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Enthusiastic vote for strike action at Cowley Body Plant

"Enough is enough!" was the mood of tens of thousands of British Leyland carworkers, who last week raised their hands for strike action in mass meetings throughout the corporation.

Their angry rejection of Michael Edwardes' insulting "final offer" of 6.8% plainly amazed the Tory press and mass media—and caught the management unawares.

Facing inflation now running at 16% a year, BL workers were painfully aware that their pay increases over the last three years have totalled less than 18%, while productivity has been driven up in repeated management attacks on their working conditions.

Hard-won agreements have been torn up by management; combine committee chairman Derek Robinson has been victimised; and tens of thousands of jobs have been axed—while union leaders have done everything in their power to avoid a fight.

Different mood

But this time even BL convenors and union officials have had to recognise a very different mood on the shop floor. Enough is enough! The popular demand for mass meetings to decide on the offer left the right wing advocates of secret ballots isolated—and the mass meeting votes vindicated all those who had argued that BL workers are ready and willing to fight.

By 40,000 to 20,000 they threw out the 6.8% offer and gave convenors an inescapable mandate for all-out action.

Swept aside have been the now routine press propaganda threatening closure and chaos if a strike is called; the warnings of dire consequences if Metro production is halted; and the company's attempts to use short time working as an additional pressure to force home the 6.8% deal.

The convenors, who knew better, easily refuted the ridiculous press distortions of the voting figures in the mass meetings and recognised that they "had no choice" but to call a strike.

Caught unawares by these events have been all those—ranging from right wing and cynical BL shop stewards through to Michael Edwardes himself—who were convinced until last Thursday that "BL workers won't fight".

Like any other section of workers, the BL shop floor will fight, if they are given a lead and a perspective.

The fact is that so wretched has been the leadership offered to them by their union officials and the Communist Party-led combine committee over the past two years, that last year even a 2-1 ballot vote to reject last year's pay offer was cast aside, and strike action by 30,000 workers in support of Derek Robinson was stopped dead in its tracks.

But these have been betrayals inflicted by union leaders, more than outright defeats meted out by Edwardes. Now the stubborn resistance of BL workers has finally forced its way through even to the meeting of 300 convenors who gathered on Monday, in the eerie surroundings of the closed Canley plant, to decide on what to do next.

After eight hours, the decision was taken for strike action—a call which had been pressed energetically by shop stewards at the Cowley Assembly Plant.

Now BL workers have emerged in the forefront of the battle to defend living standards against the Thatcher government.

But they and their case are not unique. The fall in living standards that has driven them into struggle is now hitting

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BL strike heads anti-Tory fight FORDS, MINERS, FIGHT NOW ON PAY!

Polish workers set date for strike

If Poland's Stalinist rulers do not quickly reach agreement with the leaders of Solidarity, the new unofficial trade union federation, they will face a massive renewal of all-out strike action on November 12.

This was made clear last week amid the various comings and goings of Polish ministers and negotiations with Solidarity leaders.

14 hours of talks between a government delegation led by Prime Minister Pinkowski and a 76-strong delegation of trade union delegates on Friday failed to produce a final agreement on the implementation of the deal made by the government to head off the growing General Strike movement.

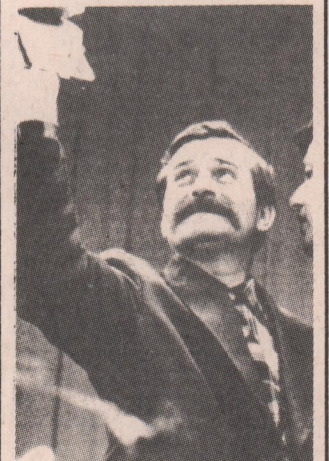
Solidarity leaders have apparently agreed to accept a High Court ruling on one of the most bitterly contested issues—the insertion by a judge of a clause into Solidarity's constitution that acknowledges the supremacy of the Polish Communist Party.

In exchange, Stalinist leaders have apparently agreed in principle to allow Solidarity to publish a national weekly newspaper, and to discuss the question of access to TV and radio.

The bureaucracy have apparently argued that a shortage of newsprint makes it impossible for them to permit the union to run a daily paper—the circulation of which would certainly dwarf that of the CP's own daily paper.

But other contested issues

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Walesa

Key conference—November 15—See page 11

INTERNATIONAL

Polish workers set deadline

From front page

have included union demands for the immediate payment of wage increases already agreed, increased supplies of food and the introduction of meat rationing by January 1.

The impact of these concessions on pay and food on Poland's already dislocated and indebted economy is likely to be traumatic.

It appears that the possibility of additional Soviet economic assistance—to enable the Polish bureaucracy to ride out such a crisis—formed one of the talking points in the brief visit to Moscow paid last Thursday by Polish CP leader Stanislaw Kania.

Although the visit took place in the context of increasingly vicious political attacks by East German and Czechoslovak leaders on the unofficial Polish unions—and moves by both regimes to restrict visits from Polish workers—Kania seems to have won the support of the Soviet leadership for his course of action.

After warmly embracing Kania at the airport, Kremlin chief Brezhnev declared his confidence in the Polish bureaucracy's ability to resolve the country's "difficulties".

Such a stance could well arise from new Soviet assessments on the immense difficulties that would be confronted in any attempt to crack down upon the militant Polish workers' movement.

Popular anger

Any move towards an invasion would prompt a huge uprising of united popular anger.



Brezhnev at Warsaw Pact summit

It has become increasingly clear that far from running in advance of the mass movement, strike leader Lech Walesa and many of the other Solidarity leaders are now struggling to restrain their members from further action.

One Szczecin delegate told Solidarity's national committee that in sounding out reactions to the November 12 strike "alert", only 8 out of 821 factories in the area voted against all-out action if their demands were not met.

Language of force

And the Gdansk praesidium has stressed that the only language the regime understands is that of force.

In these conditions Walesa emerges balancing precariously between his ties to the Catholic Church—which lead him towards seeking a deal with the bureaucracy—and the pressure from the mass movement which first catapulted him into national prominence. As he pointed out last week:

"I keep on changing my mind. When I was simply a worker, I knew what to think."

The Kremlin leaders, like their junior partners in Warsaw, are at present forced to bank on precisely such signs of weakness in the leadership that emerged in the spontaneous mass struggle this summer.

The disbanding of the official trade union federation, and a wave of new elections within the old unions to create an impression of "democracy", together with the mass entry of large numbers of Stalinists into the new unions are moves designed to suck new layers of militants like Walesa into the bureaucratic apparatus of the

state—or at least confuse sections of workers sufficiently to give the government a breathing space for further manoeuvres.

Not easily fooled

But the November 12 deadline shows that workers are not so easily fooled.

Their independent struggles have threatened the very basis of the power and privilege of the Polish Stalinist leaders: it is in the next period that a conscious Marxist leadership is necessary to transform this threat into the political overthrow of the bureaucracy and the establishment of the power of the organised working class.



Deleted sign for official union office at Gdansk shipyard

Italian Socialist Party rocks the boat

Lenin once said that "for the bourgeoisie there are no absolutely hopeless situations".

But he hadn't seen Italy in the 1980s. No sooner had the bourgeoisie won the recent struggle at Fiat, aided by and aiding reactionary mobilisations of scab workers and provoking new confusion in the heart of the trade unions; no sooner had it put together, with surprising ease, a new coalition government, led by the President of the Christian Democratic Party, Arnaldo Forlani, than everything once more seemed to fall apart.

It is "traditional" for the parties composing Italy's coalition governments (the new one is the 40th since the war) to refrain from tearing each other apart, at least in their first few weeks of office.

This time however, Forlani was obliged to make a passionate appeal for the unity of the coalition parties even before the Parliament had given the government a vote of confidence.

Such unheard-of disunity resulted from the increasingly tortuous position in which

Italian capitalism finds itself.

The new government has come into office with the explicit objective of implementing the programme of economic cuts and restrictions which its predecessor could not get through Parliament.

The only reason that it was impossible was that MPs of the government parties responded to the vast working class pressure against the austerity measures by voting (in a secret ballot) against their own government.

Two things have changed since then which Forlani hopes will allow the measures to be passed this time.

One is the defeat of the Fiat workers, though not before a situation bordering on civil war had erupted in the streets of Turin.

The second is the series of manoeuvres by Bettino Craxi, leader of the Socialist Party (the second largest in the government coalition), which asserted the dominance of his rightist faction against the left.

But Craxi knows that his party's support for the reactionary economic programme of the Christian Democrats, and his

naked manoeuvres against the left, have deeply compromised the already very limited credibility of his party in the working class.

It was he therefore—in order to distract attention from these things and regain a little credibility—who rocked Forlani's boat in the confidence debate.

He did it by resuscitating Italy's potentially most explosive political issue—abortion.

Referendum

Craxi supported a referendum on the legalisation of abortion—which is of course vehemently resisted by the ever-present Vatican and the deeply embarrassed Christian Democratic Party.

The dilemma of Italy's bourgeois politicians however is expressed in the fact that the Socialist Party has to press an issue which may split the coalition apart in order to cover up the issue which destroyed its predecessor.

It becomes ever harder to see how the bourgeoisie can resolve such a contradiction within the

framework of Parliamentary democracy.

And it was Forlani himself who warned in the debate that Italy may be en route to becoming another Chile or another Turkey.

Nothing will get it there sooner than the treachery of leaders of workers' parties like Craxi and Communist Party leader Berlinguer, who collaborate in the plans of the bourgeoisie and sabotage the resistance of the working class.



48-HOUR FAST

Friday November 7 at 7pm to Sunday November 9 Downing Street

Participants include Lord Gifford, Alan Sapper (ACTT), Jonathan Hammond (NUJ), Gordon McLennan, Carmen Callil, Jill Tweedie, Pat Arrow-smith.

Mass picket, 3 pm Sunday 9 November

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION

For British withdrawal from Northern Ireland
Saturday November 15 Assemble 1 pm. Embankment

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Monday November 24 at 7.30 p.m.
Lower Town Hall, Brixton
Called by South London Hunger Strike Action Committee
Wednesday November 26 at 7.30 p.m.
Battersea Town Hall, Lavender Hill
Called by Charter 80

Hunger strikers from back page

prisoners.

Largely because of this betrayal, seven brave men have been driven to a course of action that could rapidly bring their deaths.

They have a right to expect and demand the support of British workers in their struggle against military rule. It is the Thatcher government—busily attacking the British working class—which is presiding over the oppression of the nationalist minority in the six counties of Ireland.

It is the British capitalist class—currently throwing millions of British workers onto the done queues—which is the common enemy of British and Irish workers.

The republican prisoners have taken a firm stand. They have declared that only the granting of POW status will persuade them to end their hunger strike.

It is up to us to ensure that

their struggle succeeds, and that these men do not die.

In every area, socialists should at once call meetings and local demonstrations to publicise and win support for the prisoners' case. Trade unionists and Labour Party members must put down emergency resolutions pledging active support to the fight.

Mobilise

The national demonstrations on November 15 and December 7 must be supported by a mobilisation from labour movement bodies.

The hunger strikers have thrown down a challenge to the British labour movement. We must respond by redoubling the fight for POW status, for the immediate withdrawal of British troops and for the right of self-determination for the Irish people.





INTERNATIONAL

DEBATING THE WAY FORWARD IN LATIN AMERICAN STRUGGLE

The Stirling and District Chile Solidarity Committee must be congratulated for their organisation of a day school on the theme of "The Revolution in Latin America" held the weekend before last.

