

# WORKERS' ACTION

NO.7 Feb. 25th - March 2nd 1976 8p

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**Coventry:  
Drive the fascists  
off the streets!**

# FIGHT THESE CUTS!

"GOVERNMENT pay policy is continuing to cut the level of real incomes", whooped the Financial Times of February 19th. But big business hardly had time to catch its breath before this news was overtaken by even better news for the bosses: "Public spending cut by £2.4 billion"

Wednesday's announcement set price rises over the past year at 24.9 per cent — up by a quarter — while earnings rose less than a fifth — 19.3 per cent. The sharp reduction in the real value of wages as a result of the £6 limit, combined with savage cuts in the 'social wage', reveals a working class ground between the upper and nether millstones of Labour policy. A policy called "the social contract".

The enormity of the cuts in public expenditure, at a time when unemployment continues to rise, shows the Labour government's determination to respond to every need of capitalism in its crisis, even if it means turning its back on the needs of the class that elected it.

The week before had seen the latest grim totals of deaths from hypothermia. One week later came the announcement that £145 million would be gouged out of next year's health and personal social services budget... with a further fall of £204 million to follow that the year after.

Housing was to be slashed by £368 million, education by £618 million, and transport by a thumping £506 million, nearly one third of the entire present budget. One of the few items that rose was spending on "social security". No wonder. The combination of a cut in the spending power of workers and the slashing of public spending will have the effect of jacking up the number of unemployed at a stroke.

The complacency of the trade union leaders, who must collectively share with the Government in the responsibility for this attack on the working class, is best expressed by Jack Jones. Although the sector where his members work took the biggest single battering at the hands of Healey, all he could manage was the feeble statement that he wanted "the government to confirm that they were prepared to honour their side of the social contract".

The government's actions

speak with cruel clarity. On this point they do not have to confirm anything. This government is heading on a straight course of confrontation with the working class. There can be no turning the other cheek. There can be no sentimentalism. It's no use saying that this is a Labour government, and that workers associate Labour governments with the welfare state and working class reform.

On the contrary. The very fact that it is a Labour government means that the class that put it in power must organise itself to fight for working class interests against its leaders. There is no time to waste:



The National Front have never been able to gain a base in Coventry up to now. If they have tried to speak in the city-centre Precinct, they have been quickly disposed of. But now, trying to take advantage of the city's 18,000 unemployment figure (with more to come) they are standing a candidate in the Coventry North-West by-election, and planning to march through the streets of Coventry on 28th February. With carefully-planned provocative intent, they have scheduled their march to pass through areas of the city with a large Indian population.

Coventry Trades Council is supporting a counter-demonstration, to assemble at the Commonwealth Club, Lockhurst Lane (Near Holbrooks railway station) at 1pm. Both the counter-demonstration and the National Front demonstration (assembling 2.30pm at Edgwick Park, corner of Foleshill Rd and Cross Rd) will converge on the centre of Coventry.

It is vital that the fascists of the National Front (supported on this march by the 'British Movement') are not allowed to gain a hearing, or credibility, in Coventry. Every bit of support they gain they will use to rally the most backward elements in society against our black class brothers and sisters, against Irish people, against socialist militants, and against the labour movement.

The sort of thing they can do was shown recently in Manchester, where they broke up a meeting on Ireland organised by the National Council for Civil Liberties, severely injuring two socialists attending the meeting.

**Workers Action calls on all its readers and supporters to pull out the maximum support for the counter-demonstration.**

## Guerillas poised to liberate Rhodesia

NOT FOR MUCH longer will Rhodesia's white settlers idly sip their pink gins by the swimming pools. In neighbouring Mozambique and Tanzania 12,000 African guerillas are preparing to launch a full scale war against Rhodesia's white-supremacist regime.

The victory of the MPLA in Angola considerably raised the morale of the guerillas and the black population of Rhodesia. Already the level of guerilla activity has been stepped up. At the same time the South African has had its fingers burnt in Angola, and is very unwilling to risk intervening in Rhodesia. Without outside support, time is rapidly running out for the Rhodesian whites.

This is certainly what has prompted

Smith to look for a new 'diplomatic initiative' involving the British government. The efforts to stave off a confrontation have found willing support from South Africa, and from Joshua Nkomo, a right-winger in the African nationalist camp.

Earlier this month Nkomo was in Britain visiting Callaghan, trying to get him to exert pressure on Smith to arrive at some sort of peaceful settlement. His overtures seem to have paid off. Last week a high-ranking Foreign Office official went to Cape Town, and made contact with representatives of the Rhodesian and South African governments. He warned them that Britain would wash its hands of the whole situation unless immediate moves were taken towards majority

rule.

Nkomo, South Africa, and Britain are doing everything in their power to cool the situation before the guerilla war starts in earnest. In a statement last week Callaghan made it clear that if the regime in Rhodesia accepted British rule and outlined plans for majority rule, then Britain would be prepared to 'police' the country against 'outside interference'.

However, the vast majority of the ruling Rhodesian Front party are still resolutely opposed to any form of majority rule within their lifetime. They will hang on — and prepare for the inevitable. Smith has already found himself a cosy bolt-hole by secretly buying a farm in South Africa.

The intervention of Britain in this

situation can only bring comfort to the white settlers. The British connection with Rhodesia is very strong. Immigration to Rhodesia is still increasing, running at about 16,000 a year. British firms have enormous investments in the country. British newspapers have been used to recruit mercenaries for the Rhodesian army — an army with a high proportion of British officers and men.

British involvement will only bolster discredited 'moderates' like Nkomo against the militants in the guerilla camps. Nkomo has already made it plain that he is prepared to give considerable concessions to Smith in order to reach an agreement. He has not demanded one-man one-vote; he has given ground over

the vital issue of land reform; and he had not pushed for the Africanisation of the Rhodesian state. It is a shabby compromise of this sort that Britain is prepared to support, but the guerillas are not.

Another possibility, not so immediate, but also to be opposed, is United Nations armed intervention to secure a 'moderate' solution to the Rhodesian problem.

The labour movement should give no help to perpetuating the white-supremacist regime fostered by British imperialism, to a right-wing neo-colonial solution on the model of Malawi, or to any solution other than ending all British interference and supporting the unrestricted right to self determination of the black majority population of Rhodesia.

# Cuts – Public squalor and private poverty

£620 million cut from education. A 28% cut in spending on buses, and 18% cut in public spending on transport overall. £152 million off the already collapsing Health Service. Council house rents pushed through the roof as housing subsidies are cut.

Those are the main points of the Labour Government's drastic programme of cutting public spending. Unless that programme is resisted and reversed, it will mean crumbling schools and hospitals, unemployed teachers, nurses and other public sector workers, even worse transport services, more people homeless, cramped and damp, and a very serious decline in working class living standards.

At the same time, 'defence' spending is let off with comparatively small cuts. 'Law and Order' and the so-called 'protective services' are hardly touched. Two items of public spending will in fact increase substantially — subsidies to the bosses, and interest payments to moneylenders.

## Weak and sick

As against the £3,000 million cut off projected Government spending programmes, £3,300 million more than previously predicted will be spent on interest payments. Dozens of mean economies — so many pence more to pay for school meals, so many pounds more on council rents, so much increase in fares — adding up to a terrible total of suffering for working class families, will just about suffice to line the pockets of the rich money lenders.

**Why is the Labour government proposing these measures?**

Perhaps embarrassed about launching yet another flag-waving appeal to tighten belts and save 'the country', Healey has dressed these cuts in a slightly different sauce. The Government, he implies, is going to be 'more economical' with 'the people's money'. Certain commentators have remarked that Healey was beginning to sound a bit like Thatcher and Keith Joseph, and noted that he thought taxation was too high.

Has Healey really been 'converted' to some 'Tory doctrine', to the idea of "public squalor, private affluence"? No. As it happens, the Public Expenditure Review has little to do with ideas, and a lot to do with the same familiar old recipe: make the workers pay for capitalism's crisis. Public squalor, certainly, but for the working class it will private poverty as well.

World capitalism has entered a new period of instability since the late '60s. Increasingly deep and generalised recessions are alternating with short and feverish booms. Within the world capitalist economy, Britain is particularly weak and particularly sick. The long term tendency for the rate of profit to decline has become for the British bosses a sharp and immediate problem. This is the root cause of the investment crisis.

## Behind their backs

To restore profitability, the bosses need to cut back on social service provisions and on wages. Thus, once again, the working class pays up and capitalism goes creaking on for a while longer.

But the Labour Party was founded, 70 years ago this week, by the trade unions — with the aim of defending workers' interests. It promised in its last election Manifesto to secure some improvements for the working class. Not socialism, but at any rate, improvements.

**How is it that a Labour government can administer such anti-working class policies?**

Sometimes the Labour Party has pushed for measures which benefit workers. Always it has operated within the framework of the capitalist system. Its leaders are more closely tied to the capitalist state than they are to the working class.

Indeed, the Labour government has proved to be a very strong government — for the bosses. Because of its claims to be based on the working class, and because it has the active cooperation of the trade union leaders, it has been able to tie the workers' hands behind their backs while the

punches were thrown. No Tory regime could have got away with half as much.

Murray and Jones have sold all these measures as the unfortunate price to pay for keeping the Labour government in office. They will continue to do so — as long as we let them. But the rank and file of the labour movement cannot afford to let this go on. Each 'sacrifice' which the working class makes doesn't lead to prosperity in the future — it simply leads to more sacrifice.

We need a different policy.

- Labour councils should refuse to implement the cuts. They should take Clay Cross as their model. They should deliberately 'overspend' and 'over-employ'. They should refuse to make the interest payments which are such a large part of local authority spending.

- Local Trades councils, Labour Parties, trade union branches and shop stewards committees should come together to organise united front fighting campaigns against the cuts and unemployment.

- Public sector unions like NUPE, Nalgo, CPSA, NUT and others should take a clear stand against any redundancies or increase in work load for their members. Instead of feeble squeaks like the CPSA's statement that they "cannot rule out protest action", they should be prepared to use determined strike action if necessary and ban overtime as a matter of course. They must immediately make an absolute rule of no covering in any case of staff shortage, natural wastage or voluntary redundancies.

- We must demand that the funds of those social services which provide essential underpinning to working class living standards — social security & pensions, education, health, passenger transport — are, at the very least, protected against inflation by automatic increases in line with price rises. Indeed, we must demand more. Better nursery provision, shorter NHS queues, higher unemployment benefit. All these are immediate needs.

- To relieve the crushing interest burden, the banks and financial institutions should be nationalised — without compensation.

- We oppose the capitalist standing army and the huge spending on weapons of mass destruction. If there is a need for 'defence, instead of a standing army there should be a workers' militia, based on universal military training



and under trade union control. Immediately, we demand that any cuts to be made should come off military spending.

- The labour movement must be rallied to fight back against the cuts. Union recall conferences, a recall Labour Party conference if the rank and file can insist on them, and the Labour Movement Assembly on March 27th, must be used by socialists to ignite action around a fighting strategy.

How does the established left wing in the labour movement measure up against the needs of the situation? The 'Tribune' group of MPs have called the White Paper a 'document of shame'. They have said that they 'will have none of it'. Joan Lester, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Education, has resigned.

But beyond that, they have shown little more fight than trade union leaders like Jack Jones, who has merely asked the government for an 'assurance' that it is not abandoning the Social Contract. Apparently for Jones it will be all right if the government just tells him that the cuts won't really hurt very much after all, and basically Dennis Healey is a kind man at heart.

The trade union leaders are trapped by their belief that they cannot come out against the Labour government if the alternative is the Tories; and the 'Tribune' MPs are trapped by their belief that they cannot come out against a more-or-less solid bloc of the Labour government and the TUC.

## Blew the gaff

The 'Tribune' MPs and the left trade union leaders do have an alternative to the government's policy. Some of their proposals are utopian: increased public spending without expropriating the banks and finance houses, without no-compensation nationalisation of the monopolies and without a break with capitalism. Some of their policies are reactionary: such as import controls.

In their verbal battles with the government, the 'Tribunites' constantly revert to quoting the Harold Wilson of yesterday against the Harold Wilson of today. Against the present policies of the government, they quote the Social Contract and the 1974 Manifesto — despite the fact that both included the principle that workers should hold back on wages to help capitalism through the crisis, the same principle that we see in full flower today.

They might as well quote the Bible against the Pope. Generally, the battles are battles of words. Eric Heffer declared: "We are not here just as voting fodder to vote support for policies which we have not been consulted about, but to support socialist policies."

