

Workers' ACTION

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Kill the Bill

MARCH 9th is a start. But much more will be needed.

Workers are fighting the Tories on many fronts. Aside from March 9th, there are dozens of local strikes and demonstrations against the cuts. Thousands of workers in South Wales want a general strike against the steel closures.

In the support given by miners and many other workers to the steel strikers, there are the beginnings of an industrial alliance against the Tories.

The TUC's job, and the Labour Party's, should be to coordinate and lead forward these struggles. But the TUC has twisted the arms of Welsh union leaders to stop a general strike in Wales. And the TUC has done very little to support the steelworkers.

Labour leader James Callaghan cannot even bring himself to say that the steelworkers should get their money and keep their jobs. The best he can suggest is that some judge or professor should be wheeled in as a mediator.

We must demand the Labour and trade union leaders stop dithering and dallying with the Tories and start a concerted offensive, for a **GENERAL STRIKE TO STOP THE TORIES.**

General Strike!

TUC: stop talks with the Tories

R&F code of practice

- 1 No crossing of picket lines.
- 2 For the building, and defence of, 100 per cent closed shop. For sanctions against any individuals breaking closed shop
- 3 For full rank and file discussion and decision making by traditional democratic procedures — no enforced secret ballots
- 4 Pickets to be positioned at whatever locations necessary to win the dispute and in sufficient numbers to ensure that picket lines are observed. Strikes to be run by elected strike committees
- 5 All appeals for blacking and financial assistance for disputes to be carried out wherever practicable.
- 6 Support calls made by strike committees for mass and sympathy pickets.
- 7 No settlement of disputes without full report backs to, and decision making by, the members concerned.

Zimbabwe: Will compromises lose what the struggle won?

by BOB FINE

ZANU HAS WON a major victory in the struggle for Zimbabwe's liberation by taking 57 of the 80 seats open to Africans in the elections. It demonstrates the overwhelming popular support they built up in the course of the war.

ZANU won in the face of concerted political and military onslaught from the British, Rhodesian and South African régimes. With Nkomo's ZAPU taking 20 seats, the Patriotic Front alliance has virtually annihilated all their opponents electorally.

Muzorewa, despite his private army of 30,000 men, and despite mass rallies shepherded together by these 'auxiliaries', has been buried at the polls, taking

only three seats, in middle-class African areas. The *Guardian* reported how it happened:

"Last week throughout the rich farming areas around Salisbury, farmers sent their workers to the polls by the thousand wearing Bishop Muzorewa T-shirts and other campaign paraphernalia given by their employers. But once in the polling booths they turned against the bishop and voted for a man who has promised radical change in land ownership and wage levels for Africans."

The most notable feature of the liberation movement's electoral victory has been the turning away of the African working class in the cities from Muzorewa in favour of ZANU — though the working class has yet to find an independent political voice of its own.

Imperialist forces have suffered a defeat. The full brunt of their attack was directed at Mugabe, and the election results showed up their failure.

A coup by the white Rhodesian army or an invasion from South Africa still remain dangers. At present, they talk of the 'spirit of reconciliation' with those they yesterday called 'Marxist terrorists'. But Britain, the USA and South Africa are still fumbling for a coherent policy to adopt.

For the Zimbabwean people, though, there are many dangers ahead. The state apparatus, and the military and economic backers of the old régime, have survived almost unscathed, and heavy pressure will be put on Mugabe to continue the conservative line he has taken by inviting the commander of the old white racist

army, Peter Walls, to continue.

But Mugabe is not Muzorewa. Behind Mugabe is a politicised mass movement, which he will ignore at his peril. To ensure that the leaders cannot be bought off, a programme of action must be developed by activists in the liberation movement which looks to mobilising and organising Zimbabwe's working class, to carrying through land reform, and to destroying the old state apparatus.

The immediate steps must include: the expulsion of the 7,000 - 10,000 South African troops still in Zimbabwe, the expropriation of unused and under-used land, the rescinding of the state of emergency and martial law, the freeing of political prisoners, and the development of an independent trade union movement.

The poison industry

1. NUCLEAR POWER

'Nuclear Disaster in the Urals', by Zhores A Medvedev (Angus & Robertson, £5.95).

IN LATE 1957 or early 1958, an explosion of atomic waste occurred at a nuclear plant in the South Urals district of the USSR, between the major towns of Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk. The accident contaminated, in Medvedev's estimate, around 1000 square kilometres, and forced the evacuation of scores of villages and farming communities. According to some reports, it caused the deaths of hundreds if not thousands of people.

Unbelievable? The western powers would have found out and publicised it? Impossible? Medvedev came up against all these reactions, plus the obstruction of the CIA, in researching this case.

In the Soviet scientific fraternity it was common knowledge that a disaster had taken place, and research was carried out, those parts which were published being heavily bowdlerised and censored. Nevertheless, an expert piecing together the different reports to establish the area affected, the radiation dosages, and the geographical/climatic detail could come to no other conclusion than that a

huge disaster had taken place in the south Urals.

But if the west could find out about such a disaster in the USSR, in a period of cold war (1957), wouldn't they use it as anti-USSR propaganda? The western powers reckoned it was more important to pretend that nuclear power is perfectly safe — as they still do.

Some western experts still say such an accident would be impossible. According to Sir John Hill of the United Kingdom Atomic Energy Authority, "this sort of waste [low-level] has a very, very low activity, and could not possibly give that sort of explosion" (Times, 8.11.76). He dismissed Medvedev's story as 'rubbish'.

US Intelligence sources identified the cause of the accident as an explosion in a plutonium production reactor which (of course!) "involved reactor technology only distantly related to present-day nuclear power plants..."

Medvedev postulates the probable cause of the explosion as liquid waste seeping down until it came into contact with the water table underground. The nuclear waste heated the water. Steam pressure finally caused an explosion, scattering Strontium 90 and Cesium 137 — highly radioactive isotopes — over a radius of about 30 kilometres (18 to

Two reviews by MICK WOODS

20 miles).

From the very partial research published, Medvedev gleaned a picture of ecological disaster. Stands of trees were killed, animals mutated, natural food chains wrecked. Acres of topsoil were bulldozed into giant mounds. One witness now living in Israel claims that all the hospital beds in the district were taken by radiation victims, most of whom died.

And this was only a small disaster. Imagine the effects of a big one... let alone of a nuclear war.

Workers' Action does not oppose nuclear energy as such. We oppose those who at the moment control both nuclear energy and genocidal atomic weaponry, and who use nuclear power under grossly unsafe conditions. We believe that nuclear power might help liberate mankind from poverty and drudgery.

The Lords of Overkill who own, control, and twist nuclear power to the needs of profit and national arrogance

do not have our priorities. We need to control it, and we believe that the trade union and labour movement must force the suspension of all work on nuclear power until the movement and all its members are full aware of the facts and the issues, and are satisfied that adequate safety is ensured.

In this light, the decision of the Soviet bureaucracy to hide and censor the facts is even more criminal.

The working class needs full information on this issue. At the time of the explosion it was officially reported as a 'controlled leak'. Science itself is suppressed, and the free flow of knowledge dammed. Medvedev himself, a talented scientist, has been excluded from the USSR as a dissident.

Medvedev succeeds brilliantly in explaining the issues in a readable way. All socialists should read this book. At £5.95 for 200 pages, it's a bit steep, but order it to break the conspiracy of silence on nuclear energy.



2. LEAD

'Open secret' programme, 'The Price of Lead', Wednesday 20th February.

THIS YEAR new legislation is likely to be passed reducing the maximum lead exposure level from 100 micrograms per 100 cc of blood to 80 micrograms per 100 cc for men and 40 for women. Although this might seem like a step in the right direction, it looks different when you learn that the US health authorities are already pushing for a limit of 30 micrograms per 100 cc across the board.

Lead can cause brain damage or, theoretically, damage or deformity to a foetus. Also, a study by a Dr Lancronjon has shown that damage to sperm can take place at exposures of as little as 40 micrograms per 100 cc.

This research has been accepted in the States but dismissed in the UK. The Lead Safety Body in Britain has questioned it on the basis of insufficient controls in the laboratory procedure, and have queried whether a deformed sperm can cause conception anyway. Dr Lancronjon is however confident that given adequate resources for further research, she could confirm her earlier findings.

The programme asked the question, "If you're playing safe for women, why not for men?" The answer is that to maintain these levels would require massive investment in automated machinery and a safety cover akin to that of the nuclear power industry — i.e. an increase in costs which could lead to wholesale clos-

ure of the very profitable British lead industry.

Even the proposed EEC reduction to 60 micrograms per 100 cc would cause massive disruption. British capitalism can afford to be paternal about the safety of the handful of women in the lead industry, but not do anything for the rest.

In the US, 'care' for the mother and unborn child was shown up by the way the Cyanamid firm dealt with the danger of damage to foetuses. In Willow Island, West Virginia, they announced that all women of childbearing potential would be moved to lower paid work, but indicated that sterilisation would allow them to retain their jobs.

As Willow Island is an area of high unemployment and low wages, five were sterilised. The rest were demoted to janitorial.

Most regretted the sterilisation decision. Betty Muller said, "The day I did it, I was sorry". She felt she should have fought, but Cyanamid had just defeated a six month strike on pay, and they were a ruthless company. At that time her husband was unemployed, and her previous job, in a grocery store, had only paid \$2 an hour [about 90p, as against \$7 for the better-paid jobs at Cyanamid].

Since then she has been divorced, remarried, lost custody of her child to her ex-husband, and bitterly regrets allowing the firm to force her into sterilisation.

This is a particularly naked example of economic pressures being used by a big employer to dictate to a woman what she should do with her body. The message to all lead workers is to organise for safety, whether in Britain or the US.

