

# WORKERS' ACTION

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## Doing the Lambeth walk Against the cuts

NEARLY 10,000 people braved the driving rain on November 7th to demonstrate in support of Lambeth Council's stand against the cuts.

Scores of trade union banners — including the national banners of the CPSA, the AUEW, the FBU, and ASTMS — mingled with banners from dozens of Labour Parties, from tenants' associations, and from the untiring chapters of the National Union of School Students.

The most frequently heard slogans were 'Tories Out! No Cuts!'

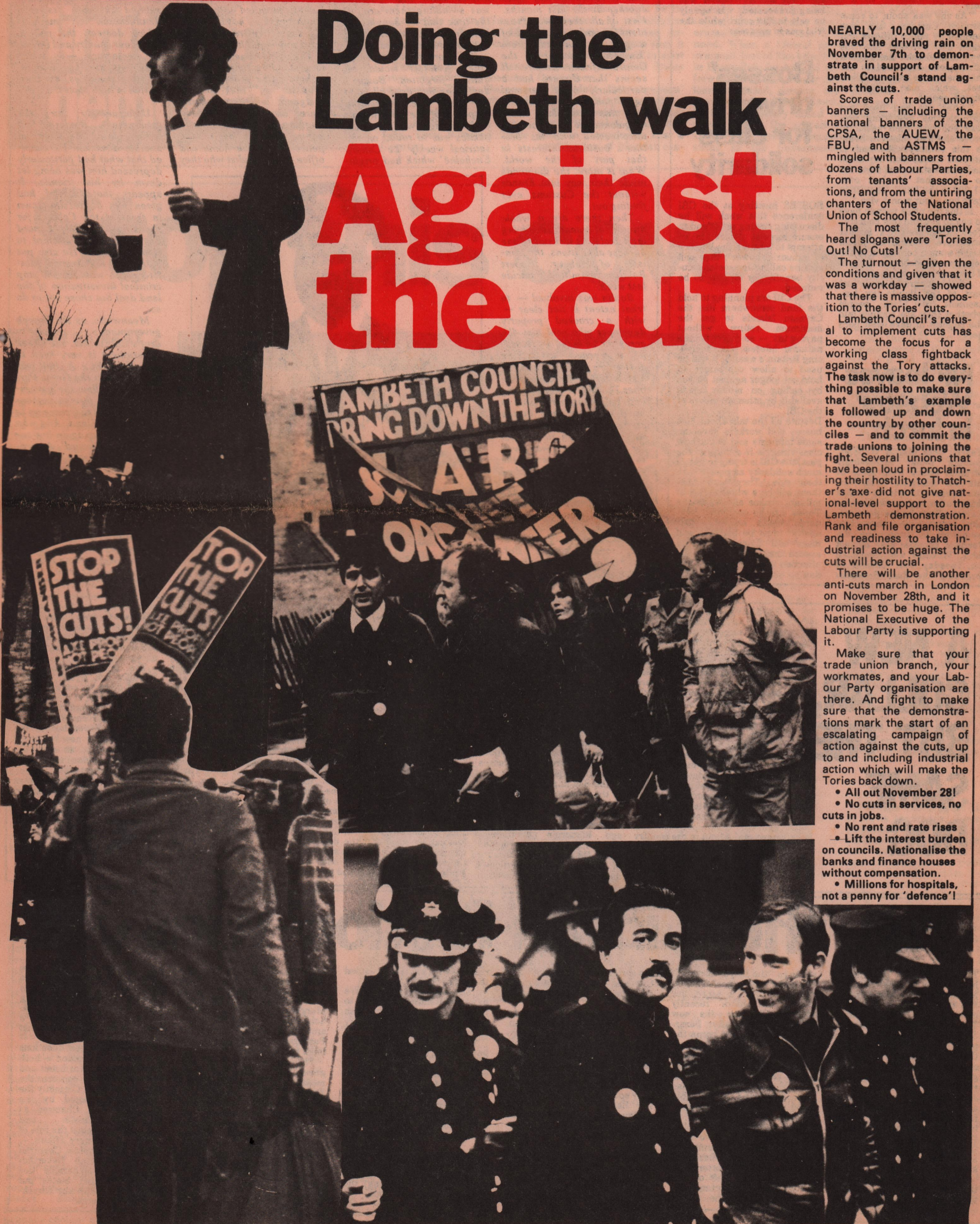
The turnout — given the conditions and given that it was a workday — showed that there is massive opposition to the Tories' cuts.

Lambeth Council's refusal to implement cuts has become the focus for a working class fightback against the Tory attacks. The task now is to do everything possible to make sure that Lambeth's example is followed up and down the country by other councils — and to commit the trade unions to joining the fight. Several unions that have been loud in proclaiming their hostility to Thatcher's 'axe' did not give national-level support to the Lambeth demonstration. Rank and file organisation and readiness to take industrial action against the cuts will be crucial.

There will be another anti-cuts march in London on November 28th, and it promises to be huge. The National Executive of the Labour Party is supporting it.

Make sure that your trade union branch, your workmates, and your Labour Party organisation are there. And fight to make sure that the demonstrations mark the start of an escalating campaign of action against the cuts, up to and including industrial action which will make the Tories back down.

- All out November 28!
- 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.
- Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'!



## Racism at Heathrow

ON SATURDAY October 20th a 73-year old grandmother was given a vaginal search at Heathrow Airport by police-women. Her granddaughter told Workers' Action:

"My grandmother who comes from Guyana, South America, had come to this country on holiday to visit her grandchildren for the first time.

"As she was about to come through Customs, she was stopped by police officers and taken into a room. She was then told to take her clothes off. No one explained to her that she was to have a medical test, which also includes a vaginal search.

"After she had been put through this degrading process she was then asked to prove she had relatives living in this country. She had to produce letters from my uncle and a bank statement from him to show that he had over £1,000 in the bank. They then gave her a four month visa."

Is this the price women have to pay to get into this country? Yes... if you are black. Similar tests have been carried out on Asian women coming in to the country, supposedly to find out if they are virgins.

All this degradation is just part of the day-to-day harassment of black people whether they are coming into the country or have been born here.

## NF leaves Webster in lurch

Fascist boss Martin Webster, coming under increasingly strident attack from some of his own 'comrades' in the National Front, came in for further humiliation last week. Despite heroic efforts by the prosecuting counsel to have him acquitted by presenting the feeblest possible case against him, Webster was convicted on Tuesday 30th October of breaking the Race Relations

Act. Webster was so deflated that he decided not to appeal.

What must have upset him most was the way the NF itself virtually ignored his case, only a small handful of members turning up at Kingston Crown Court to show their support. In fact at his first appearance on Monday morning not one fascist was there to greet him.

When the rank and file did finally show up, however, they met with great consideration from court officials. National Front News, the irregular sheet for which Webster was being prosecuted, was openly on sale in the court while the trial was in progress.

## Bosses' drive for class solidarity

BOSSSES meeting at the CBI conference this week will be discussing setting up a fund to ensure against strikes. In an attempt to 'change the balance of industrial power', they will also be calling for social security benefits for strikers to be reduced.

The CBI are planning to hold the fund somewhere like the Cayman Islands to get the maximum return without paying tax — so much for the national interest and increasing Britain's wealth! It will be used to allow companies to hold out longer against strikes by calling on money made available by other members of the CBI.

Despite all the talk about how bosses and workers have the same interests and about how class struggle is a thing of the past, the CBI is trying to get as much solidarity as possible on their side. They know that there will be a whole series of militant strikes ahead, as the Tories attacks on living standards begin to bite. Our answer must be blacking and mass and flying pickets to ensure that strikes are really effective from the very first day

# In Britain, he'd be in the Honours List...

TRY AS IT MAY, the French government seems unable to avoid the series of scandals that have come one after another in the last months. First of all, there was President Giscard's acceptance of a gift of diamonds from 'Emperor' Bokassa of the Central African Empire. It seems that Giscard had a particularly close personal and political relationship with this particularly nasty megalomaniac — a fact not unconnected with his brother's business interests in that part of the world. What is more, the diamonds made their way into France without the Customs ever finding out.

Then there are a whole number of scandals involving land deals. As a result of one of these allegations, the Minister of Labour, Robert Boulin committed suicide last week.

Boulin was involved — to what extent is not clear — with a crooked property developer who sold him 4½ acres for £40,000. In return, he intervened 'as is the custom' — as he put it in his last letter — for the developer Tournet, who was trying to get planning permission to build on other land in the area. Planning permission was never given to Tournet for this land, but it was given to Boulin, and as a result, the value of his land multiplied several times.

This however is not the main part of the accusations — it is apparently considered fairly normal to use one's political position to help one's friends. But, before Boulin had bought his piece of land, Tournet had

previously sold it to other people without registering the deal. It is alleged that Boulin knew that Tournet was swindling them around the time that he bought the land from Tournet, who had been a personal friend of his.

If Giscard hoped that the other scandals would be quickly forgotten, Boulin's death has shattered all hope of that. The immediate response of the government and the right-wing political parties was to round on the satirical weekly 'Le Canard Enchaîné' which had origin-

ally published the allegations about Giscard's diamonds and Boulin's property deal. The paper was accused of having hounded Boulin to death and there has been talk of legal restrictions on what can be published.

The government has a long-standing hatred of 'Le Canard'; five years ago the Minister of the Interior resigned when policemen were caught red-handed bugging its offices. Shortly before Boulin's death, the police raided the home and office of a journalist who they

thought had been giving the paper information.

But they weren't alone. The Communist Party chimed in with its own denunciation of 'methods which demean the political life of our country and threaten democracy — by which they meant 'Le Canard' printing the news, not corruption in high places!

Unfortunately for the government, Boulin's last letter pointed the finger in another direction. He claimed that what had particularly depressed him was being let down by his friends. It appears that Giscard had given him a dressing-down in front of the Cabinet for speaking to 'Le Canard Enchaîné' in an attempt to clear his name. He also put blame on the Justice Minister, who was able to stop criminal investigation of the land deal but chose not to do so.

Meanwhile, as the French government's popularity drops still further, the Greek government is very keen to join the EEC. A bill was introduced in the Greek Parliament to allow the government to give foreign personalities helpful to Greece up to 1500 acres of land. And who should crop up again but our old friend Giscard! According to a Greek Socialist Deputy he has been presented with — what a coincidence! — 1500 acres of woodland rich in archaeological treasure to see him through his old age. Is there a contest in the French government to see who can get the best villa to retire to for the smallest price?



Bokassa (above) has now been overthrown — and replaced by a former henchman who also has close links with France

## A NEW COLLAR, BUT THE SAME DOG

EL SALVADOR, the smallest country in Latin America, has had a singularly uninspiring history. The only two events to have caught the world's attention this century have been the massacre of 20,000 peasant rebels by the National Guard in 1932 and the pathetic little war between El Salvador and Honduras ten years ago, which was sparked off by a football match.

El Salvador, like other Central American 'banana republics', is nothing more than a piece of real estate run by a military establishment acting as property guards for a few rich families. Ever since independence from Spain 160 years ago, the '14 families' who own most of the land in the country have rigged elections and maintained a system of repression to keep themselves in power and the rest of the popu-

lation condemned to a life of poverty, illiteracy and an early death.

Yet the rich in El Salvador today are at panic stations. The reason? Revolution in nearby Nicaragua. The Sandinist victory over Nicaraguan dictator Somoza has shown the peoples of Central America that they can have a future and can make their countries into something other than economically stagnant backwaters run by comic opera generals whose behaviour towards the masses is nothing to laugh about.

The rise in popular struggle in the aftermath of the Nicaraguan events made the Salvadorean armed forces oust General Romero a fortnight ago. Romero's government, which for a time was denied direct US military aid because of 'human rights violations', dealt with political dissent in

the time-honoured manner of petty Latin American tyrants — he simply had demonstrators shot down on the streets at point blank range. In the weeks following the fall of Somoza, however, General Romero discovered the word 'democracy' but his difficulty in pronouncing it made the '14 families' put another officer in charge of running the show.

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The new regime promises elections, land reform and amnesty for political prisoners. The changes are purely cosmetic. One of the first acts of the new regime was to declare a state of seige and suspend constitutional rights. "All that has happened is that the dog has changed its collar. It is still the same dog," was how one student accurately summed up

the change of regime.

Some political prisoners have been released, but others, particularly workers engaged in factory occupations which have swept the country recently, have been thrown in jail. Armed clashes have also occurred between the National Guard and guerilla groups seeking to repeat the successes of the FSLN. On Monday 29th October, about 30 people were killed in a battle between government forces and the Popular Leagues.

The people know from experience that the new junta's claim to be building a democratic pluralist society is just eyewash. The same claims were made in 1962 when the military promised reforms shortly after the Cuban Revolution. A few months later the police ran riot in the university, demonstrators were

shot down in the streets, opponents were thrown in prison and another general won all 54 seats in the National Elections. He was of course unopposed.

The armed forces in El Salvador are trying to keep the lid down on society whilst trying to get rid of the steam of popular discontent. The American government, clearly the prime mover behind the recent coup, is now resuming military aid in an effort to stamp out popular insurrection in the Caribbean area.

The US marines have always been the last defence for naked dictatorship in the region.

Carter's noises against Cuba are a thinly veiled threat to use US troops against the people of El Salvador and American imperialism will find that road difficult to block.

BAS HARDY

# Iran: the 'Libyan faction' wins out

THE IRANIAN government headed by Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan has resigned, and this time Ayatollah Khomeini has accepted the offer. The Islamic Revolutionary Council — whose powers were probably much greater than the government's in any case — has now been formally given the responsibility for running the country.

The resignation comes after a long period of factional warfare within the leading circles in Iran. For some time now, the Bazargan-Yazdi-Chamran faction have come under heavy attack from a number of different clerical factions.

The bitterest opponents of this government group were those around Ayatollah Montazeri and his son, often refer-

red to as 'the Libyan faction'. For months Bazargan's feebleness has been a target for attack, but more recently Mostafa Chamran, the new defence minister after Bazargan's reshuffle, has borne the brunt of the assault.

Chamran was the military leader of the Lebanese Shi'ites whose religious leader is (or was) Moussa Sadr, who has been kidnapped — possibly killed — by the Libyan government. Yazdi is a relative of Moussa Sadr.

The past weeks have seen the anti-Bazargan campaign take on a new form. Bazargan and his close supporters are accused of being soft on the United States and on imperialism in general. The accusations are partly true — Cham-

ran certainly has links with the CIA and the others are pro-American — and partly demagogic.

The occupation by students of the US Embassy in Tehran and now the British Embassy is in reality part of a concerted campaign against Bazargan rather than against the Shah. The spokesman for the students occupying the US Embassy spent more time denouncing Bazargan than the US. "Islam," he said, "is a school for anti-imperialism. The Iranian revolution has been and must remain in essence anti-imperialist. But the government of Mr. Bazargan acts always in support of US imperialism, in opposition to the express policy of Imam Khomeini. This is one of the main

reasons why we have occupied the American Embassy."

The spokesman added, "We have no intention of talking to the government, but only with the Islamic Revolutionary Council".

It is not yet clear how the government's resignation will affect the negotiation of a ceasefire in Kurdistan. Certainly the team appointed by the government includes Chamran as well as ex-interior minister Sabbaghian, ex-foreign minister Sahabi and ex-minister of state Forouhar.