Yet when he was pressed, he went on to qualify this. "If the Tories want further cuts on top of these, only a madman would vote with them." This prophet of 'The class struggle in Parliament' will only vote against reactionary anti-working class policies if there is no danger whatever of this vote really threatening Wilson, Healey and Co.

And as for "policies we have not been consulted about!" — Judith Hart blew the gaff on that. Trying to get double credit for her resignation from the Government last summer, she said: "When you read that the discussions on the present cuts began early last summer, you will understand the background to my resignation." Why didn't she openly warn the labour movement of what was coming, and help to mobilise it to resist?

Any minister who has pretensions to being left wing should indeed resign — and that includes Wedgwood Benn. They should vote against the Government on these cuts proposals. No socialist wants to see a Tory government — but if the price for sustaining the Labour government is continued acquiescence in attacks on the working class worse than the Tories could manage, then the government must no longer be sustained.

The Labour Government, the Labour Party, or Labour MPs, are only of use to the working class when they act in our interests and against the bosses. If the Labour Government takes the other side in the class struggle, and if the 'left' MPs dither and fumble, then the rank and file must fight back independently.

# Housing – Labour lines up with the loan sharks

**AROUND 200,000 homeless people; 170,000 unemployed building workers; £824m in three years off house building. Capitalism has few more damning statistics.**

It is difficult to measure how many fewer new houses Healey's cuts will mean, or how many houses will turn into slums instead of being renovated, or how many more people will be homeless. But homelessness has been on the up and up, with the number of families applying for temporary accommodation up from 28,214 in 1972 to an estimated 36,000 in '74.

In 1968 the average cost of building a house stood at around £6,000. Now it is £14,000. This astronomical rise is caused by rocketing land prices

(particularly during the speculation boom of the early '70s); and by the dramatic increase in interest charges.

Healey's Public Expenditure Review proposes to cut £175m off housing subsidies this year, knock off £284m in 1977/78, and then remove £365m the year after that. But the loan sharks will go on getting their full whack.

Now, any programmes of council house building will have to be financed more and more out of increased rents and rates. This is another divisive trick of robbing Peter and, after due tithes to contractors, middlemen and moneylenders, paying what's left to Paul.

Many local authorities are already

cutting back and opting out. In Kirklees the authority's programme is 40% behind; Newham has cut half a million off this year's estimates; North Tyneside has cut off over £3.

Will the cutback in new houses mean more repairs and renovations to keep old ones going? "Funds for local authority improvement work and improvement grants to private owners are being drastically cut from £698m in 1973/74 to £497m in '76/77, to only £378m in 1978/79. That marks an almost total collapse of the policy of saving older homes." (Shelter statement, 19th February). Many council houses have Victorian standards of amenities. In Birmingham, for example, there are

20,000 houses with outside toilets.

The dropping of another subsidy will mean that for these 'amenities' tenants will have to pay more. This is the subsidy to help keep rent increases down to about 60p. Council house rents are now expected to go up faster than the rate of inflation.

The Labour Government had the alternative of attacking the property speculators, large property owners and moneylenders — or their victims. Characteristically, they have chosen the latter. Instead of nationalising all building land without compensation, and cancelling the enormous debts owed by local authorities to the loan sharks of the City, they have used the working class families on housing lists



or waiting for improvements in sub-standard homes to maintain the parasites in their London penthouses and country mansions.

# Cuts mutilate National Health Service

WHEN it was set up, the National Health Service was intended to provide a 'comprehensive Health Service free to all in which poverty would not be a disability and wealth not an advantage'. Today, there are waiting lists of over half a million for hospital treatment, hospital beds have been cut by 5,254, there is an estimated shortage of 60,000 nurses, and junior doctors must put in twice the average working week to keep the thing going. Charges for dental and optical treatment mean that for thousands, 'poverty is a disability' when it comes to getting teeth and eyes sorted out.

The lack of NHS resources has produced a scramble for services, beds and treatment. Those who can afford to pay are coming out on top. The rest are losing out.

Most public services had their budgets increased during the boom time of 1953-73. The NHS didn't do as well as others, but did manage a 141% increase spread over the 20 years.

However, it wasn't enough to leave it in any way prepared to meet the onslaught to come.

In November 1973 the Barber cuts took £111m off the NHS budget. Labour protested in anguish and indignation at this mutilation of its 'favourite child'. Now Healey plans to lop off £150m.

## Abrupt

Before the announcement, the NHS was already suffering from the limitation of any budget increases to 10%, an effective cut that brought many building plans to an abrupt end and sent hospital managements scurrying to see who they could sack and what wards and services they could close down or 'rationalise'.

In one city, Manchester, four hospital building plans schemes have been dropped; in Newcastle, £50,000 has been chopped from a £175,000 building programme; The West Midlands Regional Health Authority

has already slashed its budget by half.

All this before Healey's White Paper.

Now, capital funding will be cut to nearly nothing — any new buildings will have to be financed out of the wages and salaries funds: that is, productivity deals, longer hours and redundancies traded for necessary replacement of old building stock. Or that's the idea.

Robbing Liverpool to keep Sheffield going, and so on around the country, is one part of Barbara Castle's plan to somehow hold things together. But some of the supposedly 'richer' areas like London contain miserably poor boroughs, which will now sink lower.

A long term plan for Inner London proposes the closure of 130 hospitals, leaving just 20 large district general hospitals. The idea of this is to 'save' on staff by concentrating certain functions and applying economies of scale. GEC's Arnold Weinstock couldn't have come up with anything

more diabolical!

There is a growing trend to make NHS cuts look acceptable by referring to its high administrative costs. 'It's high time we pruned this bureaucracy', say papers from New Society to the Daily Express. But cuts here would certainly lead to more errors in patients' records, more mix-ups, wrong treatments and even wrong operations. And redundancies.

The real drain on the NHS is not the workers who arrange people's appointments and keep their medical records, but the bloodsucking private sector.

## Glossy

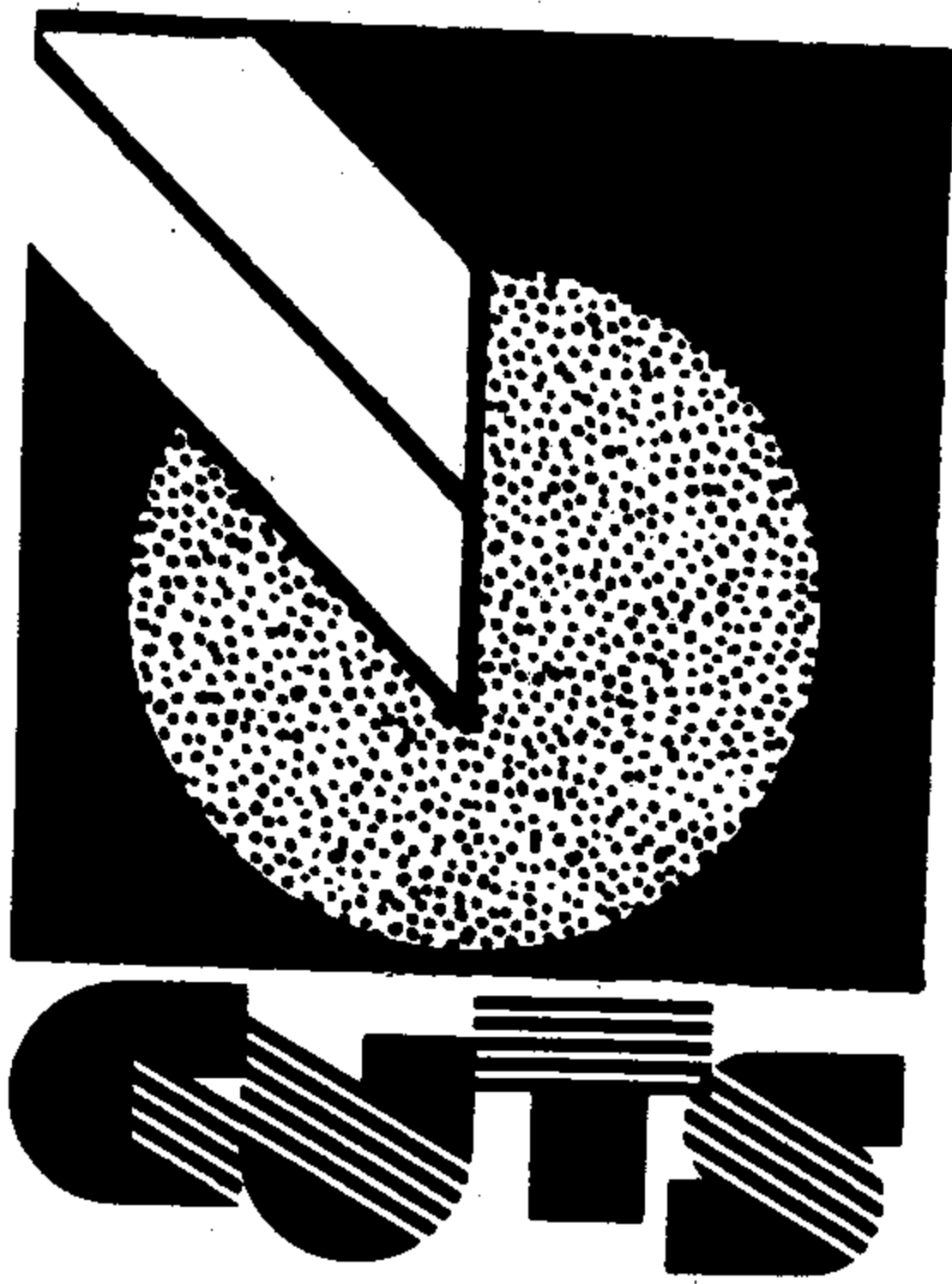
The drug companies rake in about £500m a year for their products; at one point the NHS was paying up to £10,000 a day for the tranquilisers made by the drug firm Roche! And these companies waste phenomenal sums in glossy advertising handouts to GPs, in market research to find out

such things as what colour appeals to people, and in researching new combinations of known drugs they can get around their competitors. They don't want to about cures for serious diseases not many people get: there's money in things like cold cures given that it's something the population suffers from regularly.

While these criminals like R and Distillers (who make thalidomide) laugh all the way to the bank, the NHS sinks further under the burden of their profits and Government cuts. Soon there will be any further it can sink.

In 1952 the Minister for Health Aneurin Bevan, resigned from Labour Government over imposition of prescription charges. Twenty years later, his one-time Labour disciple Barbara Castle presides over the dismantling of the Health Service.

## Education—the 'biggest casualty' £1,000m to be cut over next three years



THE bosses' press has quite correctly singled out cuts in education as the most drastic of the whole White Paper. The Mail refers to education as 'the biggest casualty' and the Guardian describes the cuts as 'uniquely savage'.

£1,000 million is to be cut over the next 3 years, concentrated in the school year 1978/79 when a massive £618 million cut will take effect.

Education was one of the most dramatic areas of expansion in social spending after the war. The reason for this was that the amazingly backward and antiquated British education system was lagging 50 years behind countries like Germany and the USA. A school leaving age of 14 showed itself in a crippling lack of a trained and educated skilled labour force. If British bosses were to compete with their rivals, a massive 'investment' in education was necessary.

Consequently education spending leapt by 275% between 1953 and 1973. Through the 1960s, a whole series of official reports — Plowden, Crowther, Newsome and Robins — outlined necessary expansion in nearly every area of educational provision — most notably the extension of technical education.

Now this whole process is going into reverse. Teachers, once secure in their jobs, are now prone to unemployment: in fact right now, nearly 7,000 fully trained teachers are out of work.

As you'd expect in a 'declining industry', training goes by the board. Places teacher training colleges are to be slashed from 30,000 in 1975 to 12,000 in 1976. And of course the staff at these colleges will be thrown out too.

All the talk about this massive cut being 'hardly relevant' because the birthrate is falling and 'anyway, married women can be brought back into teaching' is the cheapest and most shamefaced cover-up. Clearly, chopping out three fifths of training facilities because of a slight fall in the birthrate is no way to run an education system!

Little wonder, in overcrowded, depressing and crumbling 1870 vintage schools, with harassed and overworked teachers and a few schoolbooks passing round a class of 35, that kids are coming out of school

unable to read. And what a nerve the 'Right Paper' educational reactionaries have when they blame falling standards on "progressive methods" in these conditions, methods of any sort are virtually out of the question.

The nursery school programme recommended by the Plowden Report — a matter of vital concern to all women — is to be pared down by 75%, with a loss of 70,000 places, leaving just 330,000 places to go around between 4 million children under school age. And to twist the knife deeper against working class families, about three quarters of all existing places are taken by children from middle class or professional families.