Scottish YS debates 'Troops Out'

THE TORY government planned its attack on the working class by taking on what they saw as "the soft underbelly of the trade union movement", said Andy Bevan, Labour's national youth officer, at the Scottish Young Socialists' conference in Glasgow on 23rd-24th February. "What happened in the event was that Mrs. Thatcher dragged the ISTC into the 1980's. The union has been thrown into the cauldron of industrial action and now the strike is stronger than ever." He went on, "The problem is that although the working class is objectively a class in itself many workers are not conscious of being members of their class."

Delegates at the conference unanimously agreed on the need to step up the campaign against the Tories. The main conference document attacked both the last Labour Government's record and the Alternative Economic Strategy put forward by the Bennite left. A motion from Newbattle YS called on the STUC to "organise more action to combat the Tories' vicious attacks on the working class and their trade unions throughout Scotland". Conference accepted an amendment from Edinburgh Central YS which rejected "the idea that there is nothing workers can do about these attacks until a Labour government is returned" and called on the YS to launch a "Stop the Tories" campaign to prevent Thatcher from carrying out her anti-working class policies.

The hottest debates came on the second day of the conference. In the debate on the economy, supporters of Clause 4 argued for import controls as a way out of the recession facing British capitalism. The vast majority of delegates condemned the idea as nationalist and as encouraging workers to turn against their brothers and sisters in other countries rather than uniting against the bosses.

Basis

Fiona Menzies, a Workers' Action supporter, moved a motion on Ireland calling for Troops Out and support for Republicans and socialists fighting against British imperialism. She attacked the YS for refusing to support the right of the Irish people to self-determination. "What we argue is that it is our duty to support oppressed nations in their fight against our own ruling class. On that basis, we can earn the right to criticise their political programme. Comrades from Militant attack us for supposedly supporting the political programme of the Provisionals. But that misses the point. We do not believe the Provos have an adequate revolutionary programme."

"Yesterday we gave support and money to a speaker from ZANU(PF). We do not believe that ZANU(PF) has an adequate revolutionary programme for Zimbabwe any more than the Provos have for



Ireland, but we support them against the racist state. Why do the Militant comrades apply one standard to Southern Africa and another to Ireland?"

Plain

In reply Militant seemed even more confused than usual. One speaker announced that Militant's call for troops out depended on the growth of a mass trade union movement in the North. Five minutes later another Militant comrade came to the rostrum to put the opposite position: "Let's make one thing plain. The YS

calls for and has always called for the immediate withdrawal of the British Army from Ireland."

But it was Scottish chairperson Willy King who summed up for the Regional Committee by taking Militant's position to its logical conclusion. "The IRA are financed and supported by Southern Irish imperialism. To call for a 32-county Ireland is to support Irish imperialism rather than British imperialism. Comrades compare the IRA to ZANU... ZANU has a mass base in the Zimbabwean working class and peasantry. The IRA has no working class support. They are not like

ZANU, they are more like the CIA-funded organisations like UNITA, who fought in Angola in 1975."

The women's debate also aroused strong disagreement.

Clause 4 and Workers' Action argued that Militant ignore the double oppression of women. Though they had a formal commitment to equality, their attitude to women backed up reactionary sexist prejudices in the male working class. Militant replied by putting their prejudices on public display. Greg Oxley from Chapelhall argued that only socialism could solve the problems of the working class so that fighting sexism was a waste of time. "The YS doesn't want anything to do with the middle class trendies in groups like the Women's Liberation, or whatever it's called."

Reform

John Divers, a Regional Committee member, was attacked by Clause 4 members for sitting in the bar of Glasgow University while a mass meeting was debating the Corrie Bill. "As it happens I was reading Playboy at the time," he replied. "I suppose they will complain about that as well". Nobody stooped to take up the challenge.

The debate on organisation produced the most furious arguments. A resolution from Coatbridge calling for a witch-hunt against Militant was not moved. The delegates were too embarrassed to put it.

Supporters of the Campaign for YS Democracy put a resolution calling for reform of the YS. The movers argued that the main object of the CYSD was not to stir up a debate on purely organisational issues. "The YS has by-passed the major movements involving young people that have arisen over the past few years. They have nothing but insults for the thousands of women mobilised by the women's movement and they sneeringly stood on the sidelines during the growth of the ANL. The YS is introverted. We want democracy in the YS to turn conferences into real debating sessions, not just rallies for the dominant tendency. The YS must become habitable for the mass of young people."

Gordon Brewer, from Edinburgh Central YS made an appeal to the Militant. "In reply don't just say that Workers' Action and Clause Four want democracy in the YS because they have lost all the political arguments and can only take up organisational questions. Tell us why you are against the specific demands of the CYSD."

Replying from the Regional Committee Jim Newlands said that the National Committee could not be elected by National conference because the YS was not large enough. Anyway the only reason WA and Clause 4 wanted democracy in the YS was because they had lost all the political arguments and could only take up organisational questions!

JOHN WILDE

LAMBETH COUNCILLORS FLOUT PARTY POLICY

SUDDENLY, it's all going wrong in Lambeth — and nowhere can this be seen better than in Lambeth Central, where many Labour councillors are openly rebelling against the local Labour Party.

The February General Management Committee of Lambeth Central CLP witnessed amazing scenes of councillors refusing to abide by local party policy.

Lambeth Central's January GMC strongly supported a resolution which specifically asked for the Group to adopt a 'no cuts, no rent increases, no increased charges' line.

In the Group meeting just ten days later, which effectively decided the outcome of the full council meeting, the Lambeth Central councillors in the main completely rejected that resolution by implementing the cuts and increases.

So the February GMC strongly endorsed an emergency resolution asking Lambeth Central Labour councillors to support the party line — even if that meant going against the Group decision. The resolution was supported by 18 votes to 11 — and immediately afterwards six out of the seven councillors present asked for their names to be minuted as publicly expressing that they would vote contrary to that resolution at the full council meeting! The six councillors were — Stewart Lansley, Malcolm Noble, Liz du Parcq, Mike Bright, Nick Grant, and An-

drew Sawdon.

Names worth remembering — these are the people who gladly use the Party as a vehicle for attaining office, but not for implementing official party policy. And that is what this argument is all about.

GRAHAM NORWOOD
Lambeth Central CLP

BY 38 votes to 7, a very angry February Norwood GMC meeting passed an emergency motion opposing the Lambeth Labour Group's decision to raise rents by an average of £1.50 a week, and to cut £2 million of growth off the council programme.

A special GMC earlier in the month had voted for a no cuts policy and for a large rate increase of the order of 56%. At that meeting, despite persistent questions on the rents, Council Leader Ted Knight and other councillors said nothing. Delegates were given the impression that the rents issue was to be dealt with separately later in the year.

Eleven days later, the Labour Group was taking a decision to put up the rents, on the basis of a 'last minute' report from council officers pointing out that a surcharge was highly likely unless Lambeth's rents, frozen for three years, went up. Some Norwood councillors did not vote against the rent increase, and most did not vote in the spirit of the GMC policy of no cuts.

Both supporters and opponents of the large rate increase policy were united in calling upon Norwood councillors to fight the cuts and the rent increase, if necessary by moving motions in open council. Many who backed Ted Knight's line that a large rate rise is the way to avoid cuts now know they have been taken for a ride.

The Council meeting on March 26th will be lobbied not only by the local Labour Parties but also by council unions, the Fightback campaign, and the Trades Council.

CHEUNG SIU MING
[Norwood CLP]

An open letter to Jack Adams

WA supporters in Longbridge write to Jack Adams, recently elected convenor to succeed Derek Robinson



Dear Bro. Adams,

We won't congratulate you on your election as convenor, given the circumstances. But we do offer our full support to you in so far as you attempt to rebuild the fighting strength of the union organisation at Longbridge and to re-establish mutual confidence between the stewards' organisation and the members.

To do that you will have to learn from the mistakes of your predecessor — mistakes that in our view contributed greatly to his isolation and final downfall. We do not say that in a smug or gloating spirit: Robinson's victimisa-

tion, involving 12,000 redundancies, had been announced) and his whole bureaucratic and elitist approach, were what finally ensured that Edwardes succeeded in destroying him.

You yourself have acknowledged that the Works Committee has become distant from the membership. You have admitted that involvement in 'participation' was a serious mistake. You have criticised the Works Committee's role as 'firemen' (running around, 'putting out' disputes). If you reject that kind of approach in practice, and seriously attempt to rebuild an independent, militant shop floor organisation, we will support you in that.

We know there are important political differences between us. We oppose the Communist Party's commitment to a 'viable, British

motor industry' — logically that can only mean supporting redundancies and increased exploitation of the workers. We do not believe in blurring over such major disagreements.

But we do want to see maximum unity in defence of basic working class rights and organisation.

A campaign to force the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee (of which you are secretary) to call for all-out strike action against BL's 5% 'offer' and the 92-page attack on the shop floor organisation would be a good start, and could turn the tide against Edwardes once and for all.

Yours fraternally,
WORKERS' ACTION
supporters, Longbridge

P.S. You know who we are, but these days, in BL, anonymity in print is the safest policy).

HJB Plastics: Talks stifle the fightback

HOW DOES a firm manage to sack half its workforce at a time of massive unemployment without any real fightback from the unions? HJB Plastics in Leicester has been showing how.

At the beginning of February the firm announced it would sack 128 of the 242 workers there.

Right from the outset the odds were stacked in the bosses' favour. Shopfloor union organisation was weakened by racism and sexism; union branch meetings were infrequent and badly attended; and working conditions and pay at the factory were so poor that there was little incentive to fight to save the jobs.

A closed shop operated, but new workers were signed up for the union by the personnel manager at the induction course; and union dues were collected by the check-off system, cutting out con-

tact between stewards and their members. The result was that many workers regarded the union as a necessary evil, not as an organisation to defend their rights and jobs.

When the sackings were declared, instead of looking to the rank and file members of the union to mobilise them for a fightback, the shop stewards committee and the union full-timer concentrated on discussions with management.

