

workers' ACTION

No.12 April 1st - 7th 1976 8p

Labour Assembly makes it clear:

Re-call TUC must 'make demands not deals'

1974 TUC voting for the Social Contract: will it be the same again for this year's pay curbs?

A re-called TUC is to be convened in late May or early June. This has been announced by the TUC General Council on a motion from Clive Jenkins of the ASTMS and Joe Gormley of the NUM.

An exact picture of how the meeting will be held is not clear. Two options are open to the Trade Union leaders. One is merely to hold a conference of Trade Union Executives to discuss only the General Council's recommendations for pay policy after the £6 limit expires. The other is to hold a proper emergency Congress of the TUC with lay delegates and motions taken on policy to fight the entire range of Government attacks on living standards and working conditions.

The Trade Union leaders obviously wish the recall to be as safe an affair as possible. They intend it to be, in the words of Labour MP Neil Kinnock, "a conference of deals not demands".

On the day that they announced the re-call, Michael Foot made it clear at the Labour Party NEC that talks were to start immediately to establish new guidelines for wage restraint when the £6 limit runs out.

Curbs

Faced with rising anger in the trade union movement at wage cuts (or 'pay restraint', as it is officially called) the TUC leaders see a re-call conference as a means of heading off the pressure to break with all forms of wage curbs.

Militants must ensure that the Trade Union leadership cannot use the re-call in this way. Militants and socialists must ensure that the re-call focuses the energy of all those opposed to the anti-working class policies of the Labour



"without alteration or hesitation". Yorkshire likewise demands the £100 now and the Scottish area has put forward again its resolution of "complete opposition to any form of wages policy under capitalism".

At the UCATT conference there will be 14 resolutions opposing all forms of wage restraint. The ACTAT (Assoc. of Cinematic, Telecom. and Allied Technicians) April conference will almost certainly call for the rejection of the £6 pay limit.

In this situation the TUC re-call, whatever form it takes, will see the General Council manoeuvring to win approval for their deals with the government, and thus strengthen the hands of the supporters of wage restraint in the individual unions. That's why Gormley has supported the call. That's why Jones, Scanlon and Basnett added their joint voice to the pressure for a recalled TUC.

Militants must ensure that the Trade Union leadership cannot use the re-call in this way. Militants and socialists must ensure that the re-call focuses the energy of all those opposed to the anti-working class policies of the Labour

For that reason we must demand in our branches that all talks between the TUC and the Labour Government on this matter cease immediately. It makes a travesty of the re-call that agreement will have been signed, sealed and delivered between the TUC and the Labour Government even before the Congress has decided anything.

The Congress must not be presented with a fait accompli — an agreement to hold down wages, perhaps wrapped up in a sugared package of a couple of cheap concessions and presented as a gift — and then be given the option of voting for or against.

Cuts

Pressure must also be stepped up in all trade union branches to make sure that a proper congress is organised. Such a Congress should be composed of lay delegates and must be free to put down any motions and amendments on the whole front of the Labour Government's attacks on us.

The Congress, if it is to be worth its name, if it to give a

wages policy. It must come out clearly not only against all wage restraint but also against unemployment and social spending cuts, hammering out a policy for a united front to defeat these attacks.

Inside

- Abortion p4&5
- Labour Assembly p3
- Peronism p2

Say No to Backstreet Abortions
 Say No to the Select Committee
 Say No to further Restrictive Legislation
 Say Yes to Abortion as A Woman's Right to Choose
March for Abortion Rights on April 3
 In London, assemble at Speakers Corner at 1.30 to march to Trafalgar Square
 In Glasgow, assemble at 2 pm at Blytheswood Square
 And please send donations (made out to National Abortion Campaign) to:
NAC, 30 Camden Road, London NW1

LEYLAND TOOLROOM MEN CHALLENGE MDW

"WE ARE fighting for all toolroom workers, the Rover company wants to smash the national toolroom agreement, the only agreement that lies outside the scope of Measured Day Work within British Leyland. Our fight is one of principle!". That is how pickets at Rover (axles and transmissions), Perry Barr, described their fight to WORKERS' ACTION last week.

Frank Baron, AUEW toolroom convener at Rover Solihull, told Workers' Action, "The issue is one of principle — the company are attempting to change the national agreement to suppress the national toolroom agreement."

The agreement is a 1971 agreement, the only agreement that lies outside the scope of Measured Day Work within British Leyland. Our fight is one of principle!". That is how pickets at Rover (axles and transmissions), Perry Barr, described their fight to WORKERS' ACTION last week.

When MDW (Measured Day Work) was pushed through the Leyland combine in 1971 and large carrots were being dangled in front of short-sighted officials, Rover toolroom workers recognised the danger being presented to their independent bargaining position, and they quite correctly refused to be drawn in to MDW.

As we pointed out in Workers' Action (March 17th) by changing to MDW negotiated by national union officers, management hopes to undermine the strength of the independent bargaining position. We must ensure that the strength of the independent bargaining position is maintained.

Continued back page

Save Desmond Trotter!



The British Privy Council has refused Desmond Trotter leave to appeal. A government committee in Dominica, an 'Associate State' of Britain, will now decide whether to carry out the sentence of hanging imposed on the 22-year old revolutionary, on trumped-up murder charges.

Over 10,000 people in Dominica have signed a petition calling for a reprieve for Trotter; and the chief prosecution witness in his trial,

Camilla Francis, has said she will retract her evidence if given immunity from prosecution for perjury. But the repressive regime in Dominica, which framed up Trotter in the first place, is not likely to be persuaded.

The British government can still stop the hanging — if it wants to. Send resolutions and telegrams demanding that the Government intervene to: Ted Rowlands, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, House of Commons, London SW1.

FIGHTING FUND

THE EDITORIAL BOARD of Workers Action is launching an appeal to raise £6000 by June 30th.

We need this money to buy new type-setting equipment. At present we rely on an outside firm for part of the type-setting process. This makes us very vulnerable to breakdowns beyond our control. Unfortunately, these have been all too frequent. They have led to two issues appearing late, and several others have only just appeared on time.

The machine we have ordered is an IBM composer, one of the most advanced available. It

than the present system, and also improve the appearance of the paper.

But it will cost us £6000.

We have to pay, not only for the machine itself, but to fit a room with dust extraction and de-humidifying equipment to provide the right atmosphere for it. The typesetter should be delivered in July. We must have the money to pay for it by then!

If we are to reach the target, we must get the fund rolling right away. Don't delay until June! Send whatever you can to the address below, and help us reach our April target of £1500.

Send all donations to: Appeal Fund Workers Action, 49



Peron with Eva (right) and Isabel (left)

ARGENTINA: The end of Peronism

AFTER the crushing of the Chilean working class in September 1973, the focus of revolutionary hopes in Latin America shifted to Argentina. Last week's military coup signals a major setback for these hopes.

The *Financial Times* of 25th March reported that some thousands of workers in the motor industry in Cordoba had struck in protest against the coup; but the new military junta has dissolved Congress and declared itself supreme for three years. Some 2000 political prisoners have been rounded up. All union headquarters have been occupied by the military, union assets have been frozen, and a number of union leaders are among those arrested.

Press censorship has been imposed, and 'Special War Councils' have been set up with powers of indefinite imprisonment or death penalty for those they consider guilty of helping left wing guerilla forces.

The coup brings to an end a three-year period of civilian rule, following on from 18 years of military rule since 1955.

Argentina's immensely fertile pampas made it a rich country in the late 19th and early 20th century. Drawing on the surplus accumulated by the landlords of vast ranches, and the favourable circumstances created for the Argentine economy by the second world war, Juan Peron pushed through in the 1940s a programme of nationalist industrial development. The main beneficiaries were the capitalists; but the working class, with a strong trade union movement built up under state sponsorship, was granted sufficient concessions to make Peronism by far the strongest political force in its ranks, and a powerful personal mystique grew up around Peron and his wife Eva.

Overthrow

In 1955 the army overthrew a discredited Peron, whose programme had run up against the restrictions imposed by imperialism. Industrialisation continued in the form of a massive influx of US capital in the 1950s and '60s. But along with this came an increased dependence on meat exports to pay Argentina's foreign debt. Argentine capitalism stumbled into deeper and deeper crisis.

In 1969 the working class, particularly in Cordoba and Rosario, rose up in Argentina's equivalent of France's May 1968, with general strikes, barricades, street fighting and factory occupations. The exhausted military regime finally handed over to civilian administration in 1973, having allowed the aging Peron back from his exile in Madrid — together with Eva's mummified body and his new wife Isabel — in order that his mystique might help to subdue popular discontent.

Peron's lieutenant Hector Campora was elected President, and soon resigned in favour of Peron himself. After Peron's death, Isabel took over as President and inheritor of the Peron mantle.

From relatively reformist policies under Campora, the Peronist regime swung sharply to the right under Isabel Peron. The most notorious feature of her Presidency was the activities of the AAA (Argentine Anti-Communist Alliance), a fascist murder gang which openly declared its

aim as mass killings of "all individuals, regardless of their nationality, religion, race or creed, who obey unpatriotic, Marxist, Masonic, anti-Christian or international reactionary Jewish interests". The AAA slaughtered socialists, communists and working class militants by the hundred. Substantial evidence indicated that it was encouraged, sponsored and financed by Isabel Peron's ministers.

As the economy degenerated, it was only a matter of time until Isabel Peron was displaced. Inflation has been rising by 500% per year; only 5% of the federal budget was covered by income, the rest being made up by printing money; real earnings reached their lowest level for 15 years.

Strikes

Last June a general strike forced back an attack on wages and compelled Isabel Peron's chief minister, Lopez Rega, who was closely associated with the AAA, to resign. Waves of strikes, increasing guerilla activity, and mounting outcry against the corruption of the regime followed in the second half of last year. Even Peronist Deputies supported Congress motions for the impeachment of Isabel Peron.

Just before the military coup the economy reached total chaos, with the meat exporters announcing that they were cutting off sales abroad in protest against their poor earnings.

Before 1973, the wide variety of groupings under the Peronist umbrella — from important sections of the bourgeoisie, through the trade union bureaucracy to the would-be revolutionary left Peronist Youth and 'Montoneros' guerillas — had been able to coexist with their different interpretations of the "national revolution" that was vaguely supposed to follow Peron's 'second coming'. After Peron's return, the Montoneros declared a cease-fire, and Campora eased off the army drive against the guerillas.

But as the restored Peronist regime swung to the right, the Peronist bloc began to fragment. The Peronist Youth was broken up and the Montoneros were again bitterly at war with the government.

The political hold of Peronism has been substantially broken since 1973. The Peronist movement no longer has any semblance of a coherent political force. Yet, although Argentina probably has more people considering themselves revolutionary socialists and Trotskyists than any other country in the world, it has generally been the right wing and the military that have gained from the debacle of Peronism.

The new regime will not yet mean a Chile-type blitzkrieg against the labour movement. But it may well come to that before long. Time is running out for the revolutionary left in Argentina. They must use their opportunities while they still exist.



Labour leadership race Contenders show their colours

THE contenders for the Labour Party leadership showed their colours behind the closed doors of the Party's National Executive Committee last week.

