

WORKERS' ACTION

No 45

10th - 17th February

10p

ONE YEAR ON FROM THE SDA
FEB 26th
1977
11am
A RALLY FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS
See EVENTS for details



WAGES:

THE ANGER GROWS

"If the mood of this conference is anything to go by, the social contract is over."

That verdict from a leading Nottingham miners' official came after the area conference of the NUM had debated the question of miners' pay and decided to go for big increases in the Autumn, when the second round of the wage freeze is over.

Last week Leyland shop stewards' combine committee — which represents 120,000 workers — decided to campaign against the acceptance of any new pay curbs when the present one comes to an end in July. [See back page.]

And the public sector unions that have taken the biggest battering — the full weight not only of the pay curbs but also of the cuts and unemployment — are renewing their campaign against government policy.

Following on their massively successful demonstration on November 17th, these unions — representing some 2.5 million workers — are organising a joint conference on the cuts in March.

Most of these unions only accepted the social contract on condition there'd be no more cuts. This conference could in fact turn out to be an important sounding board for opposition to the social contract.

Meanwhile the big guns of the TUC, Murray, Jones, Scanlon, Basnett and Allen, have already started their series of meetings with Healey.

A clue to the content of these talks is given in the

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Wholesale prices in January rose by 3.2%. This huge price rise equals the previous record increase of January 1975.

Last July, prices in the shops were 14.7% higher than twelve months before. By November they were 16.9% higher. By December they were 17.7% higher than twelve months before. And by January prices had risen so that they were then 19.6% higher than in the previous January.

Wages are pegged at 4½%.

latest report of the TUC Economic Committee.

The report shows that the TUC is prepared to go back on all its promises and embrace yet another year of sacrifice on our behalf. It shows that the TUC is preparing to sell out not only on its repeated promises to make "an orderly return to free collective bargaining", but even on the miserable "flexibility reforms" the last TUC conference agreed to.

This list was headed by:

□ Restoration of differentials eroded since July 1975.

□ The introduction of productivity deals (with unemployment reaching towards the two million mark!).

□ A 'phased' (?) consolidation into basic rates of the increases permitted under the two rounds of wage restraint.

These were hardly radical demands. In fact they were there more to keep the lid on the growing protest — particularly from skilled workers — against the drastic fall in

living standards.

The only one of these the government is prepared to accept is, of course, the one that is thoroughly reactionary — the demand for productivity deals.

Again the excuse is the bad state of the economy. For the TUC leaders, even the most minimal demands of the working class must go by the board if that's necessary to help the bosses' system out of its troubles.

The TUC economic committee has the gall to assert that "the past two years of restraint have significantly benefited the low-paid". This at a time when the numbers below the official poverty line have risen to over two million! Thus the economic committee argue for "special treatment of the higher-paid, skilled worker" — obviously trying to avoid a confrontation over differentials, and

letting the pay policy hit hardest at the most vulnerable.

Healey, greatly assisted by the TUC economic committee, wants to be able to devise his April budget with round 3 of the Social Contract (to take effect from August 1st) safely in the bag.

He has proposed that a new round of wage claims be sacrificed for a tax adjustment favouring the top and bottom of the income tax league. In addition to this, Healey might well offer the trade unions some seats on the new board replacing the Prices Commission.

This last idea (which is also being pushed by some left MPs like Norman Atkinson) is likely to become more important as the level of inflation continues to rise, and the call goes up to refuse another round of pay curbs unless there is also an effective method of price restraint.

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But this is no way to protect the living standards of the working class. The working class must break completely with the social contract.

Substantial wage increases are needed to make up the backlog and to improve standards. And pay must, as a minimum, be protected against inflation. Instead of making themselves the defenders of higher-paid workers' privileges, the unions should lead a united struggle round a united

Contd. Back Page, Col.2

Guilty of Torture

The British Government has pleaded guilty at the European Court of Human Rights to the charge that its agents, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, used torture in Northern Ireland in 1971. The court had earlier established that accounts by internees of systematic torture were true.

Britain, however, is still denying the charge brought by the Irish 26-County government that torture was also used between 1971 and 1974. But there is no shortage of evidence for that. Nor is there any shortage of evidence after 1974 (and also evidence of gross mistreatment of Irish political prisoners in British-controlled jails in both Britain and Northern Ireland). All that has changed is the willingness of the Irish government to bring such charges.

Czechoslovakia — persecution mounts over Charter 77

Holland: strike wave to save index-linked wages

HOLLAND is experiencing a wave of strikes as the unions attempt to defend a system under which wages rise automatically as prices rise — a system which the employers are determined to scrap.

"We cannot any longer commit ourselves to handing out a blank cheque in this very difficult economic period", said a spokesman for the Employers' Federation, explaining why the employers had refused to continue the system which has existed in Holland since the beginning of the '70s.

Negotiations for a national wage agreement for 1977, and later for sectoral agreements, broke down, and on 7th February a wave of phased strikes was begun by dockers, engineers, and many other workers. They also demand a rise in real wages, and other reforms and concessions. The Unions demand the creation of new jobs, greater government control of regional development, distribution of some shares in enterprises, and participation by workers in the control of firms. The Dutch bosses are as little keen on such reforms as are their British counterparts on the proposals in the Bullock report.

The Dutch Government is a coalition dominated by the Labour Party. Despite this the recent Labour Party conference unanimously voted to support the unions' demands — and to support the strike action. After two years of a wage freeze, and in face of a planned social service cut of 1% annually until 1980, the workers are in a fighting mood. The unions rejected an employers' proposal that the Government should pay for keeping wages in line with prices out of the revenue it collects from the social service payments of the workers. They insisted that the bosses should pay.

The employers are squealing because a wage system that was designed to eliminate wage militancy has jackknifed against them through the high and unanticipated level of inflation, against which it offers workers some protection. They are caught on their own hook — rather like the Tory Government was caught with the threshold agreements in 1973.

The Dutch unions' insistence on a real wage rise, as well as maintaining the wages-linked-to-prices system, shows clearly that such a system is not necessarily a block on real wage rises — despite the political character of the unions which clearly work within capitalism, accepting its limits and options, confining themselves to reform.

On the contrary, the threshold experience in Britain, the Dutch experience, and even the recent hullabaloo because of price levels, annually adjusted to price levels, have inched closer to falling real wages — all point to a sliding scale of wages as the demand to fight for just to maintain the level of real wages in this period of very high inflation. Far from being a block on real wage rises, it can be a barrier against the real wage cuts which British workers have experienced in the last two years.

FOUR OF THE SIGNATORIES of the Czechoslovakian civil rights document, 'Charter 77', are still in jail on trumped-up charges. But 200 further people have added their support to the 240 who initially published the document on 1st January.

'Charter 77' does no more than claim the elementary democratic rights which are supposed to be guaranteed by the constitution in Czechoslovakia. It explicitly disavows any intention to organise opposition to the regime; it even rejects the label "dissident".

Yet the ruling bureaucracy in Czechoslovakia, wary of the radical dynamic of working class struggle which can develop from even the slightest crack in bureaucratic monolith-

ism — as 1968's events in Czechoslovakia showed — has responded with Stalinist repression. After the publication of Charter 77, many of the signatories were immediately subjected to police searches and sometimes arrested for questioning.

A continuous press campaign has been waged against them. They have been accused of being saboteurs, in league with foreign powers, or in the pay of West Germany. Anti-Semitism has been used: one Jewish signatory, Frantisek Kriegel, was attacked as "a foreigner without fatherland who has never been integrated into the Czech community".

Kriegel, in fact, was formerly a member of the Political Bur-

eau of the Czechoslovakian CP. Most of the signatories were associated with the Dubcek reform movement of 1968. Their activities then were met by the intervention of Russian tanks. Now they protest about the systematic harassment of 1968 activists since then.

Some 150,000 former social scientists, artists and members of the liberal professions have been set to work as window cleaners, street sweepers, night-watchmen, and so on. Sociologists have become office cleaners, historians have become boiler-room men. And their children have been prohibited from entering higher education.

