

# WORKERS' ACTION

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THE FIGHTBACK against the cuts in Lambeth is switching into top gear. This week the Council is to meet and take the formal decision to reverse the cuts. A special issue of the Council newsletter 'Lambeth Local' will go into every household in the borough, explaining what the cuts will mean, and calling on residents to join the march against the Government's policies.

Since a conference of the local Labour Parties in July pushed the Labour group into deciding to reverse the Council's original decision to implement the Tory cuts, Lambeth has become a central focus of the anti-cuts battle.

The Lambeth Fightback campaign will also be launching the first issue of its 8-page paper this week. The campaign has been formed by Lambeth Trades Union Council together with many local residents and workers, and is acting as an umbrella group for the various campaigns in the area — the NUT's fight against education cuts, the CPSA's battle over jobs in the DHSS, the Campaign against Health Cuts in the Lambeth, Southwark and Lewisham Health Authority area, the local Labour Parties' campaign, and the campaign against the Corrie Bill.

It has been gaining great support from local unions and other groups, and is producing publicity to supplement the official publicity from the Town Hall.

NUPE has called for a one-day official strike on November 7th for its London members. The entire 8000-strong workforce of Lambeth Council will have the council's blessing (with full pay) to join the march. Lambeth NUT passed a motion unanimously calling on its members to take half-day strike action to support the march, and many local union branches will be doing the same — NALGO, CPSA, TGWU, GMWU.

Norwood Labour Party is treating the cuts fight as urgently as a General Election campaign — every household getting a leaflet; street meetings every weekend simultaneously at several shopping areas; and a petition.

Other street meetings

## Support Lambeth ALL OUT NOV 7th

# Stop the cuts

have been organised by other Labour Parties in the borough, like Vauxhall, and by the Fightback campaign. These meetings will continue every weekend right up to November 7th. Every resident and worker in Lambeth will hear the message loud and clear: 'Join the Fightback!'

Support from outside Lambeth is also growing. Haringey will be sending a strong delegation, as will many other Labour Parties in London. Cuts campaigns in Islington, Wandsworth, and other London boroughs are mobilising.

Lambeth Fightback literature has been mailed to every Trades Council

through the Greater London Association of Trades Councils, and the South East Region TUC has booked Central Hall for a rally after the march on November 7th. Further support is coming from outside London, as far afield as the Yorkshire miners.

It is vital that November 7th be a massive show of working class strength. Although the cuts will not be stopped by a one-day demonstration, the confidence it generates will stiffen every struggle going on in the hospitals, town halls, schools and depots throughout the country.

Every section of work-

ers taking industrial action this winter will feel less isolated, and a network and a feeling of solidarity will have been built. Every Labour Council refusing to cut will know it is not isolated, but is joining Lambeth, Lothian and others who have already taken a stand.

The Tory government can be defeated through the united action of our movement.

- All out November 7!
- No cuts in services, no cuts in jobs
- No rent and rate rises
- Lift the interest burden on councils. Nationalise the banks and finance houses without compensation.

CHEUNG SIU MING

## KEEP IT LEGAL KEEP IT SAFE!

"UNDER the present legislation this is a rare case, but if the Corrie Bill goes through, we can expect it to become common" - Jo Richardson MP, speaking to a public meeting in Islington, was referring to the recent death in childbirth of a 35 year old woman who had been refused an abortion. The post mortem showed her to be suffering from a heart complaint, one non-functioning kidney, lung disease and narrow arteries.

"This is a very dangerous Bill indeed. There are four main difficulties...We do need the 28 week upper limit, because there is a small proportion — a tiny one, under 1% — of women who would suffer very much if the 28 week limit were reduced even to 22 weeks.

"...The Bill also changes the criteria. At the moment the Act says that there has to be risk to the life of the woman, or risk of injury to the physical or mental health of her or her children. Now Mr. Corrie intends, as previous people have done, to try to add the words *grave, substantial, and serious* to the word *risk*."

"Of course, if you think about it, how can you define what is meant by *grave*? One doctor, or even one of us, might regard one thing as *grave*, and somebody else alongside us might regard it as *less grave*."

"...The third difficulty is that Mr. Corrie intends to

try to separate the referral agencies from the nursing homes where the abortions are done. Now this applies to the charitable sector which is principally the British Pregnancy Advisory Service and the Pregnancy Advisory Service, the Brook Clinic and several other recognised agencies. Mr. Corrie's general allegation is that the charities are making money out of this...If in fact he gets his way, and the referral agency is separated from the nursing home, this will make it very much more expensive and very much more difficult for both the agency and the nursing home to continue to exist.

"...It is because they are able to run the whole thing... from the beginning right to the end that they are in fact able to do it much more economically, and much more efficiently, than they would be able to do if they simply gave the counselling, had the girl examined by doctors, and then sent her off with a chit into limbo, for her to look for somewhere to have the abortion.

"So the effect of this, if it gets through, will be to virtually ruin the charitable sector, and that will cause great deprivation to very many women.

"There are also, of course, the private clinics, about which we know very little.

continued on p.12

## BL: Don't give in to Tory blackmail

THE TGWU, the union which organises most production workers in BL, is still standing out against the Edwardes cuts. The BL senior stewards have voted to fight the cuts. But the leadership of the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions (Confed) has given in.

The Confed Executive does not speak for the BL workers.

'Someone has to give a lead for the working class in

confronting the employing class on the issue of the shorter working week'.

That is what Terry Duffy said he and the rest of the Confed leadership were doing in the national engineering dispute. The result was feeble: one hour off the working week between now and 1983.

The latest capitulation by the Confed Executive shows that their claim to be fighting against unemployment and for a shorter working week is complete hypocrisy

BL boss Michael Edwardes and the Tories have told the unions: accept the plan for 25,000 job cuts, or BL collapses. The Confed executive has just accepted that choice, and gone for the first alternative.

They have not said, there is another, *socialist*, alternative: a shorter working week, nationalisation of the whole car and components industry, and its reorganisation under workers' control. They have not said, the workers should not bear the cost

of the rat-race anarchy in the world car industry.

The TGWU and the senior stewards must now convert their opposition into a campaign. They must ensure a massive 'no' vote in the ballot which the bosses are organising with the treacherous cooperation of the Confed. They must prepare for direct action: blacking of all transfers of work, occupation of threatened factories.

★ More on BL: centre pages

## FUND DRIVE

This week we have received:	
Stoke .....	£5
Sheffield .....	£1
Total this week .....	£6
Total so far this month .....	£36.75
Monthly target .....	£200
Send contributions to: Fund, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.	

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JOHN



Mugabe and Nkomo — being bludgeoned by the Tories

## Britain tries to browbeat Patriotic Front

IF THE Patriotic Front is to be incorporated into the new government of Zimbabwe, it must be a weakened Patriotic Front: that is the main thrust of Carrington's diplomacy.

The Patriotic Front has so far compromised to agree to 29% white seats (for 3% of the population) and on a separate electoral roll for whites; and it has accepted prime-ministerial rather than presidential-style government leadership. Land, citizenship and pension rights remain subjects of conflict, and the British have put forward no formal proposals for the transitional arrangements on which the Patriotic Front places great importance.

The Tory Party Conference strengthened Carrington's hand. The motion on Rhodesia was amended to call for sanctions to be lifted 'as soon as possible' since they are no longer appropriate as 'retribution' once the 'moral basis has lapsed'. But a hard-line amendment backed by the 400-strong Monday Club meeting (which heard calls for Carrington's dismissal) was not taken, and the ultra-rightists who see talks with the Patriotic Front as overt British support for 'guerillas, terrorists and extension of Soviet influence' were quelled with little difficulty.

The Patriotic Front stands by its demands to change the Declaration of Rights as it affects land and pensions, and on provisions relating to the army, police, public services and judiciary, particularly during the transitional period.

Nkomo stated that 'peace can only come with a constitution that allows the government of a young country to deliver the goods', referring particularly to the Patriotic Front's demands that the unoccupied and under-used white-owned land, at present protected for 10 years, should be redistributed among Africans, though with 'discretionary compensation'. Carrington defends the present protection of such land under the Declaration of Rights, which also provides compensation to be paid whites who have left the country, and suggests that a

new government should seek international aid to buy land from whites. This could mean the new Zimbabwe government would be crippled from the start by massive debt charges on loans raised to pay off white farmers for land which (because of the war) they have not in fact cultivated for years, and which their forefathers stole from the Africans by brute force only a century ago.

Carrington is opposed to the Patriotic Front's proposal to deny citizenship to many of the mercenaries and assorted reactionaries who have entered the country since UDI and are among Ian Smith's strongest supporters, and is also against the proposed 'political vetting' it would involve for up to 40,000 whites.

Muzorewa, who early on in the talks accepted the British proposals in full, wants to move on to discussion of the transitional period. Smith for his part has not renewed his threat to reject the British proposals, saying 'In the end I may be forced to accept even things I don't like'.

The Patriotic Front is also keen to move on to discussion of the transitional arrangements — on the basis of a 'sufficiently wide measure of agreement' on the constitutional proposals. But Carrington, who received a reserved reply from the Patriotic Front to last week's demand for their full acceptance of the British proposals, has now demanded an 'unambiguous answer'.

He wants to make sure the Patriotic Front does not keep any open questions on the constitutional proposals so as to have bargaining counters in the crucial negotiations on who will control state power and the armed forces in the transition to a new Zimbabwe. And he wants to show both the Muzorewa gang and the Patriotic Front that Britain is boss.

Our job is to help build the solidarity movement in Britain which, in alliance with the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe, can push the Patriotic Front leaders to stand out against Carrington's blackmail.

LAWRENCE WELCH

# Trotskyism and Nicaragua

EDITORIAL

MANY SOCIALISTS have been discussing the possibility that the Sandinista revolutionaries in Nicaragua, having smashed the Somoza dictatorship and with it the main bulwarks of capitalist power in that country, will go forward to build a workers' state in the same way that Fidel Castro and Che Guevara did in Cuba.

*Workers' Action* has published articles arguing that this perspective is not the most likely one (though we do not deny that it is a possible one). We have also argued that while such estimation of probabilities is important for revolutionary socialists, the principled questions of programme and party are more important.

The governing idea of modern revolutionary socialism (Trotskyism) is that Leninist parties must be built in every country, united internationally by a common organisation and a common programme of establishing the power of workers' councils and building socialism on a world scale. Even if evidence could be produced to show that our estimate of Nicaragua is wrong, and the Sandinistas are definitely on the Cuban road, this fundamental idea would still be relevant to Nicaragua. It is relevant to Cuba itself, and has been for the last 20 years.

The Castroites did overthrow capitalism. They did not establish the direct power of workers' councils. They did not adopt the consistently revolutionary international policy which was the only way to avoid the trap of 'socialism in one country'. Only a Leninist party could have fought adequately for those vital aims.

The Castroites established a bonapartist regime which, though clearly having the consistent support of the mass of the Cuban working class, was not under their control (though it has been uniquely responsive), and therefore always had the potential of hardening into a bureaucracy antagonistic to the working class. Right from the victory of Castro, it was necessary to fight to build a party to advocate, and if necessary to fight to impose,

The same applies to Nicaragua. A sensitive and cautious tone in criticism of the Sandinistas is certainly in order. Complete self-cancellation out by Trotskyists is not.

Yet the policy pursued by the main would-be Trotskyist current internationally, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), and especially by its sister-organisation in the United States, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), has been one that fails to mention, or

there are severe limits on the immediate improvements that can be made in the living standards of the masses. Playing on this objective problem, ultraleftist sectarians are trying to build their own political formations in opposition to the FSLN.

"These groups thus fall into the bourgeoisie's game of trying to divide the masses from the FSLN. They divert attention from the real immediate tasks of defending and extending the revolu-



The Sandinistas — substitute for a Trotskyist party?

direct workers' power. The transformation of the Cuban political system into one of working-class democracy, whether it was resisted by Castro and his comrades or not (and they might not, at the beginning anyway, have resisted it), would have been a qualitative transformation — a political revolution.

To be sure, declaring a Leninist party straight off is not always the best way of building one. And a competent Trotskyist nucleus in Cuba, applying sensitive and flexible tactics towards the Castroite current, might have won over many militants and even leaders of that current to its course. Nevertheless, the work of building a Leninist party had to be started, one way or another.

even denies, the need to build a Leninist party in Nicaragua.

The SWP's paper, *The Militant*, has carried no criticism at all of the Sandinistas since they overthrew Somoza. When a group of Colombian Trotskyists who had gone to Nicaragua, in a possibly ill-judged attempt to intervene, were expelled by the Sandinista authorities for their political activity (and nothing else), the SWP approved the expulsion. So, later, did an official delegation of the USFI to Nicaragua (though the USFI itself has, despite SWP opposition, mildly criticised the expulsion).

Most recently, the October 5th issue of *The Militant* states: "In this situation

tion's gains. And they let imperialism off the hook for its responsibility for the country's problems".

The groups actually existing in Nicaragua — mainly Maoist ones, but also Trotskyists — may indeed be ultraleftist and sectarian (though *The Militant* hardly proves this). But it is impossible to read what *The Militant* writes as other than a blanket condemnation of any political organisation independent of the FSLN or even any political criticism of the FSLN leadership.

The European sections of the USFI have generally made more effort to retain some independent critical judgment on the Sandinistas'

cont. centre page

## Rudolf Bahro released

RUDOLF BAHRO, the best-known Marxist opponent of the bureaucratic regime in East Germany, was released from jail in a general amnesty on 11th October.

Bahro was jailed in the summer of 1977 when his book *The Alternative* was published in West Germany. In July 1978 he was sentenced to eight years' jail on a trumped-up charge of 'spying'.

Despite his release he has (according to the *Guardian* of the 13th) been banned from contact with the West.

Annette Bahner, a member of the West German Social Democratic Party who has been active in campaigns for East German dissidents and was arrested on a visit to East Berlin this July, was also released — before the amnesty.

Meanwhile, in Czechoslovakia, the trials of the Charter 77 activists arrested this May have been set to start on 22nd October.

### Kurdistan

ACCORDING to the government of Iran's West Azerbaijan province, Khomeini's troops are suffering setbacks in

their war against the Kurds. They no longer have control of the town of Mahabad, and the pro-Khomeini 'Revolutionary Guards' there have been forced back into their barracks.

In Tehran, the Council of Experts has added clauses to the Constitution giving further dictatorial powers to Khomeini: control over armed forces chiefs, the right to declare war, the right to veto parliamentary decisions and candidates for the Presidency.

The chief force among the guerillas operating in the area now appears to be not the Kurdistan Democratic Party but the tendencies previously organised in the local 'Associations'. Of these, the Revolutionary Organisation of Toilers of Kurdistan is the most active, and appears to be drawing support away from the KDP.

### Fiat Turin

PICKETS have been placed on Fiat factories in Turin, in northern Italy, in order to enforce an overtime ban. This action, together with a three-hour strike on Wednesday 10th, is a response to the

Fiat bosses' sacking of 61 workers on Tuesday 9th and their freeze on all further labour recruitment.

Fiat explain the sacking by saying that the 61 workers were guilty of involvement in terrorist activities like the Red Brigades', directed against the Fiat management. The unions reply that a duplicated letter of dismissal to 61 workers is not acceptable: specific reasons have to be given and proved if there are to be sackings.

