

workers' ACTION

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10p

**"THE FIREMEN'S STRIKE AND
THE 10% LIMIT"**

Workers' Action public meeting
Speakers include Doug Mackay (FBU
branch secretary, in personal capacity)
and other trade unionists confronting
the 10% limit.

7.45pm, Sunday 4th December, at the
'Roebuck', 108a Tottenham Court Rd.
London WC1 [Warren St tube]

**IN CASE
OF FIRE
BREAK
PAY
LIMIT**

SADAT OFFERS PEACE TO THE WARMONGERS



Labour stores up trouble for itself

BY ITS refusal to give the firemen more than 10%, the Labour government has run itself into severe problems.

The firemen's strike has massive public sympathy, and it would be decidedly risky for the government to try at this stage to stampede opinion by saying the firemen are letting people burn to death. If people are convinced that lives are being lost through the strike, they may turn against the Government. No Government can easily afford to declare it has let matters get out of hand so much that people are dying in uncontrolled fires.

The firemen stand to win — unless their union executive can pull defeat out of the jaws of victory. The executive voted 12-3 in favour of a 10% offer, and without doubt they will seize on any opportunity for a sell-out with lightning swiftness.

There are various possibilities for stretching the 10% limit a little: paying an overtime rate for the hours firemen work in excess of 42 a week, giving a productivity bonus for fire prevention work, or agreeing to 'independent' arbitration of firemen's wages in future.

But the firemen are learning a lot of things politically and trade union-wise very quickly — and their union executive may not find it all that easy to put across a sell-out. [According to the terms of the strike call, a return to work cannot be sanctioned unless the full claim is granted or a recall delegate conference approves it].

Many firemen know that the issue is not "firemen's special case", but the 10% limit. And so do many other trade unionists. If the firemen break the 10% limit decisively, then almost certainly the government's pay restraint policy is finished.

If the Labour government is dragged down to ruin in the wreckage of its pay-limiting policy — and many firemen are conscious of this possibility — then socialists will have to say that the responsibility rests squarely with the Labour leadership, who fight the firemen as part of their battle to make the working class pay the cost of the bosses' crisis.

The Tories need not gain — if socialists in the Labour Party set about organising to support the firemen and to draw the most militant firemen into the fight for revolutionary socialist politics.

MILLIONS throughout the Arab world have expressed their fury at Sadat's visit to Israel. They know that whatever the diplomatic intricacies that led up to or might follow the visit, it represented a betrayal of the Palestinian people.

What Sadat said was not new. Egypt's president reiterated what he saw as the basis of a 'peace agreement':

"First: Termination of Israeli occupation of Arab lands seized in 1967.

"Second: Realising the basic rights of the Palestinian people and its right to self-determination, including the right to establish its own state.

"Third: The right of all countries in the area to live in peace within secure and guaranteed boundaries to be obtained through agreed measures...

"Fourth: All countries in the area commit themselves to... the aims of principles of the United Nations Charter..

"Fifth: Terminating the existing state of belligerency in the area".

Israeli Premier Begin need hardly have bothered to reply. The state he heads has already rejected these proposals dozens of times over, it has many times declared parts of Arab territory occupied since the 1967 war as "not negotiable", and it has always insisted that the "Palestinian people" do not exist.

All he did say by way of definite proposals was: "You will have an ambassador in Jerusalem — you will have our ambassador, and we will have yours..." That of course is not a concession by Israel but the result of Egypt's concession to Israel! Begin also added that "we suggest mutual work, economically, for the further development of our countries..." Begin did not even mention the Palestinians.



So what was so significant about the occasion?

Almost certainly a new stage has been reached behind the scenes in bargaining between Egypt and Israel. But the Begin government does not have the strength — or at least did not until the Sadat visit — to sell a new deal to the Israeli public.

The rulers of Egypt and Israel, and of course the leaders of US imperialism, hope that the "Sadat initiative" will create a new mood in Israel in which the Begin government can isolate any critics as it moves towards making some concessions to Egypt.

Sadat declared that "I did not come to you in order to conclude a separate agree-

ment between Egypt and Israel". Clearly he is a liar. It is just such an agreement that Sadat made at the first Geneva conference in December 1973.

That agreement helped trigger off Syria's bloody entry into Lebanon. For the Assad regime realised that it was likely to be left out of the bargaining unless it strengthened its position by controlling the Palestinians.

With this visit, Sadat has wiped out the diplomatic gains made by Syria over the dead bodies of the Palestinians of Lebanon.



With the moves towards a reconvening of the Geneva conference on the Middle East apparently stuck in the sands of Arab diplomacy, Israel and her patron,

the United States, have decided to go in for separate negotiations again.

Sadat's visit opens up the way, therefore, for an accelerated advance for US imperialism's plan for a Middle East settlement: one where the state of Israel will be a permanent fixture and the Palestinians will be divided between two "bantustans" under the control of Israel and some combination of Arab states.



Palestinians in London condemn Sadat sell-out

A BLOW AGAINST THE ARAB MASSES

There have been three wars in the Middle East since the establishment of the state of Israel. On each occasion — in 1956, in 1967, and in 1973 — there were fears that these local wars might quickly explode into world wars. Why should this area, and particularly the state of Israel, be the focus of such concern?

The Middle East is of great strategic and economic importance to the nations of imperialism, and of considerable (though less) importance to the Soviet Union. Its massive underground wealth in particular — oil, natural gas — is crucial for imperialism's raw material supplies, and for the profits of the great imperialist enterprises who own much of that wealth.

But the days are long past when the industrialised west could keep direct colonial control over this vast area by garrisoning its troops there.

Instead imperialism has developed other means to keep the area under its domination. Imperialism has allied with the most reactionary political trends and classes to crush the radical nationalist and revolutionary socialist movements. This would not have proved at all possible — and indeed it has not been entirely successful in any case — without the creation

of the state of Israel.

Israel, since its establishment, has acted as the gun-barrel of imperialism thrust into the ribs of the Arab world. The military role of other states — like Iran today — has always been of some importance to the great capitalist powers, but Israel remains the real pivot of imperialist force in the area.

