

FOR REAL PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM

"IF THE NATIONAL Union of Mineworkers is destroyed, the damage that it would inflict upon the United Mineworkers of America and other free trade unions across the United States and across the world would be incalculable." These words, from the leader of the UMWA indicate the international significance of the British miners' strike.

Throughout the world the coal and oil magnates are watching the strike's every development. The NUM is regarded by miners and bosses everywhere as one of the world's strongest unions. Defeat for it at the hands of MacGregor would undoubtedly weaken the resolve of other mining unions and encourage the coal bosses to launch a world wide offensive against mining unions.

While in Britain coal is a nationalised industry, most coal miners in other countries are privately owned. And some of these private capitalists are casting eager eyes on Britain's own 'super-pits' as possible future acquisitions. These outfits are well organised multinationals and work in conjunction with the NCB. British Petroleum (for example) owns more coal world wide than the NCB. The Shell Company has a huge stake in South African coal and has been consistently importing it into Britain, with NCB connivance, over the last year to break the strike. Chief amongst the multinational coal/oil giants is Exxon. This company has 9.6 billion tonnes of coal reserves in the USA, Canada, Australia and Colombia. They have their eyes on Selby and the Vale of Belvoir too.

■CLASS ENEMIES■

In other words miners across the world face internationally organised class enemies. They share in common the desire to use their coalmines to boost profits. They share in common the need to exploit, and often to sack miners, in order to get these profits. The miners, on the other hand, share in common the need to resist the attacks of the bosses. Are they, however, anything like as well organised on an international scale as BP, Shell, Exxon and even the NCB?

Sadly the answer is no. All too often, international solidarity between miners is thwarted by the nationalist policies of the miners' unions. Before the present strike started, for example, *The Miner*, was busy campaigning for British coal. It declared in February 1984, "an end to coal imports would underline the value and importance of British collieries." As against what? Colombian, American, South

African collieries? The sad fact is that policies such as import controls identify the interests of British miners with British bosses. Yet, the strike has shown that British bosses are working hand in glove with Dutch oil companies in order to get cheap coal.

The call for import controls by the NUM is downright reactionary. By emphasising the importance of British collieries they are, whether they mean to or not, calling for the export of unemployment, the sacking of Colombian or US miners in preference to British ones. This is self-defeating given the internationally organised enemy we are up against. It pits miner against miner and does nothing to block either Macgregor's closure plan or Exxon's cruel exploitation of Colombian miners in the huge El Cerrejon mine. Of course an absolute blockade of strike-breaking coal is vital now. But the call for such a blockade would fall on deaf ears if the NUM had been arguing for import controls that spell redundancies for the very miners they are now appealing to. Opposition to import control in general and a clear identification with US or Australian miners against US, Australian and British bosses would ensure the success of such a call.

It is not only at the level of policies that internationalism amongst miners is thwarted. Major problems exist too at the level of organisation. Until 1983 the NUM belonged to the Miners International Federation (MIF). This is a far from perfect organisation. It is 94 years old and very bureaucratic. However it does enjoy support from virtually every miners' union outside of the Eastern Bloc countries. Miners unions in those countries belong to the Miners Trade Union International (MTUI).

For reasons that still remain a mystery the NUM together with the French Miners Union (FNSS) walked out of the MIF. The general secretary of the MIF, a former Barnsley miner and CP member Peter Tait said, "no discussions were held between MIF and the NUM prior to a decision being taken on the proposed new international union."

