in plotting within the Tunisian opposition, and training armed forces inside Libya.

Indeed at the time of the raid on Gafsa, the Tunisian army was largely massed on the Libyan border to prevent any



Gaddafi

incursion of armed opposition on the second anniversary of the insurrection against Bourguiba.

Once they had entered Gafsa, the Armed Tunisian Resistance force called for

popular support: 'We are from the popular committees and have come to liberate you from a dictatorial regime; here are the arms'.

Their expectations of sparking a rising were based on the objective conditions faced by the Tunisian proletariat.

A new level of harsher repression has been enforced by the dictatorship since the insurrection of February 1978, with large numbers of trade union leaders and militants still serving heavy prison sentences.

Price increases

The recent spate of price increases on essential commodities has intensified the mass working class hostility to the Destour regime led by Prime Minister Nouira.

Gafsa, the centre of a major mining area, has a long history of proletarian struggle—both against French colonial rule and against the petty bourgeois nationalists who have controlled Tunisia since independence.

Large caches of arms have

been discovered by the army in their continuing full-scale military occupation since the raid.

But it seems that though the Armed Tunisian Resistance fighters met with a sympathetic welcome, they were unable to lead any major uprising. Their forces are now scattered, hiding in the country or concealed in the town by supporters.

Bourguiba's regime has survived another violent blow. Its response has been to increase military spending (supposedly against the threat of 'external aggression' that is, a Libyan invasion) and to call on the French imperialists for help—French warships are now patrolling the Tunisian coast.

This show of force would undoubtedly be enough to repel any projected Libyan attack.

But Giscard d'Estaing knows as well as Bourguiba and Nouira that the real threat to the Tunisian dictatorship comes not from the 'socialism' of Gaddafi's dictatorship, but from the might of the Tunisian proletariat and its struggles against oppression and imperialist exploitation.



INTERNATIONAL

Crisis rocks Castro's bureaucracy

By Enrique Alvares

The history of Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba in the last twenty years—in common with that of nearly all other Stalinist regimes—is one of violent and unprepared shifts and lurches in policy.

These lurches have mostly been concerned with the question of incentives to work ('moral' or material), the role of the market and money, and the extent of decentralisation of the state administration.

No solution

The fact that the regime, like its Stalinist peers, has never been able to find a stable solution to these problems reflects the contradictions of bureaucratic rule in a non-capitalist economy.

Though in Cuba in particular the changes are usually made in the name of a struggle against bureaucratism, they always embody the hostility of the bureaucracy to giving up its own privileges and power and to unleashing, politically and economically, the creative power of the working class.

The last few weeks has seen a new upheaval in Cuba which reflects these unsolved problems.

The combination of the sluggishness of the world price of Cuba's main export (sugar), the rapid inflation of import prices, especially oil, along with the perennial bureaucratic deformations of Cuba's internal economic



Castro with brother Raoul administration has meant a resumption in recent months of severe economic austerity in the island after a period in which there had been easier possibilities of obtaining consumer goods.

Political opposition

This is perhaps one of the things which led to a flurry of political opposition to Castro in December and early January.

Correspondents of bourgeois papers have reported the painting of anti-government slogans on walls and

the distribution of leaflets; though none of them report the political content of these.

Whatever that is, the Castro regime has used such developments as a pretext to step up the outward signs of repression.

Havana at the end of last month was reported to be bristling with armed police, and security patrols by the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution were stepped up.

The bureaucracy might have faced another problem

as a result of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

Cuban reaction to this was delayed; and when it came was extremely muted compared with the delirium of joy and enthusiasm usually given in Havana for the actions of the Kremlin.

Though Castro happily connives in Ethiopian genocide in Eritrea, he may still have been a little embarrassed by Moscow's blatant political gangsterism in Afghanistan, particularly because of his chairmanship



Castro in the chair as Tito speaks at the Non-aligned Conference

of the non-aligned conference which he recently dominated with a pro-Soviet line.

The fact that many of the countries which voted with Cuba in the Havana Conference last summer succumbed to imperialist pressure and voted against the Soviet Union in the UN general assembly two weeks ago was one of the factors which accounts for Cuba's cautious approach to the Soviet invasion.

The international and national political pressures seemed to combine with the growing economic difficulties early in January to produce a new shift in the regime's structure and policies.

Without warning, and only three weeks after a significant ministerial reshuffle, Castro suddenly announced a major restructuring of the government. Several ministries were abolished and absorbed into others.

Eleven Cabinet ministers lost their jobs and power was concentrated more than ever in the hands of Castro himself along with the two second most powerful men in the regime—Castro's brother Raul and veteran Cuban Stalinist (a minister in Batista's "popular front" government in the 1940s) Carlos Rafael Rodriguez.

Fidel Castro not only remains the President but also becomes Minister of the Armed Forces, the Interior, Public Health and Culture—a sign that he does not even trust the rest of his top bureaucracy with wielding power, let alone the working class.

This move towards centralisation is the reversal of the direction of policy in the few years since the disaster of the 1970 sugar harvest.

It appears to coincide, however, with a reinforcement rather than a reversal

of the economic policies which have been implemented since that time.

The insistence that all enterprises of the Cuban nationalised economy must show a profit—a new policy introduced in 1975—would logically involve, as we predicted at the time the renewed possibility of unemployment in Cuba.

This appears to be what is happening. And the trend was given a boost a few weeks ago when the head of the planning commission JUCEPLAN (Humberto Perez) urged that 'excess' workers should be sacked. Under a new scheme unemployed workers are to receive 70% of their last wages.

At the same time the bureaucracy is encouraging a new development of the private sector in retail trade and other small scale activities.

This whole approach to alleviating Cuba's economic problems may demonstrate a further reason for Cuba's lukewarm reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan.

The economic 'reforms' were undoubtedly scheduled to culminate in the reestablishment of trade relations between Cuba and the United States—a step which has been under diplomatic preparation by both sides for the last two years.

The development of cold war policies in the United States, however, may now be a serious threat to the lifting of the US embargo on trade—in force since 1961.

So, while for the first time for over ten years, Fidel Castro doesn't seem quite so willing to shine the shoes of Brezhnev, for the first time in even more years unemployed workers have been forced to try to earn a bit of cash by offering to shine the shoes of Castro's bureaucracy on the streets of Havana.

Police invade Euskadi

Adolfo Suarez, the "democratic" Francoist premier in Madrid, has used the ambush of six members of the Spanish Civil Guard, to launch what amounts to an invasion of Euskadi (the Basque country) by thousands of "anti-terrorist" armed police and Civil Guards.

Government statements say that "broad powers" have been bestowed on the police commanders making it clear that a form of martial law and paramilitary occupation of Euskadi has been imposed.

It is in this state of armed occupation by Francoist police that Euskadi approaches the elections due on March 9 for the Basque parliament, established under the recently approved fraudulent Statute of Autonomy.

The pretext used for last week's invasion was the killing of six members of the Civil Guard in an ambush near San Sebastian.

The attack (bringing to 12 the number of the security forces killed this year) bears all the marks of the work of ETA (military).

The two vehicles in which the six Civil Guards were travelling were machine-gunned in such a way that the two civilian drivers were unharmed.

It is this kind of pin-point accuracy of ETA (military)'s political terrorism, which has contributed to the respect which the organisation has in Euskadi.

Contempt

Its renewed campaign takes place, as the Madrid government is only too well aware, in an atmosphere of widespread disillusion and contempt among Basques for Suarez's professions of support for Basque autonomy.

Virtually none of the very limited powers promised to a new "autonomous" Basque government have in fact been devolved.

The absence of any progress on devolved powers has severely embarrassed the bourgeois nationalists of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) to the extent that in order to repair its damaged prestige it has been driven to boycott the Madrid parliament.

The political significance of the new Francoist invasion is immense.

It is such a provocative gesture that it must indicate that the Suarez regime believed that the alternative to such action would have been a military coup.

But the invasion, although carried out in the name of the fight against terrorism, and although Suarez says it does not threaten the agreements about autonomy and the elections,



Suarez

will certainly be regarded by the vast majority of Basques as a vicious attack on their national rights.

It is bound to provoke a new wave of militant mobilisations by the working class and petty-bourgeoisie of Euskadi against Francoist national repression.

At the same time workers in the rest of Spain will be increasingly aware of the real dangers of military coup if Suarez lets up in the slightest on the repressive military occupation of Euskadi.

The most massive mobilisations are now required to demand the end of Francoist police repression in Euskadi and in the rest of Spain and against the dangers of military coup.

*Troops out of Euskadi! Dissolution of the Francoist repressive apparatus!

*Build workers committees to combat any military coup!

*For national self-determination in Euskadi!

*Force the Communist and Socialist Parties to call a general strike against repression in Euskadi and against a military coup!

*For the building of a Trotskyist Party in Spain and Euskadi.

SURPRISE THE TORIES? WE SURPRISED OURSELVES!

We hear of the strike "hardening". What's your comment on that after three weeks?

That's definitely right. You could even say that morale's increasing the longer the strike goes on. We won't go back till we get our just reward—which is at the going rate of inflation, 17-18%.

Last year we accepted 8%, which is what you might call ultra-moderate, so obviously we're still 8% or so down on last year.

Do you feel that the solidity and solidarity that the strike has shown so far has surprised the Tory government?

Definitely. They thought they were going to pick off a weak, right wing union—we've always been very tolerant and moderate as a union.

But things have changed now. Enough is enough.

I think a lot of us might have been less than convinced, less than committed when the strike started. But, as I say, all that's changed now.

Feeling for the strike's gained impetus every day. Surprise the government? Man, we've surprised ourselves.

One of you referred just now to BSC policy for Wales as the rape of the fair country all over again. But this isn't really a national issue, is it?

Of course not. We're internationalists. The Trade Union movement has to be. And you can see that from the tremendous support for the strike from the other European steelworkers.

They're going to stop all handling of steel for British ports in solidarity with our case. After all, they've been having the same problems over there—look at the massive closures in the North of France, and the long steel strike in Germany.

They're going to put a ring of steel around the whole country. And once we get the private sector steel firms out on strike on Sunday, there won't be steel moving anywhere.

Obviously the problem's particularly acute in South Wales though, with the loss of 50,000 jobs being threatened. What's your reaction to the government's chances of providing alternative employment?

Derisory. Nicholas Edwards (Secretary of State for Wales) is going around making speeches about alternative industries.

Let's look at what they are. As you say, the jobs of 50,000 Welsh workers are at risk.

Now listen to this. He's opening a Marshmallow factory in Merthyr that will employ 22 women. Then there's a mothball factory in Cymmer and a gobstopper factory in Glyncoerwg that will employ 178 between them. Marshmallows, mothballs and gobstoppers: it sounds like a bad joke.

