

Workers' ACTION

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LEFT WINS TWICE ON DEMOCRACY

AT LABOUR conference the left won on mandatory reselection of MPs and on National Executive Committee control of the Manifesto.

During 1974-9 — in fact, during the whole history of the Labour Party — Labour operated with more or less left wing policies on paper, decidedly right-wing policies in practice. The conflict has been smoothed over by vague rhetoric which proclaims socialist aims but leaves their achievement to an indefinite process of Parliamentary manoeuvring.

The Brighton decisions are a big blow against that

ately begin to ensure that Constituency Labour Parties draw in more individual members and trade union delegates: a task made much easier by the fact now that ordinary rank and file Labour Party members can begin to have a decisive voice in the policies of the Party.

More importantly, they can make their representatives adhere to those policies and vote accordingly.

Past experiences of MPs who openly flout the decisions of their constituency Labour Parties can be finished. But they will be finished only if we begin to organise the left effectively.

Callaghan, the main architect and defender of the capitalist policies pursued over the last few years, must be removed.

MPs who have flouted Conference decisions and the wishes of their rank and file also have to go. In such a struggle activists must campaign especially outside the Labour Party and draw in the many passive or cynical Labour supporters disillusioned by the pretty words and ugly deeds of their 'leaders' in the past. We have proved the political structure of the British labour movement can be changed. Now let's change it.

Only if this essential democratisation is successful and mandatory reselection does not become a dead letter will the left wing be able to tap the growing discontent of millions of workers and actively draw them into struggle.

The right wing will not die quietly. They will kick and fight. Many of those who claim to be leading the Left will waver or dither. To the extent that the political battles within the Labour Party become clearer and more open, and have more grip on actual Party policy, a hard organised left wing will more and more be needed to defeat the hard organised right wing.

Now the real fight begins



James Callaghan: two-time loser.

set-up — a set-up which has politically paralysed not only the Labour Party but the trade unions which look to Labour as their political expression. It opens the way for a clearer, sharper fight on political issues in the Labour Party and also in the trade unions.

But these victories are bound to come under attack from the Party and trade union right wing very soon.

The right wing will appeal to the passive millions against the thousands of activists — those same millions who "are not interested in politics" because the right wing's treachery has taught them that politics, as practised by the Labour Party up to now, is a dirty business. To fight the right wing backlash and to build on the victory the left has won, we must immedi-

ALL OUT AND NO SELL OUT

WHILE pressure grows among the rank and file engineers for an all-out strike, Duffy and the AUEW leaders have been having secret talks in an effort to get a deal with the Engineering Employers' Federation.

Meanwhile electricians' union leader Frank Chapple has been ranting on about these 'deplorable, ridiculous and tragic strikes' as a prelude to trying to take his union out of the action.

He claims to be pressuring the Confed leaders to call a ballot on whether the series of two day strikes should continue. His tactic is simple: tire them out, sound them out, then sell them out.

The AUEW leaders show no sign of declaring a national all-out strike, despite a barrage of resolutions demanding one and scores of others condemning their lack of leadership.

The AUEW is the main union within the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, whose claim is for a skilled minimum time rate of £80 with pro rata for other grades, extra holidays, and a shorter working week. They are also demanding a common implementation date for all employees: April 1st, 1979. The shorter working week demand is for 35 hours in 1982, and 39 hours in 1979 as a step towards this goal.

Stewards' quarterlies, District Committees and special Confed stewards' meetings in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Sheffield, Doncaster, Bradford, North London, Huddersfield, Halifax, Reading and many other places have called on the executive to start all-out strike action.

At the same time, the union headquarters are being flooded with resolutions condemning the AUEW Executive for its inaction. Most District Committees and officials have done little, too. Rarely can a national strike

have received less leadership than now. The right-wing supporters of union leader Terry Duffy don't want to lead the strike to a militant victory. Some left-wingers console themselves with the idea that Duffy will get the blame for defeat.

The members of the Engineering Employers' Federation know better. They know very well that the result of defeat will be a loss of union membership, demoralisation, and a consolidation of the most conservative trends within the membership, whether or not Duffy survives next year's presidential election.

They are clearly out to beat down the union. If they wanted to firm up the right wing they would have offered a little more and allowed Duffy to claim that a reasonable deal had been made.

Local and national newspapers have been busy headlining every gesture of opposition to the Confed's strike call, hoping to paint a picture of rebellion against high-handed trade union bureaucrats. After the failure of Mike Savage and his 'back to work brigade' at Longbridge, we have Ron Brown of Rolls Royce Patchway (near Bristol) and other media heroes.

Despite the EEF's advice to member firms to 'consider' locking out their workers, few have done so. That advice, it seems, was more a gambit to scare the unions than a serious move towards a general lock-out. But more lock-outs are still possible if the bosses decide to force the pace.

Despite some trickling back — usually because of lack of leadership by the union chiefs and no prospect of a really concerted struggle — the strike is still very solid. At a mass meeting of Confed stewards in Manchester three weeks ago, it was announced

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FUND DRIVE

By the last issue we had received £16. Since then we have received:

Birmingham	£5
Leicester	£50
Liverpool	£10
London	£31
Sheffield	£2
South Wales	£10
Stoke on Trent	£5
Bankers' Orders	£54.50
This week's total	£167.50
Overall total	£183.50
Shortfall on £200 target	£16.50

The closing date for the October fund is issue no.157, dated November 3rd. Send donations to Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD. Cheques payable to Workers' Action.

INSIDE

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BLAIR PEACH VERDICT: NO CASE AGAINST THE COPS

BLAIR PEACH was murdered by members of the police Special Patrol Group in Southall on April 23. Scores of other anti-racists and black Southall residents were beaten up or otherwise attacked by the police. Yet the Director of Public Prosecution has decided not to proceed with any charges against the police, because of 'insufficient evidence'.

There is a murder in broad daylight. There are eye-witnesses. There are presumably records of the instructions given to different groups of police, and it must therefore be known who the policemen were who attacked Blair Peach. Not bad for a lead...

But still there is insufficient evidence. Meanwhile

there is a whole mountain of what the police claim is evidence enough to convict 342 people, many of whom are now coming up for trial at Barnet Magistrates Court.

This is true blue British justice. Class justice at its clearest. The victims of the police riot are on trial, and the police, even after murdering someone, are all let go. What can you expect with no public inquiry, but only the police investigating the police?

At a Southall Defence Campaign meeting at the Labour Party conference, Neil Kinnock MP noted that Southall had not even forced itself onto the agenda of conference. There was just a fringe meeting. Is that what would have happened if

342 whites had been arrested after a police attack on their community?

What you can do:
• Get your CLP or trade union branch to add itself to the many which have passed resolutions demanding a public inquiry and the disbanding of the SPG.

• Adopt one of the defendants at your CLP, trade union branch, or trades council. Raise money to pay the fine and provide support. Contact the Defence Campaign c/o PO Box 151, London WC2.

• Build pickets of local police stations on 10th October, the day before the reopening of Blair Peach's inquest on 11th October.

Let's have countless Clay Crosses

'It was a glorious fight. It was mainly successful. We've got to repeat it'.

At the SCLV/Lambeth Against the Cuts meeting on Tuesday evening, Dennis Skinner called for Labour councils to fight the Tories now — like Clay Cross fought the last Tory government.

The consequences could be grave, he said. Twenty Clay Cross ex-councillors are still disqualified from public office, ten are undischarged bankrupts.

'But they are not bowed
continued on p.6

RACHEL LEVER reports on the Women's Voice conference in Birmingham last weekend

WOMEN'S VOICE is to become the women's magazine of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP). And **WV** groups will be 'based on the politics of the SWP'. Though officially 'organisationally independent', **WV** will be run by the SWP's full-time women's organiser, appointed by the SWP leadership against the wishes of the **WV** Steering Committee.

That the new constitution should be adopted at last weekend's **WV** Conference was a safe bet. The previous week's SWP Women's Aggregate had over-riden most of the party's own activists in **WV** and decided to push it through. The new issue of **WV** had anticipated the decision, describing itself for the first time in nearly two years as the SWP women's magazine. And Socialist Worker had reported the outcome of the Conference in advance.

Up to last weekend's conference the main division among SWP women was between making **WV** an SWP women's section, or continuing the designation 'sister-organisation of the SWP'. **WA** supporters active in **WV** groups had argued that this was not a real choice.

Women's Voice Conference SWP pulls down the shutters

Under the sister organisation the SWP had in fact kept a tight rein on **WV** politics and organisation, and even if the format was maintained, it would merely be a cover for an increasingly SWP-controlled organisation. This was especially so now that the SWP leadership itself had decided it wanted to close the ranks and turn **WV** into a more manageable contact group for the SWP.

The definitive choice lay between the SWP periphery organisation on the one hand; and on the other, a broad-based, open organisation with its own political life, in which the SWP and other tendencies could discuss political options. No group would have a special status for its politics, though no doubt the SWP would have a weightier influence.

We argued that there were real possibilities for building a popular socialist women's movement that would attract women through its activity and because they could join

and work in it without being stuck with the label of one or another group.

In the event, the resolution that explicitly wanted a sister organisation hardly got a look-in, though its contradictions and ambiguities were allowed to creep into the proposed SWP periphery organisation, which didn't anywhere state honestly that that was what it was going to be. And this was debated as against the broad-based idea, which also wasn't spelled out but implied, as the relevant resolution did not mention the SWP at all.

Broad

Crucial to the debate was the question of **WV**'s programme. The **WA** supporters' alternative platform (see **WA153**), which would have provided an adequate political basis for a broad-based movement, did not appear on the agenda. By the time of the afternoon debate on the

constitution, the only programme left on the agenda was an extremely scrappy one from Bedford, and it seemed perfectly reasonable for SWP women's organiser Lindsey German, who opened the debate, to say that a fuller range of political answers would be needed — 'and since we aren't about to adopt the politics of some other party, it can only be the politics of the SWP'.

Broad-based was from then defined by those putting the SWP line to mean non-political, or a messy soup of feminism and reformism.

The debate was also marked by a measure of self-delusion. For working class women that **WV** might try to recruit from struggles on housing, cuts, nurseries etc., 'the biggest jump is joining something at all. That it is committed to the SWP will make very little difference'. Another speaker made a virtue out of the SWP's own looseness and low political level. 'Don't think people who join the SWP know much about politics'.

The free play of political ideas was also attacked as 'internal bickering': the SWP leaders have never yet understood just how demoralising it is to have no internal democratic life; for every person who left an organisation because political argument got too hot, there must have been 20 or 30 who got out because they couldn't stand the stifling of all dissent.

The question followed: who could be a member of the new **WV**? Conference was assured that new-

comers wouldn't all have to join the SWP — but on the other hand they might as well do so: if not straight away then eventually.

But anyone who had different political ideas or commitments would be 'riding two horses'. They could stay in just as long as they worked and kept their mouths shut. And a handout 'to delegates from the SWP' spelled out 'We have never tried to exclude other people from joining these organisations (ANL, Campaign against Corrie). But **WV** is quite different. ... Joining **WV** means supporting the SWP's politics.'

The chair firmly put off as 'not relevant to this debate' the questions of the expulsions and exclusions from Moss Side **WV** (which has since collapsed), which are clearly going to set a precedent for many other areas. When it finally was debated, everyone was assured that it wasn't at all typical, and the matter was referred to the new Steering Committee — which may well reinstate the Moss Side people as a measure of reassurance.

Double

Clearly there is going to be a double standard. Women with strong objections to the SWP or with other ideas will be kept out 'because it's an SWP organisation'. But those without much political idea, or moving in the SWP's direction in an environment purged of other ideas, will not have the SWP rammed down their gullets.

This sort of compromise was reinforced on the Sunday when the Steering Committee put again to the conference a resolution from Edinburgh (not put the previous day) which said that non-SWP members have the right to set up **WV** groups, and that members of other left organisations may also belong to **WV**. Without democratic rights to organise for alternative politics this measure is meaningless —

as the Steering Ctee well knows — but it gave the impression of tolerance and seemed to back up the assurance that there wouldn't be a wholesale purge following the conference. Also passed was a motion saying that 'Women's Voice should appear as the sole masthead on any propaganda we produce'. But it will still be just as clear that **WV** is an SWP organisation, even if it isn't actually advertised in black and white.

However cleverly it is all handled, the new turn is a major one away from the potential which certainly exists for the building of a powerful movement of women oriented to working class struggles. And immediately, a large number of **WV**'s best activists will leave rather than stay to build an SWP front. Non-aligned delegates from Edinburgh, Hornsey and Tottenham went away to consider their future relations to **WV**, and no doubt there are others in the same position.

About one in eight of the delegates were **Workers' Action** supporters, who announced that the new status would make their position impossible. They were met with crude jeers and slanders, and those who knew of the work they had put into building such branches of the prized Fleet Street **WV** did not have the decency to stand up and say so.

The crux of the matter is that the SWP is unwilling to argue its politics against competing ideas. In an open organisation like the Anti Nazi League they suppressed their own politics to avoid conflict with liberals and then let it die rather than develop it politically beyond the level of carnivals and badges. And where they want to go on a hard recruiting drive, in **WV**, they clean out the opposition.

As one very long-standing SWP member, for whom this conference was the last straw, put it: 'They build up these organisations only to destroy them.'



Will they want to join Women's Voice now?

Constantin Giannaris reviews **THE CHINA SYNDROME** [left] and Nik Barstow reports on some non-fictional nuclear accidents [right]

A film that blames capitalism, not plutonium

'**THE CHINA Syndrome**' is a well constructed disaster film. Unlike other Hollywood extravaganzas such as 'Towering Inferno', or 'Jaws', it also has something to say about a very real fear — the potential consequences of developing nuclear energy.

A TV newscaster (Jane Fonda) and her camera crew accidentally witness a near accident at a California nuclear power station while on a routine reporting assignment.

They try to publicise this event and screen a secret film of the event. They meet resistance from the Power Corporation, which puts pressure on the TV network.

Secrecy is essential for the Corporation in order to resume full capacity production quickly after the shutdown of the plant.

The reporters also come up against the hostile attitude of the head nuclear engineer, played by Jack Lemmon. Although privately plagued by doubts as to the actual safety of the plant, he publicly reiterates time and time again his belief that nuclear energy is both safe and indispensable.

