

# workers' ACTION

No.93

Mar.4-11, 1978

10p

## LIFT THE BAN ON MARCHES

**THE RIGHT to hold peaceful demonstrations has been cancelled throughout London for two months.**

A planned National Front provocation against the Jewish and black population of Ilford was banned because a counter-demonstration would certainly have led to clashes between fascists and anti-fascists — and (as in Lewisham last August) between anti-fascists and the police who would have protected the fascists.

Using the Public Order Act of 1936, the police and the Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, decided to deal with the racist provocation — by a blanket ban on racists, anti-fascists, and on labour movement bodies alike. **The Government and the police propose to deal with the fascists by stifling the democratic rights of the labour movement. Leave it to the police, is the recipe!**

It may not be for just two months. Callaghan told the Commons (Friday 24th): "I regret the need for the decision, but I am certain that it was right. I hope that soon calm will return to our streets so that lawful processions can be held without the risk of violence, but I fear that cannot be for some time".

Certainly that won't happen in two months' time.

If he meant what he seems to be saying, blanket bans will be used repeatedly for the foreseeable future.

Chief NF thug Martin Webster threatened after the ban to put up a National Front candidate in the Brixton area, with a large black population, where a by-election is now due. A blanket ban there would help the NF, whose supporters could organise in small groups and private meetings to spread their racist poison, sure of protection by police who would have the



added weapon of a ban on any black and labour movement counter-attack.

Webster has also threatened to march down Ladbrooke Grove in Notting Hill during the Carnival next August. All the NF need do is announce a provocation — and with 'tactics' like these the police are set on the NF's target in the interests of keeping the peace!

This is a logical development from events like the massive police protection given to Webster on his one-man fascist march last autumn in Hyde, and from the peculiar concern of various police authorities for the safety of the NF.

### STATE

**The labour movement can't agree to 'leave it to the police' because it can't agree to place the political liberties of the working class in the keeping of the bosses' police or of the British state.**

It took generations of struggle by the working class to win liberties like the right to demonstrate. Our task is to defend the basic rights of

the working class and to deprive the racist of the right to exist or function in politics. We can't do that through police measures, or through the Public Order Act. Only the labour movement, acting in our general interests and in the interests of black workers, can do it by taking care of the fascists.

If the police banned the NF alone the labour movement would have no reason to object. But even then to rely on police protection against fascism would be a trap. Police protection would be withdrawn when it suited the bosses, when they felt they needed to use the NF or some other fascist outfit against the working class.

For the labour movement to demand police bans on the NF, or hail them as victories, is foolish: what results is at best a largely fictitious and de-mobilising appearance of action against the fascists, and usually real action against the left!

In fact the present ban maintains the freedom for fascist and racist propaganda, minus the right to march provocatively, by denying

the right of anti-fascists to demonstrate and march so that every voter knows that the NF isn't just any party. What is a "mass canvass" by fascists but an insult and an attack on every Jew and black person in the area — and an implied intimidation too? Under the current ban a rally to denounce it is banned!

**The labour movement should demand the immediate restoration of the democratic right to march and demonstrate in London — including the right to organise and demonstrate against racist provocation.**

It is well known that the Labour Party chiefs are shaken by the votes which the NF achieved in last year's London local council elections. Instead of reacting by a vigorous campaign against the racism on which the NF thrives, the Labour Party has continued to hedge, continued to administer immigration laws which are explicitly racist. Labour looks more liberal than Margaret Thatcher on this question — but fundamentally it is racist too.

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## SPEKE GOES BACK BUT PLANS TO FIGHT

Trade Unionists at the Speke no.2 plant of British Leyland are setting up a joint committee to plan the fight-back against the proposed closure of the plant. A mass meeting at the plant in one month's time is scheduled, to discuss and decide on the fight-back plans.

The Speke plant has been on strike for 17 weeks. At a mass meeting last Friday, 24th, the stewards recommended a return to work, feeling that resistance to closure could only be organised from within the plant.

So the real fight begins now. A **Worker's Action** leaflet at the Friday mass meeting said: "The first step in the fight back at Speke is, as some of your shop stewards have already said, the **occupation of the No.2 plant**. By controlling the machinery we have a chance. Without that control we have nothing.

"Stewards throughout the Combine, the Liverpool dockers and many other workers have offered their support for such action, they do this because they know it may be their turn next — something which workers at the No. One plant also realise. Leyland workers have the chance to fight to stop the loss of their jobs and the decline of Merseyside. If they don't fight then every worker will lose out in the end."

It is obvious now that the 17-week strike was provoked by Leyland management in order to weaken the chances of any such fight against the closure. Last autumn the Speke workers were laid off because of disputes at Lucas and Canley. When they returned to work, on November 1st, management engineered a strike by insisting that manning levels should be cut without negotiation, which breaks a local agreement.

### CUTS

As soon as the closure was announced, management's obstinate demand for the manning cuts suddenly faded away.

So at last Friday's mass meeting the workers had not had a full pay packet for months. Since the strike was made official only just before it ended, they had not even received strike pay for most of the time.

Playing on that fact, the Leyland bosses have offered lavish pay-offs if the workers accept the sackings quietly. **Nothing precise has been promised yet** (and if the workers accept the closure and leave the plant, then it will be too late to complain about any double-dealing!) but the press mentions amounts of two weeks' pay for every year with Leyland, plus money to make up

continued back page

# Political status for Republican prisoners

TWO YEARS ago now the British government, a Labour government, abolished political status for Irish Republican prisoners of war. This attempt to 'criminalise' these prisoners in Long Kesh, the Crumlin Road and Armagh has produced a heroic response.

It is the response of the 'men on the blanket'. Republican prisoners refuse to do prison work. According to the Belfast weekly,

'Republican News', about 300 prisoners are engaged in this kind of protest.

The point of their protest is not to show contempt for their ordinary fellow prisoners in jail on criminal charges. It is to uphold the idea that the republican struggle is the national struggle of an oppressed people against a brutal imperialism.

Imperialism in its lying arrogance habitually empties to deny national struggles their legitimacy.

Either they are 'terrorists', or 'brutal savages', or 'bandits', or 'psychopaths'. Imperialism is never engaged in a war but only 'putting down disorders' or 'keeping the peace'.

The 'men on the blankets' demand the reintroduction of political prisoner status. They demand that the British government recognises that it is engaged in a war against the nationalist command. They refuse to recognise the British government's

self-appointed right to determine what is and what isn't 'politics', what is and what isn't 'war', and what is and what isn't a nation with its national rights.

The trade union, Labour and socialist movement in Britain must show its solidarity with these Republican prisoners of war. It must protest against their present torture. And it must fight for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland.

# THE MEN IN THE CONCRETE TOMBS

NEARLY 300 Republican prisoners of war are enduring the horrors of 'H' Blocks 3 and 5 in Long Kesh, 'B' wing of Crumlin Road Jail, and Armagh Women's Prison.

Although the British government last December signed amendments to the 1949 Geneva convention which guaranteed Prisoner-Of-War status to captured combatants, it refuses to apply this to Republican prisoners.

Martin McKenna spent 10 months 'on the blanket' in Long Kesh and was then released after a successful appeal. Recently he gave a press conference where he described the prisoners' conditions of existence.

'Republican News' summed up. "Martin... was constantly naked, covered only by a blanket.

crete, with no form of heating whatsoever. There are four or five boards screwed to the floor, which is your bed. The cell is unbearably cold — even in the summer.

"When you arrive in the Punishment Block three or four screws take you to a cell. All you have on is a blanket. The screws tell you to take this off for a strip-search. You comply with this, which is very degrading. The screws then ask you to turn around several times while they scrutinise your body.

"Failure to do any of these things leads to unprovoked attack. But it doesn't really matter as the screws eventually strike you some time before they leave the cell. Punches and kickings from screws are quite common.

"When the screws leave the cell, you are left standing there with your blanket at your feet, frozen and nursing your injuries...

"Some men have been forced to embark on hunger strikes because of the treatment and conditions endured while in the Punishment Cells.

"...[They] are filthy ancient concrete tombs, which are very, very cold. There is a window which is too high to look out of, most of the small panes of glass are broken and the wind continually howls in through them."

For the men in the jail, "their only contact with the outside world is through two monthly letters in and out, which are usually heavily censored."

## Naked

"Once every 11 days the prisoners appear before the Prison Governor. They are charged with a breach of the Prison discipline — that is, refusing to wear prison clothes and do prison work. They are marched one at a time the length of 'B' wing naked, to an office where a most farcical Kangaroo Court is held.

"The men take no part in this except to state that they are innocent and refuse to wear prison gear and do prison work."

"The Governor completes the formalities of finding you 'guilty' and sentences you to the following: three days of confinement to cell, three days on Number One diet, two weeks loss of remission, and two weeks loss of privileges."