The NUM and FNSS had, it seems, decided to set up a totally new federation. Two years later, however, nothing has come of this venture. Two vital miners' unions, the Bolivian and Zambian ones, voted to stay with the MIF. At a conference to discuss the new international only delegates from Australian and Sierra Leone attended, and they have not joined with the NUM and FNSS. The end result is that in the midst of the 1984/5 strike the NUM had no official ties with either the MIF or MTUI. Despite this mining unions, as well as many



Solidarity with the miners - in Padua, Italy

other workers have, throughout the strike, shown tremendous solidarity with the NUM. We have regularly reported fund raising tours in *Workers Power*. The solidarity runs deeper than money though. Australian miners in Queensland announced, "Australians will not tolerate being put in a position of scabbing on their British counterparts." Rank and file Polish miners against instructions from their government and MTUI affiliated union announced, "We will do everything possible to support your struggle, including inaction (ie blacking - WPP)"

■RANK AND FILE■

When Shell tried to ship South African coal into Britain from Denmark rank and file workers responded marvelously. *International Labour Reports* revealed what happened when the attempt was made, "Dockers were mustered to load the coal. But at a meeting they refused to do the work. At the same time a local committee organising support for the British miners went to block the coal at the docks so that the trucks could not unload. On the basis of the blockade the lorry drivers refused to do any more trips. Police failed to prevent the blockade continuing on the first day, and

sailors on the boat gave the blockade watchers beer and music." (January/February 1985)

These are just a few examples of the solidarity, world wide, that has been given to the NUM. They are instructive examples. The rank and file have been the decisive force in getting the money, organising support committees from Frankfurt to Sri Lanka, and in organising to block coal.

On the other hand the NUM's "new international" has proved stillborn. The MIF, despite declarations of support, with its office staff of six people has not been able to stop the movement of scab coal. The MTUI has allowed its Polish affiliate to produce what is known to be scab coal with impunity. The bureaucratic international co-ordination has proved wanting, to say the least, in this strike.

■COMMON INTEREST■

The NUM has a common interest with workers of all countries. That interest goes beyond the need to win the present strike. Internationalism is not simply a method of achieving mutual aid during national strikes, important as that is. It is about combining struggles, unifying them against the common enemy, the international capitalists, with the objective of defeating them once and for all. Moreover, it is about supporting those workers like the Polish miners, who stand by their international class against the bureaucrats, throughout the Eastern Bloc, who have stolen political power from the workers.

For these reasons the NUM must build on the international links born of the strike. These links should be genuine rank and file links - international committees of struggle, not holidays for the hand-picked few in the Crimea or Bulgaria. As far as the MIF is concerned the NUM should re-enter it on the basis of fighting for unity with the MTUI, support for the thoroughgoing democratisation of all affiliated unions, for rank and file representation at all conferences and in all committees and for total support for all miners in struggle be it against the capitalists of Exxon and the NCB or the bureaucrats in the Kremlin or Warsaw. Moreover it should fight to commit such a federation to support for every national liberation struggle against imperialism and for the defence of the USSR and the degenerate workers' states against the imperialist warmongers, Reagan and Thatcher.

Miners should learn from this strike that internationalism is not an optional extra but a burning necessity. They should inscribe on every NUM banner Karl Marx's proved dictum, WORKERS OF ALL COUNTRIES UNITE!

by Mark Hoskisson

WEST GERMAN SOLIDARITY

AT A MEETING in Congress House on December 8th representatives of transport unions in Britain, Holland, Belgium and West Germany declared themselves united on a policy of "limiting the shipping of additional coal and oil to England". In similar vein the International Association of Coal Miners, of which the West German coal miners union IGBE is a member, demanded that all coal exporting countries stop exports to Britain.

Despite this IGBE leader Adolf Schmidt has allowed the West German coal owners to ship coal to Britain via the Rotterdam spot market. West German coal exports to Britain increased tenfold last year! In their turn the West German transport unions have allowed scab West German and Polish coal to be transported by rail.

At the same time West German trade union officials have tried to keep a tight bureaucratic grip on widespread solidarity support for the miners. Official collections have been sent to - of all places - the ISTC and the TUC!

Of course, in West Germany as in Britain, the trade union movement does not end with the bureaucrats. A "coordination office" run by the Teachers Union in Wuppertal (Engels' birth place) has sent over 1/2 million marks to the NUM. In Frankfurt the support committee has collected 2 tons of clothing and raised 80,000 marks in the last 3 months.