From this point on, however, the film does not take the line that nuclear energy is bad, full stop. It does not plead the case propagated by the mainstream of the anti-nuclear movement concerning the *inherently* unsafe and unpredictable nature of this energy source.

Rather, through the experience of Jack Lemmon, the originally very loyal company scientist, the film begins to uncover the social cause of the near disaster. Though it happened initially through human error and instrument failure, he soon finds that the plant has been jerry-built — most of it is potentially unsafe due to faulty welding.

To compound the greed and negligence of the construction company, the operating company's drive for profits had led them to falsify 'crucial welding X-ray plates rather than suffer a lengthy and expensive shutdown. And when Lemmon discovers this, they prepare to have him killed to hush the matter up.

Thus the film shows the crucial role that capitalist greed plays in making nuclear power unsafe. It also shows links between the different branches of capitalist

power in keeping the crisis under wraps: the television, the construction company, the Power Corporation, and the underworld mafiosi who stand by to eradicate trouble-makers when all other normal means of persuasion have failed.

Sadly, the film contrives a sugary-sweet ending after all. After the initial backdoor deals and pressure, television comes through with flying colours.

It exposes the murderous deeds of Big Business, and prompts a Federal Government Commission where all is revealed and truth and justice prevail. Jane Fonda's last speech leaves us with no doubt as to the outcome.

Finally, the most remarkable thing about the film is that it was made *before* the Three Mile Island 'accident' at Harrisburg earlier this year, where life so nearly copied the film.

The mafia violence, too, reflects reality: the murder of Karen Silkwood by the Westinghouse power corporation as she attempted to expose the fact that workers at her plant were suffering a very high cancer rate due to exposure to radioactive material.

A NUCLEAR plant at North Anna, Virginia, was closed last week after a release of radioactive gas which its operators described as 'negligible'.

The most worrying feature of this 'negligible' leak was that the faults which caused it were almost identical to faults that occurred in the Three Mile Island, Harrisburg accident in March, where gas was released and the reactor's core came close to a meltdown.

After that incident the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission brought in new regulations designed to prevent a re-run of the affair. But a re-run is what happened at North Anna, where after a rupture in the plant's water system two faults occurred: a steam valve failed — as did one at Harrisburg; then water was allowed to overflow into an auxiliary building where no safety devices to prevent a gas leak were in operation — as at Harrisburg.

Before Harrisburg, the NRC had allowed plants to operate with a smaller number of safety devices than its own rules demanded, in cases where to comply with the NRC's rules would be 'impracticable or economically unfeasible'. The Three Mile Island plant was one where the NRC knowingly let the capitalists off with lower standards.

Now the NRC are tightening their rules on this. But it seems that the plant operators still think that 'economically feasible' is better than safe.

Confidential reports collected by the West German Govern-

FACT: A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT EVERY THREE DAYS

ment and recently revealed by the country's Federation of Environmental Groups show that a nuclear accident takes place every three days in West Germany.

The government tried to cover up the facts it had about the accidents. A report in 1976 mentioned 14 incidents taking place over a period; but the confidential reports recorded that ten times as many accidents as were admitted to had actually occurred.

The Environmental groups quote a letter from the Interior Minister in 1973 about an accident in the Würzgassen power station when cooling system pipes cracked and almost ruptured. 'Such a rupture

amounts to the greatest imaginable accident for which the safety installations of the pressure water reactor ... are designed'.

Looking at potential disasters from another angle, the West German government has carefully computed what it reckons to be the worst possible nuclear accident, and suggested what plans would be necessary to deal with it.

Such an accident could involve up to 30 million people. Clearly so many people could not be de-contaminated before spreading radioactivity to the rest of the population as they flee the accident zone. So it is proposed that the most effective way to deal with the situation would be to cordon off the affected area and shoot anyone who tried to get out.

No doubt it is with the people's welfare in mind that such schemes are dreamed up. But it is certainly not in the people's interest to know such things ... nor in the interests of the nuclear bosses or of the government that they should know. And if you think you have a right to know, they've got the answer: they can't disclose the facts on nuclear accidents because the plant owners have 'a copyright' on all disclosures!

Perhaps the operators are planning to make a film to compete with **The China Syndrome**?



'Don't come near—I'm radioactive!'

STOP THESE BARBARIANS ...

A 24-STRONG public relations team for Apartheid is making its way around the country, relaying its message to an audience of thousands.

South Africa's aptly-named Barbarians, though neatly divided into 8 blacks, 8 whites and 8 'coloureds', are actually an example of what Apartheid racism is all about.

All the non-white players on the tour have been picked from teams in small, racially exclusive rugby unions. The only non-racial rugby union in South Africa SARU, in which the vast majority of black players play, wouldn't have anything to do with the tour.

Police harassment of non-racial matches is common. One white player in SARU, 'Cheeky' Watson was prosecuted three times for playing in matches with

black players in the township of New Brighton.

At club level, matches between white and black players are made almost impossible by the pass laws and 'Group Areas Act' preventing blacks entering white areas and vice versa. A host of other laws prevent the integration of facilities in clubs.

The normal functioning of Apartheid simply prevents any real integration of sport in South Africa. The Barbarians' tour is the 'exception' that proves the rule.

The Tory Minister of Sport, Hector Monro, didn't want the tour, for fear of retaliation against British sporting teams in international events, primarily next year's Olympics.

The Foreign Office didn't want the tour: they know it's a slap in the face for

other African countries that British capitalism needs to stay on good terms with. As The Economist noted with a supercilious sneer, "the Government must hope that the tour does not become a noisy sideshow, distracting the sensitive southern Africans at the Zimbabwe-Rhodesia conference."

The Irish government did ban the Barbarians. Though Ireland is now a partner in imperialist exploitation, the Irish know what racism is all about: the Apartheid regulations could have been modelled on the racist laws the British used to rule Ireland.

Margaret Thatcher obstinately insisted that the tour should go ahead.

If the Barbarians get an easy ride, Thatcher and Botha, and all the supporters of racist oppression in



Arriving at Heathrow, where even press photographers were double-checked in a massive security operation

S. Africa will be cock-a-hoop. To ensure that doesn't happen, mass pickets and demonstrations will follow the team wherever it goes in the next three weeks. They will need a lot

of support — as well as the police, they will be up against right-wing Rugby fans who have formed vigilante squads in some areas. For details, contact 'Stop all Racist Tours': 01-580 5311.

Socialist Organiser

SCLV/Socialist Organiser Conference: November 24th in London. Delegates are invited from all sponsoring bodies, and every labour movement organisation in general agreement with the policies of the SCLV/SO is asked to sponsor. Observers will also be welcome. Write for details to John Bloxam, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Become a card-carrying supporter of Socialist Organiser! Supporters' cards for 1979-80 are now on sale, £1 50p for unemployed. Contact your local SO group or SO, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

THE 10,000 STRONG ULSTER Defence Regiment is 97% Protestant. Its members have an almost endless record of thuggery and violence to their name. The UDR is the training ground for members of the Orange paramilitaries of the UDA and UVF, and is the main source of their weapons.

In 1975, for example, the UDR camp at Magherafelt was broken into and 200 weapons, including 35 sub-machine guns, were stolen. 2 UDR members were among the loyalists eventually convicted of the theft.

For the past few weeks the UDR has been training in Scotland, based just outside Dundee. Dundee United Troops Out Movement has organised, together with Scotland's other 5 UTOM groups, a demonstration to demand an end to UDR training in Scotland, the disbandment of the regiment, and troops out of Ireland. The demonstration is on October 13th and starts from Toethill carpark, Lochlee, at 11.30 am.

THE CONFEDERATION OF British Industry has come out against anti-union laws! It objects to the Government's suggestion that strikers should be made wide open to prosecution for breach of commercial contract. This is the suggestion which the TUC has said would outlaw almost any strike.

The Engineering Employers Federation has already objected. The big employers' federations obviously do not want laws which would allow cowboy bosses to provoke foolish battles.

Both the EEF and the CBI, however, are solidly in favour of the Tories' more serious suggestion of strict laws against secondary picketing. So if the Government opts for that rather than changing the commercial contract law, don't believe anything the TUC leaders say about the Tories being forced to back down!

BRITISH LEYLAND UNIONS are organising a demonstration against 25,000 job cuts on October 9th. A national meeting of shop stewards is also planned for October 13th, in Birmingham.

But the crunch will come over whether the unions are prepared to take industrial action, including occupation of plants threatened by closure and a blacking on all transfer of work.

... AND THESE ONES TOO

FIGURES IN THE FINANCIAL Times last week document the serious crisis of capitalism. All rates of return on capital 'are well below the level of the 1960s and the early 1970s'.

In 1977 the rate of return for large manufacturing companies in Britain was 5.1%, for wholesalers 7.9%, and for retailers 10.3%. In the 1960s there was an overall average of more than 10%.

Other figures in the Economist of 1st September show that the decline of rates of return is a world-wide trend in capitalism. In some countries the share of profits in value added has fallen — but the rate of return has declined even in the USA, where the share of profits has not fallen. The Economist spotlights the reason for this: a general decline in the output:capital ratio.

The value of capital employed is bigger and bigger in relation to output — so even if profits were a rising proportion of output, they would fall in relation to capital employed.

Over a hundred years after Marx explained the workings of the falling tendency of the rate of profit, the bosses are learning about it the hard way.

THE 'PERSONS UNKNOWN' trial, in which six anarchists face charges including conspiracy and possessing explosives, is going ahead with a vetted jury. And the judge has angrily condemned the Guardian for publishing details about the jury-vetting.

The judge said that jury-vetting is necessary to get an impartial jury. He omitted to say that the vetting is done by the State — the prosecution — and that the development of jury-vetting had gone hand in hand with curbs on the right of the defence to challenge jurors.

Impartial in favour of whom?

AT A CONFERENCE ON 28th-29th September, the right wing of the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) reasserted its control, shaken up at the Party's earlier conference in May.

The May conference voted to define the PSOE as a 'Marxist' party. The proposed definition was not matched by any Marxist politics — like a campaign against the Spanish 'social contract', the Moncloa pact — but it was too much for PSOE leader Felipe Gonzalez.

Gonzalez resigned. Instead

of fighting for control of the party, the 'Marxists' dithered. Now the 'Marxist' reference has been relegated to the small print of the PSOE statutes, Gonzalez has been re-elected, and May's rejection of any policy leading to 'accommodation with capitalism or just reforming it' has been changed to 'a slow revolutionisation of society'.

This episode in the PSOE illustrates a lesson for the future of the Labour Party in this country: left-wing victories on paper are worth nothing unless backed up by a determined and organised battle to oust the right from positions of dominance.

WHEN JUNE GREIG'S appeal came up at the High Court in Edinburgh on Thursday 27th, up to 100 supporters picketed the court through the day.

June Greig had been sent to jail for six years when she killed her husband in desperation after years of being battered by him. Demonstrators proclaimed: "Battered women have served enough time". There was also an all-

night vigil before the appeal. The judge, however, adjourned the case to an unspecified date.

Edinburgh Central Labour Party has agreed to support June Greig. Edinburgh Trades Council has passed a motion of support to go to the Scottish TUC's women's conference, but the STUC says it cannot accept resolutions which name individuals.

THE PRESS HAS REPORTED that the Cambodian government has "lifted obstacles" to food aid for people starving in Cambodia.

The hypocrisy of these reports was exposed in a letter in the Guardian on the 29th September, signed among others by David Owen and Shirley Williams. "It is widely believed that access to the starving population in Cambodia is politically impossible. This, however, is not the case. The Governments of Cambodia and Vietnam and the United Nations and International Committee of Red Cross representatives in Phnom Penh have urgently requested aid from any available source."

"Two British relief agencies, Medical Aid to Cambodia and Oxfam, have succeeded in sending supplies, and field staff have received full co-operation from the authorities in Phnom Penh."

John Pilger draws out the conclusions in another letter (October 2nd): "All those who connive in the denial of relief to Cambodia, including those who write the lies in Foreign Office handouts about 'political obstruction' when the obstruction is theirs... will bear some responsibility for the death by starvation and related diseases of at least a million people by Christmas."

There is a political campaign by the imperialist powers against the new regime in Cambodia and against Vietnam. The USA has a list of six countries it will send no aid to. Apart from starving Cambodia and near-starving Vietnam, it includes Angola, Laos, Cuba, and the Central African Empire (but the French sponsored removal of Bokassa will probably get that country off the blacklist). Paraguay, Argentina, Chile, and all pro-imperialist dictatorships are in the clear.

Nothing to fear but a family

LAST MARCH THE BRITISH immigration authorities decided that three young Indian boys were too much of a "threat" to be allowed into the country. They were locked up at Heathrow and then sent back to India. Their mother, Mrs Manju Patel, is now with them in a Salvation Army hostel in Bombay.

Now the High Commission in Bombay has made a recommendation: the boys should definitely be kept out. Their sordid reasoning is reported by the Guardian:

"They fear that if the children are allowed to join their mother, Mrs Patel might later decide to announce a reconciliation with her former husband, and ask the British to allow him entry so that the family might be reunited at her home in Gillingham, Kent."



YOU CAN'T WRIGGLE ROUND IT BY RAISING THE RATES

CAMDEN COUNCIL, in London, has said it will make no cuts. But it intends to cover itself by 40% rate rises. Camden Trades Council is launching a campaign against cuts and also against rate rises.

Wendy Mustill interviewed Camden councillor Ken Livingstone about the rate rise policy, and also about some of the loopholes in Camden's no-cuts stand.

Ken Livingstone argues that rate rises in Camden mean a redistribution of wealth to working class families, and refers to the fact that in Camden 75% (an exceptionally high proportion) of rates come from commercial property. *Workers Action* rejects this argument: when working class people have to pay £2 a week extra just to avoid cuts in services, that is not a redistribution in their favour!

In fact, the core of Ken Livingstone's argument is not the supposed redistributive effect of rates in Camden, but the idea that higher taxes are the only way of getting better services: "If anyone really thinks that under a socialist society, taxes and rates won't increase to expand public services, they're in cloud cuckoo land".

