

WORKERS' ACTION

12 pages
15p

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BL: Tories go for bust

B.L. BOSSES on Monday 17th declared open war on the workers. Their "offer" of 5% pay rise and 92 pages of strings will be imposed unilaterally, union agreement or no union agreement.

The bosses have not yet said exactly when they will do this, or how. They may demand each worker signs a new contract, or just decree that every worker who reports for work as usual on a particular day will be considered to have accepted the changes.

So it's goodbye to trade union negotiation and consultation in BL now. Dictatorship is the order of the day.

The 92 pages of strings include:

- Total mobility of labour
- Scrapping of trade demarcations

• Team working, with workers in each 'team' expected to cover each others' jobs

- Drastic cuts in lay-off pay
- Cuts in rest allowances
- The way night shift pay is calculated will be changed — to make the rate lower
- The right for the bosses to bring in three-shift working whenever they want — and full mobility between shifts
- Special cuts in pay for disabled workers
- The standard for each job to be discussed only between the foreman and the operator, without the shop steward being involved. The worker can refuse to agree — but then stands to be penalised if his complaint against the foreman is not upheld!

But still the unions are calling no action.

After negotiating for months without budging BL an inch, the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee passed the buck to a meeting of senior stewards and convenors, which in turn voted on March 7 to put off any action until there

was a full return to work after the current lay-offs.

In fact, the convenors knew that most of the laid-off workers were about to be recalled, and the two largest plants, Longbridge and Cowley, are now working normally. Grenville Hawley, chairman of the LCJNC and T&G automotive officer, is now talking about delaying action not just while the lay-offs last, but as long as the steel strike continues!

BL boss Michael Edwardes' threat is to cancel the 'recovery plan' and let BL collapse if the unions resist his sweeping attacks on conditions, jobs and shop steward organisation. The timely announcement of £144 million losses last year is obviously being used to the full by Edwardes to pressure the unions and the workers.

Despite the official union leadership's inactivity, there may well be spontaneous walk-outs against BL's ultimatum. The LCJNC must be forced to call for immediate all-out strike action, and if they continue to stall, the combine committee must organise simultaneous mass meetings in every plant.

The union officials should stop their behind-the-scenes talks with Edwardes and support action. The unions' claim is £24 increase plus inflation-proofing, and a 35 hour week by 1982. If Edwardes threatens plant closures, the answer must be: *occupy the factories!* Reorganise production under workers' control. Demand the nationalisation of the whole car and car components industry.

The issue facing BL workers is the same as the issue facing the steelworkers — huge attacks on jobs, conditions, and real wages as part of the Tories' class-war policy for restoring British capitalism's profits. All-out action now, alongside the steelworkers, is the way to fight back and win.

The steelworkers need support

"LEN MURRAY told us what is needed now is strong working class unity. We've been out for ten weeks, I told him!

"Len Murray is only talking about May 14th. That seems a long way off for us. There should have been a general strike weeks ago".

That is what a Scottish steel picket told WA last week. At the other end of the country, a South Wales striker echoed the thought: "The general strike call for May 14th is too little, too late."

"A 24 hour general strike is no good at all. And it should have been back in January".

But solidarity can still win the steel strike. The action at Perrys stockholders in Willenhall on Tuesday 18th showed what can be done.

More than 400 steel pickets blocked the entrance. NUR drivers refused to cross the picket line. And T&G workers inside Perrys said they would refuse to handle steel even if it got past the pickets.

That sort of solidarity, spread nationally, could win the strike in days.

But at present, because of the dillying and dallying of the union leaderships, there are huge gaps in the network of solidarity.

General Strike!

the steelworkers' picket lines. If the oxygen were cut off, Sheerness could be shut down and a huge moral victory would be scored for the steel strike.

Sheffield engineers have been forced to call off their solidarity action — a refusal to cross steel workers' picket lines which meant that several factories shut down — because of

Only hours after the victory at Perrys, NUR leaders said they would call off their blacking of steel — for fear of steel traffic moving from rail to road!

The TGWU is now supposed to be instructing members not to move steel. But at Sheerness, for example, TGWU members delivering oxygen from Air Products are still crossing

lack of national support.

At BL, the Tories are going for bust in their attacks on the car workers just as they did with the steel workers. The need for joint action of BL workers and steel workers is obvious. Yet TGWU official Grenville Hawley is arguing that industrial action at BL

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TUC marchers applauded when the steelworkers marched into Trafalgar Square on March 9th. Now the steelworkers need not just applause but active support. (photo: Nik Barstow).

RAIL UNION SAYS: GENERAL STRIKE ON MAY 14th

THE NATIONAL Union of Railwaymen has called on the TUC General Council to organise a 24 hour general strike on May 14th. The TUC will decide its response on Wednesday 26th.

"It is not sufficient to wave banners in Trafalgar Square", said NUR general secretary Sid Weighell. Too right!

A 24 hour all-out strike, properly organised for, with

demonstrations and rallies in every major city, can be a bigger boost to the battle against the Tories than a Sunday march can ever be.

But at the same time militants must keep up agitation for an all-out, indefinite general strike. The steelworkers need support now, not on May 14th. The BL workers need to unite with the steelworkers and stop the Tory blitz now, not on May 14th.

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ORGANISE SOLIDARITY NOW

IS THE labour movement going to allow the steelworkers to be beaten down by the Tories and British Steel? Is it going to allow the BL workers to face the same treatment?

• All heavy industry uses steel. Really strict blacking and respect for picket lines, like in Sheffield last week, would rapidly paralyse the main centres of British industry.

• If the TGWU really enforced its instructions to drivers to back the steelworkers, the private steel-

works would be quickly halted by lack of supplies.

• But the TUC has done nothing. It has had no campaign to support the steelworkers. It has called no conference to plan support. All it has done is bludgeon Welsh union leaders into calling off their planned general strike against steel closures.

The TUC is being true to its bureaucratic self. The left could have united to organise a national conference for solidarity action. The leaders are not leading — so the rank and file must. So far we

haven't.

WA proposes that the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions and the Defend Our Unions campaign unite to call immediate local conferences and a national conference as soon as possible, to organise solidarity.

It is late, but not too late. Support the steelworkers now! Demand the TUC campaigns for no worker to work with steel or cross a steelworkers' picket line — which means, in fact, organising a general strike. In every area, organise to step up solidarity

Protest picket and meeting, March 28 Polish rebel worker jailed

A picket of the Polish Embassy, 47 Portland Place, London W1, has been called for 6pm on Friday 28th March, to demand the release of Edmund Zadrozynski, a Polish campaigner from free trade unions. It will be followed at 7.30pm by a meeting at the Polytechnic of Central London, Marylebone Rd, addressed by the former Polish workers' leader Edmund Baluka.

Stephen Corbishley (CPSA National Executive, in personal capacity) will also be speaking.

This appeal has been put out by the International Campaign Against Repression.

SINCE July 1st 1979, Edmund Zadrozynski has been imprisoned in Torun, Poland.

An active worker militant, Zadrozynski has been involved with the Committee for the Defense of Workers (KSS-KOR) since 1977, an oppositionist group which has links with Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia. He was also one of the editors of *Robotnik*, a fortnightly independent magazine which has taken up the demand for

free, independent trade unions in Poland. Zadrozynski was among those who drafted the Charter of Workers' Rights, published in *Robotnik*, which included such demands as: improvements in working conditions, rates of pay, abolition of all unjust privileges; and protested against such grievances as: the changes in work quotas to the workers' disadvantage, discontinuities of production not caused by the workforce but leading to a loss of part of their wages. Zadrozynski fought around these demands in his place of work in Grudziadz. He organised numerous petitions: in defence of the worker militants arrested before him: Kasimierz Switon and Tomasz Michalak — and won the support of hundreds of people in Grudziadz.

Zadrozynski, according to our latest information, has been accused of complicity in a burglary according to Article 18, 199, 208 and 215 of the penal code and faces between 3 and 10 years' imprisonment. An appeal from over 800 people in Grudziadz stated that the burglary charge was a lie and declared: "We emphasise that we have fully trusted Edmund Zadrozynski for many years and we shall continue together with him to struggle for a true Poland, a Poland of workers and peasants".

An appeal for the release of Zadrozynski has been launched by *Robotnik*, addressed to the International Labour Movement, Amnesty International and the International Campaign Against Repression. This appeal has been supported by Edmund Baluka, formerly

President of the Strike Committee of Szczecin during the winter of 1970-71, and Wladyslaw Sulecki, himself a miner and one of the founders of the independent miners' union of Katowice, both victims of a similar kind of repression.

It was because of the campaigns mounted in the Labour Movement that the release was secured of Switon, Sulecki in Poland, Bernd Dietz, Annette Bahner in East Germany, and it is because of the success of these campaigns that we appeal now for support in defence of Zadrozynski.

The independent workers' movement has been growing steadily in Poland. The Charter of Workers' Rights was the inspiration for the setting up of free trade unions in Szczecin, Katowice and Gdansk. The reaction of the Polish authorities has been repression. But the cause of socialism cannot be advanced by repression. The rights fought for by Polish workers — the right to organise independently, the right to strike — are the same rights that we in the Labour Movement in Britain today are fighting to maintain against the attacks of the Tories. The struggle of the Polish workers is the struggle of the Labour Movement internationally.

Letters, petitions of protest, resolutions from Labour Parties, trade union branches demanding the release of Edmund Zadrozynski, should be sent to the Polish Embassy.

International Campaign Against Repression, c/o Flat 1, 1 Maberley Crescent, Upper Norwood, London SE19



Marchers in Oxford

The Tory policy that could kill 40 million

SEVERAL thousand people marched last weekend against the Tory government's decision to place 160 Cruise nuclear missiles in this country, at Lakenheath in Suffolk and Upper Hayford in Oxfordshire. The Cruise missiles are part of a new NATO 'defence' [read: military menace] strategy.

2,000 people marched in both Cambridge and Oxford as part of the CND's Day of Action.

Thatcher's government accepted NATO's plan eagerly while Holland and Belgium at least raised objections to their share of the 572 medium-range nuclear missiles to be stationed in Western Europe. It was entirely in accord with Thatcher's all-out support for America's warmongering campaign since the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan.

Human life counts for very little in the pursuit of military domination for imperialism.

The Government Minister for Home Defence, Lord Belstead, admitted on Sunday night that in case of nuclear

war, only one in four of Britain's population would survive. But it seems that the Tories — and the treacherous right wing of the Labour Party, who have always scabbed on the nuclear disarmament struggle — are willing to accept this risk.

For what are 40 million dead compared to the maintenance of their profits and their system? And anyway, what real risk would these 'natural leaders of the nation' face?

Although Lord Belstead rules out of hand the idea of a large scale shelter programme for the population, on the grounds that it would cost 'billions and billions' [shock! horror!] we can be very sure that provisions and measures have already been taken in full to preserve the precious skins of his kind.

Several weeks ago the Sunday Times published a report which was leaked to the press by some high-up in the Civil Service, concerning the Government's shelter programme. For sheer black humour it was incomparable.

It rejected all plans for public nuclear shelters, or [as in Switzerland] shelters attached to homes and other buildings, on the basis of cost. And, true to the ideological commitment of this government to free enterprise, and its noble attempt to wean us lazy irresponsible plebs off the welfare state, the report argues that that old tried-and-tested institution so beloved of the bourgeoisie, the family, was better capable of coping with the eventuality of nuclear war than was the State. Cute, isn't it?

We need have no worries concerning the future of the country after the holocaust, do not fear. We can all sleep secure in the knowledge that the Queen, the Government, the administration, the captains of industry, the top military brass and company will all be alive and well in their specially constructed bunkers, ready once again to resume their rightful place as leaders of this great nation of ours.

ANTONIO GERMARO

Powder keg in South Africa

Bob Fine looks at the crisis in South Africa following ZANU's victory in Zimbabwe.

FOR THE apartheid regime in South Africa, Mugabe's victory has been a serious setback. It put its full political and financial backing behind Muzorewa, hoping he would protect South African interests against the insurgent people.

Now that his plans have backfired, Botha, South Africa's Prime Minister, is changing his tune about Mugabe, coupling threats of retaliation if Zimbabwe should become a guerilla base against South Africa with bleating noises about moderation and harmony. There is no doubt that South African capitalism is on the defensive.

Boost

It has enormous investments in Zimbabwe, which give Botha great leverage over the new government, but also give ZANU greater power to strike back at South Africa than the regimes in Mozambique and Angola. The winning of majority rule in Zimbabwe, whatever Mugabe's compromises, will boost the self-confidence of the black majority in South Africa.

And Zimbabwe, with its highly developed indus-

trial, mining and agricultural sectors can, given the leadership, act as a political counterweight to South Africa in the area. There is the real threat to apartheid posed by ZANU victory, a far more dangerous one than over support for a few guerilla martyrs to be sent over the border by their ANC-CP leaders.

Food

Now, for example, the massive food shortage currently threatening Zambia can be met (in part at least) through the export of maize from Zimbabwe's highly mechanised farms and through the use of Zimbabwe's railway network, thus reducing Zambia's reliance on South Africa.

These developments across the border have intensified divisions already appearing within the ruling circles of South Africa. Inside the Nationalist Party, the struggle between Treurnicht, the hard-line "verkrante", and Botha, now turning "verligte", expresses two possible ways forward.

Treurnicht, representing the ultra-right wing element in the Transvaal (including the white mine workers' union), is calling for the strengthening of repression; for the repeal of the Wiehahn recommendations (allowing for conditional registration of African unions) and the Rickert measures (relaxing pass laws and influx control

on urban blacks); and for a tightening of the regulations of petty apartheid.

Botha, with more powerful support, has increasingly looked to granting political concessions to the black petty bourgeoisie to undercut their alliance with black workers.

Botha's steps have been tentative, calling for a convention of the leaders of the four so-called nations in South Africa (whites, blacks, Indians and colour-

eds). Botha had in mind "leaders" like Butholezi and Matanzima, government-appointed chiefs of Kwazulu and Transkei bantustans, and Motlana, the head of the Soweto Council of Ten (who supports "independent black rule" for Soweto on the model of the bantustans, and has recently displayed his capitalist inclinations by floating a private health company in Soweto!)

But the "verligte" press is pushing further. The Anglo-

American owned *Post* had a headline last week saying "Release Mandela" (the imprisoned head of the ANC) and the *Financial Mail*, organ of South African capital, echoed this call.

They are particularly worried about the situation in Namibia, where no-one has any doubts now that SWAPO would win an overwhelming victory in a UN-supervised election. Refusal by South Africa to allow

elections would simply intensify the struggle.

The advanced "verligtes" say that Herman Toivo, currently in jail on Robben Island, would make a more accommodating SWAPO negotiator than Sam Nujorma, the current leader of SWAPO. South Africa must talk to Toivo, they say. Negotiations must take place with leaders who have mass support. That is the lesson they draw from the Muzorewa fiasco in Zimbabwe.

The South African ruling class has traditionally been afraid that reforms and concessions to the African petty bourgeoisie would rapidly open the door for black demands for a profound social revolution. They are incapable of going down the road of reform with any confidence.

Repression

The repression continues. Even the respectable coloured Representation Council, was scrapped and replaced by government appointees.

Bishop Tutu, head of the South African Council of Churches, and one of those with whom Botha wishes to negotiate, has had his passport impounded and South African troops are reported to have massed again on the Angolan border.