Naturally they are also forbidden to write. And thus the most elementary precondition of democracy — the simple right for citizens to state their views publicly — has become a crime in 'socialist' Czechoslovakia.

VLADIMIR BUKOVSKY, recently released from the Soviet Union, has now linked up with the far-right National Association for Freedom. It is unclear how consistent this alignment is: he has also declared that his political activity in the Soviet Union did not aim to change the political system there; and he has written a friendly letter to a French group that worked for his release called the OCI (Communist Internationalist Organisation).

It is logical, however, for those dissidents who are repelled by what the bureaucrats of Russian and Eastern Europe present to them as 'socialism', and who cannot see the possibility of the atomised and terrorised working class of those states acting as a force for change, to turn to the anti-communist Right. But even for them, Rosa Luxemburg's principle applies, that 'freedom is always freedom for the one who disagrees'.

A workers' state sorely beset by counter-revolutionary att-

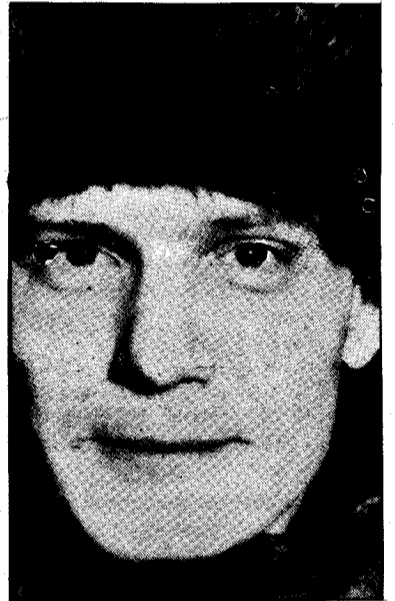
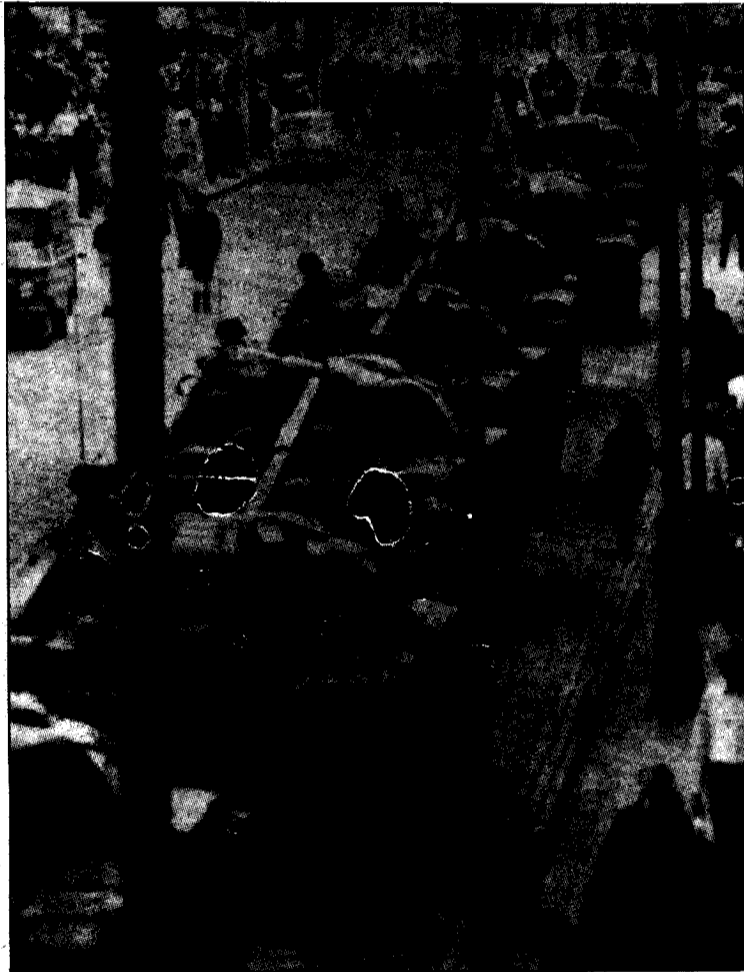
acks may have to limit that principle. But in Russia and Eastern Europe, at the moment, the most dangerous reactionary forces are certainly not those small groups of right-wing oppositionists which may exist, but the ruling bureaucracies themselves.

That is what none of the west European Communist Parties have recognised, though all the major ones — except the Portuguese — have condemned the repression against Charter 77. The CPs condemn this or that particular act of repression but never add up those condemnations into a clear assessment of the regimes.

All the acts of repression are seen as isolated, individual cases, regrettable deformations, which can be reformed away. But how can you reform a regime where even stating your constitutional rights repression down on your head?

The only effective policy against the Stalinist repression is revolutionary working-class action. And that is also the only policy which guarantees that opposition to Stalinism does not fall into alliance with the anti-communist Right.

The tanks that silenced Prague



Vladimir Bukovsky — a big catch for NAF, but can they hold onto him?

Anti Apartheid Movement Leaning on the liberals

IN A LETTER to affiliated groups, dated 1st November, the Anti-Apartheid Movement declared that its campaign work should be lifted "to a level comparable with activities in Southern Africa". The escalating and increasingly successful armed struggle in Zimbabwe and Namibia and the workers' and students' uprisings in Southern Africa have made it urgent for the AAM to go beyond its traditional boycott and petition campaign and work for full and active support for the liberation movements and the freedom fighters — focusing on mobilisation in the grass roots of the labour movement, and not on persuading the trade union leadership and imploring the government.

In a policy statement pushed through the AAM National Committee meeting on 5th February, the Anti-Apartheid Movement has fallen dramatically short of that need.

A draft policy statement drawn up by the EC was presented to the meeting by Abdul Minty. Delegates were asked to discuss the statement — but not to propose any major changes. The EC

wanted to issue the statement as soon as possible, although copies of it were not available until just before the start of the meeting.

The policy statement describes the present situation in Southern Africa as threatening world peace and warns of the possibility of a racial holocaust. It calls on the United Nations to extend sanctions against Rhodesia, and even demands that South Africa should also implement sanctions. It also calls on the UN Security Council to impose an arms embargo on South Africa.

Such a statement, meant to be acceptable to the largely liberal support of the AAM, is clearly inadequate. It proposes support for the liberation struggle in Southern Africa, not in terms of support for the complete overthrow of racist minority regimes, but in terms of ensuring world peace. World peace is certainly desirable. But it must be said that only the revolutionary socialist overthrow of imperialism will ensure it. To lead the campaign on Southern Africa in a way similar to the campaigns on Vietnam based

on 'Peace in Vietnam' can only lead to similar results: support for compromise and inadequate settlements because they are 'peace' settlements.

Rather than focusing on the need for solidarity between British workers and the oppressed workers of South Africa, the AAM EC statement looks for support from the British government and other western Governments. But those governments collaborate with the racist regimes, and stand to lose if the liberation struggle goes beyond neo-colonial settlements to gain some real degree of independence.

The bureaucratic and undemocratic manner in which the statement was presented made it impossible to amend or change it. A proposal for a further meeting of the NC to work out a new or amended policy statement was defeated but the EC agreed to meet on 14th February to discuss a final version of the statement and to ask for suggestions or amendments to be sent in to the executive.

Other matters raised by the NC included, linking the AA campaign on

Southern Africa with the anti-racist campaign in Britain, and mobilisation for the AAM March 6th demonstration.

EWA ORZECZOWSKA

ANTI-APARTHEID DEMONSTRATION

- End military collaboration with South Africa!
- Halt British investment in apartheid!
- Support the African liberation struggle!

Sunday 6th March. Assemble 1.30 at Hyde Park; rally 3.30pm at Trafalgar Square.

SCOTTISH ANTI-APARTHEID DEMONSTRATION

Saturday 5th March. Assemble 10.30am at Blythwood Square, Glasgow; rally 11am at Strathclyde University Students' Union.

'We're going to get you for the Carnival'

18 BLACK youths from Islington, North London, face trial at the Old Bailey on a series of charges which are so vague as to be ridiculous.