On Tuesday 23rd, the Cabinet and the NEC met together to discuss the cuts in public expenditure. The line-up was instructive: Benn called on the government to change course and adopt the policies outlined in the documents of the Home Policy Committee and the TUC Economic Review; Foot and Callaghan remained silent throughout the discussion; and Crosland and Jenkins supported "Brawler" Healey.

On the following day, a resolution was put forward at the NEC attacking the cuts policy. With the support of

Shirley Williams and Fred Mulley, Foot came off the fence and condemned the resolution. (POEU members should note that Bryan Stanley also backed up Foot against the anti-cuts motion.)

The meeting then moved on to an important motion tabled by Ian Mikardo, which would make it easier for constituency Labour Parties to sack their sitting MP. This was lost 14 to 11. Amid all the commonplaces about democracy being thrown about now because of the leadership contest, this failure to make even the tiniest step in a progressive direction is, unfortunately, a more reliable indicator of the state of the democratic spirit within the Labour leadership.

Earlier in the week, the Home

NABARDE KARGAR (Workers Struggle)
Campaign for the Restoration of Trade Union Rights in Iran
IF THE SHREWSBURY TWO WERE IRANIAN THEY WOULDN'T ONLY HAVE BEEN WRONGFULLY JAILED THEY WOULD HAVE BEEN EXECUTED



IN IRAN ALL INDEPENDENT TRADE UNIONS AND STRIKES ARE BANNED IN IRAN OPPONENTS OF THE SHAH'S MILITARY DICTATORSHIP ARE REGULARLY TORTURED AND EXECUTED

THAT'S WHY THE WORKERS OF IRAN NEED YOUR SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT STOP THE TUC ALLOWING ANY MORE MEMBERS TO DIGNIFY THIS DICTATORSHIP WITH VISITS, AS LORD BRIGNSHAW OF NATSOPA DID JUST BEFORE HE RETIRED

★ Urge your Union Branch, Trades Council, Shop Stewards Committee, or Union District and Executive Committee to support the idea of a British Labour Movement Mission of enquiry to visit Iran and find out the real conditions under which the workers struggle for Trade Union rights.

★ Get your Union Branch to protest against the British Labour Government's close ties with the Shah, and demand: Restoration of Trade Union Rights in Iran To elect officials To organise, to bargain and to strike AND demand freedom for all political prisoners

Poster available from 197 Kings Cross Road, WC1

Labour NEC calls for boycott of Geisel

When Brazil's President General Ernesto Geisel arrives in Britain shortly on a State Visit, arrangements shouldn't go too smoothly — if the Labour Party NEC's call for a boycott of the visit is heeded.

The NEC previously resolved to ask the Government to call off the visit by this jackboot ruler who has locked up Brazil's trade unions and tortured opponents of his regime. That call was ignored. Now the NEC are calling for direct action to disrupt the visit: "The NEC calls on the trade union and Labour movement to initiate and participate in a complete boycott of all functions and events connected with the visit and also instructs the General Secretary to so inform all constituency Labour Parties and to advise the TUC of this decision."

The motion was carried by 12 votes to 2.



Policy Committee, under Benn's chairmanship, approved a proposal for the nationalisation of the banks and insurance companies. While socialists should not be indifferent to such 'committee room' successes, it is worth remembering that just such a resolution was passed at the Labour Party Conference in 1971...

MEANWHILE, back at 'The House', there was another little demonstration of MPs' concern for basic democracy.

On Wednesday 24th, Bob Cryer, left Labour MP for Keighley, sought leave to introduce a bill that would cause the chiefs of nationalised industries to be elected. But the Commons voted 144-133 against.

Bob Cryer explained "My Bill would be the first step towards rectifying this dispensation of patronage and ensuring that the system of selection and appointment is clear and open." That way the replacement of

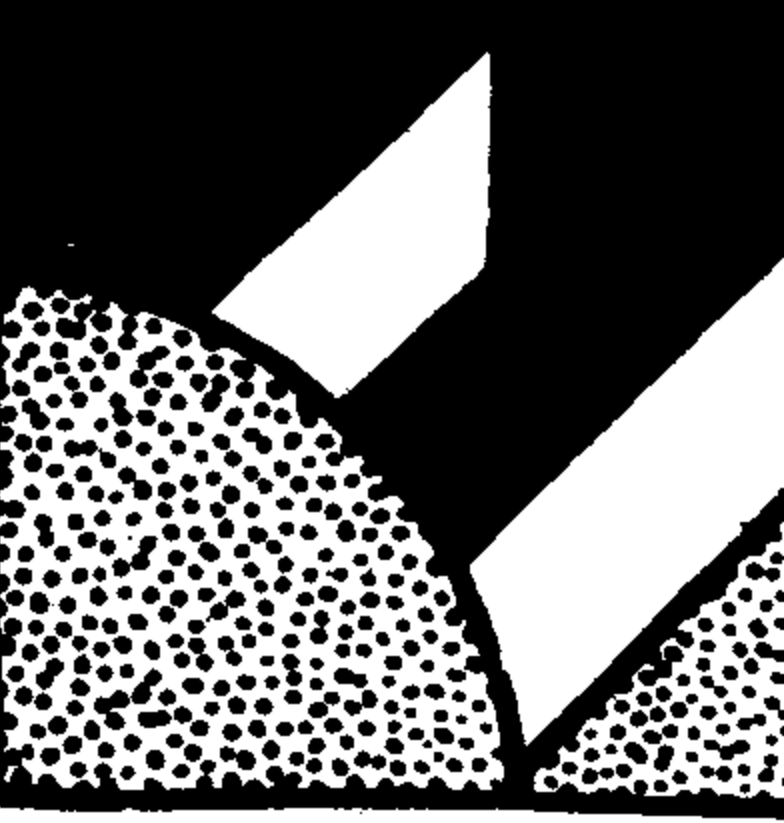
Marsh as rail chief could be done, he said "democratically instead of autocratically."

Cryer's motion was defeated with some of the Manifesto Group of Labour MPs voting with the Tories — something which two weeks ago they claimed was a cardinal sin when done by the left. Odd, too, if they really believe in the Labour Party Manifesto, which did at least put forward the idea of more 'industrial democracy'.

BENN, who is known to support a similar system of election and who recently at the conference of the T&GWU made this a central plank of his conception of industrial democracy in the nationalised industries, was attacked last week by Liverpool MP Eric Ogden — who is sponsored by the NUM! — for suggesting that workers in the coal industry should have some say in selecting the NCB chief.

Assembly of Labour — anger at unemployment loud and clear

Editorial



Make May 26 a day of action

A ONE DAY general strike on May 26th to protest against the unemployment situation — that was the most positive outcome of the Assembly of Labour held in London last Saturday. The Assembly more than 3,000 delegates and national officials of unions to branch and delegates committed themselves among other things to "A National Day of Action on Wednesday 26th, to include mass demonstrations wherever is felt to be most appropriate actions in each area of Britain. These actions should take place within working hours in London and the Home Counties it is proposed to organise a march and of MPs at the House of Commons."

The policies the Assembly agreed on — if you can agree on — if you can agree on a meeting with no vote amendments allowed alternative resolutions permitted even when have been passed by union bodies, and no circulation of the platform resolutions — these policies were uniformly bad. They were a hotch-potch of Tribune and Communist Party 'solutions'.

Scorn

Nevertheless, the call to mobilise — so long as it is not by a series of companies by a series of criticism of these ideas will be an effective boost to the efforts of socialist to organise our class to fight against the Government's anti-worker policies.

At the Assembly Ken Gill speaking on behalf of AUEW (TASS), put it clearly: "Everything we threw the Tories out for being embodied in the policies of the Labour Government." This should help us organise a fight which treats politics with the scorn they would attract if they came from Tories.

Workers Action calls on its readers to put every effort behind the Assembly's call to Work to make May 26th a National Day of Action — one-day General Strike. We combine this organising effort with an equally strenuous effort to oppose the dead-end policies of the Assembly wants to mobilisation to support.

BY GEOFF BURROUGHS

WITH OVER 3,000 delegates packed into the Central Hall, Westminster for last Saturday's Labour Assembly, there was ample evidence of the growing anger within the working class at the general decline in living standards dictated by the Labour Government and the TUC.

But what strength did this Assembly represent? Strength of numbers, of important and powerful unions and works, undoubtedly lay behind the Assembly. But when it came to strength of working class political ideas, speech after speech betrayed flabbiness and confusion.

Not long after the opening of the Assembly came a speech which presented a terrible picture of sheer ideological prostration. Phil Ballard, a delegate from the London branch of the National Union of Seamen and a prominent Communist Party member for years, underlined his demand for import controls with the statement that the new 'race relations' legislation would threaten his fellow trade unionists with "a flood of labour from the Third World!"

Boos

All the more sophisticated arguments about import controls — all of them wrong! — (confusing them with boycotts of goods from fascist countries, claiming that they would afford British industry a protective wall behind which it could expand, seeing them as a solution to the balance of payments crisis), all these arguments failed to rub out the accurate and indelible impression of Ballard's speech: the demand for import controls, imposed on labour or on goods, is nationalist and objectively racist.

Ballard's speech brought such sustained booing that finally he had to give up. The boos came from about 500 delegates to the left of the Communist Party/Tribune group camp.

Six years ago when the Liaison Committee for Defence of Trade Unions — dominated like this conference by the Communist Party — held its conferences, the voice of the revolutionary left was much smaller. While the content of Ballard's speech indicated the terrible ideological weakness of the bulk of trade union activists, the response to it revealed the increased strength of those ready to put forward revolutionary ideas.

The opportunities they got to present those ideas were still very few, and for the most part wasted in the attempt to gain factional advantage. One speaker, a delegate from Ford Langley shop stewards committee and a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party, did however put forward the two basic political issues on which the revolutionaries and the mainstream of the conference were divided.

On import controls he rightly commented that "this way we are cutting our own throats, because it will be worker fighting against worker". On the question of sustaining the Labour Government, he criticised those MPs who, after abstaining from the vote on the public expenditure cuts on March 10th, failed to vote against the Government on the confidence vote the following day.

This unleashed from Stan Thorne, Labour MP for Preston South, a torrent of anger. He had criticised the government, he said, but he would not surrender it to the Tories.

Thorne's speech, predictably, received a huge ovation: these delegates who, among the trade union movement, must be counted amongst the most aware of the attacks which

the government has mounted on the working class, loudly acclaimed a vote of confidence in it!

Ray Buckton of ASLEF who followed Thorne complained "Never did I believe that if I protested I would be 'out of my tiny Chinese mind'... Instead of taking on, as we promised to do, the capitalist system, we are endeavouring to help out the capitalist system." Yet he too concluded that the Labour Government should be sustained in parliament in order to bring about "the revitalisation in a socialist way of British industry."

Other speeches applauded the decision to hold a re-call TUC conference — but all were agreed that this conference would be late and would almost certainly not turn out to be what they had meant when they called for it. And David Bolton, Vice-President of the Scottish NUM, denounced what was likely to be merely a meeting of trade union executives to try to get acceptance for a pay "rise" ceiling of about £3.30.

