

# workers' ACTION

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## CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE LIB-LAB PACT

OF £1,500 million in Denis Healey's Budget tax cuts, £1000 million is conditional. They will come into effect only after effective wage curbs in "Phase 3". Thus the state Budget is wielded as a major weapon in the class struggle — on the bosses' side.

To take account of inflation all the income tax bands are raised by £1000: thus the basic rate band, beyond which taxes rise steeply, has risen from £5000 to £6000. That means just about standing still. Personal allowances (income free of tax) are up 10%, not quite enough to make up for what inflation gouged out in the last year.

Even the whole £1500 million cuts in income tax would mean no more than catching up with the situation where inflation has pushed many people into paying higher tax rates although their real wages are unchanged or reduced. They take no account at all of inflation for the next fiscal year. And the major tax concessions are conditional; they are the Government's opening bid for round 3 of wage controls.

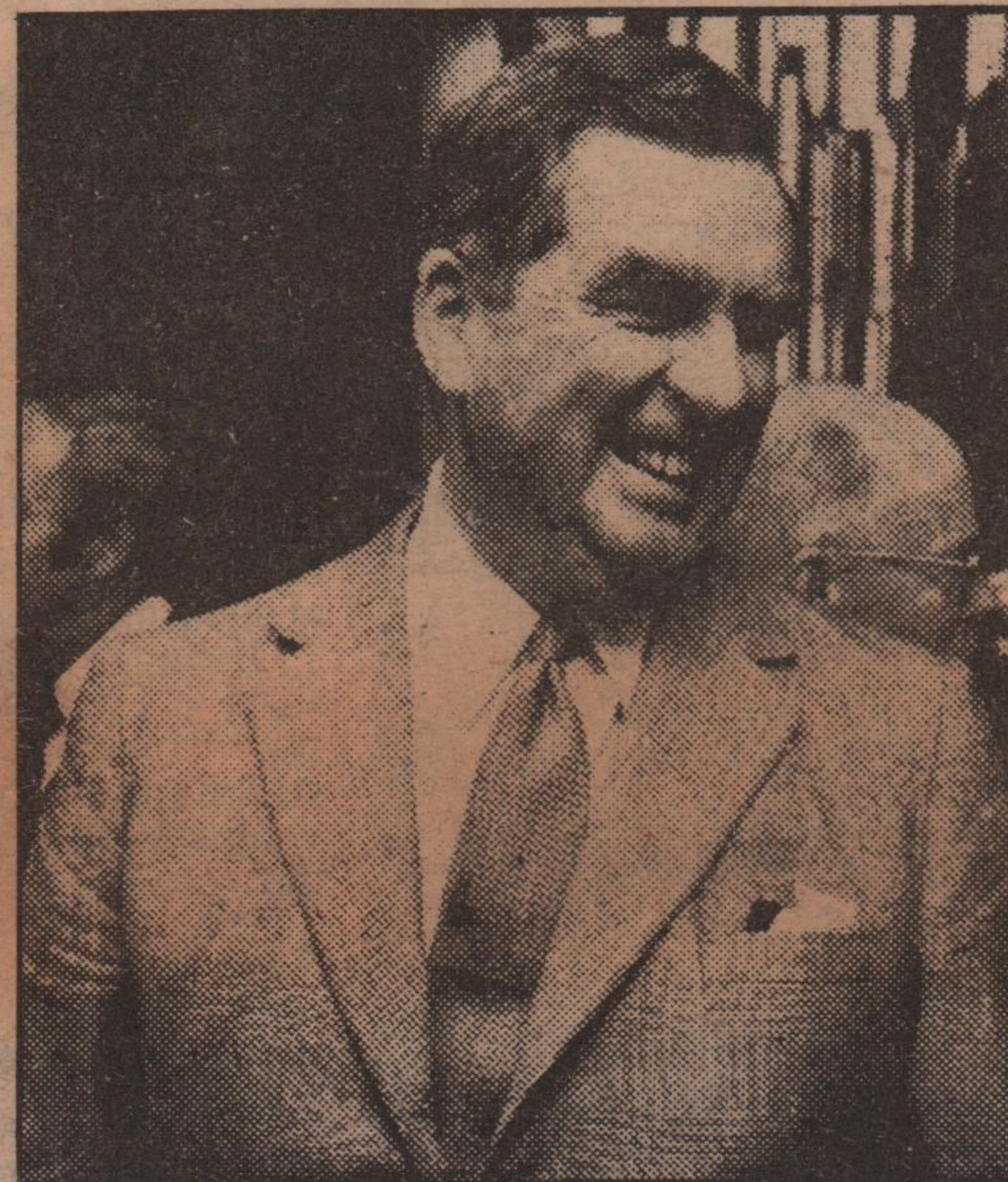
The basic rate of tax is to be lowered, conditionally, to 32p in the pound, from 35p; the TUC had asked for a reduction to 25p. The whole of the tax cuts, including the conditional ones, are calculated to allow for a possible 4½% increase in take-home pay: 4½%, as against 15% inflation in the last year.

Apart from helping Phase 3 into existence, the Budget aims, as ever, to reduce inflation to the level of Britain's competitors and to boost the productivity of British industry. Few people believe that this cautious, hold-tight-and-do-nothing Budget is likely to do either. Not even Healey claims that unemployment will be cut in the period ahead.

As a means of generating expansion in the economy, there is very little power in the Budget. Hopes for the balance of payments to move into surplus rest on the prospects of North Sea Oil, and the fact that the likely sluggishness of the British economy while the economies of most of Britain's trading partners are expected to pick up, should boost exports and dampen down imports. Whether or not the account-books are better balanced, these are not the prospects of a healthy economy.

Cont'd. on back page

# HEALEY BAITES THE HOOK WITH CRUMBS



# NO TO ANY WAGE CURBS

LABOUR'S PACT with the Liberals is a pact of betrayal. Not because of its terms, but because this pact draws the Government even further away from any accountability to the organised working class.

"The banks", declared David Steel, "can now sleep safely". He boasted that the Liberals would prevent the Government from nationalising the banks and insurance companies, or extending local authority direct works.

In reality there has been nothing socialist in the Government's policies even without the Liberals. It is not the policies of the Government that make Labour a working-class party. Politically it is clearly a bourgeois party — and the City's backing of the Government is ample evidence of that. What makes the Labour Party a working class party at all is its connections with the organised working class. And what makes the pact with the Liberals criminal is that Callaghan says to the working class: I will consult the junior Tories before I consult any decisions of the working class movement.

The terms of the pact don't give the Liberals much. There wasn't much left to give. Socialism as a guiding principle or a goal had been surrendered not by this government but by the leaders of the Labour Party from its inception 71 years ago.

Some of the paper concessions of the pact will not amount to anything in practice because of the Parliamentary situation; for example, the Bill to extend direct works had already been defeated.

But the temporary, informal coalition, is an open rebuke to the Labour left, a clear victory for the coalitionist forces around the Manifesto group, the Campaign for a Labour Victory, and other Libs in Labs clothing.

Those members of the Cabinet — Benn, Millan, Orme and Shore — who voted against the pact, preferring to stand alone as the party of the working class, were right to oppose the pact. But they then helped to make the pact possible. By not resigning from the Government they cut off their own possibilities of campaigning against the pact.

Ian Mikardo has already collected over 50 signatures of MPs on a petition of protest. Norman Atkinson has declared that he will wage a campaign against the agreement and urge Conference to reject it.

That is the right course of action — if, indeed, the Tribunites who usually baulk at any campaign within the Party do this time mount a campaign for rejection of the pact with the Liberals.

But there is no need for socialists in the Labour Party to wait passively for this to happen. Wards, constituency parties, and affiliated trade unions should immediately pass resolutions against the deal. Most of all, the coming Labour Party Young Socialists conference should give full backing to the call for an emergency Labour Party conference to reject the deal, and make this call a priority campaign.

### Inside

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# LIBERALS AND CITY RUSH TO SUPPORT LABOUR... FOR THE TIME BEING

LABOUR started the month with five parliamentary defeats in a row. It conceded defeat on the Bill to nationalise shipbuilding and ship-repairing, and agreed to drop ship-repairing from it. It lost its proposal to extend local authority direct works units. Both these proposals had been enthusiastically supported by the Left.

But what really affected the parliamentary balance was the government's defeat on the motion to limit debate on the devolution proposals. With this defeat the Government lost its chance to introduce a Bill likely to receive the approval of the Scottish and Welsh nationalists — and with that it lost the parliamentary support of Plaid Cymru and the SNP. With the nationalists disaffected, the Liberals entered the same lobby as the Tories to defeat the Government on its social expenditure proposals. To Mrs Thatcher, Labour's defeat seemed absolute, its isolation complete. Yet by Wednesday night it was the Tories that had been

defeated in their attempt to bring down the Government in a motion of "no confidence".

"The vote in the Commons tonight showed clearly that this Government is more concerned to cling to office than it is to seek the verdict of the people."

"They have concluded a shadowy deal with the Liberal MPs based on one single identity of interest: the common dread of both the Labour and Liberal parties at the prospect of facing a General Election". That was Tory leader Margaret Thatcher's for once accurate remark about the line-up on the Tories' motion of no confidence.

## Support

Of course, what she didn't say is that it was electoral prospects and not "the national interest" — that fatuous phrase William Whitelaw never tires of repeating — that determined the voting of all the parties. Labour knew it would lose a snap election. The Liberals likewise fear-

# April 3 — HOW TO END THE SOCIAL CONTRACT

TWO MONTHS ago, the Leyland Joint Shop Stewards' Committee, on the initiative of Communist Party members in that committee, launched its 'massive campaign' against the Social Contract, or, to be precise, against Phase 3. Within weeks, the CP and the Broad Left reconvened the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions, which also came out against Phase 3.

The Liaison Committee went further and called for a 'day of action' on April 19th — a one-day stoppage. It also threw its weight behind the proposal, originating among Rover stewards, for a "Rank and File TUC" to discuss and carry forward this "massive campaign". This will be held on April 3rd in Birmingham.

## DECISIVE

The CP leaders, then, have been forced by the mood which exists in the working class, particularly in the engineering industry, against wage controls, to move sufficiently so that they can be seen by militants to be fighting Phase Three.