A factory council delegate, Silvano Veronesi, was quoted in *Le Monde* of October 14th as saying that workers should conduct 'a struggle against terrorism', but 'it is not for Fiat to define a code of behaviour for the factory'. He denied the 61 were terrorists. 'We know these sacked comrades', said Veronesi. 'They are people like us. They were involved in the same struggles'.

In the 1950s, when the unions were weaker in Fiat, foremen used to threaten trade union activists, for example by phoning their wives and menacing them with the sack. The Fiat bosses had no objection to that sort of terrorism. And their attack now is really directed not

against terrorism, but against any sort of militant workers' fightback.

### Not guilty

LAST week's Workers' Action reported on the activities of the Socialist International in Nicaragua. Its main effort has been directed towards getting links with the Terceristas, the least radical wing of the Sandinista movement.

A Social Democratic Party has also been set up, based on the old Conservative Party, and with links to Venezuela's Accion Democratica which is affiliated to the Socialist International.

The Social Democratic Party has been sharply attacked in the Sandinista press. On October 9th the Socialist International put out a press release saying, 'the Socialist International never had, nor plans to have, any contacts with leaders or representatives of the [Social Democratic] Party'. It accuses the Social Democratic Party of acting 'on behalf of obscure foreign and domestic reactionary interests', and states full support for the Sandinista Front.

WHEN THE National Executive Committee of the Labour Party meets on October 24th, it will decide on the scope and composition of the inquiry into Party organisation.

The proposal for a committee of inquiry was unanimously accepted by the Organisation Sub-Committee last month at the suggestion of trade union leaders of the Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory caucus. Why did they suggest an inquiry? They were trying to argue for postponement of the debate on who should elect the Party leader, who should write the election manifesto, and mandatory reselection of MPs.

The right wing had long ago run out of arguments that might convince. Now they tried to get the debate axed from the agenda on the grounds that the committee of inquiry should report first.

# Labour's inquiry: a gambit by the right

When that move failed, the same people argued at conference for postponing the decisions on the grounds that the committee of inquiry should first make a report. That move failed too. So what of the committee of inquiry?

The terms of reference of the inquiry are fairly vague. The seven points include looking into how to: increase membership, improve financing, strengthen electoral organisation, develop political education and create a more democratic and more efficient structure. The committee is to consider rule or constitutional changes to

these ends and report to the 1980 Conference on these issues.

With such broad terms of reference, the right wing will try to use the inquiry to win back the ground it lost at the conference. The Trade Unionists for a Labour Victory have made sure of their five seats on the committee, and the Parliamentary Labour Party, meeting on October 23rd, will also be trying to grab as much of the action as it can. The Shadow Cabinet has already decided to go for representation for MPs on the inquiry.

The inquiry should never have been decided in the first

place. The basic facts about Labour Party organisation are well known enough without an inquiry — and it is clear enough what should be done to build up Labour Party membership. A campaign of demonstrations and conferences against the cuts, energetically organised by the NEC, would do more to build a mass membership than any number of inquiries.

The inquiry is, and always has been, a gambit used against Labour rank-and-file demands for democratic reform in the Party.

Now the left on the NEC must make no concessions

on the scope or composition of the committee. It should define the terms of reference as closely as possible, and the PLP should be held in check. The taking on board already of Bill Keys of SOGAT, David Basnett (GMWU), Clive Jenkins (ASTMS), Moss Evans (TGWU), and John Boyd (AUEW) — none of them known for their enthusiasm for democracy within either the trade union movement or the Labour Party — is a bigger concession than should have been made. Above all, the left must not allow the committee of inquiry to interfere with the Conference's decisions.

The inquiry was first proposed to buy time for the right wing. Even though they did not get all they wanted, the establishment of the inquiry will be used to rally the right. It is essential that the left get organised too.



The NEC left led by Benn defeated Callaghan at the Labour Party Conference. But will they stand firm under pressure?

## From right-wing Minister to anti-Tory demagogue

ROY Hattersley's speech to Basingstoke Constituency Labour Party on Wednesday 10th October proved to be something of a revelation to many of the longstanding Labour supporters who came to hear him. They were subjected to ridicule and insults when questioning Hattersley's double-think on, among other things, public spending cuts.

He stated that what Labour must argue for is an increase in public expenditure on the National Health Service and education. One Labour Party member of 40 years' standing, who pointed out that it was the last Labour government that paved the way by introducing the cuts, was subjected to a torrent of personal abuse from Hattersley.

Hattersley argued the need for an incomes policy, stating that it had been 'the system of free collective bar-

gaining that had led to the low paid being low paid', and went on to say how incomes policies would lead to a 'fair distribution of wealth'.

At this stage, Tom Garland, a Labour councillor and a fireman, reminded Hattersley of what incomes policy had done to the lower-paid public sector workers. Far from being protected and nurtured by the Labour government and its incomes policy, the firemen had been described as 'murderers' from the Government benches.

Hattersley claimed that the Labour Party conference had made the party 'profoundly undemocratic', and that something ought to be done about the NEC, which in his view was the most undemocratic leadership body of any of the European 'socialist' parties.

He also stated he was against the block vote of the unions (and always had been!).

The block vote, he was sure, would be done away with when the current inquiry reported.

Another example of Hattersley's hypocrisy was that while he thought that it was totally undemocratic for the Manifesto to be drawn up by a small body of people, the NEC, he fully supported the idea of the Party Leader having a dictatorial veto.

It is an insult to the intelligence of all thinking Labour Party members just how quickly Hattersley and his kind are asking us to forget the assaults which the Wilson/Callaghan government (of which Hattersley was a leading member) carried out against the working class. The record of that government must never be forgotten. It must be rammed down the throats of its apologists each time they call for blind uncritical anti-Toryism.

CARLA JAMISON

## LCC: PLENTY OF PROMISES, NOT MUCH ACTION

THE TORIES can only solve the present crisis at the expense of working class living standards... They will use all means possible to do this, using scapegoats to set worker against worker, using the forces of law and order to attack hard-won trade union rights...

"The left has a possibility of building and leading a fightback against the Tory offensive. I am more confident about the future than I have been for many years".

That was the basic thrust of Tony Benn's speech to 315 delegates and individuals attending the Scottish launching conference of the Labour Coordinating Committee (LCC) in Glasgow. Benn attacked patronage in the Parliamentary Labour Party, the role of the media in keeping the ideas of socialism out of common consciousness, the role of the Special Patrol Group, and the attacks on women's rights through the Tories' proposals on maternity leave and the Corrie abortion Bill.

With such a large turnout, there was a real chance for the LCC to make itself a pole of attraction for the left in the Labour Party and to take up an effective campaigning stance. It remains to be seen if this potential will be realised.

Though there were some good militant speeches from the platform and floor, there was a definite shying away from making any concrete decisions about what the LCC should do.

Michael Meacher MP, introducing the afternoon session on the role and the priorities of the LCC, pointed to the Alternative Economic Strategy as a way forward in the crisis — it was a sure way of solving unemployment, Meacher assured us. On democracy in the party, Meacher warned against complacency. We have to press home the attack started in Brighton. The constitutional reforms won at the conference in themselves are nothing but a starting point. We will have to use the reforms to bring activists into the Labour Party and to clear out the right wing.

However, it would seem from the Scottish conference that the LCC is short on the imagination or the will for

coordinated action. On the key issue of the cuts, seen as a priority by the LCC, Mick Connarty argued that a position against rate rises had been clearly rejected by the Labour Party conference, and that therefore activists in the LCC should not raise the demand. Alex Wood, from Lothian Regional Labour Party, argued that raising the rates would be making the working class pay and as such was unacceptable. The platform, however, did not seem to share this view.

The problem for the LCC will be to give direction to the many activists keen to take up the fight against the Tories. The type of proposals tentatively put forward at the weekend, like reforming the Press Council and convincing the movement of the efficacy of the Alternative Economic Strategy, do not come to terms with the problems facing the class now.

As one delegate noted, "the conference was in danger of becoming an anarchists' convention". Nothing had really been decided, and now we were electing a Steering Committee that could only proceed on what it interpreted the feeling of the conference to be. Meacher replied by saying that the Steering Committee was going to organise three more conferences, for trade unionists, for students, and on local government, plus an AGM in January.

The LCC's idea of coordinating various campaigns in and out of the Party sounds good, but without a platform which tackles the major issues, it has no real cutting edge of ideas for militants looking for a lead. We must hope the AGM will take policy decisions to organise a real fightback against the Tories.

*Socialist Organiser* and *Workers' Action* supporters in the LCC will be fighting for an anti-cuts campaign based on broad labour movement committees, with a call for industrial action against the cuts and a policy of opposing rate rises. However, the pressing task of building that campaign cannot wait until the LCC's AGM. We have to organise now.

JOHN W...

IN Islington, where the Labour vote at national and local elections is solid but largely unquestioning, and where the dominant right wing Labour councillors didn't wait for the Tory initiative before cutting nurseries, voluntary services and housing maintenance, the Socialist Centre last week debated the question 'Should socialists join the Islington Labour Party?'

The Socialist Centre is a lively gathering place for many good activists, aligned and non-aligned. Its general tenor is 'libertarian', so there was a certain amount of noisy barracking of the 'Labour' position. But very many took the question seriously and felt the time might have come to make a decision about joining the party.

The main speaker was Mike Cushman, a Labour Party member for the last 14 years. He explained that no revolutionary need abandon or compromise his or her politics in order to work in the Labour Party; the only people proscribed are those who stand against Labour at elections. If revolutionaries don't relate to the Labour Party that won't make it go away. It won't dissolve just because the left chooses to ignore it, nor will its support among the working class change if the bourgeois politics of the party that supposedly represents that class go unchallenged from inside.

## Kick out

Although he had not found a socialist perspective at election time, canvassing only on the basis that the Tories were worse, he and Cathy Bundred [who spoke about the struggle in North Islington party] were very persuasive on the local parties' situation.

The three Islington constituencies were to be merged into two, and that would be a chance to kick out all three of

## Islington socialists debate joining Labour Party

our right wing MPs. And similarly, militants working in the party had a good chance of settling scores with the right wing councillors.

Opposition to joining Labour came from two quarters: the Communist Party, and people working as individuals in this or that campaign who felt they would have to make a choice between grass-roots, class struggle action and what they saw as the purely internalised world of ward Labour parties.

The CPers boasted that they were pushing Labour to the left from the outside. One of them saw the CP as the repository of Marxist theory, while Labour had no socialist theory. This was somewhat belied by the contributions, with the 'Labour' side showing a much clearer class analysis and idea of strategy than their opponents, who tended to view the matter emotionally and anecdotally. [One man's chief complaint was that the local MP was pro-EEC. What if he lived in an area where the MP was anti-EEC?]

The CP had no answers to Jenny Morris, a left wing councillor who pointed out that in practical politics, in which many Labour party members are engaged fighting the cuts and trying to mobilise, a major obstacle is the CP domination of Islington Trades Council, which blocks any move for action.

One of the main doubts about Labour Party activity was that it involved endless 'resolution-mongering' and 'jockeying for positions' for very little gain, when one could be out doing something real instead. Rachel Lever replied that resolutions often led to action: 'If I put a resolution that my ward should go out leafletting against the Corrie Bill — which is what it will be doing in the next week — is that resolution-mongering or is it action?'

And many of the unattached 'campaigners' seemed unsure just why they were counterposing their activities to Labour Party work instead of combining them; and whether picketing and heckling council meetings was really the only option, when one could also be working against the right wing councillors inside their party.

## Fake left

Nik Barstow pointed out that many working people were joining the party now, both to sort out the right wing and to fight the Tories. 'Are we going to leave them to the influence of the fake lefts, or fight to win them to revolutionary politics?'

Two people who had stood in the past as Socialist Unity can-

didates both spoke in defence of working in the Labour Party.

Mick Sullivan, whose recent enrolment in the North Islington party is being challenged by the right wing, described the intimate links at every level between trade unions — in which many of the left groups and unattached socialists do energetic work — and the Labour Party. Should one work to build the unions but boycott the party based on those unions?

And Mike Simpson defended the Labour government's reforms. Such gains as the NHS, the Equal Pay Act etc., might be irrelevant to 'middle class Islington lefties', he said, but not to the working class in the borough.



Mike Simpson — former Socialist Unity candidate, now Labour Party member

Of the 50-odd people there, about a dozen were in the Labour Party, twenty were members of other parties [predominantly CP and Big Flame] and the majority 'unattached'.

The dilemma for them must remain: it is the mass of working class Labour voters who must be mobilised to win against capitalism; but these very people still look to Labour to fight that battle. Does one best relate to them by ignoring or bewailing their mistaken allegiance, or by joining the party they support and fighting with them to turn it against capitalism?

MANDY WILLIAMS

## Orange gunmen train near Dundee

FOR THE past few weeks the Ulster Defence Regiment has been training in Scotland, just outside Dundee. Last Saturday nearly 200 marched through the streets of Dundee calling for the disbanding of the UDR and for troops out of Ireland.

The UDR is a 10,000-strong regiment of the British Army, formed to replace the discredited B-Specials, whose drunken rampages through the Catholic ghettos had become so much of a scandal as to embarrass the British government. The UDR — 97% Protestant — has continued the B-Specials' sectarian tradition.

With both full-time and part-time members, the UDR provides an unofficial training ground for, and has extensive joint membership with, the Orange paramilitary organisations.

The Dundee demonstration was organised by Dundee UTOM, and supported by contingents from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Stirling and Aberdeen UTOMs.

## 'MILITANT' BLOCKS IRISH CONFERENCE

A MOSS Side Labour Party day-school on Ireland, due to be held in just two weeks' time, has been sabotaged by an unholy alliance of the Militant tendency and the right wing.

The Constituency party's EC had asked the political education officer, Mick Woods, to organise the day-school for the autumn. At the October EC, details of the school — including a film, a speaker from the Relatives Action Committee, an ex-soldier, an MP and a leading trade unionist — were accepted.

But at the following GMC, Militant supporters denounced Woods for supporting the republican movement and the "Troops Out Now" line [which is constituency policy].

In alliance with right wing councillors such as Pat Paget and Ken McKeon [who wanted an Orange speaker] they pushed through a motion to call off the school indefinitely. Mick Woods resigned as PEO.

In the course of the meeting it became obvious that the Militant fear an open discussion on Ireland as much as the right wing do. Chief among the Militant supporters was one Margaret Manning, who thought that the speaker from the Relatives Action Committee would be either a disguised Provo 'terrorist' or, due to having a relative in a British prison camp, a hysterical woman.

Mrs. Manning has a long and dishonourable record of slandering the republican movement. With such 'militants', who could the right wing?

## Women arrested for speaking out on Ireland

MARY NELIS lives in the Catholic housing estate of Creggan, in Derry. She has two sons 'on the blanket' in H-Block, one sentenced to 16 years for possession of a gun and membership of the IRA, the other to ten years for 'conspiring' and for IRA membership. She was a founder of Derry Relatives' Action Committee.

Vivien Doherty, also from the Creggan, has a brother who was accused of causing an explosion at a shop. No-one was injured, the shop owner declared three times at the trial that Vivien's brother was not the one who had done it, and he signed no confession. But he was sentenced to 16 years.