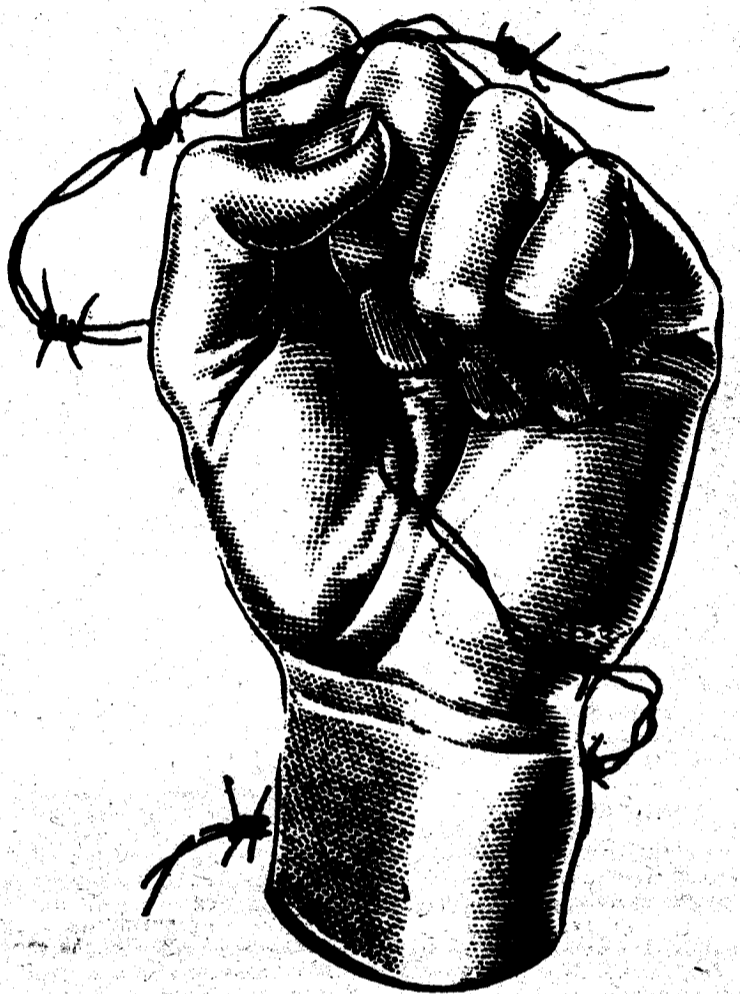
This is Number One diet:

"breakfast — a mug of tea and two dry rounds of bread. For dinner you receive two small scoops of potatoes covered with a ladle of soup. The evening tea is the same as breakfast..."

## Spirit

Against the British government's inhuman attempts to break their spirit, the Republican prisoners of war have stood firm and refused to break. Imperialism with its massive panoply of arms and wealth and power is daily being denied victory by the heroism of the men with only a blanket and their nakedness.

PAUL ADAMS



## Animal

"He was in solitary confinement all the time, and had been outside his cell on four separate occasions for half an hour each time during the 10 months. He lived and was treated like an animal. He had to wash, go to the toilet, eat and sleep all in the cell."

Conditions did not improve after the signing of the Geneva convention amendments. They got worse. In January a young prisoner wrote in 'Republican News': "The New Year has brought a fresh renewed campaign of harassment by the Prison Authorities to break us.

"The first indication of this was when two prison tradesmen arrived from the Block with welding equipment; the reason for this we soon found out. You see, there is, or rather there was, a quarter of an inch gap between the hinges of the cell door and the wall. We were able to catch a glimpse of one another now and again when we went out to empty our chamber pots. Also we used this small gap to sing out of.

## Degrading

"But this all ended when the prison tradesmen welded strips of metal on the doors to close the gaps". And men were sent more often to the Punishment Block.

In the Punishment Block conditions are even worse. "The cells are of solid con-

# 16 months without trial

GERRY McARDLE from Dundalk was arrested by the British Army 16 months ago with a friend whilst he was visiting Newry on business.

He was taken to Bessbrook RUC barracks, where almost immediately three RUC men attacked him and began kicking and shouting at him.

He was questioned several times, and during the interrogation the RUC alleged that he had guns which were found in a field near the place he was arrested.

Gerry denied all knowledge of the guns. The RUC tried to force him to sign a statement accepting responsibility for the guns. His refusal to sign a statement of guilt resulted in him being spread-eagled for hours on end against a wall.

He was forced to carry out exhausting exercises, such as press-ups, running on the spot, and sitting on an imaginary chair for hours.

One interrogator put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger to simulate an execution.

He was held in Bessbrook RUC barracks until he was senseless. On at least two occasions he fainted from the pain. He remembered once, while lying on the ground semi-conscious, being jumped on by his interrogator from the top of a table.

During one session of interrogation, a detective forced two rounds of ammunition up his



Gerry McArdle (left), and Martin McKenna (right), at a Press conference shortly after their release.

nostrils and... one in each ear, then they banged his head around.

At one stage blood began to pour from his stomach. This was coming from his stomach, but he was in such a state of exhaustion that he was unaware of the seriousness of his injuries.

The depth of depravity his torturers reached can be seen from the act they carried out during the last interrogation.

Gerry had his boot removed while prostrate on the floor. The interrogator lifted his foot and bent it back until he broke a bone in Gerry's foot. After this Gerry was removed to Magilligan Hospital, where he spent four days.

Gerry's friend, arrested with him, Patrick Livingstone, was so badly beaten that the screw authorities refused to accept him into the prison after he had spent a week in hospital.

After experiencing this ordeal Gerry McArdle was charged with

possession of guns. Fortunately he resisted signing a statement. However, he was held on remand for 16 months.

During this period of time Gerry applied for bail on four occasions. Each time the judge refused. His case was listed for trial on three occasions, and again it was put off without an excuse to either Gerry or his solicitor.

When eventually his trial did begin the judge directed that there was insufficient evidence for a trial.

Gerry (said): "My case is not an exception. Many men are in the same position as I am."

"Some are there as long as I was. Most men spend at least one year on remand. The reason why we are held so long is to accommodate Mason's policy of pretending he is on top of the Republican Movement because he has 'X' number of people behind bars."

FROM 'REPUBLICAN NEWS'

## DEAL ON A TIGHT-ROPE

IT REMAINS to be seen how much the 'internal settlement' has settled in Rhodesia.

It is not the first time there has been an 'agreement in principle'. As long ago as 1971 there was an agreement signed by Smith and Tory Foreign Secretary Home. But from 'agreement in principle' to practical agreement is a long road.

Muzorewa, Chirau, and Sithole have shown that they are willing to make enormous concessions to the white supremacists for the sake of a chance of getting the top posts in a black-ruled capitalist Zimbabwe.

28 seats out of 100 in the national assembly are to be reserved for whites — a 1 in 30 minority of the population. 20 of the 28 will be elected by white voters only; the other 8 will be chosen by the whole electorate, but from a list chosen by the present white MPs.

Constitutional safeguards are laid down for the privileges of the white minority; any change in them would have to be approved by at least 78 out of the 100 MPs.

It is reported that agreement has been reached 'in principle' on the armed forces and an amnesty for the guerillas. Arrangements for an interim government remain, however, a stumbling block — and an important one.

As the Financial Times admitted: "As security conditions stand, it is hard — indeed almost impossible — to see how free elections could be held. Yet without elections international acceptance seems remote."

The Tories have cautiously welcomed the settlement, the US State Department has cautiously condemned it, and Foreign Secretary David Owen has cautiously equivocated.

The imperialist politicians are walking a tightrope. They want to preserve the maximum possible white privileges, and the maximum security for imperialist interests. Yet if they get involved in a settlement which the majority of Zimbabwe's people clearly will not tolerate, then they could lose out by provoking a more radical overthrow of the white racist set-up.

For the people of Zimbabwe, the wheeling and dealing can only show them more and more clearly that their liberation must lie in their own hands.

## Anti Nazi League

# MILITANTS, OR FOOT SOLDIERS FOR LIBERALS?

AFTER THE POLICE ban the local anti-fascist committees called off their planned protest activity against the NF show of strength in Ilford. A large number of anti-fascists did, however, turn up on Saturday 25th, in response to a call from the Anti-Nazi League.

The NF's election meeting proceeded undisturbed — and with 5,000 police protecting the fascists. It would have been folly for the ANL to try to defy the ban and step the Front.

In its instruction leaflet for the day, however, the ANL went a lot further than recognising that reality. The ban, it said, was "an important victory", though "it would have been more appropriate to have a ban specifically directed against Nazi organisations alone".