Bazargan had certainly come to the conclusion that (at least for the time being and with winter approaching) the government forces could not win in Kurdistan. The swift

success of the army and Revolutionary Guards last August and September were a hollow victory. Now, the Pesh Mergas, the Kurdish guerillas, hold virtually all of Kurdistan and the death-toll among the Pasdaran, the Guards, has been very high.

The resignation of the government almost certainly means that the Council of Experts, which it had been pushing to abolish, will continue to exist. Rumours abound that the reactionary pro-Khomeini Kurdish cleric, Ayatollah Muftizade, is to be brought onto the council as a representative of the Kurds.

While the prospect of a negotiated settlement has led the Kurdistan Democratic Party to stop its (limited)

guerilla activities, the more militant Kurds, under the leadership of Sheikh Ezzeddin Hosseini are maintaining military activity and in Mahabad recently, they staged a huge demonstration against the government.

One of the biggest questions in the present situation — both with respect to Kurdistan and the rest of Iran — concerns the role of the army. Certainly the army was enraged by the appointment of Chamran as Defence Minister and campaigned against the role of civilians in military affairs — that is, both against Chamran and the Pasdaran. Nevertheless, their considerable ties with the United States put them at odds with any Libyan-type development.

# NUCLEAR POWER

## A lesson on the limits of democracy

THE FIRST argument against the revolutionary left is usually that we are undemocratic, meaning that we do not accept the rules of the Parliamentary game. When we reply that the capitalist class only respects Parliamentary democracy so far as it remains in its interest to do so — and that therefore the working class must do likewise — many find the answer somehow abstract and far-fetched.

An article in the Sunday Telegraph last Sunday, 4th, shows what we are talking about.

Telegraph columnist Peregrine Worsthorpe discusses a book on Philby, Burgess and Maclean. The crime of these people is of course clear to him, as to every Tory. They Betrayed Their Country.

But Worsthorpe, being a maverick, thinks aloud a bit further. Can there be a loyalty above loyalty to country, he asks. He answers: yes, class loyalty.

He does not use exactly those words, but the idea is clear. "I could easily imagine myself being tempted into a treasonable disposition under a Labour Government dominated by the Marxist Left.

"So shocking might be its programme of collectivisation, expropriation and enforced egalitarianism that it became quite natural to start looking to the United States for succour..."

Wouldn't this 'treason' offend against the principles of Parliamentary democracy. Yes. "But what if one had come to a conclusion that a combination of Marxist con-

trol of the big trade unions and of the Labour Party had effectively undermined the democratic system in all but name...?"

Worsthorpe speculates about helping the CIA to "destabilise" this far-Left government". Like in Chile? And like in Chile, too, presumably, an Army coup against the elected government would be permissible.

In fact Britain's army has already shown it is willing to defy Parliamentary government when it sees the need. When a Liberal government looked like bringing in Home Rule for Ireland before World War 1, Army officers mutinied, forcing the government to back down. In 1974 the Army failed to move against the sectarian Ulster Workers' Council strike as the Government

wanted it to.

Many people in the labour movement now are discussing how to make sure that the next Labour government really acts in the interests of the working class. Worsthorpe's article shows us that if a Labour government even attempts any serious reforms — say, abolishing the monarchy and House of Lords, withdrawing troops from Ireland against the wishes of the Army, and enforcing a £60 minimum wage and a 35 hour week — the ruling class is likely to move against it outside Parliament.

That does not mean serious improvements are impossible. It means that they can only be gained by the mobilisation of the working class outside Parliament to take on and defeat the bosses and their State.

# Stop this cover-up

by JANE FAIRFAX

AMERICA's nuclear watchdog body this week imposed a moratorium on new operating licenses, pending a further inquiry into the safety of the nuclear power industry. But in France the industry is brazening out the discovery of major faults in 25 (out of a total of 26) of its stations. The government has reacted to the faults by imposing a ban on any more information getting out.

Two new stations have been started up in the past fortnight, at Gravelines and Tricastin, despite the faults.

At Gravelines near Dunkirk, fuelling up was delayed by a sit-in strike organised by the CFDT after similar cracks to those in the existing stations were found near the reactor core. The authorities made reassuring noises — they carried out new checks and issued the 'all-clear', which duly convinced the other union federation involved, the CP-led CGT. The CFDT abandoned its action the next day.

But according to Shoja Etemad, a senior nuclear engineer until recently employed by France's nuclear consortium Framatome, no such all-clear could be given. Writing in the *Guardian* on October 25th, he says: 'The cracks are irreparable by any known technology at present'

### Cracks

He continues: 'In normal engineering practice the (cracked) plates should be replaced. But the material cost, and the costs in loss of time, would be high. The French authorities have said that the plates are safe for the time being and that, in five or six years, robots will be able to go into the reactor area and carry out repairs. No such technology exists.'

He recounts: 'The cracks were first noticed on one tubular plate last summer at Framatome and Chalom. But checking through others which had already been through the sophisticated procedure of Nuclear Quality Assurance, we found that the same cracks were present in a number of others both at Chalom and ... also in part of the primary piping close to the junction with the reactor zone. The (cracked) tubular plates should normally stop any contact between the primary coolant and the secondary coolant. Contact would involve hazards.'



The pressure of anti-nuclear protests in West Germany [left] has resulted in all new domestic orders for nuclear plant since 1975 being blocked in the courts. But the State still keeps its curtain of secrecy: below, the National Guard outside a US reactor

'A team of engineers, of which I was a member, were entrusted with testing the cracks to see whether they will grow big enough and fast enough to allow coolant to leak. Our primary findings concluded that they grew most as a result of the frequent normal operational temperature transients of power station load change.'

'The French safety authorities did not share our concern and gave the go-ahead to use them despite the fault and without having found a way of repairing them. These cracks are hazardous in themselves, but most important of all, they open up the possibility of another independent failure during a sudden change of conditions in the system as a result of an accident. (Thus) we are consciously providing less safety protection than we regarded as necessary before Three Mile Island.'

### Mix

In fact by the time his article was printed, the cracks had grown dramatically at Bugey-2 station near Lyons, and were allowing the highly radioactive primary coolant to mix with the secondary coolant. The same issue of the *Guardian* carried a report by the paper's science correspondent Anthony Tucker, where he writes: 'The fact that primary coolant is reaching the secondary circuit implies that the cracks, known to be in critical parts of the system, have grown.'

'And if they have grown at Bugey, where there have



been no known abnormal incidents in the operation of the reactor, they will most probably also have grown on all the other faulty components at other power stations.

'If there is a failure at the collar there will be a nuclear accident of major proportions with a widespread loss of radioactive material', said a French nuclear engineer yesterday.

'Circulation of radioactive primary coolant in the secondary circuit—which drives the turbines — means that the turbine hall will become radioactive, and that doses transmitted to the workforce will be larger than normal.'

The French stations are of the same pressurised water type as the Three Mile Island reactor (and which the British government plans to introduce) which, supposedly without any major faults such as the French ones have sprung, came the closest to a disaster we have yet seen.

But it now seems that there was a major fault in addition to the accumulated minor failings like jammed valves and operating mistakes. Though the Kemeny report into Three Mile Island, commissioned by President Carter, lays great stress on these, behind the scenes hurried changes are being made in the emerg-

gency core cooling systems of all 71 US reactors.

Shoja Etemad comments: 'The US Nuclear Regulatory Commission believes that two of the six failures at Three Mile Island were due to human errors. One was switching off of the safety injection by the operator during the incident. But the NRC was not present at the scene at the time and statements by the utility officers were contradictory. Considering that plant after plant is now being re-equipped with a more powerful safety injection system, would it not be more plausible to infer that the safety injection system simply failed to cool

down the reactor and was not switched off by mistake?

'But the NRC did not and cannot agree to that conclusion. If it did, it would have admitted authorising the reactor to operate with a deficient injection system. It is easier to blame an operator for he can be seen to make mistakes. The NRC cannot.'

The Kemeny report did in fact attack the NRC, as having dithered during the crisis and being in general too much a creature of the nuclear industry bosses. But the suggestion of scrapping the NRC was one of a number of recommendations whose common factor was that they are dirt cheap (eg evacuation plans and better training). This is however somewhat double-edged, exposing the industry as too careless to bother even with adequate training of control room operators.

The recommendation that Kemeny failed to make — for a moratorium on new licences — has now been forced on the government by the real lessons of Three Mile Island. But it is a small concession to safety: 71 plants continue to operate and we have yet to find out what else the Kemeny report covered up under its whitewash.

### Dark

Perhaps the biggest fault of all is ignorance. Etemad comments bitterly about the secrecy which keeps technicians and operators in the dark as well as the public. He tells how the tendency for the water pressure indicator to fail was known to French engineers, but not to the operators at Three Mile Island 'and to anybody else who may, perhaps, have assisted with a solution at the time of that crisis.' He describes how every new understanding that is gained reveals just how ignorant the engineers were before. 'Naturally there were and are safety coefficients provided for our ignorance and still giving a good safety margin. But we have been watching that safety margin decrease more and more every year. 'Have we reached the bottom of the barrel? Perhaps the secrecy is protecting our ignorance and not the reactor.'

Two things we know for certain: that governments like France's are not even concerned to get adequate safety measures for nuclear reactors — and that when governments like the US's give us figures for risk and safety, it is all based on bluff.

# Women's rights: the fight in the labour movement is central

Dear Workers Action,

I was very worried by the article by Mandy Williams about abortion rights; at a time when women are coming under such severe attack it is very important that socialists are clear about how to lead the struggle for the defence and extension of women's rights.

The statement "It seems unlikely that women will achieve abortion on demand until they take the means into their own hands and make safe early methods such as menstrual extraction their property" is concurrent with radical feminist ideas that women's rights can be won under capitalism by the rejection of men.

Abortion on demand means access to abortion on the NHS. Menstrual extraction even if widely used can by no means meet the needs of all women needing abortions. It can only be useful if a woman realises immediately her period is late that she may be pregnant and decides there and then that she doesn't want to be. Menstrual extraction is one of a number of methods which should be provided on the NHS. Of course, women who decide to do their own should not be victimised but that is by no means a solution.

Nor is the formation of a militant suffragette type campaign as suggested in Spare Rib the answer. The Tories do not care if women wear black

arm bands, tie themselves to railings or even die for the cause. It isn't a moral issue at stake. If it was why would the Tories introduce such a Bill knowing it will lead to the death and suffering of hundreds of women as was the case before the 1967 Act. Nor is it a question of cost because we know that abortion is cheaper than childbirth. And we must remember that it was the war that helped women get the vote.

The Corrie Bill is part of an overall offensive by the Tories to force women back into the home and weaken their ability to organise at work. [They want to use "the family" to hide women's unemployment figures, ensure that men are the sole breadwinners and therefore less willing to risk their jobs etc]. The Corrie Bill will also mean the flourishing of private clinics and backstreet abortionists. Overall it is one means which the Tories have for defending the interests of profit at a time of an economic crisis.

This offensive can only be answered by the organised labour movement at the point of production. Strike action is not just a nice idea it is the only means by which we will be able to defend and extend our interests if this Bill gets through. It is up to socialists to ensure that NAC orientates to the working class in such a

way as to enable us to win. To do so the recall of the Trade Union Conference is needed. And NAC groups should be building caucuses in the workplaces, holding regular factory gate meetings and leafletting and ensuring that abortion is on the agenda of all labour movement conferences etc. And that the fight against the cuts is taken up by NAC.

Fraternally,  
CHRISTINA GOODWIN

I AGREE with Christina Goodwin that fighting in the labour movement is central in the fight for women's rights, and that strike action is immensely important. But I do not think that strike action is the only way to fight, particularly in the immediate future.

The radical feminist idea that women can, under capitalism, build themselves an alternative women's society which meets all their needs is, of course, incorrect, and shares no ground with socialism. But it is a valid part of our fight for women to control their lives more effectively that they win not only the right to decide whether or not to have an abortion, but in many cases the right and means to perform it if they choose.

Menstrual extraction, practised monthly by the woman or by another, whether or not she has conceived, is a safe and

efficient guard against pregnancy. It replaces both contraception and abortion for most women. Of course, other methods are required for abortion later in pregnancy, for the woman who becomes ill or who changes her mind.

Vacuum aspiration, as practised by women's groups abroad and by the NHS and charities here as an early abortion technique, is not as universal a solution, and requires a more informed and experienced practitioner than does menstrual extraction, but not medical qualification.

It is, as Christina Goodwin emphasises, important to fight for NHS provision for abortion, for more daycare clinics and against the cuts in hospital services. It is also essential to continue to fight for abortion on demand, beyond defence of the '67 Act, whose restrictions discriminate most against working class women.

Non-medical abortion techniques are not a substitute for this fight, nor a let-out for it. But the fight for the free availability of such techniques — backed up by mass protest action — can very likely be an important part of the fight to restore NHS provision if (as is probable) the Corrie Bill becomes law.

That is what the experience of other countries with restrictive laws indicates. It is also valid and important

by Mandy Williams

## From social engineering to a woman's right

THE 1967 Abortion Act was the culmination of 30 years of reformist politics, with the pressure group ALRA (Abortion Law Reform Association) in the forefront.

In keeping with contemporary reform in homosexual law, divorce law, and other areas, what was seen as enlightened liberalism was in reality more a form of social engineering: the reformers saw abortion as necessary not for the average woman but for women who were medically unfit to bear children, too psychologically disturbed to look after children, who were severely deprived and already had a large number of children, or for girls who were thought too young to be rational in their sexual behaviour.

The old law governing abortions, the Infant Life Preservation Act of 1929, made abortion illegal except to save a woman's life. But after 1935 when a liberal court ruling established a woman's mental or physical health as grounds, the interpretation was used increasingly liberally by progressive doctors.

### Reform

In the mid-1960s, about 10,000 'therapeutic' abortions were performed each year by the NHS, and possibly more than this number in the private sector. Of course, it was the better educated woman in an area with more liberal consultants and psychiatrists who had access to this, and even then they often had to put on a degrading show of desperation and hysteria.

In 1967 David Steel, concerned by the large number of backstreet abortions, and by the inequality in provision between the NHS and the private sector, introduced the Bill which, with some important amendments, became the 1967 Abortion Act.

The need for reform was widely accepted in parliament, and the contentious part was a 'social clause' in the grounds for abortion — the clause which White, Benyon and Corrie have all attacked. The wording concerned the 'woman's capacity as mother' being 'severely overstrained'. Steel was adamant that it is not the intention of the promoters

of the Bill to leave a wide open door for abortion on demand, and the provisions of the Bill were intended to help maintain the family through avoiding overcrowding, extremes of deprivation, etc.

The British Medical Association expressed its 'unwillingness to make non-medical judgments of the sort implied in the 'social clause', and the Gynaecologists' organisation (RCOG) threatened non-cooperation. Both bodies were adamant that abortion should be a medical matter, and that their judgments should be medical rather than social ones.

The Bill was amended to satisfy their demands: terms such as 'well-being' of the woman were substituted for the previous ones. But they were in fact equally

always the more dangerous option, particularly as its dangers had been emphasised by the medical profession (not least to indicate how indispensable it was in the matter). Only Norman StJohn Stevas, a Roman Catholic anti-abortionist, foresaw that when abortion became safer than childbirth, this clause of the Act would provide a 'loophole'.

The Bill was eventually passed with tags suggesting regular review, and possible repeal when the problems with which abortion should help (i.e. desperate poverty) no longer existed.