He was 'on the blanket' until he was so badly beaten up that he was rushed to hospital, near to death. After major surgery he survived. He has suffered serious damage to his bowels, is losing his sight, and requires regular hospital treatment. He is still in jail.

Last week these women came over for a speaking tour organised by Edinburgh United Troops Out Movement as part of a week of action. When they arrived in Stranraer, they were taken off the train by the Special Branch. They were told they were being detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act, section 10, "and sections 5 and 6 if you like".

Taken eventually to the police station, they were separated and ordered to undergo a strip search. Vivien, who weighs 6½ stone, refused, as it was degrading and unnecessary. In response, policewomen finally tore her clothes off her, and in the course of this she received injuries to her arm and hand (which later required hospital treatment) and extensive bruising on her back and arms.

Mary and Vivien were asked why they were there and where they were going. They told the police it was no secret. Mary had been invit-

ed to speak to Edinburgh Trades Council and to address three public meetings. These meetings were public and had been extensively publicised.

Eventually they were released 4½ hours later, at 10.45pm. They had not eaten, and they had missed the last train. It was 3am before a lorry driver gave them a lift to Glasgow, and 6.30am before they could get a train to Edinburgh. On the way Vivien, who was in considerable pain from her injuries, suffered attacks of vomiting.

Their vicious harassment by the police was all in vain, however. Mary spoke to over 100 people at the Trades Council, and to a very successful women's meeting in Granton Gasworks. There was also a successful meeting in Stirling, and an Edinburgh UTOM meeting with a showing of the film, 'The Patriot Game'.

CALLUM McCRAE



Men 'behind the wire'. Now they are 'on the blanket', defying criminal status. Many see the struggle as being not just against British troops, but for socialism.

# Troops out is only the start

What should be the role of the English working class in relation to the national liberation struggle in Ireland?

To answer this question one must first of all take an objective look at the nature of the liberation struggle against imperialist aggression in Ireland.

Contrary to what is constantly put across by the media, the Republican movement is not solely concerned with the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. This in itself is not synonymous with national liberation. We would still have to rectify the social and economic problem of a society based on the class system.

The wealth of Ireland would still be drained out of this island by the multinational corporations in collaboration with the native bourgeois class. The Irish people would still be a subject people.

The revolutionary republican movement is waging a war of national liberation not only to rid our country of the most blatant forms of imperialist aggression as manifested by the military occupation of the Six Counties (N.Ireland) but also to tear asunder the capitalist system of society in Ireland. National freedom is meaningless without economic

freedom, i.e. the right of the people of Ireland, the workers, to control their destiny.

Thus it is the workers' control of the country's economic, social and financial affairs that is the essence of national liberation. The concept of an Irish confederation, council of Ireland or indeed a federal system of the 'bourgeois democratic' type can be left to the reformist-opportunist groupings who in their self-interested quest for any degree of legislative power have abandoned the true interests of the Irish working class.

These people now stand as the dutiful advocates of capitalist society and the willing lackeys of imperialist aggression in Ireland. It is only through the policies of the republican movement, which are aimed at securing a socialist republic, that the interests of the working class can be defended.

The portrayal of the republican movement by the bourgeois media both at home and abroad as a 'politically barren sectarian movement' is part and parcel of the establishment's counter-revolutionary programme and it is designed to drive a wedge between the

republican movement and other revolutionary working class movements abroad. The abhorrence of the republicans for the sectarian loyalist groupings is transformed by the media into sectarianism itself.

To answer this we need only enlighten those susceptible to this type of propaganda as to the reality of Loyalism in Ireland.

Loyalism is a doctrine similar to that of the National Front in England. It is based on racist policies similar to the National Front's. As a socialist movement the republicans made no apology for confronting this fascism in all its forms.

The working class of England and Ireland along with all workers throughout the world have a common interest in smashing imperialist policies of the capitalist power mongers.

In the context of this common interest, English workers should be constantly protesting and agitating to force the British establishment to withdraw militarily and economically from Ireland.

KEVIN McGETTIGAN  
Cage 12,  
Long Kesh POW Camp

# Fighting the cuts - and making them

THREE MONTHS ago national publicity was given to Coventry Labour Council's announcement that they would refuse to make cuts in expenditure from next April. Workers in Coventry, particularly the public service unions, are rapidly recognising that the Labour group's real commitment to protecting jobs and services is nil.

Last month, cuts of almost £2 million in the budget for 1979-80 were approved by the Council without debate or even a question from 'left' councillors. Now Chief Officers and Committees are preparing proposals for next year's cuts.

In social services, for example, plans for cuts of £423,000 have been drawn up — cuts which according to the chairman of the social services committee will be 'disastrous' for a city in which existing provision is already "woefully inadequate". These proposals mean increased charges in residential homes, charging for all home helps, not replacing staff, cutting essential holidays for the old and disabled, not opening a children's home, and a general deterioration of all services. Compulsory redundancies are also being considered.

In education, £1.4 million is the cut proposed for 1980-1, with larger cutbacks in the following years. Wheatley Street nursery would close and the changing of all nursery schools to part time classes would be 'considered'. 240 teachers face the sack, with the usual reduction in facilities and equipment.

Coventry's Labour councillors are not just failing in practice to defend services, there is also some doubt as to whether they even want to. Next year's cuts were, of course, the cuts that were not going to happen.

## Unaware

In essence, the Council has bought time for the present round of cuts by sounding oh-so-very-determined about fighting next April's. One Charles Ward, chairman of the education committee, speaking at a Labour Party ward meeting, even denied that any cuts were being made at the moment. Another councillor, Peter Lister, chairman of the personnel and administration committee, at a recent meeting with NALGO members, said in reply to a question that he was unaware of Lambeth Council's stand and did not consider it relevant to Coventry's problems.

Even more outrageous was Lister's statement that cuts in public expenditure were 'necessary' for the health of the national economy.

In this situation NALGO members are preparing for the worst. The Coventry branches has adopted a policy of no cover for vacancies and no reorganisation of work.

This policy is being administered by departmental shop stewards' committees.

Important as it is, however, this policy is purely defensive. The major question is forcing the Labour group to act in accordance with its public statements. Coventry social services shop stewards committee will be calling on the NALGO branch and Coventry Trades Council to organise a mass lobby of the national conference of Labour councils on the cuts to be held in Coventry on December 8th.

This conference, called by Coventry council as their recipe for fighting next April's cuts (some of which they have already announced!) will be a major event. Trade union branches, Labour Parties and community groups from all over the country should join the lobby.

by a Coventry  
NALGO shop steward

## WORK-IN STOPS BATHS CLOSURE

WORKERS at Fulham baths are keeping the baths open despite Hammersmith and Fulham Council's decision to close them from September 30th.

The work-in, started on that date, aims to keep the baths open until the Council reverses its decision. Provided that the work-in gets regular supplies of oil and chlorine, there is no reason why the occupation could not last a long time.

The Council claimed that the baths are in a "rapidly deteriorating condition"; the Chairperson of the Borough Services Committee has suggested that users of the baths are at risk from either the water storage tank or water pipes bursting. The Council has dishonestly cited this "risk to public safety" in order to justify the closure.

But both the Borough Architect and the workers at the baths say that the baths are safe (apart from one pool — the closure of which the workers are not disputing). The work-in has got support from the local community and local trade unionists.

Fulham residents have been using the baths even more than previously since the work-in started. The occupation committee still needs donations to help pay for oil and chlorine and volunteers to help run the baths.

The occupation shows the way forward for other workers faced with closure, and is an example of the mounting resistance to the cuts in West London.

Donations and messages to: Fulham Baths Occupation Committee, Fulham Baths, North End Road, London SW6.

JEFF SLEE

# KEEP IT LEGAL KEEP IT SAFE!

ALL OVER the country women are becoming active in groups set up to oppose the Corrie Bill. The National Abortion Campaign, to which most of these local groups are affiliated, say the response is much greater than the campaigns to defend the 1967 Abortion Act against the White and Benyon amendments.

One of the main activities is petitioning, arguably much more valuable for the opportunity it provides for us to publicise and discuss the issues than for the achievement of the half a million signatures that NAC hopes for. There is public petitioning in shopping centres, at stations, on estates and in workplaces, and many groups are also taking up local issues: the local NHS provision of abortion facilities, and whether their MP voted for women's rights or only for his or (in rare cases) her conscience.

The TUC has called a mass demonstration for October 28th, and unions are arranging transport and help with childcare. However, many unions are unwilling to support the demand for unrestricted abortion rights, and it was an AUEW delegate at the Labour Party conference who invoked 'compassion' in supporting the Corrie Bill. Compassion for whom?

## Police stop Corrie demo

160 people demonstrating against the Corrie Bill in Cardiff were forced off the streets last Saturday, 13th, as police broke up the demonstration.

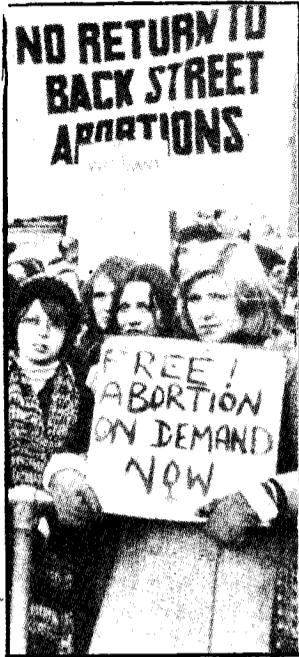
The police say the demonstration was 'illegal', though permission for it had been granted by the police themselves. Some demonstrators were threatened with arrest for obstruction as they were moved off the road.

The demonstration was supported by the local Trades Council, NUPE Health branch, South Glamorgan Women's Aid, Rape Crisis, the Women's Rights Campaign for Wales, and Workers' Action. It marched chanting slogans through Cardiff's main streets before the police waded in at St Mary's St with their threats of arrests.

At a rally afterwards, Elaine Chapman from the 'South Wales Coordinating Committee Against the Cuts', spoke about the 'systematic attack the Tories are making on women's rights', and said that 'with rising unemployment and the cuts, it is an easy and cheap option to send women back to the home to do the type of work done by public sector workers.'

'The rights won by the labour movement for women will now be lost unless an enormous fightback begins.'

GEOFF WILLIAMS



7,000 women a year travel from Ireland to England to seek abortion.

It seems unlikely that women will achieve abortion on demand until they take the means into their own hands, and make safe and early methods, such as menstrual extraction, their property. Such direct action in France and Italy played a major part in forcing the introduction of legalised abortion.

## Qualify

Until we achieve that, all those who don't qualify under Corrie's Bill, possibly as many as 75,000 a year, will have the choice of enforced motherhood — and impoverished imprisonment in the home while the Tories dismantle the Welfare State — or a backstreet abortion. In the 1960s, 3000 women a year were being admitted to hospital with a septic womb — a common result of abortion in unsterile conditions. There are no figures on deaths for this country, as coroners tended to spare relatives' feelings by recording the cause of death only according to the specific injuries which led to it. In Portugal, about 2000 women die each year in backstreet abortions.

It is essential that the labour movement mobilises on this issue — on the 28th, and right through to the third reading, planned for early February. It is not just a women's issue, for women cannot control their lives until they can control their fertility, and that affects every working class man and woman.

MANDY WILLIAMS

weak support to the campaign: most medical concern is reserved for the attacks on doctors' autonomy, not on women's. On Friday 12th the death was announced of a Chelmsford woman who died following a Caesarian section. She had sought an abortion early in her pregnancy, since her health was poor and she had lost her previous baby at five days old, but emotional pressure was put on her so that she became 'confused', and the consultant decided *on her behalf* that she didn't really want an abortion.

Meanwhile, Catholic women have gained from the Pope's speeches in Ireland an extra burden of guilt about the use of contraception and abortion. An estimated

## Vote

Once again, the conference avoided the decision about mandating MPs to vote against anti-abortion Bills: the National Executive substituted its own vaguely-worded resolution for the one, backed by Streatham CLP and the Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, which demand that MPs should vote according to the policy adopted several years ago at conference — for abortion on request. At the second reading of the Corrie Bill, 55 Labour MPs voted for it and 127 abstained.

The opposition of the professional medical organisations to the Bill has lent only

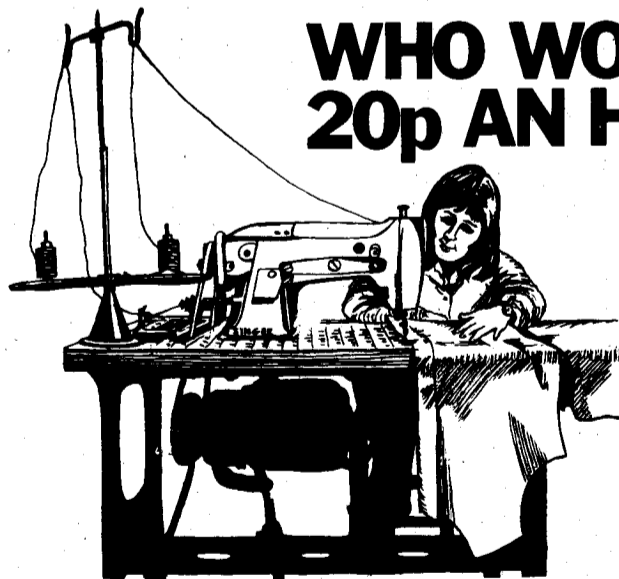
'IT IS high time we reached the end of cheap, sweated labour', said John Grant MP at the opening of the Third Annual Conference of the National Homeworking Campaign on Saturday 13th October.

Sixty-plus delegates from trade unions, Trades Councils, community groups and other bodies came to the conference to discuss the low pay, absence of employment rights, and health dangers which homeworkers suffer — problems which have been largely ignored by successive Governments and the trade unions.

Between a quarter and half a million people, mainly women, work in their own homes in Britain, having to pay the costs of their own heating, lighting, machinery, etc., with no holiday, sick or maternity pay, receiving appallingly low wages and with little protection against sackings (as most are classified as self-employed).

Grant proposed legislation to give homeworkers automatic employee status and to set up machinery to prevent their exploitation as cheap labour. Such legislation would not prevent their exploitation, but it would help bring attention to the homeworkers' case.

He felt, as did the other speakers at the conference, that the way to end the extreme exploitation of homeworkers was to organise them into trade unions. However, it is a pity that he didn't put the same effort into



## WHO WORKS FOR 20p AN HOUR?

there is no point saying homeworkers should be given top priority for day care places in nurseries if there is not an increase in nursery facilities. Now that women working for small firms will not have employment protection if they take maternity leave, the number of homeworkers will increase.

Helen Eadie pointed out that if homeworkers are not organised into trade unions in a situation where unemployment is increasing, wage demands from the shop floor will be ignored by bosses who know where they can get the work done much more cheaply.

Find out if your factory sends out work to homeworkers. If it does, make sure the homeworkers are being paid the same rates as the shop floor workers. Trade union members must be prepared to take industrial action in support of homeworkers, and to give assistance in organising them.

Fight in your Labour Party for Labour councils to demand a 'good will clause' from any firm which employs homeworkers, so that they pay at least the minimum wage which factory workers receive for similar work. And step up the campaign for a legal national minimum wage.

KATE GLEASON

campaigning for legislation for the protection of homeworkers while he was a minister in the last government that he put into helping the TUC General Council right wing to produce their document in favour of incomes policy, 'A Better Way', last winter.