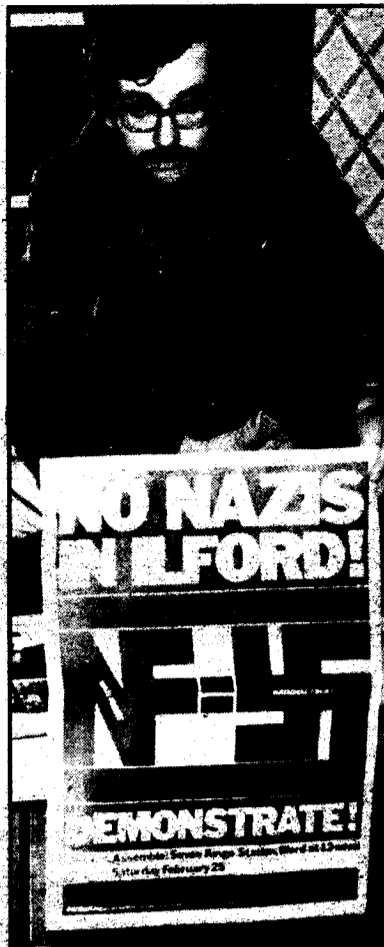
In fact, the ANL took on itself the responsibility for justifying and policing the ban, in close liaison with the cops. The result was chaos and disarray, because some of the younger anti-fascists had been brought along by the Socialist Workers' Party intending to

'Democratic' government mean, it is true — when it is to its advantage — disarm individual fascist groups but only in order with all the greater ferocity to disarm the workers and prevent them from arming themselves. The very next day the bourgeois state will accord the fascists, only yesterday 'disarmed', the possibility of arming themselves doubly and of bringing down with twofold strength their weapons on the unarmed proletariat. To turn to the state, that is, to capital, with the demand to disarm the fascists means to sow the worst democratic illusion, to fill the vigilance of the proletariat, to demoralise its will.

LEON TROTSKY

have a go at the Front. Some of them got arrested.

The SWP now seems to be paying the price for the mystery-wrapped way it set up the Anti-Nazi League. The ANL is an attempt by the SWP to cobble together a broad anti-fascist front with 'star' names like Peter Hain and Brian Clough and a range of



Anti-Nazi League secretary — and leading SWPer — Paul Holborow

left or moderate Labour MPs. But no-one ever defines clearly what the limits of the alliance are, who decides what, and who's who within it.

Thus on Saturday the SWP were not sure whether they were the footsoldiers of the liberal, pro-police-ban, anti-direct-action celebrities of the ANL — or the militant revolutionaries who helped send the fascists scurrying at Lewisham last year.

The SWP approved the ban in Tameside last year, too. But halting this present ban, instead of learning from the experience of Tameside, is a serious step away from revolutionary working class politics. Members of the SWP should insist their leaders give an account of themselves.

## LIFT THE BAN ON MARCHES

continued from front page

Now, with the ban on anti-fascist demonstrations, the Labour Government attempts by a police measure to 'abolish' the polarisation between racists and anti-racists which

has sharpened in the last year. But the fascists won't go away.

If the labour movement endorses the Government's decision to 'deal with' the racists (and the anti-racists) by a police measure, it will find

that the state and police are strengthened, and civil liberties undermined — while the fascists continue to burrow away, ready for a deadly assault against the labour movement at some time in the future.

Social democratic parties have often relied on the fictional neutrality of the state forces, especially the police, to protect themselves and the labour movement from fascism. They have often agreed to destroy some of the hard-won rights of the labour movement in order to 'save the movement'.

## THE HAVEN AND HELL OF FAMILY LIFE

DURING HER married life, Iris Pizzuto was knocked to the floor with a karate blow to the neck; pulled by the hair; dragged across the floor; had her head banged against a cupboard; she was kicked, punched, and thrown across the floor, and stood on while she was pregnant.

During all this treatment by her husband, she never once made a fuss or went to the doctor. The reason — as she told a divorce court last week — was that she thought this was all part of normal family life.

So was Mrs Pizzuto crazy? Not really. There is more violence inside the family than anywhere else. Her experience was just an extreme version of what happens in many homes behind the facade of happy married life.

The lack of control that women have over their lives, and their inferior position in society, is reflected in the fact that men are still assumed to have authority over their wives. Women are brought up to obey the man's will.

The family is regarded as sacred and private, a place where outsiders should not interfere. It is painted as a haven from the wretched world. But as Mrs Pizzuto's case shows, for many women the haven looks frighteningly like hell.

CLARE RUSSELL

18-YEAR OLD Kwai Yuk Tam from Hong Kong, was eventually deported, after her tragic case made the national headlines last week.

Her home in Hong Kong is an attic room 18 x 11 sq ft, which she shared with her elderly father, a step-mother who hates her and 4 step-brothers, one of whom has twice sexually assaulted her.

The Home Office statement said that "very careful inquiries have failed to disclose that Miss Tam's circumstances deserve exceptional treatment, and that she will be met by a Hong Kong Government social worker "who has visited the family and is fully aware of the circumstances." This statement was described by Alex Lyon MP as an "absolute white-wash".

Indeed, it was only through the efforts of the former

Home Office minister that this case received so much publicity. But there are hundreds of similar cases which do not receive publicity. In one sense, the Home Office is right to assert that the girl's circumstances are not exceptional, by Hong Kong standards her plight is commonplace.

Hong Kong, the second most prosperous city in the Far East after Tokyo is still a British Crown Colony ruled by a London-appointed Governor. It has a tremendous heroin and prostitution problem, the world's 3rd highest suicide rate (17 per 100,000) and one of the largest and most corrupt police forces in the

world.

The amount of social welfare Ms Tam is likely to receive when she is back there can be gauged from the 1970 budget figures — 19 million dollars on Social welfare, compared to 160 million on the police force.

The housing situation is appalling. The colony's 4.5 million plus population. The 1971 census showed that in over 218,000 dwellings, there were between 2-4 persons sharing each room. In 106,000 dwellings there were between 5 to 10 persons sharing each room.

The Government's squatter resettlement programme offer-

ed most tenants standard family units of 10 by 12 sq ft, on the basis of 24 sq ft per adult (children count as half).

Anyone born in Hong Kong is eligible to become a "citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies". But this does not include the right of residence in the UK itself! Hong Kong people are without the immigration controls, without at least the choice of alternative citizenship which the East Africans have.

The fact that Rees has rejected this application even after the girl's brother had promised to support her financially in Britain without burdening the State social security system,

In fact such tactics undermine the strength and self-reliance of the labour movement.

The police are not neutral and if the working class is passive and looks like it doesn't know how to defend itself, they are likely to lean towards fascism. The widespread racism of the police in Britain is already notorious.

Labour movements — like that of pre-Hitler Germany — which have relied on the police to protect them, have usually wound up facing both police and fascists.

## VICTIM OF RACISM



Deported

shows how far to the right the Labour Government feels it has to go in order to accommodate racism in the present climate. The fight against ALL immigration controls must now be waged with increasing energy.

IT BEGAN on December 6th, as an almost-routine 3-yearly contract strike forced on America's 180,000 union coal-miners by the owners' organisation, the BCOA [Bituminous Coal Operators' Association].

Three years ago the miners had to strike for 22 days to get a contract; in 1971 it had taken 42 days. This time the owners had built up huge stocks, and planned to profiteer with higher prices for the duration. They expected to last out up to four months, and force their terms on the mineworkers.

The coal-owners of the Appalachians are notoriously anti-union. Some mines, like Stearns in Kentucky, owned by Blue Diamond, are defended against Union encroachment by gun-toting thugs.

Over the years, the United Mineworkers of America (UMWA), had declined in militancy and organisation from the time when it controlled 70% of coal production and led US labour's giant organising drives of the 1930s and stood in the front line of the wage struggles of the 1940s.

Standing on the brink of a vast coal boom boosted by Carter's energy policy, the owners planned to break the back of the union and hamstring the rank and file with suspensions, loss of health cover, and heavy fines for refusing to cross wildcat picket lines, and instant dismissal without appeal for being on such a picket.



This week, it is the owners who are on the run. The miners are voting on a formula including major concessions forced on the BCOA by the rest of the US ruling class — panicked by the imminent prospects of mass shutdowns and black-outs "like New York — where a freak black-out led to mass looting and chaos — night after night after night".

Coal stocks have all but run out in the industrial heartland of the East, which depends on coal for power; and there is no way to force the miners to dig any more.

A spectacular freeze-up — with more blizzards fore-

FOR TWO decades after World War 2, American imperialism seemed to be the unchallengeable master of the world. Then the revolutionary struggles in Cuba and in Vietnam, helped by protest movements inside the USA, humbled it. And now the most deadly enemy of the American imperialists — their own working class — is on the offensive.

The US coal bosses have been forced to drop their demands that the new miners contract should include pen-

alties against strikers and the scrapping of cost of living increases.

But the new offer would still allow coal bosses to penalise 'leaders' of unofficial strikes, and include cutbacks in the miners' medical scheme.

On March 6th the miners will vote on it, and it seems possible that they will decide to continue the struggle for a better agreement. The deal signed at the Pittsburgh and Midway Coal Company, a firm outside the coal bosses'

association, and used as a model for the general agreement, has been rejected in a ballot of the company's miners.

Since the late '40s, it has seemed that American workers were 'integrated into the system'.

As the 'affluent society' has lurched into crisis, the fight back of the American workers has been slow starting. But with the miners' strike it is definitely under way — with new vitality and power.



# HIGH NOON FOR U.S. PIT BOSSES

by RON VANDY

cast — has helped the strikers. But most of all it is their own fierce militancy that has brought the American ruling class to its knees.