The minister of Health (for the time) assured parliament that no extra hospital beds would be needed to meet demand, as those previously used for the results of illegal abortions would be

ences in availability led to the growth of the charities to meet demand. The private sector also thrived.

GPs, on the whole, were relatively liberal in their interpretation of the law, as they are in touch with the whole family and its problems. Consultant gynaecologists tended to be much tighter in their interpretation of the law, and the RCOG pronounced itself horrified by the increased demand, some members stating openly that they had no intention of altering the grounds on which they had always permitted abortions. Such differences, aggravated by regional differences, are still acute.

Developments in safer abortion techniques, and a relatively static mortality rate in childbirth, made abortion in general terms, and es-

prepared to do this, and the sympathetic charities, were more easily found by the better educated, more persistent and more confident women. The hurdles that still existed, and which in some areas were quite prohibitive, tended to deny abortions to just those women that the 1967 Act had been framed to help.

In 1972, a survey of the women given abortions by the Pregnancy Advisory Service, one of the two main charities, showed that 73% were single, most were in their early 20s, and few corresponded to the poor married woman with large family that the 1967 parliament had in mind. In addition, a large number of foreign women were able to get abortions in Britain, helped by one of the charities. This, like the supposed 'abortion on demand' for young single women, was seen as an abuse of the '67 Act.

### Abuse

It was clear that the 100,000 women a year were not all in need of abortions for the reasons that the MPs had seen fit to grant it. Most MPs, firmly believing that every normal woman must find happiness and fulfilment in motherhood, planned or not, felt that these far from deprived women were seeking abortions for 'frivolous' reasons — such as wanting to continue studies, to keep a job, to delay and plan motherhood... or even not wanting to have children at all.

Charities particularly came under attack, accused of providing abortion on demand and even of bullying women into having abortions to make profits for themselves. Many MPs were taken in by such lying and sensational material as 'Babies for Burning'. An outcry was set up to tighten the 1967 Act, heedless of the fact that those to be cut off first are inevitably those for whom the Act was primarily intended.

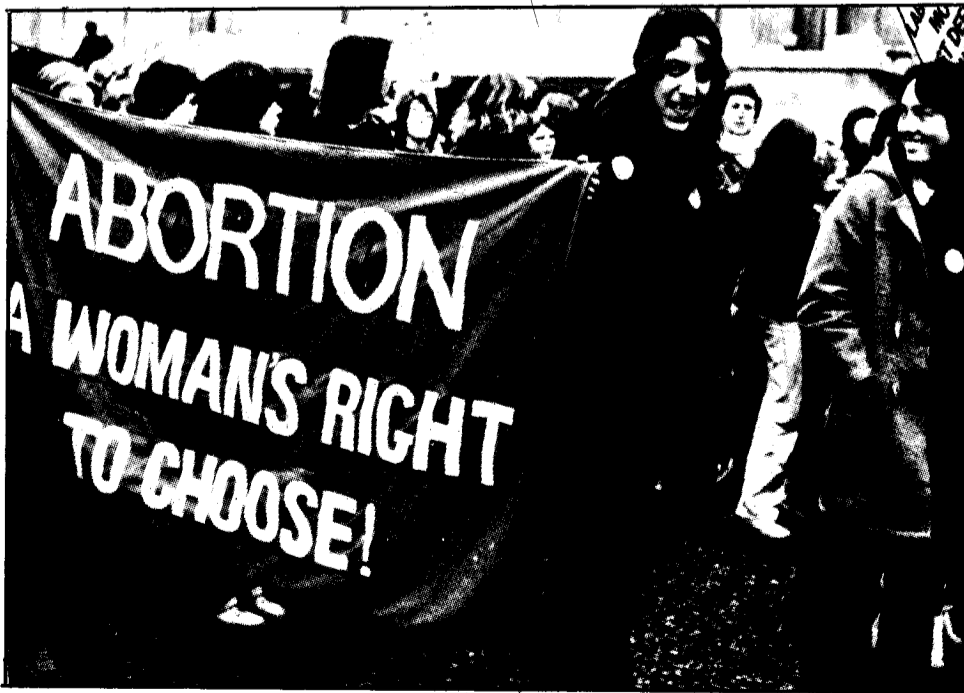
The Lane Committee, appointed to investigate charges of 'abuse' of the '67 Act, spent three years looking at the question, and reported in 1974, largely supporting the Act and its working. It recommended,

## HOW CORRIE WILL TAKE AWAY OUR RIGHTS

The Corrie Bill will:

- ★ cut out the social grounds, and further restrict the medical grounds for abortion. This will reduce the number of legal abortions by about two-thirds.
- ★ destroy the charities by separating the referral and counselling services from the nursing homes, and allowing only doctors or nurses to manage any such service.
- ★ cut the time limit from 28 to 20 weeks: Corrie has hinted at the almost insignificant compromise at 22 weeks. This will still exclude some of the most desperate cases. The World Health Organisation has recommended that there should be no time limit.
- ★ extend the conscientious objection clause so that medical staff can refuse to do abortions [and not be responsible for the results] for any reason, not just the present genuinely held ethical or religious grounds.

apart from better contraceptive services and better sex education, an extension of services to reduce late abortions caused by delays in procedure, that the charities should be licensed. It also concluded that it was in a



woolly and the House of Lords, to help define the 'risk' grounds, added the clause comparing the risk of abortion with that of carrying the pregnancy to term.

At the time, it was assumed that abortion was

free for the vast majority. But demand for NHS abortions was far beyond the government's expectations: 35,000 in 1968 rising steeply to 95,000 in 1971 and subsequently to over 100,000 a year. Marked local differ-

ences in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, a statistically safer option. This 'loophole' gave doctors grounds on which to give women abortion for health reasons regardless of the particular woman's health. But doctors

to challenge the mystique of the medical profession. The present 'right' for doctors to make moral judgements for women is propped up not only by law but also by an assumed doctors' monopoly of knowledge and competence, which in many cases has no valid scientific foundation.

I would take issue with Christina Goodwin's assertion that "strike action... is the only means by which we will be able to defend and extend our interests if this Bill gets through". Strike action at present is likely to be limited to protest strikes, and to limited support by workers on one- or half-day strike for the mass lobby of Parliament planned for the time of the third reading.

Mass demonstrations, not necessarily backed by strikes, can be effective in opposing government policy, as the anti-Vietnam war movement was in the States. And the labour movement must be mobilised not only to oppose the Corrie Bill, but also to support women's self-help groups and the few courageous doctors who defy the Act and continue to perform abortions on the NHS as they think is in women's best interests. The labour movement must be central in a fight to make the Act unworkable and in continuing the fight for free and safe abortions on the NHS.

MANDY WILLIAMS

woman's best interest that the decision remain a medical one. Apart from implementation of the licensing procedures, the substantial and extensive report was almost completely ignored.

Corrie's 242 to 98 Second Reading majority gives its backers an overpowering majority in its committee stage. Thus a bill affecting every adult woman is being considered by a mostly male committee, which also has an enormously high proportion of Catholics on it compared with the population as a whole. (Corrie's side also has a goodly number of pro-hanging MPs on it. So much for the right to life!)

New clauses can be expected to be added in committee, given Corrie's high hopes of getting through. William Benyon has already put forward a clause stating that the comparison of risk from an abortion or from childbirth must be judged on individual grounds, with no reference to statistics. Other suggestions are a father's right to veto, police access to women's medical records (in order to find cases to prosecute), and extension of the time for prosecuting medical personnel as well as extending their liability to prosecution.

## Pay

If the Bill becomes law, it will open up a spate of cuts in NHS abortion facilities, which will in turn accentuate the effects of the restrictive law. (In France, where abortion is legally available on demand in the first ten weeks of pregnancy, two-thirds of the country's hospitals have no provision for abortions and are not obliged to make provisions).

Another possible combined effect of cuts and Corrie is that women seeking abortion might (as has been suggested for car accident victims) be required to pay towards their treatment. In countries with medical insurance and no state health service, abortion is commonly exempt from insurance coverage.

The principle that a woman should control her own fertility is accepted in the form of contraception, after long battles in which it was treated as a moral issue and a threat to the moral fabric of society. We still have to fight for abortion — the only fail-safe for contraception — to be accepted as a woman's right, not a moral or a medical issue.

# POLITICS OF THE CUTS FIGHT: Just Labour or just strikes?

THE LABOUR council in Lothian region, around Edinburgh in Scotland, is defying the cuts as Lambeth is in London. And as from a conference last weekend (3rd), Lothian has an anti-cuts committee as Lambeth has its Fightback Campaign.

But the committee has a much narrower scope of representation and of activity than the Fightback Campaign. The reason why lay in the politics of last weekend's conference, and a battle will have to be waged in the committee and in the local labour movement to get a broader, more active and more political campaign.

The conference was called by Edinburgh and District Trades Council, and largely organised by the TC Executive, on which the dominant influences are the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party. There were 161 trade union delegates.

From the beginning, with the six platform speakers, the conference was dominated by a debate between people emphasising a campaign to convince the public and get a new Labour government, and SWP members arguing for industrial action. And in the course of the conference it became clear that both were aiming wide of the key tasks.

Ron Curran opened on behalf of the Scottish TUC. The cuts fight, he said, must be put into political content of the fight against the Tory government — though we also don't want "another Labour government which will do what the Tories do, except in moderation". We must go out with political arguments which can win "the mass of the population".

The Tories, Curran stressed, "do not have a mandate to implement the cuts. If you look at the figures you will see they only received the votes of one third of the British population".

Rose Galt, president of the Scottish teachers' union EIS, declared: "The sheer weight of public opinion has to overturn the Tory cuts".

Steve Cardownie (CPSA) attacked both Galt and Curran. The fight will be won by industrial action, he said, not by well-meaning phrases. The CPSA has already waged a battle against the Callaghan government this year, and is

implementing an overtime ban. That shows a lead to other unions.

Cardownie continued with an all-out attack on the Labour Party: "Don't fight through Labour Party branch meetings, fight through industrial action".

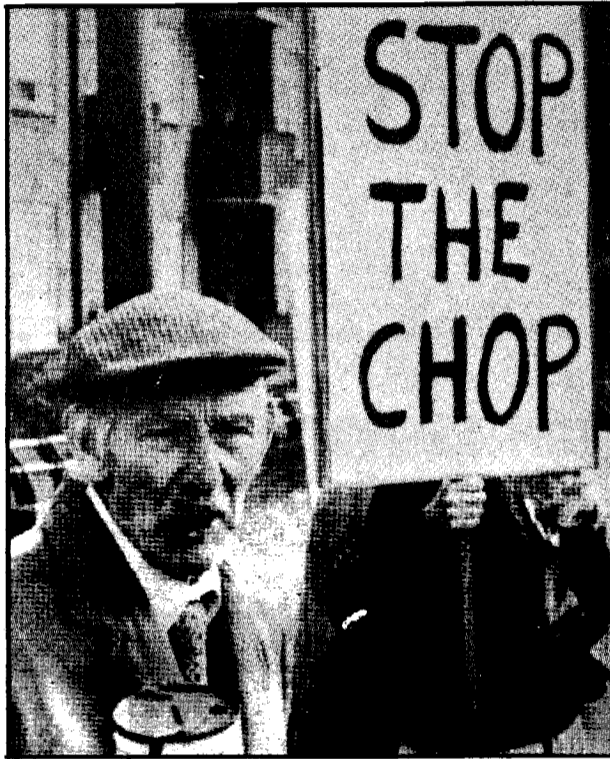
Gavin Strang, MP for Edinburgh East, responded: "Don't tell me that there is no difference between the Edinburgh district, where the Tories are implementing the cuts, and Lothian region". It is daft to ignore the Labour councillors. The conference should back them up.

Asked from the floor by Mick Napier (NUPE) whether he would support Lothian

to be just rhetoric.

Then Trades Council secretary (and SWP member) Des Loughney moved the conference resolution: to oppose all the cuts and to set up an ad hoc committee. The specific remit of the committee was to mobilise for a cuts demonstration in Dalkeith (just outside Edinburgh) on the 10th, and for the national demonstration on the 28th.

This resolution had been drawn up by the Trades Council Executive, and was not circulated beforehand. But Loughney said that no amendments could be taken. Despite all the debate at the conference, there was



"doing another 'Lay Cross' Strang said the situation was "not comparable". Pressed further, he declared he "would not get involved in factional disputes", and sat down.

After the platform speakers, there was a discussion period. SWP supporters denounced Labour perfidy. One EIS delegate summed up their attitude to the council's stand: she did not believe the Lothian Regional Councillors would be able to fight the cuts. Under pressure from the Tories, they would give in sooner or later.

On the other side of the debate, Labour supporters declared they had no confidence in calls for industrial action which seemed to them

no question about the unanimous vote for the resolution.

Shortly before the vote, Jimmy Burnett, a regional councillor, got to speak. "I see my fight on the council as part of the fight against capitalism", he said. "But there is no way the councillors by themselves can defeat the cuts. We have to go out to mobilise the movement".

Burnett also spoke against rate rises: "It's just another cut in working class living standards".

Burnett was followed by Callum McCrae, an EIS delegate and Workers' Action supporter, who argued that it was wrong to counterpose industrial action and getting the Labour council to take a stand. A fight through the labour movement to support the council's stand and make sure it stays

firm is the best way to prepare industrial action; and, equally, only mass action will enable the council to stand firm successfully.

McCrae also called for a broad cuts campaign, drawing in Labour Parties, tenants' associations, and community groups, as well as trade union branches. The conference had been restricted to trade union delegates only.

The conference closed with 17 people being nominated from the floor and accepted as the ad hoc committee.

The limitations of the conference and of the campaign it launched corresponded well to the feeble perspectives of the CP, as the leading force on the Trades Council Executive. The sad thing was that neither the mainstream Labourites nor the SWP effectively challenged the limitations.

"Weight of public opinion" won't stop the Tories. But to put forward industrial action as an alternative to the political work in the labour movement, which can prepare for action and give it a focus and rallying-point, is nonsense. If the SWP just decries and derides the council's anti-cuts stand, it makes itself a factor for defeat, not victory, in the fight against the cuts.

The SWP starts off by idealising industrial action as if it were something quite removed from the rest of the activity of the reformist labour movement. Logically they should refuse to recognise official trade union anti-cuts campaigns, and just counterpose strike committees.

Everyday realities restrain them from that logic — and they end up incoherently recognising trade unions but not the Labour Party, and seeing that it would be a great boost to the struggle if Lothian Labour Council "did a Clay Cross", but forswearing any activity aimed at committing Lothian Labour Party to that perspective.

At the conference, the general talk of industrial action gave no more positive perspective for organising as from now than the general talk of exposing the Tories' policies. The fight for an all-round class struggle perspective remains to be won.

GORDON BREWER

## AAM members demand a turn to the unions

TWO resolutions calling for the effective implementation of sanctions by the labour movement were carried by the Annual General Meeting of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, despite opposition from the executive. The resolutions demanded, in effect, that the AAM shift its focus from lobbying to trade union work.

A motion put by the Zimbabwe Information Group called on the AAM to "increase efforts to mobilise general support within, and practical measures through, the labour movement for the effective and immediate implementation of sanctions against Rhodesia", and "in the event of British military involvement in Zimbabwe, in the form of troops and material or by way of military supervision, to organise a widespread campaign in opposition to any such intervention, whether during a transitional period or under any other circumstances". This was passed with surprisingly little opposition from the Communist Party, which has consistently blocked the AAM taking up the issue of Zimbabwe.