This same point was taken up by Ken Gill, who got tumultuous applause when he said "The official movement has sold itself for nothing at all. At the re-call conference they intend to talk about the extension of the social contract. They want to know how little you'll settle for."

But Gill, a member of the General Council of the TUC, also introduced another of the false ideas that gained instant applause when he declared: "It is not a world crisis but a capitalist crisis. There is no crisis in the socialist world." If the import controls demand reveals the Stalinists bending towards the Labour Left, the general applause



ELSA WARREN, wife of jailed Shrewsbury picket Des Warren, was a guest speaker at the Assembly.

She began by saying that she spoke with some authority on the question of unemployment as Des had only worked two years in the last nine — not because of any economic crisis, but because of the blacklist run in the building industry.

She read out a message from Des that she had written up after talking to him in jail last week. His written message, she said, was still at the Home Office: "It will be passed on to the Shrewsbury Defence Committee" she said "when this conference is over. But that won't stop his message getting through!"

After she read out the message, she caused much laughter with her reference to the imprisonment of the directors of the big building firm of J. Murphy and Son, for "plotting to defraud the Inland Revenue of over £34m" by using lump labour: "At last, they've got some of the right people behind bars." Then she added grimly "Of course, what they did was called 'plotting' whereas what Dennis did was called 'conspiring' and for that he's still behind bars."

On the previous day there had been a picket of the Home Office and a letter was handed in at Downing Street demanding Des Warren's release.

and agreement that greeted this nonsense about "the socialist world" reveals the Labour Lefts bending towards Stalinism.

Gill, like Buckton, also put forward all the arguments for not sustaining a Labour Government in a vote of confidence (and, logically, for not voting support to the Healey budget either) — but then failed to draw the obvious conclusion. Quoting Hugh Dalton, Gill said "The destruction of our first post-war Labour Government was because there was too much loyalty to individuals and not enough loyalty to principles." (Almost word for word what Tribune MP Tom Litterick said in Parliament ... before he voted confidence in the Government!)

Spotless

Warming to his argument, Gill went on to underline the point still further: "The people who say that it would be worse under the Tories underestimate our movement. [Cheers from the delegates] If the Tories were in with an unemployment figure of one and a half million they wouldn't last a week."

Again, massive applause — from people who had similarly greeted Stan Thorne emotional outburst about not "surrendering the government to the Tories".

And in line with this all the MPs who spoke, Neil Kinnock, Stan Thorne, Dennis Skinner, drew thunderous applause for their abstention on March 10th, but not a single reservation about their vote of confidence in Wilson and Healey the following day. For the mass of delegates, what they had done was enough, their records were spotless.

Budget

No one was prepared to test their mettle with the simple question: "Will you vote against the forthcoming budget which no one doubts will be blatantly anti-working class?"

There were one or two bright patches. Jack Dunn of the Kent miners optimistically foresaw that "there are going to be a great number of MPLAs throughout the world." A delegate from Felixstowe docks Shop Stewards Committee reported that his organisation had been informed that they were unknowingly handling cargoes bound for Chile that are being re-shipped through Rotterdam and pledged "If we find we are working re-shipped cargoes from Chile, we will make sure that no such cargoes cross the North Sea"



Dennis Skinner MP



Ken Gill

Scotstoun shipbuilding workers called for a campaign to get Britain out of the Common Market, while reiterating Ken Gill that all is well with the "socialist world". Jimmy Airlie of UCS fame said that he "would be prepared to make sacrifices if the Labour Government could hold out some promise of solving the unemployment problem" and Jack Dromey — once again amidst perfectly justified barracking — came out with the ridiculous line that "in Northern Ireland the trade union movement is a sheet-anchor of working class unity..." He then went on to liken the Provisional IRA to the UUUC Orangemen.

All this was crowned by the organisers' failure to get a hearing for their own resolution amid the shouts from the Right to Work Marchers that the date of the Day of Action called by the conference should be changed to coincide with the court appearance of the arrested marchers.



Ray Buckton of ASLEF

The key policies for us are:

● **Cut the hours not the jobs.** For a sliding scale of hours under workers' control, if the employers cannot or will not provide enough work, with no loss of pay. We must also call for a national campaign in the trade union movement against overtime working and for a 35-hour week with guaranteed full pay.

● **Open the books and meetings** of the state, the employers and the corporations to the inspection of worker-delegated representatives. Against phony participation schemes, we must arm independent shop floor trade union organisation.

● **Occupations** — holding the bosses' property to ransom for our jobs — as our answer to threatened redundancy. Occupation in order to force nationalisation with no compensation, recognising workers' control won by occupation.

● **No covering for unfilled vacancies.** Full trade union commitment to resist all pressures to force black workers, youth and women out first. For a woman's equal right to work.

● **Full trade union rights for the unemployed.** Trade union registration of all vacancies and of unemployed workers.

NAC'S FIGHT WIDENS OUT

The National Abortion Campaign has now been in existence for over a year. During that time a number of changes have taken place.

The Campaign was set up to defeat the Abortion (Amendment) Bill introduced by James White. That Bill itself fell, but restrictive measures recommended by the Select Committee set up to review the Bill have been introduced 'through the back door'. They have now become DHSS policy, and mean among other things that advice about where to get an abortion is more difficult to obtain, and that women from abroad find it harder to get an abortion in Britain.

The Select Committee continues to exist, and we may be faced with more such restrictions that it has recommended — despite the fact that, after the resignation of six of its members, it can no longer pretend to be in any way representative.

NAC can take some of the credit for the defeat of White's Bill, and for the collapse of the Select Committee as it was constituted. Now it is organising a boycott of the rump Committee by all pro-abortion groups, and also plans to set up its own inquiry.

The past year has seen also a different sort of attack on the availability of abortions. Cuts in the Health Service have eaten away at abortion facilities — and this is especially serious given the NHS insistence on in-patient hospital treatment. Having to wait for an overnight stay bed makes abortions later — which in turn means a more serious operation, making an overnight stay necessary!

The results of these changes have made Britain one of the countries in which it's hardest to have an abortion. Only 22% of abortions in this country are done within the first eight weeks of conception (the safest and easiest time), whereas in America 36% of abortions are done in that period. Between the legal restrictions which force a woman to see two doctors for an NHS abortion, and then two more in the private sector if she is turned down and crumbling facilities, women have to suffer harrowing and unnecessary delays.

Now the NAC is faced with taking up seriously the question of NHS cuts, in addition to the question of the law on abortion. In any case, it has long been clear that the question of abortion should not be taken in isolation from the fight for other women's rights. The ability to control one's own body and choose to stay in a job or at college rather than being dragged helplessly into motherhood is crucial to the whole range of women's rights. It is good to have a campaign that concentrates on that. But it will be an enormously stronger campaign if it can link up with and draw strength from those fighting for nursery facilities, for the right of women to work, for equal opportunity and equal pay.

In the trade unions, it is necessary to wage a fight to force the TUC to take seriously and pursue the policy adopted at the last Congress: abortion on demand. And at a grass roots level, socialists must argue that NAC links up with local cuts committees, unemployment committees and the Working Womens Charter.

JULIET ASH

FREE abortion on demand is a question that relates to all women, and especially working class women. For it is the working class woman who has to risk her life at the hands of the backstreet abortionist. Rich families can afford to have as many children as they wish, and they can afford to pay out not to have children. They already have abortion on demand.

For working class women, free abortion on demand is a step towards control over our own bodies. It gives us the right to have or not to have children without the Government or the Church laying down the law.

For centuries women have been silent, weighed down by prejudices. Women have been taught right from early childhood that it is their duty — and their pleasure too — to be the servant of the family, to bear and bring up children. Girls are taught to sew, to prepare for housekeeping and childcare, while boys prepare for a trade or a job. Girls are taught that sex is a duty with a marriage contract, and a sin without.

By calling for abortion on demand women are defying these prejudices. And this defiance has created a storm of opposition from the Rotary Clubs and Mothers Unions, from vicars and

priests and bosses and their Fleet Street hacks, who stand together in defence of The Family as a pillar of their capitalist society.

The right wing, organised around SPUC and LIFE and the Festival of Light, have been able to mobilise some of the biggest demonstrations we've seen for years. Some of the most reactionary and dangerous elements of this society — and those deceived by them — have marched against the simple and just demand that women should not be forced to continue an unwanted pregnancy.

The politicians and priests who play on people's concern for children to mobilise them in defence of the "unborn child" show less concern when it comes to children already born —

children living in damp and squalid slums, children whose families cannot afford the bare necessities for a decent life or even the food they need to grow up healthy — meat, fruit and milk; children of unsupported mothers cramped in the back room of a child-minder, or battered by frustrated, over-stressed parents.

There was no shouting from these self-righteous, smug guardians of morality when working class children were deprived of free school milk and cheap school dinners.

The 1967 Abortion Act legalised abortion on certain grounds. It's a far cry from free abortion on demand (and in fact the number done on the NHS declined from 62% of all abortions in 1969 to 36% in 1972), but

in making it legal, it made it safer, as less women have had to resort to the back-street amateur abortionist. In 1960 there were 62 reported deaths from backstreet abortions in Britain; in 1973 there were only 12 deaths. In countries where abortion is illegal, thousands of women die each year.

Still, 12 deaths in a year shows that the 1967 Act is grossly inadequate.

Yet last year, backed by SPUC and LIFE, Labour MP for Glasgow Pollock, James White, introduced his Abortion (Amendment) Bill, which proposed so many more restrictions that we'd have been forced back to the pre-1967 situation if it had been passed.

It was in face of this threat that the National Abortion Campaign was set up. Partly because of NAC's activities — bringing the issue forward in the labour movement, in newspapers, on television, petitioning in local shopping precincts, holding local demonstrations and then a massive national demonstration of 40,000 last June — the Bill was dropped.

But now we are faced with another serious threat. The publicists for the White Bill make such a hue and cry about supposed 'abuses' of the 1967 Act — some of them so obviously sensationalised that it's surprising they didn't discredit themselves completely — that a Parliamentary Select Committee was set up to take evidence and make inquiries.

DIRTY

This Select Committee was presented with a mass of evidence supporting the continuation of the 1967 Act without further restrictions. This view was supported by the DHSS and by doctors and gynaecologists. But of the Committee's 15 members, 9 were unshakably anti-abortion. They ignored the evidence and recommended a number of restrictions: it should be more difficult for foreign women to get an abortion in Britain, referral agencies should be registered, and abortions later than the fifth month of pregnancy had to be done in hospitals equipped to "resuscitate" the foetus if it showed any signs of life.

These restrictions were accepted by the DHSS, and Barbara Castle is at present implementing them — even though the Bill has fallen. And to make matters worse, this biased Select Committee was re-appointed last month to continue its dirty work.

Straight away, the six Labour MPs on the Committee with liberal views on abortion resigned from it, and the NAC showed its support for their action by announcing a general boycott of the Select Committee. It is now setting up an alternative Inquiry to hear and publicise the pro-abortion evidence.