In one case, the police say that six of the youths "on a day unknown in the month of October 1976 outside the Nightingale Youth Club, Wood Green, did rob a woman unknown of a handbag and contents".

Another main charge, even vaguer, is that the youths "between 21st August and 21st October 1976 in the Greater London area conspired together and with persons unknown to commit robberies".

Eight other charges all relate to the Notting Hill Carnival.

The youths were arrested over a two-week period at the end of

October. Since then, only three have been let out on bail! Most of them are being held in Latchmere and Ashford Remand centres. One of the three who were granted bail before a Judge in Chambers on December 23rd had to guarantee £3,000! One youth's employer was willing to stand bail, but even that was refused.

The youths have been messed around by the police from the very beginning. When they were first picked up, their parents were given the run-around. Hornsey Rd Police Station told them their sons were in Caledonian Rd, and Caledonian Rd told them they were in Hornsey Rd and so on... In fact, the parents didn't see their kids until they appeared first in Highbury Magistrates' Court.

When they did appear, they were given Legal Aid only on the condition that they all had the one solicitor, who was chosen by the court.

The police behaved in their usual cowboy style when dealing with black youths. Their houses were invaded by plain-clothes police, often without warrant cards. One house was searched and re-searched using a key taken from one of the youths.

What are the police up to? The youths claim, in statements to their lawyers and to their parents, that the police have been saying things like: "We're going to put you away for a long time. Even if you do get off at the trial, you'll have been inside for six months"; "We're go-

ing to get you for the Carnival"; "Islington isn't going to become another Brixton".

The parents' response has been to set up a Defence Group for the 18. Most of the parents are now prepared to take a hand in the defence of their sons. There have been five meetings to date, and all the youths now have solicitors of their choice. Friends of the youths have started to help, although many are obviously frightened to go on as witnesses because the police then so often bring charges against the witnesses.

[From "Islington Gutter Press". The youths came up at the Old Bailey on 26th January, and bail was again refused. The defence group can be contacted at 607 2461.]

Anger at 'official pardon' for Colquhoun

MAUREEN COLQUHOUN has been given an 'official pardon' for her statements backing Enoch Powell on race by her constituency Labour Party, Northampton North. At a specially-convened meeting on 4th February, the GMC voted 17-12 for a statement angrily described by one West Indian delegate as "a whitewash".

The outcome did not, however, completely reflect feelings in the local Party; and there will be more heard on the issue.

The meeting was rendered virtually impotent by the presence of the Regional Organiser, rule book in hand. There were to be no resolutions from the floor, and no votes of censure or of no confidence. The outcome could only be an agreed press statement, and that must be an end to the matter.

Even then Colquhoun said she would refuse to sign the statement if it said that her views had caused concern not only in the Labour Party but amongst the wider labour movement. Only the casting vote of the chairman got this deletion through.

Whether Maureen Colquhoun likes it or not, a sizable minority in the Northampton North GMC believe her statement to be racist, and believe that she is guilty of giving respectability to the obscurities of Enoch Powell. When asked if she thought Powell to be a racist, she was completely evasive. Her attitude towards a multi-racial society and immigration controls was "not clarified". What she did say — and this is something militants in other Labour Parties should take up — is that other 'Tribune' MPs, including Eric Heffer, had supported her in private.



A spokesman for the local West Indian Parents has said that no blacks will vote for Colquhoun in future. And already a subcommittee of the district party had agreed proposal from the LPYS for an anti-racist campaign around the demands:

- No to immigration controls;
- Purging of racists from the labour movement;
- Support for black self-defence;
- No platform for fascists.

Kevin Mayes, Northampton North LPYS secretary, said that the LPYS would continue to argue for the Party to dissociate itself from Colquhoun's views and gave notice of a fight to have her stood down at the next election.

Northampton Workers' Action supporters are campaigning for socialists and serious anti-racists to pass resolutions through their union branches and Labour Party wards, to the Trades Council and the CLP, deploring the outcome of the meeting and dissociating themselves from Colquhoun's statement. But the campaign must not be restricted to Northampton. Maureen Colquhoun has in the past been one of the left Labour MPs most prominent in campaigns on the women's rights and Irish issues. Socialists in those campaigns have to insist on a clear repudiation of Colquhoun's attitude to Powell and a withdrawal of speaking invitations to her.

ROSS CATLIN



ROYALTY: THE BOSSES' DOOMSDAY WEAPON

The Jubilee circus may well distract some of the people some of the time from the miseries of unemployment, savage welfare cuts and general impoverishment of working class life. Many will be in a rage at the addition of insult to injury, as the procession of parasitic mediocrities are accorded a fawning respect totally unrelated to their merit.

But it would be wrong and dangerous to dismiss the British monarchy as a useless and outdated irrelevance.

If they were mere idle parasites, the Royals would invite no more objection than the others of their class. But the commentators have rightly stressed that they do a job.

Largely, at present, that job is ideological. Worker and boss, we are to believe, are all equally subjects of the Queen, who 'represents' rich and poor, exploiters and exploited, alike and binds them together by personifying a "national interest". As her husband put it, "there has been a polarisation of political party and dogma ... under

these circumstances there is an obvious need for a symbol which helps to remind people that we are all citizens of the same country and that, in spite of differing political opinions and loyalties we

Internationally the British monarchy also serves to reconcile conflicting interests. It is equally the figurehead of an exploitative British imperialism and of its colonies, now neo-colonies, whose wealth is drained by that imperialism.

Consciously, calculatingly, the Royal Family serves to foster the authoritarian family institution which capitalism uses in the socialisation of each generation into the disciplines of this society. It helps to keep alive the idiotic mumbo-jumbo of an archaic religion. And it patronises, while supposedly heading a "Welfare state", all the charities whose existence is testimony to the callousness and inadequacy of state welfare.

In fulfilling these various reactionary ideological functions, the British monarchy

performs a valuable service to the capitalist establishment. But it also has a further, more serious function, one which will not be mentioned in the jubilee tributes.

The central and over-riding function of the monarchy is that of a stabiliser of the established order. As long as the political institutions of bourgeois rule can carry on in a smooth and stable way, the Queen can keep a low political profile. But at times of uncertainty or political crisis, the monarchy could be used as a vital rallying point for the bourgeois state.

The close and living connection that is maintained between the Royals and all the important regiments and branches of the Armed Services is not just ceremonial. It is a deliberate preparation for a time when soldiers' loyalties might waver in a revolutionary situation, when it is hoped that though they might disobey their officers they could be more inhibited about turning their guns on their particular royal Colonel-in-Chief.



And the officers themselves could be rallied and organised by a centralised royal command structure.

Writing in 1925, Trotsky attacked the complacency of the British Labour leaders who accepted the monarchy then with much the same arguments as they do today. "The Royal Power is weak" he wrote "because the instrument of bourgeois rule is the bourgeois parliament and because the bourgeoisie does not need any special activities outside of parliament. But in case of need, the bourgeoisie will make use of the royal power with great success as a concentration of all non parliamentary, i.e. real forces aimed against the working class."

Asbestos: a timely attack of conscience

WHEN Henry Vaughan was 19 he got a job with Dicks Asbestos Company of Canning Town. It was good as committing suicide. He only worked there for nine months, but 35 years later, in 1971, he became ill with lung cancer and died after a very painful 6 months.

His widow, Mary, also has asbestosis, though she never herself worked with asbestos. Like the wives of the workers at Cape Asbestos, Hebden Bridge, she contracted this disease from asbestos that her husband brought home on his clothes.

Mary Vaughan could not claim compensation because Dicks Asbestos Co. had been wound up. She could not claim for herself under the state Industrial Injuries Scheme as she never worked with asbestos. All she got was £300 — the maximum payable under that scheme for her husband's death.

In Britain there are hundreds of families like the Vaughans. No-one knows exactly how many. Although the DHSS say there are only 800 cases of asbestosis in the whole of the UK, this figure must be a wild under-estimate: one Glasgow branch of the TGWU has had 132 of

its members die of this disease in the last 10 years!