Irrespective of the CP's intentions, April 3rd will help build the groundswell against Phase 3. Whether it builds that groundswell into decisive action, though, depends on the policies argued there.

The recent record of the leading CP members involved is a warning against any confidence in them. Derek Robinso, chairman of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, moved the motion for the April 19th stoppage at the LCDTU. A few weeks later he proposed to the toolmakers that they should return to work on the bosses' terms, and

signed a letter from the Cars Council (the highest body in the British Leyland 'participation' structure) to all Leyland workers calling on them to "get back to normal working" and "stay at work and achieve our production and productivity targets".

Indeed, only last Saturday other members of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee put this problem to him, and he said that he wasn't optimistic about the one-day stoppage happening at all, at any rate in Longbridge, because the members would want a few weeks of full working to earn some money after the recent shutdown. Perhaps he would like to tell that to the Longbridge rectifiers, who have already come out once within three days of their return to work, for a payment which they should receive but didn't.

We cannot reasonably expect leaders like these to get up on April 3rd and propose anything resembling a real fight of the rank and file against Phase 3, any more than their verbal opposition to Phase 2 in the past has stopped them from openly trying to break the toolmakers' strike against it.

The Communist Party are opposed to wage limitations — but they are even more opposed to action which could shake up the 'left' trade union bureaucrats and disturb the CP's strategy of reliance on those bureaucrats.

The real importance of the "rank and file TUC" is that it will bring together hundreds of militants from all unions — not just the car industry — who, whatever their present illusions in the Communist Party or the 'left' trade union leaders, will be looking for a

The Working Women's Charter Campaign will be organising a lobby of the April 3rd meeting, to highlight the special needs of women in the fight against the Social Contract. They will be putting forward a statement asking delegates to support:—

- Equal pay now;
- A national minimum wage;
- Opposition to all grading schemes which discriminate against women;
- Immediate investigations into the pay and grading of women, to be organised by trade unions;
- All wage claims to take account of equal pay and low pay;
- National solidarity with the sit-in at Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital, the Grunwicks strike, and all equal pay strikes.

A resolution will also be put to the conference from Leicester Central AUEW, raising many of these points and also women's right to work. Every delegate should demand that this resolution is debated!

real lead.

The major task of the April 3rd conference must be to win support for workers taking direct action against Phase 3 — and Phase 2.

The LCDTU met on 26th February. On the same day the Leyland toolroom workers decided to continue their struggle. What support did the LCDTU give to the one section of workers who were actually taking industrial action against the Social Contract? None. What solidarity activity did it organise? None.

Resolutions can play a vital role in organising direct action. The struggle to commit unions against Phase 3 is an essential preparation for the rank and file struggle against wage curbs.

But pressure politics combined with actual strike breaking is open class collaboration — and that is how we must characterise the CP and the Broad Left in their attitude to the toolroom workers' strike.

If the April 3rd confer-

ence is to come to grips with the real issues of fighting the Social Contract wage curbs, revolutionaries must raise their voices there to condemn sharply that class collaboration.

The toolmakers' strike also showed that more is needed than to condemn the misleaders of the working class. It showed the need for militants to fight for demands and policies which lay the basis for united working-class action. The claim for automatic inflation-proofing of wages, linked to a working-class cost of living index, is central because it sums up a unified working class answer to the problem of rising prices. It must be firmly counterposed to the inevitably illusory sham of price controls, called for by the Communist Party.

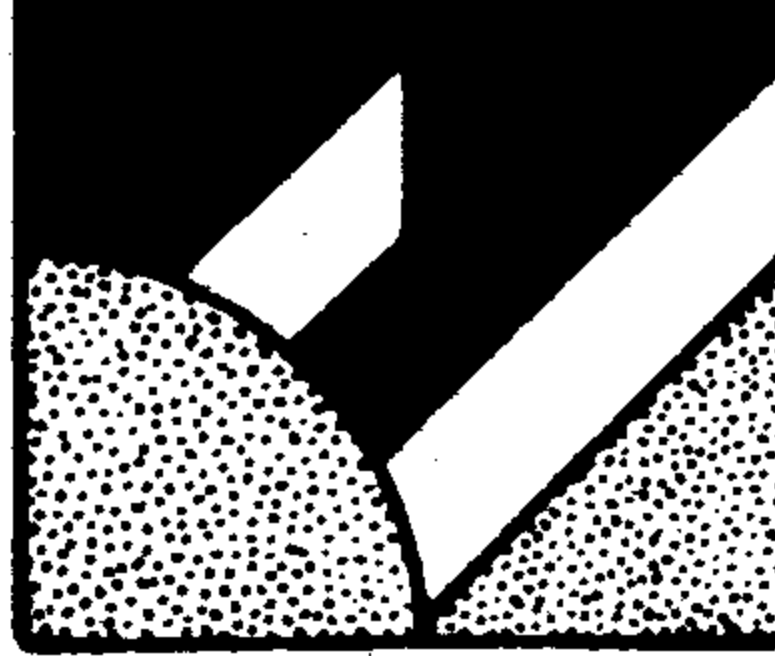
The demand for a national minimum wage, likewise protected against inflation, is also essential, to ensure that the interests of lower-paid workers are protected.

## HEARING

On April 3rd, a vigorous struggle by the militant left will be necessary to ensure that these policies get any hearing at all from the speakers' podium. Previous CP-sponsored conferences, like the LCDTU and last year's Labour Assembly, have recognised no right for opposition to be heard or for amendments and counter-resolutions.

But the struggle must be taken forward on April 3rd — and, beyond that, into the local action committees called for by the LCDTU conference, into meetings discussing the 19th April day of action, and into gatherings on that day of action itself.

## Editorial



THE ALLIANCE of the Labour Party and the Liberal Party in Parliament which sustains the Callaghan government is not an innovation. Two times before, in 1924 and in 1929-31, the Liberals have supported a Labour Government with a minority in the House of Commons — until it suited them, and the ruling class, to pull the rug from under the Government's feet.

Earlier still the Labour Party in Parliament had been politically indistinguishable from the Liberal Party, from which it differed only in being a separate group of MPs sponsored by the unions and acting as their Parliamentary pressure group. Before then the trade unions had sought political expression as part of the Liberal Party, sponsoring MPs known as "Lib-Lab".

For almost the whole of the second half of the 19th century, there was no independent working class party in Britain. Instead, the working class organisations subordinated themselves to the Liberal Party, which represented the pro-Free Trade bourgeoisie and big capitalist landowners, as against the Tory Party which rested more on the rural gentry.

## Chartism

After the defeat, in the late 1840s, of Chartism — a working class movement, mainly for a democratic suffrage — the fight for democratic rights for the working class became incorporated into the suffrage reform movement led by the middle class Radical wing of the Liberal Party. This movement was supported on a large scale by the working class organised in the Reform League, and by the leaders of the Trade Unions, then based almost entirely on the skilled workers.

The Second Reform Act was passed in 1867, giving the vote to large sections of the male working class. But in the 1868 General Election the leaders of the organised working-class presence in the Reform League felt that an alliance with the Liberals would be more valuable than standing independent

ed a big drop in electoral support.

The Scottish National Party, on the other hand, rightly thought that an immediate election was preferable to even the most generous Labour pledge, as it would bring in a massively strengthened SNP with the power — unless the Tory majority were very big — to bend the Government to its will. The Welsh nationalists, Plaid Cymru, and the Scottish Labour Party made a similar analysis — though they had no reason to be as optimistic as the SNP. The Ulster Unionists, however, the only party to split its vote on Wednesday, had nothing to gain either from an election or from Labour rule.

No vision of the future determined Labour's action. Callaghan is wedded to Government both by ambition and by the will of the bourgeoisie to keep Labour in. Nevertheless a scenario by which Labour is returned in an election in about eighteen months, swept in on the rush of North Sea Oil affluence, no

doubt tempted some MPs to ignore the betrayal going on under their noses. The Liberals hope that their pact with Labour will redeem them from fifty years of insignificance and project them as the only possible bearers of a government of national unity.

Although seriously worried about the future of the Social Contract, the capitalist class signalled that it had no confidence at present in the Tories in the clearest way possible — through the "vote" of the Stock Exchange. On the Monday prior to the vote in Parliament, the Financial Times 30-share index fell by 14.1 points.

## Cast aside

Why did the ruling class back Labour? Despite the growing protest over the Social Contract, the capitalist obviously consider that to cast aside the Labour Government now would be premature; perhaps, they think, Labour can enforce a third

round of wage restraint. Certainly the Tories can't.

Moreover, if Labour can't deliver the goods, and a period of sharp class confrontation does lie immediately ahead, the ruling class cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of the Heath period and go into that confrontation unprepared. So far there has been little preparation for a fight. The working class has been stopped in its tracks for a couple of years but it has not been softened up by a run of defeats. There has been no major shift in the balance of forces either between the Right and the Left or between the state and the mass of workers over the period of Labour rule. And the natural party of the ruling class, the Tory Party, is riven by personal factions and more importantly by huge differences in policy...

Of course, the more the working class shows that it is not prepared to knuckle under to another round of wage control, the more the bourgeoisie is likely to begin the necessary

preparations for a policy of sharp confrontation with the working class, and the more its support will swing behind the Tory Party as the battering ram of the capitalist offensive.

This means that it is not enough to counterpose to the social contract the old routine of free collective bargaining — though of course we support this call. The fight against the social contract, if it is to turn into a fight for big improvements in the standard of living, will have to learn the lessons of the 1970-1974 period: occupation, flying picket, general strike. It will have to be a fight for working class unity. For this the working class needs a clear programme of action based on the following:

□ For big wage increases — the pre-Social Contract buying power of workers' wages should be restored at the very least. These lump-sum increases should be protected against any further inflation by having the new wages rise automatically

as the cost of living rises. No wage control! No productivity deals! For a national minimum wage providing a decent living.

□ No to all forms of redundancy — voluntary or compulsory. For a policy of work-sharing under union control, cutting the length of the working time, not the number of jobs. For the immediate introduction of a 35-hour week without loss of pay.

□ Trade union defiance of every attempt of the courts to interfere in the affairs of the unions. No state interference!