The conference, attended by over 40 trade unionists, Labour Party members, students and Latin Americans, especially Chilean exiles living in the Stirling area, provided the forum for an informative and lively discussion on a number of themes.

Principled stand

Rowland Sheret, opening the conference and speaking on behalf of the Solidarity Committee, drew attention to the necessity for trade unionists, working through their trades councils and the STUC (or the TUC), to raise the vital importance of the British labour movement taking a principled stand on international questions.

He cited as one local instance of this the campaign by Stirling Trades Council to secure STUC affiliation to the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign.

Bob Sutcliffe, economist and Socialist Press supporter, then addressed the conference on the problems confronting the struggle for socialism in Latin America within the context of imperialist domination of the continent.

The special characteristics of many states within Latin America in terms of several competing indigenous power groups manoeuvring for supremacy within the overall context of imperialist exploitation, gives the politics of these states a greater complexity than is often

found in "underdeveloped" countries in other parts of the world.

Nevertheless, all of these regimes do have certain characteristics in common which he summed up as three "ins"—inequality, indebtedness and inflation.

Worsening

The second of this unholy trinity is worsening all the time with at present one-fifth of all export earnings of Latin American countries going to service debts to the banks, which increasingly include High Street banks, such as Barclays.

Comrade Sutcliffe also noted the emergence of "sub-imperialist" regimes such as Brazil, Argentina and Mexico which have now assumed a new role in the pecking order of exploitation over the continent as a whole.

Within this very sharp economic context, class struggles in Latin America are intense and severe, above all in Bolivia where successive military coups still provide no long term basis for capitalist stability.

Who then are the enemies and the allies of revolution in Bolivia and throughout Latin America?

Sutcliffe examined this question in terms of the politics of imperialism, especially its US variety, and of the bureaucracies of the Soviet Union and China, and how they seek to undermine the revolutionary process, as for instance by the Soviet Union's recent recognition of the military junta in Bolivia.

The potential strength of the revolution throughout Latin America lies in the traditions of strong trade unionism and the radicalism of sections of the peasantry.

Sutcliffe completed his survey of the situation by criticising the inadequacies of guerrillism and popular frontism.

Ernesto Cortez, speaking on behalf of the El Salvador Solidarity Committee, explained the most recent developments in the struggle there, emphasising the necessity for the left at this point to be part of the FDR, which he described as an anti-imperialist united front with Christian Democrats and Social Democrats, in which all the parties of the left participate.

In the afternoon session Des Tierney, speaking on behalf of the Nicaraguan Solidarity Committee, began by describing the historical background to recent events there.

Comrade Tierney, a leading member of the IMG, emphasised that within the Nicaraguan Government of Reconstruction, real power has lain with the FSLN.

The departure of the representatives of the bourgeoisie from the government, such as Chamorro, emphasises the progressive direction of the measures taken by the regime.

Comrade Tierney defended the actions of the FSLN in terms of strengthening its hold over the Sandinista Army, especially bringing the local militias into a tighter organisational grip.

Defended action

He saw this as a necessary step to defend the gains of the revolution against the dangers of external aggression which are very real.

He also defended the decision not to hold elections for a Constituent Assembly on the grounds that, with the power of the press still in the

hands of the capitalists, who still control 50% of the economy, this would be a recipe for political suicide for the FSLN.

During the discussion that followed, Tierney defended the actions of the FSLN and of the USFI in their attitudes towards the expulsion of the Simon Bolivar Brigade.

He said that the Brigade was guilty of "forcing workers to join trade unions at gunpoint" and of trying to drive a wedge between the masses and the FSLN leadership.

They had refused to militarily subordinate themselves to the FSLN or politically subordinate themselves to the decisions of the USFI and therefore their record was "indefensible".

He ended by emphasising the aid which Nicaragua had received from Cuba, a regime which he characterised as being neither a bureaucracy nor a workers' democracy.

The final paper of the day was given by Phil O'Brien of Glasgow University and a recent visitor to Chile.

He pointed to the strong similarities between the attitudes and policies of the Thatcher government in Britain and the Pinochet regime in Chile, emphasising that they both drew upon the reactionary concepts of the right wing ideologues, Friedman and Hayek.

He drew attention to the institutionalisation of sectors of the Chilean state and the way in which this had strengthened the basis of the regime.

The questions and controversies which these four contribu-



Sandinista guerrillas after their victory over Somoza

tions stimulated provided the basis for a lively discussion which went on throughout the conference.

This excellent initiative by the Stirling Committee must be the springboard for wide solidarity action in support of the struggle in Latin America and the precedent for other local conferences along similar lines. Not the least important

aspect of the conference was that it also provided a forum for at least a partial airing of some of the differences within the Trotskyist movement on the problems of the revolutionary movement in Latin America. This is a healthy development which must surely be encouraged.

Landslide win for Jamaican rightist

The pro-imperialist Jamaica Labour Party won a landslide victory in last Thursday's General Election.

The party, led by Edward Seaga, is expected to take 50 of the 60 seats when the final result is declared, leaving Michael Manley's People's National Party with only ten seats.

The election campaign was one of the most violent in the history of Jamaica. Manley announced early this year that elections would take place in the autumn and by polling day 630 had been killed in political violence.

Seaga's victory will lessen the threat of a coup but even this possibility cannot be excluded if there is no significant decline in political violence.

Manley's defeat highlights the complete bankruptcy of social democratic and nationalist politics.

After himself winning a landslide victory in 1976 Manley attempted on the one hand to develop Jamaica's economic independence from imperialism (in particular through establishing greater national control over natural resources like bauxite) whilst at the same time relying on the International Monetary Fund for loans to prop up a bankrupt economy.

With unemployment already at 30% and inflation over 20% a year, the IMF demanded further severe austerity measures in exchange for loans

which could not in any way provide a long-term solution to the economic problems confronting the Jamaican economy.

Whilst cultivating closer ties with Cuba resulting in a degree of economic aid and the supply of Cuban doctors and construction workers, Manley refused to break his links with imperialism and the IMF; nationalise the economy; and develop trade with the workers' states.

Only when the austerity measures demanded by the IMF threatened the PNP with electoral disaster and under mounting pressure from the left wing of the Party did Manley finally reject the IMF conditions, resulting in the withdrawal of loans.

His rejection of the IMF and failure to take bold and decisive measures to nationalise the Jamaican economy left the PNP government directionless and without a viable political platform in the crucial period leading up to the General Election, when the mass media were hysterically denouncing Manley as a prisoner of the "communists" within his party and throwing their full weight behind Seaga.

Despite Seaga's claim that his government would not be "tied to the coat tails of any superpower" he is expected to immediately apply to the IMF for a £200 million standby loan and he claims that unnamed international financial sources have promised him £650 million over the next three years.

The loans will be used, according to Seaga, to remodel the Jamaican economy after the "Puerto Rican model". This means tempting foreign capital with the prospect of low wages and huge tax concessions.

New!

Socialist Press Pamphlet containing analysis of the military coup by the Bolivian generals.



Price 32p incl. p&p from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

Cranks' corner



The cranky sectarians of the International Spartacist Tendency often pride themselves upon the "uniqueness" of their political line. But seldom have even the Sparts come up with slogans as bizarre as the ones their American supporters sported in New York recently at a picket of a visit by Prince Philip.

Plainly under the impression that, as Duke of Edinburgh Prince Philip has something to do with Scotland, the Sparts gamely wheeled out their unique full programme for Scottish workers. Their catchy demand for 'A Scottish Workers Republic as part of the USSR' is one which has yet to be argued for openly by the British Sparts - but will no doubt soon make its hilarious debut on demonstrations here.

But even this is outstripped by the Sparts' maximum demand for the Scottish proletariat: in pride of place, above the routine demands 'Abolish the House of Lords' and 'Abolish the Monarchy' came the most unique slogan to spring from the Augean stable of Spart guru James Robertson - 'Abolish Licensing Hours!'

Is this a bid for a rotten bloc with the Campaign for Real Ale?

STOP THE EXCUSES! START THE FIGHT!

We reprint below the text of a leaflet distributed by supporters of WOMAN WORKER, women's paper of the Workers Socialist League, at the Lambeth cuts conference on November 1. WOMAN WORKER is published every two months and is available from WSL, BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX.

We are sure that we do not need to tell anyone here of the effects that the Tories' £200 million cuts in local authority spending have had on working class women.

Jobs and services are being slashed in school meals, nurseries, home-help services, cleaning, old people's homes and children's homes, teaching and administration.

Yet the Tories see even the damage they have done to our social services since they took office as totally insufficient.

Now they want to completely destroy whole sections of the welfare state as they showed last month with the massive attack on council housing.

We have to stop them before it is too late. They have already been allowed to get away with the virtual destruction of the school meals system which was a major gain of the working class.

The question now is how to stop further cuts? The only way to do it is to bring the Tories down! And the only way to do that is through widespread strike action.

The major debate today will be whether such action is possible or desirable.

It is now a year since we had the emergency SERTUC conference on action against the cuts. Yet still there has not been even one effective national action organised by the trade union and Labour leaders against the cuts.

Excuses for inactivity

The same arguments will probably be peddled today as they were a year ago. A well-known excuse for inactivity is to claim that the working class had moved to the right, claiming that workers are the ones responsible for voting in Thatcher.

Of course, the real reason for the Tory election victory was that many people could see little difference between their bitter experience of the right wing Labour policies of wage control, cuts and anti-union laws under Callaghan and Healey and the bland talk in the Tory manifesto.

This is the basis not to give in to the Tories but to fight for the removal of Labour's right wing leaders!

The major excuse of the union leaders for not calling a strike is, however, to say that it is not up to them to do so—that it is the responsibility of the membership "at a local level."

The membership, they claim, are "apathetic" and "don't want to fight the Tories."

But take the question of defending school meals. In union branch meetings up and down the country, the membership, outraged at the attack on jobs and services, have been made "apathetic" by the fact that their union leaders have offered them no perspective for a fight to stop the school meals cuts.

They are told they have to find solutions at a local level and that there is to be no nationally organised campaign.

This means that instead of mobilising the strength of the whole union the fight is left up to isolated sections already run down to skeleton staff by the union leaders' acceptance of "natural wastage" and huge price rises in school meal prices.

The members are assured, especially in NUPE, that there would be no public support for any strike action as we are in the grip of a prejudiced national press who will only portray our actions as inflicting suffering on the helpless!

With leaders like these who needs enemies?

Gesture

At best the union leaders offer members the gesture of a one-day or half-day token strike—which many members reject as being pointless, and just a straight loss of pay.

Usually, however, the leadership say that since the rest of the membership won't fight, no strike is better than an unsupported strike.

One way and the other union members are encouraged to settle for no action.

In many other cases defensive action against the cuts, like the use of strike action, is not even discussed and the real leadership, seeking the point of least resistance, fight to get members to accept voluntary redundancy schemes (GMWU Hull, Oxford County NUPE).

Other well-known arguments familiar to the many women in the membership of



United against action to bring down the Tories: NUPE leader Fisher, and Labourites Hattersley and Kinnock

the public sector unions is that the only people who suffer from strike action in the public sector are the people we are paid to look after.

A desperate picture is painted of geriatrics abandoned as old people's homes go on strike or the sick dying in hospital wards as the heating is cut off.

Strike action presented in this way is therefore immediately dismissed as impossible by the members who care very deeply about the services that they provide.