As the use of asbestos increases yearly throughout manufacturing and construction industries, more and more workers will come into contact with this deadly material.

Both government and management are keen to play this down. The asbestos companies themselves are terrified of a long queue of workers and ex-workers in the industry suffering from asbestosis and claiming compensation. Already Cape Asbestos seem to have shelled out £2 million to compensate the workers at Hebden Bridge, and for the years 1973 and 1974 had an annual provision of £3.5m for compensation. Quite clearly they want to discourage too many new claims.

To this end they have consistently tried to placate workers' fears about asbestos. The big firms — Cape, Turner & Newall and BBA — have engaged in an advertising campaign which was criticised by the Advertising Standards Authority as being complacent, oversimplifying health hazards, and giving information that could not

be substantiated. In fact the adverts gave the impression that asbestos wasn't really that bad.

Now it seems that the bigger companies in the industry are to launch a scheme to provide limited compensation for workers who contract asbestosis while working for a small firm, or one that becomes defunct. Although this would cover cases like those of Vaughans, it is not really clear how the scheme will operate and what difference it will make to ex-asbestos workers and their families.

And evidently this "attack of conscience" in the industry is intended to "cover" it while it goes on inflicting the deadly disease on workers and their families. It is their way of responding to new knowledge which continually indicates that the substance is more and more dangerous than had been thought before.

In 1968 a limit was set of 2 fibres of asbestos per cubic centimetre of air. This limit was recently endorsed by the Health and Safety Commission as being one which would ensure that fewer than one man in 100 working a lifetime in the industry would get asbestosis.

Even this limit means that during an average working day 16 million fibres will pass through a person's lungs.

The limit was set after a study in 1968 of 290 asbestos workers in Rochdale. But when the workers were re-examined in 1970, 26 had asbestosis and x-rays showed that nearly half had some form of lung changes.

Now a study done by Julian Peto of the Oxford University Cancer Trials Unit predicts that even twice (i.e. half) the official standard will not prevent asbestosis. His survey is based on recent studies done on workers who have been working with asbestos under the 1968 limits. He found a startling increase in lung diseases among them.

The TUC is calling for a new limit of 0.2 fibres per c.c. of air. Even this may one day be shown to be too high. The only safe course is to get rid of it altogether as quickly as possible.

The asbestos companies won't do that. Nor by the look of it will the Government at this stage. But it will have a very short life indeed if workers simply refuse to handle it.

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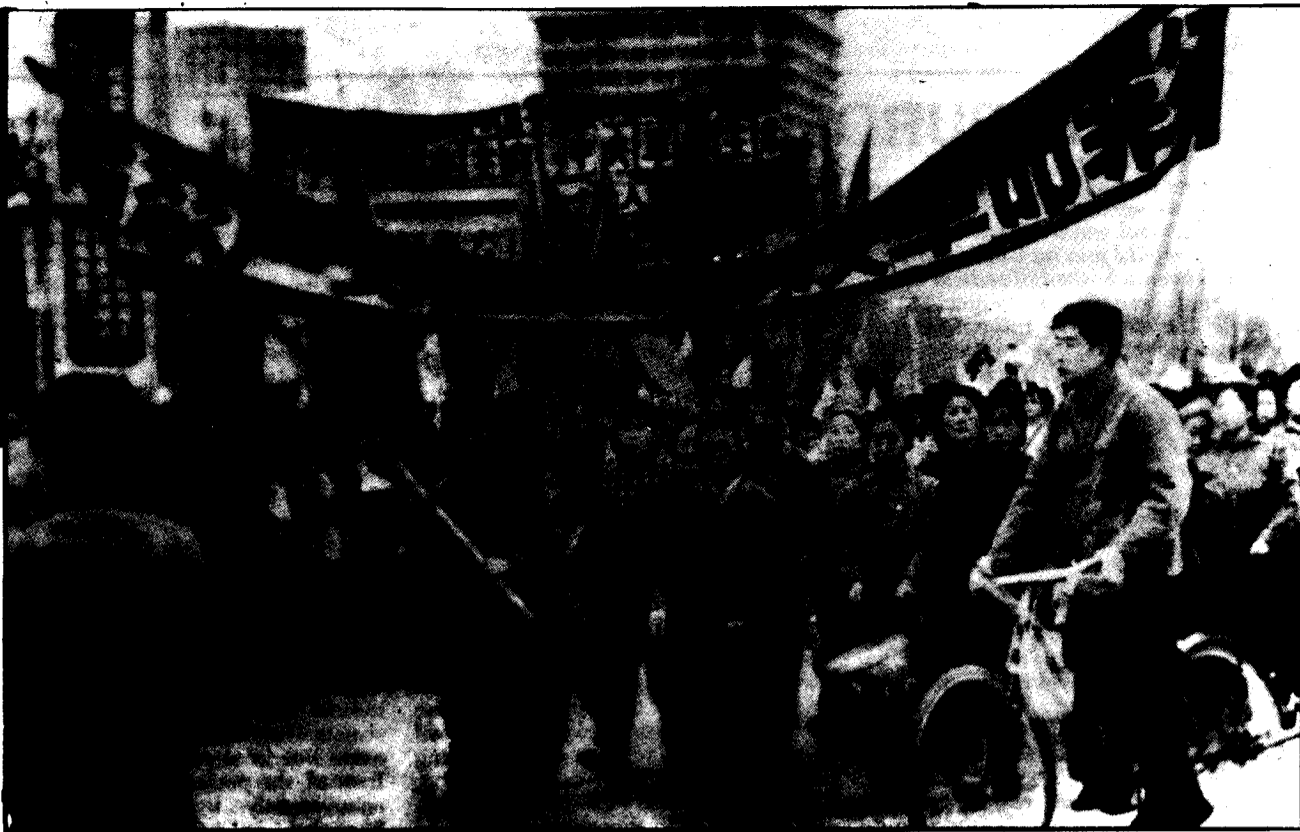
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Popular demonstration in Peking against the Maoists

by the "gang of four." Since the four have been purged for committing crimes of revisionism and capitalist restoration, the logical conclusion would be to rehabilitate all those cadres who had been purged by them.

The rehabilitation of Teng Hsiao-p'ing, recently purged by Mao himself, poses a particular problem. Teng, next to Chou En-lai, was the most important leader of the moderate faction, possessing much more influence and experience than anyone in the current leadership. His rehabilitation would be a serious threat to Hua's position, yet Teng's role in the new situation is a problem Hua must deal with soon.

The second area of probable change will be the economy, which has steadily worsened since the Cultural Revolution. Although some officials are blaming the economic situation on the intrigues of the "gang of four," the government must seek to improve things. They have already pledged to carry out the "Four Modernizations" laid down by the late Chou En-lai, but their problem will be to find the necessary funds and technology.

The third area of change concerns the living standard of the masses, which has become intolerable since the Cultural Revolution. Wages have been frozen for the working class as a whole. That is why the workers staged a general strike in Hangchow, the capital of Chekiang Province, in July 1975.

Fourth, China's education system was completely destroyed by the Cultural Revolution. Almost all presidents of universities and principals of middle schools were purged. Many professors and teachers were fired, and most were sent to the countryside for reform. Mao's supporters have carried out his "revolutionary education" instead of a regular course of study. All schools have been controlled by so-called Mao Tseung Thought Worker-Propaganda Teams, which conduct a continual "criticism, struggle, and transformation" of teachers and students.

The schools have been in great confu-

sion from the Cultural Revolution up to the present, making it absolutely impossible to educate the new generation in the interests of socialism, i.e., to bring China out of backwardness into the modern world.

The situation is the same in all cultural fields. Mao imposed a policy like that of Zhdanov under Stalin in the 1940s. Writers, artists, actors, painters, musicians—all were forced to stop their work or were fired. That is why there have been no worthwhile novels, plays, or poems produced in China since the Cultural Revolution. There are several so-called modern operas produced by Chiang Ch'ing for propaganda purposes, without any artistic significance. In one word, the cultural field in China today is a wasteland. Thus, the restoration and development of education and culture are urgent issues for the new leaders.