□ The new urgency demands the utmost rank and file unity between unions. Support for any alliances between unions to conduct the struggle more effectively. Unity at the top of the unions, however, has in the past usually proved illusory and treacherous: we need to create a nationwide rank and file movement able to coordinate and strengthen the struggle against the government, the employers, and — in many cases — the trade union leaders.

# LABOUR'S LIFE WITH THE LIBERALS

working class candidates. Two of them, the prominent London Trade Unionists Cremer and Odger, actually came to an agreement with the Liberal Chief Whip, who at the same time was manoeuvring with the reactionary magnates who controlled Liberal Parliamentary seats, to exclude working men as candidates. As a result, despite several workers standing, none was elected.

After the general election of 1874, Engels wrote:

"... no separate political working class party has existed in Britain since the downfall of the Chartist party in the fifties. This is understandable in a country in which the working class has shared more than anywhere else in the advantages of the immense extension of its large-scale industry. Nor could it have been otherwise in an England that ruled the world market; and certainly not in a country where the ruling classes have set themselves the task of carrying out, parallel with other concessions, one point of the Chartists' programme, the People's Charter, after another..."

## Miners

It was in the 1874 election that the first trade unionists were returned to Parliament. About 10 workers had stood against both Tory and Liberal, but all were defeated. The two trade unionists who did win were both miners' leaders, elected as Liberals with the official support of the Liberal Party. Engels commented further:

"... the Chartists' name was in bad odour with the bourgeoisie precisely because theirs had been an outspokenly proletarian party. Whereas under the old franchise, the workers

had to a certain extent been compelled to figure as the tail of the radical bourgeoisie, it was inexcusable to make them go on playing that part after the Reform Bill had opened the door of Parliament to at least 60 working class candidates.

"This was the turning point. In order to get into Parliament the 'labour leaders' had recourse, in the first place, to the votes and money of the bourgeoisie, and only in second place to the votes of the workers themselves. But by doing so they ceased to be workers' candidates and turned themselves into bourgeois candidates. They did not appeal to a working-class party that still had to be formed but to the bourgeois 'great Liberal Party'."

## Obstacle

The main obstacle to growth in the number of 'Lib-Lab' MPs in the following years was not any reluctance on the part of the leaders of the craft unions. Rather it was the unwillingness of the middle class Liberal Party organisations to adopt workers as candidates, and the fact that MPs were not paid by the state. As Ramsay MacDonald wrote about the ILP: "We didn't leave the Liberals. They kicked us out and slammed the door in our faces".

Despite the creation, from the late 1880s, of unions of semi-skilled and unskilled workers, less inclined to oppose independent political organisation than the old craft unions, the policy of outright 'lib-Lab'ism was not seriously challenged for over 20 years after the passing of the Second Reform Act.

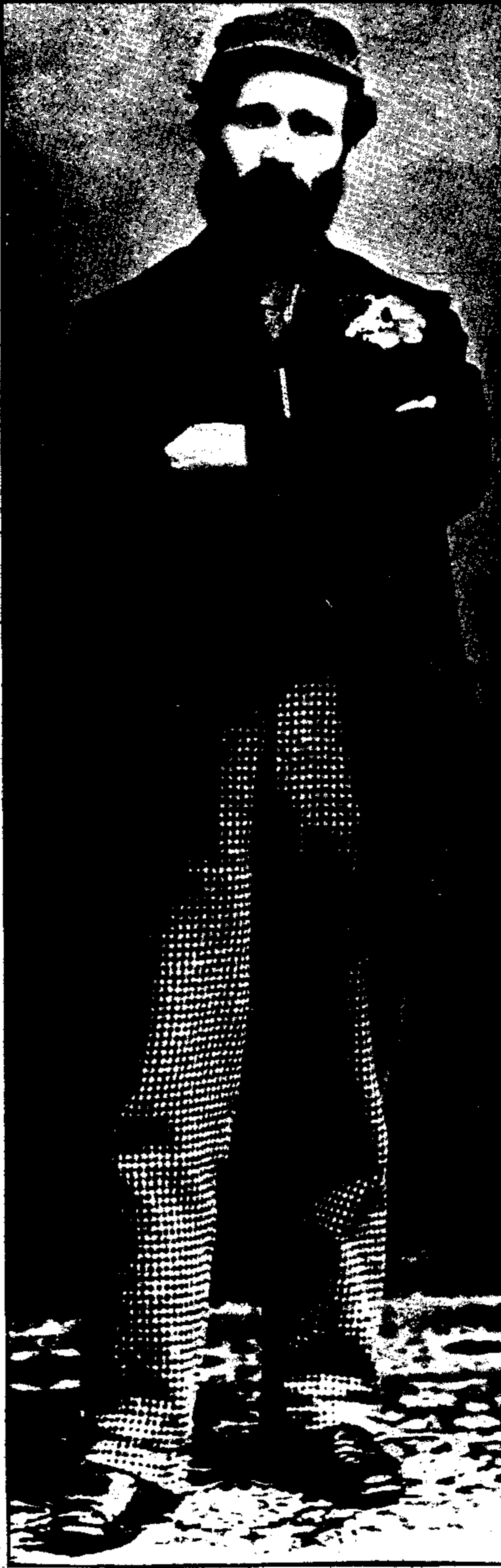
The first independent working class party of any

importance after the Chartists was the Independent Labour Party, founded in 1893. But the Christian reformist socialism of the ILP was in some respects, for example its support for free trade, not far from Liberal traditions. As the "Manchester Guardian" put it in 1901, commenting on the ILP conference: "What must strike a Liberal... is, one would say, how much of the proceedings is devoted to the advocacy of traditional liberal principles".

Meanwhile many trade unions, and in particular the TUC Parliamentary Committee and the Miners' Federation (which, in that period, included one quarter of all unionised workers), remained opposed to a separate working class party. Not until 1899 was a TUC resolution passed, resulting in the establishment of the Labour Representation Committee in 1900. The large miners' and cotton workers' unions still opposed the LRC, and by the end of its first year unions representing only 350,000 workers had affiliated.

It was only after the Taff Vale Judgment, making trade unions financially liable for any damage they inflicted on the employers during strike action, that most unions affiliated to the LRC. Their motive was the need for Parliamentary action to change the law. Even then the Miners' Federation only affiliated in 1907.

As the LRC started to become a force, it still allied with the Liberals. Even the reformist socialism of the Fabians and the ILP was not generally accepted by the leaders of the unions which made up the LRC. Of the two MPs elected on the LRC ticket in 1900, one was expelled in 1904 for refusing to accept the Labour Party constitut-



KEIR HARDIE — first proposed an independent Labour Party at 1887 TUC

ion, and joined the Liberals. In 1903 there was a secret agreement between Ramsay MacDonald and the Liberal Chief Whip, Herbert Gladstone, to allocate the seats at the coming general election so that the Liberals and Labour would not stand against each other.

After the Liberals were returned with a huge majority in 1906, the Labour Party was rewarded with a law reversing the Taff Vale judg-

ment. The Labour Party acted as a loyal opposition to the Liberal Government. When Victor Grayson stood as an open Socialist in the colne Valley by-election in 1907, he was refused the support of the Labour Party by MacDonald, so as not to disrupt the alliance with the Liberals. Grayson won the election nonetheless.

Though under increasing pressure, this close Labour-Liberal alliance survived until the First World War. It was only in 1918, with the adoption of the reformist 'socialist' constitution which survives to this day and the creation of individual membership in the Labour Party, that the organisational independence of the Labour Party was made secure. Despite that organisational independence, and despite the formal commitment to 'socialism', political independence from Liberalism has never been established.

The Liberals underwent decline and split after world war 1. Nonetheless, their Parliamentary support was vital to the minority Labour governments of 1924 and 1929, and Liberal ideas on finance dominated both those governments.

## Reform

Old-style 'Lib-Lab'ism disappeared only with the fall of the Liberal Party's possibilities of being a party of consistent social reform, and the rise of working class militancy before 1914 and after the first wave of chauvinism at the beginning of the war. That working class self-assertion expressed itself after 1918 in a big strengthening of Labour

Obviously today's coalition between Labour and the Liberals is very different from 'Lib-Lab'ism as it existed up to 1914. It is now the Labour Party which is the dominant partner, and handing concessions to a Liberal Party which does not even have any of the bourgeois reforming vigour which the 19th century Liberals had. The crucial common factor is the subordination of working class interests to those of the capitalists.

BRUCE ROBINSON

IN 1947 the United Nations, under pressure from the USA, decided to partition the British Mandate Territory of Palestine into Arab and Jewish states. The USSR lent all its weight to secure the necessary two-thirds majority vote in the UN. Before the development of anti-imperialist Arab nationalism throughout North Africa and the Middle East, the USSR treated the Arabs with the same great-power contempt as did the occupying imperialist powers.

The even-handedness of 'Partition' is only apparent. The Jews were mainly recent settlers. It had been the land of the Palestinian Arabs for many centuries. But by the UN decree, 55% of the land was to be given to the Zionists, though they were only 30% of the population.

Britain refused responsibility for carrying out the decision, and announced its withdrawal for May 1948. War followed, and at its end 80% of Palestine was in the hands of the new state of Israel.

Between April and December 1948, three quarters of a million Palestinians were driven out and then refused the right to return. The majority of the Palestinian Arabs were uprooted and lived thereafter in refugee camps. The Arabs remaining in Zionist territory were from then on treated as aliens, systematically deprived of property and discriminated against.

In 1950 Britain's puppet state, the Kingdom of Transjordan, became Jordan by annexing the West Bank, and Egypt took over the Gaza strip — areas to be occupied by Israel after the 1967 war.

The Palestinians almost disappeared as a political entity for the next two decades. They formed the majority of the population of Jordan, but they were not in control, and were oppressed. The various Arab governments took great pains to ensure that there was no Palestinian movement. It was urged on the Palestinians that their restoration to Palestine would be won by the power of the Arab states.

The rise of radical Arab nationalism in the 50s lent credence to this view that the problems of the Palestinians would be solved in the general "Arab Revolution". Pan-Arabism aspired to one united and independent state for the whole Arab people. The radical bourgeois nationalist government of Gamel Abdul Nasser attacked and expropriated imperialist interests in the Egyptian econ-

omy. The Algerians fought a long Vietnam-like war for independence, against France, from 1954 to 1962. The monarchy was overthrown in Iraq in 1958. The radical Arab movements attacked not only imperialism but also the traditionalist Arab regimes like that of Saudi Arabia: Egyptian troops fought as late as 1967 against pro-imperialist forces in South Arabia.