What is not placed before them is the whole question of emergency cover, that in strike action the services would not necessarily be withdrawn but placed under workers' control. The strike committee should decide on what provisions had to be made and would decide not to withdraw home-helps, for example, from essential jobs.

We would not be inflicting suffering on the users of the public sector but would be dealing an enormous political blow by taking these services out of management's hands and running them ourselves with the workers deciding on emergency cover.

Cover provided

Such cover was provided during the firemen's national strike and the strikes of ambulance drivers.

The point that is never raised by the national leadership of NUPE, GMWU, and NALGO is that it really shouldn't be left up to the membership in 'caring' sections to take action alone on a local level.

What isn't stressed is that nationally the three public sector unions have the power to bring the country to a standstill. They control our cities, the water works, sewage, waste disposal, our roads, courts and local government offices.

Full all-out strike action, not an odd day's stoppage here and there, could well end Tory rule.

What is needed is a strong lead from a national level. The stakes must be clearly placed before the working class: either we must endure three more years of Tory rule, the end of our social services, the loss of still more jobs and union rights; or we fight for national strike action.

Such a fight can be waged along with other sections like BL and the miners in a determined drive to kick out the Tories and replace them with a government committed to socialist policies and answerable to the working class that has put them in office.

We know, however, that Fisher and the rest of the TUC stand in complete opposition to a mass mobilisation of the working class against the Tories.

As a result the Tories have a free hand to carve up our social services and to inflict what they like on the working class while the TUC feebly crawl to talks with Thatcher—hoping to persuade her to make a U-turn!

Now that the talks have predictably failed, what have the TUC to offer? More one-off demonstrations? Or perhaps every union is going to follow NUPE's example and buy shares in a local radio station to help educate the 'public' on the effects of Tory policies?

Meanwhile as the leaders continue to argue that their membership "won't fight" the fact is that every time there is a focus for a struggle—like the St Benedicts Hospital occupation and the Eileen Crosby victimisation in Nottingham, it is the membership and the 'public' who respond while the union leaders leave them isolated on a national level, left to be picked off by the Tories one by one.

The St Benedicts occupation just like all the other occupations—Wandsworth and Coventry nurseries, Fulham Baths, St. Columba's—should have had full supporting strike action from the unions involved, the moment they were threatened with eviction.

Occupations should be established immediately to defend threatened facilities, with full scale back-up strike action.

Labour-run local authorities should refuse to implement cuts, not put up rents and rates, repudiate interest charges and in the event of any victimisation call upon immediate supporting strike action.

Strike action

Strike action is the most effective weapon of the working class to defend our interests from Tory devastation. So why don't the trade union leaders use it?

They don't want to use it because they are terrified of the power a general strike would give to the working class: workers have the potential power to bring down governments, they have to power to change the whole social system on which the labour bureaucracy depends for its privileges.

Were this power ever unleashed the working class could end capitalism.

This is why, in the fight against the Tories, we are also engaged in the fight against our existing leaders—for a new leadership in the labour movement.

We need a leadership that is prepared to fight tooth and nail for our interests not for those of the employers and their ruling system.

Enough is enough! Stop the TUC making excuses! Force action now!

TORY SLUMP

Women driven back into home

While the monthly unemployment figures continue to give an idea of the general impact of Tory policies and the capitalist crisis, another set of statistics shows the rapid decline in total jobs available.

The quarterly figures for employment published in the Financial Times show that 185,000 less jobs existed in June than in March of this year.

Between June 1979–June 1980 no less than 405,000 jobs disappeared, as the number of workers employed fell to 21.9 million.

This fall in twelve months is nearly double the total decline in jobs that took place during the two years of the 1974-76 recession—and of course since June the pace of redundancies and closures has greatly increased.

But the special oppression of women is highlighted by a comparison between the fall in the numbers employed and the smaller rise in the number registered as unemployed.

Though 405,000 less people were in work, the rise in unemployment over the same period was just under 300,000.

In other words the working population fell by some 100,000—despite the fact that the number of people of work-

ing age has recently been rising by 200,000 every year—a discrepancy of some 300,000!

At the same time there has been a definite fall in the female labour force of 135,000 between June 1979–June 1980.

In other words, more and more married women, thrown out of their jobs by redundancies and closures but ineligible for unemployment benefits, are failing to register as unemployed—and are being forced to revert to a dependent existence in the home as housewives.

These figures of course fail to account fully for the massive loss of part-time jobs in the public services and private industry, which has also predominantly hit women workers.

As the cuts begin to bite home and the Tories plan their next round of social spending cuts, the numbers of women confined to the home will be further increased, as more and more find themselves forced to cope with sick and aged relatives, denied nursery and child-care facilities, and denied even the chance of taking the low-paid jobs in the public services traditionally designated "women's work".

Only the fight for a socialist solution that can expand the social services, expand production and create new jobs can end this mounting oppression.

Bosses divided on way forward

Amid growing signs of disarray in the Thatcher cabinet, even the most staunch Tory employers are beginning to lend their weight to the "wets" in their pleas for a relaxation of the government's relentless monetarist strategy.

Anguished bleats from textile employers, electronics firms and others have become as commonplace as the nationalist demands for "import controls" from union leaders who refuse to lift a finger to mobilise action in defence of jobs.

But now, in the wake of the first-ever balance sheet loss for ICI, Britain's biggest corporation, bosses of the country's giant chemical monopolies have weighed in with demands that Chancellor Geoffrey Howe take "speedy action" to cut interest rates and bring down the value of the pound.

A letter from the Chemicals Economic Development Committee points out that many firms are losing almost all their export profits because of the high exchange rate.



Howe

These objections are now increasingly finding an echo within the Tory Party itself. The fragile facade of unity that was preserved at the Tories' Brighton conference has now begun to crack as MPs have openly criticised the Thatcher strategy.

Last week saw Howe floundering in Parliament as he attempted to defend the government's economic policy not only against routine Labour criticisms but also against sharp speeches from former Heath minister Geoffrey Rippon and from MPs Nicholas Winterton and William Waldegrave.

These Tory critics by no means offer any hope to the working class: rather they differ with her over tactics. They fear the consequences of Thatcher's policies in ruining sections of small and larger businessmen, and in promoting militant working class resistance.

Rippon in particular centred his criticisms on the need to cut interest rates.

And in Manchester Edward Heath himself joined the attack with an unusually blunt speech to a gathering of businessmen, where he declared that:

"Your problems are greater than at any time since the 1930s. It can't be right that we see small businesses built up by hard work over generations now being forced into bankruptcy."

It can't be right that great firms, among the most efficient in the western world, should find they are making losses because they cannot export because of the rate of the pound...

With the capitalist class itself increasingly divided on the way forward, and rumours of possible resignations from the Cabinet over the forthcoming £2 billion package of spending cuts, workers must seize the initiative and look not towards the prospects of a Thatcher "U turn", but towards the prospects of mass action to bring down the Thatcher government.

Competition SPOT DROMEY'S 'MONTH OF ACTION'

Several million trade unionists who fall under the South East Region TUC would have been surprised last week to read in the press that they are now engaged in a "month of action" against Tory economic policies.

At the press conference that launched it, Jack Dromey, SERTUC secretary, was suitably evasive as to what "action"—if any—was planned: though he was emphatic in denying any intention of staging a further May 14-style stoppage.

Unattributed rumours that the "month of action" could include secret lunchtime motorcades, meetings of SERTUC bureaucrats or even the furtive distribution of leaflets have not been confirmed by our reporters as we go to press.

But *Socialist Press* wishes to lend support to any struggle against the Tories.

We are therefore offering a free copy of our pamphlet "Bring Down the Tories This Winter" to any reader who can supply us before the end of November with information of any activity in any town called as part of the SERTUC "month of action".



Only evidence of TUC's so-called Campaign for Economic and Social Advance—a wallet of leaflets and stickers

PRESS GANG



Angus Maude, the Paymaster General, is the MP responsible for Tory public relations.

His task is to show Cabinet ministers how to present their policies, and their results, in a positive light.

It is his department that trains Howe, Joseph and the rest of them to tell workers who have a job that they should think themselves lucky and not to ask for wage rises.

One of the main planks of his strategy for the coming winter is to stress the 'gains' already made and urge workers not to make their sacrifices in vain.

It was no doubt Maude who masterminded Howe's statement that it would be "folly" to abandon policies "when they are beginning to produce results".

This no doubt is based on the old medical theory that if something is really unpleasant then it *must* be doing you good.

It may be surprising that this government needs public relations, since the Tory press is already skilled at presenting Tory policies in a 'positive' light.

Articles vainly proclaiming the imminent restoration of prosperity have been appearing for months in the *Sun*, the *Mail*

and the *Express*.

But the course of propaganda never does run smooth.

The ink on the adulation heaped on Thatcher at the Tory conference was hardly dry before some of those supposedly behind the government began complaining that the medicine was laced with arsenic.

It has made the PR job that Maude and the press have to plan this winter look woefully inadequate—in stark contrast to the dexterity of Sir Michael Edwardes' PR staff in the simultaneous handling of the Mini Metro launch and the BL pay claim.

Should Maude find himself out of a job he could always offer his services to King Hassan of Morocco.

Not since Giscard d'Estaing's friend Emperor Bokassa was nailed as a practising cannibal has any royal received such an unexpectedly hostile press.

BRING THE QUEEN HOME TODAY demanded the *Sun*.

Their report of the royal tour of Morocco noted that the Queen felt obliged to tap her foot with impatience and (most significant of all) "fiddled with her belt" at the outrages she had to endure at the hands of this shiftless Arab despot.

Such are the constitutional

changes that have taken place over the past four hundred years that belt fiddling (almost invisible to the naked eye) is the pallid twentieth century substitute for chopping off a few heads.

So disconsolate was the Queen, we were told, that to cheer herself up she was reduced to watching her guardsmen drilling up and down the decks of the Royal Yacht Britannia—apparently one of her favourite pastimes.

But it was not all fun. She was forced to sit for hours watching foreign tribesmen riding about on horses, wait 20 minutes for lunch and other such indignities.

She was seen pointing to her programme although the press (who manage to get their feet in everyone else's doors) claimed not to be able to hear what she was saying.

Was it all worth it for the possible sale of a few more Metros? Should the Monarch of half the world be expected to listen to a lot of Arabs making speeches?

If the Queen is reduced to fiddling with her belt, what would be the fate of Margaret Thatcher?

For the answers to these and other burning questions write to Angus Maude at Tory Central Office.

'Blackest ever-getting worse'—CBI chief

"This is our blackest survey ever, and we have not touched bottom yet. There is worse to come."

So spoke Sir Terence Beckett, the former boss of

Ford UK who is now heading a vocal campaign by the CBI for a change in Thatcher's economic policies.

So bad is the situation, he says, that the CBI is having to look at the pre-war slump to

find parallels.

Companies are shedding labour faster than any time in the last 20 years, and investment is expected to decline by over 10% next year.

"Project after project is being rejected by companies and

many other business are closing down. The longer the government delays, the longer the dole queues will grow."

A staggering 84% of the 2,000 firms covered by the latest CBI survey declare that they are working below a satis-

factory rate of operation.

Beckett pleads with the government to implement a 4% cut in interest rates in a desperate bid to bring down the value of sterling from its present "crazy level".

The desertion of the CBI

leadership from the Thatcher camp does not signal any benevolence towards the working class: as ruined businessmen they are demanding that the burden of Tory policy fall on the public sector rather than their profits.