EXILE

The new leadership must also deal with the estimated ten million urban youth and intellectuals who were sent to the countryside and are still living there. Naturally, these people are dissatisfied and hate their forced exile, creating an explosive situation. They desperately want to return to the cities and their homes to continue school, get jobs, and see their relatives. Many have already returned illegally to the cities, causing great hardship for their parents and trouble for the authorities. An estimated 30,000 to 40,000 young people have escaped to Hong Kong, at the risk of their lives.

Finally, the relationship between China and the Soviet Union has steadily worsened since the early 1960s. The Soviet bureaucrats have sent millions of troops to the border between the two countries, which stretches for thousands of miles. Mao also sent troops. This counterposition of troops has existed for many years now and has resulted in some incidents of armed conflict. If this dangerous situation is not modified by China's new leaders, it

is possible that a war could develop.

The problems outlined above, generated under Mao's leadership, cannot be resolved in a reasonable manner by the new leaders because they were created by the logic of Stalinism. To resolve these problems, the methods and ideology used by Mao must be rejected.

In the face of these pressing problems, China's new leaders are centralizing their efforts in the continued campaign against the "gang of four," accusing them of persecution of the old cadres, especially cadres in the cultural field. The personal lives of the four are exposed, with charges ranging from corruption and extravagance to the absurd charge that Chaing Ch'ing in particular is like a prostitute. Through this personal slander campaign, the new leadership is attempting to justify the purges as necessary and correct as well as appease the people's hatred for the four.

The obvious question remains: Who authorized the "gang of four" to persecute the old cadres and who permitted them to lead such corrupt and self-indulgent lives? Wasn't it the chairman of the CCP? Wasn't it Mao himself who launched the Cultural Revolution and ordered the four to purge other party cadres?

The people know that Chaing Ch'ing lived with Mao as his wife for almost forty years. If her personal life was truly so ugly and corrupt, then what does this say about Mao?

These are precisely the questions Hua hopes the masses will ask. By attacking the "gang of four" explicitly, he is attacking their leader, Mao, by implication. Hua is opening the door for de-Maoization in the future.

It seems the new leaders are preparing to make some concessions to the intellectuals by permitting a little more freedom of speech and press and allowing some of the prohibited literary works and films to again be produced. Some of the old leaders and cadres will probably be released from prisons and labor camps.

On the other hand, the new leaders are

preparing to take measures to increase the productivity of the workers through the use of "material incentives," i.e., longer hours for higher wages. The leadership wants to introduce more machines and technology from abroad into China's industry, but the problem is lack of funds.

Peking seems to be willing to take some measures to reduce tensions in its relations with the Soviet Union, but it will not be possible for them to resolve the basic dispute because both countries are ruled by bureaucratic cliques that are based on "socialism in one country." The Peking regime is continuing its propaganda that the Soviet Union has restored capitalism and is "social imperialist."

HUA CULT

That the new leadership has no intention of allowing the exiled young people to return from the countryside was made clear in a *People's Daily* article where Hua stated that he was very happy to have his own daughter sent to the countryside.

In short, the new leadership cannot resolve the problems discussed above. They can only appease the masses on a short-term basis by giving small concessions, but this will only cause the dissatisfied workers, peasants, and revolutionary intellectuals to press even harder their demands for an end to the present intolerable situation.

Even after the purge of the "gang of four," conflict still exists within the new leadership and undoubtedly new factional disputes will arise. Hua has organized his own faction and the beginnings of his own personality cult to strengthen his hold on his new posts and legitimize himself as Mao's successor. But the old leaders, remnants of the Chou-Teng faction and others, are dissatisfied with Hua. In particular, local cadres in the provinces do not consider Hua any more qualified than themselves to hold such high posts in the party, the army, and the government.

Under these conditions, it is possible that a campaign against Hua is developing behind the scenes. If this is true it could mean a very serious struggle within the CCP in the near future.

DOWNFALL

On the other hand, the masses are expecting an improvement in their standard of living and an increase in their personal and political freedoms under the post-Mao leadership. They will be more willing than ever before to employ mass action to pressure the new leadership, because they have seen the weakness of the new group in resolving its own factional disputes.

The demonstrators at Tien An Men Square last April gave an example to the people of China of how to prepare the necessary political revolution which is long overdue. The words to the poem made famous at Tien An Men point the way forward:

*We believe in Marxism-Leninism.
To hell with those scholars who castrate
Marxism-Leninism.
For the sake of genuine Marxism-
Leninism
We fear not shedding our blood and
laying down our lives.*

These words clearly call for the downfall of the bureaucratic dictatorship in China.



Mao with Liu Shao-chi in 1964 (left). Three years later Mao denounced him as the chief "capitalist roader" and, assisted by [left to right] Wang, Chang, Yao and Chiang

Ch'ing, carried through a massive purge of his faction. Now the Maoists are dubbed the 'Gang of Four' by Mao's protégé Hua, will Liu's people make a comeback?

106 years ago the workers of Paris took over their city after the government had fled before the advancing Prussian armies. The short period of workers' rule in Paris before they were crushed by the joint efforts of the French ruling class and the Prussians was, in the view of Marx and Engels, the first dictatorship of the proletariat — "the glorious harbinger of a new society."

As the instrument for their rule, the Paris workers seized upon the Commune, an old municipal body which had already played a revolutionary role in the Great French Revolution of 1789-96.

After the bloody suppression of the Commune, the alarmed French ruling class decided that the administration of Paris would be directly appointed by the Government. Only this year have they at last decided that it is safe to have the Paris municipal authorities elected!

No revolutionary outcome is likely from these elections. But they are still causing the government some trouble.

The government's nominee for Mayor of Paris, Michel d'Ornano, is opposed by — and will almost certainly be defeated by — Jacques Chirac, Prime Minister until August 1976 and now leader of the revitalised Gaullist movement (RPR) on whose parliamentary support the regime of President Giscard d'Estaing and Prime Minister Barre depends.

Chirac protests that he is still loyal to Giscard, and running for Mayor only because he is not confident of d'Ornano's ability to save the position for the Right from the Socialist and Communist Parties.

Giscard and Barre, however, see Chirac's campaign for what it is — an effort to get himself favourably placed for the coming downfall of the government. Already embarrassed by the press suspicions of a government cover-up over the murder of former Minister Prince Jean de Broglie, they have condemned Chirac more and more frantically.

The furor over Chirac is a symptom of the serious problems of France's governmental coalition. The Right has been in power now for eighteen years, but without ever cementing together a single strong party of the Right. From 1958 to 1969 the Right was held together by de Gaulle, who ruled as President with scant respect for Parliament, frequently using referendums to go over its head.

FRANCE

Trouble for the Right, but the Left cowers in its corner

by COLIN FOSTER

Neither Georges Pompidou, president from 1969 to 1974, nor Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, elected president after Pompidou's death in 1974, have been able to play the same role as de Gaulle. The present government is an uneasy coalition of several components, most notably the Gaullists, the Independent Republicans (Giscard's own party), and the centre right party of Jean Lecanuet.

In the cantonal elections of March 1976, and in by-elections to the Legislative Assembly in late 1976, this 'presidential majority' turned out to be very much in a minority. The total 'left' vote in the cantonal elections was 56%. And now, within the governmental coalition, the Independent Republicans have been losing votes in relation to the Gaullists under Chirac's leadership.

In 1974, it seemed that Giscard had the upper hand over the Gaullists. Chirac, who in May of that year supported Giscard for president against the Gaullist candidate Chaban-Delmas, in December became secretary-general of the Gaullist party, the UDR.

But in 1976 Chirac resigned as Giscard's prime minister, and re-organised the UDR into a new party, the RPR which, under Chirac's leadership is

touted as being the 'tough' right.

Presenting the RPR as the saviour of the Right, Chirac has Giscard on the defensive.

Though Giscard's term runs to 1981, the aggressive challenge of Chirac is a major setback for the post-1969 projects (most prominently represented by Giscard) of a re-structuring of the Right into a new major party to supersede the unwieldy and heterogeneous UDR.