Such support is proof of the strength of solidarity amongst West German workers. But as an article in the latest *Arbeitermacht* (paper of the Gruppe Arbeitermacht - fraternal organisation of Workers Power) points out, financial and material support is not enough to take the strike forward. The rightly argue that the key to effective solidarity is the complete boycott of all transport of coal to Britain. And the fight for the boycott means a fight against the leaders of the German transport and coal unions.

It is to rank and file workers who are prepared to wage that battle, and not to the treacherous posturings of the trade union leaders, that militant miners must reach out the hand of proletarian internationalism. ■

SWP: COUNSELLORS FOR RETREAT

AT THE LOBBY of the last delegate conference militant miners shouted one message to their leaders - No sell-out, on to victory. The job of revolutionaries is to equip these militants with a strategy for victory. It is a job not to the liking of those miserable pessimists in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP).

Once the strike hit difficulties they, like the defeatist Dr. Kim Howells, became ardent agitators for an orderly retreat. The February *Socialist Review* presented the miners with a stark choice - orderly retreat or total defeat, "The likelihood of victory is extremely remote," said some wisecrack in *Socialist Review* offering editorial consolation that this "doesn't mean that the miners are facing abject defeat. Even when the balance of forces are against a group of workers, there is a world of difference between a retreat which is disciplined and a retreat which turns into a rout."

□NEGOTIATION□

So, the SWP's strategy for the strike is an orderly retreat. As *Socialist Worker* put it the weak the TUC/NCB document was rejected, "there is everything to be gained by holding firm for a negotiated settlement which allows the miners to return with their union organisation intact." And in order to do so they were to get out on the knocker talking to individuals, building solidarity collections and "fighting to convince even some of those back at work that the strike is not lost." (*Socialist Review*)

The SWP advised militants to keep their pow-

der dry for another day, as the *Review* put it the strike should, "withdraw, without scattering or collapsing, it can regroup and live to fight another day." This means seeking a settlement in which there is "no NUM support for pit closures" - an evasive and slippery slogan that in the context of a proposed retreat can mean no more than refusing to sign on the NCB's dotted line...yet more

□FUTURE□

shades of Dr Howells! And it means winning policies of no victimisations "when work starts again". Even here the SWP do not make this the conditions of a settlement. Their journal quite explicitly envisages a fight on this issue after a return, "In the next few months there will be the focus for agitation round victimisations as well. If there is no national agreement to take back sacked members, there will be a number of fights in individual pits, like Betteshanger in Kent, where the whole of the NUM branch committee have been sacked."

This is proffered as a future defensive battle around which the retreating army can regroup its forces in the future. Despite their talk of holding out for a settlement and standing firm, despite their attempts to present themselves as 'left' critics of the NUM executive the SWP have no real alternative to treading the same path as Williams, Taylor and co. If the SWP had members on the NUM executive they would now be calling for and voting for a programme of retreat.

Though they have given up on this strike the SWP are indulging themselves in idle fancy about

battles to come. The miners should retreat in this major political battle with the Tories. And they should build up their strength again by getting down to some local trade union scraps with individual pit managers!

Like all consistent blinkered "pure trade unionists" the SWP cannot see the union being strong unless management is economically vulnerable to the union's pressure. Laughably they expect that competition between the pit managers to keep their pits off the hit list will lead them to concede to the local branch, "Their jobs will be on the line too. Faced with the prospect of 70 pits closure, perhaps even more, again and again they can be made to concede on issues around which there is a fight."

Add to this the fact that management will "try to cut corners" and "in particular to cut safety procedures" and the SWP have the perfect recipe for trade union business as normal. The SWP are back in the little world they understand, safe and protected from the storms of a political strike, "The defensive struggles ahead can lay the basis for organisation in the pits, rooted in the workplace, based on small struggles."