A new series Why build a revolutionary party? 1. The Crisis



By John Lister

If you wonder why *Socialist Press* argues the necessity to build a revolutionary party to lead the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system, it is worth first of all casting an eye at the state of capitalism itself.

With unemployment soaring, industrial production falling, modern factories closing, investment cut back and inflation still running at 16%; with social services crumbling after

repeated savage cuts, hospitals closing, schools and nurseries axed and council housing at a standstill; and with sickness unemployment and social security benefits slashed, while virtually endless sums are made available for new weapons systems and war plans, it is plain that we are not witnessing a string of exceptional problems. There must be something rotten at the heart of the system.

Indeed while workers and factories stand idle in Britain and other major capitalist countries—bringing the agony of unemployment—countless

millions of workers and poor peasants in the underdeveloped countries face the untold misery of starvation, grinding poverty and the constant lack of what we regard as the most basic necessities of life—food, shelter, clothing or transport.

The fact that manufacturing firms in Britain have decided to cease producing an ever growing range of commodities—from textiles to televisions, from motor cars to fertilisers, does not mean that there is no need for such commodities on a world scale.

It means simply that for the handful of capitalists who own the major banks, trusts and

manufacturing monopolies there is insufficient profit to be gained from production.

And since under capitalism production takes place solely in order to realise profit, there are no second thoughts: factories are closed down, regardless of the consequences in terms of lost jobs or the loss of commodities vitally needed elsewhere in the world.

How are we to respond to this situation? Are we to believe the bare-faced lies of the Tories when they assure us that the destruction of British industry today is the only way to create "real jobs" tomorrow?

Are we to believe Sir Geoffrey Howe, when he claims that the Thatcher government's policies are "only just beginning to work"?

It is more and more obvious to workers that the Tory road is one towards the restoration of profits for the tiny minority at the expense of long-term mass unemployment, devastated social services and depressed living standards for the vast majority of the population.

But what kind of alternative do the Labour leaders have to offer? Wilson and Callaghan in office showed that Labour's policies are simply an attempt to manage capitalism—to increase the profitability of industry at the expense of work-

ing class living standards in the hopes that at some time in the indefinite future they can legislate a few piecemeal reforms.

Yet for all the anti-Tory rhetoric peddled by Labour's left-wing and their pipe-dreams of "planning" the economy through state hand-outs to private industry, the fact is that it is the crisis of profitability which is the driving force in the capitalist crisis.

The Tories are proving that they are unable to control the system; the last Labour government proved conclusively that seeking to 'reform' a bankrupt economy must lead them to attack the working class.

What are workers to conclude from this dilemma? Are we to shrug our shoulders, mumble "They're all the same", and simply put up with the destruction of hard-won living standards and basic rights?

We say that such an attitude makes the going easy for Thatcher—and easier still for the Labour right wing who have betrayed the working class so many times in office.

We must recognise that the destruction of productive forces, the squandering of precious raw materials, the scourge of unemployment, and the misery of mass poverty are not natural disasters, but the

bitter fruits of an anarchic capitalist system.

That system has not always existed. It established itself in Britain only after a great revolution, which in 1649 reached its climax with the execution of King Charles I.

To establish an alternative system—a planned socialist system of production for social need rather than private greed—a new revolution is needed: a revolution in which the vast majority of society rises up, to drive out the Thatcher government and any other government that stands for the defence of capitalist exploitation, and to install a genuine workers' government, answerable to the organised working class.

The machinery of state, through which the bankers and industrialists protect their private wealth and profits—in particular the police, army and judiciary—must be dismantled, and a workers' state established to oversee a planned socialist economy.

Only in this way can we solve today's problems of poverty and unemployment and open the door to a future of peace and prosperity.

And that is one reason why we in the Workers Socialist League urge you to join our fight to build a revolutionary party.

After the Lancaster House MUGABE'S GOVERNMENT DIGS IN AGAINST WORKERS

The underlying social, political and economic tension and conflict in Zimbabwe—which the Lancaster House imperialist deal was designed to contain—are beginning to surface more and more openly.

Each day, and each move Mugabe makes, brings a new threat to the always unstable balance of class forces on which he first acquired and now seeks to maintain his position as Prime Minister.

Conflict is set to flare up around a range of specific issues.

But the basic conflict remains that between a capitalist state which, despite the level of mass struggle and Mugabe's organisational changes, remains politically intact in defence of private property and profits—and a working class and its oppressed allies which, despite the politically damaging effect of the Patriotic Front imperialist deal and the level of state repression, remains undefeated, and bound to move into struggle around a wide range of issues.

Obstacle

Each day, workers, peasants and militants are coming up against the fact, not merely that Mugabe's government is not meeting their interests, but that it is a *bosses' government*, which stands as an obstacle in the struggle to meet those interests.

Frustration, resentment and anger are growing amongst the oppressed social layers from which the Patriotic Front built its armies and then drew its mass electoral support—the hundreds and thousands of peasants and workers of Zimbabwe.

Tens of thousands of guerrillas remain incarcerated in camps, with no real prospect of adequate housing or jobs.

As part of his effort to control his former army, Mugabe is seeking to make limited housing available in the urban areas—conditional upon guerrillas surrendering their weapons and accepting the discipline of the army and police.

And he is using aid from the Thatcher government to pay for British military advice in his efforts to dismantle his former army and build up a solid loyal officer corps within the national army.

Major-General Patrick Palmer, commander of the British forces in Zimbabwe, said recently:

"One of the most important needs in Zimbabwe at present is to consolidate the stability of the country. I believe that the British Army is making a big contribution towards achieving that."

Advisory team

The general commands 130 soldiers, marines and airmen who comprise the British training and advisory team in Zimbabwe. They form by far the largest British military training operation anywhere in the world.

Former Patriotic Front



Worker on Zimbabwe sugar plantation

military commanders have been unable to maintain their authority in the face of growing discontent amongst the guerrillas.

With many of them drawn into the privileged positions of the governing bureaucracy and a privileged officer caste, they have relied on the army and police to defend their position against growing rebellion.

Maintain control

In recent weeks, Mugabe has been forced to use the existing army and police force to maintain control over "dissident" guerrillas.

In his flirtation with land redistribution—made immediately possible by the desertion of large areas of land by white landowners, (and almost unavoidable by spontaneous peasant seizures of unoccupied land in some areas), Mugabe has zealously avoided questioning the position of the banks, big business and capitalist farmers who control agriculture.

He has in fact used much essential cash aid, not for socially useful needs, but as compensation for capitalist farmers.

Despite much rhetoric and limited reality, the land redistribution which has occurred has left untouched private ownership of the big capitalist farms.

More than half the farming land is still owned by just over 5,000 white capitalist farmers.

While those who work on the land are starved of training, implements, machinery and

credit, even genuine land redistribution cannot in itself substantially change the conditions of life of the rural poor.

It is only if any redistribution were accompanied by the expropriation of the big capitalist farms and the banks and businesses which finance them that the condition of life of all those working on the land could be freed from the oppressive dictates of capitalist profitability and the market.

The dominance of finance capital over all spheres of production means that agricultural production will remain geared to profit.

And where agricultural production is geared towards profit, not need, the rural poor are doomed to a struggle for survival.

In the name of such redistribution, Mugabe is also seeking to control the discontent, concentrated amongst the hundreds of thousands who left the rural areas where the war was being waged.

'Superfluous'

As part of a programme to reduce the urban population to its pre-war levels, aid from the United Nations refugee fund is being used to dump superfluous population on their 'redistributed land'—without any social services, prospect of employment, or even the barest agricultural subsistence minimum.

In some areas, those resettled have left, and returned illegally to the urban areas.

Faced with the absence of

any real change, and a growing suspicion of Mugabe's capacity to deliver it, the rural poor are becoming increasingly resentful and hostile.

While Robert Mugabe was meeting Lord Carrington an elderly tribesman was expressing bewilderment that no fewer than 26 people had travelled with the Zimbabwe Prime Minister at government expense.

Rapping the earth with his walking stick, he complained: "They're always flying off to somewhere or other. They don't come to see us anymore."

In the Chinamora Tribal Trust Land—25 miles from the capital's centre, villagers showed their disdain for the new government by refusing to accept 10-kilogram bags of fertiliser distributed by party officials.

"We told them to use it on their lawns in Salisbury. That's just about all you could use such a small amount for," a young man said.

Struggles in the rural areas, and the growing rebellion amongst sections of guerrillas have served as the most evident flashpoints of the underlying instability.

But it is in the struggles of the urban working class, and in the economically dominant urban industrial centres that the most fundamental political crises in Zimbabwe will be posed, and their resolution determined.

For despite the oppression of the peasantry, it is only the independent class interests of the working class which consistently direct against capitalism, and it is the working class

alone which is capable of leading the revolutionary mass struggle for socialism.

Already in the unprecedented wave of strikes following Mugabe's victory, workers have given clear notice of their determination to turn the new situation to their own advantage.

Rural poverty and the impact of the war have combined to accelerate the population growth in the urban areas—at a rate which has far outstripped the provision of always pathetically inadequate social services.

Massive crisis

Even the most optimistic estimates of economic growth cannot hide the continuing massive crisis of unemployment facing the youth particularly heavily.

In 1979 there were about 250,000 jobless (from a labour force of about 1 million). They have been joined by 28,000 demobilised members of the former army, at least 50,000 returning refugees, 50,000 school leavers and at least 20,000 former guerrillas.

With inflation at well over 10% the mass of workers in the urban areas are bound to step up their demands around issues such as housing, jobs and wages.

In the face of this massive seething discontent, the capitalist employers are taking comfort from the way in which the Patriotic Front bureaucracy has turned from "championing"



Urban living conditions for Zimbabwe

workers' rights, to actively seeking to demobilise and suppress any independent attempt by workers to pursue these rights.

Reflecting on the haste with which Patriotic Front bureaucrats have grabbed economic spoils for themselves, employers are recognising the basis for an alliance in defence of economic privilege.

And they are reassuring themselves with the spectacle of Mugabe, who after years of threatening to 'lead' his guerrilla army to 'liberate' Salisbury, is now using Smith's police to shoot any guerrilla caught in Salisbury with arms.

But employers and privileged sections of the petty bourgeoisie cannot ignore the anger, discontent and continuing demand for change from the oppressed masses.

Capitalists are withholding investment, waiting for surer signs of Mugabe's ability to control his base—or, what amounts to the same thing—guarantee their property and profits at the expense of the working class.

Profits

In the supposed quest for jobs and economic development, Mugabe is desperately seeking to guarantee profits and win capitalist confidence.

But capitalist profits and confidence demand an increase in the very exploitation and political control over workers which led them into struggle in the first place.

In the face of a growing

Settlement Government Workers

By
Jim
Farnham



Signing the Lancaster House settlement



Zimbabwe working class

mood of resistance amongst workers and their oppressed allies, capitalist employers and reactionary layers of the petty bourgeoisie are becoming increasingly strident in their demands for the "restoration" of "law and order".

Reactionaries are not relying simply upon the Patriotic Front bureaucracy; nor upon British imperialist supervision over the army; nor even upon the existing, largely untouched police force, civil service and judiciary.

They are preparing their own methods of self-defence: the ever present threat of right wing terror squads is bound to emerge more and more openly as conflict escalates.

The most vicious elements of the Rhodesian army have not, as Mugabe claims, been disbanded. By and large, they have been geographically redeployed, ready to defend the capitalist state from across the South African border.

And South Africa's political-military bosses have repeatedly warned of their determination to take further military action Zimbabwe if there is "a breakdown in law and order."