But a socialist policy would take the resources at present directed to profits and dividends, to prestige spending and all the pomp and luxury of the capitalist class, to arms spending, and redirect them to useful public services. It would mobilise the extra productive potential wasted through unemployment and the anarchy of capitalist production. Far from extra taxes being needed, taxes of the present-day sort might not be necessary at all.

Right now, we must oppose every attempt by the capitalist state to wring more money out of the working class and at the same time we must defend every public service we can force the state to provide. We want to compel the capitalists to start digging into their own pockets for those services. This struggle, like any serious class struggle, has a revolutionary logic — but we should not draw the conclusion, as Ken Livingstone does, that we therefore cannot start the struggle now, or that the Tory government cannot be forced to back down.

Rate rises are in fact an illusory alternative to a

serious struggle. This year, perhaps, Camden can wriggle round the Tory attacks by raising rates. What about next year? What about other, poorer boroughs this year? The basic choice is to cut or to fight back. And attempts by the council to cushion or deflect the Tories' cuts at the expense of the local population can only make the fightback more difficult.

□ What cuts is Camden council making this year?
■ The Labour Group's

□ Isn't there a temporary freeze on recruitment at the moment?
■ No.

□ That's what Camden NALGO have said at the Trades Council.
■ Well, Camden NALGO must have got it wrong. The policy is that each post is looked at by the Policy Committee, and we follow the line that all posts have got to be filled that provide a direct service to the public. There's absolutely no doubt at all that this time next year we will have significant-

in a series of controls which effectively gives us the safeguard that the work will be done the same as it would be by the Housing Department.

□ People have said that this is in fact a cop-out by the council.
■ No. If we have got a situation where we can get money from the government to carry on a municipalisation programme, I think we should take it.

□ There's a lot in the press about these rate rises of

country. If I thought that would work, fine, it would be a tactic worth taking. But no-one can say at the moment that we're in a pre-revolutionary situation. It's just asking Lambeth and Camden to lead their councils to straight defeat.

□ But isn't there a limit to the amount of rate increases you can force upon working class people, if the government continues to make cuts each year? Do you really think that's a solution?

□ Has there been any reaction from the ratepayers in Camden?
■ Tories have always complained about the level of rates ... I have never had any trouble defending the rate increase to maintain the sort of services we're providing — not once.

□ Are you aware that the draft resolution from the Trades Council to its cuts conference contains the demand for no rate rises as well as no cuts in services?
■ Is that supported by all the Camden trade unions?
□ Well, it hasn't been put to the vote yet.

■ It will be interesting to see what happens.

□ If in fact it is carried, would the council be able to support the Trades Council's campaign on the basis of those demands?
■ No. If that is carried, I'll be very surprised. I don't think that resolution would receive the support of our staff. The trade unions certainly haven't taken that line in Lambeth.

□ Was there a vote taken on this issue of rates, or was it unanimously agreed?
■ The question won't come around until February. Why didn't we have the argument that taxes shouldn't be raised? That seems to me exactly the same. If anyone really thinks that under a socialist society, taxes and rates won't increase to massively expand public services, they're in cloud cuckoo land.

□ What would be the council's reaction if it was approached by the Trades Council to link up with other Labour councils and take a position on rate rises next year?
■ I'm writing round to other Labour councillors to come on the demonstration that Lambeth's organising. At the moment we're waiting to see what happens in Hackney where there's a strong Left group.

□ So the council has no plans for a campaign against the cuts at the moment?
■ Oh yes. We're producing a broadsheet that's going to everybody in the borough; we're sending Roy Shaw (the Council leader) to the Trades Council, and the local CLPs have got together to form a campaign against cuts, and they're sending delegates to the Trades Council, so things are starting to come together.



The St. Pancras rent strike of 1959. Will Camden tenants organise again when the rates go up, as Ken Livingstone [right] suggests?

composition has changed, and on the issue of cuts, the Group has decided they're going to oppose them, even in the face of a rate increase of up to £2 a week.

When we went to the Labour Group meeting last week, it was endorsed without a single vote against, that we should oppose cuts. We won't be making cuts, freezing vacancies or creating redundancies — we actually expect staffing to increase.

ly more staff than at the moment.

What we want to do is move staff from central bureaucracy and purely administrative functions into things like Housing and the Building Department.

□ Is it true that the Council will be looking at the areas to be streamlined? I understand that the voluntary-aided bodies have been asked to streamline as much as possible and to make reductions in staff numbers.
■ That comes as news to me. We aim to shift resources into the provision of services and away from the central bureaucracy.

□ Do you still intend to go ahead with your planned expansion of the Direct Labour force?
■ Yes. We've actually set about awarding the contracts for all the council's modernisation work of 1500 properties.

□ Is it true that you've put two bids to the government for next year's housing estimates?
■ Yes. We're submitting the bid that we believe we need to cope with the council's housing problem, and we're putting the case for that: on the assumption, though, that they're just not going to consider that, we've put in another bid which asks that the Housing Associations be given the money to carry out the municipalisation programme. The government is clearly not giving it to us, and if there's a chance of getting the Housing Associations to have the money, that's the second best. We've brought

30-40%. Why did the Labour Group decide to put up the rates rather than take a direct stand and oppose both cuts in services and rate rises?
■ The situation in Camden is that the average ratepayer is paying about £6 a week. An optimistic figure is a £2 a week increase. The problem with this view of no rate rises in this borough is that the Left has tried to keep the Labour Group on a basis of no cuts and no staff cuts, and that's the first step.

All over London you've got Labour councillors capitulating and making cuts this year. We've stopped that. There is a limit to how far you can take control of the council at any one time. This is the first time you've got the Left organising and saying we don't want rate increases, after 70 years of the Left fighting for them as a means of funding local services. In Camden, 75% of that increase comes from the commercial sector. Every time we increase the rate it's a redistribution of wealth to working families.

I have always believed in expanding services and increasing the rate to do so. Although it's a regressive step and rather a rough measure, it's the only area local councils have got where they can defend and expand their services from their own limited tax base.

And frankly, if you're going to say services and not increase the rate, you're making an immediate direct challenge to the state of a revolutionary nature. You're challenging the whole structure of finance and capital in this

There clearly is going to be a limit reached. But at the moment people are paying no more rates in London than they were paying in 1971 in real terms. Clearly if we were talking about increases of this size next year, and the next year, then if you mobilise public support around that, it will become a viable alternative. It certainly isn't this year when a lot of Labour councils are struggling to convince people that they're not just wasting their money.

workers' ACTION

STOP THE CUTS NOW

Speakers:

JOHN BLOXAM (Haringey NATFHE)
BILL BOWRING (Lambeth Council)
KEN LIVINGSTONE (Camden Council)

Friday 5th October at 8pm

'Metropolitan' junction of
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meetings

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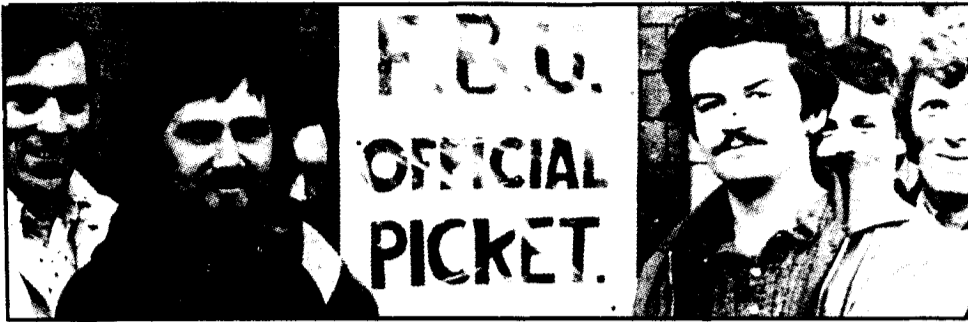
That's the spirit:

FIREMEN TO HOLD NATIONAL DEMO TO SAVE 20 JOBS

FIREMEN will be holding a mass demonstration in Nottingham on Wednesday 10th October. FBU members will be coming from all round the country to protest at 20 redundancies announced by the Nottinghamshire Fire Brigade.

The Notts brigade is the first to announce redundancies — but other cuts are taking place in the fire service in every area. Doug Mackay, FBU branch secretary at Acocks Green station in Birmingham describes the effects of the cuts there:

Since 1974, when the West Midlands Fire Service was created, one old station has been replaced every year. Now, to save £1 million a year an old station will be replaced only once every 23 years — and there are still a lot of old and sub-standard stations in use.



Doug Mackay [right] during the firemen's strike

At the Kings Norton station in Birmingham the tower is unsafe to use for ladder practices. Acocks Green doesn't even have a tower where we can do training. At our station the engine house is on the opposite side of the road from the rest of the station.

But these stations will now stay even longer — though Acocks Green was due for replacement 23 years ago. As part of

these building cutbacks it is proposed that two of the busiest stations in the north of Birmingham, Handsworth and Aston, should be replaced with only one new station. The areas they cover are high risk ones with a lot of multi-occupied houses and industrial risks such as the chemicals and explosives plant at IMI Whitton. No-one can believe that one station in this area can mean any-

thing other than a less than adequate fire cover and less firemen's jobs.

We need a campaign against all the cuts in the fire service, and we need to link it to the fights of all the other workers resisting the cuts in the public sector.

National Demonstration against redundancies and cuts in the fire service: Wednesday 10th October, 2.30 pm, Forest recreation Ground, Nottingham.

One good stand could start a steel fightback

550 JOBS out of 4,000 are to be axed at Stanton Ironworks, Ilkeston, before March 1980. That's part of the response produced by British Steel bosses to Industry Minister Keith Joseph's instructions to get in the black by next year.

The reasons the bosses gave for the cutbacks were spending cuts by the gas and water boards, reducing the demands for the spun pipes which Stanton makes. The nature of the planned mass redundancies, which will hit about 1 in 5 office jobs and cut out some products, indicate that the redundancies are 'rationalisation' plans that have been in preparation for some time. However, they are being implemented as part of the intensified attacks on jobs in the steel industry demanded by the Tory Government.

The sackings were announced



How many workmates will he have by next year?

ed on Thursday 27th September, only 4 days after the traditionally most militant section of the Stanton workforce, in the Spun Plants G&MWU, had accepted the loss of 96 jobs through voluntary redundancy in the plants they cover.

The whole tempo of smash-

ing jobs in BSC will be immensely increased if the Tory Government's intentions to make BSC pay its way by March 1980 are to be realised. The ferocity of these attacks will make a ferocious response from steelworkers more likely. But in the wake of 75,000 jobs lost without a

fight over the last 9 years, such a response will take a lot of organisation.

The call by the Corby workers for a national steel strike, directed at the TUC Steel Committee (TUCSICC), has led nowhere, and the lack of solidarity with Corby has undoubtedly encouraged the bosses and demoralised steelworkers. More direct links between rank and file workers in the steel industry can still create the solidarity that TUCSICC doesn't want to see ... but which is essential if Corby, Shotton, and all the other jobs threatened this year at BSC are to be saved.

A fightback at any of the plants like Stanton or Llanwern, where 400 sackings were also announced last week, can help start building the national fight to turn the tide.

PETE RADCLIFF

Nurses furious at 'no strike' threat

NURSES could be sacked for going on strike. The General Nursing Council has recently stated that if complaints of unprofessional action are laid against nurses who take strike action, the council could discipline them. In the case of trained nurses, this could mean losing their State Registered Nurse's status and thus their job. Untrained nurses could be sacked outright.

To follow this up, the Nursing Mirror, usually reg-

arded as the Daily Mirror of the nursing press, has printed a series of reactionary articles written by nurse managers and others, warning nurses of the dire consequences of strike action.

Half a million NHS nurses in this country have now been told that we have no right to withdraw our labour. Half the people who sit on the General Nursing Council are appointed by the Secretary of State for Social Services. The other half are elected in

very poorly publicised elections, in which only the nursing top brass usually bothers to vote.

The GNC justifies its stand by referring to patients' interests. But the GNC has allowed the patients' care to suffer much more by taking a passive role over staffing levels.

Nurses must fight this attempt to restrict our basic rights. A resolution condemning this ruling, with a promise of strike action if the GNC

attempts to discipline any nurse for taking strike action has been passed by the NUPE Branch District Committee (Cardiff) to go forward to the South Wales NUPE Divisional Conference.

A conference of NUPE nurses in South Wales is also being planned, where this ruling, and other matters facing nurses will be discussed.

MARY IRESON
NUPE Shop Steward (Nurses),
Heath Hospital, Cardiff

United fight is worth a dozen Cleggs

THE RECENT struggle to improve nurses' pay was defused by the promise of a comparability study, to be carried out by the Clegg Commission. This tactic served not only to postpone a wage increase [the study is not due to come out until January] but also to weaken the links that nurses have built up with ancillary staff. Thus nurses, traditionally a weak section where militancy is concerned, will be further isolated.

It turns out that our Pay Comparability study will be carried out by a firm of management consultants known as Hay/MSL Ltd. They will issue questionnaires to 160

nurses, interview some staff, and build up an overall picture of the jobs of nurses. They will then, on the basis of this information and the range of general skills exercised by nurses, advise the Clegg Commission on the wages that workers in "similar" jobs have.

The catch is in deciding who has a similar job to nurses. Hay/MSL Ltd. claim that they will be able to match our job against information they already hold on many hundreds of other jobs. But since no job is identical to nursing, everything depends on whatever pseudo-scientific standard Hay/MSL Ltd. use to equate jobs. Also, nurses are

expected to do almost anything: especially in small hospitals, a knowledge of plumbing and many other jobs comes in handy!

The Pay study will not really change our wages, and it will do nothing to improve our working conditions. Unlike the ancillary staff, we still do not get double time for working Sundays or Bank Holidays. We still work 11 hour night shifts, with only 2 breaks of half an hour each.

The need for nurses to get unionised is pressing. We must unite with the ancillary staff to fight together against the cuts and for better wages.

MARY IRESON

EDITORIAL

Defend women's hard-won gains

THERE WERE FEW gains for workers under the last Labour government, and those there were we paid for dearly. Yet at Brighton this week those running the Labour Party Conference refused to take an emergency resolution calling for a fight to stop part of its legislation being dismantled.