But I do know one thing, and I think that all the boys here know it now: if we let BSC and the government put these steel closures into practice, South Wales will be an industrial wasteland.

There'll be nothing here either for this generation or the next one.

What are the chances of a General Strike?

It's on the cards, no doubt about it. The trade union movement has taken enough already with the policies of this govern-

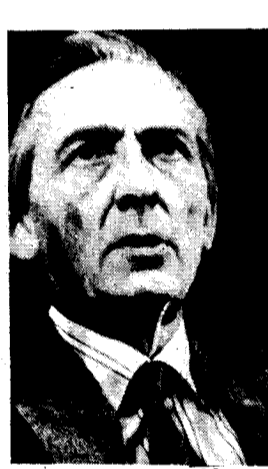
Duncan Bush spoke to a steel striker on the picket line at the Abbey works, BSC, Port Talbot on January 24th. We print the interview here.



Thatcher



Joseph



Murray

PHOTO: Laurence Spatham, IFL

ment. The trouble is, we've got people like Len Murray in charge of things, he doesn't want to rock the boat.

There's been some controversy about the picketing of places like Metal Box at Neath, private sector firms, where the local strike committees have ignored the instructions of the national union leadership not to picket. Could you comment?

It's dead simple: we've got to hit these capitalists in the private sector. You get firms like Metal Box funding the Tory party!

The strike can't be effective under these circumstances: the private sector is squealing about the picketing, but the point is that the ISTC men there ought to be out with us. The leadership is holding that back at the moment.

What do you see as BSC's long-term policy?

These closures in Wales and other places represent the first step in a move to hive off and denationalise the most profitable parts of the steel industry in this country—tinplate and galvanising, for example.

This is the aim of the BSC board of directors backed by Thatcher and Joseph: once they've denationalised these, then they're up for grabs, of course—for private profit.

How then do you view the government's "refusal to intervene"?

That's nonsense, since they're responsible for events in the first place—that's obvious to everyone. Villiers is only their puppet.

He's moving his mouth, but the words come from the government.

I'll tell you one thing: this is the most reactionary, right-wing Tory government we've ever had—including the 20s.

The last few Labour governments we've had weren't good, socialist governments. But they'd never let all this happen.

But is another Labour government, like the ones we've had, the only alternative?

Well, the worst Labour government's got to be better than the Tory party in power. But the last two Labour governments—the Wilson and Callaghan governments—didn't do much for socialism.

I've always been on the left, but I've moved to a more radical position these days—and this is in part a reflection of Labour policy over the last 10 years or so.

(One of the other strikers interjects:) Apparently two million trade unionists voted for Thatcher. That means there must be two million men and women who are feeling very ashamed of themselves by now—I know that because we've never met one who'll admit it yet. (Laughter).

Do you feel, then, that the trade union movement as a whole has learnt something in opposition to this Tory government?

We've learnt a lot. If you look at the situation now: we've got the NUB, the ISTC, the TGWU, the various craft unions, all together in struggle, all working together on the strike committees.

We've got the 100% support of the miners and the railwaymen's unions for the Day of Action the TUC's called for Monday 28 January.

That'll be a demonstration of solidarity, but if things go on the way they are we've got a General Strike scheduled for 10 March.

We're learning fast, we're acting in concert, and it augurs well for the future.

Corby: defending jobs

Corby steelworkers have been out in force on the picket lines since the beginning of the national steel strike.

The men have been determined that all steel movements both in and out of BSC and private manufacturers and stockholders should be stopped.

A strike committee has been set up to co-ordinate pickets and control the plants. Pickets have been extended to Grantham and Leicester's Metal Box factory and also to the docks at Kings Lynn and Boston.

The GMWU and TGWU have given the men full support and the NUR have backed all movements of steel in and out of Corby.

Clearly the attitude of the steelworkers is that the strike is no longer just a matter of wages but a political issue of defending workers' livelihoods against the reactionary Tory government and against those trade union and Labour leaders who have consistently refused to fight against the capitalist attacks.



Steelworkers at the January 28 rally in Cardiff, when 100,000 workers stopped work

IRELAND

The burden of British rule

The people of Ireland—North and South—continue to pay a heavy price for continued British imperialist domination.

Not only do they suffer the outrages and repression of British military rule and the police-state measures against anti-imperialist forces, but they also suffer the worst economic effects of the capitalist slump now tightening its grip on the windpipe of the British economy.

Two surveys last week underlined this problem. The one—drawn up by management consultants Cooper and Lybrand—forecast that unemployment in the six counties would climb to a staggering 17%—nearly three times the current average in Britain.

And another showed that nearly 700 out of 1,000 households surveyed in Belfast were living below the poverty line—as the outcome of unemployment, low wages and other problems.

Such figures indicate that the oppressed people of Northern Ireland are carrying the heaviest burden of the British economic crisis.

To resolve these problems the fight must press ahead for the withdrawal of British troops, the nationalisation without compensation of major industries, banks and landlords North and South, and the establishment of a united, socialist Ireland.

Another victim

A major outcry has developed following the death two weeks ago of Patrick Conlon who was serving a 12-year sentence after being found guilty on conspiracy and explosives charges.

He was arrested when he came to London in December 1974 to help his son Gerard Conlon who had been arrested on suspicion of involvement with the Woolwich and Guildford bombings. Gerard Conlon is now serving 30 years.

Mr Conlon Snr. had always protested his innocence and his supporters, who include Gerry Fitt and Belfast priest Father Faul are campaigning for the clearing of his name.

The campaign has been given fresh impetus by the support which has come from Fr. Vincent McKinley who only last week refused to allow into church the body of IRA member Kevin Delaney who died when a bomb he was transporting blew up on a train.

Support from this quarter demonstrates the breadth of feeling on this issue.

Conlon died from pneumonia after a hunger strike carried out as part of the campaign to clear his name.

At a Requiem Mass held for Conlon last week Fr. McKinley declared emphatically that he was "an innocent man".

He went on to argue that Conlon had been convicted because "Britain needed a scapegoat".

The claims that Willie Whitelaw had decided to release Conlon when he came out of hospital are little use to the dead man or his family.

This case is simply one more in a long line of examples of British brutalisation of the Irish people.

Eight pointers to Benn's reformist 'alternative'

By John Lister

Workers who look to Labour's left wing as a socialist alternative to the discredited policies of the Callaghan leadership would do well to look closely at the kind of policies endorsed recently by Tony Benn.

Benn, of course, as an obedient cabinet minister under both Wilson and Callaghan, played a crucial role in shaping and implementing their programme of class collaboration, wage-cutting and public spending cuts.

But detecting the groundswell of militant opposition to such policies within the broader workers' movement and its reflection in the Labour Party, Benn has shrewdly attempted to separate himself from the Callaghan leadership, and to establish himself as a pillar of 'left' opposition.

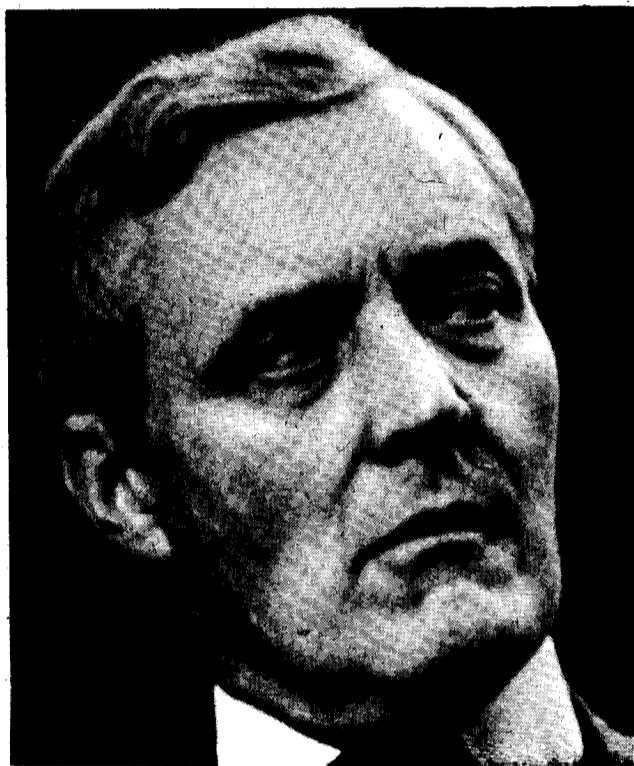
Yet despite the odd radical turn of phrase, Benn remains—as much as Foot or Callaghan—committed to the notion of reforming and transforming capitalism piecemeal, through Parliamentary measures, into a "socialist democracy".

Such reformist politics mean that time and again Benn and his fellow 'lefts' must seek to direct the working class, not towards the strengthening of its independent struggles—the formation of strike committees, occupation committees, councils of action, and the struggle for a General Strike to bring down the Tories—but towards dreams of eventually legislating sweeping reforms.

Thus in the midst of the steelworkers' strike, Benn stood up at a Newspaper Press Fund annual dinner and put forward what he called a "constructive reform programme".

"The present decline of Britain [i.e. British capitalism] is not inevitable," he added, spelling out eight points which he thought were central to reversing it.

*Full employment: this is no more than a utopian pipe dream while the world crisis of the capitalist system continues to force through a break-neck process of rationalisation and increased exploitation in the drive to raise the rate of profit.



Benn

Capitalism is an anarchic system of production which now acts as a fetter on the further development of the productive forces in Britain and on a world scale.

For Benn to talk of "reforms" that could create full employment is to sow the most wild illusions.

The only answer to unemployment is the mobilisation of the working class in defence of all jobs and to struggle for a system of work-sharing on full pay to divide the work available amongst the whole workforce.

Such a solution can only be attained in the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of a planned, socialist economy.

*Re-equipment: Benn calls for North Sea Oil money to be diverted to "modernising, expanding and diversifying" manufacturing industry.

But such "modernisation" is taking place now in whole sections of industry: it replaces workers by modern machinery

and drives up unemployment and the rate of exploitation.

And the expansion of industry is held in check by the world capitalist slump and the low level of profitability in a system that produces goods not to satisfy social needs but simply to accumulate capital.

*Planned trade: Benn calls for measures to "protect our industries while they are being re-equipped".

This is simply a disguised version of the Labour 'lefts' old nationalist policy of import controls, which seek to "protect" jobs in British industry at the expense of jobs overseas.

As some of the most reactionary elements of the employers in Britain and steel bosses in the USA clamour more loudly for the self-same policy, the 'left wing' defenders of import controls find themselves therefore in an unholy alliance with sections of their "own" capitalist class against the international working class.

*Industrial democracy: a

resurrection of the attempts to suck trade union bureaucrats and shop stewards into management that were spearheaded by Benn while he was Industry Secretary during the first years of the Wilson government.