Helen Eadie (GMWU) explained that moves from trade unionists to abolish homeworking would only push it more underground and make it more difficult to organise the women. She said that the answer is not to resort to legislation and tribunals — the trade unions' task is to help people to keep their jobs and to improve their pay and conditions. She explained the difficulties of trying to organise homeworkers, who are very isolated

and fail to join unions because of fear, not only of the employers, but of the taxation and social security authorities, although most homeworkers do not earn enough to be liable to tax.

Simon Crine of the Low Pay Unit reported the findings of recent research. The vast majority of homeworkers are mothers of young children, often immigrants, who are trapped in the home because of lack of nursery facilities. Many are one-parent families.

Only a third topped the level of pay of the lowest 10% of all part time workers — 86.4p an hour. Out of the 50 who answer the Low Pay Unit's questionnaire, one third were paid under 20p an hour.

John Tilley MP said that

## womens Voice

Womens magazine of the Socialist Workers Party

# AN OPEN LETTER

WE THE undersigned want to make it clear why we find it untenable to remain members of Women's Voice. Despite disagreeing with the SWP, in the past we have helped to build Women's Voice in local areas and workplaces.

At the WV conference on September 28/29, it was decided that WV would be based on the politics of the SWP but would be organisationally independent. It would however be run by the SWP women's organiser. Clarification was given on the political relationship with the SWP: WV would be a periphery organisation of the SWP in which people agreeing with other tendencies, or who do not define themselves as being close sympathisers of the SWP, would have no place. They may be allowed to join as isolated individuals, but not to organise or argue for politics other than those of the SWP.

In practice, the SWP now has the sole right to define the political nature and direction of WV, and will have a free hand to pull it this way or that in accordance with the latest turn of the SWP itself.

Leading members Sheila McGregor and Joan Smith spelt out the result of the conference decision. Sheila McGregor said it was illogical to build WV while agreeing with a group having different politics from the SWP: it would be 'riding two horses'. Joan Smith smeared people from other groups who had built WV and fought for their politics in it as 'outside interlopers', and claimed that the SWP didn't behave in this manner. (Though everyone in the conference knew that the SWP had dragged their members in WV into line at an aggregate just two weeks before which had sealed the fate of WV.)

Clearly only the SWP now has the right to organise for its politics in WV. The SWP has announced: 'It's our patch. Keep out!'

Any socialist organisation has a perfect right to build a periphery group for women members and contacts. But it should say so openly.

However, in many areas non-aligned women are being assured that no real change has taken place in WV. There may have been a conference decision, but what's the difference in practice?

The SWP has very good reasons for trying to persuade non-aligned women to stay in. In many branches they make up the majority of the members. While those in the SWP leadership who decided on and pushed through the tighter, SWP-front organisation must have anticipated and accepted that WV would lose many members, they don't want a sudden collapse that would lose them whole branches.

They need the present non-aligned women, even those who are quite hostile to the SWP, to tide them over

until a new generation of WV members can be brought in — women who will know nothing of the present debate. These people will then be used against the 'old generation', on the model of the SWP's own internal regime.

Thus the soft-soap operation is a con-trick to help the SWP make a bridge from the old, open, relatively neutral WV to the new SWP-loyalist WV.

We have left WV because we refuse to be conned and we won't be used in this way. Within a few months (especially after the SWP conference next month which is certain to rubber-stamp — or harden up — the WV conference decision) the atmosphere and politics of WV will be quite uncongenial to those critical of the SWP. We do not intend to wait around until then or to donate our energies to the building of such an organisation.

Some may not be convinced that the decisions are as far-reaching as we think they are. Others may be convinced but have a strong commitment to WV and a will to change the decisions. To them we propose that they press their local WV groups and the WV Steering Committee for an explicit recognition that non-SWP women should be allowed to work in WV — not just as docile paper sellers and leafleters, but as thinking political activists with the right to organise and argue for their ideas. Anything less than such explicit recognition means that women not aligned with the SWP are in WV only on sufferance.

We have left because we have little doubt that this is what the conference decision meant, although local organisers are going easy on it immediately. We can also see better opportunities for action in the coming months. The Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights has been established to tie together the various struggles and campaigns taking place in the unions, and at local level and nationally, to defend and extend abortion rights, nurseries, maternity benefits and legal rights against a barrage of attacks from the Tory government.

We will be working to support and build the working conference called by Fightback. We think it is possible here and now to start building the kind of non-sectarian, broad working class women's movement that WV has turned its back on.

We call on members of WV to work with us on this, and to discuss these issues with us.

SUE CROSS  
Birmingham WV  
ANN DUGGAN  
Coventry WV  
PAT LONGMAN  
Fleet Street WV  
JO THWAIT  
Edinburgh

# FITTING TOGETHER A FRAME-UP

The prosecution counsel in the "Persons Unknown" case at the Old Bailey is now in its third week of hearing evidence. The Crown Prosecutor, Michael Worsley, repeatedly uses the analogy of a jigsaw of evidence which must be fitted together carefully to make up the Crown case.

Worsley uses considerable imagination to fit together the pieces he has got — none of which on their own, or in combination, would to most people, suggest criminal activity on the part of the defendants. He neatly explains any gaps as just being proof of the cover-up operations carried out by other members of the "band of robbers" who have not been caught.

He justified the 'conspiracy' charges by saying "Any civilised law would have to have a means of dealing with crimes which hadn't been committed." The main charge is conspiracy to rob, for which the Crown will have to prove the existence of the "band of robbers", that the band committed robberies, and that those on trial are members of the 'band'.

Fortunately for the prosecution, which has no evidence of fingerprints on the stolen property allegedly found at the defendants' flats, nor any identification of the defendants by the victims of the

robberies (who have given descriptions of the robbers), there need be no proof that the defendants were the ones who did the robberies.

The prosecution does have to prove motive — for which the "desire to attack the institutions of society and persons in it by violence" is sufficient — opportunity

companies — none of it secret information — as evidence of "targets". There was even an article from "Woman" magazine, found at Iris Mills' and Ronan Bennett's flat, about Princess Anne and Mark Phillips' new house, which Worsley presented with the sinister remark. "You may

the court, and the frequent references to anarchists, have given the jury or other observers the idea that this trial is concerned with politics, Worsley puts the record straight: "Politics comes in only one way — if the beliefs of the defendant are... that they were seeking to achieve some political end



Defendants Iris Mills, Ronan Bennett, Vince Stephenson

("they were largely unemployed"), possession of parts of the proceeds of these robberies, and other accessory facts and circumstances.

The prosecution is presenting such articles as weed-killer, paraffin, and batteries as evidence of explosives equipment, and lists of nuclear power stations, police stations, and certain

have to ask yourself why these defendants or anyone else, should be interested in this article... a question he might more usefully address to "Woman" magazine.

And in case the vetting of the jury by the Criminal Records Office, Special Branch and local CID, the questioning and recording of information on all visitors to

by violence, or using some other illegal means, by which to put these beliefs into effect...

"That is, if they achieved an end by unlawful violence, clearly that belief in unlawful violence is a motive to commit crime... the Crown is not remotely concerned with politics."

MANDY WILLIAMS

## Trotskyism and Nicaragua

continued from p.2

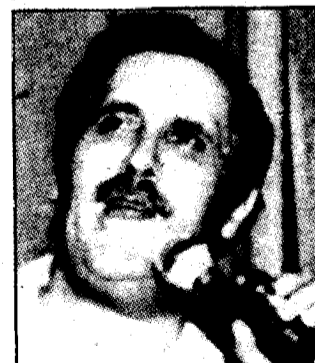
policies. The French USFI paper *Rouge*, for example, published a clear criticism of the bourgeois-dominated 'Government of National Reconstruction' which the Sandinistas have installed in (at least nominal) office. (*The Militant*, in contrast, has made no criticism of this government).

But the latest declaration of the USFI on Nicaragua, dated August 15th, makes no reference to any need for any political struggle in Nicaragua other than the Sandinistas'. It even drops the call for a workers' and peasants' government, and the criticism of the existing government, contained in previous USFI statements of June and July. In this situation silence means assent to the attitudes of the SWP.

On past experience it is highly unlikely that the Sandinistas will spontaneously develop a programme of proletarian democracy. Even those Trotskyists who firmly believe the Sandinistas are on the Cuban road have a responsibility to try to organise a fight for that programme.

The USFI policy amounts to simply giving up the programme of permanent revolution and workers' democracy, or relying on vague hopes that the Sandinistas will somehow start fighting for the Trotskyist programme... although the Trotskyists themselves do not even have the courage to proclaim the programme boldly, and go so far as to denounce those who try to proclaim it.

This shameful policy leaves would-be Trotskyists as nothing but passive, uncritical cheerleaders for the revolution led by the Sandinistas, their 'politics' no



American SWP leader Jack Barnes (top) approves the Nicaraguan regime's action against Trotskyists, members of his own international political current although they support a minority led by Nahuel Moreno (below)

more than a 'faith' in a petty bourgeois tendency to do something in the future and to change its very nature.

It puts into question the integrity and seriousness of the USFI as an internationalist organisation. In all its general propaganda the USFI proclaims the need for Leninist parties. In the documents produced for its forthcoming World Congress, it denounces guerrilla warfare in Latin America (exaggeratedly, in our view) as a strategy leading to nothing but disaster, and argues

that under present-day conditions only a solid Leninist party can lead a socialist revolution. In relation to Nicaragua, these ideas are simply forgotten.

Marxists have long condemned the opportunists who argue that their own country is an 'exception' from general principles of class struggle. The USFI is now following the same opportunist exceptionalism — only vicariously.

*Workers' Action* does not share all the politics of the minorities in the USFI — the Bolshevik Faction and the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency — who have criticised the majority. Yet they are right to say the USFI's integrity is in question.

Less than three years ago the majority leaders of the USFI published a 'Self-Criticism on Latin America' in which they examined the USFI's inadequately critical attitude towards the Castroites in the 1960s. "At the 9th World Congress we paid the price for this lack of systematic analysis of the Cuban revolution. On the basis of rapid and hasty generalisations, we did not clearly oppose the incorrect lessons drawn from the Cuban revolution by the great majority of the Latin American vanguard... our hopes were very much exaggerated as to the possibilities offered by material aid from the Cubans [and] the character of the political relations between the Cuban leadership and the various organisations claiming adherence to this leadership... the policy of 'integration into the historic revolutionary current represented by OLAS and the Cuban revolution as it was projected by the 9th World Congress was... very much mistaken'.

Isn't the present policy repeating the same mistake,

more crassly, and with less excuse?

After the right-wing coup in Algeria in 1965, the USFI considered its inadequately critical attitude for many years to the Ben Bella leadership in Algeria. It concluded that its failure to try to build a Trotskyist party in Algeria had been a failure in an elementary duty.

Isn't the Nicaraguan policy similar — and with less justification?

The attitude of the Trotskyists to the Yugoslav Communist Party leadership after 1948, when Titoism seemed to be developing as an independent current to the left of Stalinism, was never so abjectly passive and self-effacing as the present Nicaraguan policy. But most Trotskyists today would agree that inadequate critical clarity about Titoism was a major disorienting factor for our movement then.

The same mistake of passive adaptation to petty-bourgeois radical or revolutionary forces, repeated again and again despite experience and despite hindsight, becomes much worse with each repetition. To be confused about Yugoslavia in 1948 or 1949 was hardly a crime, provided that the mistakes made were later learnt from. When the USFI repeats the mistake so often, so crassly, so cynically, it raises the question of whether its leaders take their formal theory seriously at all.

Members of the USFI (in Britain, the IMG) should demand that their forthcoming World Congress at the beginning of November discusses this issue seriously. And they should look at the method involved in the Nicaraguan policy, and ask themselves how far that method has gone in corrupting the whole politics of the USFI.

## Blair Peach case: Biased judge bans jury

IN THE DAYS after Blair Peach was murdered in Southall, the police set up a special unit to interview witnesses. They took hundreds of statements from people on the pretence of trying to find who killed Blair Peach.

When the inquest opened last week, these were among the documents stacked up on the police side which coroner Dr. John Burton refused to let the family or the Anti-Nazi League see. The police could use these — together with their radio logs, their operational order, the record of use of truncheons, and the report of the internal police inquiry — to cross examine and try to trip up witnesses.

### Bias

It became clear right from the start that the coroner was content to leave the whole bias on the police side, in the nearest we've yet come to a public inquiry into Blair Peach's death.

He declared that either he wouldn't or he couldn't order these documents to be disclosed.

He threatened to deny legal representation to the ANL.

He objected to any references to the National Front as racist: "I want no political messing about", or "irrelevant" political remarks.

Most outrageously, he refused to have the evidence heard with a jury. Though the law clearly provides for one in this case, he dredged up every feeble reason he could think of to oppose a jury. The main one was that there had been a call for a public inquiry! Since this call has so far been refused, how could this possibly affect his court? Nor is there any reason in law for not having a jury just because another inquiry is taking place.

### Jury

Just to make clear that he is boss in his own court, the coroner then refused to allow an adjournment for the implications of his rulings to be considered.

Now an adjournment has been ordered by the High Court while it decides whether to order a jury on the grounds that "the safety of the public" is concerned, and that more may die as Blair Peach did.

Of that, there can be little doubt. The SPG and its local offshoots were set up and trained as a deadly weapon against trade unionists and socialists.

The inquest when it resumes, hopefully with a jury, will be a chance to brand them as killers, and to give support to the growing calls to disband the SPG.



Local people have started a campaign over

## 'His Gestapo methods leave a lot to be desired...'

COUNCILLOR John King, leader of Knowsley Council on Merseyside, is a master of understatement. Criticising Chief Constable Ken Oxford at a packed meeting of Merseyside Council last week, he complained, "his Gestapo methods leave a lot to be desired..."

What were the Gestapo methods that John King was referring to? Above all there was the murder by the police of Jimmy Kelly on June 21st.

Jimmy Kelly was wandering home drunkenly that night when, according to numerous witnesses, a police car knocked him down and policemen then set about kicking and punching him and hitting him with some sort of weapon. The witnesses were people living on the estate Jimmy Kelly was walking through.

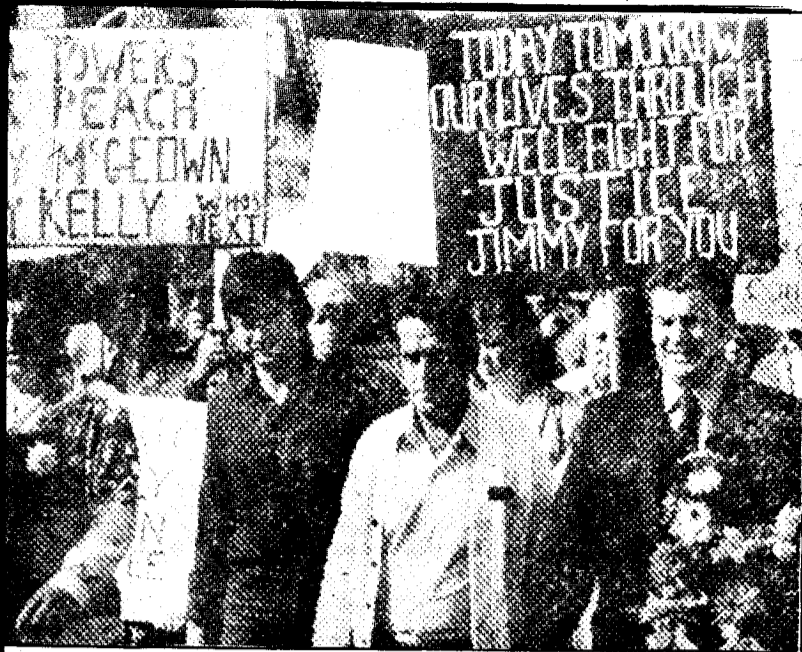
Dr John Benstead, a Home Office pathologist called in by the police, reported that the 54-year-old unemployed labourer had died of a heart condition, but Jimmy's family was not convinced as they had seen the battered body in the morgue. They called in an independent pathologist.