The Labour Government did promise a massive extension of this provision, something which in fact costs little and would be a qualitative improvement in the lives of millions of people. But last year's announcement of a £15m building programme to be extended to £25m and £30m in the next two years is now, in the immortal words of President Nixon's Press Secretary, "inoperative".

## Scandals

As in housing, the only thing to go up is what the working class has to pay. Meals will go up to £1 a week in the Autumn and then go up again to reduce the Government's meals bill from £314m in 1976 to £207 in 1979 (and don't forget inflation: at 20%, they'd have to budget £540m for 1979 just to stay where they are now). This means more kids on the means test feeling like second class citizens; and more scandals like that of Leicester where kids went without any dinner at all.

Why should they pay for capitalism's crisis? It's outrageous!

Those trade union leaders who have sold the Social Contract, the £6 limit, 1½ unemployment figures and are now doing the advance publicity for 'son of £6 limit', telling their members this was an acceptable price for keeping Labour in office, must face the bitter question: what was the point?

## Buses take brunt of huge transport cuts

IF YOU want to escape from all the gloom for a few days, forget it. That bus or train you wanted probably won't be running any more, and if it is, the fare will be beyond you.

The Healey cuts will mean a continuing downward spiral for public transport: higher fares and poorer service (in some areas no service) mean less passengers, which means less revenue, which leads to higher fares and so on in ever decreasing circles. The old aim of an integrated transport policy has been forgotten, and the popular and sensible idea of free city transport to cut down congestion has been firmly ignored.

The axe is to fall hardest on bus services,

where the budget is cut by 28%. In response, fare increases like London's coming 25% will soon come into force around the country.

The increasingly ridiculous rail system is to suffer cuts of 9%. But how "9%" will work out in practice, we'll find out when it comes to trying to get a train to take us any distance after about 7 in the evening, or trying to figure out the ever more complicated fare penalty systems.

The subsidy to BR for carrying freight will be entirely phased out, driving even more freight traffic onto the already congested roads. (And road building itself will be 75% less than planned, with less

money available for repairs: one thing that will go up, no doubt, is the road accident figures.)

BR's freight was already falling rapidly and the rail unions fear that the measures will see the death of BR's freight services. Passenger subsidies won't be cut — except by inflation; that is, by at least 20%. BR now accounts for only 8% of the 300,000 passenger miles covered annually that share will now fall again when the fare rises come in.

Overall the BR subsidy was to be increased to £400m, and nobody was being generous when they came up with the sum. Now it will be held at £235m.

## Civil Servants

### face big sackings

PANIC spread among Civil Service trade union leaders as the full message of Healey's proposed job cutbacks became clear.

The Healey measures propose that the total civil service manning level should be about 720,000 by 1978, bringing jobs down by 45,000. But already before the White Paper, a research document produced for the Women and Cuts conference (see this page) estimated that because of different lot of spending cuts some 60,000 jobs would be threatened.

Nearly 10,000 jobs are to go at the Ministry of Defence (MoD), over and above 2,500 already projected there.

Socialists will shed no tears at any losses to the MoD. Cuts in the Defence budget are welcome. But for the ordinary clerical worker at MoD, for the typists and the wages clerks, the prospect of joining the dole queues is not welcome either. Like any other workers they should have work or full pay. And work there is in plenty in the undermanned Social Security and Employment Dept. offices.

In the face of the jobs threat, the CPSA — largest and traditionally most militant of the civil service unions — has said little. It has complained that it 'wasn't consulted', and sent out circulars to its members saying it's seeking "a firm assurance that there will be no compulsory redundancy". The latest such circular says very threateningly that "fullest publicity possible will be given to the effect of any proposed cuts and contact will be maintained with both the national, provincial and local press".

The most dangerous thing is the CPSA line on compulsory redundancy. Every year, millions of people retire from work. Even though none of them is sacked, none of them made redundant, if they were not replaced then for every old worker retiring, there'd be a school leaver going on the dole. For every job that someone leaves, either to go to another job, to retire, to move away or for any other reason — including, of course, compulsory redundancy — if their job is not filled, someone, somewhere, goes on the dole. Another job is lost.

In the case of the civil service, about two thirds of the jobs lost will be lost to women. Whether we like it or not, the only job that vast numbers of women know how to do, have been trained to do, is clerical work. The civil service is a major employer of women. The research paper prepared for the Women and Cuts conference estimates that a loss of 60,000 civil service jobs will push up national female unemployment by 17.6% (over and above July 1975 figures).

## Women — special victims of the cuts

A MOST VITAL and timely conference taking place this weekend, on Saturday February 28th, is on Women and the Cuts, organised by the London Working Womens Charter campaign. Undoubtedly the Healey White Paper will heighten interest in the Conference inside and outside London.

The Working Womens Charter is uniquely qualified to mount such a conference; its consistent approach is to show how different areas of a woman's oppression interact with each other.

Most of the Healey cuts are well placed to mess up a woman's life from top to bottom. A conference paper from NALGO women outlines some of the cuts particularly affecting women.

As cuts occur, the burden of care for the elderly, the handicapped and the under-fives falls back on the 'community'. Some local authorities are considering paying relatives to care for the needy at home. In practice this 'return to community care' forces women back into the isolation of the home to take on the "community's" responsibilities. This process is compounded by cuts in Day Nursery facilities — the first sector to be hit as authorities trim their budgets.

— Nursery school programmes slashed  
— Restrictions on Meals on Wheels services;  
— Closure of Day Centres for the elderly and handicapped;  
— Fewer Home Helps — taking emergency cases only;  
— Libraries closing earlier — some completely; and charges for services;  
— Maintenance of council properties, school etc, neglected — 'upkeep of premises must remain below the level generally accepted as desirable' Circular 10-750

— Cuts in capital projects mean the cancellation of community projects — hostels, schools etc. and frequently mean no new projects 'in the foreseeable future'.  
— Postponement of implementation of legislation, i.e. parts of the new Children Act and the Health and

Safety at Work Act.  
— Unfilled vacancies, meaning greater workloads for existing staff.  
A 'personal contribution' from a member of Wandsworth Charter group puts it neatly: "The things we never have had are the easiest to cut". The detailed resolution from the Conference Planning Committee sets out areas of struggle against the cuts and for "the things we never have had", based on the ten demands of the Charter.  
There will be a full report of the conference in next week's Workers Action

## WOMEN AND THE CUTS



Friends House,  
Euston Road,  
London NW1.

on  
Saturday 28 February 1976  
10.00 am till 6.00 pm

Called by WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER London Co-ordinating Committee. Details and registration from Michele Ryan, 39 Parkholme Road, London E.8 (249-9072)

# Recall the TUC: a sounding board but no solution

by Colin Foster

ANY TRADE UNION BRANCHES, District Committees, Trades Councils, and even national unions, have demanded the recall of the TUC. This demand has been pushed only by the Communist Party and the 'Tribunite' wing of the Labour Party. In their hands it often means a message to workers: don't fight — wait for the recalled TUC to solve your problems.

## CPSA

This comes out clearly, for example, in the case of the civil service union CPSA. The CPSA voted against the Social Contract and against the £6 limit. Instead of getting now, the CPSA leadership evade a struggle by saying they should concentrate on trying to get the TUC to reconsider its policy. But for six months now the Labour Government, in close alliance with the bureaucrats of the TUC, has been forcing a £6 limit which means that living standards are eroded by inflation. It has cut social services. It has presided over record unemployment. Workers need to use their collective power to fight back now. Not a single attack on the working class should be allowed to go through without resistance.

For that reason, we oppose all attempts to put off struggle until after the TUC has been recalled (if it is recalled).

But does that mean we don't support the recall of the TUC? No, it does not.

By posing the issue as either action now, or recall the TUC, we would in fact help the union bureaucrats who want to evade struggle.

## Promises

Last summer the trade union leaders promised that the £6 limit was necessary to save jobs and social services. Unemployment has increased massively and services have been cut further. The Labour Government has paid out £162 million to Chrysler bosses who are sacking 4000 workers — instead of nationalising without compensation and guaranteeing jobs.

The trade union leaders promised it was only a temporary measure, to ensure future prosperity. They, and Labour ministers, now talk of a £3 limit following the £6 limit.

Revolutionary socialists rejected the TUC leaders' line of argument from the beginning. But millions of workers seriously went along with what the trade union leaders and the Labour government were saying. They will see an obvious case now for the recall of the TUC and the Labour Party conference.

The drive to call the trade union and Labour leaders to account will be strengthened by the fact that we have just about reached the point where price increases since the imposition of the £6 limit have cancelled out £6 wage increases, and the limit is beginning to bite directly into living standards.

## Policies

If we argue the issue as either action now, or recall the TUC, many militant workers, seeing a manifest case for the recall of the TUC, knowing direct industrial action to be a risky business, and seeing no great chance of success in such action recently, will opt for 'trying out' the recall of the TUC. We should not say 'either — or'. We should say both action now, and recall the TUC!

We have to argue the case for the recall of the TUC very clearly, to cut through any illusions. We are fighting to bring the trade union and Labour Party leaders to account over unemployment, cuts, and wage curbs.

We fight for policies of:  
• No wage curbs, 'voluntary' or compulsory.  
• For automatic cost of living wage increases.  
• For the funds of welfare services to be guaranteed protection against inflation, and for the cancellation of interest burdens and the provision of interest-free loans to local authorities.

through the nationalisation without compensation of the banks and financial institutions.

• For hours to be cut, not jobs, under workers' control and with no loss of pay.

• For nationalisation without compensation, not compensation without nationalisation.

We fight for those policies from day to day in the workplaces — we also fight to impose those policies on the established leaders of the labour movement.

We don't see the recall of the TUC as the only, or the best, way of bringing the leaders of the labour movement to account. We urge unions to call special conferences, we demand that union leaders attend shop stewards' quarterlies and other meetings to account for their policies.

Nor do we have any illusions that recalling the TUC will solve all workers' problems. The basis of representation at the TUC is highly undemocratic and inflexible (just delegates from the national bureaucracies of the various unions) and no doubt the right wing will win the day.

## Democracy

Indeed, one thing the campaign for the recall of the TUC shows up very clearly is the case for a more democratic structure of the Trades Union Congress. A real democratic congress of the trade union movement would be based on delegates elected from workplaces, mandated by and responsible to the workers who elected them.

During elections for such a congress, militants would have a great opportunity to argue the real facts of the matter, and the congress would produce a very different result from the present TUC in a vote on the £6 limit. But until we have that more democratic structure, we have to relate to the TUC as the only national forum for calling the trade union leaders to account.

A recalled TUC would not solve our problems. But it would be a massive sounding-board for the demands we put forward. Millions of workers, previously politically uninvolved, would notice that the TUC had been recalled, would wonder why, and would begin to look into the policies advocated by the militants pushing for the recall of the TUC. Even now, socialists can use the campaign for the recall of the TUC to gain a hearing for our alternative policies for the labour movement.

## Murmur

We also argue for the recall of the Labour Party conference. A real fight for working class policies in the Labour Party could be waged around the election of constituency delegates to that conference.

Against the Communist Party and the 'Tribunites', we argue the need for working class action now as well as the recall of the TUC, and the need for the campaign for recall of the TUC to be based round clear working class policies instead of such reactionary chauvinistic nonsense as import controls.

We also criticise the International Marxist Group and the 'Militant' tendency, both of whom make 'Recall the TUC' the absolute centre of their agitation. They tend to do little more than add their small voices to the general murmur in the labour movement in favour of the recall of the TUC.

Both the 'Militant' and the IMG do of course have different policies from the CP and the 'Tribunites' — but in practice what comes across is the big headline for the recall of the TUC, not the programmatic demands raised in a rather disjointed and haphazard way in the small print.

Their approach might have some sense if the TUC were a more flexible and democratic body, or if the IMG or the Militant were in a position to hope to have an audible voice in the TUC. In actuality, they run the risk of allowing hopes of what the TUC may do to take the place of plans for what workers can do in struggle now.

While supporting the recall of the TUC and Labour Party Conference, we must always steer clear of that trap.



20 years ago — Hungarian workers burn portraits of CP boss Rakosi

SEVERAL Western Communist Parties now stand on the verge of sharing cabinet power in coalition governments. In Italy the CP is prepared to enter a government with the right wing Christian Democrats. They call this "The historic compromise". It certainly is! In Portugal the CP already sits in such a cabinet. In France the CP is looking forward to the taste of power in a coalition with social democrats and radicals.