The resolution came from ASTMS, and called on the NEC to 'campaign vigorously' against the 'proposal by the government which seeks to remove from women working in small undertakings their human right to resume employment following pregnancy.'

What workers see as a human right, indeed a dire necessity if living standards are to be maintained, seen by the Tories as a positive evil. First, it's a confounding nuisance to the thousands of backstreet George Wards who back the Tories. Secondly, the Tories think mothers should stay home and mind the children, unless they can afford a nanny as a substitute mother.

Thirdly, they're very keen on getting rid of jobs. New Technology will wipe out a good many, and the coming recession of world capitalism will throw thousands onto the dole. What more convenient than a 'natural wastage' of working mums, who won't even show up in the figures.

The Tories say they are the party of choice. But what are going to be the choices for women? Those with an unwanted pregnancy will have to choose between an unplanned child and the sack, or a backstreet abortion if the Corrie Bill goes through. Others, who want to have a child will have to choose between becoming mothers or keeping their jobs.

Ron Hayward got thunderous applause when he said Labour's leaders should 'act in our interests the way a Tory Prime Minister acts in their interests'. But if they won't do it of their own accord, the rank and file of the labour movement must mobilise to defend Labour's protective legislation — and extend it — and push the leaders to stand up and do the same.

The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (which is supported by a number of CLPs and union branches and by Coventry Trades Council) has set up a campaign to do just that. It will be organising a teach-in on working women's rights and the threat to the Employment Protection Act; and mobilising to fight for full paid maternity leave and benefits, paternity leave, and child care and nursery facilities. The SCLV has published a model resolution that trade unionists and Labour Party members can put in their branches (see below).

We urge our readers to take up this campaign vigorously. If the Tories get away with this, how much more will they be able to get away with in the next five years.

A resolution for action

This branch views with deep concern the threat to abolish the right of many women to return to their jobs after taking maternity leave.

Among its effects will be:

- To limit the choices of ANY woman who may wish to have children, or who may become pregnant accidentally.
- To abolish paid maternity leave for these women.
- To enlarge the already enormous pool of 'hidden unemployed' — the jobless women who are not registered as unemployed.
- To help employers scrap jobs through 'natural wastage'.

Further factors should be noted:

- ★ New technology which will particularly hit 'women's jobs'.
- ★ The Corrie Abortion [Amendment] Bill. If this is passed, some 70000 women currently having legal abortions in any year would be forced to continue their pregnancy or have a dangerous illegal abortion.
- ★ The slashing of nursery provision and 'rising fives' schemes
- ★ The Tories believe that a woman's place is in the home. This attack is just the beginning. What will they do next to attack women's right to work?

Therefore we call on [Name of organisation] to mobilise for a mass demonstration in conjunction with the 'Labour and Trade Union Campaign for a Women's Right to Work' and to seek the backing of the TUC, Labour Party and unions specially affected to prevent this measure going through and to demand:

- ★ Full-paid maternity leave
- ★ Paid paternity leave
- ★ Public provision of child care facilities and nurseries available on a round-the-clock basis.
- We further call for a campaign to inform the membership of the effects of this measure on unemployment and working class living standards.

After Brighton

Victory on democracy but a long way to go on policy

THE 1979 BRIGHTON conference of the Labour Party could go down in history as the point of take-off to a renewal and regeneration of the political wing of the British labour movement.

The left won two major victories. Mandatory reselection of Labour MPs is now policy and will start being implemented immediately. The National Executive Committee will write the Party's election Manifestos and thus the power of the Labour leaders to gag the Party and prevent it from taking its politics to the electorate as Jim Callaghan did last April, is abolished.

The proposal that the Leader of the Party be elected by the whole Party and not just MPs was, however, defeated.

The Conference departed from tradition right at the beginning, when the traditionally 'neutral' General Secretary, Ron Hayward, and this year's Chairman, Frank Allaun, opened up on the Party's record in office and pointed the finger of responsibility at the leadership.



One-time Gaitskellite Ron Hayward said: "I wish our Prime Ministers would sometimes act in our (the labour movement's) interests as Tory prime ministers act in their (the capitalists') interests". Allaun, a long-standing leftist, bitterly summed up the usual relationship of the Labour Party with Labour Governments: "Whatever we say, they take no notice".

Allaun denounced the

Tory government as "a government of millionaires for millionaires", adding, "They don't talk about class struggle, they practise it". "We are facing the sharpest attack on the working class since 1931". He called for a campaign of resistance to the Tory cuts that will bring down Thatcher's government without waiting five years for the next election.

Workers, he said, should refuse "to sit back and wait five years while their social wage is eroded".



On Tuesday, the vote for mandatory reselection was won by 4,008,000 to 3,079,000, on a card vote. On Wednesday the vote to put the NEC in control of the Manifesto was carried by 3,936,000 to 3,088,000. The proposal to elect the Party Leader through an electoral college was lost by 4,010,000 to 3,076,000, on Tuesday.

The decisions at Brighton open up the Labour Party to control by its membership. There is now no formal reason why trade union militants should not exercise their rights through affiliation to the Labour party and make the Labour Party reflect their interests.

It will not be as easy as it appears on paper. Bureaucratic manoeuvring will continue and the right wing will organise to fight back. Yet the possibility of victories for genuinely left-wing, class-struggle politics is greater than for a very long time.

The self-defeating sectarianism of voluntary self-

exclusion from participating in the political structure of the organised working class movement in Britain will become clearer to many on the far left, radicalised in the last ten years or so and misled by the sectarian mistakes of the far left organisations or unable to go beyond healthy reaction against Wilson and Callaghan's so-

will be possible to begin to reorganise the Marxist left and unite it around a perspective of an anti-sectarian orientation to the workers' movement which exists in Britain.

The right wing will fight back. They will begin to organise to reverse the decisions next year. They have



called Labour governments. Together with a drive to politically regenerate the political labour movement, it too much at stake not to. The ruling class and its press will help them to fight back, because they have in

the last five years essential for bourgeois Britain: the bureaucratically stifled Labour gave the bourgeoisie back government after industrial direct action led to the defeat of the Tories.

So a clear left wing must be organised. And democracy is not enough. It must be filled with struggle politics.

At Brighton a resolution was passed calling for a 'massive and vigorous campaign against the cuts'. But it was passed in a vague and less troubled atmosphere to a resolution which called in precise terms for Labour councils to implement cuts, rate rises, and for mass action against the Govern-



On Ireland the message was more immediate. There were two positions, one calling for troops out now and another just calling for more action, but neither got the Hackney North CLP to lead a petition protest against this.

Big tasks lie ahead left: it must organise and rebuild the Communist Parties' membership politics that serve the working class interest. Yes or not the Brighton decision lead to a new beginning for the Labour Party will probably be decided by the success or failure of the struggle left to organise itself effectively in the 12 months.

Brighton was not the beginning of a decisive battle.

Let's have countless Clay Crosses

continued from front page

down'. They are still active, still fighting, they still think what they did was right.

And it wasn't all a defeat. 'The Clay Cross people alone were able to destroy the Housing Finance Act'. After that Act was repealed by the Labour minority government, the Tories did not propose reintroducing it in their October 1974 Manifesto.

On the cuts fight, Dennis Skinner argued, we can get wider support than Clay Cross did. He told the meeting about how a cut in Water Board expenditure had been defeated under the Labour government.

Many of the steelworkers at Staveley used to believe that cuts meant getting rid of an extra carpet here or an extra person there. 'It was an abstract thing'. Then they found their jobs were at threat because the Water Board was no longer buying the steel pipes they produced. They protested — and the cuts were reversed.

So 'I think it's quite possible to stop these massive cuts in public expenditure'. 'I don't accept that the Tories have got any mandate

to do anything that upsets my class, the people I was elected to represent'. When the Labour government was in, 'what authority did the CBI have to mount an investment strike?'

'How many votes did the IMF have? What mandate did the House of Lords have?'

We should reject any idea of the Tories having a mandate and take as our guideline 'defending and improving the conditions of the working class'. 'I went to the House of Commons the other day. They're not cutting there. It must be half a million pounds they are spending on the central heating'. But the cuts hit the old and the sick hardest.

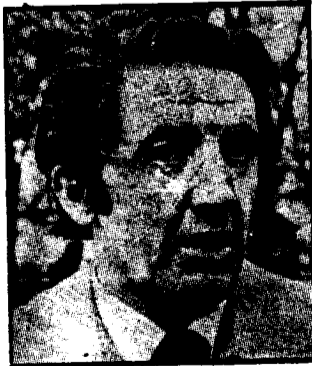
'There's got to be some action. And I don't say this lightly. Because the consequences for those in the centre of the struggle can be grave', as in Clay Cross.

But 'We've never had these problems when the trade unions are really involved. When we marched to Pentonville Jail in 1972 no-one worried about the law'.

In any case, 'it won't be won in the courts. You won't defeat them by relying on MPs and other bureaucratic groups. Reliance must be placed on the rank and

file.' Dennis Skinner warned us against relying on 'people who make speeches and then go away and make cuts'.

'Have a lobby of Parliament, Ted', he said to Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight (the Lambeth Against the Cuts speaker) beside him on the platform. 'Have it. But don't expect too much to come of it'. 'It will be action that will win the day. It will need courageous people in the local authorities'.



Dennis Skinner

So 'what we want is not one Clay Cross, but countless Clay Crosses, up and down the country'.

Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight also spoke.

'The coordination has got

to be done by us, because Hattersley and Jack Smart and Transport House don't want a fight'.

The packed 150-strong meeting on Tuesday evening, 2nd, jointly sponsored by Lambeth Against the Cuts and the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, was focused on rallying support for councils like Lambeth which are defying the cuts.

A united stand by many Labour authorities is essential, said Ted Knight, who spoke for Lambeth Against the Cuts. After Lambeth's stand, Haringey and Camden, and some councils outside London, have said they will refuse to make cuts.

'The question is how to mobilise support'. And that's where we come into conflict with the Labour right wing.

An official Labour demonstration against the cuts has been organised for November 28th, in opposition to the march called by Lambeth for November 7th. They justify it by the fact that November 28th is after the new Rate Support Grant levels are announced.

'That's just it'. Hattersley will then try to convince us that it's settled and all we can do is discuss 'how to equate the misery'.

Ted Knight explained how in July Lambeth Council had decided to go for £3 million cuts, and then, in line with the principle of accountability, had reversed them after the local Labour Parties insisted on no cuts.

Now Lambeth is mobilising. The South East Region of the TUC has pledged support for November 7th, so have other union bodies. Lambeth direct labour workers have contacted other direct labour forces throughout London.



Mike Davis spoke from the floor, explaining why the SCLV had chosen to focus on the cuts issue. 'Unless a fighting socialist alternative in the Labour Party connects with the class struggle, it is not worthy of the name'. Davis called for maximum turnout for the SCLV's November 24 conference.

The other platform speaker was Stephen Corbishley (CPSA NEC, in a personal capacity), for the SCLV.

The TUC, he noted, is 'committed to a strategy of talking, talking again, and hoping to God that the Tories will carry on talking to them'.

We need not just a propa-

ganda campaign, but 'a fightback that links up the immediate struggles that are now going on' — and with a political focus, 'taking on the banks and finance companies, challenging interest rates and the money transferred to the banks'.

The fight against the cuts is 'linked into the fight inside the Labour Party. 'Yes, this could be the end of the Labour Party as we know it. The end of a Labour Party committed to compromise with the system'.

To fight for that outcome, the SCLV is organised, not just around replacing MPs and councillors, but around a definite political platform for an all-round struggle.

The later part of the meeting was marred by a disruptive and point-scoring quarrel on rate rises. Ted Knight, summing up, said, 'I'm in favour of rate increases' (a view which the SCLV and Workers' Action reject), but he also stated well the basis for unity of the left in the struggle now against the cuts: 'I didn't raise the issue of rate rises. I think we're going out to defeat the Government, not to work out how we're going to get round not having defeated the Government in January or February'.

Callaghan answer for Ireland, the Arm and the Pop

WELL, at long last Callaghan has spoken his mind — though it was worth waiting for.

Recalling his experience during the election campaign when he was 'shot' by Troops Out supporters, he didn't mention his making sure anyone brought up the question usually hurled out by him in Stockport and in Haringey, for example.

He paid tribute to the work of Mervyn Roy Mason, and told at the present time that the police are 'playing an indispensable role' there any improper Ireland? 'Well, we're unfortunately in a position where our power to do anything is limited to the success of the Pope's visit. God where the Labour movement fails?'

n, what next?

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JOHN O'MAHONY
"WHY HAS the most power-
ful, united and democratic
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in the world made so little
progress in changing society
in the 78 years of its exist-
ence?" That was the histor-
ical perspective in which the
current proposals on Labour
Party democracy were
being discussed, Tony Benn
told a large Labour Party
conference fringe meeting on
"The Labour Party and Parli-
amentary Democracy" in
Brighton on Monday night.

The Labour Party is en-
gaged in "the recreation
once again of what we were
supposed to be — a means
by which ordinary people
could get hold of the levers of
power". The struggle to
extend democracy, to
"change the structure of
power in our society" is the
same struggle that was wag-
ed by the Chartists for the
suffrage and by the fighters
for the vote for women.

"If you have money or own
a newspaper or a bank the
vote doesn't matter. I don't
know if the owners of the 250
monopolies bother to vote.
They have power and influ-
ence anyway. But for work-
ing people the vote is the
route to political power".

The permanent civil ser-
vice now stands between the
voters and the exercise of
real power. It has its own pol-
icies. The Civil Service im-
plicitly offers a deal to demo-
cratically elected govern-
ments: "If you do what we
want, we'll pretend you are
doing what you said in your
manifesto".

For example, after Labour
won the second (October)
1974 election, Tony Benn
received a large brief mark-
ed, "For the Secretary of
State, if not Mr Benn".

The permanent holding
operation for capitalism by
the civil service is backed by
the press, which has tremen-
dous power to bludgeon
MPs and ministers. He re-
called a headline about him-
self in the (Labour-support-
ing) *Daily Mirror*: 'Minister
of Terror'. In addition there
is the huge power of the own-
ers of industry and the
banks, and the IMF could
simply dictate policy to the
last Labour government.