The South African ruling class is searching for a strategy. It has no sure way of putting off the challenge of its gravediggers, the black working class.



3 1/2 years ago the black population of Soweto rebelled. New rebellions are brewing.

'Ban the Jab' campaign demands an inquiry

PUBLIC CONCERN over the safety of the injectable contraceptive drug, Depo Provera, has forced the Committee on the Safety of Medicines to suspend its decision to grant the drug a full licence, and to issue the statement that "The CSM... has decided that further information is needed before they can offer advice to the licensing authorities".

At present, Depo Provera is recommended for use only after vaccination for German measles [the vaccination could theoretically have the same damaging effect on the foetus as the live virus, though this has never been recorded], or in the first few months after the woman's partner has had a vasectomy but may still be fertile.

Because of the drug's side effects, which include lethargy and depression, weight gain, menstrual disruption, acne and hair loss, and its apparent links with cancer shown by tests on beagles and monkeys, it has been banned in the States and elsewhere.

Relevance

The side effects are extremely unpleasant and common, and there is no antidote during the three months for which the hormone is active. But in Britain, women have been given the drug without any explanation or discussion, and some without even being told.

Immigrant and poorly educated women in particular are judged by doctors to be too "irresponsible" to use other forms of contraception, and not fit [because of their poor living standard] to have more children. They are not given any information or choice. A Sevenoaks consultant is now refusing abortions to women who will not accept the drug.

Upjohn, the manufacturers, challenge the relevance of research findings on beagles and monkeys to women: beagles, they say, are prone to cancer. No adequate studies have been carried out in countries where Depo Provera is used, either of the long term effects on women, or on their children, to whom the drug is passed unchanged in breast milk.

Because of the convenience of administration, Depo Provera is widely used in Third World countries, subsidised by the US Agency for International Development, and assisted by bribes from Upjohn [which came out in congressional committee hearings in 1978].

The CSM has taken little "evidence" from other sources than Upjohn. The Campaign Against Depo Provera, which is fighting for a ban on use of the drug, has called on the CSM to take evidence independent of Upjohn, to hold a public hearing, and to publish its evidence and deliberations so far.

Secret

The CSM operates in secret and is apparently accountable to no-one, but it is evidently sensitive to public pressure on this issue, and the Campaign Against Depo Provera is calling on those who support its aims to write to the Committee on the Safety of Medicines at 33 Finsbury Square, London EC2.

MANDY WILLIAMS

**ABORTION CAMPAIGN GOES ON THE OFFENSIVE
Corrie's last-chance bid looks like failing**

UNLESS the Corrie Bill is given government time by Leader of the House Norman StJohn Stevas, it is extremely unlikely to complete its reading on the 4th July, the only other possible date, when it follows the Seat Belts Bill on the agenda.

Pressure

Last Friday [14th], the Bill was given extra time after pressure was put on another Tory MP to drop a Private Members' Bill to introduce index-linking of maintenance payments for children of separated or divorced parents. But Corrie ran out of time during discussion of the numerous amendments tabled by opponents of the Bill, although Corrie and his allies had dropped the conscience and charities clauses so that the only section remaining was about changing the Scottish law to bring it into line with the rest of the country.

At present, the government

already has more on its hands than it can manage, and Thatcher appears to have dropped her support for the Bill. At the second reading last year, she put a whip on.

If the Bill now falls, it is a tremendous victory for women and left activists who have mobilised opposition to the Bill, including the 50,000 or more who joined the TUC march last October, the first trade union march in the world to be called over abortion rights, and for the struggle pursued through petitioning, letter writing, marching, and street theatre.

* The National Abortion Campaign, which initiated and co-ordinated much of the opposition to the Bill, is now organising a fight for positive legislation. The new law they envisage will give:

- * a woman's right to choose with no medical or legal restrictions;
- * the legalisation of all safe methods of abortion acceptable to women;
- * a woman's right to be told



Women's TUC Conference: no extra time for Corrie

cover all women, including those under 16 years, and it should not be necessary to get parents' permission. The annual NAC conference, which will discuss a labour movement conference on positive legislation, is on

May 17th and 18th in Leeds. [Resolutions to be in to the NAC office, 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1, by April 10th.]

Many local NAC and Campaign Against Corrie groups are also working with local anti-cuts campaigns to defend abortion facilities, as in many areas these facilities have been the first to be reduced or closed completely, and the use of what beds there are depends on the prejudices of the local gynecologists, not on the needs of local women.

Free

It is essential that these campaigns now go on the offensive for free abortion on demand and a woman's right to choose. TUC support is still growing [the women's TUC last Thursday unanimously passed a motion condemning the decision to give Corrie extra time on Friday], and so is public awareness: even MPs are becoming better informed about the subject...

MANDY WILLIAMS

Tories threaten police witch hunt of women's movement

PATRICK Jenkin, Secretary of State for Health, has launched what could become a police investigation of the women's movement.

The DHSS is to investigate two leaflets about self-help methods of abortion "with a view to bringing it to the attention of the Director of Public Prosecutions".

The basis of a criminal charge appears to be Jenkin's allegation that "neither of these dreadful leaflets indicates its origin" (in fact, this is true of only one of them). But since both have been widely distributed to women active in the struggle for women's rights, this opens the possibility of police searches of all women's centres and groups.

The two leaflets are very different. The one written and distributed (by post) by a group calling itself 'Common Knowledge' does, in fact, describe an extremely dangerous method using soap and water. It appears to have been produced by a rather misguided anarchical group, attempting to recirculate a method which was once "common knowledge" but which, since the '67 Act, has not been passed on to the generation of women who might well be forced into self-help (or into backstreet abortion) by restrictive legislation.

The National Abortion Campaign published a disclaimer in WIRES, a Women's Liberation bulletin, and advised all those women who had copies to destroy them.

The second leaflet is published by 'Solidarity' (with p&p), and was distributed

"This is not an instruction leaflet on do-it-yourself abortion, and to use it as such could be disastrous. Its aim is to provide information on the technique — specialised but not impenetrably mysterious — of 'menstrual extraction'."

It also warns that "Legal

proper certificates. Even if there was no actual pregnancy, an offence has been committed if an unqualified person tried to end one.

"There is an area of possible ambiguity. It could be claimed that menstrual extraction or regulation was carried out routinely, or for diagnostic or therapeutic reasons rather than to terminate pregnancy. However, we do not advise anyone to pin their faith on this dodgy 'loophole'."

At present, the technique is used only under medical supervision, though little training is required: Karman trained a group of volunteer ex-abortion patients over 18 weeks with very good results.

NAC's press release last Friday, 14th, in response to Jenkin's attack, pointed out the medical and legal risks of the methods, and said that "NAC believes that no woman should have to take these risks to obtain the abortion she needs".

It also addresses itself to Jenkin, Corrie and the other proponents of restrictive legislation: "These leaflets are living proof that if restrictive legislation is ever passed, backstreet abortions could once again become a tragic reality. Patrick Jenkin believes that they are "downright danger-

ous" and yet he has voted to restrict legal abortion in the recent Corrie debate. In today's debate on the bill, let Patrick Jenkin put his vote where his mouth is."

Women's immediate demands must, of course, be for extension of NHS facilities, particularly in daycare, all over the country; for a woman's right to choose; for research into contraception and abortion to meet women's needs. But in the longer term we must also fight for access to techniques such as menstrual extraction, challenging the medical monopoly on their use, and the medical criteria of convenience for doctors, not acceptability for women, by which new methods of contraception and abortion are judged.

In the meantime, whether or not the 'Common Knowledge' leaflet was produced by poorly informed women (or women's movement sympathisers), or by anti-abortionists in order to discredit the movement (as has been suggested), we must defend the women's movement from investigation by the police, and continue the fight for free abortion on demand which is the only way to end dangerous and desperate attempts at abortion.

MANDY WILLIAMS



uted at the TUC demo on October 28th last year, and at the mass mobilisations against the Corrie Bill at the beginning of February. The paper, which describes the method of menstrual extraction developed by Dr Harvey Karman, in California, carries the warning:

risks, like medical ones, must be consciously faced. As things stand, it is illegal in Britain to attempt (the intention is enough) to terminate a pregnancy except under the terms of the 1967 Abortion Act, i.e. it must be done by a qualified medical practitioner and with the

Gay student victimised

A GAY student in Leeds has been refused a certificate of fitness to teach, and thus excluded from the Certificate of Education course, on account of his sexual orientation. A University Health Service doctor found a note of the student's homosexuality in his medical records, and on confirming this with the student, refused to issue the medical certificate until the student had seen a psychiatrist.

The student objected, and

raised the matter with the head of the University Health Service, Dr Fraser. Both doctors have stated that they know nothing about homosexuality, and therefore want the expert opinion of a psychiatrist. The student objects to this.

The Leeds Campaign for the Defence of Gay Students is campaigning around the incident, raising the questions of why the student's sexual orientation was recorded in his medical notes; how two doctors who profess ignorance on the subject of homosexuality can express a "clinical opinion" on the case; and why a doctor should vet a candidate on non-medical matters.

The Campaign is calling on supporters to pass resolu-

tions in their unions deploring the Leeds University Student Health Service's discriminatory action and calling on the BMA and General Medical Council to clarify their position on homosexuality. The staff-student committee has recommended that a working party be set up to investigate, and the University Council is to consider the matter on the 20th.

Further information and petitions from, and resolutions, messages of support, and donations to: Leeds Campaign for the Defence of Gay Students, Box 110, Leeds Alternative Publications, 29 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2.

CRACKDOWN ON ABORTION CLINIC

THE DEPARTMENT of Health has shown which side of the abortion debate it's on. The Pregnancy Advisory Service, London's only charitable abortion clinic, has been told by the department to reword a poster which has advertised

abortion advice and help in London tubes for the last three years. Anti-abortion groups like Life have not been cold to reword their extremely ambiguous posters, which often lead women to think that they help with abortions.

However, in December (when it looked as if the Corrie anti-abortion Bill would pass through Parliament), the DHSS suddenly decided they were 'unhappy' with the PAS

poster, which simply offers help in obtaining an abortion and was approved by the DHSS three years ago.

Now the DHSS claims that it has only recently become aware that the poster was being used in the Tube. All right, DHSS policy makers don't use the Tube much and they probably don't need to use PAS much either — but thousands of women do both.

JO THWAITES

workers' ACTION

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Stone Platt workers seize the factory to save jobs

ON FRIDAY February 8th, management at the Stone Platts factory in Oldham announced closure of the factory. On February 18th a mass meeting decided to occupy the factory, and are still sitting in.

Harold Robertson, the Works Committee Chairman, explained the background to *Workers' Action*:

"Stone Platt Industries (SPI) is a big combine with between 20 and 30 factories in the country. It has several plants in this area making textile machinery.

"The demand for textile machines is dying, not only because of the decline of the British textile industry, but also because of the increased efficiency of machines which is strangling demand for new machines.

"In 1977, management decided to close their Accrington factory and move the work to Oldham. A campaign through lobbying MPs and official union backing of work prevented it.

"Plan 2 was discovered, where they thought of shutting all these factories and opening a new factory at Atham, but that got scrubbed because it would have cost them £20 million.

"Now we come on to Plan 3... the HQ of the Stone Platt electrical division is at Crawley, where they suffer from the opposite problem to up here — a labour shortage which has prevented expansion.

"At first they were going to move to Southampton to take up a council site there, but finally decided to move up to Oldham to take up the slack here and to gradually phase in production of electrical goods while moving the production of textile

STONE-PLATT OLDHAM

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machines to Accrington and Bolton.

"We agreed to this plan, but then management told us they didn't have the £1.3 million to start. We reminded them they'd just got £1.8 million off the government through the Textile Machinery Grant scheme, and they told us then they lacked orders.

"On January 2nd this year, the day after the Christmas holiday, management informed us that there would have to be 117 redundancies by January 4th. They also withdrew ex gratia payments we had negotiated which would have effectively doubled redundancy pay. We

told them they weren't on, and that this was completely contrary to negotiated agreement.

The managers' claimed not to know procedure (because they had been brought up from the South recently) and the relented and agreed to follow procedure. They called a Works Conference for January 23rd.

"Just before this arranged conference, they came to us

and told us that they hadn't prepared their case and asked for an adjournment until February 11th. We agreed.

"At 2pm on Friday 8th they called us into the office and told us they were shutting the plant. At the same time as they were telling us they handed this letter around the plant — going over our heads.

"They had been delivered notice of closure to the full time officials by a chauffeur-driven car! We didn't know about it till the last minute, but the *Oldham Chronicle* knew, and had a big front page article on the Weekend Edition.

"We had been working short time. One week on, one week off, so we couldn't do anything until we came in on the 18th. When we got in, we held a mass meeting in the canteen; we got a 2 to 1 majority in favour of strike action and occupation.

"After this vote, we went to management and the Engineering Employers' Federation and told them that if they'd withdraw the closure notice we'd continue working. They told us the decision was irrevocable. So we occupied from then on.

"Since the vote, the strike has tightened up and we've only about 50 dissenters now — you know, free-loaders, bosses' boys. This action includes the AUEW (who are a majority of the hourly paid staff), TGWU, APEX, ASTMS and TASS.

The action as a whole is being organised by the 29a District Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions.

"So far we've had financial contributions from other engineering factories in Oldham and the NUT. We have the support of Manchester North and South AUEW District Committees, as well as Oldham District Committee.



"*Socialist Challenge* printed our posters for us, and the Labour Party Young Socialists have been down a lot. We ask all activists in the movement to argue our case, raise money for us and give us a platform if possible.

"We're not asking for money from other SPI plants because we want physical support from them. We'll be going round the other plants tomorrow and Friday to raise support. We would tell you where, but last time we went out, management in Crawley were waiting for us and stopped us entering the plant!

"We went to see out MPs at the House of Commons while we were down there and went to the Company HQ in Grafton Street.

"We see no point in going back until we get a firm commitment to talks on the basis of keeping the factory open."



STONE Platts workers have shown the way to save jobs — rapid occupation and seizure of capital machinery gives workers the weapon to fight unemployment.

If SPI refuses to agree to reopen the factory on the basis of no redundancies, the labour movement must fight for the nationalisation without compensation of the Oldham plant, and of all other plants declaring redundancies.

Given the shortage of orders, this poses the need to cut the working week and share out the work without loss of pay. It's not our fault that the order books are empty and we shouldn't

have to pay for it, either by short time working or redundancies. We need to push the Confed to reopen the fight for a 35 hour week maximum now throughout the engineering industry.

Workers should place no faith in the national officials, and support them only in so far as they support us. It would be fatal to allow the National Executive to destroy this fight as they did at Leyland or over the National Engineering Claim.

The bosses are sensing weakness on our side and are breaking agreements 'eft, right and centre. We can only police national and local agreements with

effective rank and file involvement and a strong shop stewards' movement.

At Adamsons, the employer was beaten by strong solidarity amongst the strikers, and support from outside. We must win every fight against redundancies, victimisation and broken agreements to rebuild our organisation. All workers must support the occupations with cash, and give physical support if required.

Donations and messages of support to: Stone Platt Dispute Fund, c/o 70 Lord Street, Oldham.

MICK WOODS

Convenor nails bosses lies

AUEW CONVENOR Eddie Holland replies to a management letter sent to every striker:

"There are three obvious points to bring out of this letter.