Inevitably, shopfloor workers concluded that the jobs could not be saved, and the only way out was to be first in the queue for a job somewhere else.

Then the bosses attached a number of strings to the sackings, meaning harsher conditions for the workers who remained. At a well attended branch meeting, there was strong opposition to these strings, and, for a few days, the opportunity existed to turn

the tide. The opportunity was thrown away. The shop stewards committee and union full-timer returned to the negotiating table. Compromises were cobbled together on the terms of the cutback, and the number of redundancies was reduced from 128 to 120 — but the bosses still got everything they wanted.

As soon as the shop stewards returned to the negotiating table they had lost. Once again they had turned away from the rank and file membership, to discuss only the conditions upon which the redundancies would take place.

These redundancies are being carried out not because of the bosses' strength, but because of the union's weakness. This is the central lesson to be drawn from the sackings.

STAN CROOKE

Manchester busworkers say: no fares above 10p

BUS DRIVERS and conductors on Greater Manchester Transport (GMT) are to refuse to take fares higher than 10p, to hit the bosses and win support from bus-users for their pay claim.

By this fare-cutting tactic, to be implemented as a series of one-day lightning actions, they also hope to prove that high fares are driving users away from the service.

The pay claim is for restoration of differentials in relation to maintenance staff. Since the national engineering pay settlement, the maintenance

staff get £74 for a 38 hour week while drivers get £64 for 40 hours.

At Princess Road and Hyde Road depots, some militants argue that strike action will be necessary to win the claim, since GMT may try to discipline staff who refuse to collect full fares, or take the T&G to court for the outstanding revenue. Meetings at those depots nonetheless resolved to give firm support to the fares action.

Further action will be discussed at the end of March.

JOHN DOUGLAS

Leics teachers strike against cuts

LAST WEDNESDAY, 27th, the Leicestershire area of the National Union of Teachers called out its members in selected schools on a one-day protest stoppage against the cuts in education planned by the County Council.

Thousands of leaflets were delivered door-to-door by the teachers, and a march to County Hall drew 2,500 teachers, parents, and schoolchildren.

The Tory leader of the council came out to speak to us, but was howled down and forced to retreat to the safety of his office.

Around 100 children, mothers and nursery nurses from Braunstone marched with a petition against cuts in nursery education signed by 600 people on their estate. "We are not just concerned about

the cuts, we are angry", said Pat Henderson, their spokesperson. "A lot of parents would have to give up work to look after their children if there were no nursery places. There are not enough child-minders on the estate to cope. Besides, nursery education is very important".

The Tories plan £6 million of cuts in education, which will include the axing of over half of Leicester's school-crossing patrols and a large number of nurseries. Parent Action Groups are springing up as the implications of the cuts begin to hit home.

The council is assuming that mothers will be available four times a day to see their children across main roads!

At the same time, school meals services are being cut, and auxiliaries sacked. The price of a meal is going up from 35p to 60p in April. In other words: "Mum, give up your job, come home and look after the kids full time".

And this at a time when rents are up £2, rates by 20%, and general inflation is also nearing the 20% mark.

In spite of the anger outside County Hall, councillors agreed to the £6 million cuts

and a 16½p rate rise.

Leicestershire NUT secretary Betty Coates has said that the campaign is limited to "informing public and parents" and persuading the Tory council of the harm the cuts will do. But the Tories are determined to force them through, and mere protests will not stop them.

The Public Sector Action Group, which covers the public sector unions opposed to the cuts, must start looking to more effective action if we are to have any hope of stopping the Tories in their tracks.

MARK HALL

workers' ACTION

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Should MPs have a job for life?

THIRTY Labour MPs, worried about their influence and 'job security', have written a letter to Callaghan reasserting the PLP's right to write the election manifesto and to elect the Party leader. They also oppose the reselection rules carried by last year's Brighton conference.

Their proposals were supported by David Owen, speaking at the Campaign for Labour Victory meeting at the London Labour conference. Owen is one of those MPs who have suddenly become advocates of 'extending real democracy' in the Labour Party

since the Lett's proposals were passed at last year's conference.

His latest line on reselection is to argue that GMCs should retain the right to choose MPs but that there should be a 'double safeguard', under which all party members should then vote on whether to ratify or reject the GMC's decision on reselection.

In other words, MPs reserve the right to appeal to an often inactive membership over the heads of the GMCs (which also include union delegates) if they are threatened. They claim that left-dominated

GMCs are unrepresentative.

Meanwhile, new proposals to challenge the PLP's right to ignore the decisions of the party conference are included in the CLPD's evidence to the Labour Party inquiry. They argue that Labour candidates should have to sign a declaration that they will abide by party policy and that such a declaration should also be in the PLP's standing orders. Party conference would review the PLP's work in the previous year.

The CLPD's evidence also includes wide proposals to restrict the Cabinet's power

in favour of backbench MPs.

The party leadership will fight tooth and nail to preserve the Cabinet's power and to protect MPs from reselection, because if proposals such as the CLPD's are carried through it would be much more difficult for a new Labour government to carry through pro-capitalist policies. That is why Owen, Rodgers, and their sort, will do anything to roll back the party's democratic advances. And it is the reason we must ensure that the Brighton decisions are carried through and extended.

BRUCE ROBINSON

Glasgow: anti-NF march planned

GLASGOW'S fascists will not be marching unopposed on March 15th. At an Anti Nazi League meeting on 28 February, a resolution was passed committing the ANL to organise a counter-mobilisation

with Glasgow Trades Council, the Scottish TUC, the Labour Party, and ethnic groups, if the police did not ban the march.

The ANL march will begin at Blythswood Square, 11.30am

on March 15th.

There will also be a public meeting at the McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall St, Glasgow, on March 13th, at which Paul Holborow will be speaking.

IAN McLeish

Kill the Bill

LESSONS FROM 1970-4

Rank and file must take the lead

RANK AND FILE militancy beat the Industrial Relations Act, the Tories' previous attempt to shackle the unions.

The TUC leaders opposed the Act. TUC unions did not register under the Act (because registration would have given the state the right to alter their rule-books), and so almost any strike or picketing could put them in line for legal action.

However, the TUC leaders' concept of fighting the Act was limited to a boycott of the National Industrial Relations Court (set up under the Act) and an 'educational campaign'. It was rank and file militants in the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions who took the initiative for industrial action against the Act.

On December 8th, 1970, half a million trade unionists backed strikes and marches against the Bill, called for by the LCDTU. Another strike, on March 1st 1971, was backed by the AUEW, but official TUC action was limited to lunchtime meetings and demonstrations.

The first serious attempt to use the Act came in March 1972. Dockers were picketing and blacking container depots, demanding that the stuffing and stripping of containers be made registered dockers' work. Heaton's, owners of a depot in St Helens, got the NIRC to forbid the blacking.

The dockers' union, the TGWU, stuck by TUC policy, refused to appear in court... and got fined £55,000. Aghast, the union bureaucrats started looking for a way out. The TUC dropped its policy of boycotting the NIRC. The TGWU (unsuccessfully) tried to pressure the dockers into giving up the blacking.

But the rank and file dockers did not retreat. In July they collided with the Tories again... and decisively.

Midland Cold Store, in London, got a court order instructing London dockers' leaders to stop picketing their depot. On July 21 five dockers were arrested and thrown into Pentonville Jail for contempt of court.

At once, dockers struck nationwide. The lorry drivers, who had had differences with the dockers, went out too.

Print workers struck, first on Fleet Street, and then across the country.

In London, container workers, warehousemen, market workers, ship repair workers, busworkers, and Tower Hamlets council workers came out. Heathrow Airport was shut down.

Elsewhere, building sites, factories, pits, and other workplaces struck. Day after day there were massive demonstrations to 'Free the Five' and 'Smash the Act'. Posters produced by the Briant Colour Print workers' occupation appeared every-

where.

The action was almost entirely unofficial. Only one national union, the dockers' 'Blue Union' (NASDU), called a strike. Eventually, the TUC General Council limped along after the movement, calling a one-day strike for Monday 31st. But by Wednesday 26th the Tories had had enough. The Pentonville Five were freed and carried shoulder-high from the jail to address jubilant demonstrators packing the road outside.

After that, the bosses and the Tories dared not use the Industrial Relations Act for any serious class battle. But the union leaders' feebleness — they never restored the boycott policy, they never took any serious action against the Act — allowed the Act to stay on the lawbooks until July 1974, when the Labour Government finally repealed it.

This time round the TUC leaders promise to be just as feeble. They will try as hard as they can to avoid any repeat of the militant action of 1972. When it comes to a real battle between the state and the working class they are paralysed by fear — cringing fear of the state and the ruling class, and, even more so, self-serving fear of the workers' mobilisations which can blow them out of their bureaucratic niches.

That's why the rank and file must organise now to take the lead to kill the Bill.

How to organise for May 14

IN EDINBURGH, trade union branch secretaries and chairpersons will be meeting on March 22nd to organise for a general strike on May 14th. The meeting has been called by the Trades Council sub-committee.

In Dundee, there has already been a 500-strong meeting of shop stewards to make sure May 14th is an all-out strike. There, the Trades Council took the initiative together with the local shop stewards' liaison committee and Dundee full-time

union officials. Organisation like that, all over the country, can turn May 14th from a tame day of action into a mighty general strike that will warn the Tories off... and warn the TUC leaders, too, that it's time they stopped all collaboration with the Tories.

And it can help forge the links and build up the fighting spirit and confidence we need for an indefinite general strike, to throw the Tories back and put the working class on the offensive.

Kill the Bill

HOW TO STOP THE TORIES



Picket lines must be defended against the police

★ Win trade union branches, shop stewards' committees, district committees, and trades councils to the Rank and File Code of Practice adopted by over 1000 trade union delegates at the Defend the Unions conference last June.

★ Enforce the Code of Practice against and despite the Tories and the police.