The first attempt to create a Palestinian force independent of the Arab governments was Al Fatah, which was organised in the mid-1950s, and, significantly, was associated with the Algerian FLN. After Algerian liberation it set up a training camp there. It started guerilla sorties against Israel in 1965. The Arab governments reacted by setting up the Palestinian Liberation Organisation under Shuquayri and by blacking out news of the exploits of Al Fatah.

The victory of Israel in the June war of 1967 was the death blow to radical Arab nationalism — which was anyway reaching the end of its potential with the withdrawal of old-style imperialism except in a few peripheral areas like Oman. Thereafter the feuds between nationalists and traditionalists would be muted or buried.

The war which smashed the Arab regular armies also smashed the hypnosis that had held the Palestinian masses waiting for restoration by those apparently powerful armies.

Simultaneously the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the creation of 400,000 more refugees together with the captivity in occupied territory of another one million Palestinians, re-raised the question of the Palestinians in an acute form.

The defeat of the Arab armies threw the Palestinians back on themselves. By weakening and destabilising the Jordan state it created conditions in which guerilla bands could operate with great freedom, and became almost an independent state. The spotlight of world publicity focused on the guerillas. In March 1968 the guerillas repulsed an Israeli attack into Jordan which may in fact have been aimed at occupying the east Bank of the Jordan. After a day-long battle the Israelis retreated, abandoning some of their equipment.

The stature of the guerillas was raised enormously in Arab public opinion. Even the vicious tyrant Hussein declared himself

# THE ARAB PALESTINE




"for" the guerillas. From that battle until Black September, 1970, the Palestinian guerillas were a relatively independent force. Even the creation of the Iraqi and Syrian government-controlled guerilla groups, as part of a never-abandoned attempt to exercise control over the Palestinian movement, did not change that. Al Fatah took control of the PLO. Thousands of volunteers flocked to Jordan from the refugee camps.

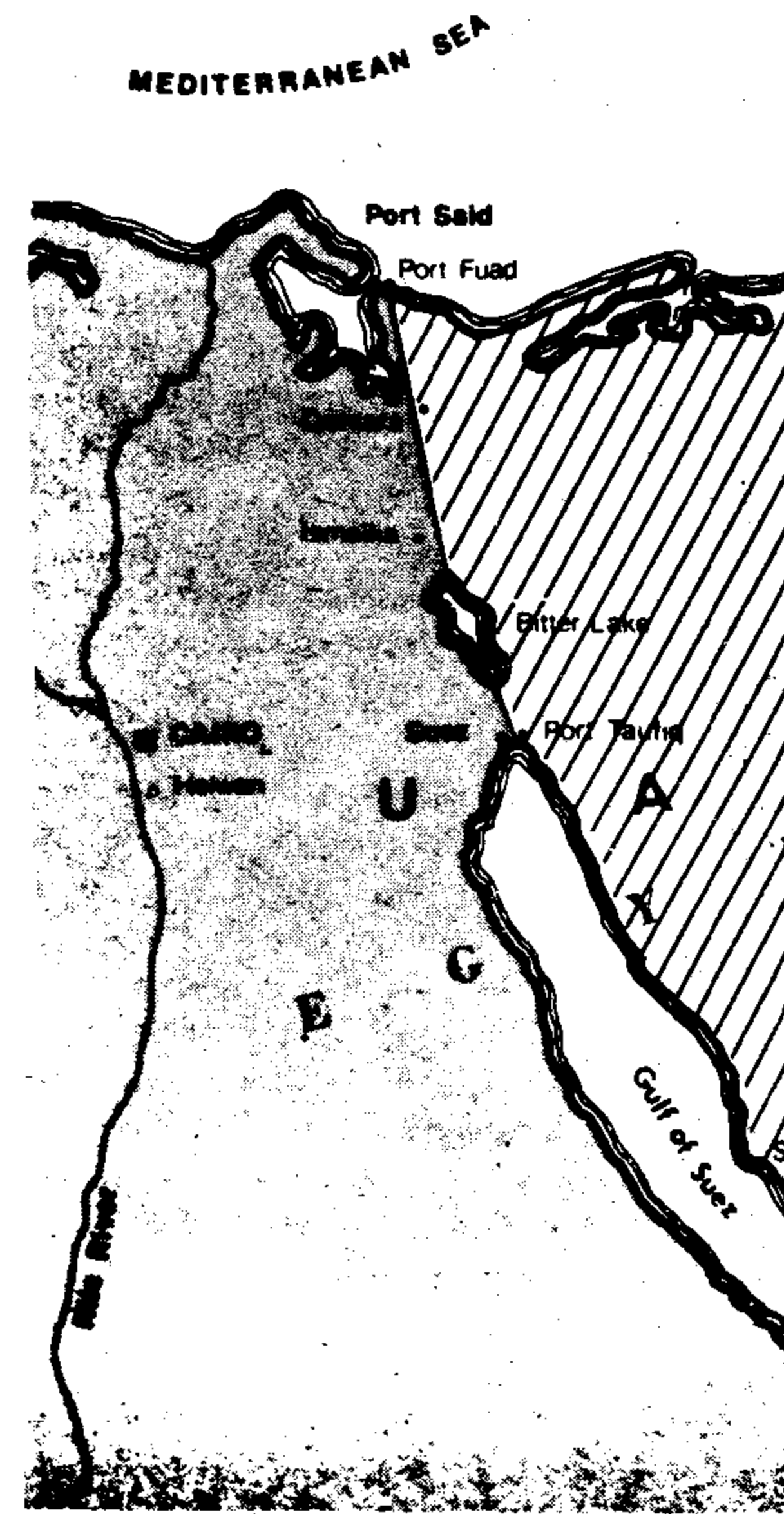
At this time, too, and against objections from some Arab governments, they adopted the programmatic goal of creating a secular

ence with those Jews of Palestine who would abandon the 'racist'/'religious' exclusiveness of Zionism and agree to the dismantlement of the Zionist state apparatus

Already in 1969 a series of clashes between the Palestinians and the Lebanese army signalled the tension generated by the independence of the guerillas. But the Arab states remained weak and the Lebanese army very weak, so an accord was reached.

In 1970 the US Secretary of State, Rogers, proposed a plan for a Middle East settlement on a basis of withdrawal by Israel to its 1967

-  United Nations Partition Plan for a Jewish State in 1947.
-  Territories seized by Israel in 1948 and 1949.
-  Territories seized by Israel in June 1967.



Prisoners of Israel — which has expanded by 400% since 1948 by military co-

democratic state in Palestine as the solution to the Arab-Jewish conflict. While it would be foolish to think that Zionism is just an easily-erased word, and not in fact the ingrained outlook of the Jewish population in Palestine, the programme of a secular and democratic Palestine translates the problem into political terms, away from the racial, religious terms in which all the Zionists and some Arabs pose it — and also away from narrow nationalism. By choosing to define the right to self-determination of the dispossessed Palestinian Arabs in this way, their organisation opened the possibility of agreement on civic coexist-

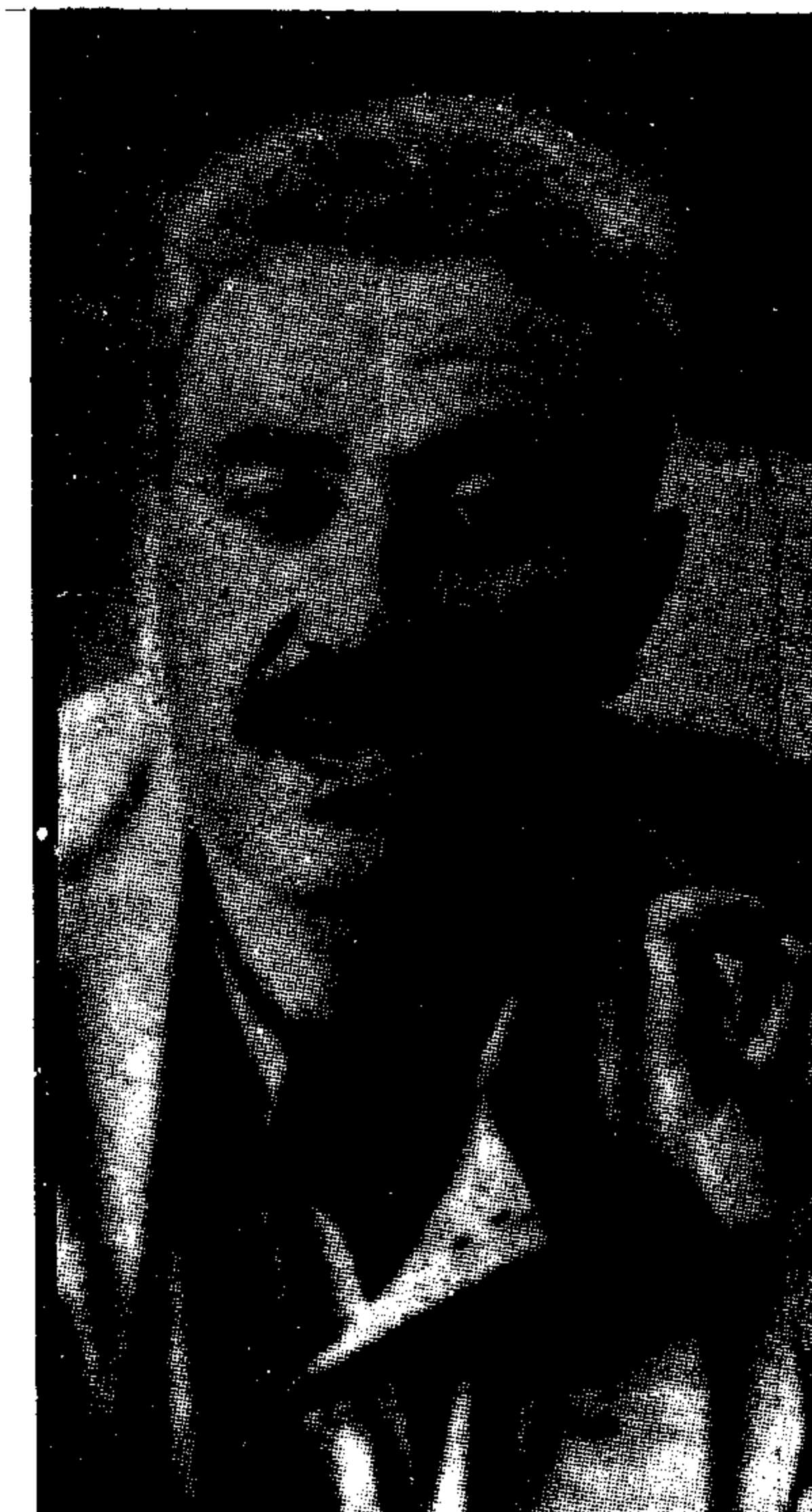
borders (that is, 80% of pre-Partition Palestine) and creation of a mini-Palestinian state.