Among the bitter fruits of this policy were the "workers' participation" set-up brought into British Leyland under the Ryder Plan, and the "worker directors" who have helped ram home successive closures in the steel and shipbuilding industries.

Socialists fight not for a hand in implementing management decisions, but for the development of independent working class bodies to impose control over management, and ensure that basic rights, conditions and jobs are defended.

*Expansion in the public services: another Benn-style fantasy if separated from the struggle for the overthrow of the Tory government and the crisis-ridden capitalist system, which requires a frontal attack on the living standards of the working class.

Benn includes here not even a reference to the nationalisation of the profitable suppliers, contractors and bankers that feed off the public services: he merely looks forward to an expansion in these industries creating new jobs!

*A return to self-government: Benn here calls for at least a partial break from the EEC, but focusses not on the international struggle to smash this anti-working class bloc of European capitalists, but simply on the patriotic issues of British

sovereignty, the power of the House of Commons, and the right to levy taxes.

*A fairer society: ignoring the record of the Labour government of which he was a leading member, which increased the gap between rich and poor in Britain, and slashed workers' living standards, Benn calls vaguely for a "more open, more democratic and more tolerant society".

But equality and genuine democracy for the mass of the population can only come on the basis of a material change in class society—the expropriation of the wealth and means of production at present monopolised by a tiny few, and the development of a socialist society under the management of the working class.

*The right to be heard: Benn's old populist moan about the Tory press is transformed into an abstract call for "better ways of communicating with each other".

Yet such a change requires a struggle against the absolute power of the press barons, for workers' control over the press and mass media and, of course, for the expropriation of this key section of industry.

Only through such policies can the working class achieve any meaningful "right to be heard".

In consistently, on every point, directing away from the necessary fight and towards Parliamentary reforms within capitalism, Benn, like his fellow 'lefts', shows his inability to offer the necessary consistent political alternative to the Callaghan-Healey leadership.

The invisible MPs

Socialist Press readers and Labour Party activists might be interested to probe the exploits of Jim Tinn, MP for Redcar, and Arthur Bottomley, Middlesbrough Teeside MP.

Tinn's non-appearance in the steel strike has caused many steel workers to ask where is this union-sponsored MP?

He has certainly not been found on any of the numerous picket lines in Cleveland.

His party branch has remained remarkably quiet over this, in contrast to Guisborough, where Socialist Press supporters won a vote to support the strike and hand over the local premises to the steelworkers to coordinate activity.

Perhaps Mr Tinn might be asked about the allegations about Bottomley being a stockholder in Redman's a Teeside steel firm who aren't on strike as yet, but where seven ISTC members have been arrested trying to stop private steel getting in or out.

Whatever else happens, there must be an investigation into Mr Tinn and Mr Bottomley's non-activity with their striking electorate.

PRESS GANG



Labour's right wing weigh their options

While the press and mass media rumble on in their efforts to blow the smouldering witch-hunt against the Militant group into the flames of a public heretical burning, the question most taxing Labour's right wing is 'who can replace Callaghan?'

He has already clearly hinted that he will duck out of the firing line at the end of this Parliamentary session.

And if he is to be replaced under existing Labour Party rules, and run no risk of his successor being elected by any other than the right wing-led Parliamentary Labour Party, then indeed he must go in the next 18 months.

Lack-lustre

But his potential successors are all such lack-lustre performers that there appears



Callaghan

no obvious candidate who could impose the necessary authoritarian grip on the Party in order to crush the mounting swell of socialist opposition from the ranks.

Particularly worrying for the right wing must be the fact that the Party is undergoing an influx of thousands of new members, radicalised by the attacks of the Tory government, and looking to Labour as a means to fight back.

While by no means all such new recruits will be ready-made left wingers, there is little hope that they are joining to help bolster the flagging support of the right wing leadership.

It is the context of this crisis for Labour's right wing that we must view last week's announcement that the extreme right wing Social Democratic Alliance intends to stand 15 candidates against Labour in the next General Election.

The SDA, scenting defeat for the right wing in the inner-party power fight, is attempting to prepare a reactionary "centre" ground from which it can invite right wingers such as Shirley Williams, William Rodgers and Neville Sandelson, to split from Labour and wage an open battle against the organised working class.

Whether Labour's crypto-Tory right are willing to take such a desperate political gamble will depend on developments in the months leading up to this year's Party conference.

Fusilier Stuart Smith-Blaine has been given "a severe telling off" by the army but has been assured that he still has a good career ahead of him.

The soldier's picture was splashed across the front pages of most of the national press last week for hanging from a lamp post, screaming abuse and giving V signs to the Sinn Fein-organised Bloody Sunday Commemoration March in Birmingham.

For the press he was a symbol of resistance to 'terrorism'—a good honest squaddie who let his enthusiasm run away with him.

Bloody Sunday was forgotten. The Birmingham pub bombings resurrected in all its hideous carnage. (The Provos have consistently denied responsibility for the bombing and the trial was a blatant frame-up).

But the story of Fusilier Smith-Blaine did not start on that Saturday.

For the previous week ATV had been carefully building up a witch-hunt against the march. Interviews were held with relatives and injured victims of the bombing—including one with Smith-Blaine's sister (who was one of the injured) and who said she would not be going on the march but she could understand those who would.

The counter-demonstrators were then portrayed by the press as a "spontaneous" opposition to the march.

In fact almost all the counter-demonstrators were members or supporters of the NF or one of its split offshoots.

An interview with Smith-Blaine's mother in the Daily Mail firmly located the family, given so much space, as part of this fascist periphery.

Mrs Smith-Blaine told the Mail that he had put on "the

uniform he was so proud of" to go for a lunchtime drink with his friends and had promised not to go near the march. (Presumably a fusilier's uniform makes it easier to order drinks).

She went on: "He has some sympathy with the National Front, I suppose we all have. At least they opposed this event..."

"We can understand how he felt. Some of the demonstrators scoffed and spat at his uniform".

The appearance of this soldier in uniform amongst the fascists has undoubtedly not harmed his 'career'.

Pedigree

Such a pedigree will no doubt stand him in good stead when he goes on his 'peace keeping' tours of Northern Ireland.

The Peter Simple column of the Daily Telegraph was of a like mind to the Smith-Blaines as to the virtues of fascist thugs.

After saying that the march ought to have been banned, the column remarks: "You see members of bodies like the National Front, whatever else may be said about them, are at least on the side of this country as a country."



MAKERS OF MODERN

MARXISM

A new
occasional
series

2. Karl Korsch

In 1923, two theoretical works appeared which shook the Third International and have continued to cause controversy to this day.

The first was *History and Class Consciousness*, by the Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs; the second, now lesser known, was *Marxism and Philosophy*, by one of the most prominent members of the German Communist Party (KPD), Karl Korsch.

Both books sprang from the massive upsurge of revolutionary working class activity which characterised the years following the first imperialist world war.

The Second International, sunk in the most craven reformism and revisionism, clinging in theory to an ossified 'orthodox Marxism' while betraying in practice all working class militancy, appeared to be dead and buried; and a new period of revolutionary advance and defeat called for a renewal of revolutionary theory.

Hegelian

Both Korsch and Lukacs found that theory in 'Hegelian Marxism'—in a return to what they considered the truly dialectical, historical thrust of what Marx had learned from the German philosopher Hegel, as against the mechanical, dogmatic nature of Second International orthodoxy.

The unity of theory and practice demanded by both Korsch and Lukacs, then, can be seen above all in their own writing, based as it is in the political experience of the proletariat of their time.

In his philosophical writings, Hegel had emphasised the dialectical interaction of 'subject' and 'object' in history and the related dialectic of theory and practice.

For him, as an idealist philosopher, 'subject' meant 'Absolute Spirit', and 'object' its self-realisation in history; but it is not hard to re-write such ideas in Marxist terms.

Working class

'Subject' then becomes the working class, which seizes the 'object' (capitalist society) and transforms it into the means of its own self-realisation.

What such a theory restores is a recognition of the active, practical nature of the class, which grasps history and refashions it in its own image.

It also revives the funda-



Revolutionary German soldiers in 1919—the placards denounce Social Democrats Ebert and Schiedemann

of the proletariat. For Hegel, 'Absolute Spirit' develops by *negating* actual society; it is the *antithesis* of all that appears to be real.

If 'Absolute Spirit' is translated into 'working class', its utter opposition to actual society becomes clear: its very 'essence' consists in 'cancelling' capitalism.

For Hegel also, theory or philosophy is no more than the expression of the movement of history.

Theory is no more than practice becoming conscious of itself. Once again, 'subject' (thought) and 'object' (practice) are interdependent.

Theory and practice

It is easy to see how this too can be re-written in Marxist terms, as the unity of theory and practice.

If a return to Hegel allowed Korsch and Lukacs to launch a powerful assault on Second International orthodoxy, it also ran them into a good many problems.

For it is clearly absurd to think that you can merely 'translate' a full-blooded idealist like Hegel into materialist terms.

To see the working class as a 'subject', actively creating history, is to risk reducing it to some single metaphysical essence, ignoring its complex material conditions and unevennesses.

For Hegel, the subject creates history; for Marxism, it does so only within the constraints of

concrete material conditions.

The 'dialectical materialism' of Hegelian Marxism, as we shall see in the case of Karl Korsch, is therefore likely to be more dialectical than materialist.

Nor is it true to claim that theory, for Marxism, is no more than the 'expression' or 'reflection' of practice.

Marxist theory is not simply the self-consciousness of the revolutionary working class: for that revolutionary self-consciousness can itself only be formed, as Lenin insisted in *What Is To Be Done?* by the intervention from 'outside' of Marxist theory itself.

Marxist theory must develop in the closest possible relation to the practical struggles of the revolutionary masses, as Lenin also insisted; but it cannot be reduced to the consciousness of those struggles, which will in any case always be uneven.

Reflection

There is no sense in which the theory of surplus value in Marx's *Capital* can be said to be merely a 'reflection' of revolutionary struggles, even though it is clearly worthless unless it is put to the service of such struggles.

We see here how the theoretical assumptions of Hegelian Marxism can lead to fatal political consequences.

For if Marxist theory is

equivalent to revolutionary consciousness, what becomes of the role of the revolutionary party? Either it is superfluous, or the party is no more than an 'expression' or 'elaboration' of revolutionary consciousness—in which case the *dialectical* relation between party and class is completely ruptured.

Ultra-leftism

Another fatal political consequence which may flow from Hegelian Marxism is ultra-leftism.

For if the working class is seen as Hegel's 'negation' then it is possible to act politically on this assumption regardless of the actual material conditions and state of consciousness of the class itself.