When reconstructing the countries of Western Europe devastated by World War 2, US imperialism generally sought to establish or re-establish Christian Democratic parties as the principal political forces of the bourgeoisie, together with Social Democratic parties linked to the working class but dedicated to capitalism.

In West Germany, this model gained complete success, and in Italy partial success (limited by the dominance of the Communist Party in the working class). In France, however, not only was the CP the major party of the working class, cutting the ground from under the re-development of a strong social-democracy, but the different fractions of the bourgeoisie, not having gone through the politically stifling experience of a native fascist rule, asserted



Top: Chirac and Giscard in friendlier days. Below: Union of the Left leaders Marchais and Mitterrand



their various ambitions too strongly for a single united party of the Right to be created.

Chronic government instability resulted, until de Gaulle's coup of May 1958 — based on the inability of the government to cope with the war in Algeria — imposed strong presidential rule and a new constitution.

It was the May '68 General Strike which finished the Gaullist regime, and set the Right in search of re-organisation. The victory of the non-Gaullist Giscard over the Gaullist Chaban-Delmas in the Presidential elections of 1974 seemed to be a major step towards that re-organisation, and possibly even towards a "Centre-Left" government in which the Socialist Party would be won away from its alliance with the CP.

But severe difficulties for French capitalism brought attacks by the Government on those sections of French society (farmers, shopkeepers and other sections of the petit-bourgeoisie) which form the traditional base of Gaullism. Thus the revival of the Gaullist bloc and its aggressive stance towards its coalition partner Giscard.

The parliamentary situation looks more and more like the chaos of pre-1958. A 'centre-left' regime is still possible; but if so, it will be very much on the terms of the Socialist Party which, with over 30% of the votes nationally, is now by far the strongest party in France.

Such is the disarray of the Right that, within the next few years, the French bourgeoisie

Chasing after the PSU

The French Right is in crisis. The mainstream French left will do nothing to take advantage of that crisis on behalf of the working class. What perspectives for struggles are offered by the groups to the left of the CP — which, since 1968, form a considerable force in France.

The biggest organisation to the left of the CP is the PSU (Unified Socialist Party). This has, however, despite the protests of a sizeable minority within it, clearly opted for alliance with the Union of the Left.

The OCI (Organisation Communiste Internationale) despite its loud claims to 'orthodox Trotskyism' in reality follows a line no less reformist than the PSU. All its criticism of the Union of the Left is directed at the presence within it of the Left Radicals. It demands a CP-SP government, which it calls a "workers' government", but doesn't put forward more than the most minimal notions as regards the policies of such a government.

Indeed, it is in the habit of denouncing the periodic policy disputes in

which the CP and SP attempt to outflank each other on the left, as disruptive of the "workers' united front" And this perspective is, the OCI solemnly declares, that of "the socialist revolution"!

"Lutte Ouvrière" presents a sort of inverse of the OCI's politics. Having correctly declared that a Left Union or CP-SP government would be thoroughly pro-capitalist, it proceeds to reject entirely the idea of advancing any governmental perspective.



L.O. thus finds it possible to advance the slogan of a sliding scale of wages — without a speaking of any struggle to impose that policy on a government of workers' parties. A specifically syndicalist twist is given to L.O.'s politics by the fact that, at the same time as they reject any struggle round demands aimed at the leaders of the CP and the SP, they find it possible to call for the equally reformist leaders of the trade unions to work out a socialist plan of struggle for the working class!

The LCR (Revolutionary Communist League, French sister-group of the IMG) recognises the need for an all-round revolutionary alternative, linking perspectives for day-to-day struggle with governmental perspectives. But the clarity of its definition of what is "revolutionary" is open to question.

The LCR's politics are marked not only by confusion but also by the constant blurring effect of vague slogans of "left unity". Chasing after the PSU, the LCR has even supported joint candidates with the PSU as 'revolutionary' candidates, thus blurring over any distinction between revolutionary politics and centrism.

And on the demonstrations of 7th October, the LCR carried through the fight for "unity" by proclaiming a slogan "Unity, Action, Giscard Out" — which they hoped would be widely enough agreeable to bridge the division between the CGT contingents shouting "Unity, Action, Common Programme" and the CFDT contingents calling for "Unity, Action, Self-Management".



Militant workers find no lead for a fightback

W may even swallow its distrust of the Communist Party and opt for a government of the "Union of the Left" — the alliance of the Communist Party, the Socialist Party and the Left Radicals, formed before the March 1973 Legislative Assembly elections.

SP leader François Mitterand has repeatedly affirmed his willingness to take office under Giscard's presidency, and the "Union of the Left" is firmly committed to accepting NATO and the 1958 Constitution.

And Giscard last week confirmed that he would be willing to appoint SP leader Mitterand as Prime Minister.



The "Union of the Left" has, above all, been an instrument for the revival of the Socialist Party.

Not only has the SP gained massively electorally — contrast its 4% vote in the 1969 presidential elections with today's position — but it has also acquired new and important (if informal) links with the trade union movement. It has established a connection with the CFTD, originally a Catholic-confessional union federation which has grown substantially since 1968 by championing "self-management" and "democratic socialism" against the other major trade union federation, the Stalinist controlled CGT.

The Communist Party has in fact lost votes, slightly, as a result of the Union of the Left. But, focussed on the prospect of getting posts in a government, the CP leaders have contented themselves with occasional attacks on the SP in order to maintain the CP's distinct identity (most recently, proposing that the Union of the Left commit itself to additional nationalisations beyond those included in the Common Programme), while at the same time sparing no effort to prove the CP's social democratic respectability.

To this end, the CP's 22nd Congress in February formally rejected the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat" as its aim.



Both the CP and SP are at one in urging French workers to "wait for 1978" for a "Left" government. But, with its full commitment to capitalism and the Constitution, such a government would have the same function as the Labour Government has had since 1974, using its credibility in the working class to make the workers pay the cost of capitalism's crisis, while granting this or that minor reform on the side.

All the official trade union protests against the Barre government's economic policies (two 'days of action' last October and a 'week of action' in January) have thus been strictly limited in scope. Eduard Maire of the CFTD speaks of struggle "on concrete and negotiable objectives", insisting that it is better to "chip away at the obstacle instead of confronting it". And Georges Seguy of the CGT speaks of knocking holes in the Barre plan, of "limiting its effects", and of "fighting its negative aspects."

All the makings of a British-style "Social Contract" are thus building up — though they'll have to find a new name for it... If a working class fight-back is to be mounted, the lead must come from socialists to the left of the CP.

Issues in the T&G election

"FINE phrases and fine manifestos have misled us too often", says one aspirant for General Secretary of the TGWU in his election manifesto. No doubt he is right. And equally surely one useful rule of thumb to adopt in judging these "fine manifestos" is to ask: What, concretely, do they propose?

Take the vital question of union democracy. The union's full-time officials specialise in high-flown but completely abstract phrases. John Cousins, for instance, pledges that if elected he will "strive to make democracy work in our union by involving more people at every level, from the shop floor to the General Executive Council".

Fine! But what will John Cousins do? Presumably as much or as little in this respect as Moss Evans, Jack Jones' heir apparent and favourite to win the General Secretaryship. Bro. Evans feels that "we must strengthen the team spirit within the union in the advance of rank and file democracy".

CRACKER

Alex Kitson opens his address with a promising piece of rhetoric on the subject of democracy: "The prime essential of any union is accountability of those in power to those who give power". Straight out of a Christmas cracker!

No doubt, like Bro. Walsh, the National Secretary for the white collar ACTS section, he "would recommend the continuation of the policy of greater democracy and involvement by lay members".

But the lay candidates have no problem getting straight to the point. "I believe that our full time officials should be elected instead of selected". Selection is "insulting to the lay members' intelligence... It is also dangerous to the well-being of our lay members because bureaucracy is the enemy of democracy", writes William Bennett from Glasgow.

Tommy Riley, candidate from the Socialist Workers' Party (IS), agrees. "All officials should be elected. We need true democracy and rank and file control of the union".