Imperialism's need to set up its own fortress state coincided with the will of the hard-line Zionists to create an exclusivist Jewish state on Palestinian soil. The setting up of the state of Israel was inseparable from the expropriation of the Palestinian people. Thus for the Arab masses Israel both embodied imperialist oppression and exploitation and the denial of Arab unity.

The double importance of the Palestine question for Arab nationalism is well expressed in the Preamble to the Manifesto of the United Arab Republic, drafted in 1963 during the abortive attempt to establish a federal union between Egypt, Syria and Iraq:

"Unity is especially revolutionary because it is profoundly connected with the Palestine cause and with the national duty to liberate that country. It was the disaster of Palestine that revealed the conspiracy of the reactionary classes and

exposed the treacheries of the hired regional parties and their denial of the people's objectives and aspirations.

"It was the disaster of Palestine that showed the weakness and backwardness of the economic and social systems that prevailed in the country, released the revolutionary energies of our people and awakened the spirit of revolt against imperialism, injustice, poverty and underdevelopment.

"It was the disaster of Palestine that clearly indicated that path of salvation, the path of unity, freedom and socialism..."

Thus a sell-out of the Palestinian people and acceptance of the Zionist state not only involves a betrayal of these oppressed masses, robbed of their lands and their rights. It necessarily involves a sell-out of the anti-imperialist aspirations of Arab nationalism.

When Sadat travels to Israel, recognising the Zionist state and suing for a separate peace favourable to the Egyptian ruling class and its imperialist counterparts, he therefore signals that the future for the Palestinians is continued destitution and the future for the Egyptian masses is one of mounting attacks by the Sadat regime and the Egyptian ruling class.

AFTER YOU...

Like many other unions, the Union of Post Office Workers has a 'wait and see' attitude on wages. The union leadership has even postponed formulating its pay demands until it sees what other workers get. The UPW is ready to take advantage of a victory by the firemen: but it has not lifted a finger, officially to help them win.

The same goes for many other unions at national executive level. What about the TGWU, the GMWU and NUPE, whose claim for one million members in local authority manual work is next in line after the firemen? What about the National Union of Mineworkers, whose £135 claim will be given a major boost if the firemen win? Why aren't they organising major national campaigns of solidarity, demonstrations, token strikes, official collections, pressure on the Government?

And the same again is true of the fire service officers. They must know that their 40% wage claim depends entirely on the current strike. Yet their union, NAFO, has refused to join the strike, or even to take any action against its members who defy NAFO policy by crossing FBU picket lines.

We're not a special case!

■ Do you think firemen should be treated as a special case?

□ No. And we have won this argument quite conclusively among firemen. What I've said is that if I'm going to win support from other workers, I can't say to them: 'We want more than 10% for firemen, but we don't think you should get more than 10%'. And that's been accepted.

■ How have you argued the firemen's case?

□ When I spoke to the Rover stewards, what I said was this: 'We say firemen are not a special case. Many other workers especially in the public sector earn even less than firemen. Our fight is not just a fight for firemen, it is a fight against the 10% limit which is being imposed on all of us. The important thing is to build support among other workers for our claim and to smash the 10% limit once and for all'.

■ How is the strike being organised?

□ On a local level in the West Midlands it is being run by the 'brigade committee'. The committee meets regularly, and the meetings are open, so there is good representation from the stations, but there is a big problem of leadership. Workers' Action had to produce the first leaflets and collection sheets in Birmingham. An official strike bulletin has been promised but postponed repeatedly.

IN CASE OF FIRE BREAK PAY LIMIT



DOUG MACKAY is the Fire Brigades Union branch secretary at Acocks Green, Birmingham, and a Workers' Action supporter. In the photo above he is receiving a donation to strike funds from Bro. Neale [left] on behalf of the Lucas Shaftsmoor Lane shop stewards. Last weekend he gave Workers' Action his views on the progress of the strike.

■ What do you think about occupying the fire stations?

□ Some areas like North Wales have been occupied from the first day despite having practically no tradition of trade union militancy. Locally the argument against occupation has been that once you are inside the fire station, it's much easier for the police to appeal to your 'social conscience' to get you to go out to fires despite the strike. I don't accept that.

■ What is the strikers' attitude to the firemen who have left picket lines to help fight nearby fires where there was danger to life?

□ We reckon we would do the same thing in their place. But the firemen who have done that have always made clear that they were helping as private individuals, not as firemen. Also, attitudes are hardening. In the Tilbury power station fire, some pickets were tricked into going to the fire by the police telling them that life was at risk when it wasn't. When they got back they found that one of their machines had been taken. They went

out and got it back.

■ What support have you had from the labour movement locally?

□ We've had tremendous support. Lucas Shaftsmoor Lane gave £100 in a donation from shop stewards' funds, and £47 from a collection on the night shift. Ansell's Brewery are discussing a £1 a head levy. Rover Solihull gave £20 from shop stewards' funds and will be taking a collection. We've also had collections from local social workers, Rover Clay Lane toolroom, Birmingham Poly and Aston University Student Unions, and from a Rock against Racism disco. A collection in Smethwick shopping centre took two people to carry back to the office.

The anti-cuts demonstration organised for next Saturday 26th in Birmingham will now also be a 'support the firemen' demonstration.

■ What do you think of the 'Rank and File Fireman' Daily Strike News?

□ At first people were wary of it, and wanted an official bulletin instead. Now it's going down very well. The

Overwhelming support for the firemen

All over the country, support for the firemen's strike has been massive. A few examples give the picture:

■ **FIFE:** NUM Dysart miners' club has loaned their premises to Fife central strike committee, which is made up from 2 delegates from each shift at each station.

The firemen have been approaching local workplaces with petitions and appeals for funds. Kinnell Colliery has raised £300 and two other pits have levied their members.

The NUM have blacked coal supplies to the fire stations.

■ **EDINBURGH:** Monkton Hall Colliery and other local pits have raised large sums of money for the firemen. Edinburgh Central and Leith CLPs

have passed resolutions in support of the strike. People have been queuing up in the streets to sign petitions and give money for the strike.

A Scottish firemen's demonstration is being organised in Edinburgh on Wednesday 23rd.

■ **GLASGOW:** Firemen raised £1100 in one afternoon collecting in Argyle St.

■ **LIVERPOOL:** A big 'support the firemen' meeting was called by the LPYS last week, with Eddie Loyden MP among the speakers. The Trades Council is giving the strikers full support.