Well-organised mass pickets can and must enforce the right to picket. If there are seven on a picket line, the police can say that more than six is too many. It's not so easy 700 or 7,000 are too many — especially when those 700 are well organised to defend each and every one of their number against attack by scabs or police.

Widespread, escalating solidarity action can enforce the right to sympathetic action, while isolated, timid actions can be picked off by High Court writs.

★ Assert the right of workers' self-defence, the principle of workers' law and order as against the bosses' law and order.

★ Demand the disbanding of all SPG-type forces.

★ Demand that the TUC withdraw its Guidelines on Picketing, breaks off talks with the Tories, adopts a policy of unconditional support of workers in struggle victimised by the Tories, and starts now to organise rallies, workplace and factory gate meetings, demonstrations, and one-day strikes to mobilise the movement against the Bill.

★ Organise for a general strike to kill the Bill, to stop the cuts, and to stop the closures.

Len Murray told the press: "We are not talking about a revolution or a general strike in the sense of bringing the government down". Indeed he isn't. But we are!

EVENTS

SUNDAY MARCH 9TH: TUC Demonstration against Tory anti-union laws and the cuts. 11am, Speakers Corner, Hyde Park, London.

MONDAY MARCH 17TH: "Debate of the decade — the crisis and the future of the left". Speakers: Tony Benn, Tariq Ali, Paul Foot, Stuart Holland, Hilary Wainwright, Audrey Wise. Central Hall Westminster. 7pm. Tickets £1 from LCC, 9 Poland St London W1 (Send SAE).

SATURDAY MARCH 22ND: Labour Movement Fightback for Women's Rights Conference, Conway Hall, London WC1. Participants include: NAC, LARC, Gingerbread, nus nursery Campaign, JCWI, National Council for One Parent Families, CPAG... Details from 41 Ellington St, London N7.

SATURDAY MARCH 22ND: National anti-cuts conference, called by Liverpool Trades Council and District Labour Party. 11am, St George's Hall, Liverpool. Credentials: 50p from T.Harrison/A.Dodswell, 70 Victoria St, Liverpool 1.

SATURDAY 22ND MARCH: Labour Coordinating Committee conference on the Alternative Economic Strategy. Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. Followed on Sunday 23rd by a conference on the future direction of the LCC for LCC members. Details from LCC, 9 Poland St, London W1.

SATURDAY MARCH 29TH: Labour Committee on Ireland conference. North Islington Library, Manor Gardens, London N7. 2-5pm.

SATURDAY 5th-Monday 7th APRIL: Labour Party Young Socialists Annual Conference in Llandudno, visitors also welcome. Details of accommodation, fringe meetings etc from "Barricade", 16 Glen St, Edinburgh.

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London Labour votes for troops out

THE ANNUAL conference of the Greater London Regional Council of the Labour Party, last weekend (1st - 2nd), voted for troops out of Ireland.

A ten-to-one majority passed a resolution calling on the Parliamentary Labour Party to "commit itself to a policy of withdrawal from Northern Ireland." It "dissociated itself from the sterile bipartisan posture which has, in fact, not led to a negotiated political solution in Northern Ireland" and called for the NEC's newly-established sub-committee on Ireland to organise a wide-ranging debate in the Labour Party.

The movers of the resolution made clear that it did not mean "troops out now". And many people could and did vote for troop withdrawal some time in the vague future without any intention of doing anything now to help Ireland's fight for liberation. Nevertheless the resolution was an important step forward in stirring up debate in the labour movement.

The conference also voted to condemn the cuts made by the Labour-controlled Inner London Education Authority. But a motion calling for a policy of no cuts and no rate rises, and for mass action against the Tories, was heavily defeated after Lambeth Council leader Ted Knight spoke against it for the Regional Executive.

Corrie thwarted

JOHN CORRIE'S determination to keep the Abortion (Amendment) Bill as vicious and punitive as he originally intended, despite moves from both sides of the house for compromise, has consigned his Bill to almost certain defeat.

Last Friday the discretionary powers of the Secretary of State to reduce the time limit virtually at will were voted out, as was the term

"serious" from the clause requiring "substantially greater risk of serious injury" from continued pregnancy for abortion to be legal. But Corrie refused to drop the word "substantially", and it was passed by a majority of 3, making the Bill too hard-line for a compromise to be fixed up.

There are two more Fridays in which the Third Reading may continue:

Fightback for Women's Rights

Combining Victorian morality with cold capitalist calculation as Britain heads into a world economic recession, the Thatcher government presents a major threat to women and the biggest challenge yet to the women's movement in this country.

In our first big confrontation, over the Corrie Bill, we have risen to that challenge in mass mobilisations and the closest collaboration yet with the organised labour movement. Other struggles, against cuts in health, day care and other vital services, are gathering pace every day.

Fightback for Women's Rights has called a conference on March 22nd with the aim of stimulating links, dialogue and further common action between the numerous groups, campaigns and individuals centrally involved in these struggles.

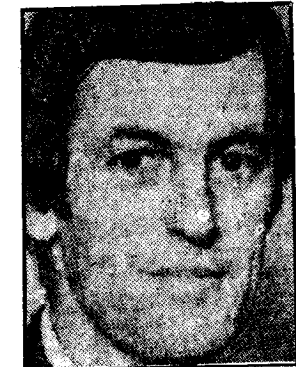
This broadsheet has been produced to outline the main issues for discussion at the conference and present the ideas, activities and approaches of some of the participating groups and campaigns. Most of the articles have either been contributed by these campaigns or compiled from their material. Where we have felt there were gaps, or that views expressed fell short of important principles for socialist women involved in Fightback, members of the collective have contributed a piece outlining our view.

PARTICIPATING

Labour Abortion Rights Campaign, National Abortion Campaign, Action Group on Immigration and Nationality and JCWI, Rights of Women, members of Claimants Union, Equal Rights for Disabled Women, Equal Rights in Clubs Campaign for action, Women in the NUT, and Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory, which initiated the call for the conference.



10p



John Corrie MP

ort for a "conscience vote" for MPs on the abortion issue to a vote according to Party policy of free abortion on request.

The fight for positive legislation will demand a woman's choice, a legal obligation on the NHS to provide adequate facilities all over the country, and extension of daycare facilities.

MANDY WILLIAMS

by MARY CONNOLLY

ARMAGH Prison is the women's prison in the Six Counties of Northern Ireland. It is here that all women political prisoners are held and where 36 are on protest for political status and in solidarity with the 'blanket-men' in the hell-hole of H-block, Long Kesh. Some of these women have been on protest for three years now.

A recent letter from the O/C of the protesting women describes how their con-

ditions have deteriorated since early February. The authorities are deliberately worsening conditions in an attempt to break the struggle for prisoner-of-war status.

The women are now locked up 23 hours a day, and have one hour's exercise at the whim of the screws. They have all been moved from B wing to A wing, where it is much more difficult to communicate with other prisoners.

They were allowed to bring



How the Tories want to hamstring unions

UNDER THE Employment Bill you can lawfully picket only at your own place of work. Exceptions are provided only for union officials, for unemployed workers picketing their old workplaces in an effort to get their jobs back, and workers like lorry drivers, who may picket at their employers' depot (but not at the places where they normally collect and deliver).

Mass pickets like Grunwicks... organising flying pickets... picketing your employers' other factories, their depots, their suppliers, their customers... or just giving support to pickets at a neighbouring factory: all these would be 'unlawful'.

What's more, if you picket 'unlawfully', the firm you are picketing can sue you for huge damages on the grounds of the loss of business which the picketing causes them.

The immediate hitting power of these clauses, in themselves, should not be exaggerated. The police will not be empowered to arrest 'unlawful' pickets straight off. The firm involved will have to get a High Court writ to stop the picketing, after which the pick-

ets can be arrested for contempt of court.

For immediate action, the police will still have to rely, as they do at present, on charges of obstruction, intimidation, threatening behaviour, assault or conspiracy.

The purpose of the new law is to sew up the present haphazard legal restrictions on picketing, to prepare for a really determined press and police offensive against picketing, and to frighten the trade union leaders off.

Solidarity strikes and blacking could also lead to unions being sued. At present unions are protected from being sued for damages if they are taking action 'in contemplation or furtherance of a trade dispute'. Over the last few years, judges like Lord Denning have tried to whittle this protection down to almost nothing. Now the Tories want to write into the lawbook what Denning tried to enforce by twisting the law.

If a judge rules that a solidarity strike or blacking:

- (a) does not actually help the main dispute; or
- (b) is called for motives 'extraneous' to the dispute (i.e. is

'political'); or
(c) is not closely enough related to the main dispute (i.e. affects a firm which is not a 'first supplier' or 'first customer' of the firm in the main dispute).

Kill the Bill

— then the union can be sued for causing breach of employment contracts, or breach of commercial contracts. (If a union falls foul only of point (c), it can be sued on breach of commercial contract only).

What all this comes down to is that it will be easier for judges to slap on an injunction against solidarity strikes or blacking. As the steel strikers showed after the Denning ruling, those injunctions will just be pieces of paper if thousands of workers defy them. But here again, the Tories' aim is to scare the union leaders into activity — and to have clauses in the lawbook which they can use to hammer the unions where and when they reckon the movement is weak.

The other clauses in the Employment Bill are less important than the ones on picketing. Government money will be provided for secret ballots in the unions, in an attempt to undermine the direct democracy of mass meetings. The Government will issue Codes of Practice on industrial relations which will not be legally binding as such, but will be admissible as evidence in court.

The closed shop will be limited. Workers will be able to get exemption not only on the grounds of 'conscience' but also of 'deeply held personal conviction' (whatever that means). New closed shops will

need 80% support in a secret ballot.

Industrial action to compel workers at a different workplace to join a particular union will become unlawful.

The Bill also contains clauses which are not directly to do with trade union rights, but which amend the Labour Government's Employment Protection Act. (Thus the name Employment Bill).