Trains carrying scab coal have been stopped in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and as far west as Utah. Roving pickets have toured Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana forcing non-union mines to shut. In heavily unionised West Virginia, scab operators shut down without waiting to be told.

Kentucky was harder. This is the land of the Harlan County union struggles; where miners at Stearns are still fighting an 18-month battle for unionisation; and where on January 6th a retired miner was shot dead by a company thug as he left the picket.

A 100-car caravan carrying 400 Ohio strikers descended on Kentucky, and stopped any coal from moving. Mounds of coal were dumped off their trucks onto the highways, with picket signs stuck in

them. Residents quickly cleared it away, and the pickets proudly dubbed themselves Robin Hoods.

Drivers were told to take their trucks home and keep them parked. Those who didn't found their tyres slashed. An obstinate trucking company was fire-bombed.

Chapperel Mining Company, in Kentucky, was stopped after the office building burnt down in Clarion County, Pennsylvania. 40 scabs were trapped in their pit until police rescued them, using a helicopter and tear gas.

Rockport, Indiana, was the last scab outfit in its area left working. Early in the strike, scabs drove a front-loading truck into pickets; after the fight that followed, the company got a court order limiting pickets to three at any site.

The strikers retaliated. Hundreds of union miners arrived at Rockport Dock. Three trucks and two cars were set on fire, and there were dynamite explosions. 194 strikers were arrested and charged with criminal contempt of the court order. But Rockport had been hit.



All over the 12 'soft coal' states, miners have been harassed by state police, company guards, and in places by National Guardsmen, armed with guns, clubs and court injunctions against picketing. They have no strike pay, no medical cover (where a day in hospital can set you back \$500), no money at all — just government food stamps worth about one-twelfth normal wages.

When the union pension fund ran dry, leaving 81,000 retired miners to survive on meagre Federal handouts. Veterans of earlier battles, many joined the pickets.

Then, after 60 days, Union President Arnold Miller tried to sell them out.

He signed a contract selling the right to local strikes, selling the union's own health scheme, selling cost-of-living rises and even selling the union closed shop. (All non-un-

ion miners work in separate, non-union mines.)

A straight wages sell-out might just have been swallowed, calculated against the financial losses of staying out: though even that is doubtful, with the strike visibly hitting and the lights going out in Columbus and Indianapolis.

But the right to strike is literally a matter of life and death. Apart from enforcement of national contracts on recalcitrant companies, almost all the numerous wildcat strikes are over safety. Strike penalties mean virtually no local union — and no union means unsafe work has to be done, and breaches of safety regulations have to be endured.

Non-union miners often get paid more. But they get killed and injured faster and have no job security. The Stearns miners came out for a union after an explosion at the same company's Scotia mine in 1976 killed 26 men.

Last year, 125 miners were killed on the job. 14,000 (one in seven) suffered disabling injury. Three quarters of all US retired miners qualify for Federal 'Black Lung' benefit.

Announcing the deal he had signed on February 7th, which conceded most of UMWA's wage demands, Miller didn't mention the anti-strike clauses. When the members heard about them, there was an explosion of anger. "They gave him the ball and he ran the wrong way with it", was how a West Virginia militant put it. The rest just said, "Shove it — it stinks".

Hundreds of miners hastily booked buses, packed sandwiches, and drove through the night to Washington. They invaded the union's HQ just as the governing Council, the 39-man body of District leaders and Executive Board members that must ratify a contract before the rank and file is balloted on it — was meeting to vote on the deal.

There, too, they found the contract, with more deadly clauses: incentive schemes (so far strongly opposed); a halving of the 90-day training period for new miners; a requirement of 'physical proof' of imminent danger before miners can withdraw

from a work area they believe to be especially dangerous; a production of Sunday work; a new rapid shift rotation and the sack for six 'unexcused absences' in any four month period.

Miller didn't dare show up. In his absence, while the strikers kept watch, the Council voted 33-3 against. At the official count next day, the vote was 30-6 against — six including Miller, his vice president, and the three negotiators. "People in my district would hang me if I ever ratified something like

THE 1974 CONTRACT did not specify the right to strike in a single pit or company. Instead it included complicated grievance and arbitration procedures; and according to a Supreme Court ruling, if a contract includes such machinery, that constitutes a strike pledge.

Despite this procedure — which left 6,000 grievances in a pipeline when the old contract expired — miners had to take strike action 1139 times in 1975 and 1383 times in 1976, to enforce Federal safety regulations, or against company violations of the last contract.

## OUTC

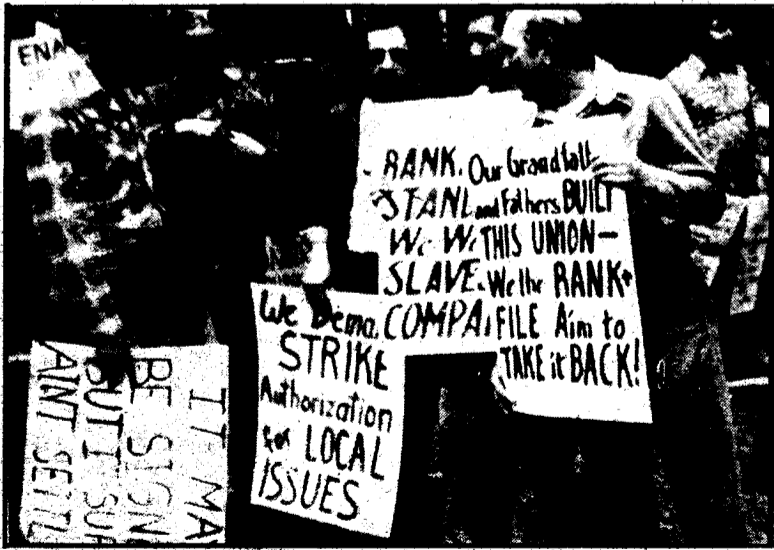
ARNOLD MILLER (right) is the president of the United Mine Workers. He has spent \$15,000 of Union money "travelling to and from his hideaway, the Heath Hotel Motor Inn in Charleston". Miller is the magazine Newsweek.

It's unlikely if Miller will get away in a hurry. After a meeting between one of his thugs, Bob Roberts, a local miners' leader had criticised Miller in a recent interview, a squad of 40 strikers was formed to defend Miller.

Every union in America would like to get after the outrageous contract agreed with the coal bosses would let them sack militant penalise local strikers.

Miller won office as the president of the Miners for Democracy, which in 1972 ousted the murderous gangster leader Tony Boyle and brought democratic procedures into the Union. As the right of miners to discuss and vote on any contract.

The rifts which the newspaper talks of in the UMWA are between those national



"18,000 iron ore miners in Michigan just completed a 141-day strike, and we know what it is like. We urge the coal miners to stay out until they get what they want in a new contract. Stay solid and you will win". This telegram, signed by 15 steel union local presidents from the Iron Range area, expresses the spirit of the longest strike in USWA's history, which ran a coach and four through the negotiating Agreement signed secretly by USWA president I.W. Abel in 1973 and upheld by his successor Lloyd McBride, barely elected

last year against militant Ed ... In Detroit, a test case for the right to strike and picket ended in a courtroom defeat on December 12th, as the miners' battle opened. Seven Chrysler workers were jailed for a week for contempt of a court injunction against a mass picket of the Trenton Engine plant last summer. The picket had been called in solidarity with four men sacked for leading a walkout when the temperature reached 130° in parts of the plant. The seven were picked out of the picket at random.

# SOLIDARITY HELPS

IN THE early 1930s, under the leadership of John L. Lewis, the UMWA was at the centre and in the forefront of the great organising drive that brought millions of workers into the labour movement, created the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and built the great unions of steel, auto, and transport workers (USWA, UAW, and the Teamsters).

Then, the miners' union spent its own funds and sent its own organisers to centres like Detroit and Pittsburgh, to help build these unions.

Today, other union leaders draw on this for a special brand of fakery. They have talked about 'a very special feeling for the coal miners'. A Teamsters leader told a miners' rally in Pittsburgh, "There isn't anybody in Western Pennsylvania who would be organised today in other labour organisations if it weren't for UMWA" — but he made no statement about disciplining Teamster members who transport scab coal.

USWA President's assistant Jim Smith followed him. "There is no way our generation in the steel mills can ever fully repay that debt", he said, also referring to the 1930s.

But rank and file steelworkers, more concerned with basic class solidarity now than fond memories, heckled him, to the effect that such a debt could very well be repaid and the best way to start was with a pledge of definite financial aid to the strike.

A better memory might be that of 1950, when a caravan of Detroit carworkers travelled down to Appalachia with food, clothing, and money collected for miners on strike to bust Truman's attempted wage freeze. The miners, boosted by such help, stood up to threats to fire, fine, draft and jail strikers, and they won.

With or without this memory, carworkers have once again

rallied to the miners. A UAW Skilled Trades Conference urged the union to take "every possible action to assist our brothers and sisters in the Mine Workers". (Yes, there are sisters — a handful of women who have broken through the barriers and won jobs in the pits). In Detroit once again carworkers are collecting for the miners.

At Baltimore and East Bay, steelworkers pledged "to answer attempts to pit us against coal miners".