"They say that we refuse to negotiate with them. This is untrue. We are prepared to negotiate at any time on the basis of keeping the plant open. The Mayor of Oldham offered to chair a meeting between us and E.G. Smalley (the Managing Director of SPI) on this basis, and management refused. Who's not talking to who?

"Secondly, the accusation about us making redundancy terms less favourable is a bit of a joke.

"Redundancy payments are now at the legal minimum since management reneged on the 1962 and 1980 agreements on severance pay and ex gratia payments.

"Thirdly, the 200 jobs in transmission will only remain if they are profitable. Manage-

ment went out of their way to tell me that. Now I know that the company financial report puts them down as being highly profitable.

"The market for this equipment is so competitive, though, that any price rise could make us uncompetitive. Management intends to raise the prices by 10%. Why?

"The fact is that we're not getting the best publicity from the Chronicle. When we make a statement they ask for management comments. When they make a statement we don't get the chance to reply. We've had to send a letter to reply to the last management diatribe.

"Management are playing a waiting game. Leech is camped out in a hotel in Hale (Manchester's Gin and Tonic Best) sending us letters. One of the reasons for this is probably that Sir Geoffrey Hawkins, the Chairman of SPI, is also president of the Engineering Employers' Federation, and the EEF's agreements have been broken by management actions."

Town hall employers go back on their pay promises

INDUSTRIAL action on a national scale is being taken by NALGO, the town hall white collar workers' union.

The action is centred around last year's pay settlement, which the employers have refused to honour. The issuing of rate demands, and all work with outside consultants and agencies, have been blacked.

The blacking of rate demands, particularly at this time of year, is a powerful industrial weapon, especially since councils' resources are

being squeezed by the Tory government. If rate income is delayed for a long time, councils will be forced to raise short term loans on the money market to meet their obligations, which will mean very high interest charges.

Computer staff, as well as the workers directly concerned with sending out the rate bills, are enforcing this blacking.

Non-cooperation with outside agencies will affect most council departments,

especially architects' and building departments.

Other actions are being considered, including a one-day strike in April, and the calling out of council meat inspectors.

This is the first time in most NALGO members' memory that the national leadership has launched industrial action. The reason for this change of attitude is the employers' response to a comparability study.

The 1979 local government

pay deal was for a 6% immediate increase last July, plus a comparability study to lead to an increase from January 1980.

It became clear by mid-March that the mutually agreed conclusions of the study indicate increases of between 10% at the bottom end of the pay scale and 22% at the top. As predicted by militants, the comparability exercise was divisive, giving more to the better-off; but all NALGO members were

united in wanting to get the promised increases.

The employers refused. Instead, they offered 6% to 12%, about half the amount indicated by the study.

Their approach was to take only a small section of the data that had been assembled... and to plead that they could not afford to pay any more.

So the pay deal agreed in summer 1979 was rejected at a stroke, eight months after the agreement. The implications for future pay negot-

iations and NALGO's ability to defend its members depend crucially on NALGO's success in defending the 1979 pay deal.

The first signs are that the national response to the NEC's call to action have been very good. NALGO militants must start organising now to ensure that any members who are disciplined by the employers, of who stand to lose money as a result of being sent home, are fully supported by all other NALGO members.

**AUEW
elections:
vote
Brett,
Harraway,
Kelly**

AUEW MEMBERS should by now have received postal ballot papers for the election of an Assistant General Secretary and two National Organisers.

Workers' Action urges its readers to vote for Ken Brett as Assistant General Secretary, a position he has held since 1968. Although we have little political common ground with Brother Brett, he is the only candidate to inject any class perspective into his electoral address, and to talk of resisting the Tories and defending the shop stewards movement, which the right wing seems to be committed to destroying in the Engineering Industry.

In the ballot for National Organiser (whose term of office commences on 4th December 1980) we should grit our teeth and vote for the Broad Left candidate Sid Harraway (Fords Body Shop Convenor), even though he describes last year's national engineering settlement, which won the 39 hour week in November 1981, as "an example to engineering workers throughout the world", rather than calling it by its right name — a sellout.

In the other National Organiser ballot we can recommend a vote for Brian Kelly, a shop steward at International Harvesters, Doncaster.

Brian Kelly supports the Engineers' Charter, and puts forward a class programme against the bosses and the spineless wonders on the National Executive Committee. He condemns the leadership's sellout of Derek Robinson, and the National Claim. He asserts that any amalgamation must take place on the basis of the AUEW rule-book.

On new technology, he says that we need to bring about a society where new technology can benefit everybody, not just the bosses.

Unfortunately, his manifesto, though spot-on in his attacks on the leadership, fails to take up positive demands such as the 35 hour week, sharing the work without loss of pay, and inflation protection of wages with a workers' price index.

He also says "Keep National Officials out of Local Disputes", a policy which WA would disagree with. We should make these time-servers fight for our members or we should kick them out.

Despite these differences, we should encourage our workmates to use their "wonderfully democratic" postal votes for Brian.

MICK WOODS

Perrys, Willenhall Solidarity wins out!

DOUG MACKAY reports on how a mass picket stopped a steel stockholder's attempt to get steel from railway yards with the help of the law.

Tuesday 18th, 8am: Pickets are assembling outside Howard E Perry steel stockholders in Willenhall, just outside Wolverhampton. By 9.30am, coaches have arrived from Sheffield, Corby, Newport, and Rotherham. More than 400 pickets assemble at the gates in driving sleet.

Perry's has got a court order instructing British Rail to deliver steel from depots at Wolverhampton and Brierley Hill. The NUR has said they will move the steel from the depot — but will they cross the picket line at Perry's?

The ASTMS van hands out tea, coffee and soup. Flying pickets from different parts of the country exchange grim smiles and local picket line stories.

Trevor Seadon (ISTC) Sheffield tells WA: "This picket will show whether we have still got the will to win. Even bringing in steel in fishing boats cannot keep the industry going much longer."

"We have said 'Stop all steel' from the start in Sheffield. Unfortunately, a lot of steel is still being moved. We have got to stop it."

Two wagons pull up. After a chat with some pickets and a glance at the very determined-looking picket line behind them, the drivers turn round and

off they go. Seasoned pickets from Hadfield and Sheerness point out members of the police flying squad who have turned up on picket lines from one end of the country to another. A mean looking bunch they are too.

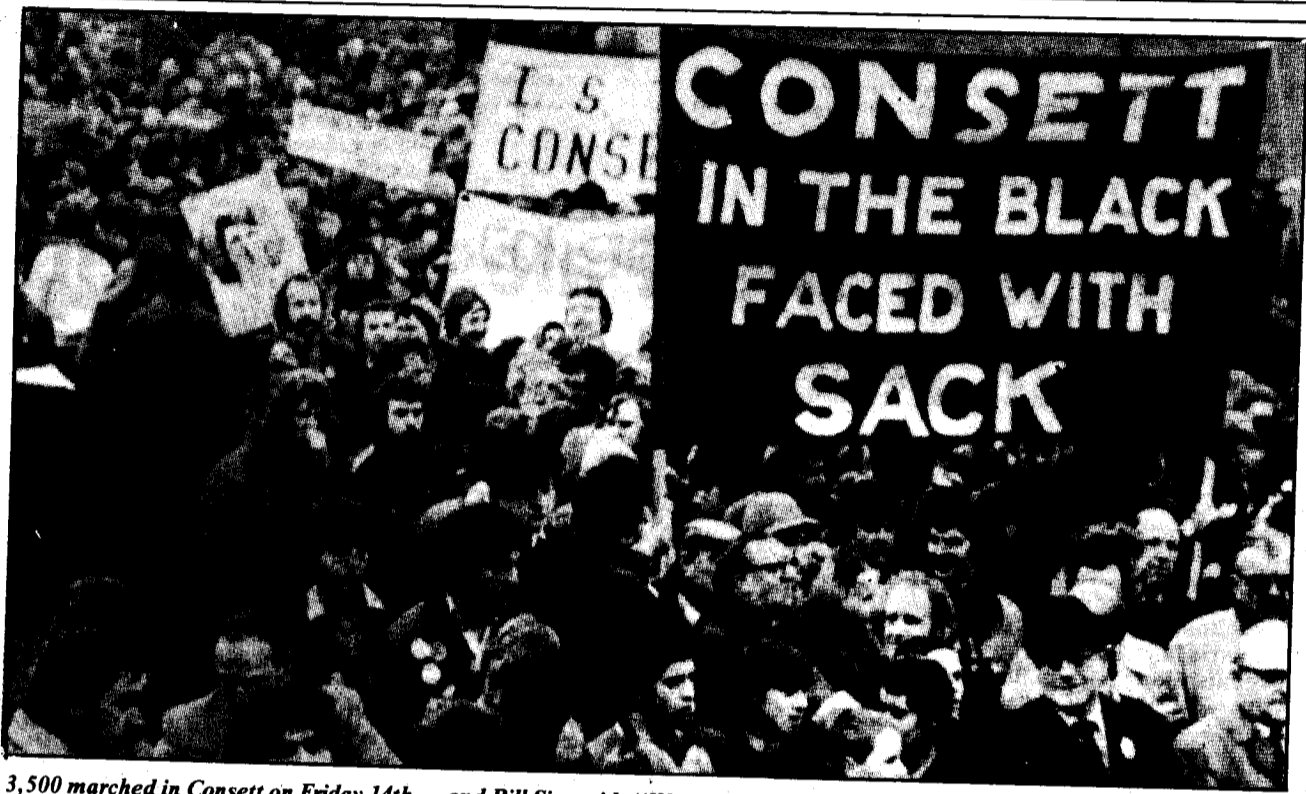
The big test comes at 11.30. Fifteen wagons, each loaded with 20 tons of steel from the railway yards nearby, roll up. The drivers are NUR members, and refuse to cross the picket line, despite open police encouragement.

Later, the pickets find out that the workers inside Perry's (members of the T&G) have been instructed not to handle the steel, even if it does slip in when the pickets' guard has dropped. Spirits rise, and talk moves to the

possibility of a BSC ballot over the head of the unions.

Ballot papers are reportedly packed up, ready to go out by the weekend. Pickets expect that the press campaign for a return to work will be stepped up during the week.

By mid-afternoon, Perry's management has conceded defeat, and the steel has been returned to the railway yard. Meanwhile, however, the NUR leadership is talking about lifting their blacking on steel, as they claim they will permanently lose contracts for the transport of steel to the road haulage industry. This stab in the back, coming so soon after the pickets' victory at Perry's, demonstrates how changeable and finely balanced the situation is.



3,500 marched in Consett on Friday 14th — and Bill Sirs said, "We are a force, and we are going to use that force not only for pay but against closures as well".

VOTE WITH YOUR FEET — JOIN THE PICKET LINE!

BRITISH Steel is likely to organise a second ballot, this time directly on its '14% with strings' offer.

The workers on the picket lines are still absolutely firm against the offer. The mood is determined — but bitter and angry about the steel union leaders' weakness, and the huge gaps in support from the rest of the labour movement.

From the mood of bitterness have come moves to take off safety cover. At Redcar, 300 pickets on Monday morning (17th) kept the safety men out, despite the efforts of full-time union officials. At Lackenby steelworks, also on Teesside, the safety men are already out.

If safety cover is kept off for some time, then the furnaces could crack. The ultra-modern furnace at Redcar, costing £11 million, could be out of action for over six months.

The steel strikers are fully aware of the dangers. But strike committees from all over the country are pressing the union leadership to pull off safety cover nationally. That is the measure of the strikers' angry determination, best expressed in the Sheffield slogan: "Treated with contempt — Never again!"

But the dangers of British Steel's ballot trick should not be underestimated.

Among the strikers who

have not been out on the picket lines, British Steel's misrepresentations — like saying their offer is 14% plus, without mentioning the strings — can have an effect, especially after 11 weeks without strike pay. Sitting at home, those workers will only get the British Steel and Tory side of the argument, from the press and TV.

Most workers will vote for the offer unless they have confidence in the union's ability to win more. And Bill Sirs is doing nothing to build up any worker's confidence.

The answer is to draw more workers actively into the running of the strike, and to step up the action to convince them that 20% can be

won and the jobs can be saved.

Local strike committees should organise regular mass meetings, and make themselves answerable to those meetings. They should take a vote on the offer at those mass meetings — after full debate! — and give that as their answer to BSC's ballot! An elected national strike committee should be set up. Detailed, factual local and national strike bulletins should be put out.

The mass picketing should be spread — and be better organised, to stop any repeat of the dozens of arrests and beatings-up which the police have been handing out. That is the way to win.

General Strike!

continued from p.1

should wait... until after the steel strike!

The Tories are faltering and divided. They can be beaten — if we make an all-out drive now for united action.

Every trade unionist should black steel, refuse to cross picket lines — and demand the union leaders launch a campaign for these policies. The BL unions should call their members out on strike in a united front with the steelworkers.

The steelworkers, too, need unity. Bill Sirs told a huge demonstration in Consett last weekend that the steel strike was now for jobs as well as pay, and no-one would go back until Consett's future was safe. Steelworkers from all over the North East — including Teesside, the area least threatened by BSC's job cutbacks — were there to give support to the Consett workers.

Sirs must be kept to that: 20% with no strings, and the safeguarding of all jobs, must be the basis for any strike settlement.

And a campaign of solidarity must be built up which forces the Tories to back down or face a developing general strike.

Wales: police photo pickets

21 PICKETS were arrested on Tuesday 17th at Alpha Steel, a private steel works in Newport.

100 police set about the pickets, while others took photographs of the workers as they were being arrested. Pickets fear that these photos could be used by police later to pick on workers whom they reckon to be militants.

The pickets' mood was bitter.

One picket said: "People are getting fed up with the lack of action by the Wales TUC, and the general strike call is too little, too late. A 24 hour general strike is no good at all."

"It should have been back in January. We'll probably be back at work by May 14th and because of all the hardship we've suffered it'll be difficult to get people out again then."

Another reckoned that 45 or 50% would vote 'yes' if BSC did ballot in Newport. "They're the ones who are never on picket lines. But the scabs will have to face the other 55% if they do go back."

MARY IRESON

Sheffield: pickets out in force again

SUPPORT for the steel strike in South Yorkshire is still strong, as the mass picket at Hadfields on Wednesday 12th showed. About 1,500 pickets, mainly ISTC and T&G, picketed the scab private firm and there were 75 arrests as they clashed with police.

The police on duty were brought in from Manchester. Some of them were specialists in anti-picket work.

After picketing Hadfields, some of the strikers marched to Temple Borough Rolling Mills, where they were given an assurance by stewards that no steel would be loaded while talks were in progress. Production at TRM was brought to a halt the following day by a shortage of steel.

From TRM the pickets marched to BSC Divisional HQ and demonstrated outside.

But there was a serious setback when the solidarity action which had been initiated by the AUEW local leadership was called off on Thursday 13th. There had been no national response to the initiative and Sheffield stewards had little enthusiasm for going it alone.

A delegation of local AUEW officials is visiting London this week to see if any further action will receive national support, and Sheffield shop stewards will meet again Friday to review the situation.

The Sheffield Confed has called for a return to work on Monday, and meanwhile AUEW members are still being instructed to black all steel deliveries.

At the big private firm of Firth Brown, TGWU members have ignored the national call to support the steel strike and are working normally. At other firms in the area the response has been more positive.

Only 30 out of 600 T&G members at Doncasters Ltd turned up for work. However, given the return of the AUEW members, many T&G will follow them, regardless of national instructions.