Anti-abortionists talk about the 'right to life' of the "unborn child", and show pictures of cute, human-

DRAWING A LINE

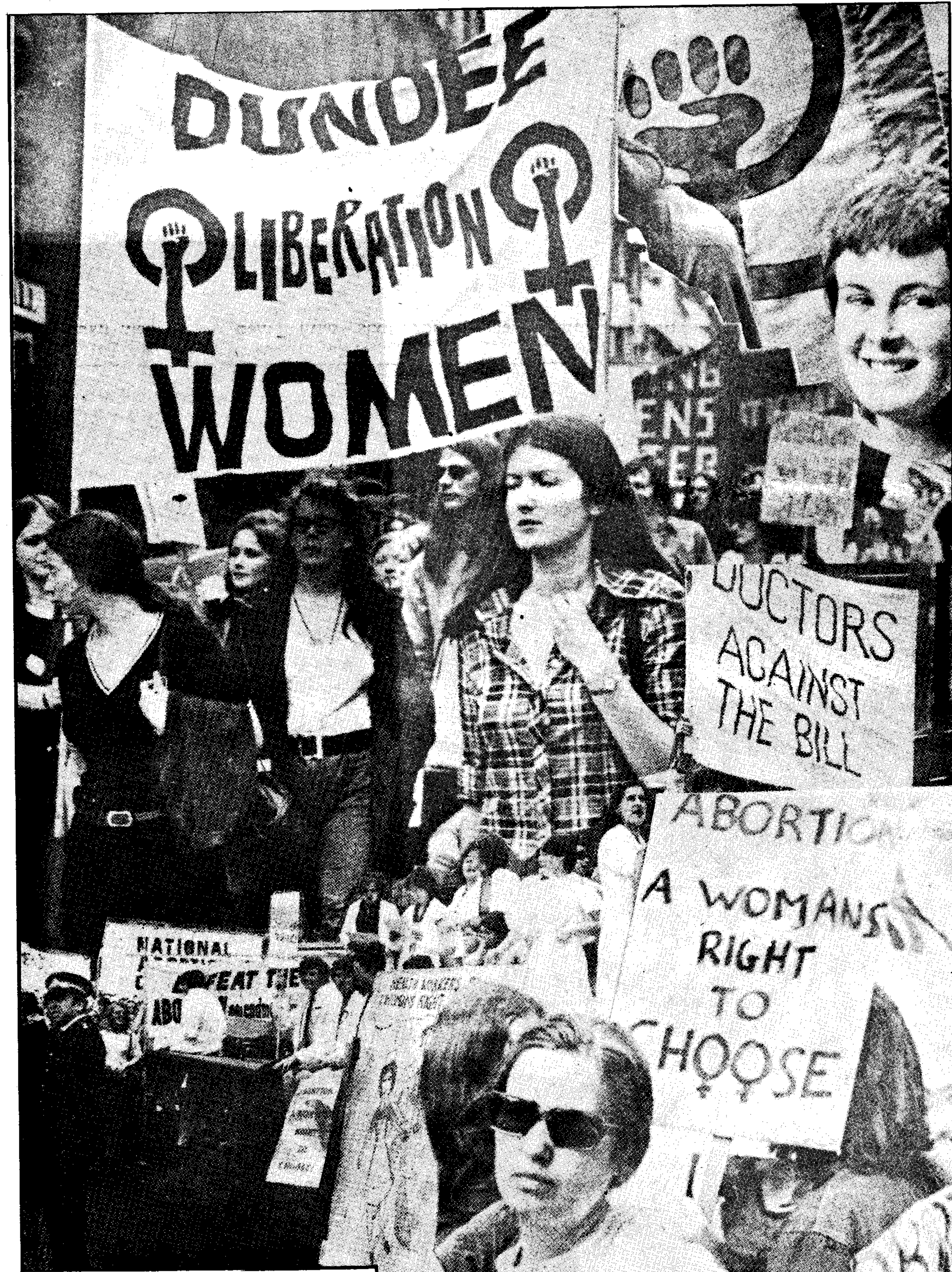
THE Catholic Church rejects both contraception and abortion. Feminists and others who lay stress on the rights and conditions of women think both contraception and abortion should be freely available.

But very many people think that contraception is right, but abortion wrong.

The trouble is, where do you draw the line. At the moment, most forms of contraception take the form of preventing the fertilisation of the egg. But the IUD works by making sure that a fertilised egg cannot implant itself and grow. And other methods that are being researched now would allow the egg to be fertilised and even to survive for two to three weeks, before being spontaneously rejected by the woman's body.

This method (which, in experiments on monkeys, is effective for a whole year from one injection) works by suppressing the hormones which create the total condition necessary for a foetus to develop. After that, without any outside interference, any egg that was fertilised would be spontaneously aborted within up to three weeks.

Is this contraception? Or is it abortion? As one of the scientists working on it observed, "whether this would be



A NATURAL NUMBER?

Ellen Waterman has three little girls. If she hadn't had four abortions, she'd have a brood of seven children now.

A brood of seven kids? A hundred years ago, people would have said that was a small family. Now it's a big one.

When a woman goes to plead her case for an abortion, the size of her family will be an argument she'll use. 'I already have three (four, or five) kids. That's as many as I can cope with'. Such an argument will be accepted by many doctors. But in accepting it, they'll be using standards of measurement which are themselves 'socially conditioned' — that is, affected by the ideas of the time.

If the 1967 Act had been in force fifty or a hundred years ago, doctors would have

enough to cope with.

But thousands of women can't cope with even one child — why else do kids get battered or ignored? It's time we got rid of the strange idea that every woman is 'naturally' fitted to have children. We don't these days think a dozen kids is 'right and natural' for a woman to have. Why then two or three?

And why these two or three simply because a woman has got pregnant at a particular time? She may well cope and be happy to bear children in later years. Or she may already have willingly had babies earlier, but not want one now. But if any woman wants an abortion, that's a good enough sign that a baby is not what she wants right now.

looki
the p
carry
when
woul
delay
regul
huma
have
Ar

W

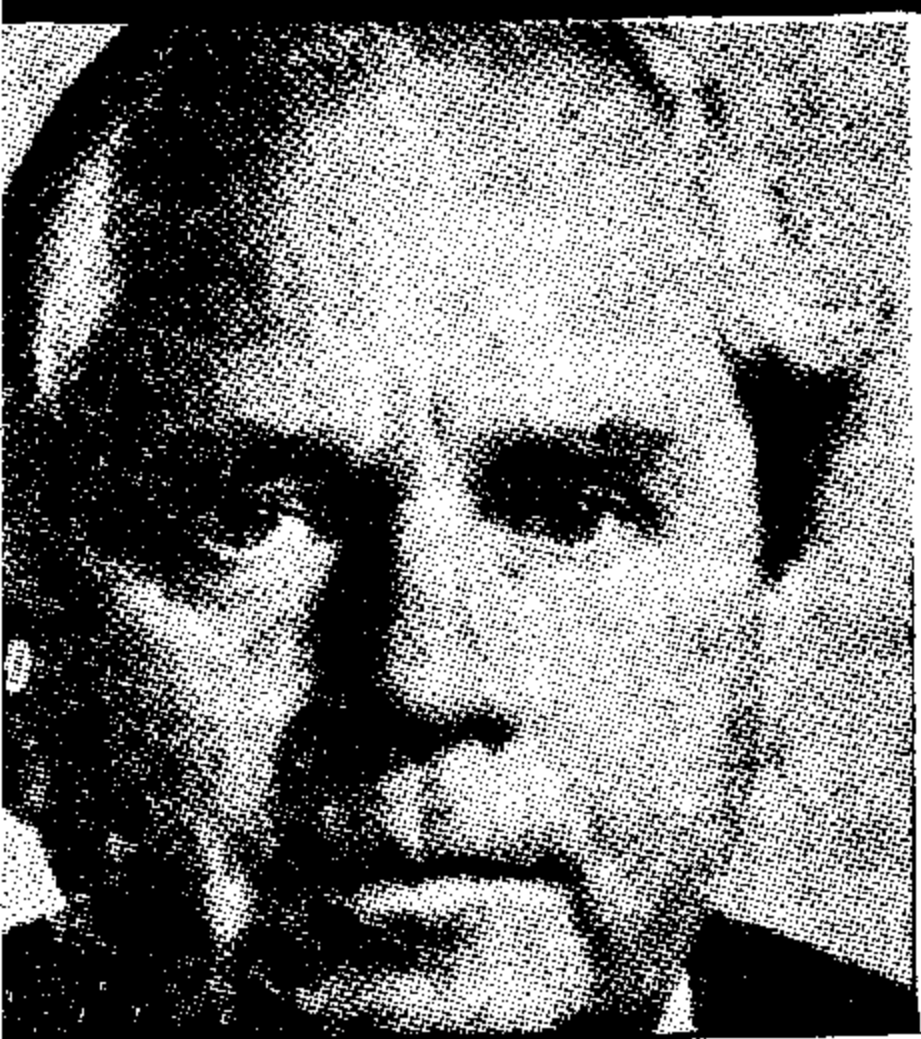
cc
fr
us
lit
cr
fr
m
fo
w

w
p
of
w
l
p
a
p

AS
min
ove
rem
ther
larg
T
rest
the
also
the
are
A
Lei
nov
beit
abo
189
nee
out
£70
I
clin
hav
cou
'me
I

is
abc
suc
wo
the
gyn
loc
I
bri
are
cha
wh
ch

FREE DEMAND



James White

ing embryos. But an embryo in period within which it is safe to abort — the period of the vast majority of women — have one if it wasn't for the pressure forced on them by the present conditions — is not a developed form and cannot be said to be identical or consciousness. Anti-abortionists have every right

to hold mystical religious beliefs that a fertilised egg is a human being. And they have every right to refuse abortion for themselves.

But we cannot give them the right to enforce their beliefs as law upon other people.

We live in a system that has precious little respect for human life. Millions starve to death. Others die through lack of drugs which cost a few pence. Working conditions and industrial pollution kill hundreds of thousands, and mutilate many more, because of the pursuit of profit by the ruling class.

The same people who claim to stand for the "sanctity of life" of the foetus never objected to the genocidal massacre of the Vietnamese people by US imperialism: the Catholic hierarchy, which stands behind SPUC and LIFE, said the US marines were the "soldiers of God".

And the 'sanctity of life' is a deception even when applied to medical

matters. A decision is made every day that certain people should get kidney machines, while others wait. Children with haemophilia are crippled because the NHS won't pay for the drug which will allow their blood to clot instead of seeping into joints and destroying them.

If you're rich, white and living in western Europe or the USA, thousands of pounds might be spent to keep you alive, even though you're reduced to a human cabbage. If you're poor, or black, or living in the 'third world', then the 'sanctity' of your life counts for nothing. Because of sheer poverty, 55,000 old people in Britain die of cold every winter. What has LIFE to say about that?

BASIC

The only way respect for human life can be made anything other than a fraud is by fighting for a society in which basic conditions for a decent life are provided for all, in which murder by the ruling class and their governments is abolished: that is, a socialist society.

Abortion on demand grants at least some real respect for the life of women. It frees us from the shackles that hold us to a downtrodden position, and by doing so helps us to take our place in the struggle for a society with real respect for life.

FRAN BRODIE

ABORTION ON DEMAND A slippery slope to hell?