A constant stream of passers by are adding their names to the petitions and putting donations into the picket line collection boxes. On Saturday over 100 firemen's wives held a solidarity demonstration in Liverpool town centre in support of their husbands. Pamphlets were distributed and a loud-hailer used to broadcast the firemen's case.

■ **NOTTINGHAM:** One small group of firemen at West Bridgeford has been scabbing. Strikers have put a picket on the scab station. Any public support they may have had was cut back when an old people's home caught fire. One scab turned up to help fight the fire — and six pickets!

A local NUPE branch has given £50 to the firemen.

■ **COVENTRY:** A meeting of 700 Coventry local authority engineers decided to give full support and not to do any work normally done by the firemen.

■ **CARDIFF:** Cardiff North CLP passed a resolution in support of the full claim and took a collection. Local strikers are now going round Cardiff factories to get support. 300 firemen demonstrated against James Callaghan (whose constituency is in Cardiff) last Friday, 18th.

■ **LONDON:** Several fire stations have 'hoot if you support us' banners, and the resulting din has been deafening! Tottenham and Norwood LPYSs have produced and distributed leaflets in support of the firemen. Dustmen at a depot in South London held a mass meeting to discuss the possibility of a strike in solidarity with the firemen.

In Hammersmith, attempts to get other council workers to break the strike have failed. A fireman spoke at the Trades Council and won full support.

■ **CAMBRIDGE:** The City Labour Party has given its offices to the firemen for use as a strike headquarters.

problem is that it doesn't give a political lead. It just gives reports without raising the political implications about the 10% limit, the Labour Government and so on.

■ What about the problem of the fire brigade officers and the strike?

□ In Birmingham some officers have torn up their NAFO cards and joined the FBU and come on strike; some have crossed picket lines, but we won't be working with them after the strike

■ Is that realistic?

□ Yes. As firemen we work very closely together. You have to rely on each other during a job. That's one of the reasons why the strike has been so solid.

Key points of solidarity

The solidarity action must be continued and stepped up. The key points are:

● Mass meetings, with firemen invited to speak, and collections in every workplace. The firemen are receiving no strike pay.

● Support on the picket lines.

● Organise local support committees; 'support the firemen' demonstrations, and stoppages in work time, to show

the power of the backing for the firemen and to counter any attempts by the press to isolate the strike.

● In any part of any workplace where you know there is a fire risk, insist that work is stopped during the period of the firemen's strike — not only to help them, but also for your own safety. Insist on full pay during this necessary lay-off.



The facilities of Apartheid: abundant cheap labour controlled by pass law, patrolled and bludgeoned by police.

"Leyland had been one of the first British firms operating in South Africa which, when under attack for the role they were playing in maintaining exploitation in South Africa, had claimed that their presence and their policies were acting as a force for positive change in South Africa. They had previously made statements indicating that they did not stand in opposition to their workers becoming members of the union. Clearly their actions directly and unambiguously contradicted their stated intentions." (Memorandum to the TUC from the Metal and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa.)

In 1972 and 1973 a wave of strikes by black workers in Natal was followed by the formation of several black trade unions, one of which was the Metal and Allied Workers' Union (MAWU).

Proud

Such unions are limited to black membership because white, coloured and Indian workers are allowed to belong to registered unions, recognised by government and employers; black unions are unofficial. Thus they have to stand alone.

MAWU was formed in April 1973, and within 3 months, 95% of the workforce at Leyland's Mobeni plant at Durban were members. The workers then approached both the Department of Labour and the Leyland management, requesting recognition of the union and of the works committee.

Leyland refused to recognise the union or to negotiate with the works committee.

They justified this response by saying that under the terms of the Industrial Conciliation Act, black unions cannot have legal recognition. But Leyland knew very well that this does not prevent firms from informally recognising and negotiating with black unions.

Leyland management went further. It tried to foist an unwanted, management-dominated "liaison committee" on

the workers. They continued to insist on representation by their union.

Management next tried to hold a ballot on this Liaison Committee. The ballot forms came back blank; the workers demanded a referendum on representation by MAWU. Management refused.

In March 1974 the workers at Mobeni went on strike to demand recognition for MAWU. They faced enorm-

ous penalties: arrest, fines and/or imprisonment, dismissal, and possibly expulsion from the urban area and loss of the right to seek work there.

On the advice of Vorster's Department of Labour, the strikers were all sacked for taking part in an illegal strike. Lord Stokes, then head of British Leyland, was in the country at the time.

Back home, Stokes felt able to inform the House of Commons Select Committee that "We are quite proud of what we have done in South Africa. ... I certainly don't think that we have got anything to be ashamed of."

Naturally. The only thing Stokes would have felt ashamed of would have been to pass up the chance of a hefty profit.

After threats to close down Mobeni and transfer the work to Blackheath (near Cape Town) failed to bring the workers back on their knees, Leyland at last agreed to negotiate with MAWU. There was to be de facto recognition of the union and its stewards.

Detained

Leyland had given in, but it still had a nasty trick up its sleeve. When the men returned to work, 65 of them were sacked. Among them were four out of the six elected stewards. The pretext was that supplies were short because of Leyland strikes in Britain; but in fact the Mobeni plant was going flat-out, overtime included.

Ultimately, management was forced to reinstate some of the 65 who were victimised, but not the stewards. And, according to MAWU, "management were careful



Durban strikers faced teargas



not to re-employ workers who were strong and influential union supporters."

MAWU remained unrecognised, but it had kept its strength and ability to act. The new stewards were able to discuss all issues affecting the workers.

But Leyland was to fight every step of the way against union rights. When MAWU tried to recruit at Leyland's Elandsfontein plant near Johannesburg, the management was ready. Alfred Mthewa, a senior MAWU organiser, was picked up by the Security Police when he went to the plant in November 1974, and his assistant in Johannesburg was also detained. A union member in the plant, Francis Mabotsa, was sacked for having given one of his workmates a MAWU membership form. Pamphlets distributed by the Union were confiscated from the workers.