Small firms will get special protection against claims for unfair dismissal.

If a worker is sacked for not being a member of a union, he can sue the union as well as the employer for unfair dismissal.

Women workers will have to give more written notice to establish their right to return to their jobs after maternity leave. Also, they can be offered a 'suitable alternative' instead of their old job; and in firms of less than six employees they lose their rights altogether.

Government arbitration over trade union recognition will be abolished. And Section 11 of the Employment Protection Act, allowing for wage claims to bring workers up to the

'general level' of comparable jobs, will be abolished.

It is possible the Tories will alter some details of the Bill. The Engineering Employers' Federation, a hard-line bosses' organisation, has complained about the new provisions on the closed shop and the abolition of arbitration over trade union recognition. The Building Trades Employers don't want Section 11 abolished.

Many Tory right-wingers want harsher laws, and police chiefs want the law changed so that mass pickets would have to be notified to the police in advance and could be banned by them.

But no amount of negotiations and minor changes will alter the essence of the Bill. The whole Bill — the most dangerous clauses, and the ones which change very little in the existing law — is anti-union and anti-working class.

We have nothing to gain from trying to haggle with the bosses' state over 'fair' rules for the class struggle. We are out to break the bosses' wealth and power, not to shore it up. All we have to demand from the Tory Government is: Hands off our unions!

Whose law? Whose order?

EVERY MILITANT picket line is a point of conflict between two opposite principles of law and order.

From a working class point of view, the scabs and strike-breakers are criminals. The picket line enforces working-class law and order against them.

In the bosses' lawbooks, the scabs are all right. There are no laws against them. But the pickets are suspect. Even apart from the Employment Bill, there are dozens of laws to be used against them.

The first principle of capitalist law is the rights of property. It is constantly biased in favour of the propertied classes, against the working class.

Fiddle a few pounds from the Social Security, and — so a judge recently said — you

should be jailed straight away, even if it is a first conviction. Make millions from a big tax or property swindle, and you will probably be all right.

Steal food from a supermarket when you are hard up, and you're a criminal. The supermarket boss who makes enormous profits out of his underpaid workers is a respected citizen.

Biased

Take the law on murder. The Tories clamour for hanging for people who are mostly sick, more in need of treatment than of punishment. But every year hundreds of workers are killed in industrial accidents — and official reports indicate that in at least one third of cases

the employers are to blame. Are they ever brought to trial? Will the Tories be brought to trial when people die because of their cuts in the National Health Service?

Even when the law appears impartial, it is biased. As a socialist writer once put it, "The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to steal bread, to sleep under bridges, and to beg for food".

The law is biased not only because it is by its nature designed to protect the present system — and thus to protect the class interests of those who dominate the system — but also because of the people who enforce it.

Four out of five professional judges come from public schools and Oxford or Cam-

bridge. About 89% of judges come from the 'upper' or 'upper middle' classes; the percentage is higher than it was in the 19th century!

The police are recruited from the working class. But they are trained and disciplined to protect the status quo. The police chiefs, like James Anderton, David McNee, and Robert Mark, are out-and-out right-wingers.

Rule

The police murdered Blair Peach; according to many eyewitnesses, they killed Jimmy Kelly; dozens of other people have died in the hands of police, unaccounted for. But no prosecutions. The 'rule of law' does not rule equally.

The secret services, like

MI5, are not accountable to Parliament, or even to the Government. They are literally a law unto themselves. Recently it has been shown that they tap phones on a big scale.

The courts, the police, the secret services, the armed forces, the top civil service bureaucracy, and the Government with its Employment Bill, are all part of a state system which upholds and defends the ruling class, the top 3½% who own about 90% of all company shares and 96% of the land in this country.

Socialism means smashing that state system, breaking up the armed forces, the police, and the bureaucracy, and replacing them by workers' law and order — by workers' control of society.

Armagh women defy prison horror

nothing with them except the clothes they stood up in. Some cells have a little furniture, others have just a bed. Some have knives and forks, others do not.

The prison regime is depriving women of washing and toilet facilities. Some of the women were refused pots in their cells and so they have had to use the floor. "The walls of the cells are covered in excreta and we ourselves are filthy", the O/C said, in a letter dated 16 February.

Inedible

The prisoners are taken out one at a time for inedible freezing food and are thus denied association. And a deliberate attempt is being made to smash the military discipline of the protesting women. The same letter says: "This morning, when I got out to get my breakfast, I went round the doors to waken as usual, but five female screws jumped me and trailed me back to the cell. "This is the way they react. They are trying to stop us organising ourselves, but they are failing miserably".

There are 45 prisoners of war in Armagh, but not all are housed together.

Five of them have political status, as they were gaoled for alleged offences prior to March 1976, when the British Government withdrew special category status in an attempt to break the support of the republican community for the IRA, through a policy of 'criminalisation'. These women are held in C wing.

Four PoWs on remand are

held in A wing, which caters for all remand prisoners regardless of alleged offence.

Even before February, the women taking part in the protest, in B wing, were locked up for 21 hours a day. There was only three hours for washing, food, exercise,

care, and one woman was forced to take hot baths. The women are restricted to two sanitary towels a day. Valium is used for everything.

The prison food is disgusting. Because the protesting women are not allowed food parcels they cannot supple-

ment the prison diet, and are therefore in a constant state of hunger. For example, this was the food for Friday 9 November: Breakfast: cornflakes and a quarter-pint of milk. Dinner: one ladleful of inedible food. Tea: one piece of liver. Supper: one small scone and a cup of tea.

But the women organise. Each wing has an O/C who

carries out a cell inspection each morning. This officer loses a day's remission each time she carries out the inspection. The screws hate to see the way the military discipline of the women continues despite the authorities' efforts to criminalise and de-

grade the struggle for national liberation.

The women also managed to carry out drill once a week. They had organised their own Irish language and history classes, despite association being severely limited, and all education facilities denied them. The women are part of the army of national liberation, and continue their military struggle even inside

the prison. On International Women's Day last year, Women against Imperialism held a demonstration outside Armagh prison in solidarity with the women PoWs. The demonstration was attacked and brutally beaten by the RUC, and a number of arrests were made.

A second demonstration was held, and this time sisters from the south of Ireland travelled to Armagh to join the protest. This successful demonstration showed the authorities that the women would not be intimidated by the thuggery of British imperialism.

The case of the women arrested has still not been heard. It was to be heard on January 2nd this year, and 'Women against Imperialism' travelled to England and to the South of Ireland to ask as many observers as possible to come to the trial. On the morning of the trial, the court was full of women from women's groups and trade unions, and many others.

However, the Armagh 11 were held up for an hour at an army checkpoint, and when they got to the court they were told that the trial was postponed as the prosecuting counsel was sick.

Silence

Obviously the authorities would like to try these women as quietly as possible. But they will not be permitted to do so!

The women and observers held a meeting outside Ar-

magh Prison. As the meeting ended, the women prisoners shouted, "When will you be back?" "On International Women's Day!" was the reply.

As a result, coaches will be going over to Armagh from the North and South of England this March 8th. As many women as possible are asked to go over to show solidarity with the sisters in Armagh and the Armagh 11, to show the authorities that we cannot be kept quiet, and that they will not be permitted to keep the silence about H block and Armagh and the struggle of Irish political prisoners in English gaols. (To go to Armagh, contact 01-263 0498).

Victims

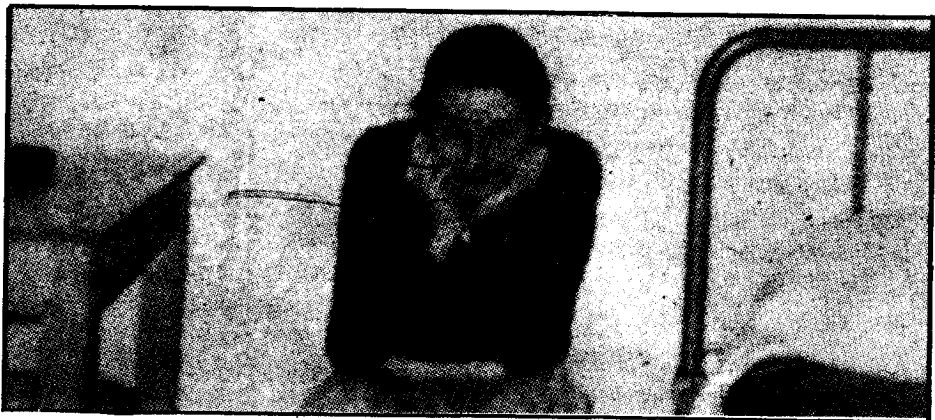
On the same day in London, a group of women from the Latin American Women's Group, Women and Ireland, and black women's groups, is organising a women-only march in support of all women political prisoners.

The march will start at 1pm from Clapham Common in South London and will go to Brixton Town Hall. On the way it will pass Brixton prison, where three Irish women victims of imperialism are being held on remand after being arrested and charged under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

We urge as many women as possible who cannot go to Armagh to come on this march and show solidarity with our revolutionary sisters in Armagh prison and throughout the world.

Victory to all our sisters in gaols throughout the world! Support the women in Armagh gaol!

Victory to the blanket men PoW status now!



PAULINE McLaughlin is a sister on protest in Armagh gaol for political status. She has suspected anorexia nervosa. She has lost four stone in weight and she vomits constantly.

The prison doctor at one stage put her on the sick, and she improved a little. How-

ever, she continued her protest and he sent her back to the normal prison restrictions, stating that if she was strong enough to be on protest she is strong enough to be off the sick. Pauline's life is in danger and the authorities refuse to let her get a second opinion.

However, her spirits are high, and she continues with the protest. But she must be freed. Everyone is urged to form a Free Pauline McLaughlin Campaign.

For further details contact: Beansaor, journal of Women against Imperialism, 7 Riverdale Park Drive, Belfast 11.