There was more trouble over the motion from the Manchester AA group, which called on the National Executive to "as a major priority, give active support to shop stewards committees and AA supporters in Trade Unions campaigning for the implementation of sanctions in the workplace... and to document its strategy, and circulate it along with other relevant papers, especially those put forward by grass roots activists".

## Snakes

Fred Carneson, a member of the South African CP and NC member, was quick to assume the activity of snakes among the grass-roots, and objected that documents from local activists would be unrepresentative of the AAM (that is, too far left for its executive).

Hugh Bayley, a NALGO official and NC member, referred to trade union sanctions as a "last ditch" resort, to be used only after lobbying parliament and the front line states. His confidence in such lobbying seemed unshaken by the revelations of the Bingham report and the sidestepping of sanctions by BP. A member of the Manchester group defended trade union sanctions as a first hurdle, not a last ditch.

The AAM's preference for lobbying over more effective political action was highlighted in the political report by honorary secretary, Abdul Minty. While he condemned the Labour Party leadership for its complicity in supplying ICL computers and Plessey radar equipment to South Africa, the strongest expression he gave to his condemnation was to call on the AAM to question MPs.

LAWRENCE WELCH

## Potteries: mothers up in arms

DURING the 1960s Keele students had a reputation as being the vanguard of the student movement. Over the last few years that reputation has become tarnished. Now is the time to put Keele back in the vanguard. Those were the words of Linda Balfe, Keele Students Union president, at an emergency general meeting called to discuss cuts in education.

At the beginning of the meeting a representative of the university also spoke, indicating that it supported the union in its campaign against the cuts. An amendment put by the Labour Club to the union committee's motion pointed to the need for the campaign to be against all cuts and for a link-up with other labour movement bodies in the

area already fighting the cuts. The amendment and motion were carried unanimously, and an action committee of six people elected.

Seconding the amendment Arthur Bough, a supporter of WA, told the meeting that though the Tories seem to believe that they have a mandate to dismantle the welfare state, the reaction of local people had shown that it was not acceptable. Spontaneous campaigns of local parents have erupted against nursery school closures, and even Tory appointed governors of nursery schools have supported Labour Party campaigns against closures.

To loud applause, he told the meeting that a mass meeting of local mothers had almost lynched a Tory county council-

lor who came to address them. And a meeting earlier in the week called by Nalگو Action Group and Socialist Organiser had elected five people to organise a broad campaign in the area against the cuts, and to hold a local cuts conference.

Bough called on the union to support this campaign, and the demonstrations in London against the cuts on November 7th and 28th.

The union general meeting drew up a programme of action for the second weekend in November. Starting with an emergency general meeting, there would then be a march around the campus and an all-night vigil on Friday night. On Saturday the students will march from Keele to Newcastle for a rally, followed by a march to Hanley.

The students have called on local bodies fighting the cuts to join this march.

In Hanley the march will meet up with a march organised by the North Staffs Poly students union for an open air public rally in Hanley.

The next week, Nalگو Action together with Socialist Organiser will hold a public meeting in Hanley on fighting the cuts.

Meanwhile over 10,000 people have signed petitions against nursery closures, and campaigns are continuing to spring up.

Many people are annoyed at the amount of publicity received by Labour councillors who have done little of the work. A campaign must be built which is broad-based and democratically controlled by its own activists.

# SCARGILL SAYS: COUNCILS SHOULD BREAK THE LAW

TONY BENN's speech at the LCC rally was loud with warnings of the results of the crisis of capitalism. "A movement is growing up that is aware that capitalism is decaying and that it holds no future for the working class".

Yet, typically, he put forward no programme for working class struggle. Instead he proposed a programme of economic reforms — some positive, but limited, others entirely wrong — which would still leave Britain capitalist. The reforms, of course, would be the work of ministers, not directly of the workers. The workers' role would be the same as the cast-of-millions

in a Biblical epic — marching, milling about, and cheering.

Even when Benn wasn't speaking, he dominated the proceedings. Jack Spriggs, once the convenor of Fisher Bendix and then a director of the KME cooperative that replaced it, remembered the moment when "Tony Benn came to our aid in helping the factory re-open. Wilson let us down. And Callaghan told the Commons that the best way to help KME was to go into liquidation".

And Arthur Scargill was certain that, "If the rank and file of the Labour Party were given a chance, they would elect Tony Benn as leader".

At least Scargill, as opposed to Benn, Jack Spriggs, and Michael Meacher MP, did propose direct action. "Local authorities should be advised to refuse to implement Tory government cuts. Just protesting evokes no response. We must be prepared to break laws. We must not allow local authorities to go to the wall like Clay Cross. Councils should refuse to pay interest rates to money lenders".

If the LCC took that line and if Scargill were prepared along with the LCC trade unionists to try to organise industrially to see it through, the road to victory over the Tories would be open.

# A new star Labour's left same old di

James Davies reports on the

"THE FIGHT" for Party democracy and the fight against Thatcher go hand in hand", declared Frank Allaun MP in opening the Labour Co-ordinating Committee's Activists Conference in Manchester last weekend.

The theme of the whole weekend was the unity between the fight against the right wing within the Labour Party, for Party democracy and for a mass, active Labour Party and the fight against the attacks of the Tory Government.

"Isn't it a degrading spectacle", asked Chris Mulhin, "to see Mr Healey attacking the Tory cuts? Even working up indignation. I don't know how he does it." The conclusion was clear: Party unity around Callaghan and Healey would be a barrier to building the Labour Party and to winning support for the fight against Thatcher.

The advances at the last Labour Party Conference on party democracy were important. Steve Bodington of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy said: "It is only a first step. But it does mean that the ideas we campaigned for have entered into the consciousness of the movement."

Doug Farrer, Chairman of the north West Region of the TUC and a TGWU official, described what life is like for the trade union officials now. "When we go to see a minister now, they just ask us three questions. Have you read our Manifesto? Do you know the size of our majority? Well, what are you here for?" His conclusion: "When Labour gets in again, we should use our majority the way Maggie Thatcher's using hers."

A lot of the 150 activists present certainly wanted a fight against Thatcher, against the Labour Party right wing and for a mass, active and democratic Labour Party. But there was little evidence that the leading figures of the LCC really understood what that implies.

## CIRCLE

A slip of the tongue by chairperson Frances Morrell revealed the reason why. "I think", she opined at the outset of the discussion of the so-called Alternative Economic Strategy, "that most of us here were in the Department of Trade and Industry during Labour's last term of office."

Most of those attending, of course, had been no nearer the said Department than the dark side of the moon. What Frances Morrell obviously meant was that a large part of the inner circle of the LCC were beavering in the backrooms for Benn when he headed the Department of Trade and Industry.

As far as they were concerned, a real possibility

for radical reform had been missed after Labour's last election victory. According to Morrell, Whitehall staffs were expecting the pink flag of reform to be run up from the ministries; they were demoralised, disorganised and frightened ... until Wilson, Callaghan, Healey and the other stalwarts of the Labour right stepped in.

They instructed the faltering civil servants to stand firm against the left — even against the leftists that they themselves had been forced to appoint. Labour, these rightists assured the bureaucrats in Whitehall, had absolutely no intention of carrying out its Manifesto commitments.

Their exclusive focus on governmental power within the parliamentary framework holds the LCC leaders back both from mass struggle and from taking the existing struggles of the working class as a point of departure.

## POWER

This came across most clearly in Francis Cripps' introduction to the discussion of the Alternative Economic Strategy. He was attacked by an ILP speaker for thinking of the strategy as "dry economics".

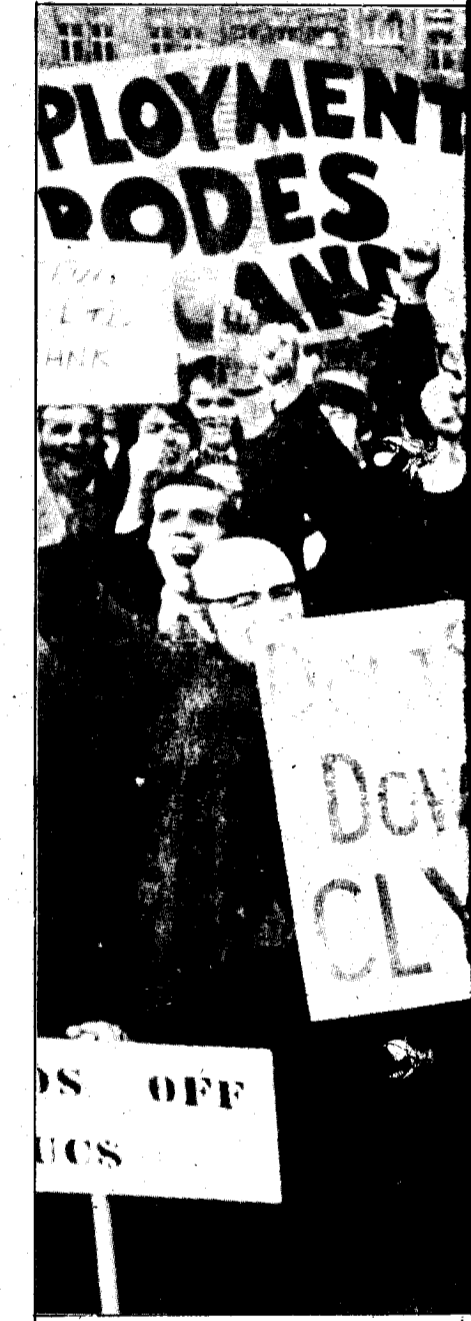
Andrew Hornung, a member of Workers' Action editorial board, agreed. Cripps was planning only what Labour would do in government. He had no answer to those workers who wanted to know what to do now.

Furthermore, Cripps was putting forward plans for what a government could do, but not for how power could be wrested from the capitalist class. Unless the working class does seize power, all the planning and alternative economics in the world will be no use.

Not surprisingly, the LCC leader who came nearest to seeing the need to mobilise the working class was Peter Hain. His background in the Young Liberals showed through clearly: positively in his encouragement of grassroots campaigning work, negatively in his tendency

A SESSION on fighting the cuts came nearest to breaking from the "what should a Labour government do in its first twenty-four hours of office" approach. "Labour councils have to respond now to the Tory attacks", said Lambeth council leader Ted Knight. "Lambeth's position is that despite the cut in the rate support grant, and despite increased interest charges, we will not make any cuts... We will not go for a supplementary rate increase... We will try and make sure Lambeth isn't isolated by taking a lead".

Asked whether he supported raising the rates as a way of stopping cuts, Knight said: "What we do about the rates



Benn at UCS. His period at the Department of Trade and Industry 1974-5 was the golden age for the LCC inner circle.



Will the LCC join the cuts fight?

# Callaghan doesn't trust the Inquiry. But should we?

THE Parliamentary Labour Party last week voted to challenge the NEC's decision about the composition of the inquiry into Labour Party organisation. With 74 MPs absent from the meeting, just over half the MPs present voted for a resolution from the shadow cabinet to demand 'strong representation' for MPs on the inquiry.

James Callaghan used the meeting to begin a new series of attacks on the NEC and the left in the party. He showed his contempt for accountability in the party by describing his visits to the NEC as 'purgatory — being cross-examined and vilified'. Ernie Roberts (MP for Hackney North) told WA: "Callaghan and those supporting him are determined to have more right wing representation on the inquiry. They don't trust the present people on the inquiry."

Yet Callaghan was very careful not to close the doors to a compromise, and rejected calls from right wing MPs to boycott the inquiry if the PLP's demands were not met.

Callaghan clearly believes that, even as at present constituted, the inquiry will recommend some measures that will favour the right. What he is doing now is getting the pressure built up to ensure that it does this.

At a speech in Grimsby he

advocated reorganisation of the NEC so as to do away with the left majority. This kind of threat might, he hopes, bring the left into line, though he has no basis for it. As Dennis Skinner (MP for Bolsover) commented to WA: "At conference, no votes were cast for drawing up the NEC in a different manner. That's what the right wing is after. They don't relish an NEC with a marginal left majority so they want to take the ball away and change the rules".

Such a ploy would suit the right down to the ground. As Ernie Roberts put it "The right can't win positions of leadership through a democratic vote at annual conference. Right wing candidates get put up and aren't elected by conferences. They're not satisfied with that and want to change it".

Callaghan favours either adding representatives from Regional parties and local councils, or setting up a larger body alongside the NEC to meet three or four times a year. This proposal chimes in well with the aims of the right wing union leaders, some of whom are sitting on the inquiry.

They also want to squash the NEC left. Another proposal of Callaghan's was to start a witchhunt against the far left of the party. He argued for taking up again Reg Under-

hill's discredited report on 'Entryism', aimed at driving Militant out of the Labour Party. There are already signs of a campaign by the right wing and the press against the 'unrepresentative' nature of local Labour Parties, as part of a general opposition to the extension of accountability. It is quite likely that this will be stepped up if the inquiry upholds the conference decisions. In the first instance, it is likely to be aimed against those on the far left of the party.

While it is unlikely that the inquiry will overturn the conference decisions, Callaghan is obviously counting on sufficient outside pressure and support from some of the union leaders to push through other changes, such as reorganisation of the NEC.

In response to these threats and pressures, it is not enough to wait for the inquiry to report or for the next party conference. The left must organise to defend the decisions taken by the last party conference, to head off attempts by the right to force their positions through the backdoor of the inquiry, and to ensure that the question of the election of leader is discussed again by conference next year.

If we just rest on our past victories, we may find them being pulled away from underneath us.

to talk in "community" rather than in class terms.

In a document circulated to the Conference, Hain stated: "The Party is ... far too committed to parliamentarianism, so avoiding the task of creating a mass movement outside capable of exerting sufficient power to make feasible socialist change inside Parliament... The aim (of creating a mass party) would not simply be

to rejuvenate but to begin to mandate for Government.