And Alan Thornett [of the Workers' Socialist League] goes one important step further in demanding that "all full-time officials (be) made subject to regular election and paid the average wage of their members".

Not one of the full-time official candidates could bring himself to mention the simple word "election", let alone the limiting of officials' pay to the average wage of their members and recallability.

Thornett is the only candidate to go further than refusing further wage restraint. More is needed than just a better claim than the government is likely

to concede; there must be a policy for the active independence of the working class and for class unity. All sorts of demands for "a big rise" which fail to put forward an alternative principle for the working class are, in this sense, falling short of their class duty now.

Thornett states the principle "for substantial wage increases plus cost of living clauses tied to a union-compiled price index to protect against inflation". Unfortunately he does not go on to spell out more concretely what this means.

Where Thornett's address becomes just as inadequate as those of the full-time officials — the one using the diction of bowdlerised Trotskyism, and the others of social democracy — is where he relates to the question of the government.

Abstractly apeing the structure of the Transitional Programme that Trotsky drafted for the Fourth International in 1938, Thornett says: "The direction of the TGWU must change from the class compromise epitomised by Bro. Jones' 'Year of the Beaver' speech, to defence of the interests of the working class."

I therefore oppose the social contract and all cuts in public spending. I call for the opening of the books of employers who declare redundancies or closure and support occupations demanding work-sharing on full pay to maintain jobs. I am for the nationalisation of any employer who refuses these demands and [somehow this gets in!] for the removal of Callaghan and Healey by left MPs who must form a government which will support these demands.

"All racial discrimination must be actively opposed and the wages and conditions of women workers improved".

The awkward phrasing is perhaps inevitable, given lack of space for the address. But two things are striking about this statement. Firstly, the way that the question of "workers' control" is evaded.

RYDER

Perhaps Thornett's fear of using this demand in the hackneyed way of the Workers' Revolutionary Party (which expelled him and the other comrades who formed the WSL in late 1974) has prevented him applying the idea properly, for example in relation to the slogan of "open the books".

But just at present, with Jack Jones hollering that the Bullock report should be implemented immediately, some indication of an attitude towards "workers control" is vital. In addition, in Leylands, where Thornett himself works, the question of participation and the Ryder scheme are crucial. This makes a brief statement on workers' control absolutely essential.

THE UNIONS



Perhaps that is an omission, dictated by the space limits of the election address. Certainly the WSL's paper, 'Socialist Press', has expressed itself clearly against participation and the Ryder scheme. But the second point of note is the amazing catechism of "the removal of Callaghan and Healey by left MPs who must form a government...".

'Socialist Press' says that this demand is the "way that we develop the culminating demand of the Transitional Programme 'for a workers' government'". But this is a thoroughly reformist way of posing the question.

Indeed, it negates the basic principle Thornett claimed to be advocating in his struggle against the WRP: for an understanding of the transitional programme as a programme of struggle, not as a set of recipes divorced from the living forces and forms of class war.

The demand produced in the Thornett address is simply the demand for a 'left' government, in itself indistinguishable from the policy of the Communist Party. Of course, the programme that the Stalinists advocate for such a 'Left' government is not the one that Thornett proposes; but a good programme of demands is worthless if it is tied to a false means of gaining those demands.

The key question is, why "must" the left MPs (who,

as everyone knows, don't support Thornett's demands) "form a government which will support these demands".

The simple answer is, they won't and they can't form such a government. The left MPs are part of the whole system of the Labour leadership, and as organically incapable of settling about an assault on capitalism as the rest of them. One can construct a "literary exposure" of the left MPs by posing an anti-capitalist programme and denouncing them for not carrying it out; one can argue, as 'Socialist Press' does, that "the 'lefts' have a duty to the Labour movement they cannot fulfill, and we must expose this".

LITERARY

But it is a purely literary "exposure", and an utterly abstract method of argument, straight from the school of Healyism. Its only practical result can be, not to 'expose' the left MPs, but to build up in a few minds the idea that the Tribunes are somehow radically better than Callaghan and Healey — an idea whose falsity is shown very clearly by the recent careers of Michael Foot or Jack Jones, once leaders of the Left, now pillars of the Government.

In fact, the focus on the 'left' makes the WSL's demand a worse variant than the usual abstract-utopian litany of "a Labour government with a socialist programme"; for there is a real difference of class base between Labour and Tories which certainly doesn't exist between left and right wings of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

SUPPORT

Concrete demands can be directed at the Government and used as a basis for mobilising in the trade unions and in the Labour Party. But a real workers' government will require the radical break-up of the decades-old British system of Labour leadership/trade union bureaucracy/capitalist collaboration, and not simply the coming to power of the 'left' within that system. The WSL's demand — unintentionally, no doubt — blurs that issue.

In Workers' Action 43 we advised readers in the TGWU to support Thornett. That support should be coupled with criticism of his demand that the 'lefts' fight to remove the Callaghan-Healey leadership and themselves take responsibility for forming a leadership answerable to the working class ['Socialist Press' no. 51].

PAUL ADAMS

workers' ACTION supporters' groups

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

WORKERS IN ACTION

LAST WEDNESDAY, 2nd February, the Leyland shop stewards' combine committee, representing 120,000 workers, resolved to begin a campaign against any new pay curbs. This could be a big boost for the struggle against workers being made to pay the cost of capitalism's crisis.

The combine committee has called a meeting of 600 Leyland senior stewards for February 15th. That meeting will discuss the staging of a national conference of trade unionists 'on the widest possible basis' to mobilise support for a return to free collective bargaining.

Leyland stewards pledged to fight any new wage curbs

The conference is provisionally scheduled for early April, in Birmingham.

The principal forces behind this action are those of the Communist Party; it was one of their members, the convenor at Prestcold, Reading, who moved the proposal at the combine committee. Derek Robinson, chairman of the combine committee, convenor at Leyland, Longbridge, and also a member of the Communist Party, explained the initiative — in terms that fell far short of a serious workers' counter-offensive against the bosses' offensive being particularly carried on by Leyland.

He denounced the social contract, so the "Morning Star" reports, "for eroding pay differentials and creating other pay anomalies... Because of the policy, Leyland workers were on low pay and there was consequent resist-

ance to increasing productivity".

"The employers and the stewards", continued the "Morning Star", "are due to see the government to argue the case for flexibility in future pay bargaining. Mr Robinson said: 'We will try every avenue open to us to persuade people that there is a need for more flexibility'".

If the fight against future pay curbs is conducted in the name, not of class-wide workers' interests, but of restoring differentials; if productivity dealing is to be admitted provided only that the pay rewards seem sufficient; and if the alternative to the social contract is going to be, not working-class struggle for (at least) a sliding scale of wages in line with the cost of living, but joint efforts by employers and stewards to persuade the government to be 'flexible' — then the proposed campaign

will get no further than last year's Labour Assembly (also a CP initiative), which brought together 3000 delegates but made no provision either for democratic debate of strategy or for really organising the fight.

Meanwhile a series of sectional struggles testify to an employers' offensive in Leyland.

1300 TGWU members at Castle Bromwich struck on Monday 7th after 32 paintshop workers had been dismissed for objecting to a redeployment scheme. A strike of 350 press operators at the same plant — over pay deductions made after a union meeting had overrun — had only just finished.

The Castle Bromwich strikes have caused big lay-offs, and 3200 workers are also laid off at Triumph, Canley, where 300 paintshop men have struck

over the introduction of time and motion study.

A four-week overtime ban by Leyland bus and truck workers throughout Britain finished only last Friday, when agreement was reached on a new sick pay scheme. And Marina production at Cowley, Oxford, was halted for two days last week by a strike of 670 workers who objected to the bosses trying to impose new manning standards without negotiation.

A workers' fight-back demands a strategy which not only gives answers to the great political issues of the day — the government, the social contract, 'participation' — but also points a way forward in these partial disputes.

Next week's WORKERS' ACTION will carry a full analysis of the disputes in Leyland and strategy for the fight-back. C.F.