Elsewhere, and as far across the country as California, there have been rallies, marches, collections, resolutions, benefit concerts, and Weeks of Action. Thousands of workers have gone to see the film about the Harlan County union struggles, and heard touring speakers from the Stearns strike in Kentucky where miners are fighting for union rights.

If none of the action has been spectacular, it has certainly been widespread — and effectively answered AFL-CIO president George Meany's blinkered, bureaucratic view that the miners should be sold out because this strike may cause mass lay-offs.



that", said one council member.

By now, American industrialists were getting very worried indeed. From the date of any new contract, union procedure (ironically, one of the few democratic survivals from Miller's first, reforming days in office) and technical delays would add up to three to four weeks before coal supplies were back to normal. In some areas, stockpiles were down to less than that.

Emergency measures such as suspension of pollution

controls were just palliatives. Solidarity was growing in centres like Detroit and Pittsburgh, threatening dangerous kickbacks if serious violence was used to move coal or force miners into the pits (and the miners themselves, many of them armed, had proved a force to be reckoned with). The Taft-Hartley Act, empowering the President to order resumption of work for 80 days, would most likely be ignored if Carter invoked it: that was too big a gamble. (The last time it was used against the miners, in 1950, it

sparked a great wave of solidarity).

Rail transport, steel, the three motor giants GM, Ford, and Chrysler, and a vast array of other industries and services faced chaos and shut-downs. Five million workers and with them billions of dollars of profits were threatened. Much as US bosses had to gain from a miners' defeat, they now had more to lose if the strike went on.

The miners had forced the bosses to back down, blazing a trail yet again for the American labour movement.

## The Right to Strike

On the principle that a contract is not worth the paper it's written on unless you can enforce it, Miller went into the negotiations insisting he would not present a contract to miners unless it had a right-to-strike clause. In fact he did the very opposite and agreed to an anti-strike clause.

This has now been dropped by the owners — their biggest retreat. But it is not certain yet whether miners have won their original demand, or merely regained status quo.

The biggest voice among the owners for a no-strike clause came from those companies also owning steel mills and iron ore mines. The union representing their employees, the USWA, four years ago signed a no-strike agreement, which has been increasingly undermined by militant Ed Sadlowksi's near-successful Presidential campaign last year, and by a victorious 141-day strike by 18,000 iron ore miners who went back just as the coal miners were coming out.

If UMWA wins the right to strike, that could knock the bottom out of USWA's sweet-heart deal.

Cynically, the owners tried to use the crisis of the Union's health scheme fund as a lever against wildcat strikes.

The fund, controlled by the Union but financed by company royalties on coal mined and hours worked, nearly went bust last summer. Until then, this vital

gain of the 1946 strike had given full medical coverage to 800,000 beneficiaries, miners, retired miners, and families. It subsidised 50 non-profit clinics.

After the crisis, payments to the clinics were cut off, and miners (and others covered by the scheme) had to pay 40% of medical bills, and could be liable for \$500 a year of hospital bills.

The companies have blamed the depletion of the fund on strikes, and tried to dress up the strike penalties (amounting to \$20 and more per day), payable to the health fund, as compensation for its lost royalties.



A scab mine guard pumped six bullets into Mack Lewis, 65-year old retired miner, as he walked from the picket line at Ivel, Kentucky, a Diamond Coal Co. mine. Lewis had joined the United Mine Workers in the 1930s. Forced to retire with a back injury 12 years ago, he remained active in the Union.

The thug who shot him was taken to a jail 100 miles away for fear he wouldn't be safe in a local jail.

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strict leaders still responsive to the rank and file miners, and Miller's clique, which quickly sold out to the coal bosses, and is now trying to squash the lid down on the members.

Now, Miller comes to Executive Board meetings with as many as 50 bodyguards, who line the walls behind the Board members. But all the bodyguards he could muster won't stop the petitions and resolutions circulating the coalfields demanding Miller's recall.

IT IS 1890. A woman and ten men have come to Brazil to settle on a piece of virgin land given by the Emperor.

Back home in Italy, with workers' and peasants' struggle burgeoning, they are denounced as renegades from the struggle for socialism. They shrug it off. They have decided to make their own socialism at La Cecilia.

They will live by right of their freely ordered labour, without police, judges, fences, laws or contracts. They run up the red-and-black Anarchist flag, sing revolutionary songs, and set to work.

"Who do you work for?", ask some labourers that a couple of the colonists meet. "We're free of all that. We have a settlement called La Cecilia, and we proudly announce our Ours was called San Antonio", comes the grim reply.

And we know La Cecilia is doomed, too.

With some buildings up and the first harvest in, the group's mentor Giovanni returns to Italy to spread the word. When he comes back he brings the wives and children with him.

At first, everyone is happy. The colony at last resembles a real society.

We've seen Giovanni declare that of all evils, he'd choose the institution of the family to destroy first. And when the families arrive, we see the men exerting their authority

## IGNORING REALITY UNTIL IT HITS YOU IN THE FACE

Jean Louis Comolli's film 'La Cecilia' has been seen at the Other Cinema [London], and, last Saturday, 25th, on BBC2. SOPHIA CAPLAN reviews the issues it raises.

as fathers and husbands, while blaming the women for being backward, and the wives go into a huddle over the washing and cooking.

Against a background of harsh work and scarcity, family interests begin to vie with communal interests. Plans are aired to divide up the land.

Giovanni observes the slide, but declares he will do nothing to stop it. After all, there are no leaders... Instead, he devotes his time to agonising over his relationship with Olympia, the one original woman colonist.

Increasingly he talks of the venture as "an experiment", which even in failure somehow proves his philosophy that people can live without any authority.

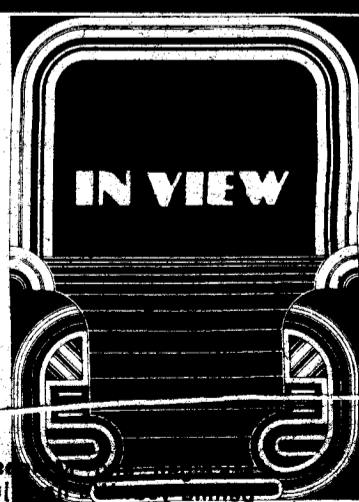
The pressures build up. The Emperor is deposed and the new

Republic demands payment for the land. Some of the men take work in a nearby quarry to buy the ploughs, tools and seed mounts.

Some of the families desert in the night, taking their share of goods and grain. It nearly comes to a fight over this meagre property.

Finally, another outside intervention kills the colony. Troops arrive and announce a general conscription to fight 'rebels'. Forgetting their ideal of a world without borders, they plead that they're Italians: at least that's another place, which Utopia isn't.

As a theme, the futility of utopian socialism is an old one, if still interesting. The film is richer, though, for its portrayal of the interaction and similarity — how organic, it doesn't say — of anarchism and utopianism.

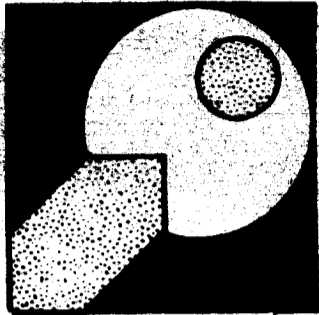


Whether the loathsome beast is a surrounding world of bourgeois reality (for utopian colonisers) or the necessity of creating a coercive authority to order a workers' society (for anarchists), the reaction of both is the same: instead of creating workers' weapons to deal with the beast in a principled manner, they pretend it simply doesn't exist. And when they subsequently come face to face with it, as inevitably they must, they have no principles which will serve their situation, and end up embracing the very thing they abhorred, like the worst of turncoats.

# And now for the facts

## ATOMIC ENERGY

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### Discussion

**LAST YEAR** — in Workers' Action nos. 64, 65, 66, and 68 — we opened a debate on the socialist attitude to nuclear power. In Britain nuclear power is not yet a big political question, but in France, West Germany, and other countries there have been major campaigns and demonstrations against nuclear power.

Most socialists in those countries supported the anti-nuclear campaigns, but in WA 64 & 65 Neal Smith argued that they were wrong, and indeed that nuclear power is at present the 'only viable alternative' for future energy production. While demanding an end to the secrecy surrounding nuclear energy programmes, and safety precautions under workers' control, he argued that socialists should not oppose nuclear power. Pete Firmin [WA 68] agreed that much of the 'anti-nuclear' argument has been backward-looking and anti-technological. But, he said, the dangers associated with nuclear power are so immense that a demand for safety precautions under workers' control must effectively mean the blocking of nuclear projects for now.

In a new contribution to the discussion, DAWN EVANS argues that Firmin exaggerated the dangers, and that Smith's conclusions were correct.

UNLIKE PETE Firmin, I believe that nuclear power can be safe. But I also believe that there can be no complacency about the dangers of this technology in the hands of those who presently control it.

Firmin exaggerates most when he talks about reactors blowing up. Without going into technical details, reactors can and have been designed where it is physically impossible for an explosion to take place.