His report stated that the dead man's body was covered with bruises and that his jaw was fractured in two places — something Dr Benstead seems to have missed. But before the autopsy could be completed, local police impounded Jimmy Kelly's body and refused the independent pathologist the opportunity of taking away samples for investigation.

Now a third pathologist has reported and his report to the Chief Constable of Merseyside confirms that Jimmy Kelly's jaw was fractured in two places, that a



Several people report being beaten up at Huyton police station



the death of Jimmy Kelly [left]

## tapo methods not to be desired'

crushed, and faces covered the his body. Sight of evidence in a case involving civilians, a age would have within 24 were witnesses, ensic evidence uent testimony y itself. Yet been done. On here is a grow- for an indep- enquiry into

Jimmy Kelly ted, other facts to light. The Kelly died ve marked the day reign of al police. John rd car worker, y police after pub for after . John Bishop, s jumped on by They just said out of the van. me in the belly wn. I curled up ere were six of g hell out

pson, another r, saw what e was down on econd and they ng him. It's a wasn't another e way they im." Within Thompson's en, two teeth and another the root. a hod carrier, head was cut ice attack and ed to wash off police officer out the head ted towel until led from the ere several emselves the

victims of vicious beatings by the police.

The next night John Bishop, who was still in the cells, heard screams from another cell: "There was a young kid with his mouth cut who could hardly walk". And he was still being beaten by the police. The "young kid" was Peter Jeonney whom police had hit and kicked before bundling him into the van. According to the 'New Statesman', "His father saw the police van later-with his son inside. 'I saw one fellow punching Peter around the face. One raised a baton and hit Peter with it. It was a helluva blow. I heard Peter scream'".

Peter's own testimony is even more horrifying. He was beaten with towels and burnt with cigarette ends. The next day Geoffrey Jones coincidentally a distant relative of Jimmy Kelly's, was the



Tony Burke

TONY Burke was another victim of peculiar police practices — but now he is free after 11 months in jail on a false murder conviction. He was a bouncer in a Merseyside club. A fight broke out. Although several eye-witnesses stated that Tony had tried to break up the fight and rescue the victim who later died, the police still pursued him.

The majesty of the law — no more than one hour's worth of consultation with his barrister, false direction by the judge and concealment of evidence by the prosecution — ensured that Tony Burke got a life sentence.

After a vigorous campaign in the Merseyside area, the Appeal Court [after earlier refusing to reopen the case] has agreed that the judge should have ruled that there was no real evidence for the jury to weigh up.

And the hanging lobby still wants blood...

victim of beatings but the police were still working on Peter Jeonney: "I was bleeding badly. When I was back in the cell I heard screaming. It was Peter Jeonney. He was screaming something like 'leave me alone.'"

There have been other cases recently of gross brutality by the police in the area, as when Michael Cavanagh, aged 18, lost a kidney and a spleen after being arrested in Kirkby.

For all this and countless other complaints, the Chief Constable is sitting tight. According to Councillor Margaret Simey, he has persistently refused to divulge information to the Police Committee, let alone agree to a public inquiry. "We are simply rubber stamps", she complained. The Police Committee includes ten magistrates and gives the councillors absolutely no control over or even information on police activities.

Knowsley Council last month called for a full-scale public inquiry into the Knowsley force, conducted by an independent person. Obviously the usual method of having the police investigate themselves is no use at all. Despite this, the Labour and Liberal members of Merseyside Council failed even to force a debate on the actions of the police. The Tories naturally backed the police up.

The Labour members of the Police Committee should not let themselves be used to give the seal of approval to police brutality and anti-working class attacks. The least they can do is fight to sack the Chief Constable. The police are the enemy of the working class, they are there to protect the capitalist order. Labour councillors should use their positions to attack the power of the police, not to cover up for them or allow themselves to be bullied.

The victims of these police attacks are ordinary workers. They should be supported not only by the political organisations of the working class but by their work-mates. If the campaign against the brutes in blue takes hold on the shop floor, there is a real chance that the working class will be able to force concessions out of the system that is rigged against it.

ANDREW HORNUNG

# The sack for some, nosebags for others

MICHAEL Edwardes, Chairman of British Leyland is very concerned about how he spends the taxpayers' money. Last week he said that without a 'substantial commitment' to his plan for 25000 redundancies, he would not ask for further financial aid from the government. Yet he is not as stony-hearted as you might think. He was so moved by the financial plight of deserving Mark Phillips that British Leyland have decided to pay him £18000 a year to maintain his team of six horses for show jumping.

A Buckingham Palace spokesman said that "If Mark has any money of his own, it must be very little." This is no doubt true. Instead, he lives on £63,000 provided by the taxpayers Edwardes is so concerned about. Who could doubt that Mark Phillips is worse off

than all those greedy car-workers?

Edwardes plans to give 25000 of them a life of leisure as well — by putting them on the dole. At the moment it is far from clear what sort of resistance he can expect from the workforce. The Leyland Combine Committee met after a demonstration against the plan in London last week and passed this resolution:

## Plan

"This Executive Committee rejects the Edwardes' Plan of plant closures and mass redundancies. We pledge full support in the fight to stop the implementation of the Company Plan. All plants should refuse to allow the transfer of work from one plant to another in line with the long-standing

resolution of the combine that is also embodied in the Confederation emergency committee resolution."

The 250 Senior Stewards who attended a meeting last weekend followed the combine's call to reject the plan. Despite the Confed Executive warning about the perils of resistance, only 8 of the stewards voted to accept the plan. Opposition also came from meetings of stewards in Coventry and Birmingham, which will be directly affected by the proposed closures of Castle Bromwich and Canley.

Yet the fight has not really begun yet. Edwardes is hoping that he will be able to force the proposals through a ballot and is talking about getting a 70% 'Yes' vote for the plan. To help this along, BL has stated that workers could get "up to £15000" redundancy pay (though few

of the Speke workers got the vast sums BL talked about there). They are also trying to split the workers by buying off the main plants, which will be involved in the production of new models. Thus Harold Musgrove, the Managing Director of the Austin-Morris Division, has visited Cowley and Longbridge showing plans for the new models to groups of 1000 workers at a time in order to convince them that their jobs will be secure if they don't rock the boat.

The Confed Executive are now working to get acceptance of the plan and to sabotage the stewards' attempts to resist. Last Tuesday they publicly urged support for the plan and they have said that they will hold a ballot, either together with the company or on their own. They will probably try to wind up the Emergency Committee they created to work out a response to the plan and which has already come into conflict with them.

Yet the management may not have it all their own way. Edwardes, who likes backing horses, is taking a real gamble. He hopes to repeat tactics he has successfully used in the past: by balloting the workforce, while union leaders either urge acceptance or provide no clear chance of fighting back successfully. This time however the convenors, who have in the past largely supported redundancies, have said that they will campaign against them, though they still have to give a clear lead in terms of action. Plans must be drawn up now for factory occupations in the event of closures being announced. Unless they act now, Edwardes may be onto another winner.



BL workers: 40,000 for the chop?

## A pay claim worth fighting for

THE British Leyland Joint Negotiating Committee have launched a claim based around a £24 increase for all grades from the 1st of November. There are other parts of the claim that are just as vital: full parity for all plants with no strings, elimination of penalty clauses for lay-off pay, one hour off the working week with a 35 hour week by 1982 and automatic cost of living increases of £1 for every 1% increase in the Retail Price Index.

The claim is a serious one and one worth winning. But it will not be won without a fight. Management immediately dubbed the claim "totally unrealistic" and is not even likely to negotiate seriously on it. Instead the company will probably offer a package deal involving the incentive bonus scheme.

This would give increases of £15 a week in return for tearing up established agreements and agreeing to the loss of another 14000 jobs above those in the Edwardes Plan. BL might even tie this deal to acceptance of those 25000 redundancies already being demanded.

Yet the Leyland Cars Negotiating Committee is unlikely to lead an all-out fight for the full claim and at the moment they have full control over the negotiations. At a recent meeting of the Leyland Combine Committee, a motion to give control of the claim to a representative shop stewards' committee was ruled out of order by Jack Adams, chairing the meeting, who also said that he did not consider the claim to be 'realistic'. For as long as the claim is the respons-

ibility of people who admit defeat in advance, there is little chance that even the basic wage demand will be won, let alone a shorter working week or cost of living increases.

However the Leyland management are far from having won yet. It is likely that their plans for the incentive scheme will be rejected, even if they try to force them through a ballot. Rover Solihull and Cowley will probably call for a national shop stewards' committee to be set up to lead the fight against redundancies and factory closures. To the extent that there is rank and file control of the negotiations, so that concessions are not made in advance, it is still possible that the claim will provide a rallying point for a fight by PL workers.

# The General

WHEN A reactionary Tory government has a stable parliamentary majority and is determined to use it to revoke many of the democratic rights which the British working class has established over decades of effort and struggle, then the labour movement is faced with a sharp choice.

EITHER it will obey the 'law of the land' — the rules which the boss class make up, or rip up, according to their needs and what they think they can get away with at a given moment — and hope that a future sympathetic Labour government will change the law sometime in the future.

OR it will fight back here and now, recognising no ruling class right to meddle with the trade unions, believing that any law which threatens strikers with jail for defending the interests of their class is a vile and villainous law; it will refuse to keep within the 'normal' channels of bourgeois politics and resort to direct, generalised industrial action to smash the Tory attempt to shackle the trade union movement.

Those were the choices the working class faced with the passing of the Industrial Relations Bill into law early in 1972.

These may very well be the choices we will face again if the Tories bring in anti-union legislation this autumn.

The first course means bowing down here and now before blatant class legislation, accepting that politics (all issues of the overall running of society) is totally and uncontrollably in the hands of the bosses, and that major issues between the capitalists and the workers are decided only through elections timed to its convenience by a bosses' government. That course is the traditional social democratic one of slavish legalism and rigid confinement to the rhythms, norms and political processes of a political system deliberately designed to keep control for the employers and their governments and to take all initiative, all political direct action, away from the working class.

Under these rules even the most favourable outcome from an election, a Labour victory, would not necessarily produce the repeal of the Act; Labour MPs would not be under the direct control of the workers who elected them; and after all, it was a Labour government which started the process that led to the Industrial Relations Act, with In Place of Strife in 1969.

Without the great industrial struggles of 1972, 1973 and 1974, which defeated and drove out the Heath government, a Labour government, when one was eventually returned, might not have ripped up the Tories' anti-trade union laws.

The second course meant challenging the Government here and now, refusing to let the Act operate as planned (or at all), insisting that the arena of struggle be one chosen by the working class, where we have the strength and the power to act urgently and directly and to challenge the right of the government to make such laws. That meant direct action, at its highest level a general strike to smash the Industrial Relations Act: necessarily a full industrial offensive. Anything less, though it might cause setbacks for the Government, force it to temporise and maybe even finally to look for a 'compromise' with the trade union leaders, would not cleanly rip up the Act and inflict the crippling defeat on the government which the class was capable of inflicting, and which it was in its interest to inflict.

The rank and file militants of the labour movement reacted with violent anger to this Tory Industrial Star Chamber. Instinctively they were for an industrial offensive against the Act and the government. Just as the Act became law the miners' strike showed the working class what tremendous elemental power it possesses when it chooses to rouse itself in action. The cynical juggling with 'the law' by the middle class reactionaries around Heath (the Official Solicitor act, etc.) dispelled for many workers the mystique of legality and exposed the class interest of the bosses behind the aged and venerable institutions of the British state.

Throughout 1972 the logic of the class struggle, the drive of the militants, was towards a general industrial offensive, a general strike, recognising this as the only course of action. In confrontation after confrontation successive brass fronts of the Tory government were shown to be mounted on feet of clay. And the strength of the working class was shown to be beyond the power of the government to control — even with the help of foot-dragging union leaders. The powerful flame of direct action that flared in July when the five dockers were jailed and which forced a humiliating retreat on the government, demonstrated that mobilisation for a general strike could have — at least — smashed the Act and, probably, the government too. But the release of the five halted the strike wave before it had reached the stage of a full-scale mobilisation such as in France in 1968 (which it gave every indication of doing).

Although the Industrial Relations Act and the National Industrial Relations Court remained in operation until mid-1974, their operations were crippled.

The proposed anti-union legislation again raises the general strike as perhaps the best weapon the labour movement will have to beat back the Tory offensive. The opportunities opened up by the 1979 Labour conference and the fight to really make the Labour Party an instrument of working class politics are today a central concern of every serious militant. But it would be as false now as in 1972 to wait for the election of a new Labour Government. The strength that we have here and now and can mobilise at will, is industrial strength. We must use it and begin to discuss the implications of using it.

For this reason *Workers' Action* in this issue begins to examine the nature, history and especially the problems in raising the demand for general strike action. The article here reproduced was first published in the paper *Workers' Fight* in May 1972. It has been slightly shortened by removing a section which dealt with the politics of the IMG at that time — but that was at least four IMGs ago, and the points discussed would be of little interest now.

JOHN O'MAHONY

THE DEAD weight of 1926 lies heavy still, half a century later, on the British Labour movement. The bitter memories of that defeat and its terrible aftermath amidst the conditions of the Great Slump have bred a deep distrust for the idea of the general strike weapon. 1926 appears as a great pitched battle and a great defeat — which indeed it was. And the conclusion in many people's minds is that the workers should avoid pitched battles.

But 1926 is not the only general strike that ever occurred. There is a very rich arsenal of Marxist thinking on the general strike and an even richer experience up to the present time. Here we attempt no more than a brief discussion of some of the issues raised by the immediate situation of the working class in Britain today.

The Tory government grows bolder with each failure of the union leaders to react to its challenge. Faced with the escalating legal sanctions, only a counter-escalation by the workers' side could hope to smash the Industrial Relations Act.

The only immediate response possible is generalised economic action — that is, a 'general strike' use of the social and industrial strength of the working class. (The perspective of a Labour government to repeal the Act in the long term — if that: remember In Place of Strife — means acquiescing to the bosses now.)

Only the continuation of the fight to mobilise on the industrial front, at the sharpest point of the struggle, while all the time striving to generalise the industrial action, can now be an alternative to abandoning all hope of smashing the Industrial Relations Act.

## by Jackie Cleary

A general strike means a head-on collision between the practical power of the bosses and their state, and the usually latent social and economic power of the working class. The collision could lead to a passing over from a limited mobilisation of the class for limited goals (such as the smashing of the Industrial Relations Act) to a full scale political confrontation in which the workers' struggle is extended into a conscious struggle against the state and capitalist society itself, ending either in serious defeat or decisive victory.