The lesson is that the full cooperation of all unions, and a vigorous campaign by the national leadership, is needed to black all steel and win speedy victory for the strikers.

JOHN CUNNINGHAM

Scotland: the anger grows

STEEL workers in Glasgow and Lanarkshire are getting tired of their union leaders' weak and slow action.

"We're getting sick. The men and women here are suffering terrible hardship and we're not getting the support we need", a picket from Rutherglen told WA. He was one of the ISTC members who led last week's Scottish TUC demonstration through Glasgow and who made sure he got his message across to Len Murray.

"I was talking to him last week. I didn't shake his hand — I didn't feel like it."

"He told us what is needed now is strong working class unity. Christ, we've

been out for 10 weeks, I told him.

"Len Murray's only 'talking' about May 14th. That seems a long way off for us. There should have been a general strike weeks ago."

Steel is still moving in the area, although the pickets of stockholders are as strong as ever. Steel is being brought in from abroad, with reports that it is going through the docks at Torquay and then being driven up to Glasgow.

Dockers should refuse to handle loads coming in that they think are 'suspect' until they are proven not to be steel.

Harassment of pickets has been stepped up in Rutherglen. Last Friday night, pickets on duty at GKN were attacked by 8 men wielding hatchets and iron bars. One picket was hit on the head by a hatchet and another was hit in the face with an iron bar. Although the men were badly hurt, they are now back on picket duty.

No one knows who the attackers were, although one strike official thinks it possible that they could be the same people responsible for the attack on the Rotherham strike offices — the fascist group Column 88.

IAN McLEISH

'DEBATE OF THE DECADE'

BRUCE ROBINSON reports on the 'Debate of the Decade' between reformists and revolutionaries last Monday, 17th.

REVOLUTIONARY politics are more urgently necessary in Britain today than for many years. The depth of the economic crisis, the determination of the Tories to solve the crisis at the expense of the working class, and the failure of the last Labour government, all demand political answers which only revolutionaries can give.

Yet for 80 years revolutionaries have faced the dominance of the Labour Party in British working class politics. They have never been able to grow beyond small groups and win a secure foothold in the labour movement, which has remained dominated by Labour's politics of accommodation to capitalism.

The "Debate of the Decade" provided a welcome opportunity for a discussion on socialist strategy between these two trends in the labour movement. Over 2,500 people attended the debate in Central Hall, Westminster with Tony Benn, Stuart Holland and Audrey Wise speaking for the Labour Coordinating Committee, and Tariq Ali of the IMG, Paul Foot of the SWP and Hilary Wainwright, (co-author of "Beyond the Fragments") speaking for the revolutionaries.

Theme

The debate focused on the central strategic issues for socialists: reform or revolution; parliamentary versus extra-parliamentary struggle; the need for a revolutionary party and the record of the Labour Party.

The theme of the Labour Left's contributions was clear enough: admitting that past Labour governments had given in to capitalism, they concentrated on arguing how and why it would be different next time. As Benn put it, "Reform has not failed, it has not been carried through". They also spelt out how a Labour government would then be able to move to socialism without revolutionary upheavals or the destruction of the state.

Although Tariq Ali and Paul Foot were able to put a general political alternative to the LCC speakers' schemas, they provided no explanation of or way out of the revolutionary left's weakness, beyond calling on people to join their respective organisations. They

concentrated on making general propaganda for revolutionary socialism, without linking it to the need to provide political answers for the struggles going on at the moment.

A third position, which was not heard in the debate, was summed up in a leaflet from the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory: "Tonight is a debate between revolutionaries who are outside the Labour Party and reformists who are in it. But what about revolutionaries in the Labour Party? "Do revolutionaries have to be outside the Labour Party, leaving the field open for the reformists to dominate the political horizons of most working people?"

Vital

"The Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory is a campaign which has fought to convince militants that the Labour Party should not be left to the careerists, right wingers and soggy lefts... instead it is vital to organise a hard left inside the Labour Party that will fight on all the immediate issues of the class struggle..."

"The left must build its strength among rank and file party members and supporters, union members, and activists in local campaigns. This means turning local parties outwards to draw in new militant working class recruits."

"Now that the fight against the Tories is gathering pace, this can be done. Thousands of militant workers who are loyal Labour supporters but cynical about the Labour Party, sympathetic to revolutionary ideas, but doubtful about small revolutionary left groups can be drawn into struggle."

"The revival of the Labour Party and the Labour left that has begun can either be part of the same old cycle of 'left wing in opposition, right wing in office', or it can be turned into the start of putting class struggle politics firmly in the centre of working class life."

This view was rejected by both sides in the debate. While the LCC are not interested in organising a "hard left", the IMG and SWP dismiss work in the Labour Party.

The debate was opened by Stuart Holland for the LCC who argued for a long-term strategy of transforming power through "intervention, planning and workers' struggles". For Holland the state is no longer the same as it was in 1917, making possible a struggle within the state rather than a struggle to smash the state apparatus

and replace it with a new state of a fundamentally different kind. Thus, in his view, "revolution or reform is a false dichotomy".

In this strategy workers' struggles are reduced to a means of supporting the struggle within the state from outside, rather than the decisive force in society; and Hilary Wainwright's response was to counterpose extra-parliamentary activity to the Labour left's emphasis on the strategic role of Parliament.

Using the example of the workers at Vickers Scotswood who drew up a workers' plan to save their jobs and then turned to Benn and Holland to get help to implement it, she pointed out that this had diverted the workers from relying on their own independent activity.

But Hilary Wainwright argued against building a "vanguard party" and she didn't provide any alternative to Benn other than arguing that workers'



The reformists: Holland, Wise

control would grow out of an extension of extra-parliamentary organisation.

Why did the workers turn to Benn and Holland in the first place? Because, however militant their factory-based struggle, they still relate to the Labour Party for general solutions on a national political level once localised and economic struggles run up against a block, as they inevitably do once they go beyond a certain point. (In the case of Vickers, the problem was the need to finance their alternative plan).

Unless revolutionaries tackle the Labour Party's political dominance of the existing labour movement, they will not be able to give extra-parliamentary struggles a revolutionary direction.

Did the revolution slay the reform? leave them a f

Paul Foot's contribution showed clearly the weakness of the SWP's conception of how to relate to the workers' movement. For most of the time, the SWP ignores the Labour Party, claims it's dead, hopes it will go away — apart from at election time when it argues "Callaghan may be bad, but

about the superstructure of the movement. Instead socialists should return to the base — the rank and file.

Even if one accepts Foot's gloomy picture, it is ridiculous to talk of the rank and file and the leadership of the labour movement as if they lived on different planets. The problem we face today is

Party is "always separate from things going on in the outside world like strikes... All those who join the Labour Party seeking to change the world are changed by it." (Here he mentioned a number of left parliamentary leaders who sold out).

Foot's totally passive view of what is possible in the Labour Party is false. Revolutionaries can get Labour Parties to turn towards the class struggle and against the normal routine. For example, in Birmingham and other places the local Labour Parties have given their committee rooms to be used as an HQ by steel pickets.

Ireland

If we leave the Labour Party to the right wing and the soft lefts, it will often be an active obstacle to the class struggle, but if revolutionaries intervene with their politics (which is possible at the moment in the Labour Party), it is possible to make the Labour Party an active force in supporting workers' struggles. At local level this often happens now — for example in fights against the cuts.

When Benn rose to speak he met with considerable heckling about his position on Ireland. A banner was unfurled on the platform behind him reading "Are you with Benn or the H-Block men?" Benn's response was to say that he had been brought up to think that "The partition of Ireland was a crime against the Irish people", though he opposed the immediate withdrawal of troops.

Benn went on to explain how the next Labour government would be different from what had gone before. "The capitalist system", he said, "could no longer sustain welfare capitalism". Without an irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power, there was no alternative to the Tories. He was not too explicit about how it would come about.

He added "We must go as far as we can within the capitalist system."

While these prospects lie in the future, Benn argued that Labour government could do what it could within the framework of the last Labour government.

But why did the Labour government reform the framework of forces" when the same "shift in the balance of wealth and power" now told will of the future was the 1974 Manifesto as he modestly by Tony Benn. Benn gave a lot of things that the government had reform (as called manifesto), using as an argument that the government had not failed to explain why the government had failed through.

In reply to remark that the Labour Party always played a leading action when it was in power, Benn argued that the Labour Party's "Agitation does not work when a Labour government is in power because the rank and file know the government is not at risk the Labour government."

Some of the workers and pickets who were last winter would rather a poor export than the rank and back mass action of the government but the government held it back in order to restore capitalism.

Benn went on to say that the idea of a revolution was a coup d'etat, and that Stalinism was



The revolutionaries: Wainwright, Foot

Thatcher will be much worse." Implicitly, the SWP argues for building up its own 'revolutionary' labour movement in parallel to the existing reformist movement — and Paul Foot came close to doing this explicitly.

Liberties

He painted a black picture of the condition of the working class and the opposition to the Tories. "There is no point in new programmes or new leaders when the rank and file don't even follow their leaders on fundamental issues of trade union liberties. The whole foundations of the movement are rotting." In this situation, Foot said, it was wrong to worry

Shock! Horror! Left organises

"HERE, it says in the Sun that a top Labour Party official has received solid evidence that the Militant Tendency has ordered its members to spy and report on Labour politicians to oust them from their seats."

"Reliable is it, this evidence?"

"Course it is. It says here in the Sun that 'the evidence comes from distressed parents of several young members who were ordered to undertake these cloak-and-dagger activities'."

"Must be worrying." "Course it is. It says here in the Sun that 'they are terrified both for their own and their family's sake of what might happen if they are identified'."

"Ruthless then are they, this Militant Tendency?"

"Course they are. It says here in the Sun that 'it is, in fact, a highly organised and tightly-knit body modelled on a guerrilla army'."

"Powerful then are they?"

"Course they are. It says here in the Sun that 'at the next election they might get up to 30 MPs'."

"Be just like Russia if they got in, would it?"

"Course it would. It says here in the Sun that 'Britain would be turned into an offshore socialist island like Cuba'."

saying that 'they are fanatics. They put orders on people to leave for other places to check out MPs and get on committees'."

"Like Big Brother all over again, isn't it?"

"Too right it is. 1984 — one-man rule but without the trains running on time."

"Personally I'm looking forward to 1984."

"Looking forward? Why?"

"Well, if we haven't kicked this bloody government out through strike action, there'll be an election in 1984 and we'll be able to get rid of the Tories for at least five years."

ghan." "Nor me. Nor old bushybrows Healey. What we need is a Labour Party that isn't going to do the Tories' dirty work."

"That's right! If they think like Tories, why don't they just go and join the Tories."

"Like that creep Prentice."

"That's right. Reg Prentice."

"Hang on a tick. It says in the Sun that these Militant people 'helped unseat Reg Prentice in Newham North East'."

"Did they now? Well, more strength to their arm I say. Must have taken some organising, that. Bit of cloak-and-dagger stuff. I should say so..."

of a Sun investigation into the Labour Party

THE DANGER THAT LURKS IN THE LEFT

How the five who lead the way

INVESTIGATORS from the Sun attended a Labour Party meeting at the Labour Party headquarters in Portsmouth last night. The Sun's investigation into the Militant Tendency's activities in the Labour Party is a major breakthrough. The Sun's investigation into the Militant Tendency's activities in the Labour Party is a major breakthrough. The Sun's investigation into the Militant Tendency's activities in the Labour Party is a major breakthrough.

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result of the Russian Revolution. Quoting the Chartist and the Suffragettes to back up his case, Benn asked "What is the ballot box but a revolution?"

He attacked the "socialist groups" for not being revolutionaries (as an expert on the subject!) but "left-talking revolutionists who want to destroy the two pillars of our strength: unity and organisation in the labour movement to change society." No evidence was given for this rather odd assertion.

Splits

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He denounced the splits on the revolutionary left as the result of "ideological scholasticism", using the example of the bureaucratic internal regime of the SWP to show why a disciplined revolutionary party was wrong (though the Labour Party itself has not always been known for its tolerance towards opposition!).

He ended by calling for "united action in a united Labour Party" (on what basis?) while denouncing "collective entrism".

In other words, an invitation to join the 'broad church' of the Labour Party as long as there is not too much rocking of the boat which endangers "unity".

Tony Benn was followed by a number of speakers from the floor. Two Communist Party speakers bemoaned the fact that they had not had anyone on the platform, and went on to outline a strategy indistinguishable from that put forward by Stuart Holland. Tony Saunois of Militant began a contribution by "agreeing with a lot of the arguments comrades Benn and Holland have put forward", and attacked the revolutionaries as "sectarian organisations a million miles from the struggles of the working class" before being howled down by the audience.

Sheila Rowbotham argued against both the Labourites

and those trying to build a revolutionary party in favour of "autonomous movements" like the women's movement.

A steelworker brought fraternal greetings from South Yorkshire strikers and a collection was taken for the strike.

Tariq Ali began by giving a good summary of why revolutionaries see it as necessary to smash the state machinery and what they would put in its place. He explained that rule by workers' councils would not remove the limited democratic rights that workers

Labour Party without "tying their hands". Why wait?

This rather condescending approach to the Labour Party turns the whole relation between revolutionaries and the Labour Party on its head. If there was a revolutionary party big enough to force its affiliation, it would already be able to challenge the Labour Party as a serious rival.

But how do we get to that point? By winning ones and twos in isolation from the party that the overwhelming majority of workers still relate to as their party? Or by taking part in the battles, going on in that party, the battles to enforce democratic accountability and to defeat the right-wing leadership?

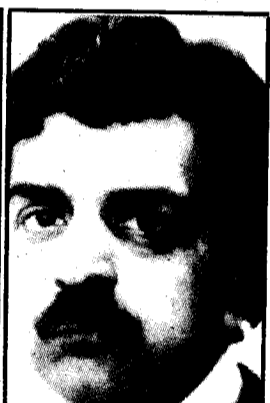
Retire

Audrey Wise summed this up in her speech when she said "I am not willing to retire from the struggle in the Labour Party and leave it to Jim Callaghan." She pointed out that Ali's approach left the Left in the party to fight to democratise it until the IMG decided to and was able to affiliate. "Without the help of a few more people it will take longer to get to the stage where the IMG will be able to affiliate". She emphasised

reality and the reality is that Labourism is not as weak as Tariq Ali believes.

When revolutionaries and left Labourites last held a debate in 1969, the Labour left, after a period of unpopular pro-capitalist Labour government, was at an all time low. Thousands of people had left the Labour Party out of disillusionment. Following the events of 1968, the revolutionary left was euphoric, riding the wave of the movement against the Vietnam War and a general radicalisation, everything seemed to be going our way. The Labourites were in disarray, unable to turn out more than a few tired supporters to the debate.

Today the situation is not so rosy. Despite five years of an anti-working class Labour government, in which Benn sat, despite the fact that numerically the revolutionary groups are stronger than they were ten years ago, and that they are far better implanted in the working class, the membership of the Labour Party is rising and the influence of the Labour Left is stronger than it has been for a long time. Revolutionaries cannot just wish this away or relate to it simply with proposals for united action (though united action is of course vital).



The revolutionaries: Foot, Rowbotham, Ali

enjoy under capitalism, but extend them so that they were exercised continuously and not just once every five years. Far from seeking to do this through a coup by a minority revolutionary party, revolutionaries sought to mobilise the vast majority of the population to take control of their own lives.