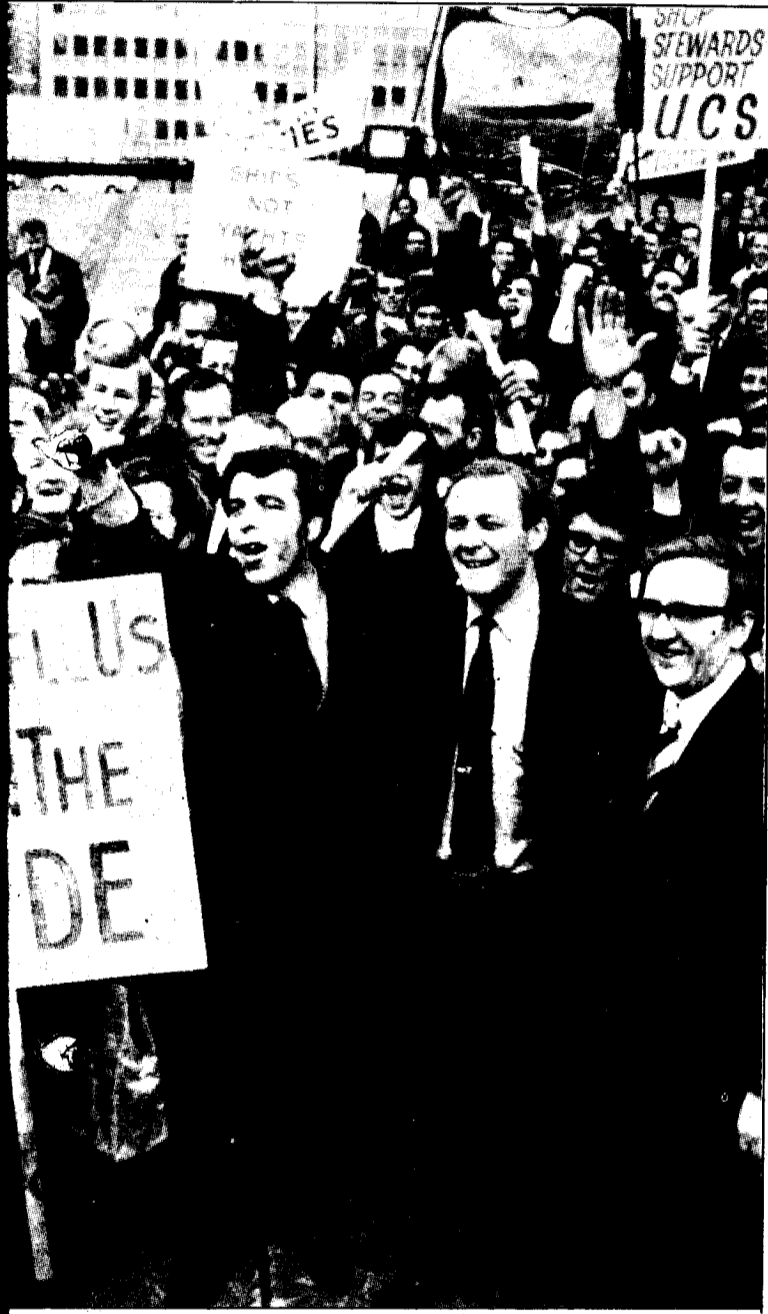
CU But, as Hain pointed out, what Hain's parliamentarianism is more radical well-attended

WA supporters argued that the Lambeth is seen to government as it has massive because it refuses to wriggle out of a supply increase. If Lambeth's rates, the supply has been built up around the council. But the thing for activists is to join with SCLV in mobilising around the council won't be or frightened down.

Other speakers argued that Stanley's view meant accepting the logic of the capitalist system rather than mobilising support for a fightback.

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the LCC conference



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on "Building a Mass Party", he argued that socialists base themselves on working class direct action not to get a mandate for ministerial action, but so that the working class can create the movement and organs of its power.

There was overwhelming support at the LCC Conference for building workplace branches of the Labour Party. Orientating directly to the shop floor would be essential in making the Labour Party responsive to the needs and movements of the working class.

Yet, again, the extremely limited nature of the LCC's radicalism was clear. Doug Farrer wholeheartedly supported the idea of workplace branches, because... they could make a considerable contribution to the Party's financial stability."

There were few industrial workers at the Conference. And the Conference did not decide on any actions that might allow the LCC to mobilise and organise that vast reservoir of working class support that their ideas — that is, basically, Benn's

ideas — have. So long as the Department-of-Trade-and-Industry mentality remains the LCC will be little more than a grass roots movement for Benn as leader of the Labour Party. What is needed is the will to take up the fight in the trade unions, on the shop floor and on the streets.

## FIGHT

Workers' Action disagrees with a great deal the LCC leaders stand for. We think that a number of their policies (like import controls) are not just rather bureaucratic or insufficiently radical, but wholly reactionary. Nevertheless, if the LCC is willing really to fight for Party democracy, against the right wing and against the Tories' attacks, it can begin to rally the forces and open up the battles which will evoke a strong demand for real socialist policies. Socialist Organiser groups will be proposing joint action with the LCC against the cuts as the first step in that direction.

## LCC keeps the postal ballot

THE Annual General Meeting of the LCC took place immediately after the 'Activists' Conference', and was attended by only 60-odd people.

According to the LCC's Organising Secretary, Nigel Stanley, the low attendance showed that most people who were at the conference were satisfied with the way the LCC was going. His view was not shared, however, by a lot of the activists who did stay on.

The way the executive ran and wanted to run the LCC came under fire. A paper on plans for future activities for the LCC — distributed only an hour before the AGM started — was referred back because many people who had differences with it felt there was not enough time for discussion. The Executive had to agree to hold a policy-making conference of the LCC early next year at which views other than those of Executive members could also be put forward.

The main debate came over a proposed constitution for the LCC, drawn up by the Executive, which, despite the LCC's commitment to fighting for democracy in the labour movement, was highly undemocratic.

The Executive retreated in advance over one point. It withdrew a clause that made LCC membership conditional on accepting a platform of policies [including import controls] published without prior discussion in 'Labour Activist' after the LCC had already been recruiting for some months.

On the sweeping powers they wanted to exclude or expel activists from the LCC, the Executive did not retract, however. Colin Barnett, Executive member and secretary of the North West Region TUC, gave no real reason why such clauses should be there — apart from a mumbled and incoherent comment that there might be people who should be expelled for violence in meetings.

The Executive's view was passed — but only narrowly, especially after it was pointed out that people expelled from the LCC would not even have the right to appeal to a full AGM.

Little defence was put up for the system of postal balloting for the Executive. Colin Barnett noted that 'it worked', and that was that... An amendment from Workers' Action supporters Nik Barstow and John Bloxam to give the AGM the right to elect the Executive was narrowly defeated. Supporters of the postal ballot surprisingly included supporters of the Chartist and the ILP.

As an open forum of the left in the Labour Party, the LCC has grave limitations, but the Executive did not succeed in limiting it as thoroughly as some of them might have hoped.

NIK BARSTOW



## The wit and wisdom of Uncle Jim

ASKED which they would prefer to watch on television, a former Labour prime minister or the little white dot after the Epilogue, most people, I think, would opt for the latter. Anybody who saw Harold Wilson with his guests or James Callaghan being prompted by Shirley Williams is likely to become a white-dot supporter for the rest of his or her life.

The most striking feature of the Callaghan interview was the man's feeble moralising. No wonder the ruling class want him out of the way and replaced by someone tougher! The main difference between his preachments and the pronouncements of the Thatcherites was the frequent use of the words 'fraternity' and 'equality'.

Fraternity? Those who struck last winter, he felt, should not have fought to keep themselves above the headline but been a bit more 'fraternal'. Equality? "Social democracy", he thought, "must appeal to greater equality, and I don't mean equality of incomes, obviously".

Had Callaghan perhaps learned any lessons from the 'unfraternal' strikes of last winter? Obviously not. "I am an unrepentant believer in Incomes Policy", he said. So what went wrong, according to him? "You have to win the members on the shop floor... Unless they understand the relation between productivity and earnings, then you will get inflation".

According to Callaghan, the government had the trade union leaders in the bag, but they didn't manage to convert the shop floor workers to acceptance of stage 4 of Labour's incomes policy. "Mrs Thatcher is saying the same thing today and it is true".

Far from any rousing call to action against the attacks of the Tories, Callaghan peddled the kind of idiotic platitude so much beloved of Tory supporters. "People are more selfish these days", "Poverty can give you a

sense of belonging", and "The Labour Party puts too much emphasis on collective action at the expense of individual freedom".

As for Labour's strategy now, all Callaghan could suggest was to "involve people so that they don't feel so alienated". "Industrial democracy has a lot going for it — workers can be involved in investment decisions".

When the questioning

Benn, Callaghan was placatory: "He has some new and fertile ideas which must not be neglected".

The main target of his attack was the Militant tendency, who were accused of dominating political education in the Labour Party.

Prompted by Shirley Williams — "we're seeing a more extreme view than we are used to" — Callaghan was quick to add, "if you have an extreme form of



As 'Uncle Jim' fades, Fleet Street backs Healey to replace him

turned from the domestic scene to foreign policy, Callaghan was no better. He avoided any clear reply on Northern Ireland, but insisted, "I don't want to break our policy of supporting the Government on Northern Ireland in any way we can".

Carter, he thought, is a great fighter — he didn't say for what — and a man of sincerity and integrity. Sadat is a remarkable man. King Hussein is a great man. (Compared with Callaghan's stature, all this may well be true, I suppose). And Begin "has gone further than any other Israeli government in solving the Middle East problem".

Although the interview did not spend long on the present conflict inside the Labour Party, it was obviously dominating Callaghan's thinking. Instead of the expected attack on Tony

Socialism, people will rebel against it... If you say, 'nationalise 200 companies', people will say it's not relevant".

The references here to the Militant tendency again lead further support to the fear that, having lost on the matter of the NEC Inquiry, Callaghan is now planning to get a new investigation going on 'entristm' and hopes it will give the right ammunition for a purge of the Party.

Callaghan is clearly demoralised by his defeats at the Labour Party conference, on the NEC over the Inquiry, and by the ruling class's clear indication that they want him to move over and let Healey be party leader. This performance confirmed his failure both as a leader for the Right and as leader of a Party having the slightest claim to being socialist.

MARY CORBISHLEY

WRITING IN 1903, Rosa Luxemburg here considers the state of Marxism 20 years after the death of Karl Marx and eight years after the death of Friedrich Engels.

She concludes: 'the splendid new weapon rusts unused... the theoretical utilisation of the Marxist system proceeds very slowly. If... we detect a stagnation in our movement as far as these theoretical matters are concerned, this is not because the Marxist theory upon which we are nourished is incapable of development or has become out of date... It is not true that, as far as the practical struggle is concerned, Marx is out-of-date, that we have superseded Marx. On the contrary, Marx in his scientific creation has outstripped us as a party of practical fighters'.

A decade later it would be demonstrated with terrible force just how far the German Social Democracy and almost all the parties of the Second International lagged behind Marxism, even as parties of practical fighters. And the collapse of these parties into chauvinism seemed to pronounce a final verdict on Marxism itself: to show Marxian socialism to have been just one more quasi-religious system to console the working class during the high summer of capitalist prosperity. Revolutionary Marxism seemed to be buried in the graves where the millions of workers misled to fratricidal slaughter in World War I were interred.

Yet, in line with Rosa Luxemburg's explanation, the needs of the working class revolt against the war that soon began generated a great flowering of Marxism in the years following its seeming collapse and destruction. Lenin developed Marxism in the new situation, renovated it, uncovered and exposed the major distortions to which the teaching of Marxism had been subjected by 'servile theoreticians' like Karl Kautsky, concerned to 'square' Marxism with the practice of the Second International by bowdlerising it.

In 1917 the Russian working class, armed with the Marxism of Lenin (and Trotsky), made its great October Revolution. In fact, two years after Luxemburg's 1903 article, Leon Trotsky, drawing upon Marx's analyses of the revolutions of 1848 and responding to the great upsurge of the Russian proletariat, had created the theory of permanent revolution, which was the theoretical framework and perspective within which the Russian Revolution was led by the Bolshevik Party. Drawing on the same experience, Rosa Luxemburg herself had made a notable contribution to theory in her writings on the mass strike.

The Russian Revolution itself led to a great world-wide renaissance of Marxism, in the early Communist International.

Tremendous resources might have been expected to become available for the development of Marxist research with the Russian workers' conquest of state power. In fact within a few years the Stalinist reaction led to the transformation of husks of Marxism into a state semi-religion.

Only the Bolshevik rearguard fighters against Stalinism, notably Trotsky, developed Marxism. Today, as a result of Stalinism, the defeats and betrayals suffered by the working class over many decades, and the peculiar form taken by the anti-capitalist revolutions which have taken place, the Marxist movement has accumulated many theoretical problems. Rosa Luxemburg's article is very relevant today for those who mistake those problems for a death-crisis of Marxism.



IN HIS SHALLOW but at times interesting causerie entitled "Die Soziale Bewegung in Frankreich und Belgien" (The Socialist Movement in France and Belgium), Karl Grün remarks, aptly enough, that Fourier's and Saint Simon's theories had very different effects upon their respective adherents. Saint-Simon was the spiritual ancestor of a whole generation of brilliant investigators and writers in various fields of intellectual activity; but Fourier's followers were with few exceptions, persons who blindly parroted their master's words, and were incapable of making any advance upon his teaching. Grün's explanation of this difference is that Fourier presented the world with a finished system, elaborated in all its details; while Saint-Simon merely tossed his disciples a loose bundle of great thoughts. Although it seems to me that Grün pays too little attention to the inner, the essential difference between the theories of these two classical theorists in the domain of utopian socialism, I feel that on the whole his observation is sound. Beyond question, a system of ideas which is merely sketched in broad outline proves far more stimulating than a finished and symmetrical structure which leaves nothing to be added and offers no scope for the independent efforts of an active mind.

Does this account for the stagnation in Marxist doctrine which has been noticeable for a good many years? The actual fact is that — apart from one or two independent contributions which mark a certain theoretical advance — since the publication of the last volume of 'Capital' and of the last of Engels' writings there have appeared nothing more than a few excellent popularisations and expositions of Marxist theory. The substance of that theory remains just where the two founders of scientific socialism left it.

by  
**Rosa Luxemburg**

Is this because the Marxist system has imposed too rigid a framework upon the independent activities of the mind? It is undeniable that Marx has had a somewhat restrictive influence upon the free development of theory in the case of many of his pupils. Both Marx and Engels found it necessary to disclaim responsibility for the utterances of many who chose to call themselves Marxists! The scrupulous endeavour to keep "within the bounds of Marxism" may at times have been just as disastrous to the integrity of the thought process as has been the other extreme — the complete repudiation of the Marxist outlook and the determination to manifest "independence of thought" at all costs.

Still, it is only where economic matters are concerned that we are entitled to speak of a more or less completely elaborated body of doctrines bequeathed to us by Marx. The most valuable of all his teachings, the materialist-dialectical conception of history, presents itself to us as nothing more than a method of investigation, as a few inspired leading thoughts, which offer us glimpses into an entirely new world, which open to us endless perspectives of independ-

# Stagnation and Progress of Marxism

ent activity, which wing our spirits for bold flights into unexplored regions.

Nevertheless, even in this domain, with few exceptions the Marxist heritage lies fallow. The splendid new weapon rusts unused: and the theory of historical materialism remains as unelaborated and sketchy as it was when first formulated by its creators.

It cannot be said, then, that the rigidity and completeness of the Marxist edifice are the explanation of the failure of Marx's successors to go on with the building.

We are often told that our movement lacks the persons of talent who might be capable of further elaborating Marx's theories. Such a lack is, indeed, of long standing; but the lack itself demands an explanation, and cannot be put forward to answer the primary question. We must remember that each epoch forms its own human material; that if in any period there is a genuine need for theoretical exponents, the period will create the forces requisite for the satisfaction of that need.

But is there a genuine need, an effective demand, for a further development of Marxist theory?

In an article upon the controversy between the Marxist and the Jevonsian schools in England, Bernard Shaw, the talented exponent of Fabian semi-socialism derides Hyndman for having said that the first volume of 'Capital' had given him a complete understanding of Marx and that there were no gaps in Marxist theory — though Friedrich Engels, in the preface to the second volume of 'Capital', subsequ-

ently declared that the first volume with its theory of value, had left unsolved a fundamental economic problem, whose solution would not be furnished until the third volume was published. Shaw certainly succeeded here in making Hyndman's position seem a trifle ridiculous, though Hyndman might well derive consolation from the fact that practically the whole socialist world was in the same boat!