Everywhere we hear the same arguments. Nearly half of the world, they say, is already "socialist" and "peace loving". The rest of the world is carved up by a few warlike expansionist powers and unpatriotic unscrupulous monopolies. As a result the original platform of the Communist Parties at their founding in the early 1920s is no longer relevant.

The parties then were committed to building independent revolutionary workers' parties. They understood that the employers and their state would not disappear gradually piece by piece. Now the CPs argue something completely different.

It is possible, they say, to organise 'popular unity' of all those not part of the monopolies on a simple platform of patriotism and democracy. For this reason the West European CPs are concentrating their energies on wooing the middle classes, small businesses (even 'progressive' colonels and generals in Italy and Portugal) into 'popular patriotic fronts'.

## Excess

To be successful in this, the CPs have to develop their credentials with the middle class and business circles. The last few months have seen these western CPs quite frantically jettisoning as much of their unpopular image as possible in order to win new friends to 'share power' with.

This process has been most marked in the French Communist Party. Symbolically, for example, the party has replaced the

clenched fist salute of struggle with the outstretched hand salute. This supposedly shows a desire for unity and the sinking of differences.

At the French CP Congress earlier this month, party leader George Marchais went further still in his efforts to alter the appeal and image of the party.

Firstly, Marchais was prepared to distance his party from the policies and demands of Moscow. Courting popularity has meant that Marchais was, for example, not attending the Russian Communist Party Congress this week. The French party is not alone in this. The much more insignificant British party has been following a similar line recently, though it can hardly have its eyes on government Ministries! Retired CPGB secretary John Gollan has written a lengthy tract "Socialist democracy — some problems", criticising the Stalin period of Russian history and the failure of the present Brezhnev leadership to root out the 'excesses of centralisation and repression'.

## Stoke up

But Marchais went much further in order to stoke up the fires of patriotism on which the party pins its hopes. He argued that the 25 leading monopolies of France, and the Giscard government, were turning France into a stepping stone for German ambition!

In his chauvinist zeal, he went on to speak of "a new Holy Roman Empire — a German one with Atlantic connections" ... "using Hitler's argument in support of building up an arms industry" which was threatening to strangle France. Against this a "union of the French people" had to be born. There were 30 individuals in France who were excluded from this — they control the monopolies. But all other sections of the French society should unite together against them!

To achieve this unity the French CP has expurgated all reference to the "dictatorship of the

V. Volynka looks a  
to the 25th Co  
Russian Com

This is a far cry from the Russian Communist Party in the years immediately after the Russian workers' revolution of 1917. In those years the Party held both an annual Congress and an annual conference. Platforms representing different ways forward were openly published and discussed in the party and in the factories. Votes took place that decided the spirit and direction of policy.

The Russian Communist Party is no longer such a party. After the 15th Party Congress of 1927 when the Trotskyist Left Opposition was bullied out of the party, three years lapsed until the next Congress in 1930. The 17th Congress was four years later in 1934. Of the 139 people elected to the Central Committee then, 98 had been shot by the time the next Congress was held in 1939. 13 years lapsed between that Congress and the next in 1952.

The party has long been only a rubber stamp for decisions taken by the Russian bureaucracy. "Not in front of the servants" sums up the attitude of the bureaucracy to its arguments and debates.

## Closed

Of course differences do exist. The top military brass, the managers of heavy industry and the more lowly managers of light industry, have different views as to how to allocate the product of the Russian workers' labour. But these differences are fought out behind closed doors. The workers, the producers of wealth, are deliberately and systematically excluded from the process.

Congresses like this one are only arranged when the bureaucrats can put on a bold and united face to the workers of Russia and to the world at large.

This Congress has met against a background of gloom and failure.

# Europ pious

proletariat" (i.e. rule by the working class) from its constitution. The party is now committed to the "preservation and the growth of democratic achievement".

Such policies may help the French CP into power. But will they help the French workers? Do they offer a strategy for overthrowing capitalism?

The deepening of the world crisis of capitalism has not left unscathed even the "strong" economy of France. Giscard d'Estaing's election marked the onset of severe differences and disagreements within the French bourgeoisie. The old semi-bonapartist presidential regime of De Gaulle, itself the product of the French CP's betrayal of the working class movement in 1958, was rocked to its foundations by the strike wave of May/June 1968.

After 1968 the UDR (Union for the Defence of the Republic), a bloc of bourgeois parliamentarians, careerists, retired generals, state functionaries and crooks, was



Marchais — wooing the middle class

# RUBBER-STAMPING RUSSIA'S CRISIS

The Russian economy is in a state of crisis, a crisis shared with the other east European so-called "Socialist" states. Their crisis is part and parcel of the overall world crisis.

Russian agriculture has failed to meet the elementary requirements of the Russian workers. Despite 45 years of 'collectivised' agriculture, under-investment and under-mechanisation has led to perpetual crop failures. This year Russia will have had to import nearly 25 million tonnes of grain to stave off shortages.

This all has to be paid for in hard currency at a time when Russia has an enormous trade deficit with the West. A trade surplus of \$200 million with the West in 1974 has turned into a staggering \$5½ billion deficit by the end of 1975. Major projects designed to modernise the Russian economy are lagging well behind schedule.

As a result of this crisis the prospects for Russian workers of an improvement in their meagre living standards remain bleak. The production of consumer goods is planned to increase by only 2.7% this year compared with 7.2% last year, and there is no guarantee that targets will be met. Plans to improve the quality of consumer goods for workers are to be shelved once again.

As the chairman of the State Planning Commission, Baibakov, put it recently, "the quality of consumer goods is still very low and more attention should be paid to this! But the most important task is to ensure the stable development of industry" ...so the workers will have to put up with shoddy and inadequate consumer goods once again!

There are few options for the Russian bureaucracy to get out of their fix. Dr. Kissinger and the Pentagon have announced plans to increase US arms spending considerably by 1980. This will

strengthen the arm of those in the Russian bureaucracy who argue against any let-up in military spending.

One option open is to borrow increasingly large sums from Western states and banks to finance any further development of the Russian economy. This policy led Russia to take out £1000 million credit with Britain last January and to borrow £575 million from West Germany for a steel works. But with interest rate repayments of 7% and 11%, short term relief can only be bought by incurring greater and greater debts.

This is a problem felt by all of East Europe's bureaucracies. Poland's foreign debt is staggering. It borrowed \$240 million last April alone. Altogether, East European states

borrowed \$2.5 billion on West European money markets last year — 2½ times what they borrowed in 1974.

Another option open to the bureaucracy is to siphon more and more goods from the Russian and East European workers onto the world market to earn the cash to modernise industry and to pay for loans and mounting debts.

But this is only a limited possibility. It risks major conflicts between the bureaucrats and the workers. In Poland in 1970, the workers brought down the Gomulka government when it announced a meat price increase of 25% in order to shift Polish meat onto the world market. This stands as a dire warning to the bureaucrats of Russia and East Europe.

Price rises can provide a short term solution. Prices have risen considerably in Russia and most of East Europe over the last year. Hungary this year intends to push up retail prices by up to 40%. Prices rises in East Europe are often disguised in official statistics, but there are limits to how much people can be fooled: Polish dockers recently cornered party boss Gierek and complained that 1 zloty razor blades had been replaced by a different line, of only slightly better quality, costing 5 zlots.

For the Russia bureaucracy itself, a partial solution is to increase the economic 'tribute' it exacts from its dependent regimes in East Europe. Last January Russia increased the price of its oil, on which East Europe is dependent, by 150%. And it has

put it up again this year. By this sort of means, and similar price rises for gas and other raw materials, the Russian bureaucracy intends to force the workers of East Europe to pay for its crisis.

This has thrown the East European states into confusion and panic as they find themselves with increasing trade deficits with Russia itself.

Russia hopes in this way to whip its "common market" — Comecon — into line. It has been forcing the East European states to dovetail their own plans with the plans constructed by the Russian bureaucracy. But the crisis on a world scale has in fact sharpened the competition that exists between the East European states for markets and sources of credit.

## Scramble

Romania and Hungary have set themselves to trade more with the West than with their so-called 'socialist partners' — successful deals secured by the Hungarian bureaucracy for clothing and footwear increasingly can only be achieved at the expense of the Czech or Polish bureaucracies. This competitive scramble makes nonsense of all claims to 'socialist cooperation' and "planned cooperative development" which are trumpeted in the uniform party presses of Russia and East Europe.

**There is no solution for the Russian bureaucracy. There is no key to success.**

Thus it will come down to holding down wages, slowing down investment and pawning

whole sections of the so-called "socialist economies" to the banks and finance houses of the West.

Behind the smiling faces, warm embraces and unanimous votes lies a creeping paralysis. The so-called 'socialist' regimes of the East cannot fulfill their promises to improve living standards and increase wealth. They can only hope to hold on with diminishing plan targets and **increasing repression.**

We hear a great deal about the intellectuals who are persecuted in Russia. But in fact the overwhelming majority of prisoners in Russia have either fought for the independence of their nation (be it Georgia, Ukraine or Armenia) or their class — the Russian working class — from the stranglehold of the Russian bureaucracy that forbids free political assembly, strikes and trade unions.

Short term loans and anti-intellectual witchhunts may provide a semblance of policy for the Russian bureaucracy. But they cannot solve the problems of the workers of Russia and East Europe.

The Russian workers, once the masters of their own destiny, are daily confronted with the contradiction between bureaucratic privilege and the official fanfares for the 'working class' and 'workers control'. The crisis of Russia and East Europe can only hasten the day when the revolutionary struggle to control their own destiny is once again posed by the workers of Russia and East Europe.



## mean CPs: Even the prayer goes now

racked with contradictions. The Pompidou regime was openly corrupt and the bourgeoisie despised it. Yet they were unable to replace it with a stable alternative.

The limits of a government not having the ideological cover of a parliamentary regime, based instead on presenting a series of questions to the electorate in the form of plebiscites, became glaringly obvious. The workers' parties and trade unions cannot be as effectively involved and implicated in decisions as under a parliamentary regime.

## Tyranny

The French CP would love to play the parliamentary game with the French bourgeoisie. They would love to hold governmental positions, to act as a party of reform within the framework of capitalism. To achieve this they are increasingly ready to jettison their connections with Moscow, which are largely a liability in terms of electoral politics.

The "dictatorship of the proletariat" in the Party programme was for 40 years not a commitment to the revolutionary creation of a workers' state based on democratic workers' councils, but more a pious prayer to be muttered while the party got on with the business in hand. Though many sincere working class militants might see this slogan as embodying an intention to settle with the bourgeoisie "one of these days", the Party leaders retained it only as an endorsement of the bureaucratic military tyranny in Russia and East Europe, and to maintain illusions amongst precisely these militants.

Despite the gloss and the window dressing, there is nothing very new in the policies of these 'Communist' parties. They are the policies that guided the Communist Parties in the 'Popular Front' days of the mid-1930s. They are the policies that led the French and Italian CPs into conservative dominated governments after the Second World War. They are the policies that guided the French Communist Party during the 1968 General Strike wave in France.

On each occasion they have served to deliberately hold back the workers' struggle for power. On each occasion despite mass battles in the factories and on the streets, capitalism has emerged unscathed from periods of 'popular front' government.

In 1936 a Popular Front government of Radicals and Socialists came to power on a wave of working class militancy. The CP deliberately held back that militancy to maintain the unity of the 'Popular Front'. Strikes and occupations involving over 2 million workers — the only force that could shift the balance of

power in France — were called off by the CP leaders. "One must know when to end a strike" was the slogan of the party leader Maurice Thorez.

In 1945 Maurice Thorez and the French CP participated in De Gaulle's post-war government. Once again the CP saw 'Unity' as meaning holding back working class enthusiasm and militancy. With the slogan 'One state, one army, one police force' the French CP help the bosses to rebuild their state and disarmed the militias of the Maquis who controlled large areas of the country. CP Ministers voted for war credits for France's war in Vietnam, and voted for a resolution saluting the French army's effort to "maintain in the Far East the civilising and peaceful presence of France".

## May '68

In 1968, ten million French workers were involved in a general strike wave. Factory occupation committees were established, the de Gaulle government was paralysed. Police representatives stated that they wouldn't be used against the strike. Most of the army was unreliable.