Reselection of MPs and
open government will create
countervailing pressures on
elected representatives to
balance the pressure of the
permanent civil service.
"This is not to attack Labour
members of Parliament but
to give them the strength to
resist. If I am elected to Parli-
ament and in the hands of a
permanent official who is the
only one who knows what it's
about, then I'll lose. If I can
connect up with the move-
ment outside I can resist".

"Party democracy is not
an attack on anyone. It is
about how we can open
channels of communica-
tion and channels of account-
ability between the rank and
file of the party who do all
the work and get nothing out
of it — all the way to the top".

"At present when a Lab-
our MP is elected, he kicks
away the ladder and says,
'I'm an MP — I haven't got
anything to do with those
grubby little people who
elected me'". "Now the labour
movement in the matu-
rity of its own experience
has decided it wants change,

Benn: new socialist or new Fabian?



that it wants accountability
and that we must mobilise
and re-mobilise the pressure
of our own movement to
counter the pressure that
drove us off the policies on
which we were elected".

Automatic reselection is
one step. Election of the
Leader and control of the
Manifesto are also essential.
"If the Parliamentary lead-
ership can veto the policy
decided by the Party, then
you aren't even allowed to
put it to the country. This is
worse than the veto of the
House of Lords".

"The labour movement is
now fighting through an-
other stage in the funda-
mental battle to regain the
possibility for those without
wealth and power to have
some say in controlling soci-
ety".

Thus Benn's view is that
the socialist struggle is es-
sentially the struggle to ex-
tend democracy, and the job
of the labour movement is
to push through democracy
as far as possible. In this way
society will be controlled by
and become accountable to
the interests of the majority.
There will be no revolution-
ary breakthrough — nor,
presumably, will there be
danger of a Chile-style coup.

Benn described himself as
"a reformer, not a reform-
ist", meaning that while he
wants to eliminate capital-

ism and therefore is more
than a reformist, he tries to
achieve this through reform-
ing society and specifically
by reforming the political
structure.

In fact, Tony Benn, who
carries on his lance the fa-
vours of the Left in the Brit-
ish labour movement, stands
ideologically and politically
on the same ground as the
anti-Marxists in the Second
International 80 years ago,
the so-called Revisionists,
who first gave voice to the
increasingly dominant tend-
ency in the labour movement
for collaboration with capi-
talism. 'Revisionists' like
Bernstein were in fact inspir-
ed by British Fabianism and
in turn provided ideological
nourishment for the early
British Labour Party.

Politically Benn represents
a force for 'renewal' — but
renewal of the very tradition
which has led the British lab-
our movement to its present
condition and to a balance
sheet for three-quarters of a
century's work which must
be headed by Benn's dam-
ning question: "Why has the
most powerful social demo-
cratic movement in the world
made so little progress in
changing society?"

The essential modesty of
Benn's perspectives and the
triviality of the goals he
would set for the labour
movement are quite aston-

ishing when one considers
the adulation which lifts
Benn up from one side and
the venomous animosity
which bombards him from
the other. He does not even
propose breaking the power
of the civil service. His entire
view is defined by the goal
of creating a balance against
it. He evades the central
question of the politics and
choices involved in the way
Labour MPs and Ministers
relate to the civil service
(including Benn himself:
though he was moved from
the Department of Industry
because he seems to have
tried to stick to Labour's
1974 Manifesto, he remained
in the Government). It is
all a matter of mechanical
pressure and counter-pres-
sures, with human choice
and personal political re-
sponsibility reduced to little
or nothing.

It would be difficult to
be further distant from the
central idea of Marxist pol-
itics, that the working class
possesses a power of initia-
tive and of creative action
which can, by political choice
and by conscious will, com-
pletely transform the polit-
ical and economic structure of
society in the interests of
our class.

In the discussion period
Benn's politics were made
even clearer. He mocked (but
in a nice way: Tony Benn is
the personification of sweet
reasonableness) at the 're-
volutionary socialism' of
Tony Mulhearn, a supporter
of *Militant*.

According to *Militant*, said
Benn, Conference should
decide to nationalise the 250
monopolies and a Labour
majority in Parliament would
just do it "all of a sudden".
This, he said, "bypasses the
whole process, risking not
bringing people with you".

He himself did not see
nationalisation as a panacea
— and he spoke as the man
who had nationalised more
firms than anyone else in
British history. "It should
be done case by case when
the workers in an industry
want it and if they want it.
With the Confed [i.e. ship-
building workers] policy for
nationalisation and then the
inclusion of this policy in the
Manifesto, I could put the
manifesto on the table and

tell them: Write me a Bill
nationalising shipbuilding".
(This is a perfect example of
Tony Benn's model of the
socialist political leader as a
Parliament-based go-be-
tween for the workers and
the entrenched forces which
represent capitalism.)

Now this contains a rea-
sonable criticism of *Militant*,
whose 'revolutionary revolu-
tion' through the Labour
Party and Parliament is
bureaucratic and elitist, but
also simply absurd. Those
like the original Revisionists,
the present-day Communist
Parties, and Benn, who talk
of peaceful evolutionary
change to socialism through
Parliament, do so necessarily
in a long perspective, in
which — it is alleged —
Parliamentary institutions
themselves will be changed,
modified and transformed.
But *Militant* will do it all
abracadabra-like in a revolu-
tion that can somehow dis-
pense with disrupting and de-
stroying the defensive state
structures of capitalism,
though it will destroy capi-
talism in a short period of time.
It is, essentially, a fantasy,
a purely mental construct,
'amalgamating' the goal of
revolution (bureaucratically
conceived) with the methods
of anti-revolutionary reform-
ism, in a way that an image
of a horse can be amalgam-
ated with the image of a goat
to 'produce' the unicorn.



Yet for all that, Benn
focused on *Militant's* bureau-
cratic absurdity to evade the
issue. For why should a pol-
itical leader or tendency not
campaign to educate and
mobilise the entire labour
movement for an assault on
capitalism? And if that is not
done, how are the dominant
powers in the society, who
are not elected and who do
not rest on Parliament (as
Benn says, without saying
what to do about it), to be
controlled, not to speak of
defeated? How is the anarch-
ic power of the capitalist
market system to be prevent-
ed from rendering null and
void the projects and the
hopes, from continuing to
blight the lives of millions
of working people?

Benn knows very well —
even if *Militant* doesn't —
that such a mobilisation
would imply revolution
and attempted counter-
revolution, and a working
class struggle that would
aim to destroy capitalism
and its armed forces and its
permanent civil service,
rather than to counterbal-
ance them. He knows about
it, and he rejects this per-
spective.

The tremendous democrat-
ic transformation that the
Labour conference decided
on is an opportunity for
Marxists to help the labour
movement renew itself on
the basis of revolutionary
politics and a perspective of
war on capitalism and its
institutions. Tony Benn is
the leader of the broad Left
and he is playing a pro-
gressive role in fighting to
ease the stranglehold of
bureaucracy within the lab-
our movement. His political
views are a measure of the
political tasks which face the
Marxists in the labour move-
ment in the struggles which
the Brighton conference de-
cisions have opened up.

Why did Militant help the right wing?

THE *Militant* tendency em-
erged at the Brighton confer-
ence as would-be saboteurs
of the drive to establish auto-
matic reselection of MPs.

They were the originators
of 'Composite 32', which
appeared on the order paper
as the alternative to 'Compo-
site 33' (which was in fact
carried). Composite 32 would
decide in principle for auto-
matic reselection and then
refer the whole business to
the committee of inquiry into
Labour Party organisation.
At best it would mean a
year's postponement. The
National Executive would
then, on the basis of the in-
quiry's findings, submit pro-
posals for constitutional
change next year.

This would have complied
with Labour Party rules that
only the NEC can propose
constitutional amendments:
Composite 33 meant a deci-
sion by Conference to waive
the rule on this occasion.

The disadvantage of Com-
posite 32 was that it would
have left everything essen-
tially undecided for another
year during which the right
wing would organise, exert
pressure, wheel and deal,
and especially try to use the
inquiry to frustrate the drive
for reselection.

Despite pressure at the
very big fringe meeting of
the Campaign for Labour
Party Democracy on Sunday
(where they were widely
accused of scabbing on the
left) *Militant* refused to
withdraw, and their resolu-
tion remained on the agenda,
where it served as an escape
hatch for the right wing.

Throughout the debate,
right wingers and bureau-
crats like Frank Chapple
attempted to avoid defeat by
calling for reliance on the
inquiry.

The mover of Composite
32, however, long-time *Militant*
supporter Pat Wall,
confined himself to a general
speech for reselection, and
did not make one single
reference to what was specific
to no.32.

What may have happened
is that *Militant* decided that
the left should avoid a deci-
sive struggle to win on this
issue now for fear of provok-
ing a backlash. This would be
very true to *Militant's* char-
acter and record.

They then encountered the
outrage of the left, and found
themselves defending a posi-
tion to the right of even the
NEC majority.

Militant is a stubborn and
self-loving tendency. It
would not withdraw. But
they saved face by Pat Wall's
general speech and by not
actually fighting for no.32.

However, supporters of
Militant should ask their
leaders what exactly they
thought they were up to in
Brighton.

IT IS A YEAR since the Camp David agreements. The United States, Israel, and Egypt hailed the agreements as a momentous step towards peace in the Middle East. But, as Workers' Action then predicted, the agreement has only boosted attempts to crush Palestinian resistance.

Within a short time, Israel reopened its war against the Palestinians in Lebanon. This war is still going on. In Egypt there was an immediate increase in political repression, as Sadat tried to stamp out opposition to the sell-out of the Palestinians. In Israel and the territories it has occupied since 1967, a new campaign against leftist and Arab organisations was mounted.

At the same time, increasing economic difficulties for Israel, Zionism's growing isolation within world diplomacy, the increased recognition accorded to the PLO, and the growth of a mood favouring peace, all created a new ferment in Israel.

Yet the government and the main opposition parties are still united on a hard-line stand against any recognition of the PLO or any real autonomy within the territories occupied since 1967. New settlement plans go ahead, Israel continues a water policy that is designed to turn the more fertile parts of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank into deserts, destroying the basis of the Arab agriculture in the area. And on the first anniversary of the Camp David agreements, the Zionist government announced it would lift the ban on land purchases by Israelis in the Arab territories.

This week we reprint two articles which together give an insight into the political developments within Israel. The first is from the journal MERIP and is slightly shortened; the second is taken from Militant, the weekly paper of the Socialist Workers' Party of America. Neither of these publications shares the analysis of Workers' Action, but we publish these interviews for their picture of the internal situation in Israel.

THE ARABS IN ISRAEL

MOHAMMED KIWAN is a founder of the Palestinian organisation 'Abna' al-Balad (Sons of the Village). He is a lawyer and former member of the municipal council of Umm al-Fahm, an Arab village in the Triangle region. From 1967 to 1969, Kwan studied at Tel Aviv University where he helped establish a committee of Arab students. In 1969 he was placed under house arrest in Umm al-Fahm and he began organising 'Abna' al-Balad. Kwan returned to Tel Aviv University in 1971 and completed his studies for a law degree.

The original aim of 'Abna' al-Balad was to counteract Israeli attempts to divide and rule the Arab community by fomenting old feuds between the various families represented in the municipal councils. 'Abna' al-Balad emphasises that the Palestinian identity is a national one, that regional, personal and family differences must be subordinated to the national cause, and that traditional structures must be transformed.

The following interview with Mohammed Kwan was conducted by Pamela Ann Smith in London in April 1978.

□□ *As the founder of 'Abna' al-Balad, can you tell us a little more about the organisation. How did it start?*

■ ■ 'Abna' was started eight years ago. We began as a local organisation, focusing our activity on community problems in the Arab villages in Israel. After that, we developed and expanded the organisation — now it is more political, and we are working more directly on specific national aims, as Palestinians. We defend our rights to the land and defy and challenge the Israeli policy confiscating our land. For example, we helped to organise the Yom al-'Ard (Day of the Land) demonstrations on March 30th, 1976. We are also a member of the Arab Committee for the Defence of the Land (Lajnat al-Difa' al-'Ard al-'Arabiyya).

□□ *I understand you have been taking part in various municipal elections and now have members of your organisation on some councils.*

■ ■ Yes. In Israel, the Arabs are not allowed to organise themselves freely because the Israeli government is opposed to the existence of the Palestinian nation, as a nation. So, to be able to operate, we have exploited the Israeli law concerning municipal elections and set up our group according to the requirements of this specific law. This means that we are run as a local organisation. We participated in the municipal elections in December 1973 and at that time I was elected to the council Umm al-Fahm as a representative of 'Abna' al-Balad. The day after the election, we began to expand by setting up a cultural club in Umm al-Fahm. There we hold public meetings and speeches about the Palestinian cause. We also have a library; it is small, but it is not bad for a beginning.

□□ *Now there are several clubs elsewhere as well?*

■ ■ Yes. After 1973, many other Arab villages also began to organise themselves as a local organisation, sometimes with a slightly different name. For example, in Taibah, another village in the Triangle, their name is not 'Abna' al-Balad, but al-Nahda (meaning "the Resurrection", or "the Rebirth"). In another village, called Ara Arara; the name is al-Bayadir, which is Arabic for "the threshing floor", in the sense of "the place of the harvest". In other places we have another kind of organisation. For example, in Dar al-Asad, in the Galilee, the mayor of the municipal council represents our trend and so is part of the Palestinian national movement. In other places, like Nazareth, for example, our friends the Communist Party (Rakah) have formed a united front with us. The front now rules the Nazareth municipal council.

□□ *How do you compare your organisation to al-'Ard, the nationalist group which Israel banned in the early 1960s? How do you hope to avoid a similar fate?*

■ ■ Well, at that time, al-'Ard was a pan-Arab group, an Arab nationalist movement which believed in Arab unity and Nasserism. Although I was young at the time, I supported it. But now we have learned from experience, and the situation has changed. The problem for us is not how to create Arab unity, but the question of the Palestinian people. So the most important thing for us now in 'Abna' al-Balad is our Palestinian identity.

Also, al-'Ard was a group of intellectuals, who formed their organisation from the top down. 'Abna' al-Balad works from the bottom up, by organising ourselves in all-Arab villages to create a mass movement capable of working on

local problems which arise on a day-to-day basis, as well as on national issues and issues of cultural identity.