One bad US design, now not used, did melt down leaving a dangerous radioactive hulk. An explosion was never on the cards, however, and little radioactivity escaped.

Other fallacies about the dangers of nuclear power are that the reactors leak continuously, and that wastes are even pumped directly into the sea. In fact, the radioactivity from one reactor is actually less than from the same-sized coal-fired power station. (Natural radioactivity is trapped in the coal; on top of that a coal-fired station gives off sulphur and other dangerous substances into the air).

As for dumping: even at present no-one is daft enough to do that, at least in countries where there is a minimum of civil liberties. It only needs one safety hawk with a geiger counter and the News of the World's phone number to create an enormous scandal.

### Waste

Waste disposal is the most important problem. First there are the shorter-term problems of transporting and storing waste.

Humanity has already produced twenty-storey buildings that can survive serious earthquakes, and containers to survive air crashes. Accidents do happen, of course, but several layers of protection can be used. If one barrier gives way, alarms will ensure that the breach is promptly sealed.

This method is already used in the Windscale tanks.

Longer-term storage has not been perfected yet. All Britain's nuclear waste since the war is still stored in stainless steel tanks at Windscale. The aim is to keep an eye on it until a satisfactory solution is worked out.

Thirty feet of water can stop all radiation; but for long term safety the waste must be stopped from leaking and spreading.

One solution being looked at is mixing the waste into glass blocks: but glass flows over the thousands of years needed for these wastes to become safe (old windows are noticeably thicker at the bottom).

Suppose the problems with storage are solved: the anti-nuclear campaigners still say there is no security for the thousands or millions of years in which the waste remains dangerous.

But a time-span of, say, 20,000 years from now is short from the point of view of science. We know of certain mountain blocks that have remained pretty stable for millions of years and will continue to do so. The movements of the continents have been plotted back for billions of years.

Slowly rocks are being pushed up to form mountains or down into the earth's crust. These land masses sometimes overlap with one being pushed downwards. So, carefully buried nuclear junk could be carried farther out of the way.

### Heat

Nuclear waste could even be made useful, since it gives off heat. With earthquake-proof bunkers, several layers of defence, carefully-maintained alarms monitored by experts, and a heat exchanger, you could take a couple of nuclear waste glass blocks, put them in your garden, and heat your house. After being installed this heat source would be long lasting, halving in output only every 1500 years.

It's easy to see why this idea hasn't appeared in 'New Scientist' or 'Tomorrow's World': where's the profit?

Another problem is disposing of obsolete reactors. As Pete Firmin rightly pointed out, reactors have a life-span of only about forty years.

I believe that it has already been proved that clean-up operations can be successful. If this were not the case, however, Firmin's favoured alternative, nuclear fusion, must also go under the axe.

For though fusion is a clean process, producing no dangerous by-products, it gradually turns the reactor radio-active. Fusion reactors end up about ten per cent as 'filthy' as fission reactors, but you can not talk in fractions that large with such deadly stuff.

There still are real nuclear safety problems — many of them involving much bigger risks than any power stations.

What about all the old atom bombs lying around since Bikini? It is reported that the United States has stored hundreds of second-generation bombs in tanks, in a suitably remote place, under thirty foot or so of water.

It is reckoned that they are now too old and unstable to be moved. So do we wait until they blow up?

Even without that, there are already enough bombs stockpiled to make the wastes from



the largest nuclear programme, even over decades, look very small.

Now the USSR has followed the USA in putting little reactors into space. These are designed to burn up well out of harm's way — so they say. What if there is an accident?

Worse still, there is the likelihood that bombs may be put into orbit. 'Killer satellites' are the latest in a string of rumours about amazing Russian weapons to come up at US defence spending review time.

These rumours, mostly started by the arms industry, normally results in a quest for a US equivalent (and increased profits!) And satellites orbiting the earth are likely to come down again — often within a relatively short lifetime.

The recent disclosure of a Russian accident at a waste disposal site raises another major question: that of secrecy. Why was this covered up for years by both Russia and the Americans? Why did US scientists even deny that it was possible?

In fact it seems that the Americans already had proof of this danger, and that a similar accident nearly happened in the USA.

They thought an old mine was a perfect site for liquid waste. It was hundreds of miles from anywhere, with impervious rocks above and below. What they didn't count on was that one stone layer absorbed plutonium preferentially to anything else. An accidental geiger counter check showed the dump to be just sub-critical (that is, just below explosion point). So concentrated was the plutonium, that it was economic to dig it back out.

In this country secrecy is taken to extremes — often ridiculous extremes. Under the Official Secrets Act, it is illegal for a nuclear worker to tell you where he works, yet you can read it at any HMSO.

One reason given for all this is the danger of 'terrorists'. They say that the new fuel they transport could be made into bombs.

This is absolute nonsense. The fuel is far too impure to be made into bombs. The only likely result in such an attempt would be to kill the bomb-makers.

To produce a bomb 'terrorists' would be missing one important ingredient, a reprocessing plant. The real danger, of course, comes from those who have these reprocessing plants now: Israel, South Africa, and India, to mention but three, in addition to the 'great powers'. With such plants, atom bombs are easy to make.

Carter's recent veto on a Brazilian re-processing plant was not due to any ideas of nuclear non-proliferation. Brazil, in their eyes, was not stable enough and anyway did not need bombs. And after losing German trade, US industry stood to gain by continuing to supply Brazil with nuclear fuel. (With a re-processing plant, Brazil could produce its own fuel).

### Gaps

The neutron bomb has produced a new glint in capitalists' eyes. It destroys people slowly and painfully but leaves property standing.

At many points there are gaps and uncertainties in what we know about nuclear power. This only reinforces the need for workers to know all the information, what the risks are and why they are being taken. The Official Secrets Act and all that it entails must be scrapped.

We must fight for workers' right to veto the slightest danger to their environment and health, and for nuclear industry workers to veto any process which may be questionable.

We must gain control of all uses of nuclear energy, stop all bomb production, and de-fuse the large stockpiles. This certainly means the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. If it also means the temporary sacrificing of some peaceful nuclear usage, then so be it.

THE WORKERS' Socialist League paper *Socialist Press* (22 February) reports that the WSL conference on 18-19 February concluded "fruitful debates... on such questions as the nature of the call for a workers' government, on the struggle against Social Democracy, and on our attitude to the national question".

It reports, however, that a "petty bourgeois ultra left tendency" resigned from the WSL. It describes them as supporters of the Spartacist line (a tendency based mainly in the USA). This grouping, it says, "is in every other left wing tendency", "won to its ranks a number of new and naive members... as well as a few who have grown tired of the consistent struggle of the WSL to turn away from the circles of petty bourgeois debate and into the fight for revolutionary leadership in the class struggle". *Socialist Press* says the tendency

## SOCIALIST PRESS REPORTS SPLIT IN THE WSL

had about 20 members.

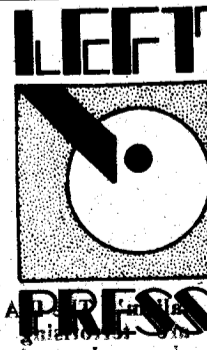
The tendency's document, signed by four comrades, does indeed take up all the major political positions of the Spartacist tendency. It characterises the WSL leadership as "Those who capitulate to the Labourist illusions of the British working class; who yearn for 'detente' with the Pabloite revisionists; who

seek to subordinate questions of programme and principle to the petty organisational chicanery of the 'mass method'..."

It describes the other main Trotskyist groupings in Britain, the IMG and the I-CL, as "Pabloite" and "non-revolutionary".

Both the WSL majority and the pro-Spartacist comrades start out

from a desire to stand absolutely firm for Marxist politics against all the pressures of bourgeois public opinion. The problem is that they tend to believe this can be done by extra vigour in stating and re-stating a selection of political formulas laid down by great revolutionaries in the past — while in fact Marxist politics can only proceed through an



ever-renewed critical understanding of a constantly changing reality, for which all formulas are only successive approximations.

The method which relies on fixed formulas is bound to replace rational political discussion by the sort of exasperated accusations of being weak-kneed or 'revisionist' which the WSL and the pro-Spartacists exchange. And, most crucially, it always leaves the comrades at a loss when confronting the more complex questions of political strategy and tactics, and the very revolutionary principles they wanted to defend.

One area where this shows up is the Irish question, where the WSL is notoriously at sea, and the pro-Spartacist tendency opposes self-determination for Ireland, reproducing the *Militant* call for a 'trade union defence force' under the slightly different label, 'Workers militia'.

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THE NATIONAL Foundation for Educational Research strapped microphones and radio transmitters to 201 teachers in 72 Surrey secondary schools, to discover that the secondary teacher works an average 46½ hour week in term-time.

On an average working day, a teacher spends 315 minutes in the class room, works for 62 minutes during breaks and lunch hours, and does another 2 hours 10 minutes out of school time. The total working day is 8 hours 27 minutes, equivalent to a 9 to 6 working day with half an hour for lunch.

On top of this, the average teacher worked more than 4 hours each weekend, and an average of one hour 40 minutes each day of the holidays. This comes down over the year to an average working week of 40 hours.