The May events of 1968 posed sharply the question of which class was to rule in France. Quite spontaneously, and without any warning, ten million French workers raised this question. But the CP did not. To them the strike wave should be used, channeled into safe economic demands, and manipulated to help the Party in its blocs and coalitions on the parliamentary arena. Yet another opportunity for the French working class to deal a deadly blow to capitalism was thwarted by the programme of 'unity' and



40 years ago — sit-in strike, Paris 1936

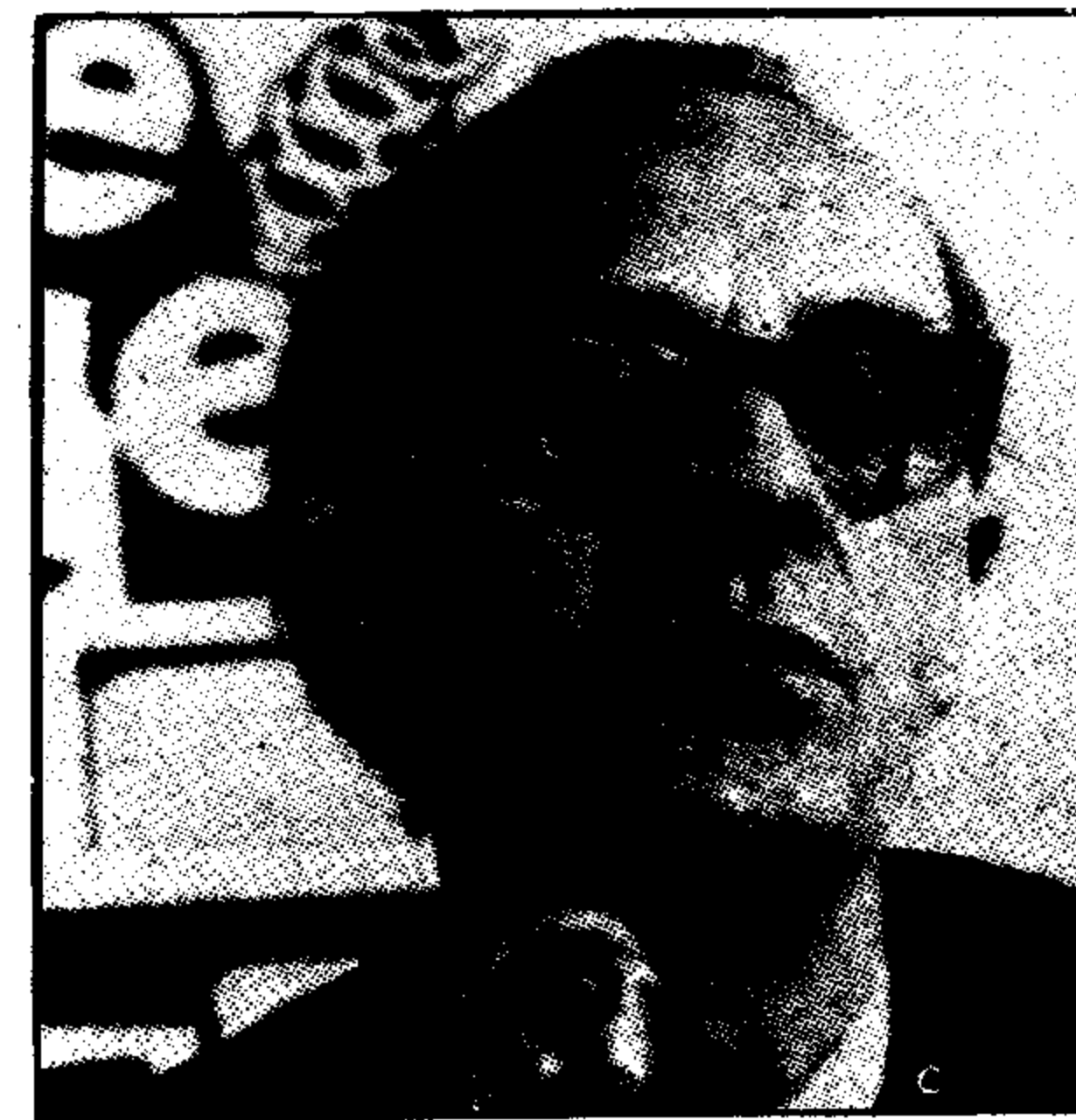
popular front of the CP. When de Gaulle suggested elections, they were delighted and called off the strike.

This party still has its beady eyes set on the same plush cabinet seats. Its platform of base chauvinism, of unity with small and middle manufacturers and of relegating the working class struggle into a parliamentary pressure point, is an abject betrayal, even on paper. In living reality, it spells further disastrous defeats for French workers.

Revolutionaries in France should

and will take advantage of this open espousal of reformism to make new and sustained efforts to win those workers hitherto taken in by the CP's fake revolutionary rhetoric. They must also fight against tendencies to look to Moscow and hark back to the 'good old days' of 'hard' stalinism as representing the fountainhead of revolutionary politics.

That spring was poisoned in the 1920s, and the politics of class collaboration and betrayal remain fundamentally the same in 1936, in 1945, in 1968 and in the 1970s.



Gollan: "Socialist Democracy"? Some problems!

**"DEATH of an Informer"**, shown on ITV last Tuesday, 18th February, dramatised the story that Irishman Kenneth Lennon told the National Council for Civil Liberties three days before he was shot dead on April 30th, 1974.

It was a powerful indictment of Britain's political police, the Special Branch, and an exposure of cynical police manipulation of the Courts and the Director of Public Prosecutions.

The story begins in April 1973. Lennon, living in Luton, had a vague background in left politics and Irish Civil Rights activity. When his wife became ill with brain tumours, he had to leave work and live on Social Security to care for his child. He grew increasingly demoralised. On the evidence he must also have been a very weak man.

Leaving the hospital one day, after visiting his wife, he is stopped by two plain clothes policemen. They have a photo of him taken in 1969 during a Civil Rights riot in his home town of Newry (Northern Ireland). They tell him he could go to jail on the evidence of the photo, and that they can also put his sister behind bars. Unless, that is, he "plays ball" with them.

The demoralised man, with a desperately sick wife and a small child to look after, believes them. He is weak and ignorant of having any civil rights — he grew up as a Catholic in Northern Ireland, where he had none. He feels vulnerable as an Irishman living in Britain. He doesn't even know that an amnesty had wiped out all such offences occurring before 1970.

The police know all this, and lean on him quite mercilessly. They demand that he "gets information for them". Later they will force him to act as a provocateur.

They have picked him out unerringly. How? They have close links with the RUC and British Army intelligence. But Lennon has been in Britain most of his working life, and his main political activity has been here.

## On the hook

The police know he has been a shop steward and a past member of the Communist Party and of the Socialist Labour League (now WRP). The Special Branch talk of his membership of the CP and the SLL as if these legal and entirely peaceful organisations are illegal armed "conspiracies". They feed Lennon's paranoid insecurity this way. By crude bullying and a little bribery (£228 in total!) they get him on a hook. Thereafter they jerk the line at will.

First, he must gather information on Republican paper sellers. Soon he is leading them on, spurring amateurs not even formally part of the Republican movement to "do something". He interests them in getting money to help the internees' families and to buy guns. He "proves himself" to them by going on an abortive robbery attempt which shows



them all to be total amateurs.

Attempting another payroll robbery, three of them are caught red-handed. Lennon has tipped off the police, who obligingly raid his home to give him cover and an alibi for not being with the others.

Lennon is safe, and stands by while the "Luton Three" get a total of 30 years' jail for "conspiracy to rob".

Scared, probably guilt-stricken, Lennon wants out. But the police aren't satisfied with a spurious haul of "three terrorists". Lennon must do more for them. What he has already done strengthens their hold on him. He is still on the hook. And they are no longer bluffing. Now they really do have something on him.

## Rescue

He is instructed to draw the Republican movement into an attempt to rescue one of the three from a Birmingham jail. Credibility demands that he approach them with a plan of rescue. He finds himself with a kid of 18 outside Winson Green Jail taking snapshots. Local police arrest them and they are both charged with "conspiracy to effect an escape".

It is the Special Branch who have conspired with Lennon to trap the boy, and later to draw in others.

But Lennon is in jail. If convicted he will face years in jail. The Special Branch have to stop him "blowing the gaff". They reassure him — everything will be "fixed". He'll get off. The 18 year old boy will go down.

Three months later Lennon is free and the boy has a three year sentence facing him.

## Conspiracy

Lennon's acquittal is secured — the film makes this clear — by the Special Branch, involving the Director of Public Prosecutions, the prosecutor, the police, possibly the judge — the entire judicial system except the jury — in a conspiracy against the boy, who is sentenced to three years for.... Conspiracy!

send their mail, this tidy kick-back can't be justified even in terms of bringing in extra custom. Thus the rest of us are paying in higher charges and poorer services for this subsidy to big business. And with higher prices driving out a big proportion of individual users, post workers are finding that a bigger slice of the deliveries consist of this 'rebate' post.

Bro. Ward was also right to draw attention to the massive interest charges the PO pays out to money lenders to keep the service going. Although the press are always willing to point to our manning levels and wages, they are curiously silent on what is, after all, one of the biggest costs. Perhaps they themselves are in hock to the same crew.

## No control

As a Post Office workers I say that as we have no control over the industry we work for, then we should accept no responsibility for the mess it's in. What we need is a fighting campaign around demands such as the cancellation of the present debts, the opening of all PO accounts to our inspection, and the right to veto all management decisions. Instead of reducing the workforce, we must fight for a reduction in working hours with no loss of pay.

Our present union leaders, however, have no intention of launching such a campaign. In a circular to branch officers, they recently gave the following advice: "Branches should co-operate with the management in seeing that staff are related to the level of traffic in the station, and goodwill should be extended in the discussions which will take place."

Any fight against sackings will only come from the rank and file and will inevitably involve a fight to remove our right wing leadership. Militants in the UPW should be organising now, both for the forthcoming Annual Conference and in building the rank and file links that will be vital in carrying out the fight.

UPW member

# Susan Carlyle on Death of an Informer

## Did the Special Branch kill Kenneth Lennon?

Lennon, free, is more desperate than ever. To convince the jury, police witnesses have described Lennon as "open, frank and honest". Much, if not all of his cover, has been blown.

Still the Special Branch won't let go. They want him to go back to Luton and bluff it out. But he is too scared. Finally the reality of his situation has sunk in.

He makes his statement to the NCCL, telling them the whole story. His last words are: "The Special Branch might try to kill me and make it look like an Irish job". Three days later he is found in a Surrey ditch.

The documentary is eloquently silent on the question of who killed him, or rather who shot him — the IRA or the Special Branch.

An IRA execution? Or had the Special Branch — having squeezed Lennon dry and alarmed at his NCCL statement — decided that his best use to them now was as a corpse in a ditch, to be blamed on the IRA and

used to justify more repression against the Irish community?

Both are possible. But the labour movement should ponder the following questions.

If the Special Branch knew so much about a marginally political figure like Lennon, it indicates a massive level of police surveillance of the labour movement and the left in Britain. To a serious degree knowledge of his activity in this field was used by the Special Branch for its lethal blackmail against Lennon.

## Frame-up

The conclusion is inescapable that those who can secure acquittals as they did in Lennon's case can also secure convictions of innocent victims. They have done this. Think of the Shrewsbury pickets, and of Des Warren, still in jail, even under a Labour government.

It is at the discretion of the same

Director of Public Prosecutions who was fully involved in the manipulations to get Lennon acquitted, that "conspiracy" charges are brought against the Shrewsbury pickets and against men like Frank Stagg.

How many Lennons are operating now? — including inside the labour movement. The Prevention of Terrorism Act is a blackmailers' charter for the police to use against Irish people in Britain. And actions like the frame-up and jailing of the Shrewsbury pickets will have intimidated very many British-born workers, too, and made them vulnerable.

There are still many mysteries surrounding the Lennon affair. The labour movement should organise its own enquiry to dig for the answers. We must demand that the Labour government comes clean.

The answers are vital to the labour movement.



Kenneth Lennon (arrowed) on a civil rights demonstration in Newry in 1969

## After 9 years of 'keeping a close watch'...

WA readers might like to know that, since 1967, Labour has been 'keeping a close watch' on the problem of hypothermia.

On December 19th 1967 a deputation from Coventry City Council, concerned at the number of deaths among old people, met Norman Pentland and S. McColl, both Labour MPs and junior ministers, at the Ministry of Social Security. A number of points along the lines of your article (WA5) were made by Councillor Jack Sprung. He stressed that the cold was a real problem to old people, made worse by poor housing conditions, confusion over supplementary benefit, and food of poor nutritional standard.

Dr. Pollock (Coventry's Deputy Medical Officer of Health at the time) outlined his studies on hypothermia from which he concluded that the problem was far greater than had been

assumed: thermometers that would detect it were not generally in use. He also emphasised that it was very unhealthy for old people to take to their beds as a means of keeping warm.