"It is obvious" MAWU told the British TUC "that the Security Branch were called in at the request of the Leyland management in an attempt to block the organisation of the workers at the Elandsfontein plant into the Metal and Allied Workers' Union. The action of the Security Branch in detaining the Union's Secretary (Mthewa) and in confiscating pamphlets from workers was

clearly designed to intimidate workers."

It is clear that whatever concessions Leyland SA made at the Mobeni plant were forced out of it, and had nothing to do with its benevolent mission to "civilise Apartheid". Both at Mobeni and at Elandsfontein, the Company availed itself fully of the 'facilities' Apartheid offers companies like Leyland: its laws and its police ready for use against workers in struggle.

Cheap

The continuing investment in Leyland SA and the refusal of recognition to MAWU go hand in hand; the steady supply of very cheap labour regimented by Apartheid makes South Africa a most profitable area for investment even during a recession.

Leyland workers in Britain should no more tolerate such racist union-bashing that they would tolerate the use of police to arrest union organisers and the systematic sacking of shop stewards at a Leyland factory in Britain. Determined and energetic industrial action in Britain could force Leyland to recognise black workers' rights in South Africa — and thus begin to deal the death-blow to Apartheid.

3 big plants and 41 subsidiaries



LEYLAND MOTOR Corporation South Africa is one of the largest companies in the country. It was formed in 1964; at first it was a 79%-owned subsidiary of British Leyland, and then the remaining 21% of the shares were taken over by BL.

In addition, BL S.Africa is the holding company of a further 41 subsidiaries in South Africa including foundries, car sales, and property and finance companies.

Leyland SA's main plants are at Blackheath near Cape Town (manufacture and assembly of cars); Mobeni near Durban and

Elandsfontein near Johannesburg [both producing commercial and heavy transport vehicles]. Leyland SA also assembles and distributes cars produced by British Leyland, and markets the Japanese Daihatsu [in which Leyland has a one-third share].

In 1974 Leyland SA's assets totalled about £44 million, with a turnover of some £50 million and a profit of just over £2 million. It holds about 6% of the SA market.

British Leyland's South African concern is its biggest manufacturing business outside Britain.

Socialist Unity

United on the tactic — Divided on principles

LAST SATURDAY, 19th November, saw the first conference of 'Socialist Unity'. There 262 people there, from the International Marxist Group, Big Flame, women's groups and an assortment of Maoist, anarchist and other collectives. But exactly which socialists were uniting, for exactly what purpose? JAMES RYAN reports.

THE RANGE OF debate was demarcated right at the beginning. The IMG and the Maoists of Big Flame and the 'Communist Formation' successfully recommended that the conference deny speaking rights to Trotskyists who disagreed with the tactic of standing candidates at elections.

The starting point of the conference, therefore, was support "for the concept of standing class-struggle candidates, standing on an alternative socialist programme in selected constituencies and wards in elections, parliamentary and local".

The aim of the conference was to adopt a programme and to establish the 'Socialist Unity' organisation.

This upside-down procedure — first decide to stand candidates, then decide what politics the candidates will stand for! — vividly calls to mind Ralph Miliband's judgment on the Labour Party: it is not dogmatic about any principles — only about parliamentary activity, a tactic.

Is Socialist Unity, then, to be a party like the Labour Party, with a programme and an organisation which exists almost exclusively for election campaigns? The conference was troubled by this problem.

Guide

Many delegates denounced "bourgeois electioneering". A programme that is good only for election addresses, and cannot guide any concerted action in the daily class struggle; or an organisation that is good only for election campaigns, and cannot offer any consistent activity outside that — those should belong to bourgeois parliamentarians and vote-catchers, not to socialists.

Therefore — it would seem — Socialist Unity must be a new party, recruiting and directing activity on the basis of its programme. Is this not the new united revolutionary organisation that the IMG has been campaigning for?

Some people at the conference seemed to see it that way. But not so for the IMG, who dominated the conference.

For revolutionary unity, the IMG's paper *Socialist Challenge* has recently published a Draft Statement of Aims. It is a woefully inadequate document, but nonetheless it is far more radical and militant than Socialist Unity's platform. And for revolutionary unity, so the IMG have said, agreement on principles is decisive. Here agreement on the electoral tactic was central.

No: for the IMG, Socialist Unity cannot be a definitely revolutionary movement, for that would make it too narrow. Instead it is to be the broader 'class struggle left wing' — which means in practice that any SU voter will still find

that SU has nothing definite and precise to propose to him or her in terms of political activity outside election time.

The Draft platform for Socialist Unity presented by the IMG and Big Flame contained no mention of revolution or even of socialism. It was not an accidental oversight. The anarchists of the Libertarian Communist Group raised an amendment which ran in part: "Our main aim is to suggest general working-class objectives, objectives which will be ultimately guaranteed only by the concentration of all resources in the hands of the working class, and their use by the working class according to its own needs".

Well, the Labour Party manifesto says it nicer, but it was too much for Socialist Unity. Six members of the

of a popular anti-capitalist programme", and anyway it didn't matter if it was inconsistent, because life is like that.

It was like the confused and pretentious debates in the radical student movement in the late 1960s. Most of those involved (other than the IMG) were miscellaneous flotsam from that movement. But by now they should be old enough to know better.

In favour

On the attitude towards the Labour Government, Big Flame and the IMG couldn't agree; consequently there was a livelier-than-usual discussion.

Big Flame said that they had been in favour of the return of a Labour Government



Socialist Unity electioneering

LCG wanted it in, 45 people wanted it out, and the IMG abstained.

Previously the IMG have said that a 'class struggle left wing' organised by the left reformists would be the desirable next step forward, but now they seem to have decided to organise it themselves, since the left reformists seem unwilling. Logically, the search for an electoral alternative slightly to the left of Labour should lead the IMG to back CP candidates. Or it might have made some sense if they had persuaded the SWP to run joint SWP-IMG candidates. But in the event the IMG were left acting out their project alone, with only a few small and confused groups in the supporting roles.

The degenerate and ridiculous character of this political play-acting became clear when the Socialist Unity platform was debated.

Debate

The first contribution was from a Maoist group which wanted to delete the demand for a £50 minimum wage on the ground that the only way Britain could afford it was by imperialist exploitation. Noting that the programme strictly avoided any reference to socialist revolution, they wanted to reduce it rigorously to what was 'possible' under capitalism.