COMMUNISM AGAINST STALINISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

The counter revolutionary role of Stalinism after World War Two

INTRODUCTION

WE CONTINUE our publication of the analysis made by Marxists of the role of Stalinism after World War 2, with the part of the 1948 theses on "The USSR and Stalinism" which deals with the nature of the East European states.

The final sections — nos. 25 to 27 — outline the political strategy put forward by the Marxists for the working class in Eastern Europe. They argue for a struggle for the withdrawal of the Russian troops, while also insisting on the need to fight against bourgeois reaction. This policy, the *Theses explain*, "does not in any way contradict our analysis of the USSR [as a degenerated workers' state]. It only applies in practice [a] the fact that the reactionary features of the Russian occupation by far outweigh its progressive features, [b] the subordination of the defence of the remnants of the October conquests to the interests of the world revolution".

Many aspects of the argument — though not of course every detail — are very relevant to the current debates on the left about the Russian invasion of Afghanistan.

In 1948, the revolutionary Marxists [Trotskyists] still considered that the East European states were capitalist, though having many peculiar features. By 1951 they concluded that: "Beginning with 1949 this duality manifestly gave way to regimes which stabilised a structure essentially characterised by property and productive relations qualitatively assimilable to those of the USSR" — i.e. the East European states had become deformed workers' states.

The tendencies were correctly noted in 1948 for the Russian bureaucracy and its local agents to push out the bourgeoisie in the East European countries, and to extend the nationalised and planned economic structure typical of the USSR to those countries (together with the bureaucratic police state apparatus superimposed on and distorting that structure). But the 1948 document rejects the possibility of those tendencies being carried through to a complete transformation, except perhaps in one or two countries.

The Nature of the 'Buffer' Countries

17 The contradictory character of this bureaucracy is most clearly disclosed in those countries which have been incorporated into its strategic 'buffer zone'. In these countries it becomes obvious to what extent the increasingly reactionary traits of Stalin's regime come into permanent collision with the needs of planned economy and an effective defence of the conquests of October.

In order to make a new leap forward Soviet economy requires more urgently than ever, after the terrible destruction of the war, peaceful integration into a planned socialist European economy. The encirclement of the USSR by a single imperialist bloc requires more urgently than ever the revolutionary mobilisation of the European and world masses for the overthrow of international imperialism. The special interests of the bureaucracy have driven it to act against these fundamental interests of the USSR. Instead of permitting the economy of Central and Eastern Europe to expand on a large scale, the bureaucracy began by ruining these countries with its various forms of extortions. Then it clamped upon them a vice of exploitation in which any serious development of the productive forces is doomed to suffocate (preferential tariffs, unilateral flow of trade, reparations, cutting off of traditional markets, impossibility of supplying industrial equipment, etc.). In most of these countries, where the revolutionary upsurge developed in one form or another, the Kremlin — instead of encouraging a broad revolutionary mobilisation of the masses which could have swept away the crumbling bourgeoisie without any great efforts — began by allying itself with the worst reactionaries and by crushing this revolutionary upsurge through the policy of its parties coupled with the action of its army and its diplomacy.

However, just as in Russia the Soviet bureaucracy rests on the basis of state ownership of the means of production, despite the fact that its own privileges and its reactionary policy undermine these property relations more and more, its conduct in the 'buffer zone' countries also bears the marks of its social nature, despite the reactionary character of its policy there.

After striving in the beginning to maintain its exploitation of these countries and to get gradual control of the state apparatus within the framework of collaboration with the

The rejection was partly motivated by theoretical caution. The theoretical possibility of 'structural assimilation' of new territories to the bureaucratically degenerated USSR had long been recognised by the Trotskyist movement, ever since Trotsky's analyses of the Russian invasions of Eastern Poland and Finland in 1939-40. And the Trotskyists had understood that such 'structural assimilation' did not mean that the Stalinist bureaucracy could substitute for the working class, or was other than counter-revolutionary in its overall role.

But the transformation of the whole of Eastern Europe showed the bureaucracy to have gained substantially more independent power, weight, and relative stability than the Trotskyists had previously allowed for. The Trotskyists were unwilling to concede in advance that the bureaucracy had that strength.

As we have noted before, the 1948 analysis based itself on the view that world politics, especially capitalism, was extremely unstable. In that framework, the future of Eastern Europe was seen in terms of short-term instability: either the Russian bureaucracy would withdraw under pressure of imperialism, or a revolutionary uprising would crush capitalism. With hindsight, we can see that the view of world instability was exaggerated — and so also was the view of instability in Eastern Europe. In fact the Stalinists were able to move against the remnants of the bourgeoisie with very restricted mass mobilisations.

The 1948 document does, however, describe accurately how the Stalinists related to the workers' movement. The first stage, after World War 2, was clearly counter-revolutionary: "They tried to repress more and more any manifestation of working class opposition... By the regime of terror and military dictatorship... the Russian army crushed revolutionary initiative". Then when the Stalinists, for their own reasons, needed to take action against the bourgeoisie, there was "a limited mobilisation of the masses... while making every effort to restrain the masses within the rigid framework of its control".

COLIN FOSTER

remnants of the national bourgeoisies, the bureaucracy has collided more and more with the privately-owned sectors in the economy and with the bourgeois and petty-bourgeois parties in the government coalitions — which remained as obstacles to the realisation of its own economic and political aims. The struggle against these obstacles assumes the form of an ever more complete elimination of the bourgeois and petty bourgeois organisations from political life, as well as an ever more rigid limitation of the privately-owned sector of industry — with this peculiar characteristic, that the bourgeois character of the state and the bourgeois character of property are left standing. This contradictory character of the Stalinist conduct expresses in its most fully developed form the contradiction inherent in the very nature of the Soviet bureaucracy. While incapable of leading the USSR forward toward socialism, it is at the same time unable to transform itself into a capitalist class in the historic sense of the term. The hybrid forms of its power and pillage in the 'buffer zone' merely parallel, under different objective circumstances, the hybrid forms of its power and pillage in the USSR.

18 The bourgeoisie in these countries sought and eagerly accepted a compromise with the Soviet bureaucracy, which was imposed upon it by the international balance of forces. This was a 'lesser evil' compared to a revolutionary overthrow. In Finland, Rumania, and Hungary, it succeeded in effecting a transfer of power from one bourgeois combination to another, more acceptable to the bureaucracy. The bourgeoisie had to pay the following price for the maintenance of its essential social privileges:

a) Armistice terms and peace treaties, allowing the bureaucracy to seize German property in these countries, and imposing onerous, long-term reparation payments.

b) The establishment of mixed companies for the exploitation of the sources of raw material of vital importance, etc.

c) A purge of its state apparatus of all elements hostile to the USSR, as well as the handing over to native Stalinist agents of the Moscow bureaucracy of a series of key positions in the army, police, administration, etc.

19 The bourgeoisie of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, or rather, what remained of it at the time of the Russian occupation, had to give in to the combined pressure of the revolutionary tide and of

the Soviet occupation, and accepted, without resistance, a series of economic reforms. In part, these corresponded to the needs of capitalist economy (necessity of making good the capital shortage; necessity of replacing the German owners, etc.) In part, they were due to the pressure of the Soviet bureaucracy. This acceptance assumed the form of a conscious compromise (Czechoslovakia) or an outright imposition (Yugoslavia), depending on the relative strength left to the bourgeoisie at that moment. Based on the same factor as well as on the degree of independence of the mass movement, the Stalinist were able to take over more or less rapidly all the key positions of the bourgeois state apparatus.

20 During the whole of this first stage, Stalinist politics were predominantly counter-revolutionary in character. This was essentially shown in three ways:

a) By the policy of nationalism and 'national unity', carried out by the Stalinist parties, endeavouring to prevent, brake or stop any independent mass actions. They concluded alliances with the most reactionary forces (Rumanian Court, Finnish big bourgeoisie, semi-fascist Bulgarian Zveno, Grabski's National Democrats in Poland). They broke all the nuclei of dual power built up by the workers. They tried to repress more and more any manifestation of working class opposition, of organisational independence, etc.

b) By the regime of terror and military dictatorship by means of which the Russian army crushed revolutionary initiative, especially in Germany, Austria, and Hungary.

c) By the pillage which constitutes the economic policy of the Soviet bureaucracy in these countries (reparations, mixed corporations, trade agreements, etc.) and by the national and police oppression which it established in different degrees in several of the countries.

This whole stage may be characterised as an attempt to exploit the resources of the 'buffer zone' and to ensure its strategic control, while at the same time maintaining capitalist production relations and a bourgeois state structure in its traditional form.

21 The resistance of the bourgeoisie and the better-off layers of the petty bourgeoisie of these countries to the policy of the Soviet bureaucracy stiffened in direct proportion to the recession of the mass movement (resulting from the demoralisation of the proletariat by the Stalinist policy and reactionary role of the Russian occupation), and in direct proportion to the growth of Soviet-US contradictions. The bourgeoisie of the 'buffer zone' knows very well that without direct aid from American imperialism it will never succeed in getting rid of Russian overlordship.

The Soviet bureaucracy, on the other hand, cannot under any circumstances tie this bourgeoisie to itself economically — in the same way as the imperialist bourgeoisie has succeeded in allying the colonial bourgeoisie to itself. It cannot supply the 'buffer-zone' countries with either capital or industrial equipment which these countries need to carry out their economic reconstruction. To the extent that these reconstruction needs make themselves felt more urgently, the bourgeoisie considers Russian exactions more and more odious. Its resistance to these exactions likewise grows on the political field. At the same time, the growing difficulties of 'nationalised' industry, the inflation and financial disorder, the rapid concentration of agricultural production in the hands of well-to-do peasants (in whose favour the agrarian reform has worked), the spread of speculation, the accumulation of foreign exchange by the commercial bourgeoisie, the famine, etc., multiply the difficulties facing the Soviet bureaucracy and its native Stalinist agents. They have no way of attaining, within the framework of capitalist production relations, the economic aims they are pursuing (reparation deliveries at fixed rates, increase of trade, increased production in the mixed corporations, etc.)