PEOPLE such as the six pro-abortion MPs who resigned from the Select Committee find that they need to hotly deny that they are in favour of anything so wicked or abominable as abortion on demand. No, they say defensively, we're certainly not in favour of that! And the anti-abortionists accuse: 'That's where your liberalism will get you — you'll have abortion on demand if you don't heed our warnings' ... rather as people once used to say 'You'll come to a bad end if you don't mend your ways'.

Why does the slogan **Abortion on demand** raise quite so many hackles, even among people who recognise the need for legal abortion, who want to extend the 1967 Act, and who have opposed the restrictive James White Amendment Bill? Why do people talk as if it were the slippery slope to hell?

The truth is that there is still a very common attitude that, however strong a woman's need for an abortion, whatever "good case" she has for it, she still shouldn't 'have it too easy'.

The real dividing line between the NAC and the 'liberals' on this issue is not on whether abortions should be limited to a particular time in early pregnancy, or whether they should be done in-patient or out-patient. It is on whether abortion should be as easy and as matter-of-fact as possible, or whether it should be a trauma-laden obstacle course that only the most thick-skinned and tough-willed of



KEEP IT LEGAL KEEP IT SAFE!

BEFORE 1967, up to one hundred thousand women every year faced the terror of a backstreet abortion. The mental pictures of blood and pain and medieval torture instruments amply sum up how these women felt about the ordeal. Every hospital in a poor area had to hold a Sunday morning emergency session to deal with the women who'd been 'fixed up' the night before. And some of the accounts of their injuries make horrific reading.

Women would be brought into hospital with a uterus filled with pus after using infected knitting needles to pierce the womb, or with holes in the vaginal walls

that had been burned with crystals so that faeces and urine were eliminated through the vagina; or they'd be paralysed because of air bubbles entering the bloodstream after using dettol and soapy water. Most common was severe internal bleeding.

Little wonder that in 1960, the total of reported deaths from botched abortions was 62.

But women are still going to the backstreets if they can't raise the money for a private operation after being turned down by the NHS.

**Keep it legal — keep it safe!
Abortion on demand — now!**

The last line of defence

BY abortion? Why can't they use contraception use methods that are far more 100% sure. Only a quarter of people using contraception are on the pill — and wonder, given the side effects (increased risk of thrombosis and 61 other conditions, depression, headaches, more frequent periods). Another 10% use intra-uterine devices (which, again, have numerous snags and dangers and aren't foolproof). The other 65% use condoms or withdrawal.

Even those on the pill can't be sure. It was recently revealed that a commonly prescribed flu drug cancelled out the effects of the contraceptive pill: thousands of women who'd been faithfully eating their pills every night found themselves pregnant. And if any of them tried to get an abortion, they were no doubt told "sorry, we cannot help every woman who has become pregnant because of her own irresponsibility."

Even the best recommendation for the pill as a reliable method describes it as "next to abortion" the most effective agent. If you're under sixteen, sex is illegal: any doctor prescribing contraception is 'aiding and abetting' a crime. And the provision of contraceptives vending machines in secondary schools or tech colleges would no doubt be branded as "immoral" as well as illegal.

This is the level of 'rationality' of the 'responsible' adults — and then the young girls they condemn to ignorance and unwanted pregnancy are pilloried as "irresponsible" and read lectures on 'morality'.

Ironically, far more youngsters who take the moralising seriously are 'caught' by pregnancy than the girls who make a conscious decision to ignore the anti-sex preaching and obtain contraceptives in good time.

It may seem a circular argument, but as long as women want abortions, that proves that contraception has failed or that it wasn't readily enough available. Ideally, no woman would ever have to want an abortion. But as long as they do, offering them homilies on contraception instead is a pretty sick joke.

IF WE DON'T CHOOSE, WE LOSE!

LONG as doctors and medical administrators have the power of decision over the availability of abortion (which means the situation under the 1967 Act) getting an abortion will depend to a large extent on where a woman lives. The anti-abortion campaigns have not restricted their activities to trying to change the law, or lobbying parliament. They have done whatever they can to undermine the workings of the present law. In some areas they have more success.

A pamphlet recently produced by the Leicester NAC, 'Abortion in Leicester' shows just how badly the 1967 Act is implemented in certain areas. Of all abortions done in Leicester in 1973, only 10% were on the NHS; 56% of women who had an abortion and got one had to go to Leicester to pay fees (starting at £10 for private abortions). This is due to the lack of NHS outpatient services. But how does Leicester come to have the worst abortion facilities in the country — so bad that only those with a 'special' case for abortion can get one? Leicester's top gynaecologist, McVicar, a member of SPUC, the arch anti-abortion campaign. His influence has been that sympathetic GPs will refer patients straight to private clinics, knowing they will stand little chance with the NHS gynaecologists who hold sway over the Health Service.

whether a woman can have an abortion on the NHS, they can continue to do this.

Clearly, given that the 1967 Act provides for abortions on social as well as medical grounds, the fact that the NHS is in some areas failing to do these is a breach of this law. But if this is the case, it shows the weakness and inadequacy of the law itself.

This law states that in each particular case that comes to the doctors, it is for them to decide whether a woman's social situation is such that she needs an abortion. What makes them fit to decide, as opposed to the woman herself who is very well acquainted with her own situation? If in the whole of Leicester — a town which provides one nursery place for every 13 children and which has some of the worst housing in the country — the doctors don't think anyone is in need of a 'social' abortion, then there is something very wrong indeed with their thinking!

There is a liberal ideal, which is supposed to characterise this country's laws: they are supposed to apply equally to all, rich or poor and whether they live in London, Leicester, Manchester or wherever. But as long as an abortion law leaves decisions up to doctors and psychiatrists, local councillors, health authorities or magistrates, the provision it is supposed to legalise will be unevenly and arbitrarily available.

It is only when women choose for themselves and have the right to abortion on demand, and when free public facilities are adequate to meet this demand, that discrimination according to the size of a woman's purse or where she lives will end.

LANE BRITTON

Belt and Braces Road- show's 'England Expects'



REVIEW

ONE OF the good things that's happened in the past few years has been the rise of many excellent socialist theatre groups which perform up and down the country. Judging by its current production, "England Expects...", the Belt and Braces Roadshow must be one of the best.

As the blurb in the programme says, "England Expects..." is the first part of a project commissioned by the Yorkshire Arts Association with the backing of the South Yorkshire Trades Council, the Yorkshire NUM and the AUEW District Committee.

It is the story of a Belfast girl who goes to London, is caught stealing and then, when she gets out of prison, is found a job by the Social Security. The job turns out to be at a factory on strike. The girl joins the strikers, and goes on to become a shop steward.

The factory is under threat of closure, and there are heated debates among the workers as to how to fight these threats — which they do, despite the right wing, class collaborationist union official.

But the ideas aren't just presented as talk and argument. Among many vivid scenes, two stuck out in my mind. In one, the manager of the factory is discussing with a foreman how to deal with the strikers. The foreman says he has a 'solution': the light go dim, and onto the stage staggers a grotesque figure dressed in an army uniform, wearing an enormous swastika ensignia and boots that make the average flatfoot's hooves look like twinkletoes. At that, the cast break into the old Nancy Sinatra hit song, 'These boots are made for walking', with a special emphasis on the line that one day they will "walk right over YOU".

Going home to Ireland on the boat, the girl shop steward is accosted by two fascists along with a soldier, and the argument they have is used to put over a viewpoint rarely heard in this country about Northern Ireland — the viewpoint of the Irish people. The question was tackled head on, Republican movement and all. Again, a rare thing to see.

My only serious criticism is that the emphasis on the EEC is wrong and could be taken as a bit soft on 'economic nationalism', if looked at in isolation from the performance as a whole.

Apart from that, absolutely marvellous, at times hilariously funny but hard hitting too. Any socialist or trade unionist can't fail to enjoy "England Expects...". Just as a foretaste, here are the words to one of the many songs that are so smoothly welded into the structure of the play:

DERRY
City men talking while Derry burns
Watch the way the market earns
my dividend.
Better get Whitehall to send
The Army in
To keep the peace and guard the plant we've invested in

Car bomb ticking by a Belfast store
Cut my lethal wires, I'll tick no more
Soldier Boy
You may be a kid but I ain't no bloody toy
You don't know why you're going to die.

Parents weeping in a Yorkshire home
Our boy was killed when not full grown
Not his choice
Unemployed school leaver never found his voice
A nation that enslaves another is itself enslaved.

TROOPS OUT NOW
TROOPS OUT NOW
TROOPS OUT NOW

REVIEWED
BY
JOHN
CUNNINGHAM

workers' ACTION supporters' groups are being formed in the following places:

Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Bristol,
Cambridge, Cardiff, Chelmsford,
Chester, Coventry, Crawley, Durham
Edinburgh, Leicester, Liverpool, London,
Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle,
Newtown, Northampton, Nottingham,
Oxford, Reading, Rochdale, Sheffield,
Stafford, Stoke

Write for details of meetings & activities to:
WASS, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27

Ireland and the abortion struggle

FIGHTING for the right of women to have an abortion whenever they decide to have one, without argument or red tape — for abortion on demand — we have become well aware of the power and influence of the anti-abortion LIFE and SPUC groups.

The propaganda of these organisations has a strong appeal — not only do they campaign for the 'right to life' of the foetus, but they stress their concern for the mothers, married or not. Many of the adherents of these campaigns are Catholics, and clearly the Catholic Church is a major driving force behind the campaigns. On the mass demonstrations, whole Church congregations arrive in coachloads to swell the numbers.

Whereas their motivation appears to be a straight moral objection to abortion as murder, behind that lie a whole set of deeply reactionary ideas about women's place in society. In this country, we hear less from the Catholic Church about these ideas. But if we look to those countries where the Church hierarchy has its way and is able to spread its range of ideas across the whole of society — places like Italy, Spain or Eire — we find them loudly insisting that women should stay in the home, bear children, and obey their husbands, whatever treatment they get.

Yet in all these countries, women are at last getting off their knees and trying to break out of the prison of the home.

In Italy, we've seen the women's movement grow in strength and influence, especially through the campaigns on divorce and abortion. In Spain, the Housewives' League mobilised a massive, all-women demonstration against the Carlos regime. And in Eire, the women's movement is beginning to grow: Irishwomen United has taken up not only the questions of equal pay and equal opportunity but is also challenging the way women are oppressed at home and in the family.

Thrust

The main thrust of the campaign has been over contraception which is still illegal in Ireland. It's reckoned that about 90,000 women in Ireland do use contraceptives — but their availability is hard to guarantee and safer methods, such as the pill, are harder to obtain.

The 1970s saw the start of more open campaigns for contraceptive provision. The Family Planning Association is now established in Dublin, Cork and Navan, but although officially tolerated, runs on a shoestring budget with no grant from the Health Boards.

The attempts made by certain senators to change the law forbidding the provision of contraceptives have been fought at every stage by the Catholic Hierarchy, using its influence on the government and politicians. Hopes were raised when Senator Mary Robinson made her second attempt to introduce a bill to relax the restrictions on contraceptives. But this was defeated after the Government promised its own bill.

When in due course that bill appeared, it was itself defeated — with the help of Prime Minister Cosgrave, who voted against it!