The concrete working class is reduced to a mere counter in some metaphysical scheme of history: it is the 'idea' of the class, not its reality, which is at stake.

The political career of Karl Korsch graphically illustrates some of these points. After the suppression of the Spartacist uprising in Berlin (1919) and the Munich soviet (1919), Korsch, like Antonio Gramsci, was a leading theoretician of the widespread movement for workers' councils.

But whereas Gramsci learnt from the defeat of the councils the urgent necessity for revolutionary leadership, Korsch placed much less emphasis on the importance of the party.

Instead, he turned his attention to the problem of uniting theory and practice, of which *Marxism and Philosophy* was the major product.

Denounced as a revisionist at the Comintern's Fifth World Congress of 1924, Korsch moved into increasing opposition to the official Communist movement.

After a prominent career in the KPD (he was Communist Minister of Justice in the Thuringian government of 1923, and later one of the leaders of the party's left faction), Korsch was expelled from the party in 1926 for denying that capitalism had stabilised, demanding renewed emphasis on workers' councils, and criticising Soviet foreign policy for accommodation with world capitalism.

Independent

For two years he maintained an independent left group, which supported the Russian 'workers opposition' but opposed the Left Opposition led by Trotsky.

In 1927 the Left Opposition officially dissociated itself from Korsch's positions on the Soviet Union.

Exiled from Germany in 1933 by the victory of Nazism, Korsch produced his second major work, *Karl Marx* (1938); from 1936 to his death in 1961 he lived in the United States, finally abandoning Marxism alto-

gether at the height of the Cold War.

Korsch's political development, then, was from ultra-leftism to reactionary disillusion.

He refused to recognise the conclusions of Lenin and Trotsky in the period after 1921: that the tide of immediate revolutionary opportunities had ebbed, that international capitalism had won itself a breathing space, and that the Communist Parties, rather than dwindling their forces in adventurist coups which lacked mass support, must turn patiently to the task of building a united front with reformist working class organisations.

No setbacks

This blindness was related to the nature of his view of Marxism. For Hegel the subject can know no real set-back: as the essence of universal Reason, unfolds inexorably through out history, cancelling the obstacles in its path.

Trotsky, in contrast, denounced such an idea in 1921 as a mechanistic misinterpretation of the Marxist approach to history: mankind had not always and inevitably moved upward, but had

From the 1920s to the 1960s, contributions to Marxist thought by thinkers indifferent or hostile to the revolutionary heritage of Marxism. From George Lukacs to Antonio Gramsci to Herbert Marcuse, a 'Marxist' theory has been developed to receive full critical evaluation by themselves.

How are the Stalinist these writers to be weighed contributions to Marxist

In this series, Terry of the theorists named a full evaluation of their



Soviets spanned Germany

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Armed workers took control of the streets of Berlin at the end of 1918

related to the end of the
revolutionary epoch of the
European bourgeoisie,
whose political hopes that
philosophy embodied.

The heir to Hegel was
Marxism—but Marxism is in
that sense not itself a philo-
sophy, but the inheritor of
philosophy.

In the hands of Marx and
Engels, Marxism is, indissol-
ubly, a scientific analysis
and a revolutionary critique:
but just as Hegelian philo-
sophy fragmented and
degenerated once the bour-
geoisie had passed from its
heroic revolutionary phase,
so Marxism declines into
dogmatism in the Second
International, given the
defeats of the proletariat
from 1848 onwards.

Supplement

And once Marxism has
been thus reduced, it seems
possible to 'supplement' it
with scraps of bourgeois
philosophy: thus it is not
unusual to find Second
International Marxists who
are, privately, followers of
idealists like Kant or
Schopenhauer.

To this extent, Korsch's
critique follows upon

Lenin's own onslaught
against neo-Kantian and
other petty-bourgeois
'Marxists' in *Materialism
and Empirio-Criticism*.

To this extent, but to no
other. For Lenin's own
philosophical writings
receive quite as much of a
savaging in Korsch's hands
as do those of the reformists
and 'orthodox' Marxists.

In a postscript to
Marxism and Philosophy,
written in 1930 after his
expulsion from the KPD,
Korsch fiercely attacks
Lenin's interpretation of
dialectical materialism as
fatally mechanistic.

In stressing materialism—
that the material object is
prior to and independent of
the subject—Lenin, Korsch
claims, sacrifices dialectics,
ignoring the dialectical
unity of subject and object
involved in the act of know-
ledge.

Knowledge becomes
merely a passive mirror of
social reality. In conse-
quence, theory is divided
from practice: theory
becomes an abstract dis-
covery of truths which it is
up to practice to 'apply' in
reality.

The political result,
Korsch argues, is ideological
dogmatism and dictatorship.

Korsch's wild charges
against Lenin must be
placed in their political
context.

As a dissident left-wing
member of the KPD, he fell
victim to the process of
'Bolshevisation' of the Com-
munist Parties undertaken
by Stalin in the aftermath
of Lenin's death, which was
indeed a matter of dogmat-
ism and dictatorship.

Dogmatism

But his own Hegelian
understanding of dialectical
materialism led him inevit-
ably to read back this ideol-
ogical dogmatism into the
work of Lenin himself.

It is quite true, as Korsch
perceived, that a naive, dis-
astrously undialectical
theory of knowledge was
current in certain quarters
of the Communist move-
ment.

The notion that truth
consists in a simple 'copy-
ing' or 'photographing' of
the object by the mind, if
this is taken to deny the
necessary activity of the
mind in knowing the
process of change which
produces the object (what
Marx called 'practical con-
sciousness'), is indeed no
more than a variant of bour-

geois empiricism.

But Korsch himself,
under the influence of
Hegel, reacts in the opposite
direction: there are points
in *Marxism and Philosophy*
where 'dialectics' seems to
have abolished the distinc-
tion between subject and
object altogether. (Not sur-
prisingly, since for Hegel
himself that distinction is at
root unreal).

In this way Korsch's
valuable insistence against
mechanical dualism keels
over into an assault on
materialism itself.

The source of Korsch's
error lies in a confusion of
dialectical materialism and
historical materialism which
is characteristic of the
Hegelian-Marxist tradition.

He accuses Lenin of
examining the relation
between subject and object
only 'from an abstract epis-
temological standpoint',
rather than as an historical
phenomenon, as a question
of the actual ideological
superstructure.

But this is to run
together two issues which
for Marxism are related but
distinct.

Situations

Dialectical materialism—
'Marxist philosophy'—quite
properly considers such
problems in an epistemolog-
ical way; *historical materi-
alism* examines the actual
relations between 'con-
sciousness' and 'social being'
in concrete historical situa-
tions.

It is Korsch's Hegelian
view of the relations
between theory and prac-
tice which enables him to
make this confusion.

We have seen that, for
Hegelian Marxism, theory is
no more than practice
becoming conscious of
itself; it has no 'relative
autonomy' of the historical
movement, of which it is
reduced to a mere expres-
sion.

Thus, in criticising the
'orthodox' Marxism of the
Second International, Korsch
objects that Marxism in
this phase was not a true
theory, in the sense of being
'nothing other than a general
expression of the real histor-
ical movement' (a quotation he

*Epistemology: the branch of
philosophy dealing with the
study of the nature of know-
ledge, its origin, foundations,
limits and validity.*

takes from Marx), but is
instead an 'ideology' impor-
ted dogmatically from out-
side.

Korsch is correct to see
that the Second Internation-
al was indeed crippled by a
dualistic separation between
'philosophy' and practice:
the one was a set of lifeless
dogmas held in almost total
isolation from the other, (as
Kautsky's work most vividly
illustrates).

Defeat

And he is right too to
grasp the political deter-
minants of this fact: the
defeat of working class
insurgency. But his only
alternative to such dualism
is a *reduction* of theory to
history, dialectical materi-
alism to historical materi-
alism: a *monism*.

The terms on which he
can criticise the Second
International for importing
theory from the outside are
also precisely the terms in
which he will go on to
attack Leninism.

Korsch's mistake can also
be seen in his insistence that
Marxism is not a philo-
sophy. By this he means not
only that it breaks with
bourgeois philosophy; he
means that it breaks with
philosophy as such.

The early work of Marx
and Engels, he considers in
Karl Marx, was still affected
by philosophical influences;
but the later Marx goes on
to break definitively with
all philosophy, replacing it
with scientific socialism. (In
this view, Korsch in some
ways interestingly prefigures
one of the major theses of
the contemporary Stalinist
theorist, Louis Althusser).

Objective

Marxism is not a philo-
sophy, Korsch claims,
because for it theory has no
autonomous existence
outside the objective move-
ment of history.

No *autonomous* exist-
ence, true; but, once again,
this does not mean that
Marxist theory is *nothing
more* than the reflection of
real history in the brains of
men and women.

Korsch's ultra-leftism
extends not only to politics;
it reaches to Marxist philo-
sophy itself.

What is impressive about
Marxism and Philosophy,
however, is that despite its
insistence that Marxism
'transcends' philosophy, it
takes philosophy itself
extremely seriously.

By 'philosophy' here he
means actual ideological
systems; and Korsch is
properly scathing in his
attack on those Second
International theorists for
whom such systems are
somehow 'unreal', mere
'illusions' or figments which
will wither away once the
mode of production is revol-
utionised.

Korsch, on the contrary,
never underestimates the
stubbornness and tenacity of
such systems, their reality as
a *material force* and their
power to resist changes in
the economic base.

In this, once again, he is
a forerunner of some of the
most productive contem-
porary work on the nature
of ideological institutions in
class society.

Like Georg Lukacs,
whose work will be
examined in a subsequent
article, Karl Korsch acutely
raises the problem of the
relationship between Marx
and Hegel.

Clarify

It is a relationship which
has yet to be fully clarified
within Marxist theory: how
far did Marx remain an
Hegelian (as the quotation
from him used by Korsch
above might suggest), how
far does historical materi-
alism break definitively with
Hegel's method and system?

In *Marxism and Philoso-
phy*, Korsch writes that
Marx and Engels:

"only problem was how
to change the Hegelian dial-
ectic from a method proper
to a superficially idealist,
but secretly materialist con-
ception of the world, into
the guiding principle of an
explicitly materialist view of
history and society".

Whether things are quite
as simple as that can be
legitimately doubted:
Korsch's own theory and
politics stand as living testi-
mony to the truth that
idealism is not to be so
easily discarded.



1918-19 revolution

NEXT ARTICLE:
WALTER
BENJAMIN

Trotsky: architect of the Red Army

By Phil French

Part Two

Trotsky built the Red Army by conscious application of Marxism to the situation where an impoverished and exhausted Russia faced the armed might of imperialism—weakened by war it is true, but possessing all the advanced industrial technology which Russia lacked.