Manoeuvring more and more frantically between these opposing forces, seeking to protect their own economic and political privilege, the Patriotic Front bureaucracy act to shackle the working class to the reformist illusion that through class collaboration a solution can be found which guarantees capitalist profits and meets the needs of workers and their oppressed allies.

Increasingly, Mugabe's

supporters will be objectively confronted by the political legacy of his popular frontist class collaboration.

Within days of being voted by the masses to form a government to serve their interests, Mugabe was throwing their votes back into their faces to consolidate a class collaborationist bosses' government, as an obstacle to those interests.

Irrelevant

Rank and file ZANU militants are coming up against the fact that their majority in Parliament is irrelevant, when power itself lies outside of Parliament.

Workers and peasants are being confronted by the fact that class oppression and exploitation cannot be voted, or legislated out of existence.

And the legacy of popular frontist guerrillism is being experienced for what it is—not the triumphant construction of socialism by a broad front united in struggle, but frustration and disillusion among the oppressed which can even lead to militaristic acts of terror against workers and peasants.

But anger, determination and the objective experience of confronting class collaboration are not themselves adequate weapons for the workers' struggle.

What is required is the policy, perspective programme and organisation which can equip the working class to turn the situation to their own advantage.

The crucial crisis facing the working class is one of leadership.

In the absence of revolutionary leadership, suspicion and anger—the product of Patriotic Front class collaboration—can turn to frustration and confusion—fertile grounds for reactionaries and opportunists, ready to exploit every grievance of the working class to their own advantage.

Wherever the capitalist right to profit is conceded, and the productive forces remain backward or geared towards profit, scarcity must prevail, and under such conditions workers can be turned against workers in pursuit of their immediate interests.

Every attempt to develop progressive socialist relations on the basis of backward productive forces, or those geared exclusively to the production of profit, not the meeting of human needs, is doomed to failure.

It is not inconceivable that Mugabe himself, or left reformists within the Patriotic Front, under the weight of mass pressure, or to secure greater leverage with imperialism, or as a frantic effort to cling to power, may use the parliamentary majority and the limited power of government to legislate apparently substantial reforms.

But socialism cannot be won and the real interests of workers cannot be met through legislation.

Those struggles can only be won by the strength of the working class mobilised around



Gone are the days when Mugabe called for power to the masses



Mugabe

an independent working class programme, fighting through independent working class organisations, with the support of all oppressed against the capitalist state.

Reaction

Any reformist effort to legislate socialism on the basis of a capitalist state is bound to provoke a capitalist reaction—

against a working class which has been politically misled, tranquillised and disarmed by reformist illusions.

Of course every change which threatens capitalists' rights and power to maximise profits inevitably threatens to provoke a capitalist reaction.

But it is one thing for reaction to be provoked by the mobilised strength of the working class, fighting for its independent class interests.

It is entirely another for it to be provoked against a working class politically weakened and looking to parliamentary leaders to accomplish reforms on their behalf.

This is why revolutionaries do not see, wait for, or rely upon any reforms from Mugabe as steps towards socialism.

On the contrary, they consistently seek to build, against Mugabe and his bosses' government, the political independence and organisational forms which alone can defend partial reforms, and extend them to the genuine advantage of the working class.

Agitational means must be found to highlight the contradiction and class division between the Mugabe regime—with its links to capital in Zimbabwe and internationally—and its popular support.

The demand for the opening of the books of industry, the banks and the agricultural monopolies to elected committees of workers and poor peasants can play a key role in exposing the level of exploitation that continues under Mugabe and the necessity for independent class action to create the basis for a planned, socialist economy.

Working class

For it is only the mobilised strength of the working class, under the leadership of a revolutionary party and programme, and building support from all oppressed that can lead a defence against the threat of capitalist reaction and build the only solution in the interests of the working class—the workers' and peasants' government, based on the independent organisations of the working class and its oppressed allies.

*For armed workers' and peasants' self-defence. Build workers' militia.

*Build the independent organisations of the working class—in the factories and mines, on farms and communities.

*Open the books of industry, the banks, the trusts, the agricultural concerns!

*Down with the parliament of privilege. No secret diplomacy and trade deals.

*For a genuine constituent assembly. Down with the bosses' government. For a workers' government, based on the independent organisations of the working class.

*Nationalise the land. Expropriate the capitalist farmers and develop collectives under workers' control.

*For a planned, socialist economy.

*Solidarity from all sections of the international labour movement with the continuing anti-imperialist struggle in Zimbabwe.

*Aid and trade for workers needs, not bosses' profits and bureaucrats' privilege.

*For workers' control of aid and trade.

*Build the South African revolution—essential to defend and carry through anti-imperialist struggles throughout Southern Africa.

Labour Party... Trotskyist history... Scotland

Silence on Scotland

Dear Comrades,

Perhaps the most disturbing feature of the recent trial and sentence of the Scottish Republicans at Glasgow has been the total absence of comment in the press of the far left.

One can hardly believe that this would have been the case had these events occurred in London.

Many Republicans who consider themselves as socialists follow the arguments of MacLean and accuse the far left of being 'London dominated organisations' and as long as situations such as this are left unremedied, protests to the contrary will cut little ice.

This is especially so when one considers the record of the left in defence of Mathew Lygate of the Scottish Workers Party, who received one of the heaviest prison sentences in Scottish legal history.

Of course, we have serious differences with the urban guerrilla strategy, but the only way to win these people from their erroneous conceptions is by being the first to defend them against the bourgeois state.

Yours fraternally,
Charles Palmer.

Don't criticise Benn

Dear Sir/Madam,

Every so often I buy the paper *Socialist Press*. Some of the articles I find very good. Some I find very bad.

I bought it the other day—No 217. I do not agree with your headline and article, which pointed out the shortcomings of Tony Benn, Duffy etc.

I do not agree because your stand will lead to confusion! How is it possible for a socialist organisation to ignore the mood which is sweeping the country since the Labour Party Conference?

To many, Benn is the radical socialist who will transform society—given the chance.

I feel it should be your duty to support Benn all the way, but pointing out his mistakes as well. This must be the correct attitude.

On the same topic, putting Benn in the same camp as Duffy leads only to confusion.

Cheers.

I have not signed my name because it is your tradition—no-one signs their name in the paper.

If our reader looked at the paper more often he would see that we by no means ignore 'the mood which is sweeping the country since the Labour Party conference'.

We entirely support the movements to democratise the party and to prevent the repetition of the betrayals of former Labour governments.

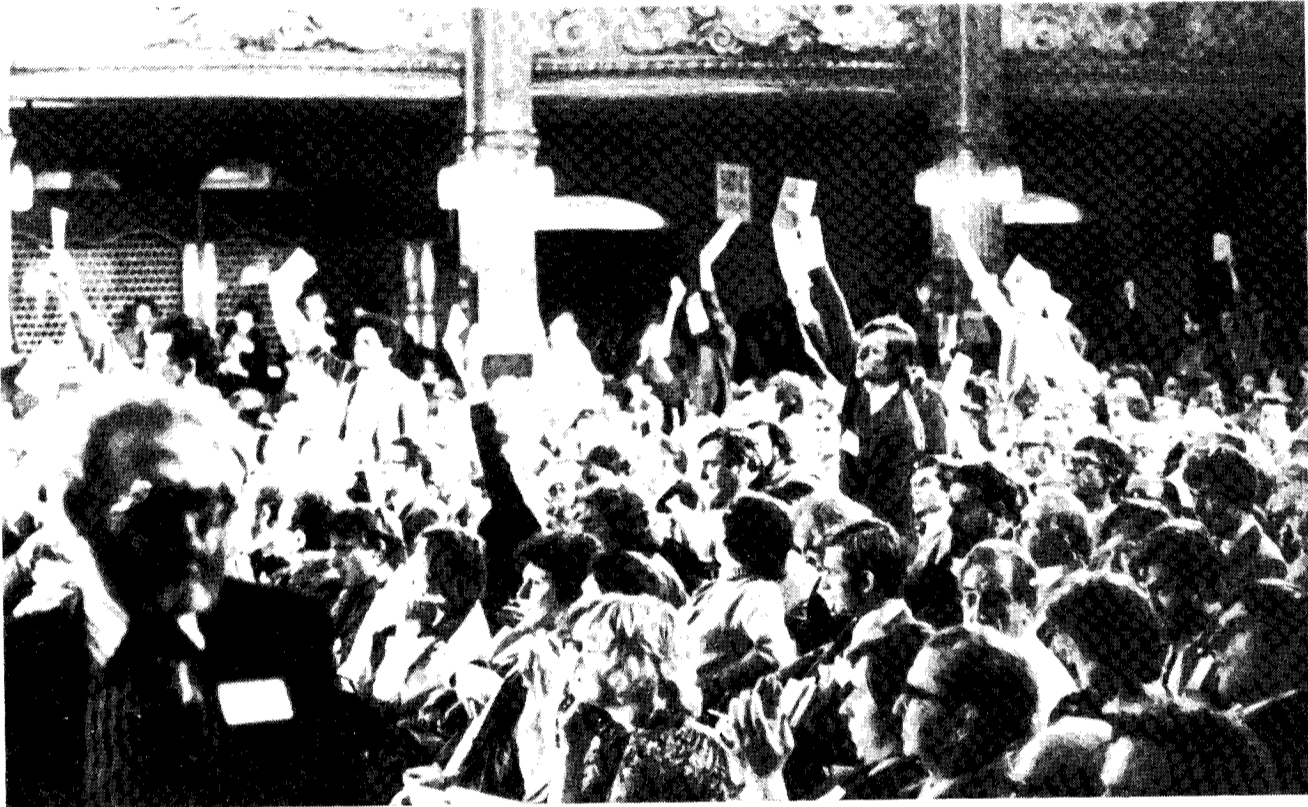
We support every move that Benn, or anybody else, takes in this direction. However we do not consider that Benn, adhering as he does to a perspective of seeking to reform capitalism through Parliament will pursue the issue as far as is necessary.

We hope that the comrade who wrote the letter will help us test this out in practice.

We would certainly be prepared to fill a page with letters on this issue—and similar topics of debate in the labour movement. We would encourage readers, (anonymous or not!) to write to us setting out their views.

READERS WRITE

We welcome letters on any topic—preferably less than 400 words.



Constituency delegates at the Blackpool Labour Party Conference

Important changes in Labour Party

Dear Comrade Editor,

The test of any organisation which is seriously fighting to build a revolutionary party is as much its ability to recognise important political developments and draw the necessary strategic conclusions as it is to defend the programme against attempts to liquidate it.

Recent issues of *Socialist Press* show graphically that the Workers Socialist League is able to do the former as well as the latter.

I would like to continue the debate which has begun since the historic developments which took place at the Labour Party conference and take up where comrade Lister left off in his reply to Colin Morrow and William G. (*Socialist Press* 219).

It is interesting to note that even comrades Morrow and G. seem to have been affected by the clear manifestation of a significant shift to the left by a whole section of the Labour Party.

Who would have thought even a few weeks ago that such principled "granite hard" Bolsheviks as Morrow and G. would have referred to Tony Benn as a centrist?

Leaving aside whether or not this is a correct scientific description of Benn the important point is that the unchallengeable fact which Trotskyists have to face is that something significant is happening to the Labour Party.

A combination of the pressure from the working class, a clear failure of successive Labour governments to make any impact on the chaotic effects of capitalist crisis and the clear decision of the ruling class to launch a major assault on the working class have produced a major ferment

which reaches right to the top of left social democracy.