During 1975, the campaign grew to support a further attempt by Mary Robinson, the Family Planning Bill. Introduced in December 1974, it was denied a reading all through last year. The Minister for Health, Brendan Corish, has now promised to get it a hearing. As the Labour Party, of which Corish is leader, has declared its support for a free Family Planning Service, we might expect some advance. But has Corish really changed his mind about the Church? In his younger days he made his position clear — "If the hierarchy gives us any direction with regard to Catholic social teaching or Catholic moral teaching" he said "I accept it without qualification".

Irish Women United was formed last June as a weapon in this battle

against Church and State. Eighty women from various socialist and women's organisations came together and adopted a charter demanding equality at work and in the unions. Since then, IWU has given a real lead in the fight for Equal Pay and free and legal contraception. A big rally last November called for "state financed, community run birth control clinics throughout the country" and a full sex education programme.

The situation in Ireland is obviously grotesquely repressive, with the whole state apparatus concerning itself with the most intimate aspects of people's

that this fight is linked to the struggle for equal pay and equal opportunity. In both countries, the two cannot be separated.

10,000 Irish women every year come to Britain for abortions. Many more no doubt resort to furtive, dangerous backstreet abortions. Even at such a time as contraception is freely available, women in Ireland will not be able to have complete control over their bodies and their lives until they have won the right to free and legal abortion. Difficult as the fight for this must be in Ireland, it must be taken up now.

The partition of Ireland, enforced by Britain in 1921 at gunpoint, has been one of the major factors in helping to entrench the Church hierarchy in the South. A united Ireland would be a severe blow to its influence and a great liberating factor in Irish society. The struggle for this aim should not be ignored by Irish women fighting for women's rights. By the same token, those in the forefront of this struggle, the republican movement — who in the past have tended to uphold the Church's restrictions on women — need to be educated and won to the fight for women's rights.

We know how active women in the North have been, not only defending their homes in the Catholic ghettos against Orange mobs and British troops, but also fighting to get the troops out. They've got their own particular freedom to fight for as well — and they're the best qualified to do it.

Here in Britain, we can best help by keeping up and pressing home our own campaign for free abortion on demand. Just as the movement in Italy has helped us here, so our successes will give impetus to the struggle of Irish women. And in practical terms, we must ensure that any facilities we win are open and free to the Irish women who still need them desperately. And that includes the women of the North — where Britain's 'enlightened' rule brings troops to the streets but has never yet implemented even the 1967 Abortion Act.

Sue Thomas



private lives. But in fact the position of women in Ireland is only a particularly harsh, exaggerated version of the general position of women in all capitalist societies. Church or no church, women are still not free of the ties of home and family, of private, individual home-based child-care.

It is these things which determine that women at work get such a lousy deal. So, although in Ireland the Church's opposition poses a direct, frontal fight for elementary facilities that we take for granted here, it is at least as important as it is in Britain



MICHAEL FARRELL NORTHERN IRELAND: THE ORANGE STATE



PLUTO PRESS are offering a pre-publication bargain on two books due at Easter on Northern Ireland.

The two volumes are Michael Farrell's "Northern Ireland: the Orange State" — 'The first political history of the puppet state and its current disintegration', selling at £5 for a solid 400-page volume; and Geoff Bell's "The Protestants of Ulster", selling at £2.

On orders received before Easter (cash with order) Pluto will let you have both books for £5.

Orders to: Pluto Press Ltd., unit 10, Spencer Court, 7 Chalcot Road, London NW1 8LH.

South-West Region TUC

ON SATURDAY 27th March the South West Region TUC held an open meeting in Bristol on "Fighting the Public Sector Cuts". There were about 100 people present. Most were from Bristol, but a few came from Bath, Exeter and elsewhere.

The morning session, on the cuts in the NHS, was almost totally taken up by the three platform speakers. Ron Thomas (Tribunite MP for Bristol North, West) spelled out Tribunite's solution — import controls, redirection of the Banks and Insurance Companies' funds into industry, National Enterprise Board and 100% wealth tax. However, he failed to say how this blueprint helps fight cuts in the public sector. His only answer was the challenge the 'economic strategy' of the Labour government on the back of the TUC's Economic Review.

Doug Cook (NALGO Health Service) described how the cuts affect the NHS, cutting hospitals, closing wards, cancelling new buildings, but still gave no answer as to how the rank and file could fight back. Bernard Dix (NUPE) did quote one example where cleaners in the council offices had been cut by 10% and decided to do 10% less cleaning. They left out the Town Clerk's office, the Mayor's rooms, etc. Soon they were back up to strength! But mostly Dix said no more than "fight the cuts".

The Bristol Health Cuts committee tried to move a resolution calling for a more organised fight, but the Chairman ruled it out as this was a public meeting! As one Trade Unionist said, more of a fight against the fight against the cuts!

The afternoon session was organised by NALGO, on cuts in general. Here again we spent half the session listening to Don Bateman (NATFHE) explaining how the cuts hit education — and no word on how to fight them. However, the discussion afterwards was more fruitful.

Because of a mix-up and non-appearance of the scheduled chairman, Cyril Gibson of the NALGO Exec was in the chair. In spite of a leaflet handed out at the start saying no resolutions could be accepted, he took one calling on the Avon Association of Trades Councils to organise a delegate conference to coordinate the campaign against the cuts.

It seems that the real weakness of the meeting was that none of the unions present were really committed

Only an illusion of a fight

to mobilising their members to fight the cuts. No-one could say: we have done this, we are doing that, we won here, we lost there, and exchange their experiences. Rather the meeting rested at the level of empty speech-making to create an impression of struggle.

NUS fights attack on overseas students

THE National Union of Students has started a campaign to protest against Government plans to limit the number of overseas students in this country by raising their fees.

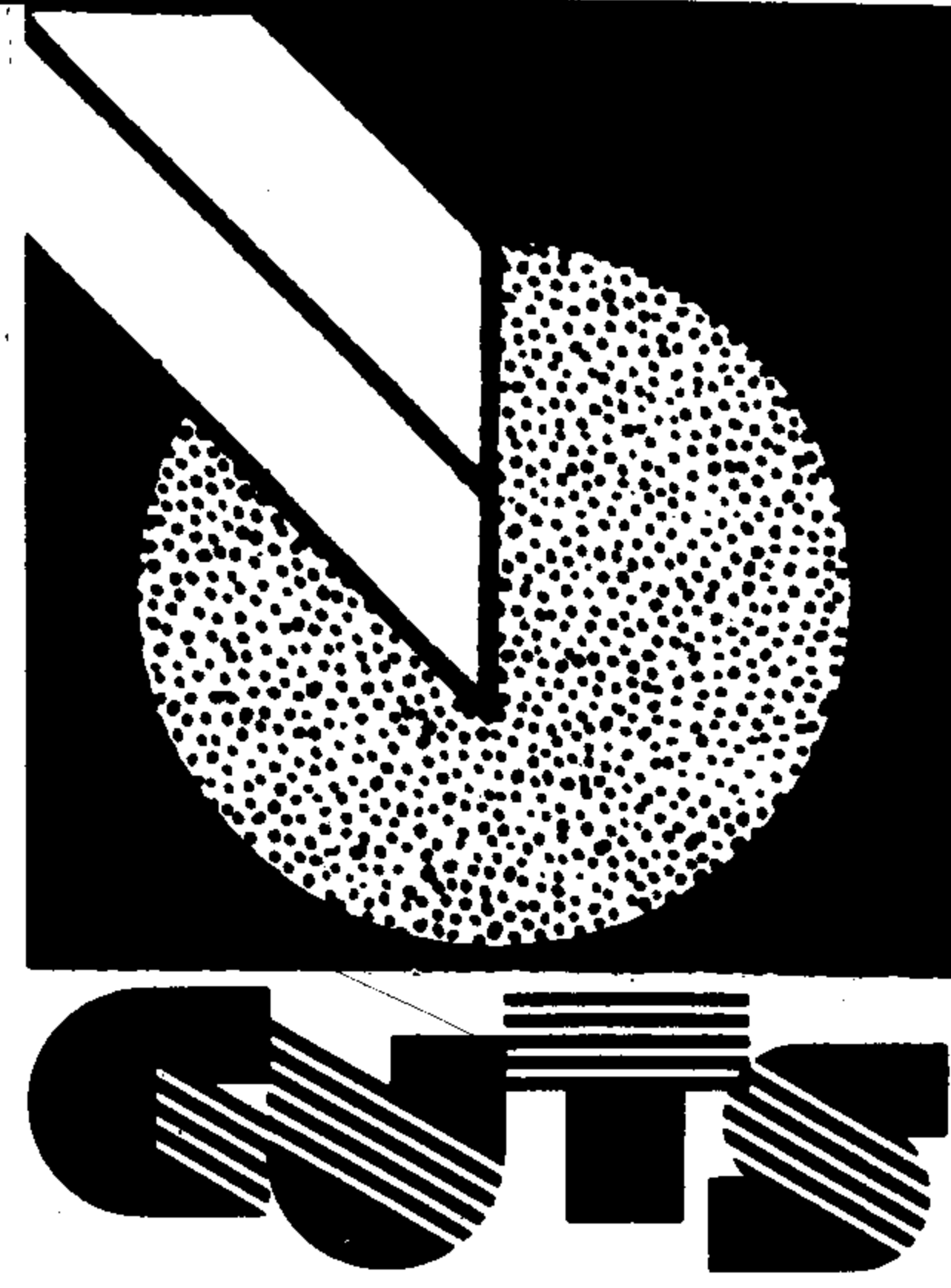
A Cabinet policy group recently recommended that these fees should be raised to a level five times that of "our" students. For overseas students on advanced courses this would mean paying about £2000 a year.

The official explanation for this blatantly racist policy is a classic piece of doublethink. Lord Crowther Hunt recently told the House of Lords that foreign students are costing the taxpayer £170 million a year.

This is an outright lie. The figure was arrived at by dividing the total cost of higher education by the total number of students, to give a so-called cost per head figure. The cost of foreign students was then "calculated" by multiplying this figure by the number of foreign students.

Since the total for education includes fixed costs such as buildings, capital expenditure, equipment and salaries which have to be paid anyway, the £170 million result is a massive over-estimation.

This method also conveniently



forgets the contribution made by, for example, "student" nurses and language assistants. Because this group — 24,500 of them — work for such low wages they are actually subsidising both the National Health Service and Education.

Profits

Also the fees of individual students (three quarters of whom are from underdeveloped nations, mostly former British colonies) cannot be viewed in isolation. The Government's method ignores the vast sums of wealth extracted from areas like India, Malaysia, and Africa. Also left out are the considerable profits still flowing back to London from overseas, for example the £500 million taken out of Hong Kong's sweat-shops every year.

But in any case, these calculations are ultimately beside the point. Education should not be a commodity available only to the rich, it should be free and a right

for all. That should apply to everyone, whatever their nationality.

The attack on overseas students is another attempt to blame the ills of the system on a minority who cannot easily fight back.