No, replied the IMG, this is a programme of working-class action. Big Flame also objected to this criticism on the grounds that the programme was "the beginning

in 1974 as the lesser of two evils, but now they weren't so sure about that, and therefore wanted to 'abstain on Labour'. The IMG, on the other hand, argued that Socialist Unity should call for the return of a Labour Government — with the most confused arguments.

Destroy

The formation of the Labour Party was a historic gain for the working class, they said. True, but are the Tories proposing to destroy the Labour Party? We are "against the return of a Tory government — indeed any government of capitalist parties", according to Ted Coxhead for the IMG; but isn't the Labour Party, according to Coxhead, a capitalist party?

Throughout the debate IMG members could only hint at the need to approach the working class base of the Labour Party through the tactic of the united front. Taken logically to its conclusion, this argument would clearly have destroyed the IMG's rationale for pushing Socialist Unity candidates in the first place.

Far from bringing revolutionary ideas to a broader audience of workers by Socialist Unity, the IMG are increasingly importing reformist ideas into their own organisation and their own propaganda. And they are not even likely to gain much in terms of recruitment; it is the groups, like Big Flame, who adapt most closely to the petty-bourgeois radical milieu of Socialist Unity, who will stand to win out.

Communist Party debate

The Communist Party's Congress has concluded with a big majority for the new draft of the British Road to Socialism. Yet no-one outside the CP, and few inside it, believe that the party has resolved its problems.

In the final article of his series on the CP's programme debate, BRUCE ROBINSON argues that the CP is caught in an impasse between old-style Stalinism and social democracy.

THE BRITISH ROAD AND MOSCOW

FROM THE beginnings of the working class movement, up until the 1920s, most socialists had always understood that their struggle was an international one; that victories in single countries were only episodes in the great international class war between Capital and Labour.

When, after 1924, the Stalin faction took up the programme of "Socialism in One Country", they introduced a conflict in the Communist Parties which is still working itself out.

In the name of the socialism which supposedly existed "in one country", all the CPs outside Russia had to abandon the interests of the class struggle in their own countries and instead follow the interests of the Moscow bureaucracy. When Stalin allied with Britain and the US during World War 2, the British and American CPs started opposing strikes, and the CPs in British colonies gave up agitation for independence.

Autonomy

All national specificities were ignored by Stalin's dictates — except the great "national specificity" of Russia.

But as the CPs, under Stalin's guidance, accommodated more and more to their own bourgeoisies, they were bound to demand autonomy. Now each CP wanted to pursue reformism "in one country". In

1943 the Communist International was dissolved, and in the 1950s it was declared that each CP would have its own "national road to socialism". All these "national" roads, however, led in the same direction — parliamentary reformism.

That move, in its turn, produced new tensions. Increasingly, links with Moscow have become an embarrassment to CPs eager to be accepted as respectable parties of government within bourgeois democracy. That is the meaning of "Eurocommunism".

National

Both the general doctrine of the "national road to socialism", and the new efforts to loosen the links with Moscow, have been at the centre of the debates in the British CP.

The "British Road to Socialism" conceives of a British socialist state in isolation from the rest of the world. It argues for economic self-sufficiency, adding only a few words about trade with the "socialist" countries. "With overseas investment abolished, foreign borrowing curtailed, the role of the City eliminated, the speculative commodity markets closed down and trade expanded, a rational handling of the balance of payments would become possible."

In the words of Reuben Falber, the "British Road" aims to show that "socialism is as native to our islands as the rose and the oak."

For the new Programme adopted last week, "the nature of the British constitution, under which Parliament has supreme authority, gives a left government the right and the means ... to carry through

drastic and necessary reforms in the state apparatus to correspond to the political change in the country expressed in the electoral verdict of the people."

The programme sees British nationalism as something to be encouraged against the domination of Britain by foreign multinationals, ignoring the fact that Britain itself is an imperialist country. The EEC is seen as "threatening national control over the economy" (essential for a self-sufficient British socialism); and there is concern that "the survival of Britain as a manufacturing nation ... is at stake". One letter in Comment asks "Surely it is time we stated clearly who the patriots are, namely the working people of Britain?"

Cagey

Long ago Trotsky denounced the German CP's nationalist demagogy, based on the claim that the 1919 Versailles Treaty made Germany an oppressed nation, a claim not unlike the British CP's claim that Britain is oppressed by the "multinationals": "Our policy is determined not by the fact that Germany is a 'ball' in the hands of the Entente, but primarily by the fact that the German proletariat, which is split up, powerless and oppressed is a ball in the hands of the German bourgeoisie. The main enemy is at home! Karl Liebknecht wrote at one time. Or perhaps you have forgotten this, friends?"

Critics inside the CP such as Charlie Doyle only say "Patriotism and international working class solidarity are two sides of the same coin.

They are both an integral part of the class struggle." And what they mean by "international working class solidarity" is in fact less criticism of the USSR.

The new Programme is cooler than previous editions of the "British Road" on the "socialist countries". It says no more than "The economic advances of the socialist countries have also shown socialism's great potential for human development, despite the problems which exist within these countries and in relations between them."

Doyle and others now — 26 years after the "British Road" was first adopted — oppose the idea of any special British 'Road'. They feel that the Programme draws no lessons from world events, and that the resistance from the capitalists to the peaceful road would be greater than is allowed for. There are also some inside the CP who propose a "Portuguese / Angolan / Cuban" road. They argue for an emphasis on "Popular Power", though still giving it a subordinate role to Parliamentary politics.

Most important, however, are the tendencies that reject even the limited criticisms the CP has so far made of the Soviet Union. Not all of them reject the British Road in toto; instead they feel that the latest version represents a new and undesirable independence from Moscow.

Mostly they reject both the new "British Road" and the split-off New Communist Party. Thus Victor Adereth writes: "Though the 1951 programme was approved by Comrade Stalin, what's good enough for the CPSU is clearly not good enough for Sid

French (NCP leader). ... I hope that now we have got rid of the dogmatists it will be possible to openly challenge revisionism without being called a Stalinist." (Comment, 3rd September).

Yet just as the "anti-revisionists" never challenge the most fundamental premises of the CP's reformism, the CP majority is cagey about completely identifying itself with "Eurocommunism". For the British CP the process of readjustment is fraught with dangers different from those in France, Italy or Spain: namely, that the Party will lose its independent identity altogether.