Such a contest is always implicit in a general strike. Clearly then the general strike is not a weapon to be played with, and the call for it is not a slogan to be raised light-mindedly. If a strike, especially a sit-in strike, poses the question of power in a single factory, the general strike poses it in the whole country. If a strike can lead to limited clashes with the police, then a general strike can lead to full scale confrontation and civil war.

The idea of the general strike was first conceived in Chartist times, in the 1830s, as the ultimate weapon of the working class. The Great Holiday, as it was called, was to be the full scale proof of the ultimate dependence of society on the working class.

The idea entered the arsenal of the Social Democratic parties at the end of the 19th century. It was then seen as the ultimate threat the labour movement could make in order to stop wars, force a general franchise etc. And it was used, for example, in Sweden in 1893.

History shows us two basic types of general strike or mass strike: those called by the official leaders of the workers' organisations, and those which well up spontaneously.

The period of the decisive domination of the labour movement by the reformist or Stalinist bureaucracies has seen a series of strikes organised from above:

(a) Strikes for reformist goals, in which the leadership is genuine in its adherence to the stated goals, and maintains control of the working class. The best examples are the series of general strikes from the 1890s to World War I in Belgium, which won universal manhood suffrage.

(b) Token strikes for the purpose of demonstrating some point or protesting, with, once again, the reformist or Stalinist leadership keeping rigid control.

The French Communist Party was infamous for playing this game way before 1968 (when it got more than it bargained for) by holding one day general strikes, half day general strikes, and even half hour general strikes on all sorts of issues.

(c) Strikes in which the leadership or a large section of it agree in advance with the bourgeoisie to play the Grand Old Duke of York and to head off militancy — so demoralising the working class and dissipating its energies that the workers are led to defeat.

The most notorious example of this is the 1926 British general strike.

The result depends as usual on the relationship of forces. In areas like Durham, for instance, the movement almost got out of the hands of the TUC. If the young Communist Party had not naively supported the TU traitors "from the left", the strike might have escaped TUC control entirely.

History also of course shows us spontaneous mass strikes of the working class, mass self-mobilisations, usually drawing in much larger sections of the class than are organised at the beginning.

For instance, in Russia, as the revolutionary workers' movement took shape at the end of the last century and the beginning of this century, the organised socialist movement helped and supported the mass strike wave with which the

working class fought Tsarism. But, for all that, they were largely spontaneous: what Rosa Luxemburg called the elemental form of the self-movement of the working class.

Sometimes the class mobilises spontaneously or half-spontaneously to meet some threat, getting at best a grudging after-the-event endorsement from a reformist leadership.

In 1920 the right-winger Kapp took power in Germany for 3 days by means of a putsch. But this aroused, and was defeated by, a semi-spontaneous general strike.

In Spain the revolt of the fascist generals in 1936 was stopped by strikes, mobilisations and the self-arming of the workers after most of the official labour movement and the Popular Front government had virtually caved in to the fascist demands.

Lastly, there is the situation where the class, whose leadership proclaims socialism but does nothing about it, grows frustrated and impatient. The militants initiate direct action drawing massively greater sections of the working class into the movement — indeed, often being propelled forward by these fresh sections.

The factory seizures in Italy in 1919 were a conscious challenge to the rule of the bourgeoisie. But they failed to find a comparably revolutionary leadership in the sphere of politics. The indecisive left-talking Socialist Party failed the working class and left it wide open to being smashed later on by fascism.

Thus the 1936 general strike in France. And thus too, 1968, where the French working class, long frustrated by the misleadership of the Communist Party and the CP trade union, the CGT, long tired of low wages, sham fights, and half hour general strikes (with the CGT bureaucrats attempting to conduct the working class and its movements like a well-disciplined orchestra) suddenly rose and seized control of France.

In this situation of course the 'leading' bureaucrats of the labour movement ran to catch up with the movement, straddled it and stopped it from smashing the bourgeois state — although the bourgeoisie was forced to give massive concessions.

After a general strike there is a variety of possible situations.

There might be a period of quiet with the bourgeoisie generally on top, having clearly defeated the working class.

Or there might be a new equilibrium, based on there being an expanding economy enabling the granting of concessions to the working class, with the reformist leadership still in control.

Alternatively, the strike can be an episode in a continually explosive situation: after it the bourgeoisie mobilises, goes on the counter-offensive and the struggle continues — as in Italy after 1919. This obviously depends on the objective possibilities — the background and relationship of forces, the role of the labour leadership and its ability to control and manipulate the working class.



The strike movement after five dockers' pickets were arrested under the Industrial Relations Act in July 1972 brought Britain to the brink of a general strike for the first time since 1926.

Further permutations are of course possible, based on these possibilities.

The experience of 1926 in Britain was an example of the first variant above. Most of the leaders were renegades, agreeing in advance with the Conservatives to head off the strike and betray it. It was growing in strength and determination. There were more men out on the last day than on the first.

Calling it off was an outright betrayal of a magnificent mobilisation of the working class by a leadership which (with a few honourable exceptions such as A.J.Cook) did not even have reformist goals for the strike.





# Strike



The defeat resulting from the betrayal was serious but not catastrophic. But its effects were soon compounded by the heavy follow-up blow to the working class which was the Great Depression with its mass unemployment.

If the Depression hadn't come so soon after; if the revolutionary socialists of the time, the Communist Party, had been able to use the renegacy of the leaders of labour to discredit them and gain working class leadership for itself — then the outcome could have been very different.

Neither the outcome of the strike itself nor even the effects of betrayal and defeat were anything like inevitable.

Today a general strike could do to the Tories' Industrial Relations Act what the miners and their allies did three months ago to the 7% pay norm. Such a strike could smash the Act. And, in the process of mobilisation, the class would begin to create the sinews and muscles in preparation for the battles — intense and bitter — that would surely follow any partial defeat of the capitalists by the workers.

Those 'revolutionaries' who argue that the general strike demands so much serious preparation that it is irresponsible to advocate it unless and until there has been "adequate preparation" are caught in a vicious trap. They have learnt little from recent, particularly French, experience.

They see the general strike as a synonym for revolution, leading always either to decisive defeat or decisive victory.

With the labour movement hopelessly bureaucratized, they therefore see the call for such a strike as deeply irresponsible: as if we were calling for the revolution to be led by Vic Feather!

Therefore, they say, we must simply make long term propaganda about an eventual general strike and meanwhile wait until we have prepared, until we have a mass revolutionary party, and are ourselves the leadership of any general strike which we call for. Thus once again the general strike becomes a synonym for the revolution. (Moreover, all the talk about 'preparation' is a heaven-sent alibi for the union leaders' inactivity).

Such pedantic comrades usually rely on the quotation mines, from which they dig out Trotsky's 1935 warning to the Independent Labour Party, who were threatening to call a general strike — as a sort of punishment to the ruling class in the event of war.

Yet they ignore Trotsky's very important appreciation of the 1936 strike in France and its effects on the working class. (Not to mention the experience of 1968):

*"The strike has everywhere and in every place pushed the most thoughtful and fearless workers to the fore. To them belongs the initiative. They are still acting cautiously, feeling the ground under their feet. The vanguard detachments are trying not to rush ahead so as not to isolate themselves. The echoing and reechoing answers of the hindmost ranks to their call gives them a new courage.*

*"The roll call of the class has become a trial self-mobilisation. The proletariat was itself in greatest need of this demonstration of its strength. The practical successes won, however precarious they may be, cannot fail to raise the self-confidence of the masses to an extraordinary degree, particularly among the most backward and oppressed*

*strata.*

*"That leaders have come forward in the industries and in the factories is the foremost conquest of the first wave. The elements of local and regional general staffs have been created. The masses know them. They know one another. Real revolutionaries will seek contact with them.*

*"Thus the first self-mobilisation of the masses has outlined and in part brought forward the first elements of revolutionary leadership. The strike has stirred, revitalised and regenerated the whole colossal class organism. The old organisational shell has by no means dropped away. On the contrary, it still retains its hold quite stubbornly. But under it the new skin is already visible."*

In essence the attitude of the pedantic revolutionaries is a variant of the old West European Social Democratic conception of the general strike as the well-orchestrated ultimate weapon controlled and directed from above. It is not a conception of the self-mobilisation of the working class.

Since their conception makes the general strike impossible, or only a prelude to betrayal, it follows for them that the slogan for a general strike cannot be used.

This ignores the experience of the mass strikes of which 1968 is the most important: welling up from below, directed as much against the labour bureaucrats (though not necessarily consciously) as against the system.

Since this is the major experience of the mass strike and of the general strike throughout most of its history, to ignore it is to ignore the real history of the working class. It is thus tantamount to preventing the revolutionary organisations from bringing the lessons of that history, in the form of propaganda, to the working class in this country.

It ignores the fact that the mass strike and the general strike, and the struggle for a general strike, can play a major role in shaking and ultimately smashing the control by the bureaucrats of the labour movement, and in helping to build the revolutionary movement — without which there will never be a full and final victory over the capitalists.

Thus it is the job of revolutionaries to make propaganda for the general strike, to promote and propagandise for a mass strike and for immediate solidarity strikes on every level.

We therefore say a general strike can smash the Industrial Relations Act. We advocate it as a tactical weapon for this limited goal. In the present situation it could win such a goal. We raise the demand that the leaders of the unions prepare and call a general strike.

Even when used as a tactical weapon for limited gains, the general strike still implicitly raises the question: who rules in society? Whatever the specific goals of the general mobilisation, its logic and its potential is the struggle for state power.

This is not merely an abstract logic, but a very practical logic. A general strike necessarily poses the creation of organising committees of the working class and of new organisational and administrative responsibilities for those stewards committees, councils and trades councils now existing.

It makes necessary the creation of broader workers' committees, street and area committees and councils; and of workers' self-defence organisations in the event of clashes with scabs and state personnel. That is, it would pose the question of the elaboration of the rudimentary organs of a potential working class state.

The outcome would be decided as a struggle between two

perspectives within the mobilised working class — the reformist and the revolutionary. All the events of the strike, the very fact of the working class moving into action, would favour the revolutionary perspective, as does any real mobilisation of the working class into self-awareness.

Whether the strike was initiated by rank and file militants or by the official leadership, the revolutionary perspective would have to be fought for, and a series of concrete immediate steps elaborated to take the class continually forward.

Revolutionaries would popularise the idea of workers' councils of self-administration, to organise the life of the country and begin to elaborate a counter-state leading to dual power as in Russia between February and October 1917.

The starting point would be the factory committees thrown up by the strike, which in many cases would already be taking decisions not normally taken by workers. These would be generalised into local, regional and finally a National Council of workers' representatives — thus opposing an embryonic workers' state to the bourgeois state.

A revolutionary organisation would advocate that workers who have taken over their factories, services etc. should begin to run them under the control of the workers' councils, enabling services to be restored to the workers and their organisations, while the 'owners' were still excluded. Thus the bosses' property, instead of merely being immobilised and held, would be turned increasingly against them, giving the workers an increasing store of power.

The revolutionary party would begin to form workers' militias, initially from among its own cadres, drawing in militants from all the factories — thus arming the workers for an uprising to disarm and suppress the paralysed organs of bourgeois power and establish the workers' state. A revolutionary party should in any case advocate and work for this in advance of such a situation. But even in the middle of the strike such a programme of action would galvanise the workers and could at least lead to a period of dual power.

Finally, revolutionaries in such a situation would raise the slogan of a workers' government as the immediate objective of the strike, and move to coordinate and consolidate the organs of workers' administration and defence into a counter-state which could challenge and decisively smash the bosses' state and establish a workers' state.

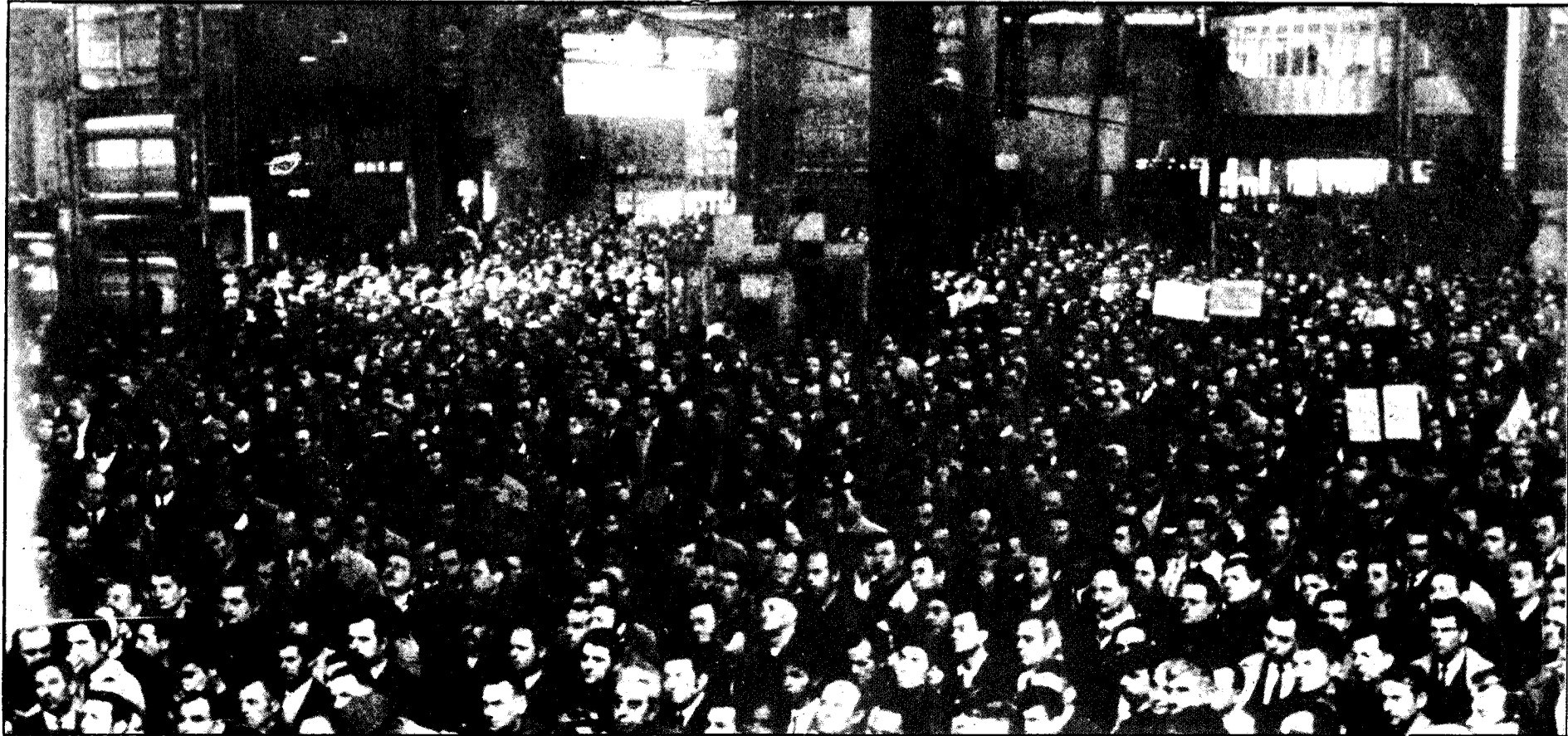
Such a prosecution of the strike movement by a party with a mass working class following could have taken a situation like that of May-June 1968 in France to a state of dual power — and from there to the revolution.