This was the crucial turning point. Nasser and Hussein accepted the Rodgers plan, the Palestinians denounced it. The necessity to forcibly control the Palestinians or to destroy them became clear. Bitter fighting followed between the Bedouin army of Hussein and the Palestinians. 20,000 are said to have died. A truce was arranged, with neither side the victor. Afterwards the Bedouin army hammered away at the guerillas until they were driven entirely underground by mid 1971. One of the results was the desperate resort to terrorist actions such as the Munich massacre.

the possible meeting-ground

As the continued existence of a militant Palestinian movement contradicted the growing rapprochement between the Arab regimes and western imperialism, so the Arab states gradually lined up against the Palestinians. At the same time they made gestures of support because of the enormous popularity of the Palestinian cause among the Arab masses.

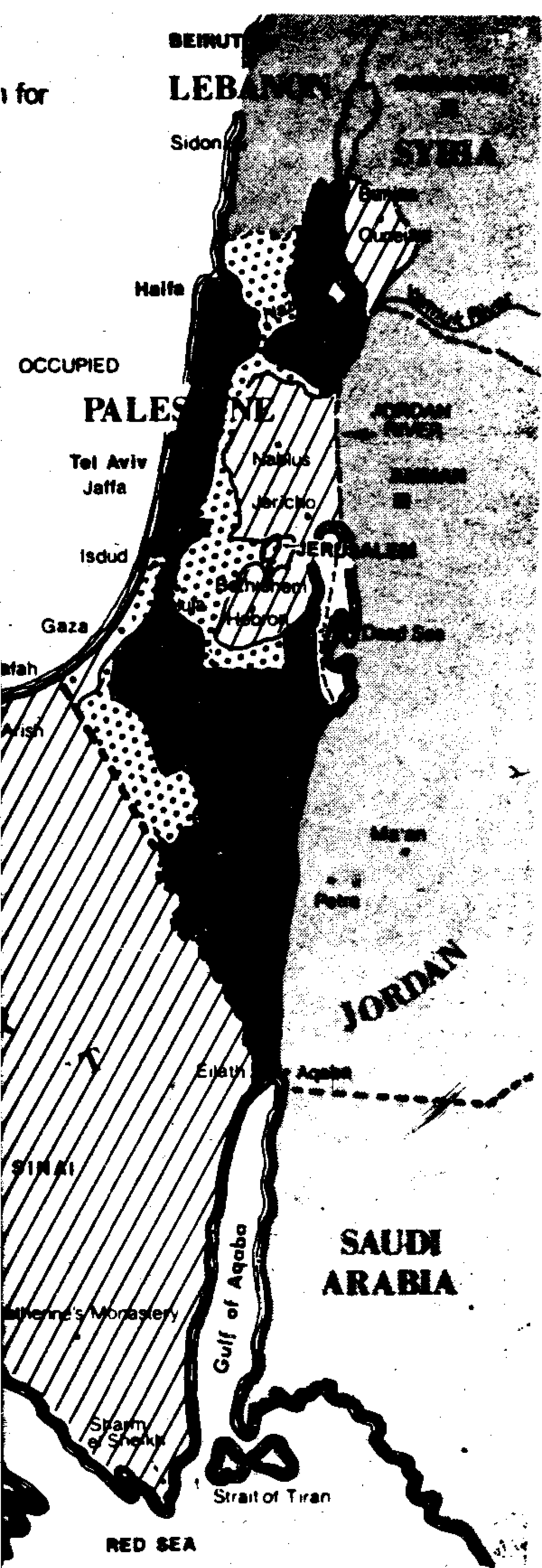
Increasingly the Arab states tried to use the PLO — in



George Habash of the PFLP



# ABS & FINE



ians, was an exercise in neutering the independent Palestinian movement in the interests of the Syrian state — and its cover-up by the other Arab states shows that Syria's rapprochement with imperialism is part of a general trend throughout the Arab world. It is symbolic of the changed relationship between imperialism and the Arab regimes today as compared with 20 years ago that an Arab regime can now be relied upon to "arrange things" in Lebanon. In 1958 the US army itself invaded Lebanon on the same side in the then civil war as the Syrians now — at the direct risk of a nuclear war.

Though there was and is both a left — populist — and a right wing of Arab nationalism, the great post-war wave of Arab liberation struggle never escaped the control of petty bourgeois nationalism. Even in its greatest period of independence the Palestinian liberation movement never escaped fully from seeing the interests of the Palestinians as dependently linked with the fortunes of one or another of the Arab states. Before and after 1967 all the Arab states did their utmost to ensure that dependence — including the butchery in Jordan and Lebanon. Now, as the Arab states regularise their relations with imperialism, the Palestinian organisations are pulled into a compromise to serve the search by the most powerful Arab states for a rapprochement with the west and its client state, Israel.

From all this flows the way in which the issue 'for or against the idea of a mini-state on the West Bank and



Palestine commandos parade in Amman before Jordan's Black September

in Gaza' is debated within Palestinian ranks.

On the right wing of the PLO are those who either out of personal ambition or acting as agents of one or another Arab power, want a peaceful settlement now, even though it means ditching the aspiration of the Palestinian movement to date.

On the left wing are those, like the PFLP, who wish to continue the struggle. But they, restricted by their conception that the struggle against Israel must come first and be conducted from a safe territorial base, and having to face up to the material situation after the defeat in Lebanon, are beginning to reconcile themselves to the idea of the mini-state. With reservations of course, but their wish to save something from the fire and their desire for an operational base, they are left with the utopian and contradictory idea of a mini-state as a launching pad for the struggle against the Zionist state.

In the last analysis this conception is no less dependent on the good offices of the

Arab regimes than Khaddoumi's. It is just less realistic.

George Habash of the Rejectionist [anti-'West Bank mini-state'] PFLP, for instance, relies on Iraq, while his opponent Kaddoumi has said, "Saudi Arabia is the most powerful weapon the Arabs possess. She alone can through American pressure force Israel to withdraw from the West Bank and the Gaza strip".

Those who rely on feudal Saudi Arabia commit themselves to what can be bargained for with the USA — their maximum is the mini-state. The tragedy is that the limited nationalist outlook of the leaders of the Palestinians, together with the accumulated defeats of the 1970s, have confined them to choices within this range.

A mini-state would be a fatal compromise of the fundamental anti-Zionist position for a secular state in Palestine with equality for both Arabs and Jews. Amidst all the cant about the "reasonable" demand that the PLO must formally recognise the Zionist state of Israel, the central fact remains that that state refuses

to recognise the existence of the Palestinian people.

If a Palestinian mini-state is set up, it cannot be a stepping-stone to a secular state in Palestine. It will most likely be a cheap labour "Arab reservation" for an Israeli racist state guaranteed by US imperialism.

Possibly this will happen within the framework of a Syrian-Jordan federation — something the oil states have been conniving at for some time and now looks like becoming a reality.

Most importantly, such a settlement would mark Arab acceptance of the racist state of Israel — a state which brazenly proclaims its own racism by denial of the rights of the Palestinians. The Palestinians themselves refuse to define Palestinian self-determination in a way that would exclude the Jews of Israel from rights in a Palestinian state, and define it as a demand for a Palestinian state in which both Jews and Arabs would be equal citizens — in all of Palestine, not in the West Bank alone.

## A FREE HAND FOR GENEVA

THE PALESTINIAN National Council, meeting in Cairo, has given the Palestinian Liberation Organisation leadership a free hand to seek a negotiated settlement with Israel. Despite the council's rejection of an attempt to remove from the Palestinian National Charter the demand for a democratic secular state in Palestine, the decisions of the Council are interpreted by informed commentators as opening the door to an agreement for setting up a Palestinian mini-state in the West Bank of Jordan and Gaza, as part of a Middle East settlement.

The Council meeting has consolidated the swing to the

right which has been marked since the Syrian invasion of Lebanon last year, and the heavy blows dealt to the Palestinian forces there by Syrians and the Lebanese right. The major organisation of the so-called 'Rejection Front' — which wants to reject the idea of a Palestinian mini-state — the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP], has refused to be represented on the new Executive Council.

The continued display of demands such as the call for a secular Palestinian state, together with a free hand for the PLO leadership, will not

make a deal with Israel and its US backer any easier. Israel is opposed to the settling up even of a small weak state on the West Bank. But it is in the interests of the major Arab states, the USA, and even the Soviet Union, to 'solve' the Palestinian problem in the Middle East.

Apart from granting the Palestinians the right of return to their homeland, which would mean dismantling the religious sectarian state of Israel, the only 'solution' is a West Bank state. The search for agreement will go on, and the Council's decision to give the PLO leadership a free hand will facilitate it.



Yassir Arafat

ANYBODY with any kind of objective perspective will surely realise that Bruce Robinson's review of Paul Foot's *Why You Should Be a Socialist* (WA49) was a deliberately pre-conceived attempt to attack SWP immediately the book was in his possession. You may collectively dislike our party, and may indeed have quite plausible reasons for doing so, but the rather self-conscious style and overt bias can't be justified easily.