The old Tsarist army had no will to fight and had in effect demobilised, the peasants who formed the vast majority of soldiers returning to the land.

Trotsky completed this demobilisation of the old army when he was appointed Commissar for War in March 1918 and turned to the problem of building the Red Army.

He realised that he had to start with a volunteer Red Army and called for the most self sacrificing factory workers and poor peasants to form the nucleus.

In April 1918 a decree was introduced for compulsory military training of workers and poor and middle peasants in preparation for conscription at a later date.

Bourgeois elements in the towns, and kulaks (rich peasants) in the countryside were not allowed to undergo training or possess arms.

The first call-up of workers from the Moscow region occurred in June 1918 and was followed by conscription in other areas.

Trotsky realised that to defeat counter-revolution and the armed intervention of imperialism, a regular trained and disciplined Red Army was needed.

Guerrilla bands, while perhaps useful in harassing an occupying army, were useless for consolidating Soviet power and forcing back imperialism.

The Red Army needed a

Review of "The Military Writings and Speeches of Leon Trotsky", Vol. 1, "How the Revolution Armed", published by New Park Publications, price £10.

centralised command structure with military specialists, appointed because of their technical skill.

An army with elected officers who had no specialist training could not win major battles. Since there were no trained Red Officers, Trotsky made use of officers of the former Tsarist armies.

Opposed

The vast majority of these officers were opposed to Soviet power, but in fact a number of them came forward to run military training schools, and to take command of armies.

Some officers undoubtedly took command positions in order to try and betray Red forces to the Whites, but some gave their services for motives of patriotism, wanting employment in their chosen profession, or even because they had been impressed by the discipline and moral authority of Soviet power.

Indeed some of the more conservative military specialists became in time loyal Red officers.

To prevent desertion or betrayal by military specialists, a political commissar was appointed to each army unit.

The military specialist (commander) was to make decisions about purely military matters, but political control was in the hands of the commissar.

Responsible

Both commander and commissar were responsible for discipline in the army and would have to face severe penalties in the event of betrayal or disorganised retreat.

Trotsky called for the most ruthless discipline to be applied to disloyal commanders and commissars. Indeed a number of those who betrayed were shot.

A further measure to prevent betrayals by officers was to introduce a register of families



Trotsky (centre) in conference with Frunze, Bela Kun, Rosmer and Gusev in the Civil War

who could be taken hostage in the event of betrayal.

Harshest discipline of all was reserved for Communists who betrayed the struggle.

Local Soviets were ordered to stand and fight against the invading White armies.

Trotsky forged the Red Army with inspiration and harsh discipline. He carried the fight behind enemy lines and into opposing armies. Appeals were made to rank and file Cossacks, Czechoslovaks, soldiers of White armies and invading armies to change sides and support Soviet power.

At all times Trotsky considered the Red Army not as purely a Russian army but an army of the international working class.

Conflict

Trotsky's policies came into conflict with certain backward layers in the working class and

peasantry and this found its own reflection in the Red Army and in the Bolshevik Party and the Soviets.

In particular there was opposition to the employment of military specialists and to the centralised command structure of the army.

Conservative

This reluctance was understandable with backward layers of workers and peasants, but in the Bolshevik Party and the Soviets it represented a conservative and bureaucratic layer.

Trotsky's letter entitled "Scientifically or Somehow" included in this volume illuminates this point clearly. It was no accident that Stalin and Voroshilov in command of the Tenth Army at Tsaritsyn (later Stalingrad) were opposed to Trotsky's policy and tried to sabotage his overall orders.

They were to become the Soviet bureaucrats, later to destroy nearly all the leaders of the October Revolution and decimate the leadership of the Red Army.

But Trotsky at this point still had the support of Lenin, who said:

"Show me another man able to organise almost a model army within a single year and win the respect of military experts. We have such a man".

Trotsky's military writings are essential reading. They will be a powerful weapon in our struggle to reconstruct the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution on a democratic centralist basis.

Of course in their introduction the Workers Revolutionary Party claim that they and the International Committee are carrying on the struggle begun by Trotsky.

This does not of course square with their present policy of adapting to petty bourgeois governments and movements in the Middle East, Africa, Nicaragua, etc.

But despite this, New Park Publications and the translator Brian Pearce have done a tremendous service to the working class movement in making this work available. I look forward eagerly to the other four volumes.

Phoenix Stories

Ernie Stubbins reviews 'Phoenix Stories', published by the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers, 'E' Floor, Milburn House, Dean St., Newcastle-on-Tyne, price 50p.

'Phoenix Stories' is an anthology of children's writings from the Phoenix School in East London.

It is published by the Federation of Worker Writers and Community Publishers to commemorate the work of Blair Peach as a teacher at Phoenix before his murder by the SPG last year.

Over recent years there has been a growing movement of worker writers, cutting through the constraints imposed by the decaying imperialist culture on the ability of the working class to express itself openly.

Many of the growth points in this cultural development have been in the collapsing inner cities of London, Liverpool and Manchester.

Part of the impetus behind the movement comes from a growing concern among workers for their own history, and many worker writers became involved through local history projects.

Autobiography

There is now a substantial body of independently produced workers' autobiography, which give vivid insight into work conditions and

workers' attitudes over the last 60 or 70 years.

The other main strand in the movement starts at the other end of the age scale.

Teachers like Blair Peach and Christopher Searle have made use of the facilities of the school to create an audience for children's writing in the local community, building the children's self confidence in ways which good exam results cannot achieve, and which the education system seems designed to avoid.

'Phoenix Stories' is a collection from some of Peach's pupils. Its recurrent theme is the way in which living conditions in East London, particularly high rise housing, destroy human relationships.

Spiky

The writing and drawings are sharp and spiky and have a very direct method of expression. For readers not yet acquainted with the worker writers movement this volume would make an excellent and refreshing introduction.

Any profits from the volume will be given to the Blair Peach Memorial Fund.



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Labour movement must probe police violence

By Jeff Harris

The ever-increasing political pretensions of police chiefs were outlined in issue 157 of *Socialist Press* ("Keep off the Streets").

But such ultra-right wing leadership is bound to give full licence to the most vicious and backward among the police rank and file, men and women who are already by definition the most effectively brainwashed and least class-conscious of all workers.

In recent weeks the case of Jimmy Kelly, battered to death by Merseyside police, has crystallised many of the central issues.

Last week an extremely important development took place when Liverpool Trades Council decided to organise a conference on the Kelly murder and numerous other allegations of brutality against the Merseyside police.

"Neutrals"

The importance of this initiative is that it gives a lead to a labour movement investigation of the police at a time when these noble blue-uniformed "neutrals" are being prepared to spearhead direct physical assaults on workers through the anti-union laws.

But no enquiry or conference can possibly succeed by concentrating on one particular incident or one particular aspect of the role of the police.

Jimmy Kelly was beaten and kicked to death in front of several witnesses who saw what happened from windows overlooking the waste-ground where the police "arrested" him.

None of the witnesses were asked to give evidence to the police "inquiry".

In November 1978 Jimmy McGeowan was brutally battered to death in a Glasgow police station. An eye-witness account by a young recruit implicating the duty sergeant was ignored.

Probably the best known case in recent years was that of Liddel Towers, a Geordie who died in hospital having never recovered from internal injuries inflicted during his arrest and questioning.

The coroner's verdict was the astounding "justifiable homicide".

Mind you, Towers was a fit and healthy sportsman; not like Norman Barr from Barrow, whom police were informed was suffering from a fatal disease when he was arrested. Barr was shaken and slapped so severely that he died.

Scot free

His brother is now serving two years after assaulting the policeman who killed his brother. That policeman is still walking scot free.

Such cases must be seen in conjunction with the record of the SPG in recent years, whose clubbing to death of Blair Peach was an openly political killing, and the shadowy "riot squad"—the bunch of professional goons used to smash up prison riots (such as the one at Wormwood Scrubs last year when over 30 prisoners were hospitalised).

In addition, lurking beneath the more publicised incidents are many more examples of direct brutality or vicious negligence.



For instance, we are constantly told that the home is the most common place of accidental death. Not true. Proportionately many more people die of "accidental causes" in a police station than in the home.

And since most home accidents involve poisoning, fire and asphyxiation, which are not normally sources of danger in custody, serious questions must be raised about the accuracy of such coroner's verdicts.

Another statistical let-out is the 'open verdict'—in other words the police cannot produce sufficient evidence about how someone died in their own custody.

There were fifteen such incidents recorded between January 1970 and June 1979 alone. In the same period a total of 62 people suffered "death by misadventure", usually hypothermia or suffocation in their own vomit.

"Natural causes"

Many more deaths in police custody are ascribed to "natural causes".

One such was Ronald Blair, arrested by Gateshead police (those involved in the Towers murder) early in 1979.

Blair died from a heart

attack—officially. But his heart attack might just have had something to do with the four fractured ribs he received in between his arrest and being taken to hospital.

There is also the question of deaths after release from custody, of which it is very difficult to compile figures.

Charade

On average four people a day go through the ridiculous charade of filing official complaints against the police for assault.

The total lack of police accountability is shown by the fact that last year the Police Complaints Board heard over 13,000 cases of various kinds. In only 15 did they recommend disciplinary action!

Occasionally the police force, for the sake of appearances, purges its most openly corrupt members.

The present "Operation Countryman" is one example, where up to 70 Metropolitan pillars of society are implicated in running a "firm" involved in robbery, fraud and appropriation of stolen property.

Three years ago the entire night-shift of a police sub-division in Northumbria was

done for a series of burglaries.

Such pantomimes are staged purely to divert attention from the real issues and amount to little more than giving Hitler a parking ticket outside a concentration camp.

Now we are told that there is to be a Parliamentary enquiry into deaths in police custody—a move welcomed by the Tribune MPs like Meacher and Cryer who have agitated around the Kelly case.

Such an enquiry can do nothing and will lead nowhere. The Labour Party's hypocrisy on the whole question stands condemned in the person of Harold Wilson, posing naugly with the relations of Jimmy Kelly whilst musing on his own record of using the police to smash up workers' struggles.

Political murder

We in the Workers Socialist League support the Liverpool Trades Council conference.

But such an event cannot be a one-off thing. Any death at the hands of the forces of the state is a political murder.

The last TUC conference overwhelmingly carried a resolution calling for the disbanding of the SPG; but what has the TUC actually done about it

in the form of workers' defence squads.

The formation of such squads must be seen as very much on the agenda in the coming period.

The Thatcher government has shown in its immediate granting of huge pay rises for the police and army what tactics it will resort to when the major confrontation with the working class occurs.

And the question of which side of the barricades the Labour Party and trade union leaders will be on is given a clear answer in the use of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, introduced under Labour and now a major weapon in the state's armoury.