The third volume of 'Capital', with its solution of the problem of the rate of profit (the basic problem of Marxist economics) did not appear until 1894. But in Germany, as in all other lands, agitation had been carried on with the aid of the unfinished material contained in the first volume; the Marxist doctrine had been popularised and found acceptance on the basis of this first volume alone; the success of the incomplete Marxist theory had been phenomenal; and no one had been aware that there was any gap in the teaching.

Furthermore, when the third volume finally saw the light, whilst to begin with it attracted some attention in the restricted circles of the experts, and aroused here a certain amount of comment — as far as the socialist movement as a whole was concerned, the new volume made practically no impression in the wide regions where the ideas expounded in the original book had become dominant. The theoretical conclusions of volume three have not yet evoked any attempt at popularisation, nor have they secured wide diffusion. On the contrary, even among the social democrats we sometimes hear, nowadays, echoes of the 'disappointment' with the third volume of 'Capital' which is so frequently voiced by the bourgeois economists — and thus these social democrats merely show how fully they had accepted the 'incomplete' exposition of the theory of value presented in the first volume.

How can we account for so remarkable a phenomenon?

Shaw, who (to quote his own expression) is fond of 'sniggering' at others, may have good reason here, for making fun of the whole socialist movement insofar as it is grounded on Marx! But if he were to do this, he would be 'sniggering' at a very serious manifestation of our social life. The strange fate of the second and third volumes of 'Capital' is conclusive evidence as to the general destiny of theoretical research in our movement.

From the scientific standpoint, the third volume of 'Capital' must no doubt be primarily regarded as the completion of Marx's critique of capitalism. Without this third volume, we cannot understand, either the actually dominant law of the rate of profit; or the splitting up of surplus value into profit, interest and rent; or the working of the law of value within the field of competition. But, and this is the main point, all these problems, however important from the outlook of pure theory, are comparatively unimportant from the practical outlook of the class war. As far as the class war is concerned, the fundamental theoretical problem is the origin of surplus value, that is, the scientific explanation of exploitation; together with the elucidation of the tendency of socialisation of the process of production, that is, the scientific explanation of the objective groundwork of the socialist revolution.

Both these problems are solved in the first volume of 'Capital', which deduces the "expropriation of the expropriators" as the inevitable and ultimate result of the production of surplus value and of the progressive concentration of capital. Therewith, as far as theory is concerned, the essential need of the labour movement is satisfied. The workers, being actively engaged in the class war, have no direct interest in the question of how surplus value is distributed among the respective groups of exploiters; or in the question of how, during the course of this distribution, competition brings about rearrangements of production.

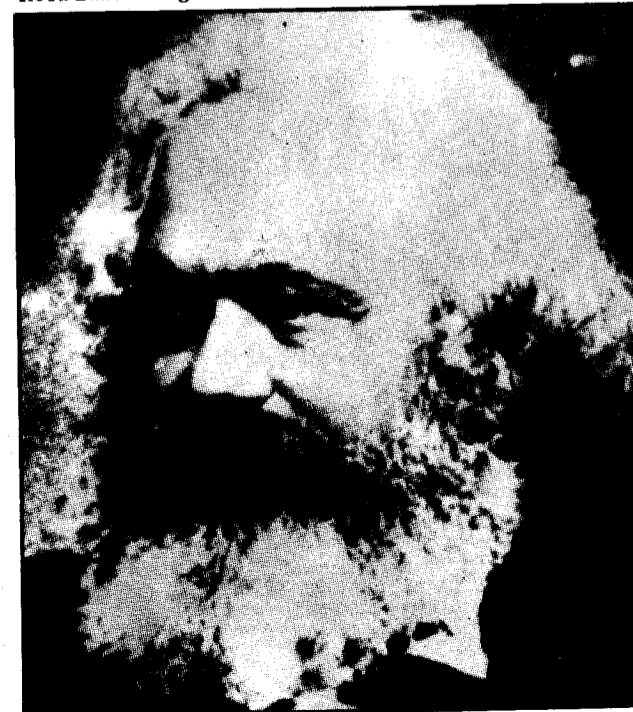
That is why, for socialists in general, the third volume of 'Capital' remains an unread book.

But, in our movement, what applies to Marx's economics applies to theoretical research in general. It is pure illusion to suppose that the working class, in its upward striving, can of its own accord become immeasurably creative in the theoretical domain. True, that as Engels said, the working class alone has today preserved an understanding of and interest in theory. The workers craving for knowledge is one of the most noteworthy cultural manifestations of our day. Morally too, the working class struggle denotes the cultural renovation of society. But active participation of the workers in the march of science is subject to the fulfillment of very definite social conditions.

In every class society, intellectual culture (science and art) is created by the ruling class; and the aim of this culture is in part to ensure the direct satisfaction of the needs of the social process, and in part to satisfy the mental needs of the



Rosa Luxemburg



Karl Marx



members of the governing class.

In the history of earlier class struggles, aspiring classes (like the Third Estate in recent days) could anticipate political dominance by establishing an intellectual dominance, inasmuch as, while they were still subjugated classes, they could set up a new science and a new art against the obsolete culture of the decadent period.

The proletariat is in a very different position. As a non-possessing class, it cannot, in the course of its struggle upwards, spontaneously create a mental culture of its own while it remains in the framework of bourgeois society. Within that society, and so long as its economic foundations persist, there can be no other culture than a bourgeois culture. Although certain 'socialist' professors may acclaim the wearing of neckties, the use of visiting cards and the riding of bicycles by proletarians as notable instances of participation in cultural progress, the working class as such remains outside contemporary culture. Notwithstanding the fact that the workers create with their own hands the whole social substratum of this culture, they are only admitted to its enjoyment insofar as such admission is requisite to the satisfactory performance of their functions in the economic and social processes of capitalist society.

The working class will not be in a position to create a science and an art of its own until it has been fully emancipated from its present class position.

The utmost it can do today is to safeguard bourgeois culture from the vandalism of bourgeois reaction, and create the social conditions requisite for a free cultural development. Even along these lines, the workers, within the extant form of society, can only advance insofar as they can create for themselves the intellectual weapons needed in their struggle for emancipation.

But this reservation imposes upon the working class (that is to say, upon the workers' intellectual leaders) very narrow limits in the field of intellectual activity. The domain of their creative energy is confined to one specific department of science, namely social science. For, inasmuch as "thanks to the particular connection of the idea of the Fourth Estate with our historical epoch", enlightenment concerning the laws of social development has become essential to the workers in the class struggle, this connection has borne good fruit in social science, and the monument of the proletarian culture of our day is — Marxist doctrine.

But Marx's creation, which as a scientific achievement is a titanic whole, transcends the plain demands of the proletarian class struggle for whose purposes it was created. Both in his detailed and comprehensive analysis of capitalist economy and in his method of historical research with its immeasurable field of application, Marx has offered much more than was directly essential for the practical conduct of the class war.

Only in proportion as our movement progresses, and demands the solution of new practical problems do we dip once more into the treasury of Marx's thought, in order to extract from it and to utilise new fragments of his doctrine. But since our movement, like all the campaigns of practical life, inclines to go on working in old ruts of thought, and to cling to principles after they have ceased to be valid, the theoretical utilisation of the Marxist system proceeds very slowly.

If, then, today we detect a stagnation in our movement as far as these theoretical matters are concerned, this is not because the Marxist theory on which we are nourished is incapable of development or has become out of date. On the contrary, it is because we have not yet learnt how to make adequate use of the most important mental weapons which we had taken out of the Marxist arsenal on account of our urgent need for them in the earlier stages of our struggle. It is not true that, as far as the practical struggle is concerned, Marx is out of date, that we have superseded Marx. On the contrary, Marx, in his scientific creation, has outstripped us as a party of practical fighters. It is not true that Marx no longer suffices for our needs. On the contrary, our needs are not yet adequate for the utilisation of Marx's ideas.

Thus do the social conditions of proletarian existence in contemporary society, conditions first elucidated by Marxist theory, take vengeance by the fate they impose upon Marxist theory itself. Though that theory is an incomparable instrument of intellectual culture, it remains unused because, while it is inapplicable to bourgeois class culture, it greatly transcends the needs of the working class in the matter of weapons for the daily struggle.

Not until the working class has been liberated from its present conditions of existence will the Marxist method of research be socialised in conjunction with other means of production, so that it can be fully utilised for the benefit of humanity at large, and so that it can be developed to the full measure of its functional capacity.

# Trotsky on the British Revolution

FOR THE 100th anniversary of Leon Trotsky's birth, this week, we are reprinting some extracts which are particularly relevant in Britain today.

Analysing Britain's decline in 1925, Trotsky foresaw revolutionary upheavals. But in 1926 the TUC General Council betrayed the General Strike — and the British Communist Party, misled by Stalin, failed to rally a strong revolutionary opposition to the General Council. In the late 1920s and the 1930s, with the working class weakened and demoralised by the Depression and the CP moving further and further away from revolutionary politics, the British labour movement's conservatism was strengthened rather than shattered.

Then in the capitalist boom of the 1950s and '60s Trotsky's revolutionary perspectives seemed further away than ever. Britain's relative decline continued, but it was cushioned by the general upswing of world capitalism.

In the 1970s, world capitalism has faltered and stagnated — and Britain's decline makes itself felt cruelly. The revolutionary opportunities of the 1920s will not, of course, be repeated in exactly the same form in the 1970s and '80s. But current developments confirm that Trotsky had grasped the basic dynamics of British capitalism and the British labour movement with remarkable accuracy.

Trotsky showed how the characteristic sluggishness and little-Englandism of the labour movement's leaders derived from Britain's past.

FROM THE PAST history of England, the Fabians have borrowed only the spiritual dependence of the proletariat on the bourgeoisie. History turned her back to these gentlemen and the chronicles they read in history became their programme.

Their insular position, their wealth, their success in world policy, all these things, cemented by Puritanism, the "religion of the chosen people", was transformed into an arrogant contempt for everything continental or non-English in general. The middle classes of Great Britain were for a long time concerned that the language, science, technology, and civilisation of other nations were not worth learning. And this quality has passed intact to the philistines now heading the Labour Party.

Even Hyndman issued a pamphlet, *England For All*, while Marx was still alive, which is based entirely on Marx's *Capital*, but which does not mention that work or its author, a strange omission due to the fact that Hyndman did not wish to shock the English readers by making it appear possible for an Englishman to learn something from a German.

The historic dialectic process in this connection has played a sorry trick on England, in transferring the advantage her early development into the causes for her present backwardness. We have already seen this in the field of industry, in science, in the government system, in the political ideology. England grew up without any precedents. She could not seek and find any pattern for her future among more advanced countries. She advanced by groping, empirically, looking ahead and generalising as to her path only when absolutely necessary. The traditional cast of mind of the Englishman, particularly of the English bourgeois, is impressed with the seal of empiricism, and this same tradition was passed on to the upper layers of the working class. Empiricism became a tradition and a banner; it was combined with a contemptuous attitude for the 'abstract' thought of the Continent.

Trotsky expected the crisis of British capitalism, aided by the revolutionary intervention of the Communist Party, to quickly throw off that conservatism. But he also discussed the likely course of the labour movement if the revolutionary chances were missed.

UNDER DIFFERENT conditions, i.e., if England should grow and become economically strong, a labour party of the present type might be able to continue and intensify the 'educational' task of Protestantism and Liberalism, thereby powerfully cementing the consciousness of great layers of the working class with the conservative-national traditions and the discipline of the bourgeois order.

But in the present state of England's obvious economic decline, with the present absence of hope, we must expect a turn in precisely the opposite direction. The war has already dealt a heavy blow to the traditional religiosity of the English masses. Mr. Wells has every reason to occupy himself with the concoction of a new religion, thus preparing himself for the career of a Fabian Calvin somewhere on the road between Earth and Mars. We must say we are doubtful of his success. The mole of revolution is working too fast! The working masses will swiftly free themselves from the national-conservative discipline, and will work out a discipline of their own for revolutionary action.

The leaders of the Labour Party will pale before these shocks from below. Of course, we do not mean that MacDonald will bleach into a revolutionary; no, he will be



Leon Trotsky

cast aside. But those who in all probability will bring about the first change, men of the type of Lansbury, Wheatley and Kirkwood, will soon give evidence that they are only a leftist variation of the same Fabian type. Their radicalism is bounded by democracy and religion, and poisoned with a national conceit that completely subjects them to the British bourgeoisie. The working class will very probably be obliged to replace its leadership a number of times before a party will be born which truly corresponds to the historical situation and tasks of the British proletariat.

Ramsay MacDonald and the leaders of the Independent Labour Party headed the Labour Party at the time when Trotsky wrote. Trotsky showed how the leadership of these semi-pacifist semi-socialists had corresponded to the incompleteness of the British workers' break from Liberalism.

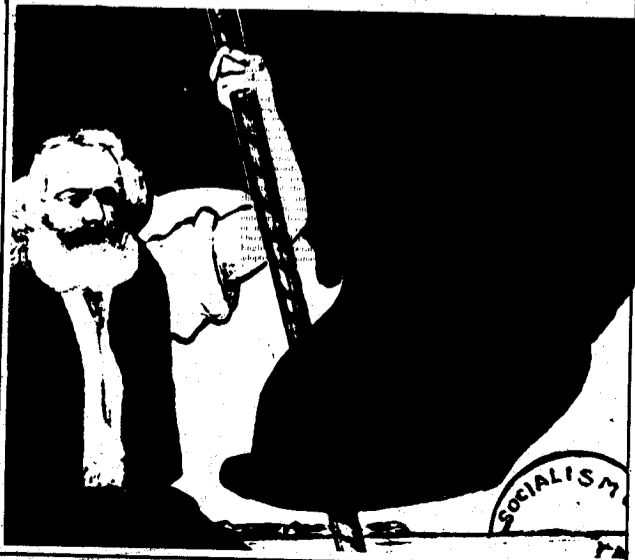
IN THE PAST, the English proletariat, insofar as it participated in political life, was attached, by reason of its democratic-pacifistic illusions — particularly during the second half of the nineteenth century — to the Liberal Party. The latter did 'not justify' these hopes, and lost the faith of the workers. A separate labour party then grew up, a priceless historical achievement, which even now can never be nullified. But we must not overlook the fact that the working masses were disillusioned rather as to the goodwill of the Liberals than as to the democratic-pacifistic methods of solving social questions, the more since new generations, new millions, were for the first time being drawn into political life. They transferred their hopes and illusions to the Labour Party. For this reason, and for this reason only, the Independents were given an opportunity to lead the party.

Behind the democratic-pacifistic illusions of the working masses stands *their awakened class will, their profound dissatisfaction with their conditions, their readiness to support their demands by all the means that circumstances may require.* But the working class can build a party out of those ideological and individual leading elements who have been prepared by the entire preceding evolution of the country, by its entire theoretical and political culture.

And so the ILP had headed the Labour Party. But new conditions would give rise to a demand for a new leadership.

THE Independent Labour Party, born in a petit-bourgeois environment and close to the circles of the trade union bureaucracy in its feelings and tendencies, naturally headed — together with the latter — the Labour Party, when the masses by their pressure obliged their secretaries to create such a party... In the course of decades, the ILP succeeded in gathering about 30,000 members. But when the profound alteration in the international situation and in the internal structure of English society gave birth to the Labour Party, an unexpected demand for leadership by the Independents was at once displayed. The same course of political evolution is preparing for a still more powerful 'demand' for communism at the next stage of development.