Firstly, I think you failed to recognise what actually Foot's book was all about. It was attempting, in a very simple and direct manner, to recruit people

If it attracts people to socialism, that's fine

towards socialism and dispelling any misconceptions they may have held, through absorbing the ubiquitous British media and socialisation process, about our basically agreed end. In my own mind it is the only really worthwhile book that has been published to attempt this cause, and judging by my friends' re-

actions towards it, it is certainly effective in its aims. It is thoroughly accessible and comprehensive in this limited sense. While failing to recognise this, I think, you perhaps have genuinely misapplied your criticisms.

In some respects you are perfectly justified in saying that

it was a book giving the impression of, why you should join SWP. Is there anything wrong with this? Surely the first fundamental we should all applaud is that if it attracts many people to socialism, then that's fine. Surely these people will be able to choose quite freely to some other alternative

if they wish and will be able to evaluate SWP then. The point that we overstated SWP's role in the movement is slightly exaggerated and deceptive, as anybody will know, who has read it, without already knowing what they want to read it for (i.e. Robinson's prejudice) will verify. The feedback is basically a willingness to participate or at least be interested in the socialist cause, and, yes, with SWP, because it was their book after all.

Your pedantic arguments therefore are quite inept, their validity can be 'taken up' in some other context. Perhaps this ignorance lies within a basic characteristic of *Workers' Action*, its failure, as Paul Foot rightly points out, to communicate with anybody uncommitted — "theoretical purity without any contact with real life".

B. Dowson [Huddersfield SWP]

REPLY: It is comrade Dowson, not Bruce Robinson, who has missed the point about Paul Foot's book. His argument boils down to saying that **Why you should be a socialist** is a good book because, in simple language, it induces people to take the first steps towards socialist consciousness and commitment, and that to criticise it from the standpoint of "theoretical purity" is pedantic. What Robinson is actually saying in his review, however, is that Foot's book fails to give satisfactory answers to many of the questions that it raises, that its arguments are inadequate or

## A recipe for misleading

sometimes (as on the Labour Party) factually wrong.

For problem after problem, Foot fails to give any answer except: Join the SWP, because it fights for socialism. But workers have been joining parties to fight for socialism for over 100 years now. Very often they have joined parties far more revolutionary than the SWP, and by the hundreds of thousands, not the tens and hundreds who have joined

the SWP — and yet they have been misled again and again, by social democracy, by Stalinism, and by centrism. Instead of drawing any lessons from those defeats, Foot simply assures us that the SWP is more militant and dynamic than the Labour Party. **But that is a recipe for misleading workers once again.**

Dowson's letter makes no attempt at all to answer the political disagreements — that's only "theoretical purity", leave us with our vague view of the "basically agreed end", and we'll get there! This really underlines what Bruce Robinson wrote!

Dowson accuses us of lacking "objective perspective" and having "overt bias", and then says, on the book urging readers to join the SWP, "Is there anything wrong with this?" You can't have it both ways. Of course SWP publications will attempt to promote the SWP, and there's nothing wrong with that. But equally comrade Dowson should expect us to explain and argue for our differ-

ences!

When comrade Dowson says he doesn't mind if people, after reading Foot's book, evaluate the SWP and move somewhere else, he is using deceit. The book is presented as "the case for the SWP", not as a diving board into the pool of socialist theory! And instead of seriously presenting the arguments between the SWP and the other groupings on the revolutionary left, it rests content with a few dishonest jibes.

Dowson concludes, "Your pedantic arguments therefore are quite inept... only to follow with, 'their validity can be 'taken up' in some other context' So our arguments are pedantic and inept... they may be valid, however, but that's of no consequence!"

The socialist movement has a long history. To fail to learn from this history, to resolve the question, as Foot's book does, into 'good guys' and 'bad guys', is a certain recipe for disaster.

Bob Sugden

## TRIBUNAL ADDS TO DIFFICULTIES

"Find the boss" is a game we are increasingly being made to play these days when we are asked to believe either that we are all workers or that we are all capitalists, with shares and industrial democracy... But we all know when we are fired or victimised who in fact has the power to decide on these actions, namely the managers.

In a case which we are fighting in the Industrial Tribunal [under Section 53 of the *Employment Protection Act*], a teacher, Sharad Korgaonkar, makes a complaint against the headmaster of his school alleging victimisation for trade union activities.

The complaint is clearly against this headmaster, though in theory the employer is the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA). But the Industrial Tribunal has dismissed the headmaster (who was down in the case as agent of ILEA) from the hearing as a respondent, leaving only the legal officers of the ILEA as accountable for the complaint.

If this judgment stands, (and it has been upheld on Appeal) then Tribunals actually add to our legal difficulties. On this ruling we cannot even be sure of the presence for cross examination of the person complained against. For, unlike courts, Industrial Tribunals don't have the power to subpoena wit-

nesses. So if the 'employer' does not call the person complained against, the 'agent' does not have to appear. Even if the 'agent' came to court at the request of the employee, he would then be a witness for the employee complaining against him and the employee could not cross-examine him!

This decision should not remain unchallenged. In fact it goes against common law, in which the normal principle is of joint responsibility of the 'chief' and the 'agent'.

To change this ruling would make the EPA a more effective defence of workers' rights. But workers are still at a big disadvantage fighting through courts and tribunals, and these cannot be the way to gain political strength. Our challenge must not merely be to the interpretation of a law, but to the power of laws supporting the relation in which workers are a class of 'employee' who can be hired, fired and victimised by 'employers' as long as they stick by the 'rules'.

No such challenge is offered in the courts and parliament, certainly not by the government which passed the *Employment Protection Act*.

SAFDER ALLADINA  
Black Workers' League  
5 St. Charles Square, London W10

## STUDENT UNION BUILDS LINKS

IN a recent editorial (WA50) you rightly warn against any idea that the courts are neutral. This lesson is no doubt being learned around the country, as courts rush in to grant injunctions against occupations by students and workers.

At University College, Cardiff, where three weeks of direct action against tuition fee increases included occupation of the Principal's office, the security office and another, administrative area, the college administration easily obtained eviction notices. But even after the students had ended their occupation (in response to court orders) Judge Morgan Hughes went on to grant a High Court injunction restraining every union member from occupying any college-owned premises for the next four months (i.e. until the summer vacation).

In the short term the use of the legal bludgeon has worked to

quell the students' action. But it has also impelled those who want to continue the struggle into viewing it in a wider context. The Student Union Society (which led the occupations) has now affiliated to the Campaign Against a Criminal Trespass Law (CACTL) and delegates attended a meeting held in Merthyr a couple of weeks ago.

Also, moves are being made to build stronger links with other student unions and the broader labour movement, and support has come from Cardiff Trades Council and a number of Labour Party bodies.

If these links can be made effectively, student can hope for the support of organised workers next time the courts are used against them — and in turn they are more likely to offer such support to workers faced with such attacks.

CARDIFF STUDENT

## Stechford: the wrong emphasis

As a regular reader of *Workers' Action* I found your article 'The poor way to get rich quick' (WA 50) on the intervention of the IMG and SWP in the Stechford by-election rather confusing at best.

"The first essential for a revolutionary socialist alternative in the elections", is, you argue, "clear political ideas". And yet the political platform of the SWP and IMG for the Stechford campaign, are given only the briefest of mentions. Perhaps the SWP's politics can be dismissed in a paragraph — as you say, "£10 wage rises and a 35 hour week" sums them up — but the IMG want a little more attention.

Yet the sum total of your criticism of the IMG's politics amounts to 2 points, levelled at Brian Heron's programme as printed in *Red Weekly* of February 3rd. Firstly, he didn't mention Ireland — but you don't explain why he should have done. Secondly, you correctly maintain that calling for price controls is diversionary" but give us no explanation why.

After this your readers are now supposed to understand that the IMG election platform "contains nothing specifically revolutionary, nothing that relates to the question of the state or even the government". That's true, but tell us why.

You continue: "The record of would-be revolutionary

candidates in recent British elections shows no deliberate thought-out strategy." The major part of the remaining article sets out to prove this. It compares the 1.1% of the vote received on average by British 'revolutionaries' to the 'sharp contrast' of France — 2.7% was the combined vote of the 2 revolutionary candidates in the 1974 presidential election. So where is the big difference? And if vote-catching is not the aim of standing candidates, as you say, what point are you making?

You also argue that the French transferrable voting system enables revolutionaries to publicise "their ideas without seeming to help the Right". If you are not condemning the IMG etc for

splitting the vote, then the point you are making is lost on me.

Surely the best way to give the IMG the hammering they deserve is to take up Heron's election platform as published in *Red Weekly* of 17th March. They end up calling for the nationalisation of "the banks, the finance companies and insurance companies without compensation so that the resources can be planned in a socialist way". That is, nationalisation equals socialism, never mind about the capitalist state. Surely better mileage can be made against the IMG by taking up their reformist electioneering politics, rather than harping on the fact that very few people, thankfully, are listening to them.

Alan Cherrett

## AN EVALUATION

REPLY: We have explained our criticisms of the IMG, and of the SWP, at length in *Workers' Action*. Rather than reproducing that whole argument, or attempting some glib super-condensed summary, I thought it better in an article on election strategy simply to note the major points.

My purpose, after all, was not just to "make mileage against the IMG". Marxists could support candidates with wrong politics if those candidates were a real pole for the revolutionary and militant aspirations of sections of workers. It is "anti-parliamentary cretinism" to think that it is irrelevant in this context whether the revolutionary left candidate gets 12% of the votes (as in Orleans) or 1%. With a tiny fringe vote, the candidature may still be useful for recruitment for the organisation involved —

but that is about all.

Detailing the political errors of the SWP, the IMG, or the WRP is one thing; but evaluating the experience of revolutionary candidates in Britain, and working out their strategic value, now, vis-à-vis the problem of reformism and the Labour Party, is another. My article tried to make that evaluation. In this context, considerations like "not seeming to help the Right" are important. Revolutionaries sometimes have to seem to help the Right — or even really help it, in the short term. But — unless we are doctrinaire ultra-lefts — we avoid it when we can.

One final point. I did not intend to criticise Brian Heron for not mentioning Ireland. *Red Weekly* says that the omission in their issue of February 3rd was an oversight, and I believe them.

Colin Foster

AS THE battle to decide whether the government and the TUC can impose another phase of wage restraint sharpens, the need for an active intervention by revolutionaries becomes ever more urgent.

The recall conference of the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement, held in Birmingham on Sunday March 27th, offered the opportunity to build the basis for joint activity.