4,350 arrests have now been made under the PTA in five years (leading to a total of only 46 charges actually under the Act).

To the reformists and the civil liberties lobby there is no connection between the detention of a working class Catholic youth and the murder of Jimmy Kelly.

State

But such mass arrests and such murders are not isolated "excesses"; they are the direct consequence of the bourgeois state's use of trained and armed bands of men and women to defend capitalism in all its forms.

At the moment in Britain the police force is simply showing that it has the utmost ruthlessness and that it is a law unto itself.

It also has the necessary conscious political leadership within its own ranks. In this context the liberal reformist cry for greater accountability is simply dangerous naivety.

We fight for the democratic demand of full accountability only as a means of raising the political questions involved.

Starting with the SPG, the entire police machine must be disbanded and replaced by workers' defence squads.

The building of such squads can, only proceed from the struggle to link up battles on jobs, wages and the cuts through councils of action.

WOMAN

Women's paper of the Workers Socialist League.

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Civil Service pay danger

Unless a principled leadership emerges shortly in the two main Civil Service unions, the pay struggle for 1980 will turn into a charade of posturing from the union leaders and a shameful sell-out.

At a badly publicised and poorly-attended meeting of members of CPSA and SCPS in Leeds in January as part of a national series of meetings, Stalinist Peter Palmer of the SCPS executive spoke uninspiringly of the present and future cuts in public services and in the civil service.

He then proceeded to recite the claims of between 20-25% for which his union is supposed to be fighting with the enthusiasm of one reading out his telephone bill!

The CPSA speaker detailed his hopes for the clerical grades in the light of the union's assess-

ment of the PRU comparability findings.

Perceptive listeners who pointed out the disparity between the hoped-for rises of £10 per week for the lowest grades and £2,000 per year for the top executives and suggested that flat-rate increases would help to unite both unions in a common struggle were given short shrift as the leaders of both unions refused to be moved from their adherence to the fraudulent Pay Research method of bargaining.

Manipulation

Even when it was pointed out how Pay Research rides on the backs of unions who actually fight for their increases, and is open to manipulation and distortion from the government to prevent civil servants' pay keeping pace with inflation, the leadership proved itself determined not to break from the

system.

Palmer even suggested that the members refuse to fight for a pay increase unless it has the PRU seal of approval!

And this at a time when the cost of housing, fuel and transport alone are outstripping the proposed increases!

Such was the despondency engendered by this spectacle that the few left at the end of the meeting did not even feel themselves capable of pledging themselves to a fight against the government's proposed cash limits of 14%.

Unless the call is raised immediately for flat-rate increases across the board that are protected from inflation by index linking to a working class cost of living index, civil servants will continue to be led down the blind alley of Pay Research.

Victimised spark speaks out

Would you give *Socialist Press* some details of your victimisation at Vosper S.R. in Southampton?

Yes. I'd already been unemployed for two years before applying as a 'spark' at Vospers in 1972. Management were opposed, and it took industrial action by the electricians to get me in.

Since then I've been a steward in the EETPU, fighting the employer and their stooges within our union.

Last year, Vospers tried to force through acceptance of a sophisticated 'Value Added Bonus' scheme, a productivity scheme. The company spent over £100,000 in lost production in hiring a cinema, coaches, etc. so as to hold a meeting of the workforce which was jointly chaired by management and unions.

I'd spent £8 on printing leaflets opposing this deal, instead calling for a 30 hour week, double paid overtime, total rejection of closures and demands for workers' control of the company.

My yard, Vospers (Woolston) voted it out, 1002 against 763. Next day I was sacked!

Socialist Press interviews 'Ginger' Pearse, a recently victimised shop steward from Vosper S.R. in Southampton.

Did the electricians strike in your support?

No. The electricians' shop stewards decided unanimously on immediate strike action if I was not reinstated and called a mass meeting of 'sparks'.

Area official Scanlon (EETPU) started his speech by saying "Brother Pearse has been blatantly victimised".

But he then spoke against any strike action: "It's hopeless. The fight will be long and hard. There will be no official recognition. What about your families." He finished off with "A strike will be bad publicity for our union".

After this the meeting voted against strike action and I was left with no alternative but to take my case to an Industrial Tribunal.

Have you heard the result of this Tribunal?

Yes, after two adjournments I was found to have been "justifiably sacked".

Did you expect to be reinstated as an elected steward?

Of course not. We can only expect justice in workers' courts. I had sixteen witnesses testifying to the treachery of Scanlon and the lies of management.

They sat through a 'political' trial and were disgusted by the pro-management bias of the Tribunal.

No, although my branch of the EETPU and Southampton Trades Council have passed resolutions demanding reinstatement, this can only be won by strike action and that is opposed by official scabs.

In eliminating resistance to the 'Value Added Bonus' management and their union lackeys have won a major victory at Vospers.

Yes. How have they pursued this attack on the workforce?

Well, as expected, 'VAB' has now been forced in, and I know that the second payout, for productivity, was sweet FA, nothing, zero!

Added to this the bosses have viciously announced they intend sacking up to 400 workers in the next few months! These are the fruits of betrayal.

Do you view your sacking as having any parallel with Derek Robinson's victimisation at Longbridge?

Yes, of course. The similarities between Robinson's case and mine are obvious. Both British Leyland and British Shipbuilders are 'nationalised' and both are facing some of the most savage attacks by Thatcher and her 'gang of 14'.

Workers face 'speed-up' and massive redundancies in both. This will lead to total closures of shipyards and BL plants.

We must oppose all redundancies and demand a real cut in the working week, occupations instead of closures, for full workers' control.

This is the political difference between Trotskyists, workers like myself trying to act as Trotskyists and Stalinists like Robinson, who supported witch-hunts of militants at BL and in doing so paved the way for his own sacking.

Nevertheless, in spite of Robinson's political betrayals, this ruthless attack by Edwardes and the AUEW leadership, who blatantly retreated at the time when TGWU workers were already on official strike, is a vicious attack on the whole trade union movement. Robinson must be reinstated by united strike action.

Yes, in solidarity with the steel workers and all other sections of the working class?

Yes. We see the hostility of workers to this Thatcher regime so clearly in this strike, the first steel shutdown since 1926!

This strike has developed into the most crucial confrontation with the Tories' monetarist policy. Now, not next week, or next month, we must give full support to the steelworkers and extend picketing to the private sector, regardless of any bourgeois court ruling.

This strike must be developed into a General Strike with the sole intention of bringing down the Tories, replacing it with a government mandated to carry out the full socialist programme.

It must be turned into a political strike.

TEESIDE CUTS FIGHT

As part of the build-up for the February 9 anti-cuts demonstration in Middlesbrough, the Langbargh Area Anti-Cuts Campaign is holding two meetings to help mobilise trade unionists and Labour Party activists in the area.

The local anti-cuts campaign is opposed to all cuts, including those being carried out by the Langbargh council which is Labour controlled.

This follows the debate in Cleveland and Whitby GMC to try and force the Labour Group not to implement the cuts.

Socialist Press supporters have been fighting consistently in the local anti-cuts campaign and have been leading the anti-cuts fight inside local ward parties.

The demonstration on February 9 needs full support from trade unionists in the area for a number of reasons.

Firstly to bring to the attention of Labour bureaucrats that local steelworkers are still on strike and need full support

from the labour movement of Teeside, and to help to extend their struggle.

Consistent fight

This is the first step towards a consistent fight to remove the Tories and to support the call by the South Yorkshire Trades Council for a general strike against the cuts on February 18.

The 9 February demonstration should be the start of a clear campaign not only to fight the cuts but to boot out the right wing of the Labour Party.

*All out support for 9 February demonstration!

*Lobby Langbargh Labour councillors.

*Extend the struggle—for a workers' inquiry into the public sector.

*Kick out the Tories! Build councils of action.

The anti-cuts demonstration will assemble at 11.30 a.m. on Saturday 9 February at Albert Park, Unthorpe Road, Middlesbrough and march to a rally at the Town Hall.

JOIN THE WSL!

With workers by the thousand taking to the streets to oppose Tory policies there is plainly no lack of militancy in the organised working class.

Yet the existing trade union bureaucrats and Labour leaders—whether right or 'left'—have no perspective to offer those workers prepared to fight in defence of jobs, living standards, social services and democratic rights.

These can only be defended through policies which start from the independent interests of the working class, which, as an international class, has nothing to gain and everything to lose from attempts to restore the profitability of their "own" employing class.

In a period where the contradictions of the anarchic capitalist system force the wholesale closure and destruction of the productive forces of society, only a socialist planned economy on a world scale offers a way forward.

To achieve such a perspective a leadership is needed which, in today's struggles fights

to advance workers beyond trade union militancy, protest politics and illusions that capitalism can be abolished through parliament.

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist movement fighting day in and day out to build such a principled leadership in the working class in Britain.

Internationally, we are affiliated to the newly-formed Trotskyist International Liaison Committee, which fights for the reconstruction of the Fourth International and the building of revolutionary parties in every country to lead the struggle against imperialism and against the parasitic Stalinist bureaucracies in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

We invite all readers of *Socialist Press* to seek more details of the WSL and its work, and to join us in the struggle for socialism.

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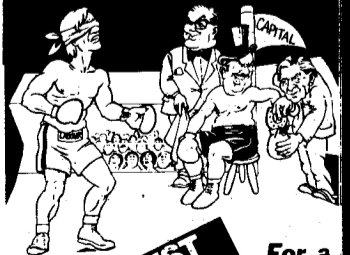
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BL set to reject 5%

It looks as if BL workers will reject the 5% plus strings which they have been offered on their annual review.

Ballot papers dropped through workers' doors on Saturday morning.

In a massive publicity campaign involving statements delivered by post, half a dozen different posters displayed throughout the plants and a thirty minute slot for Edwardes on TV just before the ballot, management urged acceptance of the deal.

Their main argument was that to reject the deal would be tantamount to a vote for strike action.

Unfortunately for them such an argument was no deterrent to rejection of the offer; it is what workers are looking for anyway!

A TV team stood for an hour outside the Cowley Assembly Plant last Friday trying to find a worker who intended to vote in favour of the package; but they couldn't even find one opposed to strike action against it!

A mass meeting earlier that day had given an enthusiastic reception to the convenors as they advocated a massive rejection of the deal.

At Rover Solihull a mass meeting held at the same time voted unanimously to reject the 5%.

Yet the leadership given to workers has been a disgrace.

Having only just handed the control of the secret ballot over to the management, the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee have responded to management propaganda with protests that the ballot "has nothing to do with strike action" (Grenville Hawley).

If the deal receives a massive rejection they say they will seek further negotiations with the management and express fears that the BL issue will get "tangled up" with the steel strike!