General Secretary Gordon McLennan was very careful in an interview in the Morning Star (4th July) to emphasise that "Eurocommunism" was nothing much new or exciting and that national parties had always had the right to be "independent": "No doubt the use made of the term by some commentators in the capitalist media is intended to create differences in the Communist movements... What is being talked about is the development of policies and strategies of various communist parties over quite a long time..."

Sect

Sam Russell, writing about the Madrid meeting of Marchais, Carillo and Berlinguer, says proudly "Indeed the British Communist Party can claim with all due modesty that it pioneered many of these ideas in its British Road to Socialism."

But what is new is that an up-and-coming CP intellectual such as Alan Hunt can write as follows: "The breakaway proves the logic of the Stalinist position is that their political home is outside the CPGB. ... What, then, is Stalinism? Stalinism is a deformed version of Marxism..." (Comment, 3rd September).

For Hunt, Stalinism is identified purely with an uncritical attitude to the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, it is significant that the CPGB can tolerate — even from the outriders of the leadership — such debate in the Party.

Pulled in one direction towards completely dissolving into British reformism, pulled in another direction towards becoming a Moscow-loyalist sect, the CP has no future. Those CP members who are seriously wanting to fight for socialism have today to look to the revolutionaries, and to the ideas of Trotskyism, which provide the only real and coherent alternative to reformism and the Stalinist bureaucracies of Moscow and Peking.

WHAT SOLIDARITY WITH THE R.A.F.?

THE LETTER published last week from the Austrian IKL group argued that the "Red Army Fraction" must be seen as part of the workers' movement, and it criticised Workers Action for inadequate solidarity with the RAF.

With actions such as the Lufthansa hi-jacking we have no solidarity at all. Even if they are motivated by a will to fight the capitalist system, we could not regard people who made such deeds their main activity, using the lives of ordinary people as pawns for bargaining with a bourgeois government, as other than our class's enemies.

But the RAF should not simply be identified with that hi-jacking. The actions for which Baader, Meinhof and their comrades were jailed had been directed against ruling class or military targets (such as US installations at the time of the Vietnam war.) And shortly before he was murdered, Andreas Baader reportedly condemned the Lufthansa hi-jack.

That doesn't make the RAF part of the workers' movement — either now or when it started. On the contrary, it has always counterposed itself to the workers' movement. Its policies are not policies for the workers' movement, to be argued out within the movement; nor do they accept any responsibility or accountability to the workers' movement.

To be sure, morally they have often been more admirable than the reformist bureaucrats within the workers' movement, who incidentally can be murderous on a far grander scale than anything the RAF ever set their hands to. We shed no tears for their ruling class victims, and we salute the self-sacrificing heroism with which they conduct their battle against our class enemy and for socialist aims. We see them as militants whom we try to win over from a politically mistaken, dangerous and futile strategy to our Marxist strategy, centred on working class mass action.

In that sense we have solidarity with the RAF. And we oppose their maltreatment and murder at the



The Lufthansa hostages

hands of the state, as we would do whatever their politics.

One other thing commands our sympathy — though not "solidarity". We understand that the state criminalises many actions which are clearly political, pretending they are actions which any settled society would abhor. The militant picket is labelled "thug" by the capitalist press, and the political dissenter is labelled "hooligan" by the press of Eastern Europe. One of our basic acts of solidarity is to explain how the RAF have been criminalised.

But where self-criminalisation takes over from state criminalisation, where, in other words, the RAF's actions are opposed to the interests and morality of the proletariat, our working class solidarity demands that we condemn them.

What, concretely, does the IKL propose as more adequate solidarity?

The IKL's journal *Permanente Revolution* carries the slogan "Free

All Political Prisoners". This slogan is not of much use in the case of the RAF.

When the working class seizes power, we will of course open the prison gates to release all political prisoners, and most "criminal" prisoners too. Specific campaigns for the release of particular prisoners or particular categories of prisoners (eg Irish nationalist political prisoners in Britain) or for giving them "prisoner of war" or "political" status, are of value to the extent that they relate to political realities.

A campaign for the RAF to be accorded "political" status could be used by revolutionaries as part of their battle against the West German government's witch-hunt.

But "free all political prisoners" would be an incomprehensible "declaration of principle"; and a call for "prisoner of war" status would give credence to the RAF's own, false, self-image.

Workers' Action
Editorial Board

Coventry

More sackings at Alfred Herberts

ALFRED HERBERT, once the largest machine tool firm in Europe, have given three months notice of 460 sackings at their Edgewick (Coventry) works.

The firm has 7,000 workers world-wide (about half the number of ten years ago), 4,000 in the Coventry area. In 1975 the National Enterprise Board handed out £25 million to keep the firm afloat after Alfred Herbert had reported five consecutive years of losses.

The main problem immediately facing Alfred Herberts is the continuing world-wide recession in machine tools. Given that machine tools is a key sector, indeed often a barometer for the economy as a whole, this does not augur well for a new upturn for world capitalism.

The *Financial Times* (Sep. 20) commented on the eve of the International Machine Tools Exhibition in Hanover: "The recession refuses to respond to the normal rules". Many UK machine tool companies are said to be working at only 60% capacity.

Some of the big seven UK tool firms are cushioned by being part of huge diversified multi-nationals (Matrix Tools/Tube Investments, Wickmans/John Browns), but Alfred Herberts is not in this position and has to rely on government aid to avoid bankruptcy. At the same time, one of the feat-

ures of the Hanover exhibition was the large number of 'third world' countries making low value machine tools (e.g. simple capstans, cutters, etc, not linked to computers or assembly lines) for export — a line for which Alfred Herberts and other UK firms are famous. The *Financial Times* commented: "Third World machine tool production and technology is increasing at a breathtaking rate".

It is clear that, like Leyland, Alfred Herbert is losing out in the international capitalist rat-race. The intervention of the NEB with Labour government approval is to help to streamline the firm ruthlessly, to cut back on manning and plant in order to try to make the firm profitable.