□□ *What are your relations with the Palestine Liberation Organisation and with the West Bank?*

■ ■ Well, as you can see in our declaration, we say that the only true legitimate representative of the Palestinian Arab people is the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and that all attempts to create a substitute for the PLO from among those who are cooperating with the occupation or with Arab reaction are plainly ridiculous. This is the



Israeli army repression in Galilee

first principle. Secondly, that all the Palestinian people, everywhere, constitute one identity.

As you can see in the declaration, we emphasise that because we form an integral part of the Palestinian Arab people, any solution of the Palestinian problem must include official recognition and international guarantees for the national identity of the Palestinian residents in the state of Israel as well. This includes their right to remain in their homeland, the return of their confiscated lands, including their property, villages and charitable waqf estates, and the full implementation of their cultural, social, civil and political rights.

□□ *Can you tell us a little about the conditions Palestinians in Israel are now experiencing? Let us take, for example, your village of Umm al-Fahm. What is the economic situation? Has it worsened?*

■ ■ Umm al-Fahm is a good example because it is typical of all the Palestinian villages in Israel. In 1949, it was given to Israel by King Abdullah (of Trans-Jordan) under the terms of the Rhodes agreement. In the Agreement there is an article which expressly says that Israel shall not take any measures against Arab property. But what in fact has happened?

Umm al-Fahm is an integral part of the so-called Triangle, the lower Triangle. Before the establishment of the state of Israel, Umm al-Fahm owned 140,000 dunums of land (35,000 acres). The population consisted of about 5,000 people. Now we have about 20,000 people, but the amount of land, by various Israeli decrees, has been reduced to 15,000 dunums. Virtually all of this is mountainous and not suitable for cultivation. The other arable land was confiscated under the terms of the 1953 Law of Land, Insurance and Compensation. Two "socialist" kibbutzim have been built on these lands — Meguido and Giva' at Oz. The remainder was turned over to a Jewish moshav, a type of co-operative settlement for Jews only.

When the Arabs lost their land, all of them had to become workers. They had to travel every day from Umm al-Fahm to Tel Aviv, or Haifa, or to other Israeli towns where they are employed on a daily basis in the least desirable jobs. The majority are working in the construction sector, on building sites, or in restaurants or as maintenance men, cleaning the streets.

Some now work in factories in unskilled jobs, but most of these belong to the Histadrut, the trades union federation of Israel. There are no factories in the Arab villages, so Palestinians in Israel must travel constantly to find work. They may be employed in one place for two weeks, or if they are lucky, for six months. When the project is finished, they must look for work elsewhere. This is why, for example, there are no organised trade union strikes by Arab workers in Israel.

We can make strikes, but these concern national issues,

such as the confiscation of land. All of us suffer from this problem in common. In Umm al-Fahm, for example, there was a strike last summer in which all the residents participated to protest against the shortage of drinking water, not to mention the lack of water for cultivation, and we succeeded in getting the Israeli authorities to respond to our needs.

□□ *Are any of the workers from your village employed in the kibbutzim set up near Umm al-Fahm?*

■ ■ There is not one Arab who is a member of a kibbutz in the whole of Israel. But sometimes they hire Arab workers for the unskilled jobs. Under this strange kind of socialism, Arabs are forbidden from membership, and if a Jewish worker is available, he is given preference for any jobs. Only if there are no Jewish workers available are they allowed to employ an Arab.

□□ *Where are most of the villagers in Umm al-Fahm working?*

■ ■ The choice of where to go depends on what area is booming at the moment. Five years ago, most of the villagers were working in the Tel Aviv area, but now there is no work in the construction industry in Tel Aviv. So most of the workers are now going to the Galilee, which is unfortunate on the one hand because work is available there only because of the Israeli government's projects to Judaize the area. But on the other hand, the villagers have families they must support. They have to eat. They must work to live.

□□ *Can you tell us how the rise in the cost of living in Israel is affecting Palestinians?*

■ ■ Today there is a sense of fear among our workers, because the rise in prices is so high relative to their wages. For example, a Palestinian worker on a building site earns a maximum of about 150 Israeli pounds a day. Out of this, he must pay 30 to 35 pounds just for transportation to work. Then he needs another 20 or 25 pounds for his daily expenses — cigarettes, etc. This leaves only about 100 pounds left over, if he is lucky. If he wants to eat dinner in a very modest restaurant, it will cost from 40 to 50 pounds. You can see how difficult it is.

□□ *I assume this is for a single person. But what about families, those workers who have children to support? How do they manage?*

■ ■ I ask myself the same question. I don't know. We do have in Israel a form of social security which provides family allowances, but under Israeli law those who have served in the armed forces receive double the amount of those who have not. So, without expressly saying there is discrimination between Arabs and Israelis, in effect this is what happens since the Arabs are not allowed to serve in the military.

□□ *So a Palestinian receives only about half the allowance provided to a Jewish family?*

■ ■ Yes. An Arab man with three children would receive about 400 pounds a month. An Israeli would receive 800 pounds.

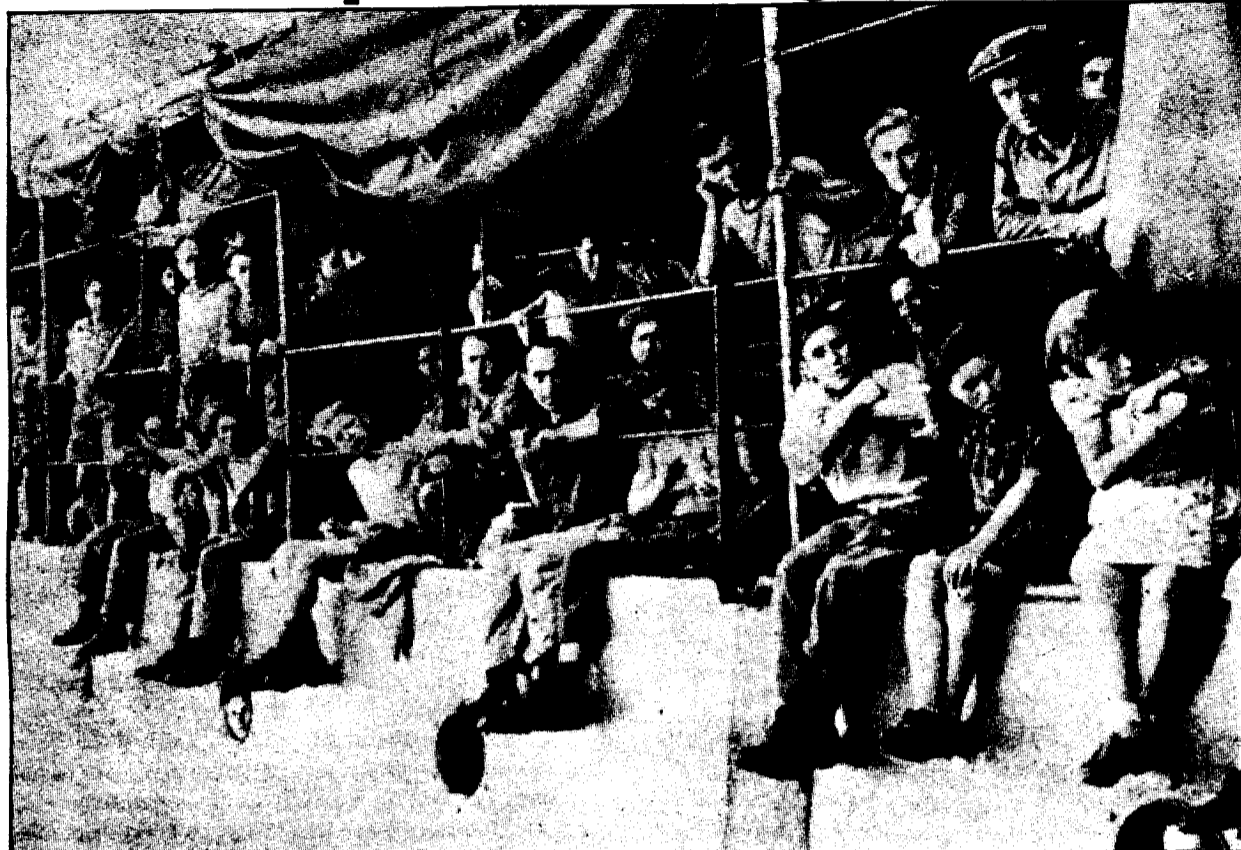


Many Palestinians have never known anything but life in the refugee camps

□□ *Now that Prime Minister Menachem Begin has announced his new economic policy, what effect do you see this having on Palestinian workers?*

■ ■ Well, the first people to be fired are the Arabs. Until recently, the Arab workers in Israel had not suffered greatly from unemployment. But now there is, for the first time, the fear that a worker will lose his job and also the chance to find another. Some have already lost their jobs. They have no security and no assurance of finding work in the future. In fact, ever since the beginning of the Zionist movement, the policy has been that Jews should be given the first right to employment, as well as to the land. The function of the Histadrut, ever since its foundation, has been to defend the right of Jewish workers to work in a Jewish homeland, in Jewish employment, and to combat the employment of Arab workers. This is the main responsibility of the Histadrut.

Interview with Israeli socialist Why Jews in Israel are questioning Zionism



Jewish immigrants arriving in Palestine in 1946. Instead of a haven for Jews, Zionism has created a trap.

A LEADING MEMBER OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST LEAGUE, THE ISRAELI SECTION OF THE USFI, TALKS ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION IN ISRAEL

Question: How did you get involved in revolutionary political activity?

Answer: I came to Israel from Latin America some ten years ago when I was eighteen. Under the influence of Zionism I went there seeking a solution to anti-Semitism, which was still very strong where I lived.

Israel and Zionism claim to be a solution to that problem. Zionism says that Jews need their own state and their own army to defend themselves, to make sure that what happened in Germany under Hitler will never happen again.

When I was growing up in Latin America most of the youth, including myself, had no idea about the left or about radical politics because of the fierce political repression.

But after I was in Israel for a short time I was struck by the tremendous discrimination against Arabs, the racist attitudes toward the Arab population.

That was the beginning of my break with Zionism. I started to study how Israel had been built, and found that it was not, as the Zionists claimed, a case of "a land without people for a people without land." The Palestinians had already been living there and were expelled by the Jews in 1948.

As I studied deeper, I realized that Israel was not established as a progressive, democratic, socialist movement to help the Middle East overcome its problems. The establishment of a Jewish state went against the historical process in the Middle East, the Arab struggle for national liberation. It plays a counterrevolutionary role in the region. I also realized that this was the root of the struggles between the Jews and the Arabs.

Q. Do many people in Israel still see it as a socialist experiment?

A. Not any longer. Everything changed radically after the 1967 war. Until then most of the economy was in the hands of the state and the egalitarian ideology was still quite strong.

But following the 1967 war, the occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip brought a huge Arab population under Israeli control and a new orienta-

tion developed in the economy.

Foreign capital investments were encouraged, as was Israeli private enterprise. New capitalists took advantage of the new markets for Israeli goods in the occupied areas, and took advantage of the big, cheap, Arab labor force.

Crisis of Zionist ideology

The old Zionist ideology that was heavily influenced by socialist ideas broke down. Zionists had said that Jews should do every kind of work, from being merchants, to farmers, to bus drivers, to street cleaners. But now all the hard work was being done by Arabs from the occupied territories.

The kibbutzim, for example, had always been held up as models of socialism, although in fact they had always been heavily subsidized by the taxes of the workers. Now they began moving away from emphasis on agriculture to emphasis on industry, and started hiring large amounts of outside wage labor. Kibbutz members became a very prosperous segment of society.

Finally, after Milton Friedman, the University of Chicago economics professor who advises the Chilean junta, became an economic consultant for the Israeli government, it would be hard to find anyone in Israel who still thinks the country is socialist.

The 1967 war brought with it another phenomenon that undermined the strength of Zionist ideology. That was widespread corruption. Israelis did not expect that their leaders, whom they viewed as leading the life or death struggle of the Jewish people to survive, would stuff their pockets with millions in the process.

Q. Has the current economic crisis—the austerity programs, the triple digit inflation—resulted in a radicalization of the Jewish population in Israel?

A. You have to understand that the economic problems, while important, are not the overriding question for the Jewish population. The overriding question is how they can live in the Middle East and how they can have peace with the Arabs.

If the Jewish population is convinced that they have no alternative but to follow the present course of constantly fighting the Arab revolution and trying to destroy the Palestinian movement, they will follow that course even if it means heavy sacrifices, even if it means subsisting on a diet of potatoes.

The reason the economic crisis is having an

impact on people's consciousness is precisely because the ideological arguments for following the present course, the course of war, are weakening. There is a fundamental rethinking of what we have been doing for thirty years.

It is the interconnection of this political crisis and the economic crisis that is forcing the Jewish masses toward a basic rethinking of what we want to do with our lives, with our existence.

Q. Has this developed largely since the 1973 war?

Shock of 1973 war

A. Yes. The 1973 war was a big shock to the Jewish masses. Before that war people in Israel were saying "We never had it so good." No Arab country, they thought, would dare confront Israel. We had decisively defeated the Arab armies in a quick and efficient war in 1967. The Palestinians had been defeated in Jordan in 1970.

The *nouveau riche* were prospering from the occupation of the West Bank. Israeli goods were entering the occupied areas. The 1974-75 world recession had not yet begun.

People felt the Zionist strategy of beating down the Arabs until they finally give up had been proven in practice.

But when the Egyptian army broke through the Bar-Lev line in 1973—which everyone in Israel had thought was impregnable—and there were the heavy Jewish losses in the fighting, it was the beginning of a big crisis of confidence in the Zionist state's traditional approach to the Arabs. People saw we were as far from peace as ever.

Then there was a resurgence of the Palestinian national movement. Arafat spoke at the United Nations and a mass movement of Palestinian youth developed, which reached its height on the Day of the Land protests in Israel in 1976.

A new generation of Israelis, who had not lived through 1948, saw Israeli soldiers beating and shooting Palestinian demonstrators on the West Bank. It was quite a shock.