The SWP once had its heyday. It was in the early 70s when trade unions and British capitalism were stronger than they are today. Back in those days their economic politics of small scale trade union militancy cut some ice with militants who were involved in such actions. But the capitalist recession, and the ruling classes' political offensive gave both those militants and the SWP a real jolt. The SWP has never recovered. It is out of its depth and rapidly drowning. We must fight to make sure that it does not take militant miners down with it. □

by Dave Hughes

A WORKING CLASS WOMEN'S DAY

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY will be marked in Britain this year by a mass rally of striking miners' wives and women supporters in Chesterfield. Miners Wives like Florence in North Staffordshire will be hosting socials celebrating International Women's Day and marking the strike's anniversary. This year International Women's Day will be returning to its roots as a day of working class women in struggle against the bosses.

The original name was International Proletarian Women's Day. It was a day for working class women to show their strength, their international solidarity and to bring their own demands to the fore.

Working class women were, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, as they are now, employed in the worst paid jobs and working in terrible conditions. Neither the craft conscious union leaders in Europe or America nor the bourgeois women's rights campaigners were interested in, let alone able to give voice to, the demands of these women. In reality both the union bureaucrats and bourgeois feminists wanted to make peace with capitalism. The needs of working class women, on the other hand, conflicted with the system's insatiable lust for profit.

The conflict of interests was well illustrated in attempts to organise working women in the United States. The Industrial Workers of the World cut across the craft unionism of the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and deliberately set out to recruit women. One of its leading organisers, Elisabeth Gurley Flynn summed up its class attitude to the woman question:

"The 'queen in the parlour' has no interest in common with the maid in the kitchen; the wife of the department store owner shows no sisterly concern for the seventeen year old girl who finds prostitution the only door open to a 5 dollars a week wage clerk. The sisterhood of women, like the brotherhood of men, is a hollow sham to labour. Behind all its smug hypocrisy and sickly sentimentality look the sinister outlines of the class war."

In contrast the middle class feminists who tried to organise New York garment workers into the Women's Trade Union League (WTUL) preached class harmony.

In March 1909, women workers took to the streets, demanding both the vote and an end to sweat shop conditions. Later that year, a mass strike of the Waistmakers erupted in New York. The middle class leaders of the WTUL tried to

accept a compromise - but the strikers labelled this a sell-out and fought on. It became clear that the do-gooders from the upper and middle class could not be trusted to fight for working women's interests. These interests, short term and historic, were bound up with the struggle for socialism.

The argument that women's final emancipation was only possible through the victory of socialism was developed and advanced by Clara Zetkin.

A leading figure in the German Social-Democratic Party (Socialist), she called for working class women to unite in struggle both for immediate demands such as the right to vote, protection for working mothers and so forth, and for the overthrow of capitalism. She argued:

"The liberation of women workers does not consist merely in obtaining equality with the male world within the present society. Rather, the existing social order must be abolished in its entirety, for the economic and property relations of this society are the root of both class and sexual slavery."

To fight for these positions in practice Zetkin, in the teeth of bitter opposition from many in the SPD and Second International, organised regular conferences of International Socialist Women.

It was at the 1910 conference in Copenhagen

that International Proletarian Women's Day was proclaimed. In the first year, 1911, March 19th was chosen, commemorating the revolution of 1848 which had felled the old aristocracy. Marches were held through Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland and Austria with 30,000 marching in Vienna. In their propaganda, the socialist women pointed out that the bourgeoisie, after winning its own rights in the wake of 1848, had abandoned the working class and indeed become its class enemy.

After a major demonstration by New York women workers in 1913 the date of International Proletarian Women's Day was changed to March 8th. In every country the day was celebrated as an expression of solidarity between sisters of one class the working class.