EVENTS

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

SATURDAY 12 FEBRUARY. Cambridge Working Women's Charter day conference on the Sex Discrimination Act and the Equal Pay Act. 2pm to 5pm at Mawson Hall, Mawson Rd.

SUNDAY 13 FEBRUARY. Northampton Workers' Action Socialist Forum: "Marxism & Trotskyism — the connections and their answers". Speaker: Dave Spencer. 8pm at the Electricity Sports and Social Club, Angel Lane.

THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY. "Women's liberation and the struggle for socialism". Cambridge Workers' Action meeting. 8pm at Mawson Hall, Mawson Rd.

THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY. "The material basis of women's oppression". First of a series of six fortnightly forums on women's oppression under capitalism, based on the article in 'Revolutionary Communist' no. 5. Speaker: Carol Brown. Admission: 20p. 7.30pm at the 'Roebuck' 108A Tottenham Court Road.

FRIDAY-SATURDAY-SUNDAY 18-19-20 February. "Portugal-Chile-Britain" conference at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Details from PWCC, 12 Little Newport St, WC2.

MONDAY 21 FEBRUARY. All-Lambeth Anti-Racist Movement public meeting. 7.30pm, Brixton Centre, 2 St Matthews Rd, SW2.

SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference. Credentials: (75p) from J Hills, 137 Wanstead Park Rd, Ilford, Essex.

SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY. "A Rally for Women's Rights". 11am at Alexandra Palace, N22. Rally Secretary: Mandy Snell 33 Wemyss Rd, London SE3 (318 3763).

THURSDAY 3 MARCH. Cambridge Workers' Action meeting, "Struggle in Southern Africa", 8pm at the Chetwynd Room, Kings College.

SUNDAY 5 MARCH. Campaign Against Criminal Trespass Law day conference for Wales. 11am to 5pm, Miners' Hall, Merthyr Tydfil. Details c/o AUEW-TASS, 18 St Anne's Close, Merthyr Tydfil, Mid-Glamorgan.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 5-6 MARCH. Second Socialist Teachers' Alliance conference. Creche, pooled fare. Details from 01-906 0570.

SUNDAY 13 MARCH. Workshop on "What is a socialist feminist practice?". No. 1: "Is unemployment an area of feminist struggle?" Cannon House, St Johns Way, N19. More details: 13 Malford Rd, London SE5.

SATURDAY 19 MARCH. 'Liberation' National Conference against Racism. Sponsored by 8 major trade unions and 100 MPs. 9.30am to 4.30pm at Friends House, Euston Rd, London. Delegates' credentials (E1) from Libération, 313-315 Caledonian Rd, London N1.

MONDAY-THURSDAY 4-7 APRIL. "Four days of Marxist discussion on the Soviet Union", organised in central London by Critique (9 Poland St, W1). Registration limited: write now.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY 21-22 MAY. "Which way for the Charter campaign?" The Working Women's Charter Campaign will be holding their National Conference in London. Venue will be announced later. All enquiries to 1A Comberwell Grove, London SE5 (01 701 4173).

CYPRIOT DEFENCE COMMITTEE
Campaigning against the threatened deportation of Cypriot immigrants under the 1971 Immigration Act. Contact: 90 Mountview Rd, London N4.

United response still needed at Fords

WHILE THE strike at Fords plant at Halewood around the case of a sacked welder showed that workers were prepared to take action against the bosses' repeated assaults, the settlement reached left a number of questions unanswered.

The welder, dismissed for alleged 'vandalism', was not actually reinstated.

The divisions inside the plant were shown. While the Body Plant shut, the Paint, Trim and Assembly [PTA] was laid off. There was very little attempt to involve the PTA in the strike. The Transmission plant continued working.

The settlement 'guaranteed' trade union representation in disciplinary cases. But it missed out management's use of 'cumulative' disciplinary action [hourly and increasing discipline in situations where workers refuse to work in unsafe conditions], and includes a 'hold' period while appeals are made. This is aimed by the bosses to stop any immediate solidarity action on the shop floor.

FROM p1 Wages

demand: for automatic cost-of-living wage increases, based on a working-class prices index.

The demand for automatic cost-of-living increases should also apply to all benefits, grants, and pensions. The commons motion, signed by 80 Labour MPs, opposing moves to end the existing inflation-proofing of social security benefits, is nothing more than the minimum necessary.

The campaign against new pay curbs, for automatic cost-of-living wage increases, must be taken into all the unions — but particularly into the public sector unions.

The way to protect the value of wages and benefits is to have them increase automatically with the increase in the cost of living. That is the working class answer to inflation — not the misleading slogans of price restraint, which the trade union leaders are now likely to use, only in order to harness up the working class for another year of wage freeze — the third year running.

Since last September, Fords have sacked 55 workers from the plant, and 100 have received letters of censure. There are reported to be 100 appeals in the pipe-line to be heard under the new procedure. The basis of the bosses' offensive — to get more work out of the labour force by intimidation and by breaking down organisation in the

plant — still remains.

The same special drive to boost productivity has been put in front of the workers at Fords Dagenham plant. Management are demanding an increase in Cortina production of 10 an hour [from 45 to 55] and an increase in Fiesta production of 100 per shift [from 200 to 300] — with the same number of workers!

ALL MANUAL WORK at Massey Ferguson's Banner Lane plant, Coventry, came to a halt on Monday 7th February. The strike of assembly workers has now been made official by the AUEW and other unions are refusing to cross the picket lines.

About 1500 staff are still working in the giant office block, headquarters of Masseys European operations. The strike was provoked by the Company in an attempt to cover the cheaper prices on the new '500

Series' tractor. In particular, they had picked on the most cooperative men for cab assembly, but then tried to screw even those workers down more than they could take.

Unfortunately component production is still proceeding at Peterborough, Kilmarnock, and Manchester. The Company no doubt hope that when the annual wage review takes place in April, they can be hard on the lads in Peterborough, Kilmarnock, and Manchester, who will be demanding parity with Coventry,

since enough components will be in store to withstand any strike action they have in mind. So meanwhile Masseys Coventry will be able to work 7 days a week!

Truly militancy is not enough! This multi-national company is out to tame or break trade unionism. Every week management from 132 plants across the world are on the phone to each other. The workers must begin to build the same sort of unity.

DAVE SPENCER

THOMAS HUXLEY COLLEGE CLOSURE

LAST SUMMER Thomas Huxley College students occupied the college in the struggle against teacher unemployment.

Now the college is under the threat of closure. After the initial shock at the announcement, both students and staff seem united in their will to fight this death sentence imposed by the Government.

But as regards means of struggle — the emergency student union meeting last week decided to carry out a borough-wide survey to assess the general opinion on the merits of mature teachers.

So the students are arguing for 'special case' treatment rather than for opposition to all cuts wherever they fall. The Students' Union president, Jenny Byron, explained that students were anxious to collate information about the college and prove that mature students made better teachers.

But when the letter from the Department of Education and Science stated that the proposal to close the college was no reflection on the history of Thomas Huxley, it was true. The government are imposing cuts, not because they consider Thomas Huxley a poor college, but because they want to divert funds from teachers and teacher training to direct capitalist investment.

The students' union needs to adopt tactics more like those of last summer.

WORKERS AT HAMMERSMITH hospital have begun industrial action following news that two of the catering staff may be made redundant.

Catering staff are refusing to deal with trainees and students, or to do special functions. Porters are refusing to handle certain stores. And there is to be a half-day strike and lobby of the Area Health Authority.

One worker threatened with redundancy is baker and NUPE steward Bill Geddes. He said: "This is a vital issue. It is the first clear-cut case of redundancy in a London hospital. I think we have come to the crunch over the cuts and we are determined to win this battle."

"We have also had considerable support from shop stewards at other hospitals in the area, who intend to back us up in whatever action we decide to take".

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST No. 2-3: January 1977

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International-Communist League public meeting "IMPERIALISM & THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST"

Speaker: JACK PRICE. 7.45pm, Sunday 20th February, at the 'Roebuck', 108A Tottenham Court Rd, WC1 (Tube: Warren St.)



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