The source of the political crisis in Israel is the resurgent Palestinian movement. When I came to Israel in 1970, Golda Meier used to say that there was no such thing as Palestinians. But their movement forced the Israelis to recognize that the Palestinians exist.

People had been forced to confront the first "big lie" of Zionism—that there was no such thing as Palestinians, and that eventually the Arabs will give up, will realize they cannot beat us, and will learn to live with us. The Jewish population was forced to acknowledge the existence of the Palestinians and many realized that the Palestinian question was the key to peace.

Q. What was the impact in Israel of Sadat's trip to Jerusalem?

Sadat's visit

A. When Sadat came to Israel he exposed the second "big lie" of Zionist ideology. His visit to Israel, and his acceptance of Israel's existence, was objectively a big setback for the Arab struggle. But leaving aside this primary aspect for a moment, within Israel the visit undercut Zionist ideology.

The Zionists had always maintained that we have to fight the Arabs because they want to drive the Jews into the sea. But Israelis saw that Sadat, an Arab leader who had himself fought Israel, was in the country saying that if Israel makes some moves regarding the Palestinians we can have peace.

This raised big questions about the previous justifications for Israeli policies. But I should also point out that the effect of Sadat's visit was less than it could have been. When Sadat said that 70 percent of the problem between Egypt and Israel was psychologically based, he ignored the heart of the question—the Palestinians. By attributing the fighting to psychological motives, Sadat equated the motives of the Arabs and Jews. He covered up the fundamental responsibility of the Zionists.

So Sadat's visit had contradictory effects. On the one hand it had the negative consequence of legitimizing Israel and was a big setback to the Arab revolution. But within Israel it made it harder for the Zionists to maintain the illusion that the Arabs are a Nazi-like enemy that wants to annihilate all the Jews.

Continued on next page

Interview with Israeli socialist on

Continued from preceding page

Q. How do you view the Camp David accords?

A. Although the media tried to present them as a big step toward peace in the Middle East, in fact, the Camp David accords and the Sadat visit are not steps toward peace. They are part of the strategy of American imperialism and the Israeli state to solve, in their own way, what they call the "energy crisis" by holding down the Arab masses and the Palestinians in the interests of the oil monopolies and the strategic interests of imperialism.

War drive in Lebanon

Especially since the Iranian revolution Israel has been driving toward war as the only way to definitively defeat the Arab masses and the Palestinians. Of course this is not what the government is telling the Israeli people.

But Begin's strategy is to first neutralize Egypt so that he can take care of the Palestinians and the rejectionist front, destroying the Palestinian movement once and for all and forcing the rest of the Arab states to sign peace treaties along the same lines that Sadat agreed to, meaning treaties that capitulate to Tel Aviv's and Washington's dictates.

The need for another war to achieve this aim is shown by the invasions and the constant bombing of Lebanon.

Although they have been hit very hard in Lebanon, the Palestinians there and on the West Bank and in Israel itself were not so demoralized that they could not continue their struggle. Israel is still unable to achieve what it calls a "radical solution" to the Palestinian "problem."

Today, despite the Zionist state's big success in getting Egypt to sign a treaty with Israel, the Palestinians are holding fast to their struggle and are opposed to any step that would cut across their national rights. Israel has not been able to get a single Palestinian figure to come out in favor of the Sadat-Begin treaty or the phony Palestinian autonomy plan.

Q. What is the significance of Israel's military operations in Lebanon?

A. Today Lebanon is at the center of the Israeli state's present political goals. It is now the main arena of the fight between Israel and the Arab revolution. In Lebanon Israel wants to do two things: destroy the Palestinian resistance movement and force Syria to reach an agreement with Israel.

Israel has been putting tremendous military pressure on the Palestinians through the Litani River invasion, the constant bombings of the Palestinian camps, and the arming of the right-wing militias.

At the same time it wants to pressure Syria to withdraw its troops from Lebanon. If Israel succeeds in this aim, it will be left in effective control of Lebanon. That would be a gigantic defeat for the Palestinians, whose main forces are now restricted to that country.

Q. How did the Peace Now movement arise and what has been its impact in Israel?



SADAT: one result of his trip to Jerusalem was exposure of lie that Arabs want to exterminate Israeli Jews.



Israeli tank leaving devastated village in Lebanon. There is growing opposition inside Israel to Begin's policy in Lebanon.

A. The Peace Now movement arose in response to Begin's intransigence on the question of setting up new Jewish settlements on the West Bank. It was started by 320 reserve army officers who said that unless Begin made some concessions to the Arabs they would have grave doubts about the justice of a future war.

This was one of the most dramatic statements ever made in Israel. No one had ever raised questions on this scale about Israel's right to wage war against the Arabs. It was a symptom of the rethinking that is taking place.

When they saw that no political parties would stand up to Begin, the leaders of the Peace Now movement decided to stage street demonstrations. About 30,000 attended the first, and around 70,000 the second. They were stunned by the response they got. Seventy thousand people is a huge number in Israel.

The government opposed the demonstrations as weakening the Israeli position in the negotiations, and the movement was attacked as a fifth column in the country, playing into the hands of the enemy.

The Peace Now movement has very serious weaknesses and drawbacks, which I will describe in a moment. But on the positive side it is another example of this process of rethinking the old Zionist responses to the Arabs that I mentioned.

These people, primarily youth, are looking for an answer to two questions: how can we as Jews continue to live in the Middle East; and how can we live in such a way that we don't become corrupted by the experience of being an occupying force over the Arabs.

The existence of the movement has greatly increased the margins of "permissible" debate in Israel. We can get a hearing for many anti-Zionist points now that would never have been considered in the past.

But the Peace Now movement's fundamental weakness, which led to its present virtual collapse, is the fact that it was never able to break out of its Zionist framework, and therefore could not put forward a real alternative that could lead to peace.

Begin has been able to exploit this weakness very effectively. He is quite blunt. Zionism is colonialism, he told them. He said that if the Peace Now movement opposed the settlements on the West Bank they would logically have to oppose the existence of Israel too. We have always settled in the middle of Arab lands and taken the land from the Arabs.

If you don't agree with what we are doing on the West Bank, Begin argued, then you must also oppose Hanita, a long-time kibbutz in northern Israel, which was established exactly the same way.

The Peace Now movement tried to respond by saying that they were the "sane Zionists." But Begin is correct in the analogy he makes. And since

the Peace Now movement remains locked into Zionism they cannot present an alternative to Begin.

We are trying to work with the many young people who were attracted to the Peace Now movement, who are looking for a way to achieve peace. We try to show them that the ultimate solution to the problem of war is a unified Palestinian state encompassing Arabs and Jews, while at the same time we work together on the specific demands of dismantling the West Bank settlements and withdrawal from the occupied territories. And we have recruited to our group by intervening in this movement.

Dissent over Lebanon

Although the Peace Now movement has, as I mentioned, virtually collapsed, opposition to Begin's war drive against the Palestinians, especially in Lebanon, remains strong. The lack of enthusiasm for the invasion of southern Lebanon was reflected in the deep demoralization among Israeli troops. It became known in Israel that Israeli troops had engaged in massive looting of Arab property in Lebanon. And it was recently reported that an Israeli soldier who had killed Palestinian prisoners in Lebanon had been amnestied by the chief of staff.

All this was deeply shocking to many people in Israel and has spurred questioning of the government's policies. But the government and media have been trying to counter the revulsion that this caused by again pointing out that the same things took place in 1948.

For instance, the chief military analyst of *Ha'aretz*, a morning paper, responded to criticism of the amnesty by writing that killing Palestinian prisoners was nothing new. He asked his readers how they explained that the Jews did not take a single Palestinian prisoner in the 1948 war. What happened to the Palestinian prisoners? What we are doing now, he said, is exactly what we have done in all our wars, and if you oppose what we are doing now, then you are calling into question everything that Zionism has done for more than thirty years, you're calling into question the whole Zionist state.

And the government television and radio are broadcasting huge propaganda barrages to reinforce the idea that the Palestinians are nothing but terrorists and murderers who must be exterminated.

But people are not convinced and are wavering. That is why the Israeli papers for the past two months have been playing down what the army is doing in Lebanon.

One of our campaigns is to call on the newspapers to tell the Israeli people what the army is doing in Lebanon. If the facts are known—that Israel is creating new refugees, is destroying homes and villages—people would oppose that policy.

The reaction of Israelis to the fighting in Lebanon—their uneasiness—is another sign of the growth of questioning of the political and ideological underpinnings of Zionism, the crisis of Zionist ideology.

This is a big problem for Begin because he needs a war to accomplish his two goals—the destruction of the Palestinian movement and an accord with Syria. But today the Jewish population is not at all convinced that justice would be on Israel's side in a new war.

Q. Could you describe the recent fusion of Trotskyist groups in Israel?

Q. In April two Trotskyist groups fused to form the Revolutionary Communist League (RCL). The RCL puts out a Hebrew monthly called *Matzpen-Marxisti* and an Arabic monthly called *Sharara* (Spark).

The fusion was between the Revolutionary Communist League, which was the section of the Fourth International in Israel, and the Palestine Communist Group (PCG).

The PCG had arisen several years ago from a split in the Workers League, a Trotskyist group that had at one time been affiliated with the Organizing Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International (OCRFI).

The RCL and the PCG began to draw close together in 1977. Discussions and joint activity led to the decision to publish a common paper, and then to the preparation of common resolutions for a fusion congress, which was held April 12-16.

the crisis of Zionism



Workers in Tel Aviv protest rising prices. Discrediting of Zionist ideology is making Jewish workers readier to take action against attacks on economic level.

Q. On what basis did the two groups draw closer together?

A. The fusion of the two groups came from an understanding by both that there had to be a strategic turn in our conception of who we are in the class struggle in the Israeli state. This change was a reflection of a change in the objective situation. For some years Zionist ideology and the institutions of the Zionist state have been in a crisis, which has led to increased possibilities for doing political work among the Jewish workers.

Basis of fusion

We came to understand that we were part of the Israeli population, that we were not outside it. We were not a chosen few who could understand what no one else could understand. If we had come to reject Zionism, so could other Jewish workers.

We found that we were part of the population, of the thinking and questioning that was going on, and we realized that the population would, as a result of their material needs, come to understand what we understood.

The fusion was possible because we found a basis on which to discuss the political questions, the political differences, and, equally important, we saw a way to go forward.

If the possibility of going forward did not exist, we could have sat and discussed forever. We could have had theoretical discussions on whether there is such a thing as an Israeli nation, on how to relate class questions to national questions, what position to take with regard to the Communist Party, and so on, without developing a common perspective for intervening in real struggles. We would have had no way to test the positions against reality.

So the fusion convention took place as a result of a changing conception of what we should be doing in Israel and a change in what it was possible to do. We were able to draw on the lessons of the past eight years of Israeli Trotskyism, the positive as well as negative aspects.

This will enable our forces to strengthen their participation in the class struggle and find the right way to build the party there.

Q. What kind of work do you do among the Arab population?

A. We have considerable influence in the Arab student movement within Israel. This is quite important since that is one of the few organizational forms that the Arab population in Israel has available to it.

Because of our influence in the Arab student movement the Communist Party (Rakah), which has big influence among Arabs, has to deal with us. We have been able to force the CP into some united fronts with us, where we work with them without, of course, yielding an inch to the CP's politics.

Q. What is the strength of the CP?

A. While the Communist Party has almost no influence in the Jewish population, it is a mass party among the Arabs in Israel. This reflects the radicalization that has taken place among Arabs since the 1967 war.

Role of Stalinists

The Arab people look to the Stalinist party to defend them because they are not allowed to have their own nationalist organizations. Al-Ard, an important nationalist group, was banned by the Zionist state.

The CP has done very little to defend the interests of the Arab population from the assault by the Zionist state and it has not organized big protests against the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Government circles see the CP as playing an important role in moderating the Arab population.

For us the question of relations with the CP is of primary importance for winning influence and support in the Arab population. We are fighting for the democratic demands of the Arab people and against the CP's class collaboration.

The CP's role is especially bad for two reasons. First, because it accepts the Zionist state and practices class collaborationism, the CP is tying the Arab struggle to the Zionist doves, who won't do a thing for the Arabs.

Second, because the authentic voice of the Arabs is not being heard in Israel, no one in the Jewish population knows what is really being done to the Arabs, which allows the government to continue its oppression and increases the gap between Arabs and Jews. If the Jews do not know what the Arabs are fighting for and why they are fighting, they won't support the Arabs.

This second point is very important because the Jews will continue to be trapped in the confines of Zionism and the Zionist state until they can understand the Palestinian struggle and identify with it.

Q. How does the Revolutionary Communist League intervene in this process?

A. We feel that the main way to intervene is by helping to build a strong movement of the Palestinians on the basis of their national and democratic demands. Such a movement can be built around three points.

Where to start

1. Unconditional support for the Palestinian struggle against Begin's war drive and the invasion of Lebanon.

2. The democratic rights of the Palestinians on the West Bank, which are closely linked to the rights of the Palestinians within the 1948 boundaries of Israel.

3. The struggle of the Palestinians within Israel

against confiscation of Arab land, for housing, jobs, and education, all of which are related to the oppression of the Arabs as Arabs.

We call for the Arabs to organize themselves on the basis of a program of democratic demands, and we call on the CP to participate in and be part of this fight for Arab rights.

We also stress that the Palestinians should not write off the Jewish masses as potential allies. It is important to understand that the Jewish masses today are becoming more receptive to ways of breaking from Zionism. The Palestinians have the possibility of providing answers that will further this process.

If the Palestinian movement has a correct attitude to the Jewish masses, that will greatly strengthen the Palestinian and anti-Zionist movements. If the Palestinian movement has the wrong attitude, if it writes off the Jewish masses, there will be another war. Unless the Jewish masses are broken from Zionism, there will inevitably be another war.

Q. What kind of economic struggles are taking place within Israel?

A. The Israeli economy is in terrible shape today. But as yet no big class battles have taken place.

The reason for this is quite simple. If the Jewish masses remain tied to the Zionist state and Zionist ideology they will be willing to make all sorts of sacrifices because they think they have no other choice. The Zionists present it as a life or death question, which supercedes economic sacrifices.

But confidence in the Zionist road and Zionist ideology is breaking down very rapidly, and this process is shaking up the Jewish working class, so we can expect that economic struggles will increase.