The most dramatic and historically significant celebration of Women's Day came in 1917 in Russia. In Petrograd on February 23rd (the Russian calendar was then behind the Western calendar), International Proletarian Women's day was marked by women textile workers holding mass meetings in several factories. They decided to strike, and marched from their factories to other nearby metal works shouting "Bread". By the end of the day nearly 90,000 workers were on strike, five days later there was a successful insurrection against the Tsar.

The women of Russia were suffering acute hardship and deprivation during the years of the first world war. After years of hunger they took matters into their own hands. The women workers



Women move from bread queues to militant conferences in Petrograd, February 1917

■ACTION■

decided to act on the slogans of the Bolsheviks which had been put to them only one year previously:

"Comrades, Working Women! This is the day of our solidarity; the day when the working woman, breaking her ancient bonds of submission, slavery and humiliation, proudly joins the ranks of the international proletariat for the struggle with the common enemy - capital. Working women! The government has sent our sons to their crucifixion for the sake of capital. So build your own organisations, band together in workshop and factory, office and shop, and let us roar in the face of insatiable capital: 'Enough blood! Down with the war! Bring the criminal autocracy to justice!'"

On the morning of February 23rd 1917 when mass meetings were called they quickly decided to strike. They marched to the nearby metal works. A Bolshevik metalworker, Gordienko, recalled the scene when the shouts of the women were heard outside: "I and several other comrades quickly showed ourselves at the window...the gates were thrown right open. Masses of militant women flooded into the alley. Those who saw us began to wave their hands, crying 'Come out! Stop work! A snowball flew through the window. We decided to join their demonstration."

4,500 workers from the Erikson factory and 7,500 from the New Lessner factory joined the demonstration and they moved South through the area. By 10am ten factories and 27,000 workers were on strike. By midday there were 50,000 out!

■SURPRISE■

The Women's Day action had taken all the leaders, even the Bolsheviks by surprise. The Bolsheviks were however quick to respond to the importance of this spark. They stepped in alongside the women and gave a lead to the struggle. Their slogans "Down with the Autocracy! Down with the War! Give us Bread!" expressed and directed the anger of the workers. With these shouts ringing through the streets of Petrograd the strike spread the next day. More clashes with the police occurred and the struggle intensified. The government sent troops in with instructions to shoot demonstrators, but again the women were key in turning the tide. Trotsky's account reveals:

"A great role is played by women workers in the relation between workers and soldiers. They go up to the cordons more boldly than men, take hold of the rifles, beseech, almost command: 'Put down your bayonets - join us!' The soldiers are excited, ashamed, exchange anxious glances, waver; someone makes up his mind first, and the bayonets rise guiltily above the shoulders of the advancing crowd. The barrier is opened, a joyous and grateful 'Hurrah!' shakes the air. The soldiers are surrounded. Everywhere arguments, reproaches, appeals - the revolution makes another forward step."

This was how the great Russian Revolution begun in February 1917. The celebration of International Women's Day sparked a revolution. The actions of the miners wives in 1984/5 may not spark a revolution, but they are no less inspiring for that. They have shown the strength and resourcefulness, the courage and determination of working class women. They on one side and Margaret Thatcher on the other are the living proof that sisterhood between the classes is a hollow sham. It is ever more vital to reclaim our history and our heritage and go forward to build a working class women's movement. ■

by Verna Care and Helen Ward

FIGHT AIDS HYSTERIA

THE YELLOW PRESS led by the Sun is running a new mind poisoning campaign. Its headlines over the past weeks have reached new depths of hysteria; "Gay Plague Kills Priest", "Two Pubs Ban Gays in AIDS Panic", "AIDS: Three British Airway Crew Die". The Mirror and The Star have joined in with their misinformation and scare mongering.

The campaign has had some effect. The Fire Brigades Union has instructed its members not to give the kiss of life to people if they suspect that they may be homosexual. Air crews have threatened to refuse to work with homosexuals. Gays have been banned from certain pubs and clubs and the British Dental Association has ordered dentists to be "extra careful with gay patients."