Such talk is a betrayal. If the steel workers are defeated BL workers will face a difficult task.

If BL workers join the steel workers against the government—together they can win. If the ballot rejects the offer the LCJNC must be forced to act.

The review has been negotiated on a corporate basis, the membership have been consulted on a corporate basis, if the ballot goes in favour of the unions there must be a decision from the LCJNC, endorsed by a convenors' conference, for an immediate all-out strike throughout BL.

SWP endorsement for Stalinist line

In the wake of the bureaucratically disrupted conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, the Socialist Workers Party has declared its full backing for the political line presented by the Stalinist platform.

In a one-page feature headed "Let's fight the Tories TOGETHER", Socialist Worker reprints the entire political statement presented to the Conference, describing it as "A fighting declaration".

The statement—to which the Conference chairman, Stalinist Kevin Halpin, would allow no opposition—contains no demand for General Strike action to bring down the Tories: indeed its only substantial demand is for "real action of general strike proportions" to take place on the TUC "day of action" on May 14—3½ months time!

In continuity with the record of the LCDTU under the Heath government, the entire

thrust of the declaration is towards a protest campaign aimed at changing the minds of the Tories on their package of anti-union laws, rather than forcing Thatcher out of office.

Yet Socialist Worker enthusiastically states that "before the delegates was a Declaration spelling out the way to fight the Tory proposals".

And, lest there be any confusion, the page also features a letter from SWP spokesman John Deason, written on behalf of the SWP-run "Rank and File" Defend Our Unions Committee to Kevin Halpin on the day after the abortive LCDTU conference.

Deason assures "Kevin" that:

"The Defend Our Unions Committee fully supports that declaration—indeed we recognise that the Liaison Committee included in that declaration many of our previous suggestions."

Deason goes on to complain that the LCDTU has ignored repeated letters, phone calls and personal approaches from the

Rank and File Committee seeking united action.

And he renews his plea—which formed the only issue of contention between the SWP and the Stalinist platform—for a joint LCDTU/R&F conference to be convened.

So as the Communist Party trails behind and seeks to divert the militancy of the working class into a succession of aimless one-day and protest actions, their supposedly more 'left wing' rivals in the SWP abandon any political struggle against them—in the name of "unity".

There is no doubt that in this respect Deason is right and Halpin wrong.

The SWP and CP are, in a real sense, politically united, in opposing the development of a revolutionary political leadership in the working class, and in seeking to confine the anti-Tory fight to what the Rank and File Committee calls "a campaign of protest and defiance against the new laws".

Cowley victory

The election for deputy convenors in the BL Cowley Assembly Plant have resulted in a further important victory for the left.

The left candidates all improved their positions and the right wing all lost votes compared to the previous ballot.

The most striking result was the vote for Alan Thornett. He came third out of the list of 25 candidates competing for the seven available positions.

The right wing main contender, Jim Barson, who was beaten recently by Bob Fryer for the convenor position, was reduced to fifth place.

The ballot was held under typically sharp conditions.

The Oxford Mail on the previous evening reminded workers that in voting for Alan Thornett they were voting for a confirmed Trotskyist and a member of the Workers Socialist

League—a revelation which could hardly have surprised them, since it has been said at every election for the past 14 years.

The right wing branch, the TGWU 5/837 circulated a leaflet pointing to the strikes led by Alan Thornett in the past and predicting conflict in the future if he was elected.

The attacks were of no consequence. BL workers are not looking for weak leadership. They are militant and looking for strong leaders who will confront the employers and who have policies on which they can fight and win.

*Following the election BL have refused to recognise Alan Thornett, saying that they have not changed their position since he was victimised in 1974.

They have, however, asked for more time to consider their position and will be giving a final reply next week.

CRACKDOWN AT FORDS

Line workers from the Phase 2 heavy truck assembly area at Ford's Langley Plant walked out last Wednesday over the sacking of a colleague on a trumped up charge of "not declaring a hernia condition" when he joined the company nearly a year ago.

The sacking was the fourth in a week at the plant and represents an international 'get tough' policy by Fords management.

Three weeks ago six leading militants in Denmark were sacked by the company for hosting last year's 'International Combine' meeting; and as we go to press there are unconfirmed reports of a steward being sacked at the Southampton plant.

At Langley, stewards repres-

enting the sacked worker called for a series of one-day strikes until the threat of steel lay-offs was over.

While the possibility of lay-offs at 80% pay needed serious consideration, a Socialist Press supporter argued for immediate indefinite strike action as the only effective way to win reinstatement.

A vote split the meeting, with a narrow majority for indefinite action. In all 100 out of 130 line workers on the section are out and the company has lost £1 million in production.

The shop stewards committee has called for official recognition of the strike, prevented any manning up of the Phase 2 section, and called for reinstatement.

There is strong support throughout the Plant which has pushed the convenor and TGWU officials into passive support.

A DIVERSION FROM FIGHTING THE CUTS

"Is the TUC changing its emphasis on nurseries and directing towards workplace provision because it won't face up to a fight against cuts in the public sector?"

This question from the floor at the SE Region TUC Seminar on Workplace Nurseries last Saturday pointed to the key issue at stake.

It forced Jack Dromey, 'left' speaking Secretary of SERTUC to hurriedly change his set-piece summing up speech in order to reassure the speaker that there was no change of emphasis.

Of course, he blustered, "if" the campaign for workplace nurseries and the fight against the cuts weren't proceeding side by side then "today's seminar would of course be a dangerous diversion."

Welcome

Yet it was clear throughout the seminar that the workplace nursery campaign, in the present political climate—with the Tories hellbent on an ideological attack on women's right to work, and determined to dismantle the welfare state—is indeed seen as a welcome diversion by the trade union bureaucracy.

Speaker after speaker, from

local NALGO and NATFHE branches in particular, detailed their local surveys and attempts to force local councils to accept their "responsibility" as employers' by providing workplace creches for local council and college workers.

Yet some of these speakers had no idea what their councils' day nursery and nursery school provision were, nor how these were threatened by cuts.

Axed hospital

Bere Saxby, ASTMS speaker from the Heathrow Airport nursery campaign even announced that this campaign was asking permission to use the axed Staines Hospital and Ashford School for workplace nurseries! (At a cost to parents of at least £15 per week!)

Speakers from the Oxford Save Our Nurseries Campaign explained how the Tory Council there has exploited the insular nature of a workplace creche campaign by offering a classroom (which should have housed a state nursery class that was axed in the first round of cuts) to the local Polytechnic Student Nursery Campaign with a charge of £12 to parents.

This had driven a wedge between the students and the nursery campaign in the town and prepared the ground for

introducing the concept of parents paying for all nursery provision.

Closed down

The same speakers also showed how the national NALGO policy of workplace nurseries had allowed the local NALGO leadership to turn their backs on the nursery nurses and assistants in Oxfordshire nursery classes—who face redundancy when the nurseries are all closed in July 1981.

If any delegate to the seminar was in any doubt about the intentions of the bureaucracy, their doubts should have been answered by the explicit statement in the paper submitted by Terry Marsland of the Tobacco Workers Union:

"There is no hope over the next five years of achieving any improvement in the provision of child care facilities by Local Authority, and our only way forward is to persuade the employers, who have the financial resources available, to establish creche and nursery provisions at the place of work."

If this is not a diversion from the fight to defend and extend existing state nursery provision then what is?

NUT sell-out

NUT leaders in Nottingham appear to be attempting what must be one of the most despicable sell-outs ever.

Last December Nottingham sacked dozens of its nursery nurses, leaving very large nursery classes staffed only by a teacher and one assistant.

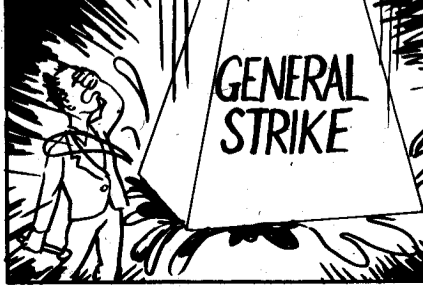
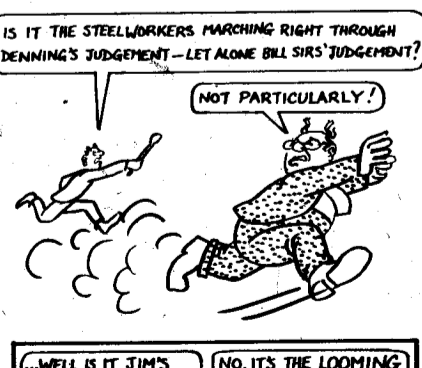
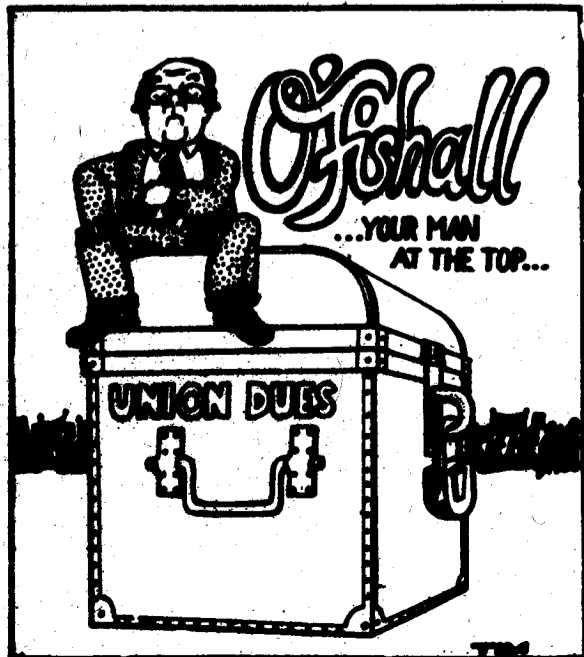
One teacher Eileen Crosbie of the Robert Mellors School in Arnold, refused to take a class of 40 children under these conditions and was suspended. The authority put a probationer in her place.

The seven other teachers in the school came out on strike and the parents boycotted the nursery. The NUT in Nottingham held an official half-day strike in protest.

But now, with Mrs Crosbie still suspended, the NUT leadership has sent the other teachers in the school back to work, and is negotiating with the Council to reduce the number of children to 26—to comply with the DES 1:13 ratio!

In this conspiracy to carry through the cuts they have the full support of NUPE and NALGO leaders who sat back in the autumn and did nothing to prevent the wholesale sacking of their members.

Nottingham teachers must show their solidarity with Mrs Crosbie and press for all-out strike action until she and the sacked nursery assistant are reinstated, and nursery and education facilities defended.



SOCIALIST PRESS



What the Lords ruling means

Lord Scarman: Is it a necessary implication of your submission that Parliament by this section has made a general strike unlawful?