The recognition by *Socialist Press* of the emergence of a new anti-capitalist mass movement must be followed quickly by a wide-ranging discussion amongst Trotskyists of what needs to be done now to make serious steps towards regrouping and politically sharpening that movement into an instrument which can be used by the working class—a revolutionary party.

The central arena of the fight for a revolutionary programme must now become the Labour Party.

The time when it was necessary to build organisations outside the mass party of the workers' movement is now over.

Trotskyists have always sought to stand alongside other socialist currents within the Labour Party fighting for our policies and perspectives.

The real "entrists" are those such as David Owen, Shirley Williams and Reg Prentice—the people who through their bureaucratic hold on the party and their openly pro-capitalist programme have witch-hunted revolutionaries out or demoralised them into leaving in disgust.

If revolutionaries adopt a fraternal approach to those who are fighting the Callaghans and Healeys of this world and debate out the elements of our strategy then the days of left organisations numbering only hundreds will be over and a new stage in the fight for a revolutionary programme will be on the agenda.

One final comment—the development of the class struggle tests out all those organisations claiming to be revolutionary, also throws into perspective the differences

which have led the Trotskyists to form different organisations.

It is to be hoped the tremendous opportunities opening up before us will force us all to question the significance of the many petty differences which have prevented us from combining our resources for the great task we have to face.

It is, therefore, particularly heartening to me to note that *Socialist Press* 219 reports the agreement of supporters of *Socialist Organiser* and *Socialist Press* to present joint amendments to the conference called by Lambeth Council.

Roll on the day when supporters of these two papers can stop competing and produce one journal.

Yours fraternally,
K.W.
Coventry

Editor's reply

*It is only fair to point out in reply to comrade K.W. that *Socialist Press* and *Socialist Organiser* are not so much "competing" with each other as struggling to carry out very different political tasks.

For *Socialist Organiser*, the perspective is to map out a minimum basis of principled agreement for the formation of a left wing current within the Labour Party.

For *Socialist Press*, the task we set is to spell out as fully as possible the full programme for the building of a revolutionary party, drawing forces from the whole labour and trade union movement—including of course many elements who are not currently active Labour Party supporters.

There are obviously important areas in which these two

Errors in report on Trotskyist history

Dear Comrade,

I notice a slight error has crept into your report of the Conference of the Group for the Study of Leon Trotsky and the Revolutionary movement described in the article 'Lessons from History of British Trotskyism' in your paper on October 8th.

You talk of 'Matlow and Palsey' as being part of the Trotskyist entry into the ILP and as being members of the Revolutionary Policy Committee. I presume that by 'Palsey' you mean Joe Pawsey.

Actually, Matlow was not so much an entrant as a recruit, and the same goes for Pawsey as far as I am aware.

Reg Groves remembers Matlow as being in Clapham ILP at the time that they had close contacts with the Balham Group, but says that Matlow never actually joined the Communist League.

Naturally, when the group led by Denzil Harber and Jim Woods split off from the Balham group to enter the ILP Matlow joined them when they came in, and due to his pre-eminent organising ability became secretary of the Marxist Group that the Trotskyists set up in the ILP a year later.

In addition to this, I feel you should have pointed—and so should the speaker at that conference—that the interest in and ferment of semi-Trotskyist and Trotskyist ideas in the ILP had already had a long history before the split of 1932.

Apart from articles in the ILP paper supporting the struggle of the Left Opposition against the Stalinist bureaucracy, there were such comrades as the late Hugo Dewar, who as organiser of Frank Ridley's semi-Trotskyist 'Marxian League' continued to work in the ILP and regarded himself as a supporter of Trotskyism in its fullest sense before the Balham group had declared its opposition to the Communist Party line.

Others in the group were also ILP members. Only later when the Marxian League split, did Dewar, Graham, etc join the struggle of the Trotskyists inside the Communist Party. On top of this, the Communist League itself recruited four members of the ILP and used them to distribute their propaganda for Trotskyism in the ranks of that party.

I feel that neither the speaker, nor your report, appear to be aware of this and the impression is maintained that the ILP's first contact with Trotskyism was the entry of Harber and the others.

This impression, I am sure, does not stem from any conscious intention to distort the facts, but it seems so common in all the discussions of the history of our movement during that period that I feel obliged to write to you about it.

Incidentally also, a deliberate blanket of silence does appear to have been placed over the history of the Marxian League of Frank Ridley and Chandu Ram ('Aggrawala') by all who discuss the early period of Trotskyism in this country, which I consider to be doing history a disservice.

In spite of Ridley's rather individual views, his pioneering role should not be undervalued: quite a few of the later talented recruits to the Trotskyism movement received their first training in his organisation—Dr Worrall, Max Nicholls, Gerry Bradley, Dewar etc.

Finally, I feel I should bring this rather long letter to a close by informing your readers of the sad deaths of so many of the veterans of the movement in this year.

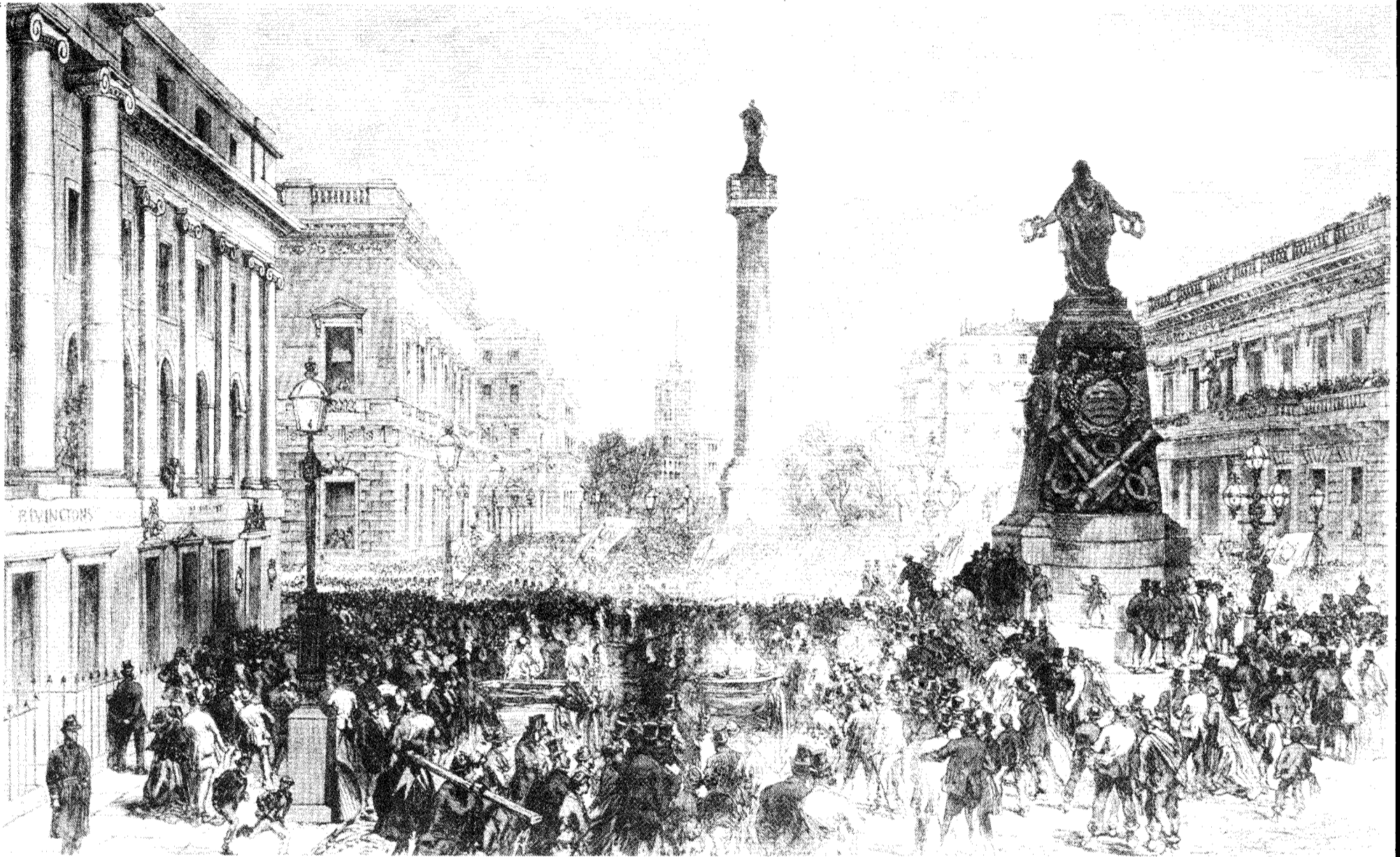
Apart from Dewar—whose last letter to me setting the historical record straight should be published by someone—we have also lost Frederick Marzillier, who shared with Matlow the organising of the Marxist Group in the ILP and Arthur Cooper, Trotsky's old opponent in the discussion over Labour Party entry in 1936, who continued faithful to the movement throughout many vicissitudes.

If you feel incapable of publishing the rest of the letter due to length and content, I would be most grateful if you would at least pass on this unwelcome news to your readers.

Fraternally,
Al Richardson.

Karl Marx and the fight for the First International

By Neil Garrett



A trade union demonstration in London in 1867

In the struggle for revolutionary politics today militants stand on the gains established by Karl Marx, Engels and the early leaders of the Communist movement.

Marx co-wrote the Communist Manifesto, and spelled out the detailed economic analysis of the capitalist system embodied in *Capital*. But, together with Engels, he also played a key role in the fight for internationalism in the construction of the First International.

The first international arose out of the struggles of the working class in the first half of the nineteenth century.

The main movements were in Britain and France which were the most industrialised capitalist countries in the world.

Britain played a major role because it was the first country to have trade unions and a politicised working class which grew around the Chartist movement in the 1840s.

Before 1864 a number of attempts were made to set up some form of International Workers Association and were centred mainly in England; Julian Harney set up the "Society of Fraternal Democrats" in London in 1845 which became a refuge for political exiles from all over Europe.

In 1850 Ernest Jones established the "International Committee" which held mass rallies and demonstrations in Paris and London.

Finally there was the "Communist League" which

helped Marx and Engels to write the "Communist Manifesto" in 1847.

The strengthening of capitalism in the 1840s and '50s and the suppression of workers' revolts and trade unions in Europe isolated the "leaders" from the workers; but with the economic crisis in 1857, the Italian war of Independence in 1859 and the American Civil War the working class resistance again began to gather strength.

Badly affected

Britain and France were badly affected by increased competition from the developing nations such as America, Italy, and Germany. They began to employ foreign workers as cheap labour in the textile factories and increased unemployment.

In Britain the workers reacted by demanding "one man one vote" and similar movements developed in France.

The re-awakening of the French and British working class

also led to the growth of internationalism which led to a meeting in London on September 28 1864 of workers and trade union delegates from America and Europe.

They agreed to draw up the constitution of an International Working Mens Association which would have its first congress in Belgium in 1865.

At first Marx played a small role in setting up the IWA but believed that "the era of revolution has now fairly opened again in Europe".

He quickly became the main intellectual leader and wrote the aims of the IWA.

The address to the first meeting in 1864 was a complete indictment of capitalism as much as the "Communist Manifesto" itself.

It pointed out that in the preceding twenty years capitalist production and economic expansion had increased all over the globe as never before, yet the misery and poverty of the working class had remained the same.

The new industry and banks which the capitalists had set up had sharpened the big difference between the workers and the bosses.