At the present moment, the Communist Party is extremely small. In the last elections it had altogether 53,000 votes — a figure which, when compared to the 5½ million votes for the Labour Party, might seem distressing if we did not understand the logic of political evolution in England. To imagine that the Communists in the course of subsequent decades will increase step by step, acquiring at each new parliamentary election a few tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of votes more, would be a radical misunderstanding of the development of the future. Of course, during a certain comparatively prolonged period, communism will develop rather slowly, but then there will ensue an ineluctable crisis: *the Communist Party will occupy in the Labour Party that position which is now held by the Independents.*



**SOCIALIST Challenge** last week wrote the obituary of the 'revolutionary unity' project which has been its chief political campaign for over two years.

Martin Shaw, a former prominent member of the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP), was the main figure outside the IMG (International Marxist Group, the organisation behind Socialist Challenge) taking part in this unity campaign. He declares that he has given up on the campaign — and on the revolutionary left.

'The real problem is that there is no prospect of the far left with any strategy — Leninist, quasi-Leninist, non-Leninist or anti-Leninist — making a serious breakthrough in the foreseeable future...

'The irrelevance of the organised far left is highlighted by the advance of a new left in the Labour Party... I don't know what the political organisations of the left should do, but for individuals (like myself) deeply dissatisfied with each of them as they are, there is no longer much reason to hope for positive developments from that sector.'

So Martin Shaw is joining the Labour Party — not in order to join forces with other Marxists and build a serious revolutionary left wing there, but as an individual who has concluded that the revolutionary left is a write-off. From Tony Cliff to Tony Benn, as the Socialist Challenge headline puts it.

On the same page of Socialist Challenge, the end is announced of the International Socialist Alliance, a loose grouping of ex-SWP members set up in 1977 by Shaw and others. About 20 people attended a final meeting which agreed to form two caucuses — one to discuss with Big Flame and the other with the IMG — and at the same time to plan 'the production of an independent journal'.

Both Shaw and the ISA note that Big Flame (a small semi-Maoist/spontaneist group) has also given up on the unity campaign. And that leaves none except the IMG.

Phil Hearse replies for the IMG. He is bitter — 'Indecision led the ISA to virtual paralysis... Demoralisation set in... In our view, all this was the disastrous consequence of waiting for the 'perfect' regroupment...

'A section of the ISA membership has begun to move towards anti-Leninist, libertarian positions. This coincided with the unprincipled manoeuvres of Big Flame which — despite describing itself as a 'Leninist vanguard' organisation — is attempting to build itself by becoming cheerleaders for the anti-Leninist ideas in Beyond the Fragments' (a recent pamphlet in which three socialist feminists state their case against Leninism).

Yes, Big Flame and the ISA have acted like dilettantes, not revolutionaries. But wasn't the IMG's unity campaign all too well designed to provide a camping-ground for dilettantes?

Much of what the IMG said in favour of revolutionary unity was correct and remains correct. Yet they conducted their drive for revolutionary unity with the wrong politics, the wrong orientation, and the wrong timing.

The IMG proposed a bland political platform for unity, too bland to give a guide to action in any real test of the class struggle or to have any grip on the real political issues thwarting revolutionary unity. Instead of a political discussion (which could have led to a decision for unity despite differences, once those differences had been clarified), their unity campaign became a series of desultory organisational manoeuvres and organisational wrangles.

They orientated mainly towards the most politically vaporous (and middle class) fringes of the revolutionary left — the 'children of '68' — and to the groups, Big Flame and the ISA, which best reflected that milieu. There would be no sectarian objections to unity (so the IMG no doubt thought)

# How not to run a unity drive

from people who were so vague politically.

On the contrary. When Big Flame turned out to be (as Hearse puts it) 'open' ... to everyone but the dreaded IMG, 'non-dogmatic' on every question but regroupment with the IMG, that was quite in accord with their political nature.

Revolutionaries with a serious ideological and political basis will understand the need for flexibility and openness of tactics, orientation and method of argument. Revolutionaries or semi-revolutionaries who lack clear fundamental ideas are — in proportion to their unclarity — all the more likely to cling to their 'own' organisation, their 'own' ideas (such as they are), and their 'own' milieu.

Sectarianism arises not from definiteness of political principles, but from a lack of clear principles, compensated for by secondary definitions (and this is relevant not only to revolutionary unity but also to the reluctance of most revolutionaries to work in the Labour Party.)

The IMG chose an unfavourable time for their unity campaign, a time when the revolutionary left was floundering rather than a time when big developments in the class struggle pointed towards clear tasks round which the revolutionary left could be united. (Indeed, the unity campaign was in itself an expression of floundering on the part of the IMG, a substitute for a clear orientation in the class struggle.)

Real advances for revolutionary unity — big enough to come near to justifying the IMG's huge promises of what could be achieved by unity — would have had to include the SWP. The IMG missed a vital chance for unity with the SWP (then IS) back in 1968. Even so the IMG might possibly have been able to make a second chance for itself, if it had pressed through a skilful unity offensive in 1977.

The SWP was shaken by the fact that the IMG and its Socialist Unity election front were consistently able to do better than the SWP at elections. It was sobering up after the mindless ultra-leftism of

1974-6 which cost it half its membership, most of its industrial base, and most of its experienced cadres. It was also looking with new interest, if not respect, at the USFI (the international current of which the IMG is part), after the debacle of its efforts to make an international link-up with semi-Maoist groups like the PRP in Portugal, Avanguardia Operaia in Italy, and the OCT in France.

But the IMG muffed it. They sent the SWP an IMG Central Committee resolution which said, in effect 'you are rotten syndicalists, likely to rat on the class struggle any day, but we love you really'. The SWP leaders were easily able to convince their membership that the IMG's approaches were just a sectarian trick.

Apparently the sending of that resolution was a clerical error at the IMG offices. But the real problem was that unity with a bigger organisation was a less comfortable prospect for the IMG than inviting smaller groups like Big Flame or the ISA to join the IMG's own ranks.

Thus the only result of the IMG's unity campaign in relation to the SWP has been a series of feeble attempts by the IMG to ingratiate itself with the SWP's politics — and continuing those politics even after the SWP itself has realised its error and moved on to a different policy — on the Anti Nazi League, or on election tactics.

Phil Hearse still maintains that it is possible in this period to build a large revolutionary organisation, based on democratic discussion and open debate, which could challenge the Communist Party as the major force on the left of the Labour Party. But he doesn't say how. The SWP is not going to unite with the IMG. Nor is anyone else. Is the IMG going to grow as big as the CP just by one-by-one recruitment? Hearse can hardly believe that.

A revolutionary organisation naturally needs democratic discussion and open debate. But it must be 'based' not on those but on definite political principles and a definite understanding of today's tasks.

As regards the basis principles of revolutionary Marxism (Trotskyism), the IMG has a lot of questions to ask itself on current USFI policy on Nicaragua. As regards today's tasks, the most important issues are raised by Shaw — though he raises them from a reformist angle.

The experience of the Labour Government and the Social Contract, and the current turmoil in the Labour Party, pose the need for a struggle by revolutionaries to renovate and restructure the labour movement — from inside the movement. Round that task the revolutionary left, too, can be restructured.

That is what Workers' Action proposes. The IMG's face is still firmly turned in the opposite direction. Hearse denounces Shaw, not for joining the Labour Party without a revolutionary perspective, but for joining the Labour Party.

Over the past two or three years, in fact, the IMG's relation to WA has been the seamy side of their unity campaign. They have denounced us for not unifying with them ... and at the same time obstinately turned down every approach from us for central discussions, saying that we must first drop our criticism of them as 'centrist' (i.e. wavering and politically unstable). Joint practical actions were rejected, too.

Surprisingly, they invited us to take part in the discussions leading up to the USFI's 11th World Congress — then they put off any central discussions, month after month, with one 'practical' objection after another, and finally they said that the invitation to observe the World Congress was off (the excuse was that we were supposed not to have replied to a letter of invitation...).

Since the IMG's face was firmly turned in the opposite direction to ours — theirs towards the dilettante, foot-loose left who seemed the likeliest people for unity without raising any awkward questions, ours towards the labour movement — this attitude was logical, for all that it showed up the IMG's unity demagoguery. A supplementary motive for the IMG is their effort to ingratiate themselves with the SWP.

At an IMG symposium recently, Tariq Ali declared (apparently for the SWP's benefit) that the SWP was right in 1971 to expel the Trotskyist Tendency (a group from which militants now round WA trace political continuity), and indeed that the Trotskyist Tendency was largely to blame for the SWP becoming bureaucratic!

The IMG has degraded itself politically by its attempts, for the benefit of the SWP, Big Flame and the ISA, to prove it is not like the 'nasty' Trotskyists (WA) — and predictably it has gained nothing. The time is long overdue for the comrades of the IMG to reorientate — towards Trotskyism and towards the labour movement.

## Split in the USFI

THE BIGGEST organised international tendency of the Trotskyist movement, the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI), has split on the eve of its 11th World Congress, due to take place this week.

At the end of October, a joint international coordinating committee was formed by two dissident factions of the USFI and the international current round the OCI, a grouping outside the USFI. This formalised the cold split which has existed since the beginning of October, when the dissident factions refused to accept USFI policy on Nicaragua which they considered (correctly in our view) to amount to liquidating Trotskyist politics.

National splits had taken place long before in many countries; in Colombia, Peru, Italy, etc. there have for some time been two organisations affiliated to the USFI. A new and important national split has taken place in France, a country which is central for the USFI and indeed for Trotskyism.

The supporters of one dissident faction, the Leninist-Trotskyist Tendency (LTT) have walked out of the USFI's French organisation, the LCR, taking about a quarter of the membership with them.

It is not clear how many more national splits will follow, and in particular whether the LTT supporters in the USFI's British organisation, the IMG, will split. But it does seem certain that the international split will now go through to completion.



USFI leader Ernest Mandel

Both sides of the split claim to have a majority of the world Trotskyist movement, basing their claims on different membership figures for the various national organisations. The dissident Bolshevik Faction is strong in Latin America and especially in Argentina; the USFI leadership has its strongest support in Europe and in North America, though the LTT has substantial groups where the USFI is strongest, in Spain and France. The OCI has a relatively large organisation in France and small groups in a number of other countries.

Although the immediate issue of the split is Nicaragua, the factual lines along which the split has taken place existed long before the Nicaraguan revolution. They were developed in fierce debates on guerrilla warfare, the Portuguese revolution, the Angolan war of national liberation, attitudes towards Stalinism in Indochina and China, etc.

The split, however, is not tidy. Both among the Bolshevik Faction, LTT, and OCI, and among the remaining USFI forces, there are major differences on the key political issues of recent years and even of the present. Nicaragua, however, poses sharply the to-be-or-not-to-be question for Trotskyism. It therefore calls for, and makes possible, a fresh assessment and appraisal of all the forces of the Trotskyist movement.

COLIN FOSTER



### Facing the problem of reformism

The beginnings of the IMG's unity campaign date back to 1975. Reacting to the right wing turn of the Labour government, the IMG raised the slogan 'Unite the Left against Wilson'.

At first the IMG's orientation was to the broad reformist left rather than the revolutionaries. The IMG leadership apparently believed that the SWP (then IS) and other groups were an irrelevant side-show in comparison with the inroads the IMG could and would make in the broad left.

The IMG did not make inroads, and slowly its attention began to veer to the revolutionary left. In 1976 they published a series of articles, 'Faction and Party', arguing for an all-inclusive concept of a revolutionary party. They attempted discussions with the Socialist Charter, with the Workers' League, and most importantly with the Workers' Socialist League — in no case with much result.

Things changed with the March 1977 by-election in Stechford. An IMG candidate easily outdid the SWP. Other by-elections in the following months proved that the IMG (or Socialist Unity) could beat the SWP consistently.

The Socialist Unity election alliance was launched (with its first conference in November 1977). As well as the IMG, it drew in Big Flame and Martin Shaw, who had just been expelled from the SWP.

In June 1977 Socialist Challenge was launched. Its first

issues bore the masthead 'Build a Socialist Opposition, For a Unified Revolutionary Organisation', and declared: 'Socialist Challenge is a paper open to all those aiming for revolutionary unity'. Not much came of the attempt to make Socialist Challenge a broader paper than just the IMG's, but in its early issues at least it was a great improvement journalistically over the IMG's previous paper, Red Weekly, and sales went up.

Late 1977 and early 1978 was the high point of the unity campaign. The Socialist Challenge editorial board issued a unity manifesto in October. In November there was the Socialist Unity conference. In February 1978 the first conference of the ISA, with over 100 present, heard a strong appeal from Martin Shaw for unity with the IMG. In the same month an appeal to the SWP for extensive joint work went out, signed by the IMG, two individual Big Flame leaders, and Workers' League leaders.

But it has been downhill all the way from then. The ISA conference rejected Shaw's appeal and decided to wait and see. Big Flame lost interest. When the general election came in May 1979, Socialist Unity made a feeble showing.

Like many other policies of the IMG, the unity campaign was borrowed from their French comrades, the LCR.

The LCR's unity policy began in 1974. They were re-founding their organisation

Stechford, March 1977: when unity seemed to be about to take off



## Corby's best allies: other steel workers

15,000 MEN, women and children marched from the town centre of Corby to the steelworks on Thursday November 1st, while British Steel Corporation (BSC) bosses and the TUC Steel Committee debated the closure of the works at the town's BSC offices.

The march was joined en route by passers by, showing a strong feeling that the closure of the steelworks is the concern of the whole town.

The message was: 'The real fight begins today'. At the rally, speakers included Labour MPs Jim Marshall, Bob Cryer and Dennis Skinner, all of whom said that although they would be supporting the cause in Parliament, the real power lies with the steelworkers themselves.

Otherwise there was little by way of perspectives put forward from the platform.

Alternative plans are being produced by academics showing that Corby can be 'viable' — but BSC ignores them. Instead of calling for a link-up with continental steelworkers also facing closures, Bob Cryer called for import controls and for leaving the Common Market.

The march was organised by ROSAC (Retention of

Steelmaking at Corby), a broad-based committee involving steelworkers, townspeople ... and a local Tory MP.

But the role of the wives of steelworkers and the women employees has been very important in the stand against closure. They held a separate march in the morning.

Leaflets given out on Thursday called for a commitment to all-out action, including occupation of the works and national strike action. However, there was not one steelworker on the platform to propose this, and little was asked of supporters from up and down the country.

When the demonstrators — and the huge police presence, over 1,000 strong — had dispersed, the BSC bosses formally announced that Corby steelworks will be closed and 5,500 jobs will go next March. The town will be devastated.

The main steel union, the ISTC, has said it will call for an overtime ban, a one-day national strike, and selective strikes. But the ISTC has a record of making militant noises and then backing down as soon as BSC gives it any sort of concession.

Corby workers cannot afford to trust the ISTC leaders. They will have to work out their own programme of action, and, most important, their own rank and file links with other steelworkers for a united fight against BSC's job-slashing plans.

A shorter working week and reorganisation of production under workers' control must be our answer to the steel crisis.

CHRIS GOODWIN  
ROSS CATLIN

## CDLM conference

# What politics for the anti-Tory fight?

THE CAMPAIGN for Democracy in the Labour Movement, a militant trade unionists' campaign initiated by the Workers' Socialist League (WSL), held an anti-Tory conference in Birmingham last weekend (3rd).