The working class is the crucial arena where the division between Jews and Palestinians can begin to break down. The only place in Israel where Jews and Arabs are side by side is on the job. Jews do not visit Arab homes, don't live in Arab villages, and Arabs don't live in Tel Aviv. Only at work are they together.

After the Iranian revolution there was general agreement among all wings of the Zionist movement that there has to be a hard line against the Arab struggle. Therefore the Histadrut, which is supposed to be a labor organization but isn't, has been unwilling to lead any struggles of workers since they are afraid such struggles might weaken the Zionist apparatus. From time to time the Histadrut goes along with a struggle for tactical reasons. But even that is rare.

Workers beginning to radicalize

Workers struggles are developing slowly, and the workers face big political obstacles. In order to fight effectively they have to be organized effectively, which means they have to organize real unions. These can only be reorganized together with Arab workers since Arabs are a big component of the working class in Israel.

The working class is beginning to radicalize. And local struggles are taking place through local, elected factory committees.

Sometimes the workers win their local demands, often they lose. But the current economic crisis is so big, with real wages dropping sharply and the standard of living declining, that a purely local response is largely ineffective.

As yet there have been no solidarity activities between workers in different plants or joint actions of workers in different branches of industry. The workers response has remained atomized.

But I believe that a joint response will come, because of the economic and political crisis the country is going through. The working class will be forced to respond. Although the Histadrut has been able to prevent a joint response thus far, I do not believe it can do this for long.

Q. What does the Revolutionary Communist League propose as the ultimate solution to the struggle of Palestinians and Jews?

A. At our fusion convention we adopted a call for "a united Palestine of Jews and Arabs." This will have to be further concretized and given content when we put forward our programmatic positions.

We also call for the unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli occupation troops from the West Bank. The cutting edge of our agitation is the demand to dismantle the Jewish settlements on the West Bank. These settlements are very unpopular and are a good issue around which to raise the whole question in the Jewish population.

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

SATURDAY 6 OCTOBER. Irish Republican Socialist Party: Seamus Costello Memorial Function. From 8pm at Hackney Trades Council and Labour Club, 96 Dalston Lane, E8. Bar extension. Adm. £1.

SATURDAY 6 OCTOBER. Demonstration against cuts in playgroup provision in Islington. Assemble 9.45am, Highbury Fields, for march to Islington Town Hall. Organised by Islington Under-5s Action Group.

SATURDAY 6 OCTOBER. Islington Conference against the Cuts. Sponsored by local Labour Parties, trade union branches, stewards' committees, tenants' associations, Islington Trades Council, and 14 councillors. At Essex Road Library, London N1.

SATURDAY 6 OCTOBER. Organising conference on Women and Ireland. 10am-6pm at St Matthews Church Hall, Lancaster Rd, London W10. Information c/o 48 William IV Street, London WC2.

WEDNESDAY 10 OCTOBER. Edinburgh UTOM Public Meeting. Film, 'The Patriot Game', and speaker, Mary Nelis (a founder of Derry Relatives Action Committee, who has two sons 'on the blanket'). 7pm at Edinburgh Art College, Lauriston Place.

WEDNESDAY 10 OCTOBER. Meeting of 'BL Stewards for the Annual Review'. 8pm at Birmingham Labour Club, to discuss the crisis in BL.

WEDNESDAY 10 OCTOBER. Camden Conference Against the Cuts. 7pm, Friends Meeting House, Euston Rd, NW1.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY 12-13 OCTOBER. 'Critique' conference on Bahro. Speakers include Zhores Medvedev, Ernest Mandel, John Saville, Rudi Dutschke, Chris Harman, Andre Gunder Frank, Ernesto Laclau, Michel Raptis. From 9.30am on Friday, and 10am on Saturday, at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq, London.

SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER. Dundee UTOM demonstration against UDR training in the city. 11.30am Tosthill car park, Lochlee, Dundee. Coaches from Edinburgh leave Waverley Bridge 9am: cost £2.

SATURDAY 13 OCTOBER. Edinburgh UTOM social, with Irish music. Heriot Watt Students Union, Grindley St, Edinburgh.

TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER. Organising Against the Corrie Bill, meeting sponsored by North Islington Labour Party and Islington NAC. Speaker: Jo Richardson. 7.30pm, Islington North Library, Manor Gardens, London N7.

TUESDAY 16 OCTOBER. Labour Movement Against the Corrie Bill meeting sponsored by Stoke Socialist Organiser group and Newcastle Women's Action Group. Speakers: Gwynneth Dunwoody (MP for Crewe) and a member of Newcastle Women's Action group. 7.30pm, The Guildhall, Newcastle-U-Lyme.

SATURDAY 20 OCTOBER. Conference on the education cuts in Avon. University settlement, Barton Hill, 9.30-5pm. Registration; Maggie Eales, 17 Lye Mead, Winford, Bristol

THURSDAY 25 OCTOBER. Manchester Workers' Action meeting: 'Fighting Racism and Fascism'. 7.45pm, Packhorse Hotel, by Deansgate Station.

SATURDAY 3 NOVEMBER. Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement conference. 10.30am to 5pm in Birmingham. Credentials for labour movement delegates, £1 (50p unemployed), from Godfrey Webster, 99 Barclay Rd, Warley, W.Midlands.

WEDNESDAY 7 NOVEMBER. March on Parliament against the Cuts, organised by Lambeth Council.

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SACKINGS WON'T BREAK THIS STRIKE

360 MEN AND women at the T.I. Greaves knitting machine needles manufacturers in Leicestershire have been on official strike for 8 weeks for a 15% no-strings pay rise.

The company, part of Sears Holdings, have offered a paltry 5% plus a productivity scheme. Wages at the factory are the lowest in Sears' Bentley engineering group, and workers receive no 'fringe benefits' like sick pay or even overalls and safety shoes.

As the strike enters its ninth week, the bosses are attempting to scare people back to work by sending out redundancy notices. These redundancies make no economic sense, even from the bosses' point of view. One section, for example, which has almost been wiped out is the one that performs the essential first operation on the needle.

In addition, one steward has been sacked for alleged assault on the picket line. Many think that the bosses' next step will be to sack the entire workforce for breach of contract, then re-employ

only those they want back in.

This tactic has already been used successfully at other factories in the Bentley Group. Such scares have only made the strike more solid. One member of the strike committee said: "I wish everybody could go out on strike. The feeling of togetherness is fantastic. I have got to know people I never speak to at work."

The strike committee has organised 24-hour picketing and weekly members' meetings. The Greaves workers have received no support from other Bentley Group factories in Leicester, and the next step should be organising blacking and solidarity strike action among these workers.

Police attack Vauxhall blockade at Harwich

by MICK CASHMAN in Harwich

FOUR pickets were dragged from the gates of a distribution depot in Harwich on Wednesday 3rd, beaten up and then arrested by members of the Tactical Support Group, a local equivalent of the notorious SPG. The four joined ten other pickets arrested the previous Friday. Most of them have been charged with obstruction.

The pickets are from Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port factory, where 8,000 carworkers have been on strike since September 4th for a 25% wage claim. Harwich docks are being used to distribute General Motors parts from Germany to make up for lost production at Ellesmere Port. Though Vauxhall's Dunstable plant has

been put out of action, the Luton plant has managed to keep going.

Ellesmere Port's pickets have won support from dockers around the country, and GM parts are being blacked in all registered ports. But the parts can still get through in drive-on/drive-off containers of the type used at Harwich.

To stop GM getting parts in to the country by shifting supplies from port to port, pickets have been touring ports in the South of England warning dockers. While at Ipswich docks, pickets managed not only to warn dockers of possible GM supplies being moved through the port but also to turn back two lorries from the Luton plant waiting to pick up loads.

The convenors at Luton got the bosses' 14% pay offer accepted, and are now urging

drivers from the plant to break the Ellesmere Port strikers' blockade and collect parts shipments to keep Luton open.

On Tuesday 2nd, the Luton management said they were due to lay off workers. The next morning, 11 Luton drivers were down at the gates of the Harwich depot, protected by a force of police outnumbering the pickets two to one. At first the pickets managed to get the gates shut, but they were dragged away by the police and the 11 lorries got through.

More pickets are going to Harwich but national union officials are trying to pressure the Ellesmere Port convenor into calling the pickets off.

The pickets are tightening the noose around Vauxhall production. They can win, especially if support can be got from other GM workers in Europe.

MASS WALK-OUT AS 'NO-COVER' CIVIL SERVANTS SUSPENDED

A WALK-OUT by up to 5000 clerical workers (members of the CPSA) closed ten Social Security Offices in Liverpool on Friday 28th September. Other government departments, including the Department of Employment and the Ministry of Defence, were also affected.

The action took place because of the suspension of six clerks at the Breckfield DHSS office. The six were suspended for refusing to alter their work routines in order to cover for unfilled vacancies.

The decision to confront

the 'no-cover' action — vital to a campaign against job cuts — was sanctioned, it appears, directly from Westminster. A public warning was issued by Patrick Jenkin, the Minister for Social Services, the week before; he specifically threatened that any workers refusing to cover would be suspended.

The bosses' determination to press on with the attack was shown on Monday 1st October when a seventh suspension took place at Breckfield. This resulted in another walk-out at the office.

The importance of the struggle around these suspensions was summed up by a clerical worker from West Derby who said "If the union doesn't support this case, then the others who aren't covering might as well give up now straight away."

Local CPSA official Glyn Davies has now threatened to escalate the action. Further action must involve as many sections of the civil service as possible, with the aim of forcing the withdrawal of any suspensions and forcing the government to fill the vacancies immediately.

Volunteer or you're sacked!

SIX WEEKS ago the bosses at Adamsons Containers wanted to give 39 workers the boot. At first they asked for voluntary redundancies. Because the plant had been on short time working for a period, 61 out of the 250 strong workforce volunteered to go.

But the bosses were not happy with this arrangement. They had drawn up their own list of sackings. On the list were all but one of the shop stewards, the convenor, John Taylor, and other workers who were obviously marked down as 'trouble-

makers'.

The workers, members of the AUEW, Boilermakers' Union, and EETPU, rejected this ultimatum. The bosses took John Taylor to one side and offered him money to just leave quietly. Instead the Adamsons workers struck.

Support for the action has been strong locally. Workers at the Adamson and Hatchett factory in Stockport, which also belongs to the shop stewards, the convenor, Acrow group, voted to come out in support. 100 supporters of the strikers marched from the centre of Stockport

to the factory on September 24th. The Stockport district of the AUEW balloted its members on whether to conduct a levy for the Adamson strikers, and it was decided to do so overwhelmingly. Other local districts may also levy their members.

Support must be got from other factories in the Acrow group and Acrow products must be blacked.

Donations and messages of support to John Taylor, convenor Adamsons Containers, 26 Jubilee Avenue, Dukinfield, Cheshire.

MICK WOODS

Workers' ACTION

COLLEGE NALGO STAFF TURN MILITANT FOR 24pc CLAIM

University staff in NALGO held a one-day strike on October 1st, in support of their pay claim. The union put in a 24% claim in July, and has been offered 8 or 9% plus a comparability award from November 1980.

The response to the strike call was very strong for a normally non-militant workforce. In Cardiff, over 100 workers picketed University College, and delegates were sent to a national rally in

London. Only seven scabs went into work, and they came out again when told they would be 'sent to Coventry'.

Action is continuing with official blacking on the registration of students. But Kim Shanahan, a member of Cardiff NALGO Action Group, told Workers' Action: "This one day strike is just a token and we've been told that any lightning strikes have to be cleared with

London first. What we really need is all-out action to win the full claim".

The National Union of Students (under Broad Left leadership) advised students to cross picket lines to register. But students at University College, Cardiff, will have an opportunity to express support for the workers' action at a Students Union General Meeting on October 4th.

MARTIN BARCLAY

ENGINEERS: From front page

ounced that 98 firms, including one GEC factory, had settled on all the points of the claim.

A memorandum from GEC boss Arnold Weinstock has instructed management to arrange for withdrawal from the EEF once the strike is over.

The unions should follow up these signs of employer weakness by opening up the action, making the strike an all-out national strike and smashing the employers.

The rank and file cannot wait for the top officials to act. It must take the lead in spreading the strike. In some places, like GEC in Sheffield, workers are in occupation. At Rolls Royce, Bristol, they have decided to issue a weekly bulletin to combat the ideas of the bosses' press. Elsewhere picketing, which

has been at a very low level, has been stepped up, strengthening the grip of the strike.

These are the keys to opening up the action. We need flying pickets to try to close down those factories still working and bring them out in solidarity with those where there have been lock-outs. And every lock-out should be met by occupation. There needs to be news to combat the demoralising diatribes of the bosses' press, and we still need to fight to convince fellow members of the correctness and urgency of the shorter working week demand. In fact, this demand should be brought forward as the focus of national action: for a 35 hour week now.

Workers in other unions should fight to bring their claims forward. That is the best way to stand shoulder to shoulder with the engineers.

ANDREW HORNUNG

TALBOT A DEAL TO WASTE THE STRUGGLE SO FAR

A DEAL has been struck between bosses and local union bureaucrats in an attempt to end the 14 week long strike at Talbot's Ryton and Stoke plants in Coventry. The deal includes a £5 a week 'start up' bonus in addition to the 5½% pay offer originally made. The bonus will only be paid out for five weeks though, till a 'union-management working party' plans the introduction of a productivity and regrading scheme designed to 'improve efficiency'.

But even if Talbot workers wanted to work themselves harder, 'productivity' would scarcely increase because the bosses have let the plants run down so badly over the last few years. This means that the productivity deal is just another version of the original '5½% plus strings'

offer that was rejected over three months ago.

The local union leadership, which agreed the deal, has not given much of a lead despite the solidity and determination of the Talbot strikers over the last three months. The Ryton leadership, especially, has done little to try and win the strike — leaving it up to the Stoke plant to try and get blacking of Peugeot/Citroen products and to raise money for the strike funds of both plants.

The mass meetings to which the offer will be put must choose between accepting a deal that would mean their action had been an almost totally wasted effort, or continuing the fight for a better offer and the future of the already threatened plants.

NICK LAWRENCE