The response of these junior ministers — Labour, remember — makes depressing reading today. I quote from the minutes of the meeting: Norman Pentland said that "with regard to fuel and other price increases, he wished to assure the deputation that the government would keep a close watch on the situation" and "he gave an assurance that the appropriate ministers would give close attention to all the points raised by the deputation without delay."

Well, the only thing that hasn't been delayed is the **worsening** of the situation that we've seen in the last 9 years!

With regard to the weekly additions for heating, your facts were not quite accurate. The 55p is a minimum, but if you're bedridden you can claim as much as the grand sum of £1.65 a week.

What a future to look forward to after a lifetime of work for capitalism: an extra £1.65 a week if you're bedridden — just as long as you've filled in all the right forms!

SID WEST, Coventry



## National Working Women's Charter Conference

10th and 11th APRIL 1976

at the LANCHESTER POLYTECHNIC, COVENTRY

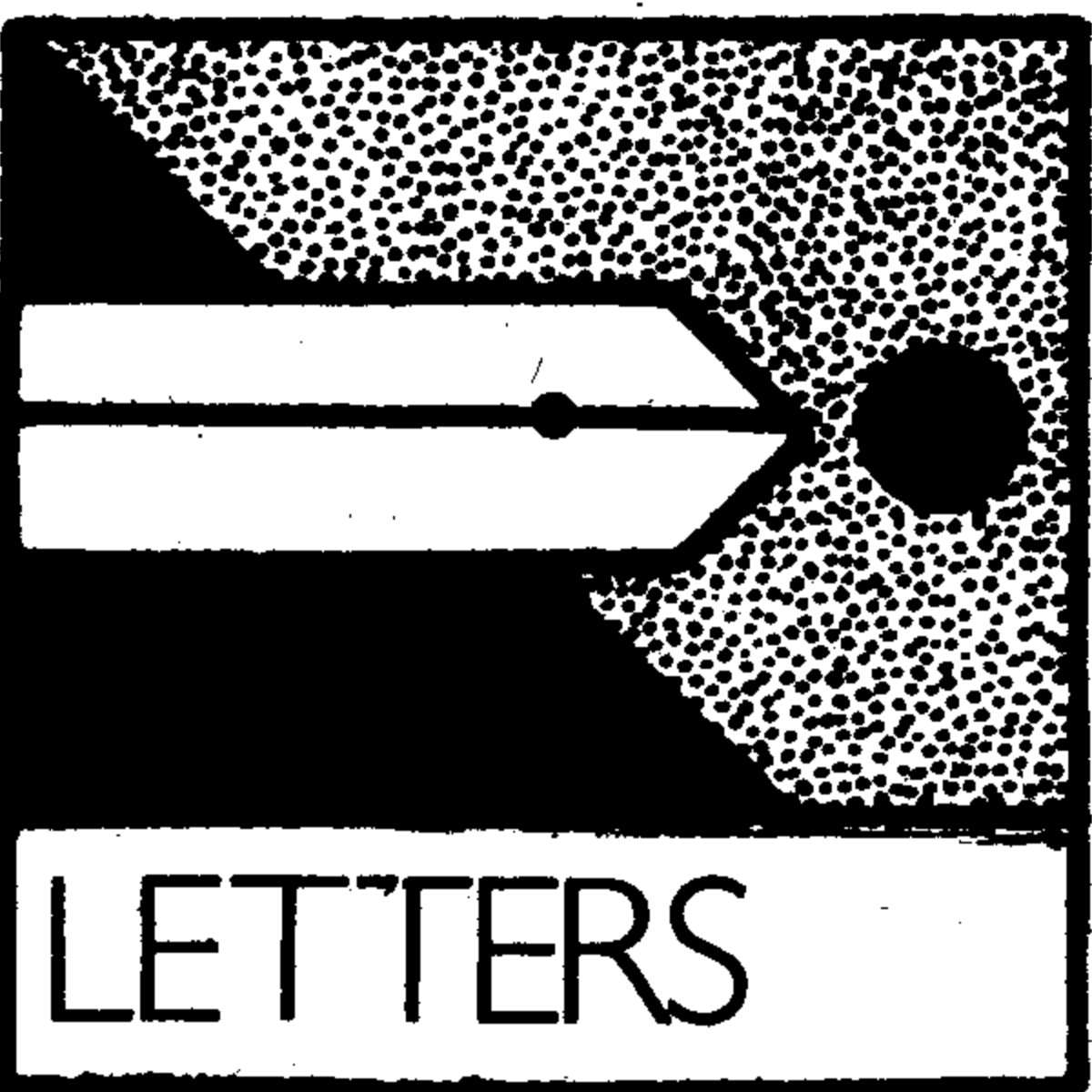
Organised by the Working Women's Charter Campaign in Coventry and London for all groups and organisations fighting for the demands of the Charter

Details and application forms from Helen Gurdon, Flat 4, 39 Newbold Terrace East, Leamington Spa, Warwicks

PORTUGAL  
Solidarity  
Campaign  
**NATIONAL  
CONFERENCE**

Saturday March 13th,  
Conway Hall, London.  
Details from PWCC,  
12 Little Newport Street,  
London WC2

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## Post Office: Putting the blame where it belongs

Dave Ward was quite right in his article on the Post Office to put the blame for the present crisis where it belongs, at the door of the PO management. Like all other so-called public service industries, its main aim is to provide cheap facilities to big business, with ordinary users coming a very poor second.

One example of this is called the bulk rebate scheme. Under this if a firm is big enough to post one million letters a year, it gets 300,000 post free. As there is no other way that firms can

# Robbing Peter and not paying Paul

**HARD on the heels of their recent attacks on foreign workers, the government and local authorities are now going in for the victimisation of foreign students.**

Recently the Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) announced that it is planning to cut the number of foreign students at ILEA establishments by half in the next six years. Next year the ILEA will instruct colleges not to take on a higher number of foreign students than they took this year; and the following year the actual cut-back will begin.

This will affect thousands of prospective foreign students.

The argument put forward by ILEA is that "in current economic circumstances there must be a limit to the resources we can provide for overseas students without detriment to the growing needs of our own young people." This is simply another variant of robbing Peter and not paying Paul — remember all those low-paid workers who were supposed to benefit from the wage restraint of higher paid workers? Of course the money never

got to them.

Money saved on overseas students will not find its way into other areas of education: it will simply be swallowed up in the general cuts in the education system. In some cases, ILEA's argument will be used to close down whole colleges in 'rationalisation' schemes that are based on cutting the roll of foreign students, running down certain colleges that now cater for many of them, and then closing them, throwing staff out of work and pruning down places and courses.

The response from both the staff and students at London colleges has been one of outright opposition to the proposals. The principal and vice-principal of South West London College, which has the highest percentage of foreign students, have condemned the decision, as has the Association of Polytechnic Teachers.

The National Union of Students has deplored the proposals as being "unnecessary and short-sighted". They are already campaigning against the planned increases in overseas students' fees, and will incorporate the ILEA's cuts into this campaign.

The increase in fees was no doubt intended to cut down on numbers: already overseas students pay higher fees than students from England and Wales. Now a confidential report by the Cabinet policy group on higher education seeks to raise their fees to as much as £2,000 a year for advanced courses: thus cutting out all but the very rich.

Why should foreign workers and students bear the highest costs of the economic crisis? They are not responsible for the crisis — they should not be victimised as its scapegoats. Instead of Labour bashing the weakest sections of society, let them hit at the strongest — the bosses!

**PAUL HARRIS**



Overseas students protest racist cuts planned by ILEA

## West Ham occupation

AT 11 last Thursday morning (Feb 18th) students at North East London Polytechnic occupied the director's administrative suite in West Ham. The occupation, called by the Nursery Action Group, follows years of inactivity by the authorities on this important question. About 25 students and children stayed the night and finally left on Friday afternoon.

They were demanding free nursery facilities for children of students, staff and local women.

Ian Ford, the student union president, told Workers Action: "The response by students was tremendous. I think we have demonstrated the need for nursery facilities and the Director's opposition to that need. Director Brosan, faced with a peaceful occupation, called in the police and asked them to eject the students and to prosecute. The police refused to do so. Brosan then locked

the outer door of his foyer imprisoning about 15 toddlers and the student occupiers. He then told two students that he was suspending them. I consider this kind of thuggery to be worse than that of Terence Miller at the Polytechnic of North London."

Examining the files, students found a letter from Brosan to Professor John Vaizey, head of the School of Social Sciences at Brunel University, agreeing with the latter's suggestion "to add a senior police officer to the Academic Advisory Committee and recommend that you go ahead and arrange for Detective Inspector Colin Rutter to become a member of the Committee."

Also uncovered was a letter to right wing Tory educationalist van Straubenzee admiring his "guts" for spreading his reactionary ideas and inviting him to lunch at the Reform Club.

**MICK WOODS**

## A kick in the teeth or a kick in the groin

**AT the National Committee meeting in Leeds on February 14th, Rank and File Teacher went a long way towards clawing its way out of the sectarian morass it had found itself in and re-establishing a more a healthy national democracy.**

The main debates centred around perspectives for Rank and File and the future of the R&F newspaper, both crucial areas given the current decline of the organisation.

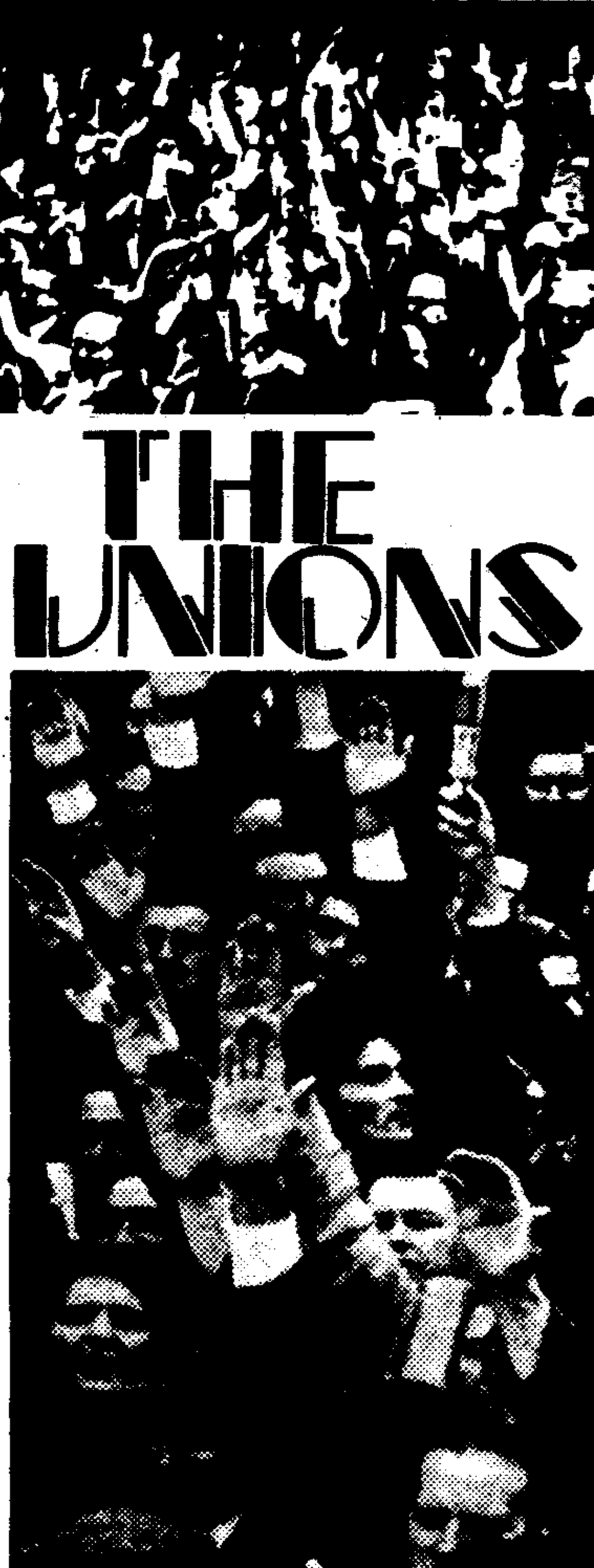
There was a major debate on an Executive Committee resolution stressing the primacy of school based action and formulating agitational demands to be used as a basis for a Teachers' Charter. Opposition came from an amendment from Lewisham pointing out the dangers of school based action being seen as a substitute for work in the NUT at local association level and above.