22 In view of these difficulties, the bureaucracy has been forced to take increasingly energetic measures against the economic and political centres of bourgeois resistance. These measures could be limited to police action or purely external pressure only in those cases where the bourgeoisie was too weak to offer any kind of organised resistance. Wherever this was not the case, the Stalinist bureaucracy has been forced to supplement its political

COMMUNISM AGAINST STALINISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

action with a limited mobilisation of the masses (Czechoslovakia), while making every effort to restrain the masses within the rigid framework of its control, and while turning immediately against all 'excesses' on the part of the masses.

This intervention has had the following results:

- a) The elimination, step by step, of all centres of bourgeois and petty bourgeois opposition from political life.
- b) The imposition on the economic life of these countries of a gradual control by the Stalinist bureaucracy, utilising different methods in different sectors — the setting apart from the national economy of these countries of 'Soviet-owned' and mixed stock companies and the attempt to integrate them directly with Soviet planning; control over nationalised sectors by the 'national' Stalinists; indirect control over the privately-owned sector through the allocation of raw materials, price regulations, extension of bank credits, etc.

23 By its social nature the Soviet bureaucracy is incapable of integrating the 'buffer' countries with the Soviet economy, falling the complete destruction of capitalism in these countries. A destruction of this sort did take place in the Baltic countries, Eastern Poland, Bessarabia, Karelia, owing to the existing relationship of forces in these countries. This was possible owing to the relationship of forces inside the labour movement and the degree of control exercised by the Stalinists over the mass movement. The bourgeoisie here was, moreover, extremely enfeebled and found itself caught between the pressure of world imperialism, on the one hand, and of the bureaucracy on the other.

On so large a scale as half of Europe, structural assimilation of the 'buffer' countries was impossible both because of the international relation of forces as well as because of the

ed sector through the medium of manifold trade relations, bank credits, etc.

d) The nationalised sector itself continues to retain a capitalist structure (individual profit balance, role of money, individual management and accounting, and so on).

e) Anarchy in production has been increased by the fact that the German property seized by the USSR has been placed outside the control of even the 'native' Stalinist agents and operates independently of all the other sectors of economy. This fact, coupled with the retention of narrow and outlived national boundaries of the 'buffer' countries, renders planning impossible, even apart from the question of the class nature of property relations.

f) Nowhere have foreign debts been cancelled. Foreign capital has not been expropriated; compensation agreements either have been or are being concluded wherever foreign-owned property has been nationalised.

d) The land has not been nationalised. Agriculture, which is preponderant in the economy of most of these countries, retains its capitalist structure.

The peculiarity of 'buffer-zone' countries consists in this, that the Soviet bureaucracy has succeeded, for the time being, in orienting the capitalist economy in a sense corresponding, in the first instance, to its own interests. This situation can only be *transitional*. It must end either in the bureaucracy's withdrawal from its position, under the pressure of imperialism, or in the real destruction of capitalism, which can take place only as a result of the revolutionary mobilisation of the masses, and the elimination of the special forms of exploitation, introduced by the bureaucracy in their countries.

24 In the 'buffer' countries the state remains bourgeois:

- a) Because the state structure remains bourgeois; nowhere has the old bureaucratic state machine been destroyed. The Stalinists have merely taken the place of the

dictatorship in these countries (except Finland).

b) The extraordinary weakening of capitalism at the end of the war, which has everywhere thrown the conservative elements back upon intermediary formations (peasant parties).

c) The demoralisation of the proletariat, as a result of the reactionary policy of Stalinism, which has brought about the retreat of the working-class masses from the political arena. This has profoundly upset the social balance of forces, has again inspired the bourgeois layers, who in 1944 lost confidence in their 'historic task', and has reoriented the petty bourgeoisie toward organisations on the extreme right.

It follows that the real balance of forces is completely misrepresented in the field of parliamentarism or of legal parties. The main support of the present government coalitions is the power and influence of the Soviet bureaucracy. Only in Finland, Czechoslovakia, and to a certain extent in Hungary, have the collaborationist sections of the bourgeoisie been able to stay in power under more favourable conditions. In the other countries, these sections — mostly represented by the peasant parties — have been crushed between the hammer of Stalinist terror and the anvil of conservative forces fighting openly to restore the pre-war regimes.

26 The mood of the masses is dominated by two preoccupations which are, to a certain extent, contradictory:

- a) The mass of workers and poor peasants are deeply opposed to any return of the pre-war situation. In general, they enthusiastically welcomed the reforms of 1945 and had great illusions about the possibility of rebuilding these countries on 'socialist' bases as a result of these reforms. It is precisely the masses' fear that a victory of the anti-Stalinist opposition would mean a return to the former situation, that largely paralyses their efforts and enhances their passivity. Misery and concentration on purely economic problems are working in the same direction.

b) The growing hostility toward the dictatorial tendencies of the pro-Stalinist governments and toward the reactionary role of the Soviet bureaucracy. The most active resentment has been expressed by the more advanced workers' strata (in Poland, Finland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria) against measures that forbid free expressions of the class struggle in private as well as nationalised industry. The absence of a revolutionary party to support these justified aspirations of the masses within the framework of a revolutionary policy threatens to throw broad layers of workers into demoralisation and prostration and impels the most confused 'activist' elements toward the conservative camp of the national bourgeoisie.

27 The revolutionary vanguard must formulate a policy which corresponds to these two basic aspirations of the masses.

- a) The Bolshevik-Leninist militants must resolutely place themselves at the head of all mass actions in defence of living standards and democratic freedoms. They must be in the forefront of strikes, demonstrations, actions for improving the workers' living and working conditions, protests against any restriction of the freedom of organisation, assembly, speech, press, etc. They must pose the necessity of a struggle for the evacuation of these countries by Russian troops, and place this struggle within the framework of the revolutionary programme for the whole of Europe, making possible the rebuilding of these countries by means of the free cooperation between free socialist republics.

They must link this struggle with constant efforts calling upon the soldiers of the Russian army to fraternise with the workers of the occupied countries and explaining to them that the free development of the class struggle in these countries is a far more powerful barrier against American imperialism than the Russian military occupation which only arouses hatred against the USSR.

b) The Bolshevik-Leninist militants must at the same time declare themselves the firmest opponents of any return to the old conditions. They must constantly warn the masses against the manifestation and growth of the reactionary forces and clearly point out Stalinist responsibility for this situation. In the case of any reactionary restorationist *coups d'état*, led by imperialist agents, they must mobilise the proletariat in order to resort to action and crush the forces which can only establish a bloody fascist dictatorship in the country (as in Greece). In such a case, a proletariat victorious against its own bourgeoisie, through its own revolutionary mobilisation, would easily eliminate what remains of the Stalinist apparatus. Only the abstention of the proletariat and the lack of a revolutionary party could strengthen the Stalinist dictatorship after the defeat of the reactionary bourgeois forces.

This position has nothing in common with that of the 'third front', since it is a position of active intervention. In the struggle between the workers and poor peasants on the one side, and the Stalinist apparatus on the other, it would actively intervene on the workers' side. In this struggle, the sympathy and support of the bourgeoisie will be completely on the side of the regime. In the event of an armed attack of bourgeois reaction against the present regime, it will mobilise the working class against the bourgeoisie. This will be the surest way of liquidating both capitalism and the Stalinist dictatorship. It defends the historic interests of the masses and strives, here as everywhere else, to transform every partial fight into a struggle for the socialist revolution. This does not in any way contradict our analysis of the USSR. It only applies in practice (a) the fact that the reactionary features of the Russian occupation by far outweigh its progressive features, (b) the subordination of the defence of the remnants of the October conquests to the interests of the world revolution.



relations between the Soviet bureaucracy and the working class of these countries. To the extent that the bureaucracy was compelled to restrict more and more rigidly the privately-owned sectors of industry, to that extent it has acted in a purely empirical manner in accordance with the conditions existing at the given time in each of these countries. It acted without destroying root and branch capitalist production relations in these countries. Ideologically this process finds its expression in the theory of the 'new democracies' and in the totality of the positions held by the Stalinist parties of the 'buffer zone', all of which affirms the continued existence of capitalism there. It is not excluded that a certain relation of forces may necessitate a real structural assimilation of one or another country in the 'buffer zone'. But it is necessary to indicate clearly that the policy of the step-by-step limitation of the privately-owned sectors of industry has not been oriented in this direction up to now. And the specific forms of exploitation introduced by the Soviet bureaucracy constitute entirely new and powerful obstacles to structural assimilation.

The capitalist nature of the economy of the 'buffer zone' countries is apparent from the following factors:

a) Nowhere has the bourgeoisie as such been destroyed or expropriated (with the exception of certain groups placed in the category of collaborators).

b) In all these countries the bureaucracy has introduced special forms of exploitation (mixed corporations, Soviet-owned stock companies, preferential trade treaties, etc.) All these, while assuming peculiar forms owing to the social nature of the bureaucracy, nevertheless appear within the framework of the economy of these countries as forms of capitalist exploitation.

c) Extensive bourgeois layers continue to exist in auxiliary light industry and in the field of distribution, employing approximately half of the country's manpower. The privately-owned sector continues to participate in the division of the surplus value extracted from labour in the nationalis-

decisive layers in the bourgeois state apparatus.

b) Because the *function* of the state remains bourgeois. Whereas the workers' state defends the collective ownership of the means of production, arising from a victorious socialist revolution, the state of the 'buffer' countries defends property which, despite its diverse and hybrid forms, remains fundamentally bourgeois in character.