Only 2.8 minutes a day out of that allotted to teachers as 'free time' (i.e. preparation and marking periods) was recorded as a private activity such as going to the toilet, chatting socially, or just sitting for a moment before starting the job in hand.

Surrey hardly springs to mind when thinking of schools with the worst conditions. And all this took place in 1974, since which time the NFER considers that the work load has increased because of the public spending cuts.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

## SCOTTISH YS CONFERENCE

# 'Militant' at sixes and sevens

"AS LIVING standards fall, people are driven to seek out scapegoats. Racism is one such feature. In Scotland much of the reaction to the crisis has been channelled into nationalism and support for the SNP..."

"The rise of the SNP and their programme of empty phrases has led to a call for the decentralisation and devolution of government..."

So said the 'Militant' tendency's discussion document for the Scottish region Labour Party Young Socialists Conference held in Glasgow on 18th-19th February.

So you would suppose that 'Militant' would fight against devolution. But no! At the conference 'Militant' called for a 'yes' vote in the devolution referendum. Devolution could be converted from boosting the Nationalists to socialist ends by linking it with the call for the Scottish Assembly to have 'strategic economic powers' to nationalise the commanding heights of the economy.

### FANTASY

The same fantasy politics dominated the debate on the economy. 'Militant' were attacking the Tribunes for not planning to nationalise enough monopolies, claiming that this shortfall would lead to a Chilean-type defeat for the working class.

We were even treated to a debate on the mathematical conundrum: Does 200 top monopolies into 80 key sectors go?

Both tendencies completely missed the fundamental point. As Marx (whom 'Militant' profess to learn from) pointed out: "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes".

By missing the point that, rather than using the existing state, workers must in the course of struggle implement our own demands through our own self-organisation. 'Mil-

itant' become unable to map out the kind of campaigns the working class needs now.

This was shown in the debate on unemployment, where 'Militant' supporters opposed a motion from Edinburgh Central LPYS. The mover of the resolution had pointed out that although we can't permanently 'get rid' of unemployment under capitalism, we can now fight to lower the level of unemployment through the employed working class taking action on the demands for overtime bans, work-sharing, and the 35-hour week, all without loss of pay.

### CURIOUS

The speaker described how Edinburgh Central LPYS had initiated a local Youth Campaign against Unemployment group which produces a fortnightly dole queue bulletin, 'Dole Mole' (circulation 1500), and mentioned attempts being made to draw the local labour movement into the campaign.

The 'Militant' dominated regional committee recommended rejection of the motion and so it fell...

On racism and fascism the 'Militant' tendency seemed to be totally at sixes and sevens.

A Tribune motion from East Renfrew LPYS called for united work with 'all anti-racist and anti-fascist groups', but laid down no clear programme for combatting racism. An amendment from Edinburgh Central argued that the LPYS campaign should be based around the demands:

- Rejection of all immigration controls;
- No platform for fascists;
- Fascists out of the unions
- Support for black self-defence.

'Militant' supporters argued against the amendment on the curious grounds that 'although you do support blacks who are defending themselves against attack, you argue for united black and white labour movement defence'. Edinburgh Central YS had not said any different!

But 'Militant' threw out the amendment and then supported the motion.

That, too, was curious. Two weeks before, at the London regional conference, 'Militant' had opposed an amendment calling for united-front work against racism and fascism.

The only conclusion that can be drawn is that 'Militant' only support united front activity when proposed by open reformists, and oppose it when proposed by revolutionaries (as at the London conference).

The 'Militant' majority at the conference often restricted democratic debate. This was shown particularly clearly in two instances concerning Edinburgh Central YS.

They had prepared a document in response to a call from 'Militant' in their major conference text for 'a free and comradely debate on how we achieve socialism'.

### SLANDER

As Edinburgh Central YS stated in a protest leaflet, "The Chairperson ruled that our document was out of order as it had not come from the Regional Committee. If that is what is stated in the standing orders then we are quite prepared to accept it."

However, the chair indicated that comrade Paine would be free to make reference to the documents in his contribution from the floor... Comrade Paine, however, in spite of indicating clearly throughout the debate that he wished to speak, was studiously ignored by the chair when speakers were called.

It was clear to the chair that comrade Paine wished to offer a different perspective to the two ['Militant' and 'Tribune'] which were given exclusive rights to speak.

Later, the LPYS National Committee member for Scotland, Jane McVeigh, repeated a rumour which has apparently been spread far and wide, to the effect that Edinburgh Central YS has not supported

the YCAU.

Suspecting this slander might be used, Edinburgh central had two weeks previously passed a resolution making clear their commitment to the campaign. But they were told they could not read it to the conference: they should discuss the matter privately with comrade McVeigh!

When they objected to leaving the lie unanswered, the chairperson threatened them with withdrawal of delegate rights.

The saddest indication of the level of debate, however, was when the chairperson once forgot to give the regional committee's recommendation on which way to vote on a motion. There was total confusion. The vote eventually had to be taken again after the recommendation had been given.

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FASCISTS on their doorstep, and the National Union of Teachers has told its members officially to do nothing. Well, not quite nothing, the guidelines say "the first thing to do is to see your union representative, who is advised to consult the Head and request him or her to inform the local authority".

In addition, the borough NUT secretary is to be notified and informed throughout.

The only action mentioned is that "as in the case of pornographic or other undesirable material, a head teacher would confiscate and dispose of any overtly racist material found in a pupil's possession". Hardly a sure way to change a pupil's views!

In Newham, members of the Socialist Teachers' Group have condemned these guidelines as "a contemptible recipe for inaction", and have requisitioned a special Newham NUT branch meeting to discuss a resolution along the following lines:

- Full support for self-organisation of school students;
- Labour movement pickets of schools where the fascists are holding meetings;
- NUT members to act immediately to prevent distribution of fascist literature at school gates;
- Setting up a labour movement anti-fascist committee in Newham.

Meanwhile the 'Times Educational Supplement' (24th February) has carried the following report:

"National Front supporters beat a hasty retreat from the gates of an Ipswich school on Tuesday when they were set on by a crowd of angry pupils."

(A2U) The incident took place when two Front supporters tried to give out leaflets at Chantry school. They were spat on and their literature was torn from their hands. Afterwards pupils discussed their actions with their teachers. One said: "It is clear we want no nazis at Chantry nor in Ipswich".

I.H.

# SCOTLAND: A NEW START FOR IRISH SOLIDARITY

IT WAS the first time in six years that Sinn Fein had been invited to speak to a conference in Scotland on the Irish question, declared a Provisional Sinn Fein spokesman addressing 120 people in Edinburgh on Saturday 17th February.

The conference was organised by the First of May Bookshop Collective.

### STATUS

In the morning a comrade from the Irish Republican Socialist Party described the continuing repression by the British Army and the RUC of the republican organisations, and the plight of the prisoners in 'H' block at Long Kesh.

For daring to demand the status of political prisoners, they are deprived of exercise and clothed only in a blanket.

The IRSP comrade disputed Roy Mason's almost daily claims that the IRA are on the

verge of defeat. Although it is true that the nationalist minority in the Six Counties is war-weary, the turn-out to the recent Bloody Sunday commemoration demonstration in Derry was the largest for several years.

The nationalist minority will continue the resistance; as long as Britain stays in Ireland, they have no choice.

Most of the afternoon session was taken up with a debate between *Militant* and *Workers' Action* on the tasks of socialists in Britain. *Militant* outlined their view that the Irish people should "unite and fight for socialism". The IRA and the UDA are attacking the working class and a trade union defence force is needed to defend the working class against sectarian violence.

### TASK

The *Workers' Action* speaker took issue with this. It is not

the task of British socialists to give pedantic lectures to the Irish people on the need for socialism. First and foremost it is the duty of British socialists to fight in the British labour movement for recognition of the Irish people's right to self-determination.

Concretely, this means defending unconditionally the right of the republican movement to wage war against the British occupation.

*Militant's* claim to defend the right to self-determination is just so much verbiage. When it comes to taking a position on the actual struggle going on, *Militant's* line on the IRA is no better than that of the *Daily Express*. They merely repeat uncritically the slanders and lies of the imperialists against the republican movement.

With their absurd refusal to recognise the national question in Ireland, in practice *Militant* are nothing other than scabs on the Irish people's legitimate

struggle for freedom.

It was significant that in a conference consisting largely of people who were in some way active on the question in Britain, *Militant* received not one voice in support of their position.

### TRIBUNAL

A follow-up meeting to discuss action has been called for March 11th. *Workers' Action* affirmed its intention to take up the fight for Labour Parties and YS branches in Edinburgh to sponsor the International Tribunal on Britain's Presence in Ireland. (Edinburgh Central CLP has since voted to sponsor the Tribunal).

Unfortunately the *Militant* comrade did not reply to this challenge in his summing up. It is to be hoped that they will show a more positive attitude in the future.

JENNY FRASER

# WORKERS IN ACTION

## T&G READY TO DO LEYLAND'S DIRTY WORK

WHEN THE T&GWU bureaucrats set out to victimise the leading militants at the Cowley car factory, the same committee was jury, judge, and prosecution: Oxford district Finance and General Purposes sub-committee.