In the event, however, the Conference marked a big step backward. Without a swift reconsideration on the part of the Workers Socialist League — the majority tendency on the Campaign's Organising Committee — the CDLM is destined for the junkyard, to rot alongside the rusty shells of the Rank and File Movement and the All Trades Union Alliance.

## Quashed

The Conference began with an unfortunate demonstration of what the Organising Committee (OC) are pleased to call "Labour Movement Democracy". Delegates from the Scottish Socialist League and the International Marxist Group moved an amendment to the Standing Orders to allow the IMG to move resolutions in the name of their political organisation rather than through trade union or Labour Party branches only. The Conference chairman quashed all discussion on it and moved to next business without taking a vote.

Apart from the high handed attitude to democracy displayed in this way, the WSL were clearly determined to assert an organisational role for the conference and the campaign which is both unjustified and unrealistic.

The conference itself was not run on a delegate basis, since visitors too could both speak and vote — indeed, given the implantation and base of the revolutionary left, it could not have been otherwise. Yet the WSL persisted in maintaining the fiction that it was a trade union conference to rival the British Leyland Combine Convenors' conference to be held next weekend (April 3rd) — smaller, but comparable in form.

# Democracy Campaign: Expecting the Apocalypse

The same attitude emerged when the conference majority rejected an amendment seeking to build and intervene in local LCDTU (Liaison Cttee. for Defence of the Trade Unions) committees. The unstated but implicit attitude was that these would be rivals to local CDLM committees. And anyway, LCDTU committees would be full of Stalinists and reformist bureaucrats, so it's best to keep well away from them in case we become tarred with the same brush.

Logically, the WSL could have advanced another reason for abstaining from fighting inside LCDTU bodies: any time now we'll be building councils of action instead! For, according to the resolution presented by the OC, a development such as the General Strike in May 1968 in France is foreseeable "in the coming period". Lest anyone take this to mean 'some time in the future', Alan Thornett (leading member of the WSL and the CDLM OC) explained that such a situation began to emerge the other week, in the context of the Leyland toolmakers' strike.

So, with dual power just around the corner, the mundane task of fighting reformism and Stalinism in common or-garden rank-and-file committees is really beside the point.

Workers Action has said before, in the context of the CDLM, that the WSL is entitled to its analysis of the current situation, however lunatic or half-baked it may be. We have also said that it is the height of sectarian folly to attempt to impose such an analysis on other political tendencies as a condition for participation in joint activity around agreed demands.

Yet this is what the WSL persisted in trying to do at

Sunday's conference. They demanded that the conference vote not only on a series of programmatic demands and initiatives, but also on three pages of apocalyptic predictions such as the explosion of dual power.

No separate vote was accepted on the two sections of the resolution (this was, though, a majority decision of the conference), and thus only the faithful followers of Comrade Thornett found themselves able to vote in favour of anything proposed.

They had a majority; but a quicker road to sectarian exclusiveness is hard to imagine.

## Thread

The WSL's line of march on the organisational questions facing the conference and their delusory political postures are clearly connected.

So too are a number of programmatic issues where they have a lamentable position. To mention just one of these, the conference majority rejected a call to support the demands and initiatives of the Working Women's Charter. In this they are somewhat behind the Communist Party (who support the demands but not the organisation).

A member of the WSL explained that the Charter did not deserve support because it was not part of the Labour Movement (though the CDLM is?). She added that equal pay reduced itself to the fight against the Social Contract, while the struggle for nurseries and abortion rights all flows from the fight against the bureaucracy.

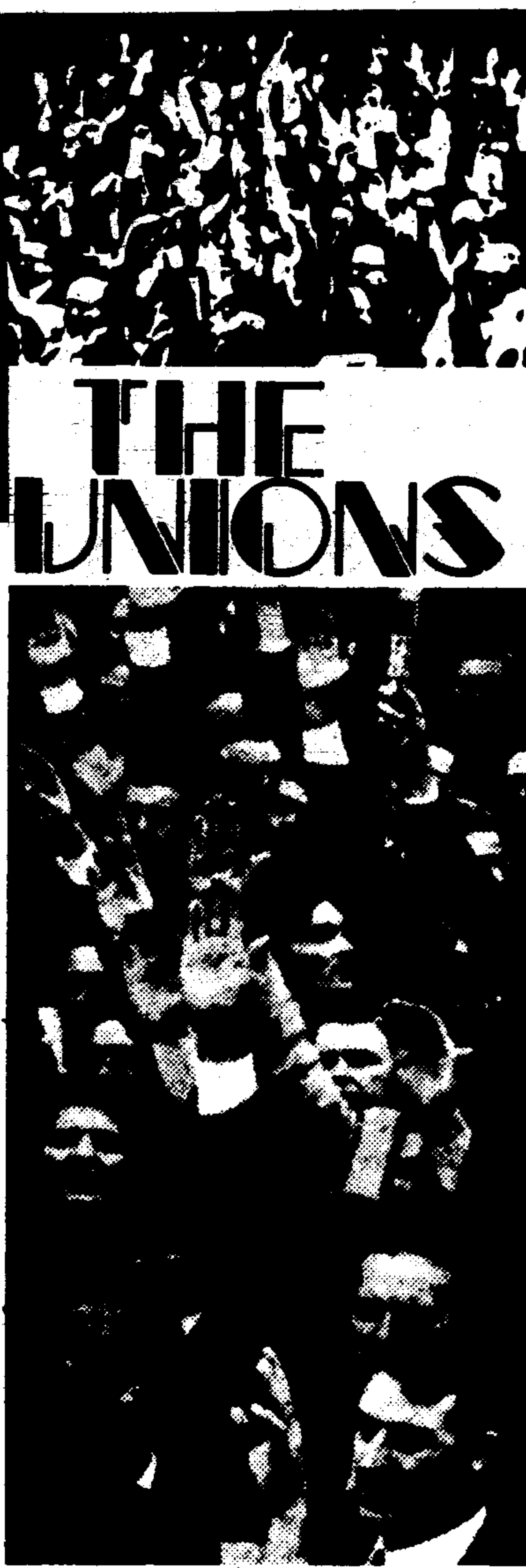
All of these conceptions are tied by a common thread. It goes under the name of Healyism.

## Old habits

The WSL originated in a split from the Workers' Revolutionary Party, and a healthy split it once seemed to be, too. But old habits die hard. Thornett is still trapped in the same overall straitjacket as his former leader Healy.

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 OC 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 vein 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.

## Backyard

The lack of attention to questions — such as that of women — outside the WSL's scenario, flows from this vision; and so does the characteristic Healyite advocacy of effectively reformist nostrums supposed to be given revolutionary quality by the imminence of dual power.

Thus the Councils of Action, differing from all existing committees in being imbued with the WSL's conviction of impending general confrontation. And thus the OC's amendment at the conference declaring that the answer to the Callaghan-Steel alliance was to demand that the left MPs "declare themselves in favour of alternative socialist policies."

Workers Action supporters will continue to attend meetings of the CDLM organising committee in the hope that the WSL will make an effort to bring their feet into contact with firm earth. It is possible that the shambles they created at Sunday's conference will sober them up. But the crossroads between participation in the real struggles of the working class and the path back to the allotment owned by Gerry Healy will soon be reached.

JAMES RYAN

# Asbestos: make it risky for the bosses

Despite increasing pressure on the Government's Advisory Committee on asbestos to tighten up the existing regulations, the Committee's interim report recommends standards which are, according to the TUC, "Totally inadequate".

The TUC's view is backed by a report by the authoritative US National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) last December.

In that report NIOSH recommend standards 20 times as strict as those now in force in the UK and USA, and say that the present allowable levels of asbestos dust are "totally inadequate in protecting against cancer risks". But both the TUC and NIOSH have a policy of getting asbestos banned altogether rather than playing the numbers game "because it is impossible to specify a safe level for asbestos."

But the TUC only proposes to "encourage" replacement substances and "advise" inspectors to be strict about things like ventilation standards.

But asbestos continues to be more profitable than known alternatives, and research programmes are expensive. Given these economic pressures, words in the Government's ear won't lead to asbestos being either banned or even severely limited by the Government. Meanwhile workers are damaged and workers die.

But if the TUC were to give a lead for industrial action by workers to impose standards up to the NIOSH levels or better still black asbestos altogether. The workers' movement can impose its own 'economics' on the employers by making asbestos as risky for them in terms of trouble and disruption as it is now risky for workers' health. Industrial action is the only way to make research and alternatives 'profitable'.

And we mustn't drop our guard when it comes to the substitutes either. Some of these, such as fibre glass, are pretty doubtful too.

■ ■ ■  
The Götaverken shipyards in Sweden are among the most modern in the world. Yet a recent intensive study into health hazards there led to 300 of the 600 chemicals in use being thrown out as either harmful or unnecessary. And it showed that only 42% of the 1492 workers still had normal hearing; more than 20% had very severe hearing loss.

Two workers have been retired with brain damage, possibly caused by organic solvents. And allergies are common — epoxy-resin paints and some hardeners are thought to be the cause.

Shipyard hazards — noise, welding fumes, ultra-violet radiation, dusty insulating materials, accelerated working pace and so on — are more intense, perhaps, but basically similar to other heavy industries.

One result of the study which will interest many workers here is that back complaints can now be classified on a scientific basis as an occupational disease for compensation purposes.

ROB MCGONIGLE

# WORKERS' ACTION

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Write for details of meetings and activities to:  
WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27

# WORKERS IN ACTION

The month-old occupation of the Plessey factory in Kirby ended last Wednesday, 23rd March when the 385-strong workforce narrowly voted to allow management back into the plant. The 13 shop-stewards at Kirby recommended that the action continue despite the fact that the workers had ceased to receive wages and were refused benefits from the D.H.S.S. The financial pressures were unfortunately too strong for the majority of Kirby workers who rejected their shop-stewards lead. On management's return the following day, action committee leader Lil Allen, and her 12 fellow stewards resigned from their posts.

The collapse of the Kirby occupation was not first and foremost due to the lack of money, however. The decision of

the 6,000 Plessey workers at Edge Lane to call off their action against management heralded the end of the struggle at Kirby. When Edge Lane union leaders got the trivial commitment from the company that those being made redundant would not be named before a 90-day period they backed down, accepted the principle of redundancies and left Kirby isolated.