Blacked

Phase 2 of the company's plans include the closure of the foundries on the Edgewick site and the sheet metal and pattern shops. This would shut down the whole of the first stage of production, and the company will then rely on sheet metal and castings from other sources. In any economic expansion, Alfred Herbert would have to join the queue for metal.

The response of AUEW convenor Ron Doughty was to call for a

CPSA Conference

The right wing is defeated

THE TRUMID-backed right wing in the Civil and Public Services Association have suffered a crushing defeat over their new rule book proposals.

Their project of postal balloting went down 116,000-95,000 on a card vote — and they needed a two-thirds majority to get the rule changed. Other new rules about length of term of office of President and Vice-president, undermining of branch autonomy, and conference sovereignty, were all defeated.

The right wing strategy is in ruins, and the civil service mandarins who placed a lot of reliance on the victory of the right wing will now be looking for other tactics. Delegates leaving this rules revision conference cannot yet count on the complete defeat of the TRUMID-backed off-

ensive to create a EPTU-type union within the civil service. The right wing are bound to try again.

They may turn again to the use of High Court and Fleet Street to ram through rule changes at the 1978 conference. And they will probably continue the witch hunt against left-wing militants, pushing the Government to update the 1963 Radcliffe report on security vetting of civil service employees.

The outcome of the rules revision conference, however, will certainly boost the CPSA week of action on cuts and wages starting 28th November, and the call by left wing area committees for a one-day strike on pay on 3rd December.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY



THE UNIONS



liaison committee representing all trade unionists in machine tool firms in the Coventry area. However this committee, instead of waging an organised struggle against all sackings in the industry, banning overtime, calling for nationalisation without compensation, etc, has started out by calling for import controls. Already

Wickmans workers have blacked maintenance work on Japanese NC machine which competes directly with an Alfred Herbert machine.

These tactics are not only viciously narrow-minded, but ultimately offer no hope of saving machine tools jobs.

DAVE SPENCER

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*, 49, Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

FRIDAY 25 NOVEMBER. "British trade unionists and the fight against apartheid". 7pm, Friends House, Euston Rd. Organised by AAM and SACTU.

SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER. Working Women's Charter day school on women and the trade unions. From 10.30am at Friends Meeting House, Church Street, Reading.

SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER. 'Rank and File' delegate conference. 11.30am at the New Century Hall, Corporation St, Manchester.

TUESDAY 29 NOVEMBER. Cardiff Workers' Action readers' meeting: "Rank and File Movements". 7.30pm, VCS, St Mary Street.

WEDNESDAY 30 NOVEMBER. CPSA-firemen joint mass rally. 3.30pm in the Central Hall, Westminster. Sponsored by CPSA Broad Left, 'Redder Tape', and 'Rank and File Fireman'.

SUNDAY 4 DECEMBER. "the Firemen's Strike and the 10% limit" — London Workers' Action meeting with speaker Doug Mackay. 7.45pm at the 'Roebuck', 108a Tottenham Court Rd (Warren St tube).

SUNDAY 11 DECEMBER. The international-Communist League public meeting advertised for this date, on 'Marxism and Terrorism', has been postponed. A new date will be announced soon.

WOMEN'S FIGHT no. 3, paper of the Working Women's Charter Campaign — *OUT NOW!* Articles on 'Women in the GDR', abortion rights, Maureen Colquhoun: why was she sacked, sexism in the NUJ. Order your copy now: 10p plus 7p p&p from 43 Shaftesbury Rd, London N19. If you want to sell the paper to your friends or workmates, order 10 at £1.20 or 20 at £2.30. Orders of 50 or more on sale or return. Or subscribe: £1.50 for 8 issues.

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LMDI REPORTS ONE YEAR LATE

THE SEMI-tragedy of the Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland reached nearly its final act last Saturday. A conference called to discuss the delegation's final report attracted only 100 people, nearly all of them already-committed activists. It took the organising committee 14 months to get to this stage from the time of the visit to Ireland.

Nonetheless the conference might have had some value if it had seriously discussed the problems of campaigning on the Irish question within the working-class movement. Instead we were treated to endless demagoguery about Vietnam, India, Kenya, and the role of the troops in the firemen's strike — in fact nearly everywhere except Ireland.

On speaker, Tom Lennard of the

NUR Executive, urged support for a Bill of Rights and was not directly answered from the platform, although Gerry Lawless did assert that it was impossible to democratise the 6-County State.

Two of the major weaknesses of the delegation were shown up again. A delegate from Portsmouth Poly complained that the refusal to meet Loyalist organisations had greatly weakened the delegation's credibility. And it was Bert Ellicott of Tameside Trades Council who pointed out the most glaring omission. Speaking more than half-way through the meeting, he was the first person to mention the Republicans!

The conference agreed to support the Bloody Sunday Commemoration demonstration in January 1978 and the Tribunal on Britain's Crimes in Ireland. It also decided to set up a 'Labour Movement committee' to win support for the Delegation's report. The ineptitude which meant it took over a year to organise the report-back conference suggests that this committee will have little real value, and will most likely be just a vehicle for the Lawless grouping in the Irish solidarity movement.

SIMON TEMPLE

Suttons try to smash union organisation

200 DRIVERS and warehousemen in Manchester, St Helens and London were sacked on November 7th by the Suttons haulage firm in an attempt to smash union organisation.

The workers had been doing a 10 hour day instead of their 'normal' 11 hours in order to back up their demands for management to recognise a national bargaining structure and convenor Tommy Hackett. On Friday 4th they stopped work for four hours. The next day they received a hand-delivered letter threatening the sack if they did not return to 'normal' working.

The workers refused and found themselves locked out on Monday and paid off on Wednesday 9th.

The firm's tanker depot at Whiteley near Warrington got the threatening letters a week later and went black.

Last Friday, 18th, the T&G and

ACAS met with Suttons to hear their proposals. If three shop stewards accepted redundancy, the other workers would be reinstated as from next Wednesday. Otherwise, as Sutton announced on Granada the same night, he would cease trading.

He offered about £3000 in redundancy money to the three stewards, but the men voted unanimously into stay out.

Although the T&G has not yet made the dispute official, they did not accept Suttons proposal. Only six or seven cowboys have crossed the picket line.

Workers at the Barton depot in Manchester have not received any money yet from the Social Security. Send messages of support and donations to Jim McKenna, 4 Fairwell Rd, Grange estate, Timperley, Cheshire.