And now that same committee turns out to be part of the court of appeal! The regional officials have been visiting Oxford this Monday and Tuesday (27th-28th) to consider the case, and the

district F&GP members were there, sitting alongside them and helping them grill the 11 trade unionists accused of disruptive activity.

Among the accused are Bob Fryer, newly-elected Assembly Plant convenor, Tom White [deputy convenor], Frank Corti [deputy convenor and secretary of the 5/293 branch of the T&G at Cowley], and Alan Thornett [recently elected deputy convenor, but refused re-

cognition by Leyland management]. The district F&GP wants Thornett expelled from the union.

The proceedings are an outrageous kangaroo court! Frank Corti — wrongly, in our view — tried to challenge them in the High Court on 27th February. Predictably, nothing good came of this attempt to use the bosses' courts as a tribunal of appeal for the labour movement.

The judge noted that the district committee had "muddied the waters" by taking improper action. But: "I don't accept that charges brought by the district committee will have any influence on the regional committee".

Only speedy action by the T&G rank and file will stop this frame-up. Every activist in the T&G must back the accused militants; and that should include the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers' Party, neither of which has yet taken up the case in their paper.

Moves are being made to organise a defence committee based on T&G branches and shop stewards' committees. The T&G branch at Ford Langley has already declared opposition to the victimisations. All resolutions and messages of support should be sent to: Frank Corti [secretary, 5/293 branch], 4 Queens Close, Botley, Oxford.

## RAIL UNION SIDE-SHOW

THE MARCH 1st train drivers' strike was called off at the last minute. But was all the tension and cliff-hanging really a sideshow?

The NUR has a pay target of 63% increase; ASLEF has a 30-40% target. British Rail is offering 10% plus productivity money. Yet the loud militant talk for the union leaders is all centred round a small bonus payable to a small minority of train guards.

Instead of standing up to the rail bosses, NUR general Secretary Sidney Weighall declared: "My union will not be kicked around by a cabful of engine drivers".

The roots of the dispute go back to the 1974 rail agreement, which consolidated all bonuses paid by British Rail into the basic wage. Since then there have been no special bonuses — with one exception, for drivers doing journeys of over 200 miles.

However, on some rural lines there are no ticket offices at the stations, and the guards are supposed to collect the fares on the trains. The guards objected to doing this extra work without receiving any extra money for it.

And so on some lines, for four years, fares have not been collected. British Rail has now offered a bonus of £2.50 to £5.75 for the pay train guards.

ASLEF complained that this contradicted the 1974 agreement, and demanded the same increase for train drivers. Weighall replied that if the drivers were given the increase, then he would demand it be paid to all NUR members too!

While this furious battle of union against union was going on, the NUR was quietly negotiating with British Rail on manning cuts and productivity increases — and both unions were doing precisely nothing to gain a decent pay rise for all railworkers.

TUC General Secretary Len Murray and Transport Minister William Rodgers worked out a proposal for ASLEF to call off its strike in return for an inquiry, chaired by Lord McCarthy, on whether the pay-train guards' increase was legitimately negotiated.

The union leaders' sabre-rattling can only serve to divert railworkers' militancy into useless and divisive squabbles, as a way of avoiding a fight against the 10% limit.

## Penguin workers fight on despite secret sell-out

THE PAY STRIKE of 110 members of the National Union of Journalists at Marshall Cavendish has entered its sixth week.

The chapel, who claimed an increase of £1,000 across the board, plus compensation for inflation at the rate of £1 a week for every percentage rise in the Retail Price Index, were offered an overall increase of 3½% — giving some members exactly 9½p a week rise.

After imposing sanctions at work for 2½ months, the chapel finally struck on 20th January.

As the dispute drags on, it has become clear to the chapel that the company — one of the most profitable in the industry — is out to smash the union. Along with this realisation, the unity and determination of the chapel has grown. But after six weeks on strike they face the danger of being starved back to work. As a result of this pressure they have already started to look to ACAS for a way out.

Meanwhile at Penguin another wages battle is underway. Both the 80-member NUJ chapel and the 180-strong ASTMS group submitted

claims last November for wage increases in excess of the 10% guidelines — with automatic compensation for inflation on top.

Faced with a management offer of 10%, together with the scrapping of the long-standing system of personal increments whereby every individual had previously got 4% on top of government wage limits, the two unions combined their claims a month ago and resolved at a mass meeting to take sporadic action jointly in pursuit of the claim.

A sudden and highly effective one-day strike followed on 8th February.

But the very next day ASTMS leaders, including the steward, a member of the Socialist Workers' Party, unilaterally called off sanctions and agreed to hold 'informal talks' — from which the NUJ were excluded — with management in a nearby hotel. Out of these talks came the suggestion that management's offer might be increased as a result of a 'productivity deal'.

The NUJ chapel, faced with this betrayal, rejected what amounted to a suggestion that they should sell jobs for the promise of a few more pence. ASTMS members, when they were finally consulted, were thrown into confusion at what had happened. Lacking a clear alternative — since all their established leaders were implicated in the secret deal — they voted to continue with unilateral negotiations and not to reimpose sanctions.

But on Tuesday 28th, in a surprise about-turn, they voted by the narrowest of majorities to reject the company's offer. This decision, for constitutional reasons, must be ratified again at the end of the week.

In the meantime, the NUJ have stepped up their own sanctions, and are currently blacking almost 100 books. As the sanctions begin to bite, open confrontation seems increasingly certain.

JAMES RYAN [NUJ FoC, Penguin]

## Leyland Speke

from front page

unemployment benefit to full pay.

Naturally there was a strong feeling at Friday's meeting to "take the money and run". That feeling has to be combatted over the coming weeks. During the strike there were only two mass meetings in 17 weeks, but now maximum involvement of all the rank and file is vital.

Otherwise the Speke workers will be prey to any insidious tactics management can devise. One obvious possibility is that they will try to get particular sections of workers to take their redundancy money and go early, thus sabotaging the chance of united resistance.

So the Speke workers have to decide to fight — and that can only mean occupying the plant — soon, or never. It is also vital that rank and file links should be established between Speke and other Leyland plants. For Speke is only the beginning of the Edwardes carve-up.

## Sacked electricians fight scab recruitment

Five workers were killed in a fire on a North Sea oil rig last weekend. Yet Mather and Platt are currently trying to recruit scabs to work on their contracts for installing fire alarms on the oil rigs.

They have sacked the 100 electricians they had working on the rigs, for taking industrial action.

The dispute started after management refused to consider the electricians' claim for an agreement to include £1500 severance pay at the end of the contract. The EETPU told the electricians they would just have to wait, so on 20th January the electricians stopped work on the rigs.

On 25th January the EETPU instructed them to return to work. They refused. On 18th January 30 electricians were sacked, and they were flown off on 2nd February. The senior shop steward was sacked on 7th February, and the rest were sacked later. EETPU national officer

Les Britt's reaction was: "It serves you right, you're on your own".

The electricians are picketing Aberdeen docks and airport, and Mather and Platt's Park works in Manchester. Their demands are to get their jobs back and to get the severance pay agreement.

They have also picketed the Manchester area office of the EETPU, demanding official union support. In return EETPU officials in the North East have warned them that anyone attending unofficial meetings may be fined.

The electricians are trying to get the EETPU to support them. They have written to the EETPU national office and to the EETPU regional office in Manchester. They have also written to the EETPU regional office in London. They have also written to the EETPU regional office in Liverpool. They have also written to the EETPU regional office in Manchester.

Donations and messages of support should be sent to Vincent Foy, 12 Moorlands Jarrow, Tyne & Wear. (Tel. Boldon 4417).

JOHN DOUGLAS

## 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 3 MARCH. Broadside *Workers' Theatre* presents *Rule Britannia* for the *Garners Steak House Strikers*. 7.30pm at the TGWU district hall, 203-209 North Gower St, near Euston. Adm. 50p. Other contributions to the *Garners Steak House Strike Fund*, c/o TGWU, room 84, 12-13 Henrietta St, London WC2.

SATURDAY 4 MARCH. Fund raising social to pay off debts of the rank and file paper 'Building Worker' and enable us to print the next one.

8pm at 36 St Alphonsus Rd, London SW4. Tube: Clapham Common. Admission 50p.

SATURDAY 4 MARCH. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference. 11am to 3pm, Beaver Hall, Garlick Hill, London EC4. Credentials for trade union delegates 75p from J. Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Rd, Ilford, Essex.

WEDNESDAY 8 MARCH. Workers' Power public meeting. 'Marxism and the Trade Unions' Speakers: Bill Brindley, John G. Jones. 8pm at the Roebuck, Bow Court Road.

THURSDAY 16 MARCH. 'All London Teachers against Racism and Fascism' rally. 5.45pm at Central Hall, Westminster. Adm. 50p.

'TROTSKYIST Faction splits from the WSL' - documents in Defence of the Revolutionary Programme available from 35 Lennox St, Birmingham, for 20p p&p.