The balance of forces at the NC soon became clear, with International Socialist teachers who had up until recently controlled all the leading bodies of R&F arguing for school based action; and an alliance of the 'Workers League' (recently expelled from IS, the old IS Opposition) together with the 'non-aligned' grouping marshalled around Dave Picton, arguing for the Lewisham amendment.

The ultra left dangers inherent in the IS approach came out when an IS delegate from Liverpool said that all the best militants in his area no longer went to local association NUT meetings, which were dominated by reactionaries; they were too busy working in their schools!

However, the right wing content of the Lewisham amendment, which sought to "involve both socialist and non-socialist teachers in common struggle" (in Picton's words at the December NC, "we seek to unite the reactionaries with us against the cuts") was also clear, and the original motion was carried after the amendment had been defeated 44-35.

What was not brought out in the debate on the actual demands of the Charter, however, was that at just the time when Rank and File initiative against the cuts and unemployment in education is at the stage when it should be used as a basis for common action with other areas of the public sector, the Teachers' Charter, by its very nature, sectionalises teachers' struggle once more.



The afternoon session on the paper centred around proposals to deal with the situation on the editorial board. What had happened was that at January meeting of the Rank and File EC (no longer dominated by the IS) since the expulsion of the IS) bureaucratic manoeuvre in true IS style carried out by the ISQ with the non-aligned group had sacked Dick North as editor of the paper and installed a non-IS editorial board.

The sorry spectacle then at the NC was of two sets of bureaucrats (the IS and the ex-ISQ plus non-aligned) piously accusing each other of bureaucratic manipulation. A resolution from IS calling for restoration of the original status quo was defeated; and a motion from the ISQ/non-aligned calling for maintaining the new EB was also defeated by 37-35.

Workers Action supporters voted against both sets of proposals, and was a delegate from Newham, John McGill, who pointed the only principled way out.

"What we are being faced with here," he said "is a choice between a kick in the teeth and a kick in the groin. We don't see why we should put up with either. What we need is an election from the floor here and now and for a new editor and EB."

The NC voted to accept this, and after unsuccessful attempts by both IS and the ISQ/non-aligned to impose their slates, Dick North was reinstated as editor and an EB was elected consisting of representatives from both major tendencies, together with others, including a supporter of Workers Action.

## The programme 'everybody knows'

AS unemployment climbs and the crumbling of the Welfare State changes from a threat into a tangible fact, discontent is taking shape in the ranks of the Labour Party. After several fake starts, a Greater London Regional Tribune Group has been formed.

At a meeting on 13th February, several dozen people assembled in Caxton Hall to hear Eric Heffer speak on Tribune's policies. However, he was elsewhere, and gave as his apology that he "hadn't really believed that a meeting would be organised on Friday 13th". Max Madden, MP for Sowerby, had to speak in his place.

Madden gave a persuasive account of the trials of a Labour back benches: the Cabinet makes decisions without consulting back benches, they have many conflicting demands on their time, no internal links, no sustained campaigning groups...

He thought, or so he said, that Socialism would come by the action of workers outside Parliament. But he didn't spell this out very exactly. Meanwhile, there was Tribune's programme. This was dealt with in about thirty seconds, as "everybody knows it"; he simply listed import controls, investment in manufacturing industry, and reflation of the economy.

Speakers from the floor thought Tribune's programme couldn't be accepted just like that. Madden was challenged about the import controls on Portuguese textiles, and replied that he felt bound to support such controls because he was MP for a textile constituency. Someone then asked what stance he would take if he were MP for Barrow where Polaris submarines are made, but he didn't answer that one.

Another speaker warned about the

combination of aspects of Tribune's programme — import controls — with action in streets, reminding the audience of actions socialists must oppose: such as the 'united fronts' with employers like Courtaulds, and demonstrations sponsored by bosses using workers that they were threatening with redundancies to further their own interests.

The formation of Tribune groups locally is to be welcomed if it allows socialists to challenge the ideas of Tribune's programme. Many of those forming them will not have thought too hard about these ideas, probably taking them for granted as 'common sense', or simply looking for a way of getting together with others on Labour's left.

But such groups offer nothing in the way of real action against government policies.

## 'We live to fight another day'

### says Pochins convenor

Last week, the strikers at Pochins Manchester Poly site were ordered back to work by UCATT officials, with only the vague undertaking of a "meeting to sort out differences on the site."

The 4 workers who have been threatened with the sack are now unemployed. UCATT has even agreed with management to call off the proposed disputes panel.

Manchester has five large sites as well as expensive council schemes. However, cuts have meant the cancellation of four hospital rebuilding schemes in the area, as well as a smaller council house building programme.

The north west region has some 45,000 out of a national total of 200,000 unemployed building workers. The large sites are organised, some weakly. Woodrows, for instance, is notorious in its use of the blacklist. A new Poly site is employing Laing, a

notoriously anti-union firm.

The decline in private house building and the recession means that lump labour has taken a hammering. Its lack of organisation has meant that lump workers have been the easiest to cut. It remains for the employers to attack the organised sites.

Pochins Poly site remains well organised. In January last year the workers struck and occupied the site, with success, in defence of 14 jobs. As convenor Ian Heyes puts it, "it was a principled struggle for the defence of jobs. It left the union organisation stronger and more militant. The stewards on this site don't take decisions for the men — each decision is referred back to the men on the site. This is real democracy."

This strong organisation has enabled the site to fight for the implementation of regional UCATT

policy on employment. That is —

**Worksharing, no redundancies; 40 hour week, no overtime.**

"For the past 12 months" Bro. Heyes told us "despite the loss of bonus earnings, overtime has not been worked on this site."

The experience and lessons learnt in this struggle have not been lost. Pochins strikers addressed meetings of stewards on other sites, and collections have been held to help the men. Now they have been ordered back by UCATT: "The site organisation could not long survive the combined attack of both union and employers" Ian Heyes concluded. But he is optimistic: "The men have returned. Our organisation survived and we live to fight another day."

The men on the site know that another round is due. Pochins aim to smash this organised site, which UCATT officialdom has criminally sold out.

## Workers' ACTION

supporters' groups are being formed in the following places:

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

Write for details of meetings & activities to:

**WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27**

# WARRIORS IN

# ACTION

## Union leaders use busmen's rally to tame rising militancy

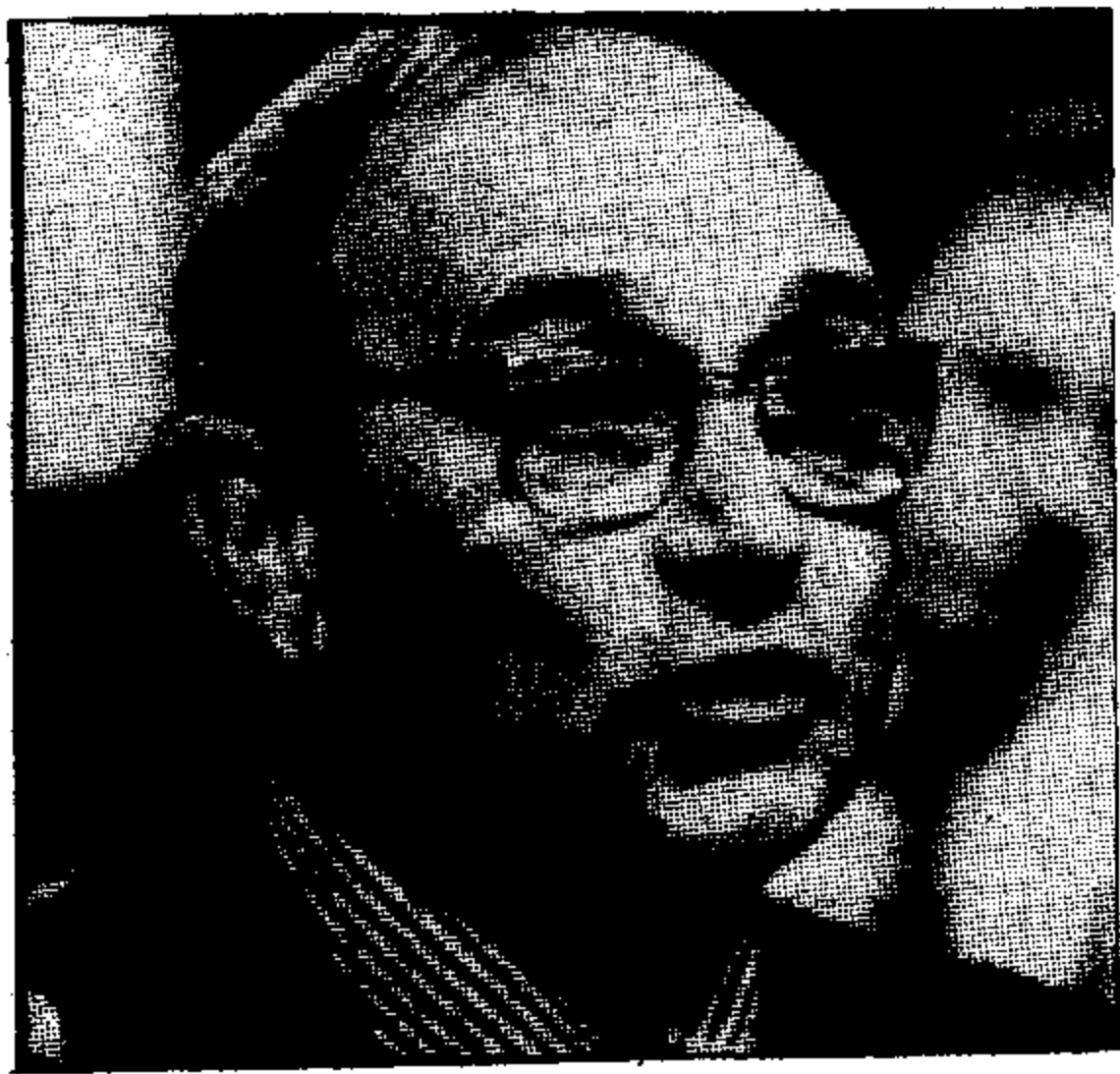
by Steve Cushion T&GWU

LAST Wednesday (Feb. 18th) 5,000 busworkers packed into Central Hall for a rally against the cuts in bus services and against redundancy threats from the National Bus Company.

They came from all over the country, with particularly large contingents from Scotland — and many of them were extremely disappointed to have come such a long way to hear so little.

Jack Jones and Larry Smith (national passenger workers' secretary of the T&G, known as Larry the Lamb) made very uninspiring speeches. The only policy they put forward was to lobby MPs, as if the Government had no knowledge of the bus cuts and only had to be told by some rank and file busmen what the situation was.

The bus service cuts are deliberate in exactly the same way as all the other cuts in social services are, and only firm direction action will make the authorities reverse their decisions.



At times of high unemployment socialists often talk about a programme of useful public works. One such would be to nationalise the bus and truck industry under workers' control, expand production so workers can be employed to build the buses that are desperately needed, and then many more unemployed can find work operating them. And workers and their families, who rely on public transport, can use them.

This year, £8 million has been cut off London Transport's grants, at a time when inflation has pushed costs up by over 20%. We should demand that the grant goes up, not down. The local authorities say they have no money and that they must cut the social services. But the only thing they have not cut is the interest repayments to the loan sharks that they have got themselves in debt to over the years. This is where the cuts should come.

The employers are slowly whittling down our jobs by 'natural wastage' and non-replacement of staff. We have to take action to stop this, and from Larry Smith's showing on Wednesday, we can't rely on him to help us. The purpose of that rally and lobby of Parliament was in fact to siphon off the pressure from the rank and file. It was kept as low key as possible, and was just meant to channel the militancy into harmless lobbying.