But even a struggle that does not end with the working class taking power can be an invaluable experience. New leaders and often new forms of organisation are thrown up. These can — even if the movement is for the time being repulsed — serve the class in future struggles.

This was true of the Soviets of 1905 which really came to the fore in 1917. It was likewise true of the Irish Citizen Army which was created in the strike movement of 1913 and became the cornerstone of the Easter Rising of 1916.

It is in this sense that Trotsky and Lenin thought of the 1905 revolution as the "dress rehearsal" for 1917.

And it is in this sense that all the strategies above must be put forward in any general strike situation, so that even if it is not the final showdown the best lessons will be learnt.



French car workers during the general strike of 1968: discussing, learning, finding new leaders

# 1929-79:

BETWEEN 1921 and 1929, while Europe was struggling to restore and slightly improve pre-World War I levels of production, the United States boomed, becoming the preeminent capitalist power.

The US index of industrial production almost doubled between 1921 and 1929. New industries, like car manufacture, and new techniques, like the mass production line, rose from almost nothing to a leading place in the economy. Americanism and Fordism were trumpeted as the capitalist answer to Bolshevism.

by Martin Thomas

From early 1928 the industrial boom was accompanied by a huge stock market boom. Thousands of fortunes were quickly made in speculative ventures. The stock market boom added an unhealthy flush to the industrial boom. "A few firms", as J.K. Galbraith reports, "instead of trying to produce goods with its manifold headaches and inconveniences, confined themselves to financing speculation. Many more companies started lending their surplus funds on Wall Street".

But there were still plenty around to assure the speculators that nothing done according to the rules of free enterprise could be wrong. "There is no cause for worry", Treasury Secretary Andrew W. Mellon said. "The high tide of prosperity will continue".

On September 3rd the stock market boom broke. On Thursday October 24th and again on Monday and Tuesday 28th and 29th, Wall Street crashed.

On Tuesday a meeting of the Governing Committee of the New York Stock Exchange was held. To conceal the fact of the meeting and avoid causing further panic, "The members of the committee left the floor in twos and threes and went, not to the regular meeting room, but to the office of the President of the Stock Clearing Corporation directly below the trading floor.

"Some months later, Acting President Whitney described the session with considerable graphic talent. 'The office they met in was never designed for large meetings of this sort, with the result that most of the Governors were compelled to stand, or sit on tables.

"As the meeting proceeded, panic was raging overhead on the floor. Every few minutes the latest prices were announced, with quotations moving swiftly and irresistibly downwards. The feeling of those present was revealed by their habit of continually lighting cigarettes, taking a puff or two, putting them out and lighting new ones — a practice which soon made the narrow room blue with smoke and extremely stuffy".

The meeting produced no positive result. The next day, in an effort to reassure the market, John D. Rockefeller made his first public statement in several decades. "Believing that fundamental conditions of the country are sound... my son and I have for some days been purchasing sound common stocks". Eddie Cantor commented: "Sure, who else had any money left?". The crash continued. By November 13th, prices of industrial stocks had been almost halved. Investment trusts did even worse. United Founders Trust had been \$70 on September 3rd, American Founders Trust had been \$117. By July 1932 they had fallen to around 50 cents.

This stock market crash was in effect a massive collapse in the country's credit system. The dizzy rise of the stock market had been based on people buying on credit. As long as stocks continued to rise, the pyramid of credit could rise higher and higher, creating an impression of ever-expanding easy wealth. When the stocks fell, hard cash was demanded. Many speculators could not pay up. When they failed, their creditors failed in their turn.

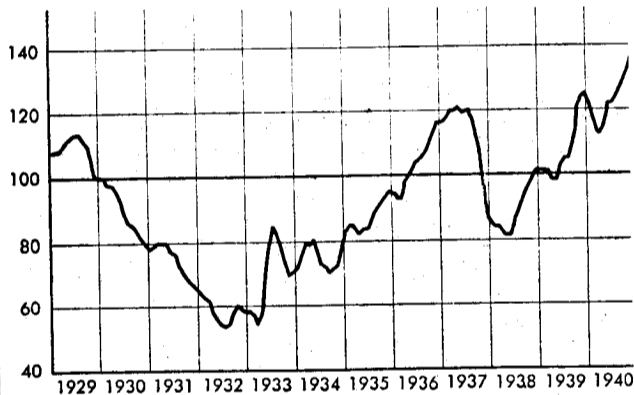
This crash was expected to have some effect on industrial production, which in fact had been declining since June. But it was not clear the decline would turn into depression. In early 1930 there was a slight pick-up in stock market prices and production, and official optimism continued until late in the year.

Then in late 1930 there was a wave of bank failures. Not only small country banks collapsed, but major city banks, including, in December 1930, the Bank of the United States. Another 3,750 banks failed in 1931 and 1932. Meanwhile the financial collapse spread to Europe. Kreditanstalt, the largest bank in Austria, failed in May 1931. A serious credit crisis in Germany followed, and then a run on the pound. In September 1931 the British government was forced to take the pound off the gold standard.

The whole world trade system was shattered. As Lionel Robbins described it, "Tariffs, exchange restrictions, quotas, import prohibitions, barter trade agreements, central trade-clearing arrangements — all the fusty relics of medieval trade regulation, discredited through five hundred years of theory and hard experience, were dragged out of the lumber rooms and hailed as the products of the latest enlightenment".

Industrial production in the US and the whole capitalist world slumped. By 1932 the physical volume of industrial production in the USA was about half its 1929 level. Steel production fell to 12% of capacity. Investment dropped to almost nothing in 1932 and 1933. The real value of US exports in 1931-4 was about 40-50% of their 1929 level. Although a slight revival of production began in 1933, the economy remained deeply depressed until the War. In 1933, a fourth of the US workforce was out of work; in 1938, it

## Will there be another Great Crash



The physical volume of industrial production in the US [chart above] was almost halved between 1929 and 1932. In 1938 it was still 20% below the 1929 level.

was still one in five.

The ravages of this world economic crisis drove Europe, which had already been in decay economically before 1929, towards fascism and war. Hitler's triumph in Germany, Dollfuss' in Austria, Franco's in Spain and Petain's in France, all followed on quickly from the Depression.

For a long time, in the 1950's and 1960's, conservatives and social democrats said such horrors were a thing of the past. Capitalism in the 1930s had been bad and unjust. But the new mixed economy, with its new methods of economic management, could ensure indefinite progress. There would be no more great crises.

Today the defenders of capitalism are not so sure. In 1974-5 the capitalist world went through a major crisis, though to be sure not one as deep as the early 1930s. Since then world capitalism has wallowed in stagnation as it did in the 1930s, though again the depression is less severe. And the 50th anniversary of the Wall Street Crash coincides with a new slump in the US stock market — a near record week's decline in prices in the week 8th-12th October — wild speculation in the gold markets and an undeniable industrial recession in the US.

What is the truth of the matter? Why did 1929 happen, and could it happen again?

For bourgeois economists 1929 was a great surprise. Irving Fisher, for example, was a celebrated economic theorist of the time, and one who is still cited with respect by modern bourgeois writers. In autumn 1929 he wrote: "Stock prices have reached what looks like a permanently high plateau". In September he was forced to be more cautious: "There may be a recession in stock prices," he wrote, "but not anything in the nature of a crash".

In October, just before the great crash, he said the decline had represented only a — "shaking out of the lunatic fringe". In fact, he argued, stock prices should go higher to represent the real value of the productive capital on which they were based. Among other things, the market had not yet reflected the effects of Prohibition, which made the American worker "more productive and dependable".

In November Professor Fisher complained bitterly about the stock market collapse: "It was the psychology of panic". He still maintained that Prohibition provided the basis for a continuing growth in capitalist wealth. "For the immediate future, at least, the outlook is bright", he wrote in a book published in 1930.

For professors with seats on the boards of investment trusts, like Fisher, there were more than the usual ideolo-

gical motives for insisting on such optimism. But from a different vantage point, that of the Marxist movement, the inevitability of a crisis in the US had long been clear.

From the middle of the 19th century, up to around 1914, there was the great epoch of capitalist expansion. Despite periodic crises, and even some periods of near-stagnation, the general trend was clearly upwards. Large-scale capitalist industry, first developed in Britain, arose in country after country.

Capitalism soon became imperialism. The European powers seized areas in Asia and Africa, markets for commodities, sources for raw materials and arenas for the export of capital.

By about the turn of the century, the world was almost completely divided up into colonial empires or spheres of influence of a few great powers. But capitalist competition still drove ahead — towards a redivision of the world through war.

With its huge internal market, its rich natural resources, and its easy preferential access to Latin America, the US had been able to do without a formal empire. It was also able to do without intervening in the First World War until near the end. It emerged as the war's great victor.

Britain lost a quarter of its foreign assets in World War I, France a half. Germany's foreign assets were wiped out. In 1913 the US had less than a quarter of the world's gold reserves, by 1921 it had nearly 40%.

The new imperialism of the US, based on effective economic domination rather than formal political control, replaced the colonialism of the European countries as the world's dominant economic power. For some time after World War I a new war between the US and the strongest of the old imperial powers, Britain, seemed likely to Marxists. In the event Britain went under peacefully. But it was certain that the US boom would be limited by the decayed condition of the world capitalist economy over which the US established its hegemony.

"We live under conditions of world economy", wrote Trotsky. "And it is just this that determines the fate of capitalism — for all the continents... American capitalism is far stronger and stabler than European capitalism; it can look to the future with far greater assurance. But American capitalism is no longer self-sufficing. It cannot maintain itself on an internal equilibrium. It needs a world equilibrium".

The perspective which the Marxists focused on was that of the US boom being disrupted by revolutions in Europe. "It is precisely the international strength of the United States and her irresistible expansion arising from it, that compels her to include the powder magazines of the whole world into the foundations of her structure, i.e., all the antagonisms between the East and the West, the class struggle in Old Europe, the uprisings of the colonial masses, and all wars and revolutions".

The Stalinist degeneration of the Communist International stifled the expected revolutions. But the imbalances of the world economy were bound to take their toll eventually.

Trotsky outlined the dilemma: "Seven billion [dollars] are accumulated annually in America. What to do with them? If simply put in a vault, they, as dead capital, would drag down the profit level in the country. All capital demands interest. Where could the available funds be placed? Within the country itself? But there is no need of them; they are superfluous [relative, of course, not to human needs, but to the possibilities of profitable capitalist production on the basis of the inevitable limitation of the final consumer market by the restricted level of wages]..."

"An outlet must be found abroad. One begins to lend to other countries, to invest in foreign industries. But what to do with the interest, which returns, after all, to America?". Without rapid expansion elsewhere in the capitalist world — which would in any case create its own problems, putting competitive pressure on US industry — the US expansion was doomed.

The bourgeois economist John Maynard Keynes described the resulting crisis in his own terms: "It would be absurd to assert of the United States in 1929 the existence of over-investment in the strict sense [i.e. relative to human needs]. The true state of affairs was of a different character. New investment during the previous five years had been, indeed, on so enormous a scale in the aggregate that the prospective yield of further additions was, coolly considered, falling rapidly. Correct foresight would have brought down the marginal efficiency of capital [Keynes' term for the expected rate of profit] to an unprecedentedly low figure...."

In fact, during the 1920s the production of capital goods had increased at 6.4% a year (while production of non-durable consumer goods increased at 2.8%). This great accumulation of capital meant, firstly, that the rate of profit, relative to the accumulated capital, had to fall; and secondly, once the falling rate of profit had somewhat checked the expansion, that it would be revealed that the capitalists' competitive efforts to grab bigger shares of the expanding market had driven production beyond the capitalist limits of consumption.

The slump was made more drastic by the collapse of the world trade set-up. During the 1920s the US had systematically exported more than it imported. At the same time it monopolised the world's gold reserves. American capitalists therefore extended a greater and greater volume of loans to other countries. When the slump came, they called in those loans. But many of their debtors could not pay. And so the world credit system collapsed.

In the end, World War 2, with its result of even greater US hegemony, had to be gone through before a functioning capitalist world monetary and credit system — this time based on the dollar — could be restored. The restoration of world trade, together with the development during the war of many new branches of technology, laid the basis for the world capitalist expansion of the 1950s and '60s. But that expansion was temporary, too.

Marxists neither could, nor tried to, predict the exact form and date of the end of the US boom of the 1920s. But bourgeois economists studied the form of the crisis, and from that tried to draw conclusions.

That was the origin of the new bourgeois economics of J M Keynes. Previous bourgeois economists had mostly not recognised unemployment as a serious problem. If it existed, it was due to some factor external to the system. Keynes recognised unemployment as a problem of capitalism, but proposed reforms which, he thought, could solve that problem.

Both by labour movement bureaucrats and by conservative-minded capitalists, Keynes' ideas for increased state spending were regarded as almost the same thing as socialism. Keynes himself, however, regarded his ideas as "moderately conservative", and complained, "The difficulty is that the Capitalist leaders in the City and Parliament are incapable of distinguishing novel measures for safeguarding Capitalism from what they call Bolshevism".

His political stance was clear. "Ought I, then, to join the Labour Party?", he asked in 1925. "Superficially, that is attractive. But looked at closer, there are great difficulties. To begin with, it is a class party, and the class is not my class..."

"When it comes to the class struggle as such, my local and personal patriotisms, like those of everyone else, except certain unpleasant zealous ones, are attached to my own surroundings. I can be influenced by what seems to me to be Justice and good sense; but the class war will find me on the side of the educated bourgeoisie".

Like almost every other great economist, bourgeois or Marxist, Keynes believed there was a tendency for the rate of profit to fall. The lower rate of profit had its place in the background of his theory. But he focused on the effects, that is, on the decline of the capitalists' readiness to invest.

Those effects, he argued, could be offset by reducing taxes and increasing state spending. The dogma of a 'balanced budget', the idea that the state cannot spend more than it receives, should be scrapped. So should the idea that cutting wages was the way out of crisis.

If taxes were reduced and state spending was increased, so the state spent more than it received, then effective demand would be increased. That would lead to increased production, increased production would mean increased income for workers and employers, hence further increased demand... then further increased production again. Through this 'multiplier effect' the budget deficit would be more than covered.

These policies were tried in the depression of the '30s, though to an extent which Keynes regarded as inadequate. Despite their very limited success then, in the 1950s and '60s Keynesian policies were reckoned to be a reliable recipe for full employment.

In fact, the connection between Keynesian policies and capitalist expansion was little more than coincidence. That became clear in the early '70s. There was serious unemployment — but Keynesian policies did not lead to expansion but to more and more inflation. Limited inflation does no harm to capitalism. But rapid inflation wrecks business calculations and harms the international position of the country suffering inflation. So Keynesian policies were junked — to live on only in the bedraggled form of the 'Alternative Economic Strategy' for 'reflation' proposed by *Tribune* and the Communist Party in Britain, and similar political currents elsewhere.

Over the last four years of high unemployment, British governments, Tory and Labour, have done exactly the opposite of what Keynes would propose: they have cut state spending (without cutting taxes much).