STEVE MACSWEENEY

An appeal to the Labour movement from the Clay Cross Labour Party

AN APPEAL to the Labour movement has been issued by the Clay Cross Labour Party. It concerns the surcharge imposed upon the ten councillors who agreed to pay wage increases to council workers. The appeal reads as follows:

"On February 23 and 24, a further 10 Clay Cross Councillors appeared in the High Court. Like their predecessors their appeal against surcharge and disqualification was dismissed. Unlike the previous councillors they had not been surcharged for not implementing the Housing Finance Act, but a surcharge had been imposed for the payment of 'illegal' wage increases to council workmen and old-aged pensioners' wardens. These councillors who held office only for a period of three weeks before local government reorganisation, were surcharged a total of £2,229, yet the successor district council continued to make the same payments to the workmen for a month and to the wardens for 15 months, and were absolved of any liability for surcharge!

"Clay Cross Labour Party considers this to be a further example of victimisation against its councillors, but now this further surcharge makes the situation, and the need to defend the councillors even more critical. Several of the original councillors had transferred their goods and property into their wives' names, and now some of those wives have also been surcharged. Thus several families now face impoverishment and even the loss of their homes.

"In the face of these new circumstances we have no alternative but to launch a fund in order to protect these people and their families.

"These 'second eleven' councillors, like their predecessors, have always been prepared to carry out policies as laid down by Labour Party conference. The original decision to fight the Tories' Housing Finance Act gained the overwhelming support of the Labour movement.

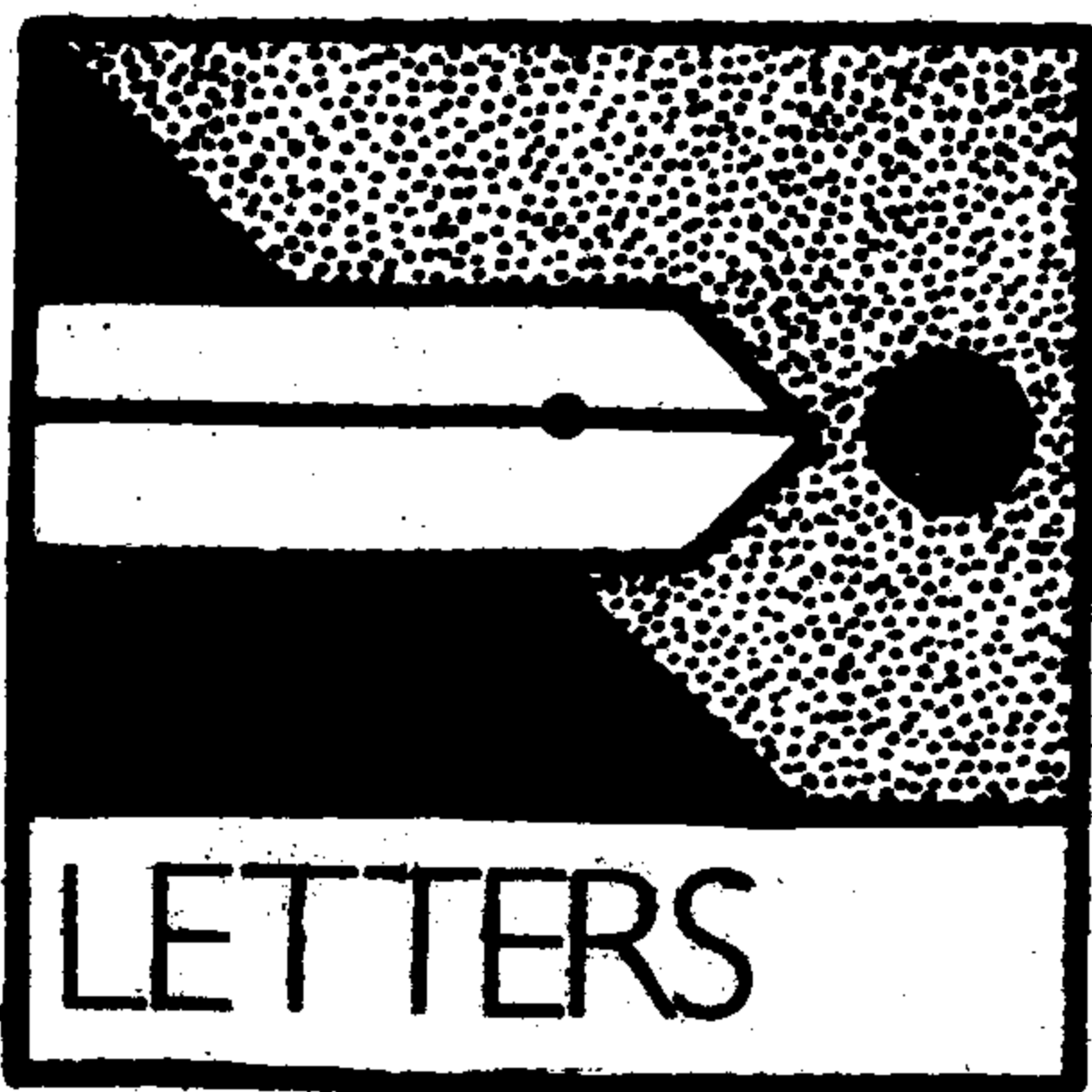
"The fight would also have been successful had the Labour Party leaders implemented Labour Party policy on this question. However, their refusal left the councillors out on a limb.

"Time is very short, only a few weeks are left in order to raise these funds (the time in which the surcharge falls due to be paid expires on April 6). We therefore ask your organisation to make as large a donation as possible in order to avert this situation.

"We realise that times are hard but trust that your organisation will do everything in its power to protect our councillors."

The matter is of considerable urgency, and all those making donations should send them as quickly as possible. The Tribune Group of Labour MPs has sent £50 and is launching a campaign to raise further contributions.

All donations should be made payable to "Clay Cross Labour Party" and sent to: Clay Cross Labour Party, c/o 27 Queen Street, Clay Cross, Derbyshire.



Should we bring down the Labour Government?

Tribunites should have voted against the government on a vote of confidence. In the present relationship of forces in the Labour movement, we can only be in favour of a Labour government. Thus revolutionaries should demand of the 'left' MPs: vote against Wilson's pro-capitalist policies, but vote in favour of a vote of confidence. In this way you do everything possible to stop the anti-working class policies, and alert the labour movement to their significance, without incurring the odium of being responsible for the calling of a general election in which the choice would simply be between worker-bashing Labour and worker-bashing Conservatives.

In such a general election, of course, Workers Action would call for a vote for Labour, and hence for a Labour government which would certainly be "worker-bashing". Socialists in parliament should thus vote for a vote of confidence, not because of any "confidence" in the ability of the social democrats to institute socialist measures, but to keep them in the hot seat of government, which from the point of view of the working class is the best place to have them.

If Workers Action thinks differently, then it is coming dangerously close to neutrality on whether Labour or Tories form the government, and that is a classic ultra-left error which you

have in the past opposed.

Fraternally, Phil Andrew, Erdington, Birmingham.

WORKERS' ACTION REPLIES:

IT CERTAINLY is unfortunate if our editorial of March 17th was "ambiguous" ... but in fact comrade Andrew seems to have got it right. It did say — not only "appear to imply" — that the 37 Tribune MPs who abstained from voting for the cuts on March 10th ought to have voted against the government on the vote of confidence that Wilson insisted on the following day.

Why? Because we have no confidence in the Government's policies. We do not support the Government.

Our policy of no confidence in a capitalist government — even if that policy brings down the pro-capitalist Labour government — is, of course, not the same as the policy of the Workers' Revolutionary Party, which sees the overthrow of the government as the central slogan of the working class.

If there were MPs, unlike the 37, who were prepared to refuse the government a vote of confidence, no doubt the Labour leaders would blame them for wrecking the Labour Party, supporting the Tories, etc. As it happens, this was what was said about

the 37 in any case. To such remarks socialists would answer: what has brought the government to ruin is its own anti-working-class policies.

Revolutionaries refuse to accept the responsibility for such policies. And that means refusing to accept the responsibility for the defeats for the Government that such policies might bring with them.

In this case, it is the policies of Wilson, Foot, Callaghan and Healey (backed by a substantial section of the Parliamentary Labour Party) that are bringing defeat on the Government. If these people had any confidence in the support for those policies amongst the working class they wouldn't mind "going to the country".

Had the government been brought down, Workers Action would have called for an immediate Emergency Labour Party Conference, urging socialists to fight at that Conference for a policy in the interests of the working class.

Election

In an ensuing election we would support those socialist MPs who had rebelled (who would by then certainly find themselves outside the Labour Party). We would advocate the putting up of other socialist candidates based on a programme including the rejection of the anti-working-class policies of the Labour leadership. We would argue for local Labour Parties to defy Transport House and support such socialist candidates against the official Labour nominee.

Where we could not do this, we would vote Labour, as we have always advocated, saying to Labour supporters: "Where we cannot stand our own candidates to good effect, we will help you get a Labour majority. But we will not be hostages to their possibly small margin over the other parties. We do not support the Labour leadership. Along with our vote we

fight to change the policies of the Labour movement, to throw out right-wing leaders, right-wing MPs and right-wing policies, and to replace them with militants and pro-working class policies."

Of course, we would be branded as 'agents of the Tories' not only by the Labour leaders but by many honest Labour Party members (to say nothing of the line of the Communist Party). They would say that our actions had helped the Tories. Perhaps in that election they would be right. But for us that is totally secondary compared with the value of standing openly for revolutionary principles. Will comrade Andrew be consistent in his view about not bringing down the

Labour government when faced with the Healey budget? That Budget will certainly embody the Government's policy of squeezing the working class, and it will be carefully worked out so that it can lead smoothly to the adoption of the "son of £6" a couple of months later. But the Budget vote will be a vote of confidence.

To be consistent, comrade Andrew should argue that MPs should vote for the Budget. Workers Action has argued that MPs should oppose it even though such opposition would bring the government down!

We don't know whether comrade Andrew is acquainted with Trotsky's attitude to voting for the budget of the Spanish Republic during the Spanish Civil War. The Trotskyists fought with the Republican forces against Franco. But Trotsky opposed voting for any budget of a capitalist state — whatever the coloration or needs of the government.

This principle was upheld even by the stalwarts of the Second International before 1914, who refused to vote for any budgets in a bourgeois state. "Not a man, not a penny" — and not a vote of confidence — "for this system".

WARRIORS IN ACTION

Leyland workers stick it out against combine assault

Continued from page 1

While there is no direct link between the wage struggles and the issue of workers' participation, the toolroom workers see their present stand as a part of their overall refusal to be sucked into management's more recent schemes. The phrase that is heard now about participation is that "we don't want any round tables, we want square tables with us on the one side and them on the other".

The scope of the dispute is very wide. Directly affected are the Rover plants at Solihull, where 400 toolmakers have been on strike since 12th March, the Rover-Triumph plant in Coventry where 350 toolmakers have been on strike for over a fortnight — leading to the lay-off of 2,300 workers in the Midlands and by now another 630 in Liverpool — the Rover plant in Cardiff and SU Carburettors in Birmingham.

At the time of going to press, the 32 men at SU Carburettors were sticking out for their increase despite Foot's thumbs-down. Management have already conceded the agreement in principle, they say — it is only Foot and his £6 limit that stands in the way.

The men are demanding parity with other Leyland toolroom workers who are about £12 ahead of them at present.