The CDLM has been kept in the background for a period, and this fourth CDLM conference was rather smaller than earlier ones (150 delegates and visitors as against 250 at the first conference, in October 1976). This smaller size does not seem to reflect a loss of forces by the WSL, but rather a falling-off in interest from other tendencies of the revolutionary left.

The Workers' Power group moved that "the call for a General Strike should form a central plank of the CDLM's work and propaganda", and this was accepted by the platform. Another WP proposal, that the CDLM should campaign for a joint conference of itself, the (CP-backed) Liaison Committee for the Defence of the Trade Unions, and the (SWP-backed) 'Defend our Unions' campaign was rejected. The WSL argued that the CDLM instead should intervene in those bodies on the basis of superior politics.

The Spartacist League also intervened, slanderously alleging that WSL members in the BL Cowley Assembly plant scabbed on the Confed strike. Alan Thornett, deputy convenor at Cowley and a leading member of the WSL, replied. His description of how the WSL comrades had fought against the anti-strike movement in Cowley,

though in the end they were defeated by superior force, evoked the loudest applause of the conference.

Mostly, however, it was a conference of the WSL and those close to it. It therefore offered a good opportunity to assess the WSL's current policy.

The conference resolution (supplemented on the day by amendments from the Organising Committee) started with a description of British capitalism's severe crisis and the Tories' attacks. It denounced the established trade union leaders' failure to fight, and argued that a new leadership is needed.

An action programme was proposed: to force the Tories out of office; to remove Labour and trade union leaders who won't fight; mass strike action to defeat Tory anti-union laws; to 'occupy with supporting strike action' against the cuts; cost of living increases on wages; troops out of Ireland; opposition to immigration controls; open the books.

It was proposed to "unite strikes and occupations as a step towards forming councils of action". Through building councils of action a leadership could be prepared to replace the Tory government, not by a Labour government, but by "a workers' government to resolve the crisis of capitalism by ending capitalism itself".

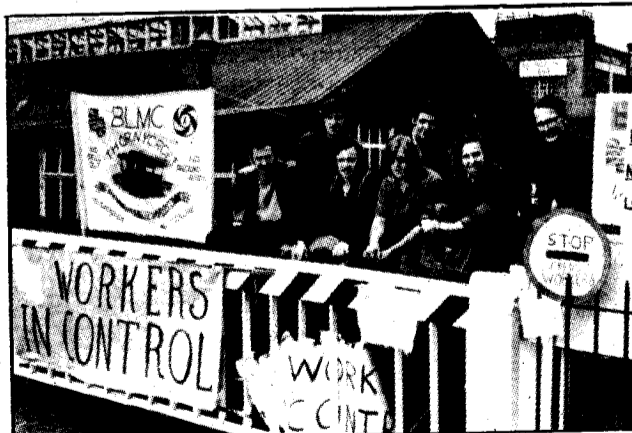
In discussion, many speakers concentrated on personal experiences of the treachery of trade union bureaucrats. The main theme was the need to push direct action

against the cuts and other attacks on the working class. "The fight has to be within the union movement to continuously expose the bureaucracy", as one speaker said.

The one-sided stress on direct action initiative was accompanied by almost total neglect of the role of political reformism.

Tony Richardson did take

deeply incoherent. If we have on the agenda the building of a movement (around councils of action) which can oust the present Government and take power in opposition to the Labour Party, then battles over whether Callaghan or Benn should lead Labour represent a stage long since surpassed. If, on the other hand, the fight to remove



Workers occupy at the Thornycroft BL factory: despite the threat to jobs in BL, and the centrality of BL to the CDLM's work, the resolution said nothing about workers' control

this up in moving the conference resolution. But he reduced the problem to demanding the removal of the Callaghan-Healey leadership and exposing left Labour MPs who do not fight for this demand. The political problem was reduced to an organisational formula — one which, in fact, has served as the WSL's main propaganda point for the last four years, usually in complete abstraction from reality.

Moreover, on closer examination the perspective is

Callaghan should be the focus, then talk of councils of action taking power in opposition to Labour is premature.

True, big upsurges of class struggle can change the political outlook radically and rapidly, telescoping years of development into days. But as of now we have to base ourselves on current realities, not on more or less speculative possibilities.

The explanation of the WSL's incoherence is this: neither the taking of power

by councils of action, nor 'sack Callaghan', is really a perspective. Both are just agitational gambits secondary to the main task, i.e. the 'exposure' of the bureaucracy.

The WSL places great stress on the crisis of working class leadership. But they tend to interpret this in narrowly organisational terms, downplaying rounded political education and agitation and focusing on organisational conflict with the bureaucracy, sometimes artificially provoked (or simulated!) conflict.

Thus the rather arbitrary call for councils of action (which goes together with a chronic failure on the part of the WSL to put forward an adequate programme for restructuring the existing labour movement). Thus the fetishising of the (correct) call for ousting Callaghan. Thus the startling poverty of the conference action programme on important issues: nothing on the shorter working week, nothing on unemployment, nothing in detail on picketing and the police, on the cuts only an arbitrary call for militancy with the sketchiest political back-up.

The basic conclusions of what we wrote after the second CDLM conference, in March 1977, remain valid. "Thornett is still trapped in the same overall straitjacket as his former leader Healy [of the WRP].

"Briefly the scenario is this: The working class is a seething volcano, prevented from erupting and overwhelming capitalism only by a thin crust, which goes

under the name of 'the bureaucracy'. This bureaucratic leadership, the CDLM Organising Committee declaration assured us, has 'no real base of support'.

"What this leaves out of account altogether is the hold of reformism on the consciousness of the vast majority of workers. Thus the 'party' and the 'programme' will, in some magic way, crack open the bureaucratic obstacle.

"In this view the CDLM OC declaration states that any serious battle over wages will unleash an upheaval of the proportions of May 1968, and, further, that the CDLM is 'the only serious initiative on the wages front'.

"By two easy steps, then, the WSL makes itself the lever to unleash revolutionary upheavals".

So the WSL's agitation tends to be centred round often very limited politics and often quite arbitrary organisational conclusions. This is justified by the conviction that agitation for those organisational conclusions provides the assured key to exposing the bureaucracy and to revolutionary advance.

The result is organisational sectarianism and political primitivism.

One thing, however, was positive about last Saturday's conference: the WSL has become less wild in its political assessments than it was in 1977. We must hope this more sober assessment is the beginning of a wider reappraisal.

RICHARD PAINE  
COLIN FOSTER

# ARMY SEIZES WORKERS' CO-OPS

IN THE EARLY hours of Monday morning (the 5th), the British Army took over the premises of two small West Belfast firms. Without warning, they moved in, and when workers turned up they were told by the soldiers that their workplace had been commandeered as a "British Army post".

These were not ordinary firms. The small Andersonstown Welding and Northern Candle Company were co-operatives, set up by local workers unable to find work elsewhere.

Turf Lodge and the surrounding Whiterock Ballymurphy area house

some 30,000 people — two great Unionist-built concrete jungles for Catholics. Poor housing and social conditions have led to suicides and one of the highest child mortality rates in Western Europe.

Male unemployment is over 50% and yet factories continue to close. On top of this: military repression, murder, torture and constant harassment.

In this context, establishing the two small firms was an act of working class political resistance. To the British Army it was just another move in the campaign, supported by both major

parties, of grinding down the defiance of the working people of this part of Northern Ireland by economic misery and military terror.

As we go to press, local people have already held three demonstrations, and the campaign is being taken into the few remaining factories of West Belfast. Already in recent weeks, workers in the Royal Victoria Hospital have begun to fight back against British plans, in direct contravention of the Geneva Convention, to build a military base within the hospital.

FRANK MURPHY

## ISOLATION BEATS VAUXHALL STRIKERS

WORKERS AT Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plant have voted to end the strike they began on September 4th. Despite flying pickets to the docks and Vauxhall showrooms, the Ellesmere Port workers were isolated once other Vauxhall workers at Luton and Dunstable had decided to accept the company's offer.

On Monday 29th AUEW

members voted to accept the 17% offer made by management together with various strings, such as the end of the guaranteed shift and transferring workers within the factory to cover for disputes. Despite a recommendation from T&G stewards to stay out, their members also voted to accept the deal last week.

AUEW setters are still out however for 2p an hour to

maintain their parity with the fitters. Although the setters favoured acceptance of the 17% deal at the AUEW meeting, they are determined to preserve their status as against the fitters.

While the setters are still out, the rest of the workers have been laid off and the company is not recalling them until the setters' dispute has been settled.

## MANCHESTER CONVENOR FIGHTS THE SACK

WILLIAM Ayrtons, in Longsight, Manchester, are trying to victimise AUEW convenor Frank Dunne.

On October 26th Dunne and one other worker were given redundancy notices. The bosses justified it on the basis of 'last in, first out'. But they have been attacking trade union rights in the factory for months.

During the Confed action, they went over the convenor's head to move a holiday from a Friday to a Monday.

Early in October a mass

meeting of the 60 AUEW members at the factory decided to send chargehand David Massey to Coventry and demand he be sacked. Massey had just assaulted a worker — the sixth such incident in 18 months.

The bosses took no action against Massey. AUEW district committee approval was given for industrial action. The workers started a work-to-rule. After one and a half days it had to be called off because a few scabs were energetically sabotaging it.

Since November 2nd the management have refused to allow Frank Dunne into the factory, thus going against the provisions of the Employment Protection Act on the rights of union representatives. A conference between the union, the Employers Federation, and the management is planned for Thursday 8th.

As a matter of elementary union solidarity, the AUEW should see to it that this petty exploiter does not get away with flagrant union-bashing.



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**Fightback for Women's Rights**  
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The conference will focus on five main areas:

- Abortion rights, and what to do after Corrie.
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- Maternity leave & benefits, and paternity leave.
- Legal rights.
- Strengthening the position of women and the priority of women's rights in the labour movement.

\*\*\*

Representatives are invited from women's groups, trade union bodies and women's caucuses of unions, Constituency Labour Parties and women's sections; and from all campaigns and organisations with similar or overlapping aims, which are also invited to contribute papers, speakers and workshops for the conference. Individuals are welcome too.

\*\*\*

Further details of speakers, conference arrangements and agenda, etc., from: **FIGHTBACK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS**, 41 Ellington St., London N.7. (01-807-5268)

Initially sponsored by SOCIALIST ORGANISER

to pool information and experience; to discuss and coordinate the coming struggles; and to stimulate the growth of dialogue and common work between women in the labour movement and the women's movement, and those in specialised campaigns for women's rights.

Conway Hall  
Red Lion Sq WC1  
**Sat. March 22**  
**11am - 5pm**

# Workers' ACTION

## BL takes the gloves off

LAST THURSDAY (1st), BL boss Michael Edwardes got a 87% majority in the ballot on his plan for BL. No surprise: workers were presented with a take-it-or-leave-it choice between voting for a plan labelled 'survival' and the void. Even unions that opposed the Edwardes plan, like TGWU and TASS, offered no convincing prospect of a fight for an alternative.

But as soon as Edwardes got his majority he set about using it in a way which will arouse resistance even from workers who were blackmailed into voting Edwardes' way.

BL workers had submitted a claim for £24 a week rise, inflation-proofing of wages, and a 35 hour week by 1982. BL replied: only 5% wage rise is on offer, and even that is tied to drastic conditions designed to crush shop-steward resistance in BL.

10% is offered to skilled workers, but all other grades would get only 5%. With inflation at 15% or 20%, this means a real wage cut of 10% or 15% at least.

An incentive scheme is also proposed, but with a very high level of production as the starting point above which money would be payable. It is certainly no improvement on the incentive scheme previously rejected by BL workers in a ballot.

The rest of the "offer" — ultimatum would be a better word — is 85 pages of conditions.

• Total mobility of labour is demanded. 'Any employee would be called on to work in any part of his or her plant ... on any grade or category of work'.

• Trade demarcations must be scrapped. Pipe-fitters and millwrights, for example, will be expected to do each others' jobs.

• Team working would be

introduced, with workers in each 'team' expected to help cover each others' jobs.

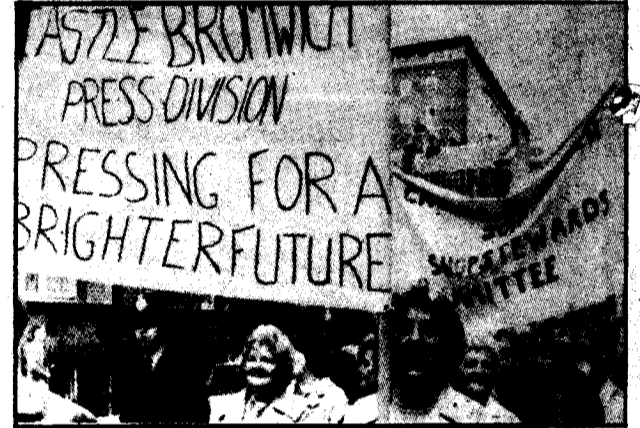
• Lay-off pay will be refused for any strike within the BL combine. And each group of workers will lose all lay-off entitlement for even one minute's strike in a quarter (rather than over 8 hours' strike, as at present).

• Workers will be paid only 90% of grade rate while training, and if not found satisfactory may be put down to a lower grade or sacked.

without the shop steward being involved. If they fail to agree, the steward can be brought in — but the worker is liable to be penalised if his complaint against the foreman is not upheld!

Additionally, it is proposed that shop stewards should be trained on the same courses as BL industrial engineers.

The proposal causing the most immediate anger is about shift working. BL bosses want the right to impose three shift working



• Rest allowances, now about 17% of work time in the Longbridge plant, will be cut down to 12% or even lower. Idle time and break-down time will be deducted from rest allowances.

• The way night shift pay is calculated will be changed — to make the rate lower.

Perhaps the most vile of the bosses' proposals is about disabled workers: they will be dropped to 90% of grade rate or to a lower grade.

The most far-reaching is the proposal specifically designed to squeeze out the shop stewards' role. The standard for each job is to be discussed only between the foreman and the operator,

wherever they want — and full mobility between shifts.

Ballot majority or no ballot majority, the BL bosses are not going to be able to impose these conditions without a huge fight. Quite possibly they will not even seriously try to impose them all.

But one thing is clear for BL workers now. There is no leeway any longer. Either an all-out fightback starts, insisting that the right to work cannot be sacrificed to capitalist profitability, or the bosses will press through their attack until thousands of workers are on the dole and the remaining BL factories are hell-holes dominated by speed-up and the dictatorship of the foreman.

## EVENTS

**SUNDAY 11 NOVEMBER.** Victory to the freedom fighters in Zimbabwe. Demonstration called by Zimbabwe Emergency Coordinating Committee. 1.30pm, Speakers Corner.

**SUNDAY 24 NOVEMBER.** Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory conference. From 10am at Central Library, 68 Holloway Rd, London N7. Open to card-holding SCLV supporters and delegates from sponsoring bodies, plus observers. Details: John Bloxam, c/o Hackney North Labour Rooms, 5 Stamford Hill, N16.

**SUNDAY 25 NOVEMBER.** Demonstration against the 1971 Immigration Act and against new Tory immigration and nationality proposals. 12 noon from Speakers Corner. Organised by Campaign Against Racist Laws.

**WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER.** Demonstration against the cuts, called by the South Yorkshire Trades Councils and the Labour Party NEC. 12 noon, Speakers Corner.

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# Workers' ACTION

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