Comrade Ali argued that "socialists can't avoid coming to grips with Labourism", but said that at the moment, the main task was to build up a revolutionary party until some point in the future when it would be big enough to apply for Labour Party affiliation successfully!

"Affiliation will not tie our hands", he added. Yet even now revolutionaries can fight for their ideas inside the

the fact that "the arena of struggle is the labour movement itself", adding "Who got rid of Prentice? Not the SWP".

Much of the rest of her speech was a justification of work in Parliament, confusing the idea of using Parliament insofar as it is possible to aid workers' struggles in that way, with a strategy which argues that socialism can come through Parliament.

Tariq Ali finished his speech on a dramatic note: "Labourism is sickly and weak. We must fight to dislodge it." Fine sentiments, but how does one dislodge its ideological hold? If Labourism is weak, then the revolutionary left is a thousand times weaker.

It is always dangerous to mistake one's hopes for

It is not enough to hold a debate with the Labour Left once every ten years and come away with a warm feeling that "we really smashed them" and pretending that they will then go away. Many of the revolutionaries in the audience at the debate seemed to see the ideas of the Labour Left as something rather quaint to be jeered at. Yet in the last ten years this view has not undermined the political hold that the Labour Party has in the working class.

For as long as the revolutionary left fail to relate to that political hold and fail to see the Labour Party as part of the arena of struggle they will be doomed to impotence and the Benns will be able to lead the labour movement to new and ever more serious defeats.

WHILE WITCH HUNT CONTINUES

LABOUR RIGHT SCHEMES TO 'TAKE ON THE UNIONS'

THE UNDERHILL report on the Militant tendency is likely to set off another round of witch-hunting articles in the Fleet Street press when it is published this week. The pressure on the Labour Party National Executive to take action against Militant will again be stepped up.

But a number of left wing members of the NEC, including Tony Saunois, Joan Maynard and Jo Richardson, have hit back by sending Party Secretary Ron Hayward evidence of CIA links with prominent right-wingers. The NEC at its last meeting decided to drop an inquiry into Militant after the Organisation Sub-Committee had extended the inquiry to cover Labour right-wingers' links with the CIA and with bankers and industrialists.

And a good indication of the politics of the Right and how they are organising has come from the recently revealed minutes of a Campaign for Labour Victory meeting held in Newcastle on January 10th. The main speaker was David Owen, who with admirable frankness (the meeting being by invitation only) put forward the policies he would like the next Labour government to adopt.

"We have been too totally subservient to the trade unions... I would support giving financial support to the trade unions to hold elections [as the Tories propose]. We would be ill-advised to come out against it".

"The NUT has a stranglehold on education, a Labour Secretary of State should take them on".

As regards economic policy, Owen "would bless Margaret Thatcher for the VAT increases. We need markets for choice and variety... We're too weak on British Leyland and steel. Steel needs to be run down, but the Tories are running it down too fast."

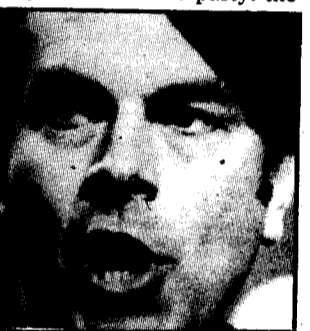
"We have not been prepared to take on the unions on tough policies... We have to take on the vested interests of the trade unions".

"I can't understand", Owen added, "how a favourable view of incomes policy is a right-wing view".

The main part of the meeting was given over to discussing how to combat the left's growing influence and the decisions of the last conference. Owen stated, "We have felt that those who want 'democracy' want it to be tilted in influence to their point of view" - but, moved to bluntness by the feeling that he was among friends, Owen added: "the same is true for us".

He clearly set down the CLV's objectives, "Militant is the real enemy, but we must also attack the craven ones who go along with them. The group we are after is the NEC. We have tried waiting for a few women to fix the women's section elections; we wanted to get rid of Joan Lestor for years but it hasn't happened".

One MP, Dave Clark, showed the doublethink that characterises the way CLV view the party: the



David Owen: 'The group we are after is the NEC'.

idea that only the Right wing have the right to organise. He said, "I support the CLV because I want to protect our party and I'm against 'machinations' and similar moves to 'capture positions'. I don't think we have lost control of the party, but we need to organise".

At the end of the meeting Mike Thomas MP gave out a list of things for the CLV to organise which consisted of nothing else but... 'machinations' and 'capturing positions'.

The CLV claims that Militant and the left are undermining the Labour Party. Yet as Owen's speech to the Newcastle meeting shows, his policies are simply a more 'moderate' version of the Tory government's.

BRUCE ROBINSON

SUNDAY TIMES BLOWS THE LID ON BLAIR PEACH COVER-UP

IN A FRONT page exclusive, the Sunday Times has exposed the police and DPP cover-up of the murder of Blair Peach by the Special Patrol Group in Southall last April.

The material submitted to the Director of Public Prosecutions by Yard investigators led by Commander Cass includes, says the Sunday Times,

- "Evidence tending to show one officer having been responsible for Peach's death";

- "Evidence suggesting that certain officers could be charged with causing an affray";

- "Evidence that lies had been told to investigators; that crucial questions had been met with refusals to

answer; and that charges of obstruction of justice could therefore be laid";

- "Evidence that senior uniformed officers in the Metropolitan Police had tried to thwart the inquiry".

All this evidence, but no charges have been brought. It has been a complete whitewash.

Blair Peach was killed, we now learn, by a team of six, five constables (White, Freestone, Lake, Richardson, and Scottow), led by Inspector Alan Murray.

When first asked whether they had been on the spot when Blair Peach was killed, they all denied it. Later, however, "under interrogation", they admitted that was "a mistake", and then

they refused to answer any direct questions about Blair Peach.

According to the Sunday Times, the biggest hitch for a prosecution is the lack of a witness who could definitely identify the person that hit Blair (though there is circumstantial evidence pointing to one officer). But as a press statement from the Blair Peach Memorial Fund and the Friends of Blair Peach Committee points out, no identity parade was held until over three months after the event. And then, on the police's own admission, the suspected officer was wearing a beard that he had grown since the Southall events!

The Sunday Times com-

pletely vindicate the stand taken by those campaigning to bring the cops to book for murdering Blair Peach.

They are demanding:

- a public enquiry into all the events in Southall, including Blair's death,
- the disbanding of the SPG,

- the immediate publication of Commander Cass's report,
- That the inquest should establish who killed Blair Peach.

The inquest re-opens on April 28th. The day before, there will be a demonstration organised to mark one year since the murder and the police rampage in Southall.

ANDREW HORNING

Why we
need
a
General
Strike

A new pamphlet from Workers' Action. 20p plus 10p postage from PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

Socialism and the Alternative Economic Strategy

by Martin Thomas

THE TORY GOVERNMENT's hard-faced class-war policy has shown dramatically what price capitalism will make the working class pay to get through its crisis. The future for working people is a dark abyss.

Unemployment is running steadily at 1½ million, and predictions only differ about when it will reach two million. Major industries and whole communities face devastation. Wages for many workers are lagging far behind prices, while the social spending cuts hit at living standards especially for the worst-paid workers.

House-building has declined to the lowest level for decades. Civil rights and trade union rights are under attack.

And on all these fronts, Labour Governments blazed the path the Tories are now following.

The waste and irrationality of capitalist production for profit is at the root of this crisis. The socialist economist Andrew Glyn has calculated that the waste through unemployment and under-use of capacity alone squanders resources which could provide for:

- a 50% increase in pensions and other benefits;
- and a minimum wage of £70;
- and a doubling of housebuilding;
- and 25% more spending on health and education;
- and a 10% increase in all workers' living standards.

And so serious activists in the labour movement are looking for a new strategy for socialist economic change, a strategy that provides an alternative to the failure of past Labour Governments. The "Alternative Economic Strategy" is the answer put forward in various forms by *Tribune*, by the Communist Party, and by the Labour Coordinating Committee. It is also backed by the TUC and, more energetically, by individual unions such as NUPE.

In the February issue of the LCC paper *Labour Activist*, Francis Cripps explains:

"The Alternative Economic Strategy was first conceived as an answer to the failure of Harold Wilson's National Plan in the 1960s and as a positive alternative to the confrontation policies of Edward Heath..."

"The key elements in the strategy envisaged when Labour came to power in 1974 included fundamental renegotiation of the Common Market, modernisation of British industry through the National Enterprise Board and planning agreements, and the social contract to bring trade union experience to bear on the formulation of government policies..."

A long list of other policies are found in various different versions of the AES. Cripps himself adds:

- * import controls and exchange controls,
- * "controls on the banking system",
- * "open government and industrial democracy".

Some supporters of the AES call for outright withdrawal from the EEC rather than renegotiation. Other demands include:

- * controls on export of capital,
- * workers' cooperatives (like Meriden or KME) and industrial democracy,
- * a wealth tax or a punitive tax on high incomes,
- * cuts in defence spending and restored or increased social services,
- * price controls (and, in some versions, wage controls),
- * a 35 hour week. (Some supporters of the AES, like John Hughes, argue that workers should then be willing "in return for the shorter working week", "to settle for more moderate advances in weekly pay".)
- * more nationalisations.

According to which of these policies they stress, versions of the AES can range from mild reformism to sweeping radicalism. But usually the core of the argument centres around planning agreements, increased social spending, import controls and price controls.

Through planning agreements between the Government, unions and big companies, through increased social spending, and through new nationalised industry, investment will be jacked up. The increased investment will boost overall demand in the economy both directly and indirectly (for example, through the increased demand for consumer goods by workers in investment industries). It will thus pull the whole economy out of slump into expansion.

The import controls ensure that the increased demand does not just pull in more imports. And the price controls make sure it does not just lead to inflation. The other AES measures make sure the expansion benefits the working class.

Since investment will be under public control, the AES — so it is argued — will shift society away from the dominance of profit to what some AES supporters call a "popular control economy" (John Eaton, Michael Barratt Brown and Ken Coates: *Economic Strategy for the Labour movement, an Alternative*).

A step-by-step perspective ... Socialism in the next twenty-five years

In this "popular control economy" profit-making, large-scale private ownership of industry, and a market economy will remain. The changes proposed fall far short of the full socialist programme of collective ownership of the major branches of industry and democratic overall planning under the control of the working class. For some AES supporters (for example, Stuart Holland in his book *The Socialist Challenge*) more sweeping socialist change is *undesirable*; continuing private ownership and market economics is necessary to counter trends to Stalinist bureaucracy. For most people who support the AES, however, the more radical socialist programme is not undesirable, but just unrealistic in the immediate future. The "popular control economy" is a more realistic first step.

Holland puts this argument too: "A government Bill requiring leading private companies to expand [let alone nationalising them without compensation - WA] would be likely to result in at least widespread non-cooperation, if not a capital strike and organised management opposition paralleling the successful opposition of the ... labour movement ... to the Industrial Relations Act." And so "new

public enterprise" should first be set up which will push the big private firms into expansion through the pressure of competition. In any case, he adds, "The kind of strategy sketched in this volume is about as far as any Labour government, or Parliamentary Labour Party, is likely to aim, in the decade ahead". (No word about how far rank and file workers might want, or need, to aim).

In line with this step-by-step perspective, AES supporters see the "popular control economy" as being introduced through a long, slow process. The LCC was launched under the slogan: "Socialism in the next 25 years"; and one statement of the AES, by Tony Benn, Francis Morrell, and Francis Cripps, is entitled "A ten-year industrial strategy for Britain".

But all the explanations of the AES say very little about what sort of political and industrial struggle would take place in those 10 or 25 years. Alongside the mention of "the injection of people versed in the economic philosophy of democratic and socialist control" into top jobs (Eaton et al.), there is also mention of mass pressure and mass involvement. But it is very vague: "keen trade union pressure", "the toughest possible union lobby" (Eaton et al.), "the negotiated and bargained support of the trade union movement" (Holland) — all suggesting tough talk across the negotiating tables, rather than any action on the picket lines or on the streets.

But can the tiger be skinned claw by claw?

Even leaving aside the strict economic feasibility of the AES, it runs into serious problems here. How will it be enforced? Will the capitalists just grin and put up with it as their power and privilege is slowly whittled away? Will they sit quietly in the dentist's chair as their teeth are extracted one by one? Can the tiger be skinned claw by claw? Won't the British capitalists and army chiefs follow the example of their equivalents in Chile?

In the earlier versions of the AES, these problems were hardly mentioned. Since the experience of the last Labour Government, however, some AES supporters have expressed more awareness of the problem of capitalist resistance.

Tony Benn has argued that the top civil servants possess huge power, used without any accountability to maintain the status quo. Michael Meacher (in the *Guardian*, March 17th) has talked about "new patterns of power coming to the fore in Britain", as the police force acquires new powers and a more overtly political role.

Many activists have noted Field Marshal Carver's recent statement that some army officers were considering a military coup at the time of the strikes and Labour's election victories in 1974. Francis Cripps in *Labour Activist* argues that: "The central point about the alternative strategy is that it requires a seizure of power by a democratically elected government from international institutions like the IMF, the EEC and foreign companies and banks, as well as from managerial cliques in the City, Whitehall and large British companies".

Alan Fisher of NUPE has argued that the labour movement should not "regard the State as in some mysterious way a neutral body. It never has been and it never will be."

None of the AES supporters has tied all the threads together in a connected theory of class power. The implications, though, are clear: *the State, with its apparatus of violence and repression, exists to maintain and where necessary to forcibly defend the power and wealth of the capitalist class. Only determined class struggle will defeat that State. And in that struggle the workers must be prepared to use violence.*

In a situation where acute crisis gives capitalism little leeway, not only a thoroughgoing socialist programme, but even a relatively limited policy like the AES, would provoke

violent reaction from the capitalists and their state machine. The experience of Chile proves that. Unless the workers are prepared to fight back, the result will be a counter-revolutionary massacre.

The supporters of the AES disagree with these conclusions. For them, the AES provides for peaceful, gradual and democratic (i.e. parliamentary) change towards socialism. And so they end up with very limp conclusions. The last Labour government, they hint, could not be blamed too much. The power of the state machinery and big business tied it hand and foot. (But Tony Benn, for example, never explains why he did not openly denounce and call for action against that power while he was in the Cabinet). And now they call for action, not to break up that state machinery, but to hem it in and put pressure on it.

To try and give some justification to this blurring over of the fight against capitalist resistance, AES supporters often hint that the AES would not hurt the bosses too much. The bosses won't like being forced to invest more, but once the investment gets under way, there will be a snowball effect of general prosperity.

In fact, the figures show that investment is low because profitability is low, not because of some unaccountable greed or idleness on the bosses' part. AES supporters sometimes contest this with the assertion that the bosses have huge profits concealed by accounting tricks, and they make this argument sound very radical and anti-capitalist... but actually it is just the old, naive line that all social conflicts arise from misunderstandings.

Stuart Holland argues the question of violence directly. "Most of the electorate", he writes, "are not likely to change it [the parliamentary-democratic machinery of restraints] for armed confrontation with the existing system if they can avoid it". Further, he points to "the failure of such attempts at armed uprising in Western Europe in the 20th century... the violent path to revolution is ridden with more risk than concerted pressure for change within democratic structures."

We must fight to win — and prepare for violent capitalist resistance

Where peaceful methods are possible, revolutionaries prefer them as much as reformists do. But revolutionary politics means fighting to win, with the most decisive methods of class struggle appropriate at each stage — and clearly warning the working class that when it comes to crucial battles, the capitalist class will dump or shelve parliamentary formalities, and resort to violence.