With the notable exception of Manchester TASS, no other union proposed action to back the Kirby occupation.

Left Labour MP's, Trade Union leaders and the CP-dominated Liver-

pool Trades Council preferred talking to the bosses and government officials than supporting the direct action of the workers. If unions had agreed to pay dispute money to the Kirby workers they could have held out, but unions like the EPTU, the major manual workers union at Plessey, whose strike fund has hardly been put to good use over the past decade, refused to do this.

Kirby also revealed the limitations of the work-in as a viable tactic against redundancies. Plessey bosses weren't at all put out by the fact that Kirby was working normally,

and perhaps even better in the absence of management supervision; and they weren't in the least inclined to shed tears not having to pay for this work. Getting supplies from Edge Lane was also a problem for the Kirby Action Committee. When the occupations began, the company removed all insurance cover from their vehicles, and lorries leaving plants were stopped and sent back by the police. (The removal of insurance seems to be a new technique employers are using against occupations. The withdrawal of insurance from the Kelvinator factory has made it impos-

ible for workers there to get supplies). When Edge Lane went back, the Kirby workers had to hire lorries to transport parts and it turned out that they could only manage to conduct such a costly operation for 2 days. Full occupation of the factory and a refusal to continue production would have been more effective.

The Kirby workers feel let down and demoralised. In the light of their defeat it is almost certain that they will join the ever-increasing dole queues on Merseyside. But the Plessey struggle is by no means over. Once workers at Edge Lane find out

exactly which of them are on the list for the chop they may very well decide to resume and deepen their short-lived occupation. It is also certain that these aren't the last of the redundancies in a company which relies for 95% of its sales on one customer — the Post Office. It is to be hoped that the lessons of the past month's struggle — need for unity between salaried and hourly-paid workers; coordination between shop-stewards committees in different plants; the limitations of a work-in tactic; and reliance on direct action at the workplace rather than on MP's, trade union officials and negotiation mechanisms — are assimilated by Plessey workers and that the fight lost at Kirby last week will be won elsewhere.

## COLQUHOUN LISTENS TO POWELL BUT NOT TO LABOUR CRITICS

AS MP Maureen Colquhoun launches a witch-hunt in the local Press against critics in the Northampton Labour Party, Northampton Trades Council has passed a resolution, moved by no.3 branch AUEW, to dissociate itself from Ms Colquhoun's speech in defence of arch-racist Enoch Powell.

Colquhoun has called for an enquiry into a censure motion passed on her by Park Ward, and alleges an 'extremist' takeover in St George's Ward. Bitterly Colquhoun said that the numbers involved in the Park Ward vote were too small to be representative. She thus joins hands with the Tory press campaign and those like Reg Prentice who seek demagogically to pit normally passive Labour supporters against those who give the party life.

Colquhoun has already been given a free pardon by the Northampton Party and the Tribune group in Parliament for her notorious speech demanding that the labour movement should "listen" to Enoch Powell. The Regional Organiser declared a Young Socialists motion condemning her invalid and the GMC did not vote on it. But clearly she wants more — complete immunity from criticism.

She has joined those in the Parliamentary Labour Party and the press who try to insist that Labour MP's, like medieval kings, are God-appointed and anointed for life! How dare Park Ward censure her for whom so many people vote? She

forgets that the overwhelming majority vote Labour, not Colquhoun. She also forgets that the Tribune group believes (nominally, anyway!) that Labour Parties should have a right to recall and dismiss MPs.

Colquhoun has been impressed with the degree of racist feeling in

middle-class socialism can lead either to working-class socialism or to the socialism of idiots, racism or toleration of racists.

That is where it has led Colquhoun. Powell is not, as she claims, just airing "a problem" which others refuse to consider and which she has just become aware of. He foments racism, licences it, and has given credence and respectability to organised racist groups.

Colquhoun herself is playing the same role for sections of the labour movement that Powell plays for the Right. She, as a left-winger, is helping to make racism respectable — to make the presence of the black population the 'problem' to be discussed, rather than racism. Where a hard-nosed long-standing racist like former Labour Chief Whip Robert Mellish is dismissed by the left, Colquhoun's left-wing record will dispose some to listen to her.

But racism and racists are not a matter for debate with either the 'left' or the right. Like carriers of the plague they must be isolated and destroyed politically. And when an unstable muddlehead like Colquhoun wants to make it a matter for discussion, and boosts Powell, her party has an obligation to deal harshly with her.

However, she said something to the local Press which deserves an answer. "It is ironic, isn't it, that this man might be the man that saves the Labour Government... Why are they not now meeting to demand that Enoch Powell does not vote with the Labour Government and save it?"

Yes, Ms Colquhoun. The Labour Party that treats Powell, in any circumstances, as other than a Parliamentary and social leper is sick. You yourself are proof that the sickness of respectabilised racism is catching



Hackney, where she recently moved from Hampstead. She articulates that feeling, and obviously thinks that many in the Labour and socialist movement are anti-racist only because a middle-class social filter protects them from the bitter working class experience of poverty, unemployment, and bad social services in areas like Hackney. She does not understand that the best hard-core working-class militants fight racism especially in areas of working class deprivation: because it is no answer at all to the problems, and indeed makes them worse. It is the 'socialism of idiots'.

Colquhoun seems governed by a revulsion against the world-view of smug middle-class socialists whose anti-racism springs from liberalism and not from the needs of working-class solidarity in struggle and of opposition to anything which oppresses one group of workers and divides the class. Contempt for

## A warning to the Front

ON 23rd MARCH the National Front made its first public appearance in Basingstoke for over two and a half years. Only 28 people were there, including the speakers and out of town supporters brought in to bolster the meeting.

Outside the meeting hall, 85 anti-fascists were mobilised in only 24 hours from gaining the first information of the fascist gathering.

The counter-demonstration organisers had decided beforehand, in view of the likely balance of forces, to go for a peaceful protest rather than trying to physically prevent the Front meeting. In the event, if preparation had been possible in the short time available a more decisive stand could have been taken. But in any case the size of the counter-mobilisation was a warning to the National Front that they will have no easy passage in Basingstoke.

From Page One

## BUDGET

Inflation is calculated to be between 13 and 15% in the next year. Healey himself says that the limited Budget increases in indirect taxes will add 1% to the retail price index. These indirect taxes hit the working class especially hard.

Last year the same Chancellor brought in the same type of taxation "concessions", traded off against Phase 2. As a result, real wages fell by about 5%.

The TUC should not even start talks on terms such as these, let alone reach agreement on them. Yet the trade union leaders will talk.

They will allow themselves to be pressurised by talk of a Tory return to power into helping the Labour government to cut working class living standards better than the Tories could do it.

All the possible concessions which the union leaders

can negotiate with the Government and the bosses will be just crumbs — compared with last year's wage cut, and compared with the wage cut that is coming even if every 'benefit' in Healey's budget is secured.

We need an offensive to gain wage rises to compensate for the fall in real wages. We need wage agreements — for the whole of the working class — indexed to the inevitable rise in the cost of living. Anything less is a sell out. No to phase 3!

## SIT-IN DEFIES BOSSES' THREAT

AN UNSIGNED LETTER from Kelvinators to the Shop Stewards' Committee at Bromborough, Merseyside, which arrived last week, carried the threat of permanent closure of the plant, where workers have been sitting in for almost a month now. The occupation has been confined to the gatehouse since power and supplies were stopped.

The determination of the workers to see this struggle through to a successful ending has been increased by this threat, which is seen as a further attempt at waving the big stick by an arrogant and high-handed management. The workers are demanding the withdrawal of management warnings made to paint-shop workers who refused to cover, and wages due for 26 workers for the period of a lock-out.

The main problem in the factory at the moment is that the white collar workers, members of AUEW-TASS, are still turning in for work in the offices. In fact, management have been quoted as referring to this section as a "tower of strength".

The AUEW District must immediately call out these TASS members, who are currently crossing official AUEW picket lines. With the maintenance workers already having withdrawn their labour, it is essential that the office workers be also brought out. Maximum unity has to be the response to the cowboys in the Kelvinator management.

Donations to: H. Mosses, 89 Mackenzie Rd, Leasowe, Wirral, Merseyside. Kevin Feintuck

### Advertisement

Pirate Jenny Theatre Group's new play, "Bouncing Back with Benyon", is a ferocious and funny 15-minute piece on the reactionary lobby's attack on a woman's right to choose to have an abortion. It will be ready from 11th April. Ring Eileen, Diane or Siobhan at 01-960 5875.

### "INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST"

No. 5 now out: Special issue on "The Leninist Party". Documents 1967-76 on the Leninist theory of the party and the conceptions of the SWP-IS. 30p plus 6½p postage. Still available: "International Communist" no.4, price 30p plus 6½p postage; "Women's Liberation and Workers' Revolution", an I-CL pamphlet, 20p plus 6½p postage. Send all orders to G. Lee, 98 Gifford St, London N1 0DF. Cheques payable to "Phoenix Pamphlets" or "ICL".

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word; block ads, £5 per column inch. All payments to be made in advance. Send copy to Events, 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

**SUNDAY 3 APRIL.** Conference on wage restraint called by the Leyland combine committee. Credentials 60p from P. Nicholas, 88 Newbridge Rd Small Heath, Birmingham B9 5JG (or phone 021-783 2987 and collect credentials at the door). AUEW North London district coach leaves Kilburn station (Bakerloo line) at 8am. Conference starts 10.30am at Birmingham Town Hall.

**TUESDAY 5 APRIL.** "Drop the Secrets Charges". Meeting organised by the Aubrey-Berry-Campbell Defence Committee. 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

**SUNDAY 17 APRIL.** International Communist League public meeting: "What Programme for Workers' Power?" Speaker: Sean Matgamna. 7.30pm at the 'Roebuck', 108A Tottenham Court Rd (Warren Street underground).

**SATURDAY-SUNDAY 21-22 MAY.** National conference of the Working Women's Charter Campaign — "Which Way Forward for the Charter Campaign?" Delegates' credentials £1.50 from Jill Daniels, 1a Camberwell Grove, London SE5. Last date for resolutions from delegating bodies: 15th April.

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