MICK WOODS

FIGHTING AGAINST FASCISM...

JUST OVER a month ago, the National Front announced they were starting a recruitment drive in Scotland. They rented offices in Edinburgh and announced plans to distribute 10,000 leaflets.

The residents of the tenement stair in which the NF had taken offices responded immediately by signing a letter against the NF and calling on the council to evict them. The 'office' is just an empty room: the NF have not dared to take up occupation. Postal workers are now refusing to deliver mail addressed to the NF there.

13,000 anti-fascist leaflets were distributed door-to-door and on the streets during a 'week of action' organised by Edinburgh Campaign against Racism and Fascism in conjunction with Edinburgh Central LPYS, Edinburgh Anti-Fascist De-

fence Committee, and local student unions. There was a good response and £19 was raised in donations. The campaign now plans to go on to cover other areas.

CM/C

FOUR MEN appeared in Leamington Magistrates Court on Friday 18th November charged with 'criminal damage', and were committed for trial at Warwick Crown Court. The charges arise out of the painting-over of a racist slogan on a wall in Warwick. A defence campaign has been established and can be contacted c/o 7 Mill St, Leamington.

500 ANTI-fascists turned up to pick-

et a National Front local election meeting at Tyssen primary school, Hackney, last Tuesday 15th. Only about 30 fascists crawled past the heavy police protection, which include 15 mounted police.

The fascists were greeted with cries of 'Blame the Bosses, not the Blacks'. One youth was spotted by a militant black school student who warned him he'd be "seen" in school the next day.

Tyssen school was in fact not the Front's first choice of venue. Their first choice, Skinner's School, stayed them off by insisting that the school was already booked for school activities, as had been suggested to all Hackney schools in a circular from the local NUT association.

MF/HH

WORKERS IN ACTION

Stanton strike

Disunity is the danger

"NO TO THE 10% LIMIT" will be the slogan of the march in Nottingham on Saturday 26th to support the firemen's strike and the steelworkers' strike at Stanton. The march, which has Trades Council backing, will also — it is hoped — involve workers from the local Raleigh factory.

Solid

The Trades Council has also promised £100 for the Stanton strike fund. But, despite this support, the Stanton workers have problems in their own ranks.

Their claim is for £15 pay increase plus 40p for each 1% rise in the cost of living.

The strike started after management sent home workers at the 18' Spun Plant on 7th November because of a go-slow in pursuit of the claim. BSC have offered no more than 5% plus a rise in holiday pay equivalent to 2%.

BSC iron production general manager Denis Hunt sent out a letter by post to all the strikers, trying to pressure them back to work and red-baiting the strike leadership. At a mass meeting on 21st November, the strikers stayed solid and decided to start mass picketing of the Central Melting Plant and the Concrete Linings Plant. Hunt followed up his letter by going down to the Central Melting Plant picket when there were only a few there

and menacing them.

At the Concrete Linings Plant two thirds of the workers are on strike. The problem is that although the Concrete Linings Plant workers are covered by the same negotiating committee as the 18' Spun Plant and Dale Spun Plant workers, they are not in the Spun Plants branch of the GMWU, but in an area GMWU branch which also covers other industries. Their branch secretary has told them to stay at work.

At the Central Melting Plant, no-one is on strike. These workers are in the same union branch — but under a different negotiating committee! However, the GMWU stewards are plann-

ing to lead the workers out on Friday — and if they don't win a majority, they will resign as stewards and lead a walk-out.

Refuse

Union officials have advised the Central Melting Plant to stay at work, and refuse to make the strike official on the grounds that procedure has not been exhausted.

At the mass meeting, James Hunter, a shop steward and a Labour councillor, unsuccessfully called for a return to work. Afterwards it was discovered he has been encouraging some of the workers whom he represents to scab! Moves will be made

to take away his steward's credentials.

TGWU drivers at Stanton have blacked all pipes covered by the strike. Hull dockers have pledged that they, and other ports, will also impose a blacking. The strikers are approaching BOC workers to cut off oxygen to the Central Melting Plant, and will be picketing the BOC sub-depot at the plant. Other steel plants are also being approached for support.

Messages of support and donations to B. McGinley, 29 Glendon Rd, Kirk Hallam, Derbyshire. The 'no to the 10%' march starts at 10.30 am at the Forest, Gregory Boulevard.

PETE RADCLIFF

APEX suspends Grunwick strikers

Starving for action

FOUR GRUNWICK strikers are on hunger strike on the steps of the TUC's London headquarters.

The hunger strike is a desperate attempt to shame the TUC and APEX leaders who have betrayed them with inaction. APEX leader Roy Grantham has reacted by suspending the protesters from the union.

The Grunwick strikers have been picketing their works in North London for over 15 months. Their courageous strike has drawn such massive support from the trade union movement at rank and file level — last July 11 there was a mass picket and demonstration of 18,000 workers in support of them — that September's TUC was forced to "urge all affiliated unions (to) continue to intensify their financial and political aid to those in dispute".

At the Congress Roy Grantham claimed that he could not be explicit about the "plans" that had been

set in motion to smash George Ward, the Grunwick boss. The 'Times' of 23 September, however, revealed that Grantham's only plans were that APEX should drop the Grunwick issue.

When WA asked strike committee chairman Kamlesh Gandhi about this early last month, he replied "A lot of what the press has been saying is true, of course, but I don't think they'd do it..."

Cautious

The Grunwick strikers rightly have been very cautious about the trade union bureaucracy; they have always understood that APEX was trying to get them to stop the mass pickets; they have always understood that the TUC and APEX are being pressured by the government; and they have always understood that it was not



appeals to the law but the rank and file that would win the strike. But they did not think that the trade union bureaucracy could sink to such depths of treachery and cynicism.

If the Grunwick strike is defeated, the working class will have lost an important

battle — important for trade unionism in general and particularly important for the organisation of black and women workers.

It is by no means defeated yet. There is still the possibility of mobilising the rank and file, as was done before the TUC stepped in

with its lying promises. But "If this strike is defeated", to quote the words of Mrs Jayaben Desai, the strike committee's treasurer, "we want to point the finger in the right direction — at the TUC".

Robert Aimes