If workers are solidly organised and determined to fight for socialism arms in hand, then there is a chance of capitalism being overthrown with relatively little bloodshed. But the greater the political influence of people with politics like Holland, the greater the chance of protracted and bloody resistance to socialism — or of victorious counter-revolution, which is always ten times more bloody than revolution.

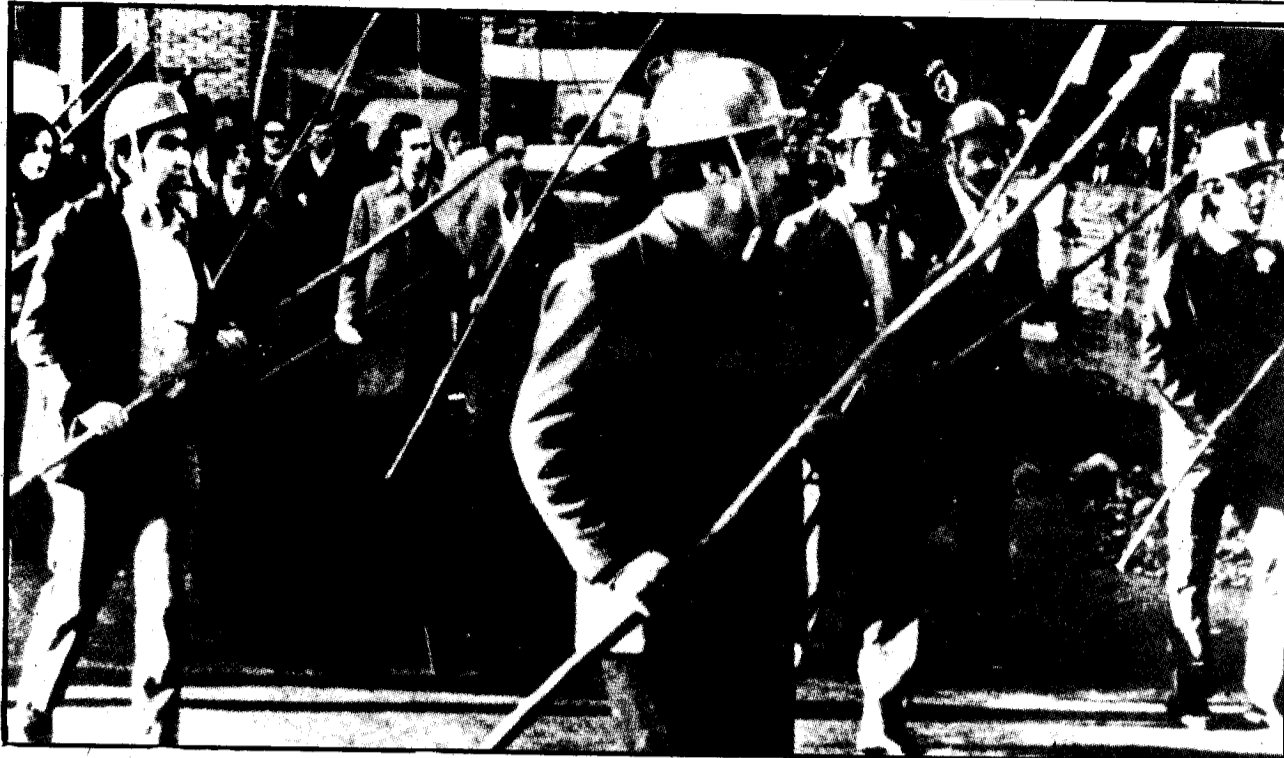
Holland argues that "socialists... may be able to cause some [soldiers] to refuse to fire on workers. But they are less likely to do so if the workers themselves are armed..." This is exactly the opposite of the truth! Armies are bound together by strong discipline. For soldiers to come over to the workers' side, they must be confident that the workers are going to win. They must see that the workers are ready to fight to the end.

In May 1968 in France, it was not humble persuasion, but the students' heroic battling on the barricades on May 11th, that inspired the workers to seize the factories and the police union to declare that its members would refuse to act against the workers.

Leon Trotsky summed it up like this: "No one has said that the revolutionary method automatically ensures victory."

What is decisive is not the method in itself but its correct application, the Marxist orientation in events, powerful organisation, the confidence of the masses won through long experience, a perspicacious and bold leadership.

"The issue of every struggle depends on the moment and conditions of the conflict and the relation of forces. Marxism is quite far from the thought that armed conflict



Chile — the workers demonstrated with pikes, but the reformist leaders preached a "peaceful road to socialism". Result: massacre.

is the only revolutionary method, or a panacea good under all conditions. Marxism in general knows no fetishes, neither parliamentary nor insurrectional.

"There is a time and a place for everything. There is one thing that one can say at the beginning: 'On the parliamentary road the socialist proletariat nowhere and never conquered power nor ever even as yet has drawn close to it...'

"Without [revolutionary preparation], civil war when conditions force it — and they always end by forcing it — will take place under conditions most unfavourable for the proletariat, will depend upon many hazards, and then, even in the case of military victory, power can escape the hands of the proletariat."

The immediate demands of the AES: 'realistic' for the working class... or for the capitalist nation-state

A supporter of the AES could reply: 'Yes, the final showdown will be violent. But the revolutionaries themselves say it is not a question of civil war tomorrow. In the meantime we need immediate demands. The AES fills that need.'

The debate then focuses on the difference between the immediate demands proposed by revolutionaries and those proposed by the AES. Some demands, like the 35 hour week, are common to both policies. But revolutionaries go on to demand:

- * work-sharing without loss of pay.
- * workers' control of production, without taking responsibility for managing capitalism.
- * automatic wage increases in line with the cost of living.
- * nationalisation without compensation.
- * troops out of Ireland now.

We actually oppose some of the AES policies, like import controls. And we consider planning agreements to be a right wing pseudo-alternative to nationalisation.

What lies behind these differences?

Revolutionaries' demands are designed to be "realistic" in terms of being close to the needs and the struggles of the working class. We aim to map out a way forward for the strikes and other struggles in which workers begin to move against the bosses, advancing the workers' unity, class consciousness and political independence. Most of our demands have actually come forward during strikes many times in recent years.

The AES demands are "realistic" according to a different principle: in terms of being close to the needs and the activities of the capitalist state.

Thus Holland asserts the realism of his strategy by arguing at length how the Italian state concern IRI "does work in the public interest".

Moreover, the supporters of the AES at least nod recognition to the fact that capitalism's crisis is international. But then all their policies are *national*, focused on what the (British) *nation state* should do.

Consider import controls. The AES supporters argue that British import controls would not lead to retaliation by other countries. We doubt the argument... but it is in any case beside the point when the philosophy of the AES indicates *import controls all round, retaliation or no retaliation*. There is nothing in the argument for import controls in Britain that cannot be (and is not) applied in almost every other country.

And import controls all round just mean less international trade, more slump, higher prices, and stricter barriers between nations.

Import controls can only make sense from a viewpoint which sees a socialist policy as a policy for Britain and does not even ask the question of socialist policy internationally. (Either that, or it relies naively on the scheme put forward by some Cambridge economists for balanced import controls all round, which would supposedly allow each country to expand without problems of an inrush of exports, and would thus, after successful expansion, actually permit

a higher level of trade than without import controls. The scheme would make sense... if the world economy were an arena of rational planning rather than of ruthless capitalist competition.)

A socialist policy must include a state monopoly of foreign trade as part of the general collectivisation of the economy. It would be a temporary measure until the country is integrated into a wider socialist federation — and it would go hand in hand with efforts to get international workers' unity in struggle, and to spread the socialist revolution.

Import controls within the existing system mean an attempt to export unemployment, and inevitably disrupt and



Tony Benn says the last Labour government was a prisoner of the top civil servants. But why does he wait until now to denounce those defenders of the status quo?

divert from international workers' unity. Thus, while many workers passively support import controls, independent working class action for import controls is very rare. Serious campaigns for import controls are almost always joint employer-worker affairs.

The model for the AES: World War 2 controls and siege economy

Again and again, World War 2 economic policy is cited as a model for the AES: a siege economy, government controls. Eaton, Barratt Brown and Coates even argue for "utility production of furniture, household goods, clothing etc (following World War 2 precedents) and the rationing of basic necessities at a subsidised price."

This focus on action from above, by the state, even shows up in the very name, Alternative Economic Strategy. A real socialist policy can never be just an "economic" policy; it is a policy for mobilising the working class, for challenging and breaking up the capitalist state, for developing direct workers' power, and for changing economic and other social relations, all as part of the same political struggle. The "economy" is not a machine that can be tinkered with at will by this or that government, with the class struggle only applying external "pressure" one way or the other.

Since the fiasco of the Wilson-Callaghan government, some supporters of the AES have widened it to include demands which are not narrowly economic, like freedom of information and curbing capitalist control of the media. But fundamentally the AES remains a strategy with at best a static view of class struggle; its perspective is not one of stormy battles, but of the labour movement stolidly applying "pressure" in the right directions while Labour ministers zealously issue their planning agreements and control regulations and rationing schemes — and the capitalists sit it out with glum resignation...

So how "realistic" is the AES? Many of its demands are state-control measures already tried and tested by capitalism, and can certainly be implemented... but usually in a form completely contrary to the best intentions of the AES supporters.

Thus the Social Contract, hailed in 1975 by Eaton, Barratt Brown and Coates, and by Holland, as being "despite ambiguities" a decisive step forward for trade union control of economic priorities, ended up clearly exposed as a Social Con-trick. Price controls were brought in by the Labour Government — and were clearly a sham. So were planning agreements.

In 1965 Ken Coates (then the leading spokesman of the IMG!) greeted wage curbs with the slogan: "Incomes Policy — only under workers' control". Neither Coates nor the IMG would risk the same slogan today.

Industrial democracy of the sort proposed in most versions of the AES already exists in West Germany — and is a means of drawing workers into helping organise their own exploitation.

Import controls already exist on goods like textiles, and may be extended. Stuart Holland commented recently: "We may find that a right wing government of authentic or surrogate conservatives maintains that it has delivered 'the' alternative economic strategy, by introducing import controls, without any fundamental change in the balance or benefit of economic power in society."

AES supporters could protest that we cannot judge their strategy by the actions of those who misuse it. But the misuse is built into the strategy. Because the only means proposed for realising the aims of the AES are pressure and lobbying on precisely the sort of people and institutions who will "misuse" those aims, it is only a logical result that the radical-minded supporters of the AES end up "deceived" and disappointed.

We need a programme for a fightback now, not just for advice to the next government

They end up disappointed in the working class, too. Since the demands of the AES mostly do not gear into workers' struggles at all, and since the only role given to workers in the AES perspective is one of pressure and lobbying, there is predictably little *working class activity* behind the AES, despite the widespread sympathy for it. And so Michael Meacher ends up lamenting: "You say our ideas have a big resonance within the working class, but I don't think that's true. I'm not sure we have such resonance within the trade unions... We're not getting ordinary people in [the LCC] who are officials, stewards or just ordinary working people." (*Socialist Organiser*, February 1980).

A Marxist programme is nothing but the conscious expression of the struggle to create the active agent that will carry out the programme — the working class as a class-conscious unit. The working class reorganises itself, re-educates itself, and unites itself in the struggle and the ideas of the revolutionaries, as Marx put it, "merely express in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle". But the AES concerns itself with devising "realistic" ways for the labour movement as it is to tinker with the capitalist system as it is.

AES supporters will sometimes tell revolutionaries that our ideas are just too much in advance of the labour movement. We should be realistic and put forward policies acceptable to the movement as it is. But by this attitude they make themselves the reflection of passive, obsolete and conservative elements in the movement. Marxists, basing ourselves on the active, new, dynamic tendencies in the movement, fight for a programme to make the movement quite different from what it is!

The supporters of the AES mostly oppose Stalinism. Some see 'market socialism' and workers' cooperatives as an alternative to Stalinism. But their socialism is fundamentally statist, elitist and bureaucratic too.

To really implement the radical aim which the AES endeavours to spell out — serious working class control over production and distribution — tremendous class mobilisation on the picket lines and the streets would be needed. To develop that struggle, socialists need a linked chain of demands starting from workers' most immediate concerns, not just an agenda for a reforming government. And the working class cannot be mobilised to take control over production on the basis of going halfway, and reaching some sort of compromise with the capitalists in the AES's "popular control economy", but only on the basis of fighting to win. A mobilisation that could enforce the AES would necessarily go much further than the AES.

The AES is not geared to mobilising workers. It is geared to advising the next government (always the next...)

Indeed it is important what the next government does. But the working class needs to fight back now. Without an all-out fightback now, and the linking of that fightback with a struggle to restructure and reorient the labour movement, all talk of radical policies for the next government is empty words.

And many workers who support the AES are ready for a fightback now. They see the demands for a 35 hour week, and for more trade union control over production, and for now are willing to take the AES economic experts' words for it on the other demands. They interpret the AES in terms of class struggle.

In that attitude there lies a contradiction. The more there are *class battles* for the demands in the AES, the more broadly the struggle develops, the more workers will be convinced (and convince others) of the need for a more radical programme than the AES. The AES, as it is written on paper, certainly is not the answer to the capitalist crisis. But a real struggle to mobilise the labour movement for the demands of the AES (and an active intervention of Marxists with a revolutionary programme) can be the beginning of an answer... and the end of the AES.

COMMUNISM AGAINST STALINISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

Stalinism and its place in history

INTRODUCTION

THE FINAL SECTION of the Fourth International's 1948 Theses on The USSR and Stalinism, which we print this week, contrasts the Trotskyist theory of Stalinism with other would-be Marxist theories.

The document focuses on the different perspectives for world politics implied by the different theories. The Trotskyist theory of the degenerated workers' state sees the bureaucracy in the USSR as a malignant parasitic growth, due to "conditional factors [isolation of the revolution, backwardness of the country, interaction between the bureaucratization in Russia and the bureaucratization of the Communist International, etc]". It thus maintains a working-class revolutionary perspective for world politics.

The theories according to which the USSR is state capitalist or bureaucratic collectivist, however, reflect "the illusion that the degeneration of the USSR is not due to relative factors of the world situation and that the retardation of the labour movement is a 'final historic phenomenon'". By calling the bureaucracy a class, in Marxist terms, they give it a much bigger role than a parasitic growth. Inescapably they tend towards a perspective of a new class society as the historic successor to capitalism, a perspective which relegates the workers' revolution to the distant future.

In this respect, the "anti-Stalinist" theories of a new class in the USSR are very closely parallel to the pro-Stalinist theories which accept Stalinism as historically necessary.

39 The exceptional importance which the Russian discussion has assumed, first in the Trotskyist movement, and now in the whole world, both in working-class and bourgeois public opinion, is due to the absolutely unforeseen development of Russian society since the October Revolution, and to the first-rate position Russia occupies in world relations today. The importance of the 'Russian Question' in ideological discussions is only a reflection of the historic importance of the October Revolution and of the political weight of the Stalinist dictatorship in world affairs.

However, inside the revolutionary workers' movement, the historic significance of the Russian question goes far beyond an explanation of the Russian and Stalinist phenomena themselves. As was the case from the start of the Left Opposition's fight against the theory of 'socialism in one country', what is at stake in this discussion is nothing less than the maintenance of Marxism against revisionism and disintegrating tendencies appearing in the labour movement, under the pressure of bourgeois or petty-bourgeois ideology.