The Soviet bureaucracy has been and remains compelled to maintain the bourgeois function and structure of the state not only because its destruction is impossible without a revolutionary mobilisation of the masses, but also in order to defend its own particular exploitation of the workers of these countries. Wherever it is forced to undertake a limited mobilisation of the masses in potential organs of dual power (e.g. Action Committees in Czechoslovakia), it insists both in action and propaganda that these organs are not intended to replace the state organs but merely to supplement them.

Thus, while maintaining bourgeois function and structure, the state of the 'buffer' countries represents at the same time an *extreme form of Bonapartism*. The Stalinist state apparatus has acquired a great degree of independence in relation to the bourgeoisie and proletariat, not alone owing to the balance between and the growing prostration of both these classes; but, above all, owing to its intimate ties with the Soviet state apparatus and the overwhelming weight of the latter in Eastern Europe, amid the existing world relation of forces.

The Revolutionary Strategy in the 'Buffer Zone' Countries

25 The political situation in the 'buffer-zone' countries, for which the Fourth International must elaborate its revolutionary strategy, is determined by the following three factors:

- a) The existence, in different degrees, of a Stalinist police

The way to win:

Steel strike week 10

WORKERS' ACTION

Step up the picketing

LAST SUNDAY, over 3000 steel strikers in Rotherham and Sheffield defied the press's claims that the steel strike is on its last legs after the return to work of several private steel plants.

They held an enthusiastic and determined march to a rally at the Rotherham United football ground. Contingents were there from all the major steelworks including large numbers from Tinsley Park, Stocksbridge, and the famous Rotherham Red Army. There were also many women steelworkers and

signal for the return to work. And, taken aback with the speed and scope of the return, the strikers in Sheffield and Rotherham have recently only had token pickets on the private firms.

Hadfields and Firth Brown started the private sector scabbing, followed by Temple Borough Rolling Mills and other smaller firms. Steel is now being produced again. Confed shop stewards are meeting this week to decide whether or not to call off their recommendation to black the work of steel-

coordinated mass pickets, and no crossing of picket lines by T&G drivers. At Macreadys stockholders in North London, after four weeks of ISTC picketing, drivers have finally had new instructions from the T&G and refused to cross the picket lines. But elsewhere T&G drivers are still crossing.

Some private steel plants have gone back to work in South Wales — Duport in Llanelli and GKN in Cardiff. In Newport at the GKN stockholders, which is still moving steel, there have

workers from the ISTC. They should expel all the scabs'.

The real blame for the scabbing lies with the ISTC leaders. They should have brought forward the private sector steel claims at the start of the strike, to tie them in with the BSC claim and make the unity of interests between BSC and private sector workers clear to everyone.

Then they should have stuck to a firm line on bringing the private sector out, instead of their feeble on-and-off tactics. And the victory of mass picketing at Hadfields should have been followed up with further mass picketing to tie up the private sector decisively.

Even now, the situation in private steel can be saved if mass picketing is restarted and the ISTC leaders work out demands to give the private steelworkers a direct interest in the outcome of the strike.

The rank and file urgently needs to take control of this strike at national level, with an elected and accountable national strike committee. And steelworkers must insist on full support from the TUC.

As Arthur Scargill said at the rally in Rotherham last weekend, the strike could be over in 24 hours if the TUC called out its members. The TUC's refusal to back the Wales TUC's call for a general strike was the main reason for the South Wales miners' vote against strike action, a vote which was clearly a serious blow to the steel strike.

In the 10th week of the strike, the key to winning is still the picket line: mass pickets to close down the private steel firms and stockholders, with support from all sectors of the labour movement.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

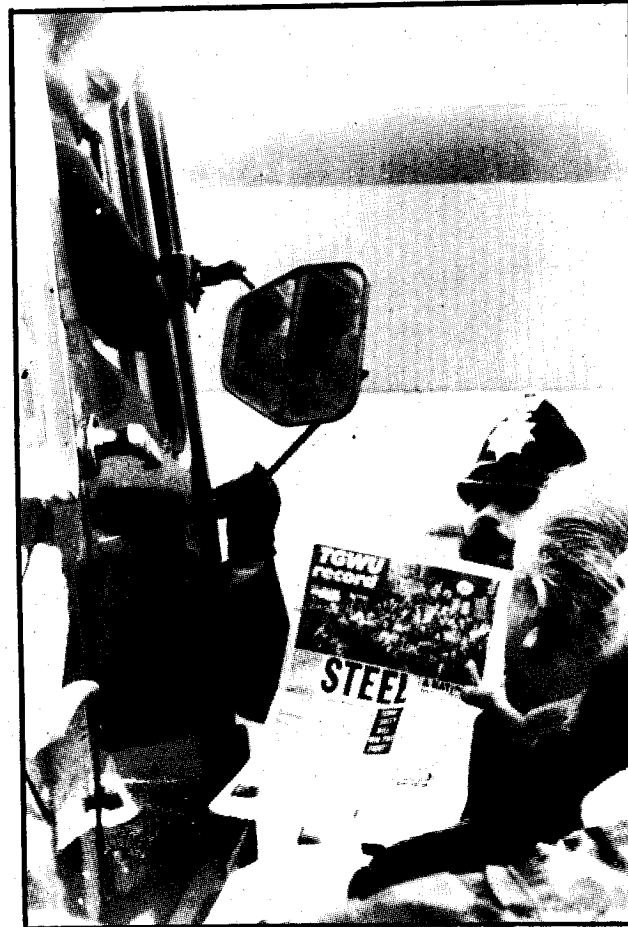


Photo: Nik Barstov

Mass picketing won at Hadfields last month. It can win again.



steelworkers' wives, some marching behind their banner, 'South Yorkshire women hate scabs'.

Bernard Connolly, chairman of the South Yorkshire craft committee, was loudly cheered when he called for more action and more picketing to continue the fight until the 20% is won.

The rally called for mass picketing to stop scabbing in the private sector.

It was the fall-off in mass picketing after Hadfields (14th February) and Sheerness (20th) that gave the

workers who have disobeyed the national strike call. Already the blacking is not very effective.

At Sheerness, in Kent, the scabs are continuing to work and are being expelled from the ISTC. But pickets hope to shut the plant down by stopping oxygen supplies. They reckon production to be already severely cut back.

The ISTC is holding a joint delegate conference with the T&GWU this week to discuss stepping up the action. This must mean more frequent, stronger, and better

been mass pickets with accompanying mass police attendance, attempting to shut the place down. There is no change in the South Wales steel strikers' determination to fight for jobs as well as pay, despite the miners' decision not to come out on indefinite strike over job losses in South Wales.

At the Manchester Steel plant, workers have been scabbing throughout with the exception of a couple of days. Pickets there are bitter and angry, and say, 'It's no good just expelling the Sheerness

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Take collections. The strikers get no strike pay.
- Defend the picket lines against police attacks. Give support on the picket lines.
- Black all steel. Report any movement of steel to the nearest strike committee HQ or Trades Council.
- Refuse to cross picket lines. National TGWU policy is not to touch any steel.
- Organise Labour Party public meetings in support of the steel workers in every area, and hand over Party facilities [rooms, telephones, duplicators, etc.] to the strikers.
- Demand that Labour-controlled local authorities make council facilities available to the strikes [as some councils did for the miners in 1972].

NAZIS SAY: WE BOMBED STRIKE HQ

COLUMN 88, a fascist group, has claimed responsibility for fire-bombing the strike headquarters in Rotherham. The building was badly damaged, but strike organisation is continuing from a new HQ in nearby Rawmarsh.

■■

STEELWORKERS in Sheffield showed what they thought of BSC's ballot at a mass meeting on Tuesday 4th. 1500 strikers in the Memorial Hall tore up their ballot papers, and then spontaneously marched to the BSC regional headquarters in Sheffield and occupied the offices. After the police 'heavy mob' turned up, the steelworkers dispersed peacefully — but determined to see that their strike is not broken by the BSC's tricks.

Steel ballot swindle: Don't vote!

RACKING THEIR brains for yet another ploy to split the steel strike, the BSC bosses have come up with a really original idea. A ballot about whether the steel strikers want a secret ballot to vote on the 13% BSC offer, an offer that has been thrown out by the union negotiators.

Secret

As the BSC bosses and the Tories know, the best way of getting the response that they want is to hold a secret ballot. That's why the Tories have included aid for secret ballots in their Employment

Bill.

Not all the strikers are out on the picket lines and actively involved in the day-to-day running of the strike, and many are therefore open to the bosses' propaganda hurled at them daily from the press and the television.

Steel workers must boycott the ballot. As pickets outside Shelton Bar told *Workers' Action*, 'Villiers is trying to do a Michael Edwardes'. 'We will not be bound by any secret ballot... this is a union matter and he should not interfere. We will follow the union's instructions, and at Shelton we are still 100% behind the ISTC'.

Pickets from Teesside out-

side Macreadys stockholders in London said they had already phoned him to ask their wives to put the ballot papers in the bin. Steelworkers in South Wales are putting '20% now' on the papers and sending them back, making it quite clear what they think of the 'ballot about a ballot'.

Claim

But, as a picket from Teesside said, 'It doesn't make much difference what we do. If only 1000 steelworkers return the ballots saying yes, then the BSC and the Tories

will claim that as a victory for themselves.

'Look what they've done ever since the beginning of the strike. Sirs says sacking Villiers is part of the solution, but it's not. When he goes another like him will just take his place. It's the whole rotten system we're fighting and the BSC ballot is just part of it'.

The way to counter the bosses' splitting tactics is to get all strikers involved in the day to day organisation of the strike. Mass meetings must be held regularly to vote at a rank and file level and discuss the way forward. Matters should not be just left to the higher echelons

of the unions.

Regular strike bulletins must be produced locally and nationally and circulated to all strikers, so that everyone knows what is going on round the country.

Democracy

That is the most democratic way of running the strike — by workers' democracy, not the bosses' democracy which relies on isolating workers and destroying the collective strength and self-confidence of the labour movement.

JO THWAITES