But it is not just the Government these workers have got to fight — there's the TUC, too. A spokesman at Congress House delivered this scab's judgment on the issues: "The AUEW has accepted the £6 agreement. If members defy the TUC and their union's policy, it's up to the union itself to keep them in line. We would not support these 30 people nor indeed could their union. Therefore I think they would get a dusty answer from Hugh Scanlon. It's crude and rough justice (!) but it's got to stick".

Head-on

And so the toolrooms in Rover are taking on management in a head-on struggle to maintain their independence in a collective bargaining framework, and go beyond the £6 limit if it blocks their just claims.

The combined assault on Leyland workers by management and the government, and being cheered on by

the Tory press, is being met by a solid rebuff by the Rover toolrooms. The attack is being waged on several fronts — the £6 limit, the 'participation' schemes and the MDW offensive. On all these fronts the Rover toolrooms are in the front line.

Despite being made official at the level of the Birmingham East district of the union, both national and local Tory papers have been attempting to belittle the aims of the dispute in an attempt to maintain the traditional isolation of the toolrooms from the rest of the workers. The press campaign has been orchestrated by the management of Leyland cars, whose managing director, Derkek Whittaker, called a 'conference' of 400 shop stewards at Longbridge on Thursday. He threatened them that unless they toed the line, government financial aid would stop.

Whittaker had used this ploy last December to warn dire consequences for 'wild-cat' actions. But like Mathilda who cried 'fire' too many times, his ridiculous threats are unlikely to work this time. The only thing that could be described as 'wild-cat' about this particular dispute is the



action of management in wanting to tear up the toolroom agreement.

It is quite clear that Whittaker has got a mandate from the Labour government to smash the independence of the ROVER TOOLROOMS AND INTRODUCE WHAT George Cattell, chief architect of MDW in Rootes, called 'a modern form of slavery'.

Despite the strike being official at the local level, despite the principle at stake, despite the fantastic resolution

of the toolroom workers, other AUEW workers on production and TGWU members are continuing to cross the picket lines.

These workers must be called out officially and the AUEW Executive must sanction dispute benefit for their members. Information regarding the rights to social security benefit for dependents of the members must be organised by the District Committees. As a result of the District Committees' failure to put these matters in hand the Confed meeting last week was railroaded into voting against a resolution calling for support for the toolrooms. Solidarity action now would bring the dispute to a speedy and victorious conclusion. The lack of it will make the dispute long and bitter, with increasingly vitriolic attacks on the strikers' by the bosses' press.

● The 400 Solihull toolroom workers are in fact split up over five different plants, four in the Birmingham suburbs: Perry Barr (axles and transmissions), Percy Road, Greet (gear boxes), Tyburn Rd (general components), centred on the fifth (general assembly) in Solihull itself.

Messages of support should be sent to Bro Frank Baron, c/o AUEW District Office, Holloway Circus, Birmingham, West Midlands.
DICK PRATT

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Send copy to 'Events', 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Thursday 1st April. Reading Workers Action meeting on "The Fight Against the Cuts". 8pm, TGWU Hall, Kings Road.

Thursday 1st April. Manchester Workers Action meeting on "Why the Labour Government is selling us out". Speaker: Dave Spencer (Coventry Trades Council). 8pm at the Ducie Arms, Gt Ducie St.

Saturday 3rd April. Conference on how to fight the education cuts. 10.30am at the University of London Union, Malet St, WC1. Sponsored by TUC South East Regional Council. Credentials from Paula Lanning, NATFHE, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, WC1.

Saturday 3rd April. "Free Desmond Trotter" meeting, 7pm at the Abeng Centre, Gresham Rd, Brixton.

Saturday 3rd April. National Abortion Campaign demonstration for Free Abortion on Demand and A Woman's Right to Choose. Assemble 1.30pm at Speakers' Corner.

Saturday 3rd April. Local labour movement conference on unemployment and the cuts, organised by Lambeth Trades Council and Norwood Labour Party. At Stockwell Hall, Stockwell Park Walk, SW2. Details from W Wiseman, 23 Saunders Ho, St Martins Estate, SW2.

Tuesday 6th April. Leicester Workers Action meeting on Spain. Speaker: Stuart King. 8pm, at 'The Globe', Silver Street.

Thursday 8th April. Greater London Tribune Group meeting on "Where is Labour Going?". 7.45pm at Caxton Hall, Westminster. Speakers: Brian Sedgemore and Richard Clements.

Saturday and Sunday 10th-11th April: Working Womens Charter national conference. At Lanchester Poly, Coventry. Details from Helen Gurdon, Flat 4, 39 Newbold Tce, Leamington Spa, Warks.

Sunday 11th April. Campaign to Repeal the Immigration Act demonstration. Assemble 2.30pm at Speakers Corner. Committee to organise the demo meets every Thursday, 7.30pm at 31 James St, WC2.

Saturday 24th April. Rally against unemployment and the cuts, called by North West Region of the TUC.

Friday-Saturday-Sunday 23rd-24th-25th April: National Women's Liberation Conference 1976. Registration forms and information from 46 Simonside Tce, Newcastle-upon-Tyne 6.

Friday-Saturday-Sunday 23rd-24th-25th April. Delegate Conference to mark the 50th anniversary of the General Strike, at Sussex University. Registration: Peter Cresswell, Trade Union Group, Sussex University Union, Falmer, Brighton.

Sunday 25th April. National Demonstration called by the National Coordinating Committee against the Cuts in the NHS. Assemble 1pm at Hyde Park Corner. Details from P Stern, 55 Bridge Lane, London NW10.

"Fight the Cuts" film made by a group of film-makers in ACTT. Available FREE for all meetings and conferences against the cuts by phoning 01-794 2825. 55 minutes, black and white, 16mm optical sound.

Published by Workers Action, 49 Carnac St, London SE27. Printed by Prestagate of Reading (TU). Registered as a newspaper at the GPO.

Blackmans get the ACAS treatment — and return



AFTER A MASS meeting at which shop stewards reported back on their discussions with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, the workers at Blackmans, Tottenham decided on a return to work.

They had been out for over 12 weeks, locked out in the case of most of them by GEC, the parent company. In view of this length of time, the narrow margin of the voting to go back and the large number of abstentions show a work force where there is no lack of anger and no lack of determination to fight.

The dispute had started when, after a whole series of provocations over the previous year by management, Rudi Klein, a TASS steward, was sacked on a trumped-up charge — attending a meeting in works time.

As the central issue around which the dispute took place was the defence of Rudi Klein, the agreement of the workers to go back on terms which include his victimisation must be accounted a clear defeat.

The workers have also accepted the introduction of greater flexibility in work arrangements.

That was the formula recommended by ACAS. That's what they call advice, conciliation, and arbitration: better to call it attacking, conning and aggravation service.

Apart from the obvious lesson — that ACAS is a service for the employers and on-one else — there is another lesson to be learned about this set-up. That is the way it serves as a psychological watershed in a dispute.

Morale

Unless there are massive defections in a strike situation — either people finding other jobs (hardly as great a problem now as previously) or people going back to work — unless there is some very visible slump in morale, one week can be very like another. If the stewards recommend staying out and the mass meeting agrees one week, there seems little reason for coming to any different decision the following week.

But — and here's the trick — if, after several weeks the officials and stewards go to ACAS and get the usual thumbs-down treatment, this seems to mark an obvious

point for calling the whole thing off. In a situation of weakness, the finality of a refusal at ACAS can be the decider.

The simplest advice would be: don't touch ACAS! If in a strike situation the workforce do opt to go to ACAS, however, it is vital that the right psychological and political preparations are made to cushion the almost inevitable come-down afterwards.

Perhaps the central lesson of this strike is the need for a strong combine committee. Of course, this is necessary in any period; workers ought to be organised at least as extensively as the bosses. But right now there is a special pressure, because with the state of order books in most industries the employers can afford to provoke disputes like the Blackmans lock-out in sections where things are slack. Only by organising on a combine basis is it possible to hit the employer where it hurts most. The weakness of the GEC combine had a direct effect on the defeat of this dispute.

There are plenty of other lessons — positive as well as negative — we can all learn from the Blackmans lock-out, about occupations, about the duties of Trades Councils, about the criminal delays that are customary in the payment of strike pay by unions, etc. While we are assimilating them, however, we have a duty to discharge still.... donations are still needed even though the workers have returned. They should be sent to Jim Pickering, AUEW, Suite 3, Second Floor, 128-136 High St, Edgware, Middx.

Knowsley Direct Works return

THE 579 building workers employed in the Knowsley, Merseyside, direct works department, returned to work on Monday 29th March.

They had been on strike for two weeks against the Labour council's threat of 181 redundancies and to demand the withdrawal of allegations made against a local Trade Union official.

In an informal meeting the previous week, the Council had offered local union officials withdrawal of the redundancy threats until April 28th, in return for 'meaningful discussions' in the intervening period. This proposal was put straight to a mass meeting on Friday 26th March, where it was accepted by a large majority.

This came after a week in which support for the strike had been spread by mass picketing of a number of building sites in Knowsley. The background and cause of the strike had also been put out in a leaflet distributed to local tenants and trade unionists.

What exactly 'meaningful' discussions mean in a situation where the policy is still no redundancies, is not at all clear. The redundancy threats have, for the moment, been postponed. The offer of the post-

ponement obviously came because of the rank and file strength shown in the strike. That strength remains the only guarantee against new redundancy threats and against any other attacks. JOHN BLOXAM

Hackney Working Women's Charter

ON SATURDAY 27th March Hackney Working Women's Charter, together with Hackney under-5s campaign, held a demonstration and rally of about 100 local women and men. The demonstration was called in order to demand more nursery places in Hackney.

830 nursery places are planned to be cut in the borough by 1983, while there is an estimated demand for 6,000 more nursery places.

The demonstration attracted a lot of local attention and served as the start of the proposed mass campaign for more nurseries with adequate staff and facilities in Hackney.

Hackney is one of many places where Working Women's Charter campaigns have linked the 'Stop the Cuts' demand with the demand for more nurseries. In this way women are beginning to organise around their own oppression and against the Government's attempt to push them back into the home.

44 Right to Work Marchers to go on trial on May 21st

THE TRIAL of the 44 "Right to Work" marchers arrested after the police attacked the march at West Hendon on March 19th has been set for May 21st.

So far the arrested marchers have been charged with a variety of crimes like obstruction and assault. One, John Deason, has been charged with the far more serious crime of grievous bodily harm. The police however, are biding their time on whether or not to bring other serious charges against more of the marchers.

This means the response must come now.

Workers' Action fully supports the demands of the Defence Committee set up for the marchers: a Trade Union enquiry into the attack and the dropping of all charges. Resolutions supporting these demands should be passed in Trade Union branches up and down the country and sent to Union executives, the TUC and the Home Secretary. The Defence Committee can be contacted at 46 Prince George Rd, London N16.

STEVE MACSWEENEY

SUBSCRIBE NOW!

STANDARD SUB:
50 issues - £7.50
25 issues - £3.75

Special Offer

UNTIL APRIL 1st:
50 issues - £6
25 issues - £3

To: Subscriptions, 49 Carnac St., SE27

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Cheques payable to Workers' Action