40 Nineteenth-century revisionism was deeply impregnated with petty-bourgeois optimism, a reflection of the relatively 'peaceful' development of capitalism. As long as 'the movement' seemed able to constantly win new positions for the proletariat—and above all, new benefits for the labour bureaucracy—the illusion that 'the movement is everything, the final goal nothing' could find a wide response among the most satisfied layers of the labour bureaucracy and the radical petty-bourgeoisie.

Present-day revisionism is deeply impregnated with petty-bourgeois pessimism which reflects the catastrophic developments of the past three decades, the unceasing defeats of the workers, the monstrous degeneration of the Soviet Union and the development of barbaric tendencies in the contemporary world. As long as a decisive revolutionary victory has not taken place in an advanced country—and the petty-bourgeoisie is only attracted by the power of real ideas insofar as they are coupled with the idea of real power—the illusion that the degeneration of the USSR is not due to relative factors of the world situation and that the retardation of the labour movement is a 'final historic phenomenon' will necessarily be largely echoed among the most discouraged and disappointed layers of the radical petty-bourgeoisie and the older generations of workers.

It is not by accident that present-day revisionism has most frequently crystallized around the discussion of the 'Russian Question'. Revolutionary Marxism gathers enormous strength from the practical example of the victory of October, the first decisive demonstration of the possibility for

the proletariat to conquer power under the leadership of a resolute revolutionary party. Similarly, those who question this possibility are able to counterpose to the October experience the fact of the degeneration of the workers' state and of the Communist International.

41 Present-day revisionism which has found parallel expression at the two extreme poles of the revolutionary Marxist movement is, on the whole, characterized by the following conceptions:

a) The degeneration of the workers' state is not the product of conditional factors (isolation of the revolution, backwardness of the country, interaction between the bureaucratization in Russia and the bureaucratization of the Communist International, etc.), but is inherent either in the nature of Bolshevism (the revolutionary party) or in the proletariat itself, or in a combination of both.

b) The bureaucratic dictatorship in Russia does not constitute a historic 'accident' which will merely prove to be a passing stage on humanity's road to socialism. On the contrary, it is a necessary phase in the historic development of mankind (or its fall into barbarism).

c) The retreat of the working-class movement in the interval from 1923 to 1939 is not due to the problem of revolutionary leadership, that is, the still inadequate development of the revolutionary vanguard at this stage, determined by a whole number of historic factors; but reflects either the incapacity of the proletariat to fulfil its historic mission, or its incapacity to select a revolutionary leadership, or a combination of the two.

42 The most finished 'anti-Stalinist' expression of this revisionism has been worked out under the pressure of imperialism in the United States!—by Burnham in his *Managerial Revolution*, and by Dwight Macdonald. Applying the above-cited conceptions, they arrived at the following conclusions:

a) The Soviet bureaucracy is a new class whose domination will mark a necessary stage in the historic development towards which the whole capitalist world is heading (similarity of state enterprises in the USSR, Germany, Japan, USA, etc.).

b) Marxism, which proved incapable of foreseeing this new development and which is based entirely on the revolutionary potential of the proletariat, has turned out to be utopian and bankrupt. A 'new' maximum programme of social perfection must be drawn up. Up till now these 'new programmes' (in Macdonald's case quite openly) have amounted to a retreat to pre-Marxist socialist conceptions.

The most finished 'pro-Stalinist' expression of this revisionism—under the pressure of Stalinism in France!—has been supplied by Bettelheim, Martinet and Co. in the *Revue Internationale*. By likewise applying the above-listed ideas, they come to the following conclusions:

a) Owing to its lack of homogeneity and technical education, the working class will be obliged to pass through a stage of social differentiation and inequality after its conquest of power. Historic progress is assured by the privileged strata of the proletariat (the bureaucracy). It is the task of the state to defend these privileges.

b) During the epoch of decaying imperialism, the proletariat ceases to grow numerically and ideologically and instead retreats, witnessing the decline of its strength and the decay of its social structure. The failure of the 'classic' proletarian revolutions of 1918-23 is final. The Leninist strategy of the proletarian revolution is a thing of the past. In view of this incapacity of the proletariat to fulfil its historic mission, humanity has no other road to progress except to try to 'participate' in the statification of the means of production by the Soviet bureaucracy on an ever larger scale, and to draw up a new minimum programme in order to attenuate the violent character of this process.

The parallelism of these two revisionist tendencies strikes the eye. There is no room for them in the revolutionary movement. But some of their features appear at the bottom of mistaken conceptions on the Russian question which have found expression in our own ranks. What is important is first of all to lay bare the inner logic of this incipient revisionism and make its proponents aware of its dangerous consequences to the whole of Marxism. Secondly, one must carefully distinguish between a revisionist position on the Russian question, which endeavours to remain within the framework of the Marxist conception of our epoch, and one which carries with it the danger of branching out more and more into a complete revision of Marxism.

43 The adherents of the theory of the existence of 'state capitalism' try on the whole to maintain their views within the framework of the general Marxist conception of our epoch. They maintain in its entirety the Leninist strategy of the proletarian revolution. They doubt

neither the revolutionary capacity of the proletariat nor the possibility of building a revolutionary party by relying, first and foremost, on the class struggle and the experience of the workers' struggles. Their revisionism appears when, by characterizing the USSR as a capitalist country, they must logically consider the present Soviet society as a sort of 'future picture' of capitalist society in general, and must, as much as Burnham, point out the 'statification' tendencies inside and outside Russia. This is based on superficial and formal analogies, which completely distort the understanding of the profound tendencies of contemporary capitalism and of the fundamental overturn constituted by the October Revolution.

44 These analogies are, in the main, the following:

a) The analogy between the nationalization of the means of production in the USSR and the tendency towards the statification of the means of production in the capitalist world.

This is the most obvious example of the formal character of all these analogies. As a matter of fact, in Russia it was a question of expropriating and destroying the bourgeoisie as a class through the revolutionary action of the proletariat and the workers' state. In capitalist countries what we have is the nationalization—with compensation—of certain unprofitable sectors of bourgeois economy for the benefit of the big monopolies. The 'fusion between the state and economy' in Russia meant the destruction of the bourgeoisie as a class. The fusion between the state and economy in the capitalist countries—particularly Germany and the USA—meant the destruction of the independence of certain capitalist sectors and their complete subjection to monopoly capital. The fundamental difference between these two processes lies in this, that only the proletarian revolution shows the 'striving to expropriate the monopolists', whereas the capitalist countries not only do not show this 'striving' but



Industrialisation — construction of a coke-chemical plant

on the contrary show a tendency to strengthen and enrich the monopolists who subject the whole social life to their direct control.

b) The analogy between the tendency towards the fragmentation of the world market, inherent in decaying capitalist economy, and the monopoly of foreign trade established by the October Revolution.

In reality, the protectionist and 'autarchic' tendencies, which are elements of war economy and palliative measures against crises resorted to by the decadent bourgeoisie, do not save these countries from exploitation by foreign capital, but rather increase the latter's profits to the degree that these countries attempt to become 'self-sufficient'. At their highest level of 'autarchy', capitalist Germany and Japan returned the highest profits to American capital. In the case of the USSR, there has been a drastic elimination of the



COMMUNISM AGAINST STALINISM IN EASTERN EUROPE

country's exploitation by foreign capital. The pressure of the world market continues, but only indirectly.

c) The analogy between 'planning' tendencies inherent in monopoly capital and the Soviet planning. The national 'planning' of monopoly capital, Trotsky said, consists in 'artificially restricting production in certain sectors and building up, just as artificially, other sectors at colossal expenditures'. It results in 'an unstable regularization, bought at the price of a lowering of national economy taken as a whole, an increase in the world chaos, and a complete shattering of the financial system, absolutely indispensable for socialist planning'. Soviet planning, on the contrary, while far from being harmonious, has nevertheless succeeded in realizing enormous and real economic progress, developing the productive forces in all sectors, raising—at least until the inception of the Third Five-Year Plan—the living standards and wants of tens of millions of ordinary men and women.

There is a qualitative difference between these two tendencies. The one maintains profits as the regulator of economy and subordinates 'plans' together with the whole of economic life not to the interests of an abstract 'capitalism' but to the interests, quite tangible, concrete and definite, of the monopolists. Soviet planning, on the contrary, derives its profound impetus from the fact that private appropriation of surplus value has been radically suppressed, and that consciousness is beginning to replace profit—although in a distorted form—as the decisive element in the regulation of economic development.

d) The analogy between 'production for production's sake' in the capitalist system and the development of productive forces in the USSR (in the first place, the growth of the sector of the means of production); the analogy between the operation of the law of value in the capitalist countries and in the USSR, and so on.

What is really involved here is a question of starting from unproved premises. Proceeding from the assumption that Russia is a capitalist country, the proponents of this theory interpret the development of Soviet productive forces in terms of the capitalist form of the law of value. But a stupendous development of the productive forces, especially of heavy industry, characterizes not only capitalism but also the transitional society after the conquest of power by the proletariat. The 'law of value' applies not alone to capitalist society but to all pre- and post-capitalist societies where the production of commodities continues to exist. In Russia, the 'law of value' is certainly valid, and has not ceased operating since 1917, but it no longer applies in the same way as in capitalist society. Prices are not dependent upon the average rate of profit. Money does not possess the quality of transforming itself into capital.

This whole theory is based on a total absence of any attempt to analyse the specific forms of transitional economy such as will exist in every workers' state until the complete disappearance of classes and the final advent of Communism.

45 The reproach levelled against us by the adherents of the 'state capitalism' theory, that we are 'economists' or that we base our analysis on a 'fetishism of nationalized property' is absurd. In reality, our analysis starts from the fundamental difference between bourgeois nationalizations (England, France, the 'buffer-zone' countries) and all of the upheavals that have taken place in Russia as a result of the proletarian revolution, culminating in the expropriation and destruction of the bourgeoisie as a class and the transfer of the means of production into collective ownership.

It is up to the adherents of the theory of 'state capitalism' to explain how the bureaucracy constitutes a State capitalist class, while at the same time preserving property relations that resulted from the destruction of capitalism and while itself destroying the new rural bourgeoisie in the USSR: It is up to them to explain how the annihilation of the conquests of October has been possible without a change in property relations and without a new social overturn. It is up to them to explain how they can reconcile the 'capitalist' nature of the USSR with the total overturn in production and property relations which German imperialism was obliged to institute in the occupied areas of the USSR, as well as those changes which the Soviet bureaucracy found itself obliged to institute in the reoccupied areas and in the provinces annexed to the USSR. On all these points, this theory clearly shows its incapacity to interpret the reality of 'soviet life in a Marxist manner.

46 However, the most obvious internal contradiction of this theory appears in its conception of the Stalinist parties. Here it attempts to reconcile the needs of revolutionary strategy—which necessitate the conception of Stalinist parties as degenerated workers' parties—with the conclusions of this theory, according to which the Stalinist parties must be considered as agents of a capitalist-fascist power. The absurd results achieved by this reconciliation—which involves a transformation of Stalinist parties from workers' parties into bourgeois parties the moment they conquer power—together with the impossibility of explaining the self-evident phenomenon that the influx of the radicalized masses into the parties which are agents of a 'capitalist' power is a sign of the revolutionary tide—this itself is the most striking refutation of this theory.

47 The adherents of the theory of 'bureaucratic collectivism' have an advantage over those who consider the USSR as 'state capitalist' to the extent that they clearly understand the non-capitalist nature of the USSR and are capable of understanding the changes in

production and property relations brought about by the capitalist invasion of the USSR and those effected after their withdrawal. But, on the other hand, their revision of Marxism does not stop with the Russian question itself.

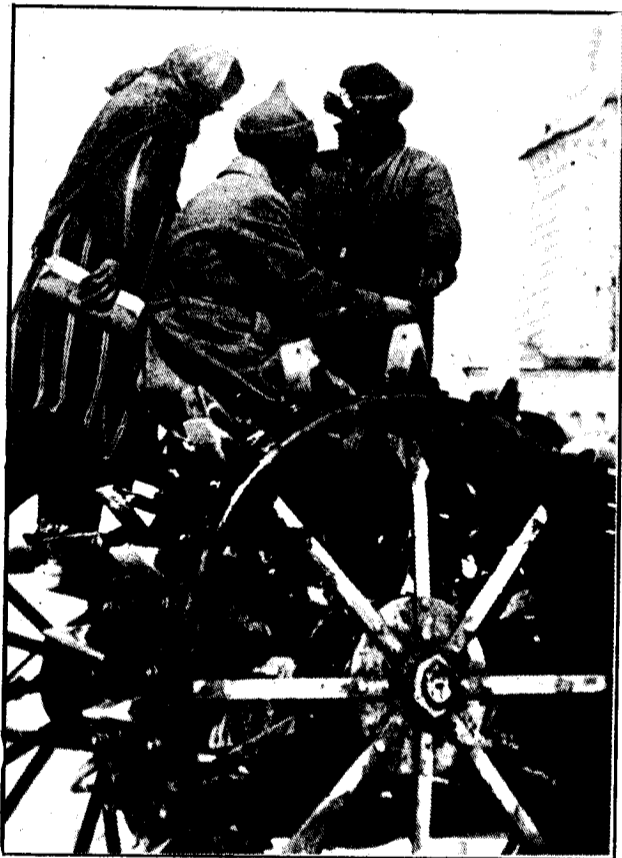
Not only are they obliged completely to revise the Marxist conception of the development of capitalist society, but they also question a series of the fundamental concepts of historical materialism. This is, of course, their full right. One must only ask them to be more consistent. As Trotsky has already stated and as only the thoroughgoing revisionists (Macdonald, Burnham and Co.) have clearly expressed, the logical outcome of the theory of bureaucratic collectivism is the conception that the proletariat is incapable of fulfilling its historic mission and the rejection of Marxism as utopian.

48 The term 'class' is not an accidental notion in Marxist sociology. It is the basic concept in the application or negation of the whole Marxist conception of history. For this reason, it has well-defined and distinct limits. The application of these delimitations to the bureaucracy leads to the absurd conclusion that the bureaucracy is a 'class' which possesses none of the characteristic traits of other classes in history.

a) Every class in history is characterized by an independent and fundamental role in the process of production—at a definite stage in the historic process—and by its own roots in the economic structure of society.

b) Every class in history represents a definite stage of historic progress, including the classes that arise in periods of historic recession whose task is to safeguard the technical conquests, etc. Each represents a definite stage in the social division of labour, a definite stage in the evolution of the ownership of the means of production.

c) Every class in history is a historically necessary organ



A soldier teaches an Uzbek peasant how to operate a tractor as part of the First Five Year plan

fulfilling a necessary function from the standpoint of the development of the productive forces.

d) Every class in history, advancing its candidacy to power—and all the more so, every ruling class!—is conscious of its role, possesses its own specific ideology and features, and attains a minimum of stability in its composition, a stability which it endeavours to transmit to the succeeding generations.

e) Explicitly according to Marx, no social formation can become a class solely on the basis of its higher income, its political privileges or monopolies (of education and so on).