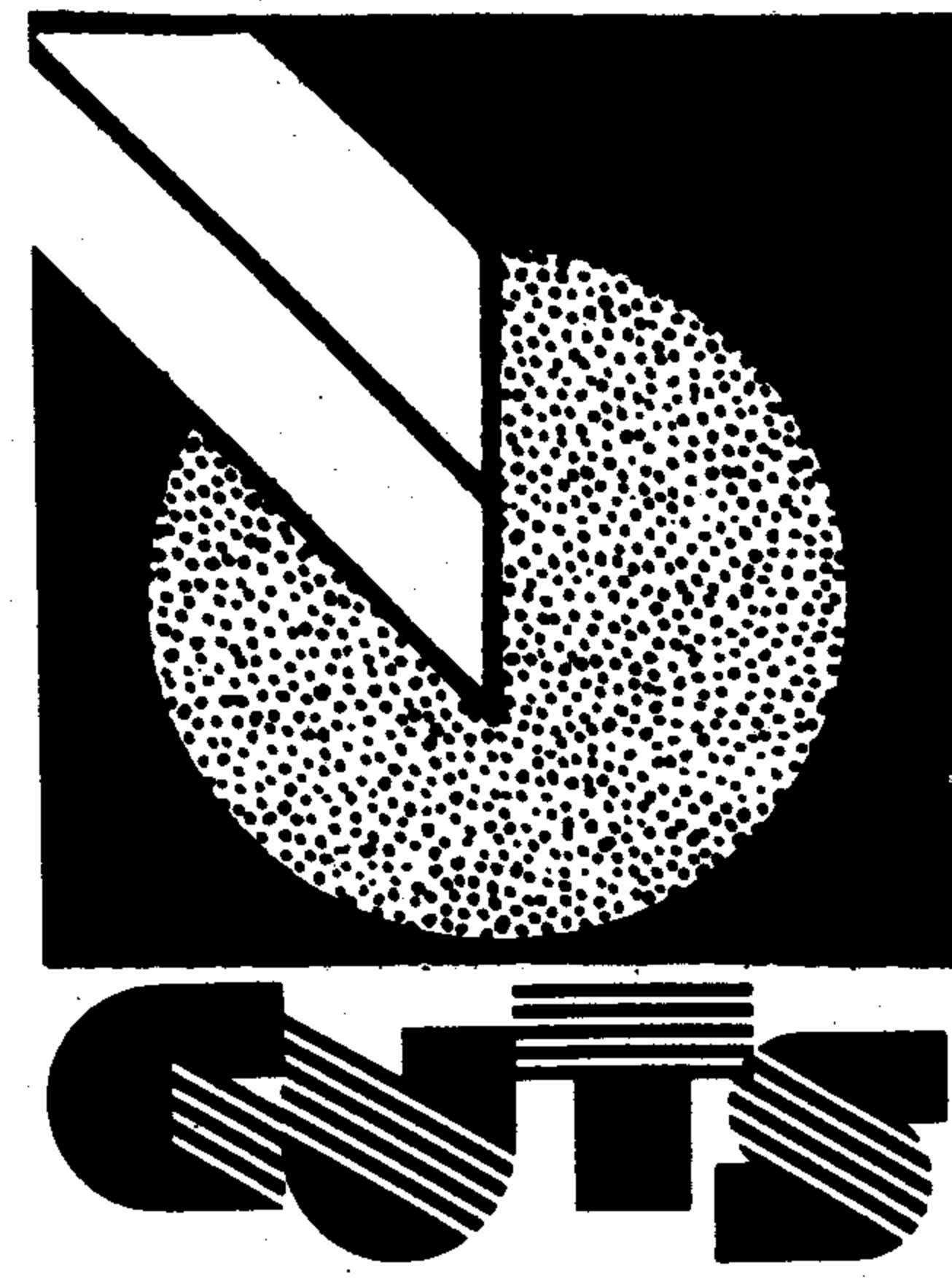
This was shown by the attitude to other action on that day. Circulars went out to try to prevent the one day stoppages which some areas were thinking about the London section was not involved until the last minute-

and no serious attempt was made to mobilise London.

The bus section of the T&G has always suffered from these divisions; into Scots and English, London and provincial, National Bus Company and the local corporations, etc. We must unite on a rank and file level to overcome this.

Small groups of rank and file militants are slowly getting together. If we can unite to form a National Rank and File Movement, then we have a chance to fight the common problem of the cuts, despite official interference.

Contact London 'Platform' group c/o 548 Lea Bridge Road, London E10.



## 'Vote Labour! Vote for the boss!'

IF COVENTRY was the boom town of the '50s and '60s, it also sums up the crisis of the mid-'70s.

The local machine tools and car industries have been hard hit over recent years. Workers who were accustomed to shop floor militancy bringing easy results have come up against the need for political solutions.

And the Coventry North-West by-election (polling day: March 4th), caused by the death of Labour MP Maurice Edelman, gives a fair picture of the political solutions the present system has to offer.

The rump of the National Front is standing Norfolk landowner Andrew Fountaine. The National Party, the other fascist fragment from the recent split of the old NF, is standing their most prominent leader, Kingsley Read. Both Read and Fountaine openly proclaim a racist 'solution' to the present crisis.

The Tory candidate is Jonathan Guinness, a prominent figure of the right-wing 'Monday Club'. The Liberals are standing a lawyer, Alan Leighton.

The Labour candidate is Geoffrey Robinson. He used to work for Jaguar, who have two major plants in the constituency ... as managing director! He was a strong advocate of 'participation' schemes that involved workers in helping to manage their own exploitation.

Not only have the local Labour Party put workers in Coventry North-West in the position of having to vote for their own boss, they have refused to support the Trades Council-sponsored counter-demonstration against the National Front's march on February 28th. However, this policy has not gone without opposition. The vote in the Borough Labour Party on supporting the counter-demonstration went 28-28, and was settled by the casting vote of the chairman, who is also the Lord Mayor.



A contingent on last Saturday's huge Birmingham march against the cuts

Photo by Eric Harrison

## Miners NEC abandons Langwith — now another pit is threatened

THE NATIONAL Executive Committee of the National Union of Mineworkers is, between conferences, the custodian of union policy as decided by conference. In the event of circumstances arising not covered by existing policy, the NEC has the responsibility of deciding policy to cover the new situation. That is what they were elected for — not to swap and change policy to suit their own or anyone else's whims. Why then have we seen such a fiasco as that over the Langwith closure?

National policy, decided by conference, is to resist closure except on the grounds of exhaustion of the seam. At Langwith even the National Coal Board have admitted that there are still two and a half million tons of accessible reserves. At first a significant number of NEC members decided to support the national policy and vote for an overtime ban to resist the closure of Langwith.

When this resistance was put into practice, the right wing went into action against the decision. Not only did they vote against national policy, but they embarked, assisted by the press, on a vicious campaign to split the unity of the NUM, by calling on workers to disregard the NEC decision. The resulting confusions meant that in some areas pits supported the ban, while other areas continued to work normally.

In an effort to paper over the cracks which he himself had helped to create, Gormley called a special NEC to "re-open discussion". On the eve of the special meeting, he announced that unless the meeting went his way, against continuing the ban, he would not represent the NUM in talks with electrical power management and unions on their future use of coal. As a result the NEC fell into line and called the ban off until an individual ballot of the membership is held.

Although there should be absolutely no need for a ballot, now that it has been called it is vital that miners recognise the importance of the issues involved. This is not a one-pit issue. Miners face a situation like that of the '60s, with every pit in the land threatened. Around thirty million tons of coal are lying in stock, with no stable market for it.

There is a serious possibility of an attack on the five day week and

widespread pit closures. The NCB has chosen a 'border-line' pit like Langwith to test the resolve of the NUM. Already another colliery at Teversal, Notts, is in danger of closure. About 700 miners at the pit are continuing the overtime ban and seeking assurances from the NCB that their pit will not be closed.

It is up to rank and file miners to respond by refusing to accept closures such as happened in the '60s. NUM branches must deluge the NEC with messages of support for the overtime ban, and strongly criticise Gormley for his undemocratic behaviour. If the leaders won't show the way, then the rank and file must.

STEVE ABBOTT (Calverton NUM)

### Richard Whitecross

RICHARD WHITECROSS, a member of the ASTMS Publishing Branch, was arrested together with his wife and a number of Chilean exiles by the Argentinian police on November 24th. No legal charges were made, but it is believed that he is accused of aiding Chilean refugees.

Although there has been no charge and no trial, Richard Whitecross is still in jail in Argentina. Last December members of his trade union branch picketed the Foreign Office, who continue to answer all questions with the bland reply "We're doing all we can".

The ASTMS Publishing Branch with the support of other ASTMS branches has set up a Whitecross Defence Committee. This committee is calling for a demonstration on Wednesday March 3rd: 1pm at the Argentinian Embassy, 9 Wilton Crescent, SW1 (near St George's Hospital).

### Gas strike

THE LAST FEW weeks have seen a series of strikes by NALGO members in the gas industry. The high points of the campaign so far have been one-day strikes covering whole NALGO regions.

The origin of the dispute lies in the productivity scheme for the industry's 50,000 manual workers. NALGO has told its members not to implement the scheme, which would have posed a serious threat to white collar staffing levels. NALGO also want more money than the £4.75 extra offered for running the scheme.

## Defence needed against fascist violence

A mob of National Front supporters effectively broke up a meeting and film show on Angola called for last Wednesday, 18th February, by the Tower Hamlets Movement against Racism.

The fascists infiltrated this meeting of a dozen or so, to swell the numbers to 40, forcing the organisers to call for the police and cancel the meeting. The police took 35 minutes to arrive from the station (two minutes away), by which time the atmosphere was

heightened by acts of provocation.

The police helpfully suggested that they could "only be invited in", and stood meekly outside the hall while the NF supporters shouted "Shame", "Mercenaries for Angola", "Free Speech for the Front", grabbed and stole copies of the anti-fascist publication 'Searchlight' from the bookstall, and menacingly surrounded a black comrade, throwing ink in his face before marching out in triumph. Only then did the police offer protection to the

black comrade, leaving the rest to fend for themselves.

The lesson to be learnt is that the left and the labour movement must organise itself into self-defence squads and provide adequate stewarding for meetings. In Liverpool last month a 'Troops out of Ireland' meeting was held successfully with 40 to 60 people on patrol outside. This followed an Irish meeting in Kirkby that had been broken up, with the hall being wrecked.

A recall meeting will go ahead.

### Rule 14

Feeling among NALGO members is running high, particularly over the 316 staff who have been locked out for refusing to do extra duties. Up to 1,000 will still be on strike this week in sympathy, including many computer operators. The refusal of supervisory staff to carry out the training procedures in the manual workers' agreement has resulted in some friction between the two unions involved, the General and Municipal Workers' Union and NALGO, particularly at a local level. Nationally, however, the GMWU has declared support for the actions of NALGO.

### Rule 14

The new 'model rule 14' for Trades Councils, which forbids Trades Council to enter into political activity against TUC or Labour Party policy, or in alliance with political parties other than the Labour Party, has been rejected by 37 votes to 33 on Camden Trades Council. The new rule is supposed to be a uniform regulation required of all Trades Councils by the TUC.

The main opposition to rejecting the rule came from Communist Party members. They argued that the rule did not matter; it could be got round in practice. However, the majority of the Trades Council recognised that even if we could get round the rule in the short term, it would remain a potent weapon for right-wing TUC bureaucrats to use when they felt strong enough to do so.

A motion from the NUJ Book Branch to campaign with other Trades Councils against the model rule will come up at the March meeting of the Trades Council.

## Twisted logic of 'Life' campaign

THE RECONVENING of the Parliamentary Select Committee on abortion law has given a new boost to the anti-abortion campaigns 'SPUC' and 'Life'.

But at the 'Life' meeting in St Mary's Hall, Clapham, London, last week, 20 out of the 80-strong audience were supporters of the National Abortion Campaign, which calls for free abortion on demand.

The main 'Life' speaker was articulate and clear. She argued that a foetus is a person from conception and that the 'unborn child' has all the rights of born children. 'Life', she said, provides a support system for women under pressure to have abortions.

However, her supporters were mainly beyond child-bearing age, and a number of them were men. They were not very vocal, apart from several loud and large women screaming abuse at us from time to time. One even felt so strongly as to tell me my mother ought to have had an abortion instead of having me — rather a turn-about!

'Life' showed a film, produced by the Nestle company. It featured cute toddlers, amazingly life-like fetuses, and a woman having a child — beautifully! The final slide of a bin of babies was reminiscent of the notorious anti-abortion tract "Babies for Burning"

But NAC supporters were able to

get some questions across. What about cases of rape? What sort of 'counselling' do 'Life' give to pregnant women? How do you define "life"?

'Life' do not want a woman to have the right to choose, and are openly calling for the total repeal of the 1967 Abortion Act. Abortionists, they feel, exploit and pressure women whose real desire is just to have the child!

In fact, exploitation and pressure can be minimised only by giving every woman the right to choose, with abortion freely available if she wishes it. It is 'Life' who are exploiting many women befuddled by religious or moralistic prejudices.

WENDY CLARK

LAST SUNDAY, February 22nd, saw a demonstration of 2,000 in Liverpool in favour of abortion on demand and a woman's right to choose. The demo was organised by Liverpool National Abortion Campaign, and also protested against the decision of the Liberal-controlled council ban any demonstrations, street meetings, etc. organised by the local women's liberation group.

The end-of-demo rally, addressed by Maureen Colquhoun MP, ended with a call to support the national NAC demo on April 3rd.