Along with this new policy, a new bourgeois explanation of crisis has gained influence. According to this 'monetarist' explanation, put forward notably by the right-wing American economist Milton Friedman, the Depression was due to monetary mismanagement by the US government. There would, Friedman admits, have been some economic setback anyway, but the fact that it escalated into a huge slump was due to the authorities allowing the stock of money to contract, thus driving banks to the point where they had not enough cash to meet their commitments.

If only Governor Benjamin Strong of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York had not died in October 1928, to be replaced by the more incompetent George L Harrison, then the Great Depression would never have happened! (Friedman slurs over the fact that the biggest bank to go bust in 1930, the Bank of the United States, actually turned out to have been keeping going for some time only on the basis of massive illegal operations).

The monetarist theory ultimately rests on the assumption that the free enterprise system is stable, and can only be disrupted by incompetent governments. Figures are produced to show that movements in national income are correlated with movements of the stock of money, but these prove that bad money-management is the cause of slumps only if it is assumed that the stock of money is determined only by its supply (which is far from obvious, since the stock of money, in this sense, includes bank deposits, the size of which is not simply determined by how much hard cash the central authorities issue. In fact the stock of hard cash increased throughout the Depression, while the total money stock was falling sharply). Otherwise the figures can equally well show the slump causing the reduction in the stock of money, rather than vice versa.

The monetarist recipe — which is to fix strict rules for the expansion of the money supply and forbid governments to break those rules — is even less of an answer to capitalist crises than the Keynesian recipe.

The bourgeoisie does not have such control of its economy as to exclude a huge slump on the scale of the 1930s. The stock market is still unstable. The international monetary set-up is unsound. As the *Economist* put it last week, "Foreigners are holding much more American currency than



Sit-down strikers in Detroit in the 1930s. The American workers' fight-back against Great Depression conditions was slow to start. It did not get moving until the slight economic revival of 1934. But when it came it was stormy and militant, pioneering new methods of struggle

they did in 1929, partly for the unnerving reason that they do not know how else to hold their foreign exchange...

"There has to be fear that on some black Tuesday the flight from the dollar could take wings, including maybe a flight by Americans out of their own currency. Heaven knows what would happen to world liquidity [supplies of internationally acceptable cash — which, at present, means mostly dollars] then".

And the underlying conditions of production are unsound. Huge industries, like steel, shipbuilding, and cars, suffer from massive over-capacity. In many countries, like Britain, they are kept from collapse only by state support. But the system of state support for industry, long a stabilising factor for capitalism, is now a serious destabilising factor: the state cuts too deeply into surplus value to leave profits which the private capitalists find adequate, and so they clamour for cuts in state spending.

No-one can say for sure how deep the present world crisis, set into motion by the US recession, will be.

But the idea of looking out for "another 1929" is misleading. 1929 catches the imagination because it was the greatest and most spectacular of crises, and because it was clearly (despite Milton Friedman and his speculations about Governor Strong) a crisis generated by capitalism itself, and not by some event which could be presented, however falsely, as 'external' to the system, like a war. However, capitalism is a system of crises. There have been many other crises than 1929. The job of socialists is not to wait around for 'the' crisis, defined according to some favourite scheme, but to use actual crises going on here and now to hasten the downfall of capitalism.

Also, there are real reasons for capitalist crises being less dramatic now than in the 1930s. State spending is in itself a problem for capitalism, and the bosses are trying to cut it — but it still exists on a very large scale, and does have some stabilising effect. In a slump when private spending declines, state spending — on arms, on public utilities, on welfare benefits — may well not decline to the same extent. Thus the spiral of decreased demand - decreased production - decreased demand is checked.

There was a practical illustration in 1974-5. The crisis, though deep, was very short by the standard of the 1930s. As early as the late summer of 1975, the US economy was beginning to pull out of the trough, thanks to an increased budget deficit. The recovery was very limited, and brought with it huge problems of inflation in the US and decline of the dollar internationally — but it happened.

From the point of view of socialists, this sort of simmering crisis provides better conditions than the catastrophic slump of the 1930s. After 1929 the American working class was stunned for over four years. Not until 1934 did it begin a militant fightback on a big scale. In Europe, the depth and speed of the crisis led to the working class in several countries being crushed by fascism before they had a chance to develop new revolutionary leaders in the struggle and replace the corrupt Stalinist and social democratic leaders.

The crises of the 1970s, however, have coincided with a general rise of working-class militancy (albeit with ups and downs) since 1968, and a serious though gradual strengthening of revolutionary currents in the labour movement. The more slowly-burning crisis gives the working class a chance to rethink, reorient — and relearn many things. If we seize our opportunities, there is every chance that there will never again be a crash like 1929 — because we will overthrow capitalism before it can get to that point.



# Strikers plan pickets of Vauxhall dealers

WORKERS from Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plant were forced last Friday to call off their picket of Harwich docks. They had been picketing to stop the import of parts vital to maintaining Vauxhall production at Luton.

It was not the arrest of 15 pickets, nor repeated attacks by police, that forced them to end the picket, nor was it an injunction granted against the pickets in the High Court. It was the refusal of the TGWU to give official support to the blacking (though the union has offered to pay the fines and hardship money) and drivers from Luton driving through the picket lines, which made it impossible for the picket to

continue. The shunters who move the containers from the port to the transit depot where they are loaded onto lorries agreed not to move them as long as the Luton drivers didn't cross the picket line, and as long as they had official support from the TGWU by last Friday. The TGWU refused and at the same time one firm began laying off its drivers at the transit depot.

It was agreed to call off the picket when workers inside the transit depot looked likely to reverse their support for the blacking under the threat of more lay-offs.

The Ellesmere Port workers are still keen to extend their action, however. A

meeting last Monday decided to organise pickets of Vauxhall main dealers throughout the country, starting in the North West in order to persuade them not to take Vauxhall cars. They are also calling for a public inquiry into the actions of the police in Harwich in attacking their picket lines.

Support from other labour movement bodies is becoming crucial as the strike has been going on since September 4th. Motions of support for the strike and for the call for a public inquiry, as well as donations, should be sent to: J. Mullally, Treasurer, TGWU, Vauxhall Motors, Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.

COLIN FOSTER

# Camden says no cuts, no rate rises

A CONFERENCE called by Camden Trades Council on Wednesday 10th voted clearly for a fight against cuts, no rate rises, and support for the November 7th anti-cuts demonstration called by Lambeth Council.

Council leader Roy Shaw tried to justify the Labour group's decision to put up rates by 40% from April 1980, saying it was the only way to 'maintain the present levels of services and jobs'. He completely missed one very important political point: the mobilisation of the working class to mount a big campaign against the cuts.

Camden Trades Council had prepared a statement for the conference calling for no cuts and no rate rises — but the Executive deleted the reference to rates! Also, the conference chairman got all amendments to the statement referred back, on grounds of lack of time.

However, a motion proposed by John Suddaby of Camden General NUPE was passed unanimously.

This conference supports the decision taken by Camden Council not to make cuts in jobs and in services in the financial year beginning April 1980.

"This conference recognises, however, that yearly increases in rates are not an adequate answer to the Tory attack on public services. The crisis in the public sector will only be averted by the mobilisation of the trade union and labour movement against the policies pursued by the present government.

"We therefore call on Camden Council to play its full role in organising resistance to Tory policies on a London-wide basis and ask it:

"1. To support the demonstration to Parliament on November 7th called by Lambeth Council, and along with Lambeth to grant all Council employees paid leave to attend this demonstration.

"2. To issue a call for an all-London labour movement conference to organise the fightback against the Tory cuts"

TOM KANE

# Civil servants fight the cuts

CPSA members at the Department of Employment (DE) offices, Aytoun St, Manchester, held a one-hour stoppage meeting on Monday 8th to discuss action against the cuts taking place in dole offices.

The pressure of work at the offices is intensifying as the DE bosses are not filling vacancies when they occur. The meeting decided to organise, along with other north-west DE branches, lightning one-hour stoppages as part of a

campaign to force the Department to employ more staff.

As Elaine Turner, chairperson of the DE branch in Manchester, said, "The members are acting out of desperation due to the pressure of work".

The branch also supports the fight for the reinstatement of seven union members in Liverpool who were sacked for taking similar action.

JOHN DOUGLAS

# Women fight pay cuts

OVER 100 women, TGWU members, are on strike at Draftex, Coventry. The company, a subsidiary of Cammell Laird, is under new management and is trying to cut the women's wages.

"At the moment they get average piecework earnings for any 'down' time, when the machinery is idle through no fault of their own. The bosses are trying to cut the down time payments to £1.20 an hour, a cut of about 50p or 70p an hour.

The women are maintaining a 24 hour picket and have stopped a scab lorry.

They have had no help from the men in the plant. The maintenance men, AUEW members, went through the picket line — previously they had refused the Confed national strike call. Another 80 men, TGWU members, have been laid off but have so far given no support.

The plant makes door seals for the car industry. The present struggle takes place just after a new £1½ million order for the Ford Theresa.

DAVE SPENCER

# Haringey folds under pressure

THE Majority of the ruling Labour group on Haringey council has folded up in face of a determined pro-cuts stand by right-wing councillors.

After the Tories announced their cuts, the Council initially went ahead with plans to chop £2.7 million locally. Under pressure from the local labour movement, the Labour group voted to reverse these cuts. But then right-wingers threatened to resign, saying that the no-cuts line would mean 80% rate rises next year.

Many of the councillors who voted against cuts had no answer to the right-wing complaint that such huge rate rises were impossible. The Labour group has now voted, 21 to 16, to reinstate most of the original cuts [while safeguarding education and social services], and to have rate rises only around the 40% to 50% mark.

Voting against the cuts is easier than carrying through a fight. Rate rises are an illusory answer. A clear socialist policy for 'where the money will come from', based on mass struggle against the Tories, is vital. Those are the lessons from Haringey.

JOHN BLOXAM

# ENGINEERS:

# STEWARDS ORGANISE NATIONAL LINK-UP

Bureaucratically launched, bureaucratically conducted, and bureaucratically sold out, the Confed strike campaign for engineering pay and conditions showed an urgent need to build a rank and file movement in the engineering industry.

The National Engineering Shop Stewards conference in Birmingham on Saturday 13th was a step towards building that movement. 150 delegates attended. A 28-member coordinating committee was elected [or, rather, selected by the platform from about 50 nominations from the floor]. The Broad Left is most strongly represented on this committee, but it also includes a couple of Engineers Charter supporters.

Ron Halverson, opening the conference, outlined what was wrong with the settlement. "At this rate of progress, we will be into the 1990s before we get a 35 hour week".

No AUEW National Committee meetings were called during the dispute, and in fact the AUEW Executive had no right to call off the action in the way it did. The Rolls Royce lock-out should have been answered by an all-out strike, said Halverson. And he called for a fight to break the four-year freeze on any improvement on hours and holidays which is part of the settlement.

There were some clear differences of orientation in the contributions from the floor. Ron Thompson [Sheffield] stressed that the coordinating committee must not just be an electoral machine against AUEW president Duffy. John Murphy [Longbridge] attacked the role of Confed officials in organising demonstrations against the BL redundancies and at the same time organising a sell-out to Edwardes.

George Anthony [North London], however, said the settlement was a "credible achievement", and made a witch-hunting speech against Engineers Charter. When a worker from Adamsons Containers made an appeal for money for their strike fund, Anthony leapt up to declare that this was totally irrelevant to the business of the meeting. It appears that Anthony feared there was some 'ultra-left' influence in the Adamsons strike.

Nevertheless, unity in action, called for especially by Mick Brightman [Manchester], was the main theme. The next step now is for the coordinating committee to work out a proper programme for struggle so that it can in fact organise a rank and file movement and not just a 'beat Duffy' campaign.

GERRY BYRNE

# WORKERS' ACTION

# STOKE STEWARDS DEFY ISOLATION

THE 3400 manual workers at the Talbot (Stoke) plant in Coventry meet on Thursday 18th to vote on whether to return to work.

Out for three months to overturn the Peugeot-Citroën bosses' 5½% plus-productivity offer, the workers are demoralised. On Thursday 4th the strikers at the nearby Ryton plant narrowly accepted a majority stewards' recommendation with support from the local union bureaucrats for a return to work for £5 for 5 weeks on top of the original offer. Much needed solidarity was lost.

The income tax rebates have now stopped coming in and all that is left is £6 per

week average strike pay.

Even the blacking of Peugeot-Citroën parts — attempted by delegations of stewards without involving the rank and file — has been broken. A ship carrying 8,000 Talbot car kits for the Iran National Car company's Paykan car sailed from Newport docks on Thursday 11th.



Despite previous assurances from the dockers, union officials scabbed on the Talbot stewards' appeal. Talbot bosses have warned that the Iranian contract, on which Stoke's immediate future depends, will be lost

if the action continues.

But the mood is very bitter, and the stewards will recommend staying out. The vote is likely to be close. The company has made no improvement on the offer accepted by the Ryton workers. And with an antiquated plant Stoke's future is bleak even if a return to work is agreed.

If the vote is to continue strike action, then mass picketing to prevent Peugeot-Citroën-Talbot cars entering Britain from abroad will be vital. Ryton's production depends on engines from the Stoke plant, but Ryton itself is not necessarily a part of Peugeot-Citroën's plans.

RICHARD PAINE

# KEEP IT LEGAL KEEP IT SAFE!

continued from p.1

because this is a matter of how much money you've got. If you are well off, you can always get an abortion, always were able to get an abortion, and not a backstreet one, and you will always be able to get an abortion even if this legislation goes through.

"So this really is one law for the rich and another for the rest of us. I think we must keep that in the forefront of our minds, because that kind of private clinic is not going to disappear.

"The fourth difficulty

which he is introducing is to extend the conscience clause...Of course, the answer to all this is the growth, which I feel we won't get under the Tory cuts, of daycare clinics. Working in them is voluntary...there is no pressure put on anybody. This is something which I had hoped, under a different kind of government and without a Corrie, we might have been working towards a greater extension of."

In terms of voting figures alone, defeating the Bill seems almost impossible. But a massive mobilisation could change that, exerting considerable pressure not only on those MPs who abstained, but also on those who supported the Bill at its second reading but are forced to reconsider their position by vocal public opposition.

March Sunday October 28th. Mass demonstration called by the TUC: assemble at Speakers' Corner (Marble Arch) 11.30, march to Trafalgar Square.

# 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 20 OCTOBER.** Conference on the education cuts in Avon. University settlement, Barton Hill, 9.30-5pm.

**THURSDAY 25 OCTOBER.** Manchester Workers' Action meeting, 'Fighting racism and fascism', 7.45pm, Packhorse Hall, near Deansgate Station.

**FRIDAY 26 OCTOBER.** Abortion rights, maternity leave, nurseries, under attack — Fight back for women's rights. Speakers: Mary Corbishley (Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights) and Mandy Williams (Islington NAC). 8pm, at the General Picton, Caledonian Rd/Wharfedale Rd, Kings X.

**SATURDAY 27 OCTOBER.** 'Liberation' conference on Ireland, from 10am at NUR Hall, Euston Rd, London NW1. Credentials £1 from 'Liberation', 313 Caledonian Rd, N1 (01-607 0465).

**SUNDAY 28 OCTOBER.** TUC demonstration against the Corrie Bill. Assembles 11.30, Hyde Park.

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

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# Socialist Organiser

SCLV/Socialist Organiser Conference: November 24th in London. Write for details to John Bloxam, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

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