Throughout the 1850s, when workers came under attack, they won victories with the passing in Parliament of the "Ten Hour Bill" which meant that workers only had to work ten hours per day and also the setting up of the co-operative movement which gave workers cheap food and clothing.

The speech to the first meeting added that the capitalist class would continue to use their economic and political privileges to maintain

their power and that the job of the working class was to "capture political power".

The workers, said Marx: "possess one element of success—numbers. But numbers are weighty in the scales only when they are united in an organisation and lead towards a conscious aim".

Basically, the aims of the International were the same as those in the *Communist Manifesto*:

- i) Only the working class can achieve its own emancipation.
- ii) Class rule has to be abolished.
- iii) Capitalism is a system of boss against workers and therefore the overthrow of capitalism is the aim to which all movements must strive.
- iv) The working class revolution is neither local nor national, but international.

This thus laid the basis for an international workers' movement, based on communist internationalism.

Marxism was thought of as a theoretical tool rather than a guide to working class action by liberals and some sections of bosses in the 1850s/60s.

Proudhon

The First International had not a majority of Marxists, but of middle class liberals, social reformists and nationalists (social chauvinists).

One leading brand of liberal socialism was expressed by the supporters of Pierre Joseph Proudhon who did not believe in smashing private property but in tinkering with the economic system and setting up co-operative societies.

The Proudhonists disapproved of the main methods of working class struggle: the trade unions, strikes, factory occupations, demonstrations and political action.

Marx's biggest battles were with Mikhail Bakunin.

Working class

Marxism bases itself on the industrial working class as the decisive force in capitalist society, while Bakunin wanted a movement dominated by the peasants, the middle class, dispossessed workers and backward, pro capitalist workers.

Bakunin became the 'father' of modern Anarchism—which reflecting the ideology of the middle class, is against all forms of authority and organisation, no matter if it is a workers' state or a fascist state.

Marx, however, was in favour of a workers' state where political and economic power is in the hands of the workers.

To set up these states there must be national, local and international communist parties.

The First International represented a milestone in the history of the working class movement. It also represented the political battles which had to be fought ahead.

The battles between Marxism, Proudhon and Bakunin brought into the open the differences between those who represented the liberal minded middle class and those who believed in a perspective of the working class overthrowing the rotten

capitalist system.

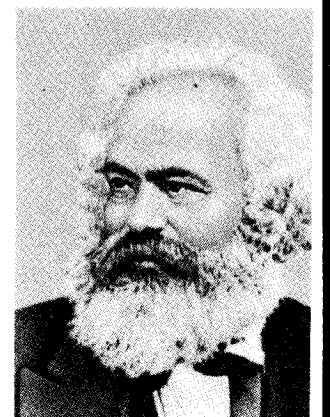
At the same time Marx was forced to combat the narrow trade union militancy of many of the British representatives.

Despite the political weakness of the First International, it was able to bring tens of thousands of workers onto the streets of London in 1866 in favour of 'one man, one vote'.

The IWA was able to stimulate the trade unions into greater contact with the working class by involving itself in the political and social life of the class.

In the late 1860s the IWA supported the workers' uprisings throughout Europe, including the Paris Commune of 1871.

All subsequent struggles for revolutionary internationalism have therefore stood on the shoulders of the gains embodied in the First International.





AHA removes cancer patients through picket line

Following close in the wake of the St. Benedicts closure, the authorities have so far been stopped in their tracks in attempts to close St. Columba's Hospital, on Hampstead Heath, London.

Listed

St. Columba's is a hospital for terminally ill cancer patients and has been listed for closure for over a year by the

Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster AHA.

Opposition to the plan by staff and local hospital trade unionists has so far prevented the closure.

Too ill

At the beginning of October, the district administrator, Mr Hunt, announced that the closure was to go ahead, and the remaining 8 patients were to be transferred.

The acting consultant at the hospital, Mr Hopkins, appeared on a Tnames Television pro-

gramme condemning the plan, declaring that the patients were too ill to be moved.

Picket mounted

The administrators responded by sacking Mr Hopkins and going ahead with the transfers.

A picket line was mounted on the hospital gates in an attempt to prevent the moves, with official backing from NUPE, and strong support from local ambulance drivers and hospital workers throughout London.

Against opposition from hospital staff, patients and a refusal by London ambulance unions to move the patients, Hunt and his team of administrators pressed ahead with their plans.

Even private ambulance companies refused to make the move. But this did not deter Hunt. On Tuesday 21 October three seriously ill patients were escorted through the picket line in minicabs.

So angry was the response from trade unionists and in the medical world, that Hunt has made no further moves since that date.

The picket line has been maintained, and opposition to the closure is spreading throughout the London labour movement.

The chairman of the neighbouring Camden and Islington AHA Mr Freedman, has visited St. Columba's and made a press statement declaring that they may be prepared to take over the hospital, providing funds can be found.

The Camden AHA meets on November 3, and the final decision will be taken there.

Whatever the Camden AHA decide, they have so far given no indication that they will prevent the transfer of the remaining patients or the redeployment of staff at St. Columba's.

Staff at the hospital and supporters of the campaign realise that it is only the mobilisation of hospital workers and trade unionists that will save St. Columba's.

Chance of victory

Local NUPE full-timers have given official backing to the picket line, and printed leaflets, but they have not even attempted to mobilise a single hospital branch against the closure.

At this time, there is still a chance of victory at St. Columba's.

If the authorities are allowed to go ahead with the transfers it will almost certainly amount to legalised murder.

Five of the St. Benedict's patients died this week after they were moved and the chances of this happening at St. Columba's are greater.

As well as supporting the picket line (from 7 am. to 5 pm. everyday, at the Hospital in Spaniards Lane NW3) local branches must pass resolutions demanding that the public sector union leadership call immediate strike action throughout London to save St. Columba's.



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.

Please send me more details of the Workers Socialist League.

Name

Address

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Send to WSL: BM Box 5277, London WC1N 3XX

Hunterston: shop stewards fight betrayal

On Monday October 20 the workers at Ayrshire Marine Constructors at Hunterston were starved back to work after eight weeks on strike.

At the meeting in Greenock James Murray, Secretary-Elect of the Boilermakers Society, managed to persuade the workforce by a 145-105 vote to return to work under the most iniquitous conditions, including the following:

1) a reduction in the labour force from 900 to 600 with everyone having to reapply for their jobs.

2) the original agreement on working conditions to remain in force until August when it can be renegotiated

3) sub-contractors to be allowed on to the site whenever the management so desire, thus weakening the possibilities for permanent trade union organisation

4) no back payments for those workers who were involved in the initial cause of the dispute, the unsafe working conditions in the yard

5) procedure to be adhered to at all times and, if anyone breaks this, they face the threat of immediate dismissal.

Murray blustered and threatened throughout the meeting, revealing at one point that even if the meeting did not go his way, he would allow the gates to be opened and scab labour to be employed.

This tenacious struggle carried on by the workers and their stewards should not be underestimated. They were not so much stabbed in the back as repeatedly stabbed in the chest by the leadership of the trade union movement, especially the General Council of the STUC and the Executive of the Boilermakers Society.

Throughout those eight weeks the stewards fought to broaden the basis of support and to compel the trade union leadership to back them. Up to the end of the strike support from trades councils, factories and other working class organisations was pouring into the strike headquarters.

It was the fear of this momentum behind the Hunterston men, fear of it becoming the focus of a real struggle against unemployment that led Milne and the leadership of the STUC, Lambie, the local Labour MP and Murray and the right wing in the Boilermakers Society into their strike breaking stance.

Lobby

When the union's annual conference met at Rothesay the week before the strike ended, 40 of the workers involved mobilised in a lobby of the conference demanding that their struggle be given official sanction.

Pressure from delegates inside the conference also mounted for a discussion on the issue, but the leadership managed to evade the question by the specious argument that a national conference could not give official backing for a "local" dispute.

The stewards who led the fight are determined that the matter shall not rest there. They intend to carry on the fight for their jobs and to take the lessons of the campaign into the trade union and labour movement.

Despite the defeat suffered last Monday, the struggle at Hunterston may yet provide the springboard for the building of a principled socialist leadership in the Boilermakers Society.

Hunterston should also be a

central issue at the projected conference on unemployment in Ayrshire.

The closure of the ICI works at Ardeer with the loss of 750 jobs and the debacle at the Stonefield factory at Cumnock must also be on the agenda of any such conference.

The programme decided upon at the recent Falkirk conference on unemployment, and reprinted in *Socialist Press* 220 provides the basis for a discussion on how to unite the labour and trade union movement in a fightback.

*Since the above report was written, we have received news that the Hunterston shop stewards are to call a rally for all shop stewards in the West of Scotland on Monday 17 November in Partick Burgh Hall at 10 am.

They intend to carry out an extensive campaign to make this a major step forward in the struggle. We urge all class conscious workers to make this a success.

The meeting has been given the support of the Clydeside Advisory Committee which consists of representatives from shipbuilding yards and engineering factories.

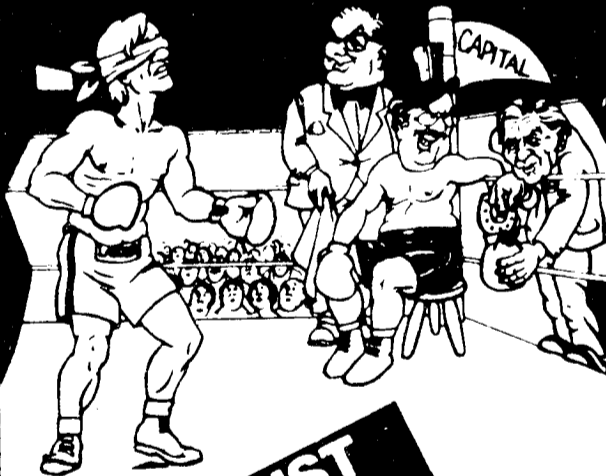
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Leyland strike... from front page

every working class family as Tory economic policies gather pace.

And while BL management plead that they "cannot afford" to pay their workers a living wage, this same line is being echoed by every employer in both the private and the public sector.

On Monday, Rolls Royce management arrogantly informed union negotiators that they were imposing a 12-month "pay freeze"—and that the only option open to the unions was to negotiate a 5% productivity deal!

In Fords management claim that profits in the second half of the year are "almost non-existent", and that therefore they are only prepared to offer a single figure pay increase.

The National Coal Board, too, has played the same old tune—turning out its empty

pockets and telling miners that they are only prepared to offer a single figure increase in reply to the NUM's 35% claim.

Throughout the public sector, Tory Chancellor Sir Geoffrey Howe has set cash limits and scheduled further cuts which dictate pay increases of no more than 6-10%—well below the current rate of inflation.

Water workers have already declared themselves willing to prepare for strike action to pursue their 20% claim.

The fact is that while the Tories have avoided openly proclaiming a "pay limit" along the lines of Edward Heath and the last Labour government, their monetarist economic policies are designed to force down pay settlements by threatening closures and redundancies if workers fight for settlements to match inflation.

Yet militant opposition to the whole range of Tory policies is clearly rising throughout the working class.

The vote by 700 labour movement delegates last weekend for a programme of massive strike action against the cuts (see back page) has gone alongside unofficial action by NALGO members in numerous town halls to block the Tory policy of selling off council houses.

There is a mood for a fight against Thatcher. With 2½ million unemployed, prices soaring, and hospitals closing, more and more men, women and youth are saying, with the BL workers, that "enough is enough". The question has been where to begin.