Counsel (for private steel firms): I would say that acts, the object

of which was not to set up a chain of trade or commercial consequences but to bring pressure to bear on the government of the day to alter its economic policy might not qualify as acts in furtherance of a trade dispute.

The decision by the House of Lords to overturn Lord Denning has still left room for the law to be used against strike action.

While the Law Lords have not yet published their detailed reasons for overturning Denning they did not rule out the possibility of injunctions being granted in the event of a general strike. (Such injunctions could then legitimise the use of police and army against strikers as strikers, rather than against pickets).

The private steel firms had based their application on the 'remoteness' from the dispute. It was the Appeal Court itself (firstly Lord Lawton and then Lord Denning) that came up with the concept of there being two disputes—one with the BSC and one with the government. It was this notion that the House of Lords overturned.

Counsel for the private steel firms said that the strike was damaging to the 'wellbeing of the country' (i.e. the wellbeing of the bourgeoisie). This line of argument has not been definitely set aside.

Lord Scarman in overturning Denning remarked that one of the factors the court must consider was:

"Whether it would be possible before the damage developed irretrievably for the government by action of some sort or another by legislation or whatever—to avert damage to the welfare of the state".

In other words Scarman is saying that the courts should not declare a strike illegal—so long as the government is capable of acting by other means against the strike.

But, should the court take the view that the government is not capable of so doing, it could then declare the strike illegal.

The Lords' judgement is thus not so much a licence to strike, as a decision to hold back on the use of what the bourgeoisie recognise must be a weapon of last resort.

STATE SURVEILLANCE

EXPOSED

All of a sudden last week, after the revelation by the *New Statesman* of the secret service phone-tapping centre in Chelsea, the press began to act as if such widespread surveillance was common knowledge.

The *Sunday Times*, for instance, in a major article pointed out that the capacity of the Chelsea centre was probably not 1,000 simultaneous phone calls—as suggested by the *New Statesman*—but 5,000!

And it went on to quote one

"source" who pointed out that every public phone in pubs in the area of Kilburn was tapped as part of the state surveillance of the IRA.

Grunwick

Instances of phone tapping from the 1926 General Strike, through Peter Hain's 1969-72 Anti Apartheid campaign, Judith Hart's activities on behalf of Chilean exiles while she was a Labour Minister in 1974, to the tapping of the phones of the Grunwick Strike Committee leaders in 1978—have now been brought to light.

The *Sunday Times* points out that Lord Carrington was able to bludgeon the Patriotic Front leaders the more successfully at the recent Lancaster House talks on Zimbabwe because he was briefed with up-to-the-minute secret service transcripts of their every phone call and private conversation!

Meanwhile the publicity on the issue has brought evidence rolling in from strike leaders and militants all over the country of extensive telephone eavesdropping during industrial disputes.

Thatcher, openly challenged on the issue in Parliament, has failed even to deny that Labour MPs' phones are tapped.

But despite the readiness of Labour leaders to climb on this

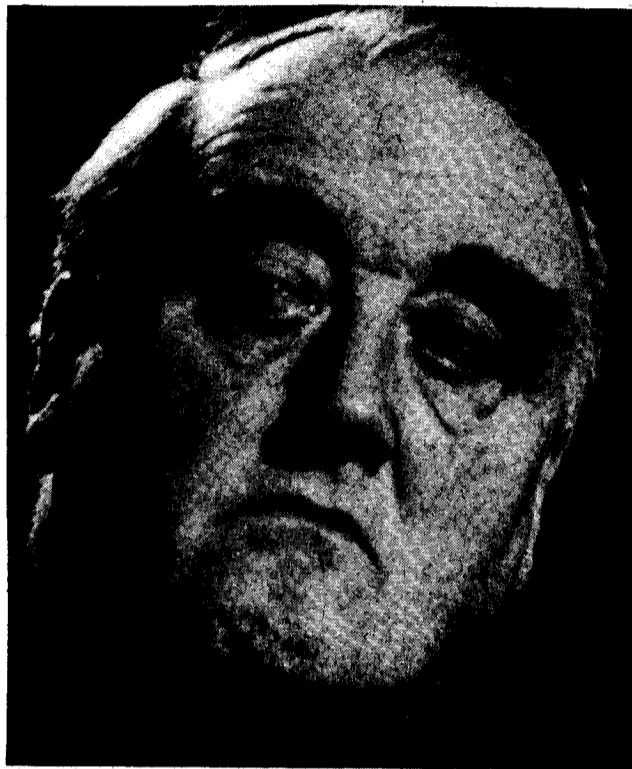
rolling "civil liberties" bandwagon, there is no doubt that Whitelaw is substantially right to argue that phone tapping under this government continues in the same way as under the Callaghan and Wilson governments.

The fact is that the machinery of the capitalist state—the intelligence services, the police, and the armed forces—operate continually against the workers' movement, and have only ever been notionally under the "democratic" control of Parliament.

Labour governments, which seek merely to "reform" the capitalist system and its state, therefore find themselves presiding—with greater or lesser knowledge—over the self-same apparatus of surveillance, harassment and repression as the Tories.

Offensive

The Thatcher government of course committed to a class war offensive designed to demolish workers' living standards and social services and restore 1930s levels of unemployment, has set out to extend the powers and strength of the state, beginning with huge pay rises for police and army thugs and new anti-union laws.



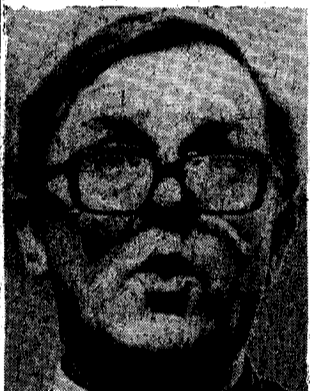
Only the Anthony Blunt scandal torpedoed a Tory attempt to push through a "Protection of Information" Bill that would almost certainly have made the *New Statesman* revelations illegal.

Last week saw the first mass arrests of pickets in the steel strike—and the use of handcuffs to shackle workers, who were offering no resistance.

And Home Secretary Whitelaw revealed that the Tories are considering vicious new legislation that would oblige demon-

stration organisers to pay the cost of policing street demonstrations and putting down hefty advanced cash deposits against possible damage.

With employers now screaming their demands for new anti-working class legislation there is no doubt that the only way to curb the growth of police powers in the next period is through mass action to bring down the Tory government and the removal of Labour's reactionary Callaghan leadership.



Former Labour Home Secretary Rees:

PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

Zimbabwe violence

A rocket attack killing 13 in a civilian bus is the latest in a long series of violations of the cease-fire in the Zimbabwe war which are being attributed to the ZANLA guerrilla army.

Robert Mugabe, leader of ZANU(PF) which is politically linked to ZANLA, says that it is Bishop Muzorewa's militia which is responsible for most of the violent incidents.

It is hard to separate truth from lies in these claims and reports.

But it is certainly true that after the tumultuous reception for Mugabe when he returned to the country there has built up an alliance to try to stop ZANU(PF) from getting an election majority without actually banning it.

The alliance consists of the Soames dictatorship, Muzorewa, the veteran white racist leader Ian Smith and, more tentatively Joshua Nkomo.

Demanded

Nkomo, leader of the ZAPU branch of the Patriotic Front, has also demanded that ZANLA end the ceasefire violations.

But so far he has gently reproved Ian Smith for calling for a vote to ZAPU as opposed either to the "Marxist" ZANU or to the racists' old and now useless ally Muzorewa.

Mugabe has continued to respond by bending over backwards to deny any intention of

introducing socialist measures.

His abject compromises are one of the reasons why numerous ZANU members are refusing to follow him in co-operating with the imperialist plans.

Despite many fabrications, many of the ceasefire violations do reflect this movement against compromise by the rank and file of the ZANLA army.

But a political leadership capable of directing that movement towards a socialist Zimbabwe has still to be built.

'A woman's right'—say 80% in 'Corrie' poll

As John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill comes up for its Third and final reading in the House of Commons this Friday, two new surveys have shown that it flies in the face of the wishes of a majority of adults.

One, conducted by *Woman's Own* magazine, showed that a massive 80% of the women asked believed that the choice of whether or not to have an abortion should be an issue to be decided solely by the woman concerned and her doctor.

And a *Sunday Times* opinion poll revealed that less than one-third of the public wanted the abortion law tightened up, while 50% want it left the way it is or made more liberal.

According to the *Sunday Times* 54% of the public as a whole agreed with the statement "Abortion should be made legally available for all who want it."

Horrors

But of course the Tories have other ideas. Not only does Corrie's Bill set out to condemn thousands of women to the horrors of unwanted pregnancy and childbirth, but the savage spending cuts in the Health Service are ensuring that the facilities for free abortion are inadequate even under the existing laws.

For Tories like Corrie and his reactionary allies in the Catholic Church, women are to aspire to no more than to be housekeepers and child-rearers.

But such reactionary values are shared also by the gang of

Labour right wingers that argue it is against their "conscience" to allow women the elementary right to control their own bodies, their own lives.

Corrie's Bill has proceeded this far with only token opposition from the trade unions, and has been actively fought by only a depressingly small section of left wing Labour MPs.

Majority

The Tory majority in Parliament seems now certain to ensure that the Corrie Bill carries through its Third Reading, to emerge in the near future on the Statute Books.

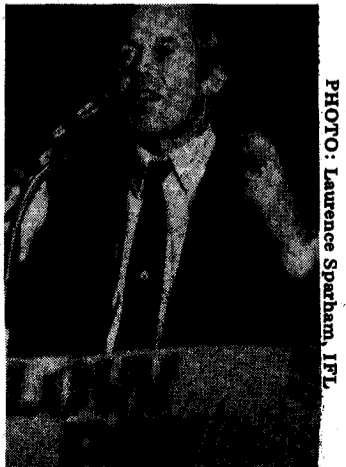
But it is not too late for the labour movement to prepare the ground for action to defend abortion rights against the new legislation.

This means fighting to: *Call on the Labour Party to enforce its policy of "free abortion on request" by a) imposing a three line whip on Labour MPs to vote against the Corrie Bill and b) pledging the next Labour government to the repeal of all anti-abortion legislation.

*Call on trade unions to ensure that sponsored MPs vote in accordance with Labour Party and TUC policy and to act to remove those that do not. *Call on union national

executives, particularly ASTMS/MPU, to commit their unions to strike action in the event of any member being prosecuted for continuing to provide abortion in defiance of the law.

*Support trade unionists who take action, including strike action or occupation, in defence of abortion or other health service facilities threatened by the government's public spending cuts.



NUPE leader Fisher—must be forced to act on Corrie

PHOTO: Laurence Spatham, IFL