It is evident that the Soviet bureaucracy only possesses features which, from a Marxist standpoint, do not make of it a class. It is in no way 'a historically necessary organ' but a malignant growth upon the proletariat. It has no roots whatsoever in the process of production, but owes its position exclusively to privileges in distribution. It does not represent any historic 'progress' but corrodes and undermines the progress made possible by production relations inherited from the October Revolution. It does not represent any phase in the evolution of property but maintains the property relations established by the proletarian revolution. In no way does it have its own ideology or composition. The best indication that Russia is not a new class society but a society corrupted by the appearance of a parasitic growth is this fact: Contrary to what happens in every exploiting society, the solidity of Russian economy stands not in direct but in inverse proportion to the privileges of the bureaucracy.

49 Any conscientious and consistent application of class characteristics to the bureaucracy can result only in a justification of its historic role and in a historic condemnation of the proletariat. If the bureaucracy is really a class, it follows that the bureaucratic stage of

society's development is a historic necessity and that the proletariat is not yet capable of ruling the world. This was Burnham's conclusion which the adherents of the theory of 'bureaucratic collectivism' in the revolutionary movement have not dared to draw.

They have tried to escape this fundamental contradiction of their position by emphasizing the 'unique' character of the bureaucracy, born of exceptional Russian conditions. For the same reason they have put forward the anti-Marxist theory that in an epoch of 'collective' ownership—as if such an epoch exists outside the epoch of the proletarian revolution!—class domination no longer alters property relations, but alters only the domination of the state. However, the expansion of the bureaucracy beyond the Soviet frontiers has impelled these theoreticians towards a new revisionist extension of their theory. The Communist parties throughout the world are now considered as 'nuclei' of a new class. With this definition the whole Marxist definition of class is invalidated.

For it is evident that the Communist parties and their members do not play any independent role in the process of production and would become a 'class' solely on the strength of political privileges. And it is evident that they can obtain these privileges only to the extent that the proletariat proves incapable of overthrowing decaying capitalism. A new stage would open up in the history of mankind, that of bureaucratic collectivism on a continental (or even world) scale more or less identified with barbarism.

The proponents of this theory have never tried to analyse the laws of the development of this new society and to show through what operation of social contradictions it would ever cease existing. By insisting on the 'decay' of the proletariat and its reduction to the 'slave' status, they can only underline the conclusion, flowing from this theory, that the proletariat is incapable of fulfilling its historic mission. Its proponents, if they were consistent, would have to abandon the programme of the socialist revolution—at least in those countries where bureaucratic collectivism has, according to them, been victorious; and replace it with a 'new minimum programme' for the defence of the slaves' interests. By its implications, this theory would liquidate the Fourth International in these countries; and its logical application would completely paralyse the activities in capitalist countries in face of the problem of the Stalinist parties.

50 Every exploited class which takes over power in a society where the development of the productive forces does not yet guarantee the satisfaction of all social needs must necessarily pave the way to a class exploitation. For the building of a classless society a high level of social wealth is required. The Russian experience only confirms the second aspect of this Marxist law. For, while Russia's level of development of the productive forces does not allow a gradual progress towards a classless society, world economy as a whole is over-ripe for the building of socialism. Just as Stalin did not understand the interdependence between the development of the capitalist world and Russian development, so this interdependence is ignored by all those who believe they discern new social forces in Russia, by abstracting the latter from the decisive active forces on the world arena, which have far from spoken their last word. We start from the assertion that the proletariat has preserved intact its revolutionary potential; we do not think that the historic phase of the October Revolution is already dead and buried, or that Russia is a demonstration—either as an isolated or a world symptom—of the proletariat's incapacity to hold power, as well as a demonstration of the instability of the production relations established by the proletarian revolution. The theory of 'socialism in one country' combines the myopia of successful, satisfied bureaucrats with their profound distrust of the revolutionary potential of the world proletariat. The practice of Soviet expansionism, which appears to deny the 'theoretical' postulates of this theory, is in reality its inescapable logical conclusion. The theories which picture the USSR as a new class society are bound to place at least a question mark over the relative capacity of the proletariat to defend socially the productive relations resulting from its victorious revolution; they consider possible the triumph of the counter-revolution without an open prolonged civil war. Our theory of the permanent revolution affirms at one and the same time that the proletariat is unable to build socialism in one country, while the bourgeoisie is unable to overthrow the workers' state without a violent revolution. Our theory embraces in these terms the entire dynamics of the world class struggle; and far from treating the Russian question as 'unique' and beyond the Marxist study of decaying capitalism, it places this question within the framework of the decisive problems of our epoch.

This is why our analysis of the USSR maintains the whole Marxist heritage, with its interpretation of history as the history of class struggles, with its scientifically precise definition of the concept of class, with its analysis of the capitalist world as leading inevitably to the sharpening of class contradictions and to the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, with its programme of the socialist revolution, based on a historical process which makes such a revolution possible and necessary for the further progress of mankind.

The building of the Fourth International is today the essential condition for the extension and victorious resolution of the workers' revolutionary struggles on a world scale. A victorious solution of this task will in turn 'answer' the Russian question through the triumph of the fourth Russian Revolution. History will show that a correct analysis of the phenomenon of Stalinism is one of the premises for the achievement of our historic mission.

Strikes can beat the cuts

NEXT Saturday (22nd), a national anti-cuts conference will meet, called by Merseyside anti-cuts committee.

It comes at a time when most local councils have already decided on their budgets for the coming financial year. This means that a major opportunity to rally support for taking a stand against the cuts has been lost.

Many Labour councils, including left wing Lambeth, have decided to increase rents, carry out cuts or cuts in growth, and increase the rates. These councils have backed down from confronting the Tories on account of (or with the excuse of) the absence of a national co-ordinated campaign to defy the Government.

Things could well be different had the anti-cuts conference been called a month or two earlier.

The Labour councils have ducked the fight, mainly because they can see no way forward — massive rate increases, or cuts, or a combination of both were the only options within the rules,

and even then Tory Minister Heseltine has threatened to claw back Rate Support Grant in November from those who have not cut back enough and have levied higher rates.

But the councils' climb-down should not mean that the labour movement as a whole backs down. A fight against cuts must continue, on a clear policy, even if it has to be a fight against Labour councils. At the same time preparations must be made to support any council penalised by the Tories in November.

We support the councils against the Tories: but we do not support rate rises.

Like rent rises and cuts, rate increases to compensate for Tory cuts in central government grants merely pass on the cost of the cuts to the working class. Councilors who used to argue that rate rises buy time to prepare a fight are now rapidly panicking and pruning their spending.

A call can be expected at the conference for forcing a general election and calling

on the next Labour government to nationalise the banks and monopolies. Good. But what about a strategy to fight the Tories NOW?

A Tory government with a stable majority can carry through wholesale destruction of the welfare state if the labour movement marks time, passes resolutions and just relies on the Labour leaders to put things right next time round.

What is needed now is a general strike to stop the Tories — to reverse the steel closures and the cuts and to smash the anti-union Bill. The conference should put out a call to organise for a general strike. The policy of no cuts and no rate rises must be backed up by preparing for industrial action among local council unions, linking up with steel workers and other workers taking action.

CHEUNG SIU MING
SATURDAY 22 MARCH
National anti-cuts conference, called by Liverpool Trades Council and District Labour Party. 11am, St George's Hall, Liverpool.

Workers' ACTION

NUT leaders sabotage cuts fight

On the 10th March, Haringey council approved cuts in education totalling over £1 million. The decision was made with a majority of only one, after a revolt by 10 labour councillors who argued that there should be no cuts.

Local teachers had voted to take action, and Haringey NUT had asked their National Action Committee for approval for a half day strike on the afternoon of the 10th. This was turned down as the NUT nationally was satisfied with the concessions the council had made: cutting 90 teachers' jobs rather than 200! There will still be cuts in real terms in money for school books and equipment, and for cleaning.

The Council justifies the cutting of jobs on the basis of falling rolls.

The feeling of NUT members in Haringey, as shown at a recent meeting of school representatives, is one of

outrage that our own union will not back the local teachers' call for action. If the strike action had gone ahead, at least one more councillor might have joined the no-cuts "rebels". At best the cuts could have been stopped, and at worst, they could have been put off for a month.

School caretakers in Haringey also threatened a one-day strike, but it was called off pending negotiation with the council.

TONY BROCKMAN

Reckitts repulsed, Thatcher thwarted

ASTMS MEMBERS at Reckitts and Colemans in Hull have won the first round against the company's efforts to make 118 pharmaceutical workers redundant, including up to 40% of the research and develop-

ment staff. 1200 white collar workers decided on an immediate strike on Wednesday 14th when upon arrival at work they found redundancy notices for 118 of them. This had the side-effect of causing the cancellation by Thatcher of a planned visit to Reckitts Household and Toiletary plant.

Instead, she went to the Elastoplast manufacturers, Smith and Nephew, where several hundred workers promptly walked out. Throughout her Humberside visit, Thatcher was accompanied by egg-throwing demonstrations, and finally left Hull to a chorus of "Out, out, out!"

Reckitts management caved in on Saturday and withdrew the notices, but are now going to pursue their plans through 'agreed' channels. At the moment ASTMS is opposing all redundancies. They must continue to do so. Unemployment is mounting on Humberside. Only a few weeks ago the rundown and closure of a Findus fish processing plant was announced, with the loss of several hundred jobs.

LES HEARN



Manchester: now for a real anti-cuts fight

THE BLUSTER from Labour council leader Norman Morris in Manchester about how the council will defy the Tories on the cuts has now been shown up for the sham it always was.

At the budget-fixing meeting recently, £13 million worth of cuts and a 28.8% rate rise were forced through.

The Labour leadership are trying to argue that the cuts will only be cosmetic, and won't have any real effect. If that were true, it would certainly justify previous Tory charges of wasteful spending. In fact it is complete nonsense.

Already the £5.6 million cut in the education budget is threatening 460 teaching jobs. The social services budget has been cut by £1½ million, and this will mean fewer nurseries and old people's homes.

The cuts have also put a large question mark over the Women's Aid and gay centres,

and if the cuts scheduled for the housing department go through, there is no way that redundancies can be avoided.

The sell-out by the Labour leadership has not gone through without opposition, though. At the budget-fixing meeting, 12 Labour councillors voted against the whip to oppose the cuts package, and in the Education Committee Morris needed the help of the Tories to get some of the cuts through.

The 12 councillors are now being threatened with having the whip withdrawn, despite the fact that they voted in line with City Party policy.

Resolutions should be passed in Labour Party and trade union branches supporting the 12 anti-cuts councillors, condemning the council leadership, and pledging support for an active campaign against the cuts. If the 12 do have the

whip withdrawn, we should demand the City Labour Party recognises them as the official Labour group.

The 'Campaign for Manchester, which was set up by the Labour group and the Trades Council to act as the mouth-piece for Morris, has now been opened up to delegates, and Morris has resigned as chairman under pressure. The Campaign must now be turned into a genuine anti-cuts campaign, in opposition to the council.

The labour movement must show the council that it is not prepared to put up with cuts under any circumstances. It is not the job of a Labour council to carry out Tory cuts, and if some councillors have not got the stomach for a fight then they had better make way for those that have.

PETE KEENLYSIDE

EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

SATURDAY 22 MARCH. Labour Coordinating Committee conference on the Alternative Economic Strategy. 10.30am, Digbeth Hall, Birmingham. Registration £2 from C H Lomas, AUEW TASS, Holloway Circus, Queensway, Birmingham 1. Followed on the 23rd by a strategy conference for LCC members.

SATURDAY 29 MARCH. Labour Committee on Ireland conference. 2pm to 5pm, Islington North Library, Manor Gardens, London. Credentials £1 for individuals, £2 for organisations, from LCI, c/o 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

WEDNESDAY 26 MARCH. Turkey Solidarity Campaign meeting: 'Crisis in Turkey'. 7.30, Islington Central Library, Fieldway Crescent, off Holloway Rd, London.

TUESDAY 25 MARCH. North West London Rank & File teacher open meeting: 'Fight the Cuts'. Speaker: Cheung Siu Ming (Lambeth NUT). 5.15 at Brent Teachers' Centre, Ealing Rd, Alperton.

SATURDAY 5 - MONDAY 7 APRIL. Labour Party Young Socialists Annual Conference in Llandudno. Details of accommodation, fringe meetings etc from Barricade, 16 Glen St, Edinburgh.

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Meccano calls mass picket

THE MECCANO workers, who were thrown out of the occupation of their factory by police last week, have been picketing the plant every day since. But they are still waiting for official backing for their action from their union, the G&M.

The only way the bosses have been able to get into the factory has been under police escort, and there has been a heavy police presence on the picket all week.

Last Friday, 14th, the pickets tried to stop a lorry taking stock out of the plant, but it got through. However, nothing has left the place since then.

The pickets reckon that the

value of the toys still inside the factory is £1½ million, and the bosses must be pretty desperate to get the stock and the equipment.

The workers have called a mass picket for this Friday, supported by Liverpool Trades Council and Warrington steelworkers. They are appealing for support from all sections of the labour movement.

Also on Merseyside, the workers occupying Massey Fergusons have decided to step up their action. They will be picketing Coventry and other UK Massey Ferguson plants this week.

MICK CASHMAN



Labour movement Fightback for Women's Rights A WORKING CONFERENCE

Discussing: abortion after cuts, maternity rights & the Employment Bill, legal rights & the immigration rules, and women in the labour movement

Participating: Rights of Women, A.L.S., NUT Equal Pay Rights Working Party, NUS Women's Campaign, G. CLPD, National Abortion Campaign, Women's Advisory committee of the Labour Party

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

Details, agenda & registration from:
Fightback for Women's Rights,
41 Ellington St., London N7 (607 5268)

Glasgow ban hits the left, too

DESPITE AN official ban on all demonstrations in Glasgow, about 400 people turned up on Saturday 15th in response to the Anti-Nazi League's call to make the centre of the city an anti-fascist area.

Groups leafleted shopping areas, and there was a brief rally.

Meanwhile about 200 fascists and Loyalists met on Glasgow Green, claiming to be a new group, the Scottish Loyalist Association. When they tried to march out of the park, the police broke up the march and arrested 58 people.

The call for the ban came initially from Glasgow Trades Council Executive [dominated by the Communist Party]. The local police agreed, and got the Government to impose a one-month ban, because they felt they could not handle the National Front 'Smash the IRA' march scheduled for the

15th and the planned counter-demonstration.

The TC Exec held back anti fascist mobilisation with a call to wait for the police reply to the request for a ban. When the police reply came — just a few days before the 15th — the TC Exec withdrew support for any action on the 15th, and so did the other official labour movement bodies which had backed a counter-demo, the Scottish Council of the Labour Party and the Scottish TUC.

The Anti Nazi League held a meeting on the 13th which decided what to do on the 15th and discussed its attitude to the ban.

Peter Porteous and Paul Holborow of the ANL leadership and SWP said that the ban was a hollow victory. It is no good appealing to the police to ban marches, although that is a first step.

The only way is to confront the fascists.

Speakers from the floor attacked the ban more forcefully. It was actually a defeat for us, said Stuart McLennan of the IMG. Workers' Action supporter John Wilde said that the ban had let the labour movement leaders off the hook. They could leave it up to the police and call off their mobilisation. But bans always end up being used against the left.

He also argued that the NF's use of the Irish issue to split the working class and mobilise reactionary forces showed the need for the labour movement to take a clear line of support for Ireland's fight for freedom.

The NF has said they will call a march immediately after the ban is lifted, and an anti-fascist demonstration is being planned whether the NF go ahead or not.