Now that a powerful section of workers has taken a stand, the task is to ensure that they do not fight alone.

We must remember the bitter lessons of last winter, when TUC leaders left the steel strikers deliberately isolated sooner than allow an all-out fight to bring down the Tories.

As a result, tens of thousands of jobs have been lost, and the Tories left in office for another nine devastating months.

Never again must such a betrayal be allowed! Enough is enough! We must bring down this savage government of employers, aristocrats and bankers!

Miners, Ford workers, Rolls Royce workers and others with pay claims outstanding must demand all-out action alongside BL.

The fight for action to defend the public services—health, education, social security and social services—must be driven forward.

Wherever struggles erupt, councils of action must be fought for to draw in delegates from every section of the local labour movement—trade union bodies, workers' political parties, students, tenants and pensioners associations—to broaden, deepen and extend the fight into a general strike to bring down the Thatcher government.

In this way the most favourable conditions can be created to fight for the removal of the right wing Labour leadership and all of those leaders 'left' and right alike who stand opposed to the necessary socialist policies to answer the economic crisis.

St Mary's lobby

On Monday 27 October the North West Thames Regional Health Authority were lobbied by about 30 stewards and trade unionists campaigning against the plans to close St. Mary's Hospital, Harrow Road.

After a long battle against the closure, the Kensington, Chelsea and Westminster AHA have referred the decision to the region, leaving the final decision to the Tory Minister of Health.

Following usual practice the RHA took the item on St. Mary's off the agenda, and have deferred the discussion until the next meeting on Monday 24 November.

Leaders of the St. Mary's campaign are planning a massive lobby of this meeting.

Conference at turning point of anti-Tory struggle

Make sure you're there!

A meeting of the Organising Committee has prepared the final agenda and speakers for the national conference of the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement on 15 November in Birmingham.

In the first session, on the main resolution, speakers have already agreed to come from British Leyland, the Gardners occupation and the Birmetals strike. The committee hopes

speakers will also attend from the oil rig strike at Hunterston and the Llanwern Steel Action Group.

Councillor

For the session on democracy in the Labour Party the mover of the resolution will be a Labour councillor and there will be a speaker from the Rank and File Mobilising Committee as well as a speaker on Ireland.

The last session, on democracy in the trade unions, will

include a speaker from the Adwest strike.

The committee at its meeting on Sunday agreed to draft emergency resolutions on Leyland, Adwest and Ireland.

Reports from around the country indicate that about 200 people will attend the conference, which comes at a crucial point in the fight for mass action against the Tory offensive.

Observers

Delegates are invited from all labour movement bodies, and individual militants are also welcome to attend as observers.

Transport is being arranged from many areas to bring delegates and visitors to Digbeth Hall, Birmingham.

All *Socialist Press* readers are urged to attend this important conference. Further details are available from *Socialist Press* sellers or direct from the CDLM as advertised.

Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement CONFERENCE

Saturday November 15 at Digbeth Civic Hall, Birmingham
10.30 am. to 5.00 pm. Credentials £1 (50p unwaged)
from G. Webster, 169 Barclay Road, Smethwick, West Midlands

Lambeth conference

From back page

amendments was moved by Lambeth Trades Council with the support of Vauxhall Labour Party and others.

This added to the main statement before the conference a new point:

"A policy of no cover for vacancies and a campaign against voluntary redundancies and natural wastage. Create and defend jobs by stopping overtime and fight for a shorter working week."

The section on industrial action was improved by a new section which said:

"This conference calls on trade union organisations at all levels [from TUC General Council to branches and shop steward committees] to pledge themselves to and campaign for all-out strikes and occupations of workplaces as soon as any Labour council faces receivers or commissioners, or is surcharged, for taking a stand against the cuts.

"The struggle may centre around the public sector unions at first, but conference calls on other workers, especially the strong sections like the miners and engineers, to join this fight to force the Tory government to back down on the cuts or get out. Conference also calls on Labour Councils and Labour Parties, in cooperation with local anti-cuts committees and tenants' associations, to campaign for rent and rate strikes as soon as any Labour council is removed or surcharged for taking a stand against the cuts."

In proposing these amendments Vanessa Wiseman of Lambeth Trades Council empha-

sised the need to develop the widest support for any action against the cuts.

Effective weapon

She referred to steps already being taken in Bradford and elsewhere by trade unionists and by councillors against council house sales. Every step had to go towards industrial action—our most effective weapon—to win support through rent strikes and action from outside unions.

Peter Kavanagh, TGWU Region 1, said that he would campaign in his union for such strike action.

Supplementing this was an amendment from Leicester AUEW 16 Branch calling amongst other things, for "immediate strike action with official backing to oppose redundancies as soon as notices are issued."

It also called for a fight in the labour movement for:

1) Cancellation of debt charges. Open the books; nationalise the supply industries, e.g. drugs, food and building, and the banks and finance institutions without compensation under workers' control.

2) No charity funding of facilities! Black private sector use of facilities!

3) Funds of public services to be (as a minimum) protected from inflation in line with a cost index worked out by labour movement committees."

In moving this amendment, Peter Flack, a delegate from Leicester Trades Council, emphasised the lessons of past

struggles in demonstrating the need for supporting action and for clear policies to develop such action.

In supporting this, Joanna Coxhead from Oxford COHSE quoted examples of how even the smallest struggles against the cuts could be won with outside support.

These amendments were carried, along with a number of others calling for "no rate and rent rises to compensate for government cuts", (from Liverpool NALGO) and a call from Barnsley Labour Party that the TUC General Council should begin to organise a general strike.

One notable feature of the voting on these propositions was that the more radical calls to action generally did not win the support of the Labour Group representatives.

There were at least two significant exceptions, however. Morgan Chambers from the Merthyr Tydfil Labour Group urged support for the Lambeth Trades Council amendment and any action that followed.

And Ken Livingstone of the Greater London Labour Group said that it was essential to direct a fight in the Labour Party against the right wing and to organise defiance of the government.

Almost all the trade union delegates present showed their support for such a fight.

Mike Waller of Lambeth NALGO said a mass meeting of 1750 of his members had already voted to take action against every cut and in defence

of every job.

They were refusing to cooperate with council house sales despite the decision of the council to go along with the Tories on this.

"The middle ground has gone", he said. The choice was now between mass action and mass redundancies.

A number of local NUPE speakers repudiated the defeatist views of Ron Keating.

Passing the buck

John Suddaby from the London Division said it was impossible to keep passing on responsibility.

There had to be unity between councillors and trade unionists—but in the end decisions on action had to be taken.

Speaking on the current struggle in British Leyland, Alan Thornett, 5/293 TGWU, said that strike action could be secured if it was fought for, particularly against bureaucratized layers such as the BL convenors.

To talk in terms of the problems of the fight creates its own momentum of weakness and retreat.

Delegates at the conference showed by their speeches and votes that they were prepared to go back to win support for strikes and other action to defend services, and to organise for the coordination and victory of any struggles that now emerge.

A large steering committee of around 50 was elected to carry out these decisions.

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Lambeth conference adopts fighting policies

NOW FIGHT FOR ALL-OUT

STRIKE ACTION!

A significant step forward in building the fight against the Tory cuts was taken at a widely representative conference on Local Government in Crisis held at Camden Town Hall last Saturday.

The conference, set up by the Lambeth Labour Group and local authority trade unionists, was attended by representatives from 40 Labour Groups, 140 Constituency Labour Parties and 500 trade union branches and trades councils.

Alternatives

They considered a wide range of alternative strategies for mass action against the cuts.

The chair of the morning session was taken by Arthur Latham, who is also chairman of the London Labour Party.

He told delegates that this was a conference of action, aiming not to discuss how bad the cuts were but to work out the policies necessary to defeat them.

Ted Knight, leader of Lambeth Council, in moving the main resolution, said that this conference should have been called by the TUC General Council and the Labour Party National Executive Committee. However the situation was too urgent to wait for them to react.

Nor, he added, was it good enough to follow the advice of the right wing Labour leaders and to wait around until they got re-elected.

By then there would be no services to save. And in any case, could we believe that on their past record they would even attempt to restore cuts which they had themselves initiated?

Knight outlined the cuts that had already taken place in local authority financing.

First there was the reduction in the rate support grant; then lower subsidies on capital spending allowances; followed by the recent moratorium on house building.



Keating

Further cuts in the rate support grant are likely to be announced later this month.

The choices facing those Labour Councils who intended to defend their services were growing increasingly narrow.

Those who had tried to "slim down" or had increased the rates no longer had such options open to them.

Those who refuse to contemplate further cuts can only now think in terms of defiance of the government, and the organisation of strikes, occupations and other actions to mobilise the working class against the Tories.

It was the form of such actions and the response they were likely to get that was at the centre of the discussions at the conference.

Ron Keating, Assistant General Secretary of NUPE, who spoke for the only union nationally represented, argued

that there was "so much fear in the land" that it was impossible to conceive of large scale action at this point—or even by next January.

All that was possible was propaganda against the cuts.

He proposed a series of amendments to the main resolution cutting out all possible calls for action.

Few other speakers supported this and after Keating had been heavily criticised by local delegates from NUPE, the amendments were heavily voted down.

However there were one or two important statements reflecting the same defeatist position and refusal to fight the Tories.

Thus John Lebor, right wing leader of Brent Council, argued that we must "accept reality" and wait until the political pendulum swung the other way. David Plunkett, leader of

Sheffield City Council, said he did not support the tenor of Keating's contribution but agreed with him in maintaining that it was impossible for one group to act alone.

Attacked

Other alternatives associated with this view included a policy of Labour councillors continually standing for re-election or refusing when in a majority to form administrations.

Again these views were widely attacked in the discussion.

Most speakers concentrated on attempts to develop action against the cuts. This centred in particular around amendments jointly initiated by the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement and Socialist Organiser.

The main part of these
Continued page 11



'H' BLOCK HUNGER STRIKERS: DON'T LET THEM DIE!

March attacked

The hunger strike of the republican prisoners in the 'H' Blocks of Long Kesh is certain to lead to a great sharpening of tensions in Britain over the Irish question.

This is very well illustrated by the developments in Birmingham over the last week.

Six Birmingham Labour councillors and two county councillors signed a statement in support of the demands of the H Block prisoners for political status.

This was followed by a sustained campaign of slander in the Birmingham local press, with headlines attacking the councillors in four successive issues.

They were referred to as "IRA councillors" and as supporters of terrorism. With the memory of the Birmingham

pub bombing, this is an invitation to physical attack and the councillors have received threats of violence.

This violence became a reality on last Monday's torchlight procession in support of the demands for political status.

As the march was assembling it was attacked by twenty fascists who are thought to have belonged to the British Movement.

They came armed with bags of rocks with which they pelted the thirty marchers who had by that time assembled.

One woman was struck on the head and was rushed to hospital with blood streaming from a scalp wound.

The fascists then charged the march and seized a priest, threw him to the ground and kicked him semi-conscious.

During this attack, which lasted ten minutes, the police from neighbouring Steelhouse



Belfast marchers support the hunger strike

Lane police station were mysteriously absent.

They only appeared when a counter-attack had the fascists on the retreat.

The lesson for the labour movement is clear. We cannot rely on the police to defend our marches.

As the struggle for political rights of the H Block prisoners escalates, we must be prepared to defend ourselves against fascist attacks.

And we must defend those Labour councillors courageous enough to stand up and defy the press witch-hunts.