Unless a stand is made against this ignorant and vicious campaign all the gains in terms of legal and civil rights made by Gay people over the past 20 years could be effectively reversed. The underlying reasons for utilising the outbreak of AIDS in Britain to persecute gays is more clearly brought out in the misnamed "quality" press. Thus in the Tory red-necks morning read, the Daily Telegraph, Peregrine Worsthorne has expounded the full argument. AIDS is not so much a physical disease as a "moral problem". It is God's punishment for homosexuality.

■EPIDEMIC■

After repeating the usual hysteria about it "reaching epidemic proportions in the foreseeable future" he puts down its cause to "the promiscuous indulgence in sexual practices which until recently were condemned by both Church and State as perverted and unnatural, not to say grossly unhygienic." The answer to AIDS is simple. Not medical treatment. Not a scientific search for a cure. "There is already a moral vaccine against AIDS; chastity, which needs no taxpayers' subsidy."

Doctors have been desperately trying to combat this outbreak of hysteria with facts that the press will not carry. These facts show that such guardians of public morality as the Sun and the Telegraph are wholesaling ignorant prejudice as if it were scientific truth.

AIDS has not reached epidemic proportions nor do doctors expect it to do so. Only 118 cases have been reported of whom 53 have died. The Department of Health itself does not believe that in five years cases will exceed 5,000. Thus to call it an epidemic is wrong. It is neither contagious nor infectious - ie. neither being in the company nor having physical contact with an AIDS sufferer is sufficient to transmit the virus.

The AIDS virus has been isolated in semen, blood and saliva, but its transmission has been discovered to be by sexual contact or from infected blood. No evidence exists that purely oral contact - from a kiss or a glass in a pub - is sufficient to pass on AIDS.

Even in the USA where there have been 7,981 cases, there have been no cases amongst health

■MEDICAL WORKERS■

workers who had purely medical connections with patients. This in no way invalidates health workers justified claims to full information about all diseases and the fullest safety measures possible. But they are, at present exposed to far greater risks from other illnesses than from AIDS.

The "Gay Plague" claim is itself totally self-contradictory. The suggestion involved in this phrase is that it originates from Gays and can spread like the plague to everyone. In fact AIDS appears to have originated in Central Africa amongst people, the majority of whom were heterosexuals and spread to the Caribbean (Haiti in particular) again amongst heterosexuals. Thence it spread to the USA and the Gay community.

Basically its main mode of transmission is through anal intercourse. Here Mr Worsthorne obviously objects that this is in itself, "unnatural" "perverted" and "unhygienic". Sexologists, Anthropologists and Psychologists have for nearly 100 years been revealing that human sexual practice is exceedingly varied. The idea that some sort of "missionary posture" is the "normal way" to have sex is a fantasy of missionaries.

The 'moralists' arguments are hopelessly muddled on this question. Sometimes they argue that any behaviour that is not found in non-human nature at large is 'unnatural'. Then they will turn on gays and accuse them of 'bestial' or animal-like behaviour. In fact the words have no scientific meaning whatsoever. They merely indicate moral disapproval. The morality from which they spring is the clerical sex-pleasure denying morality of Christianity. The Churches have always tried to enforce their morality via the state. Marxists have always fought against this arguing that such questions should be a private matter as far as the state is concerned.

If Mr Worsthorne wishes to practice chastity by all means let him. However private 'virtue' is not enough for him. He obviously would like gays hounded and discriminated against and would

obviously welcome the return of legal punishment.

As for hygiene - of course all forms of sexual activity involve health risks as indeed does sport, work or even doing nothing. But this is a problem of cleanliness and health care and of medical attention. Killer illnesses like AIDS are not mysterious acts of divine retribution. Once people believed all illnesses had this character. Today if one suggested this about any other disease 99.9% of the population would think you were a complete crank.

In America and France doctors have discovered the cause of AIDS and are working to find means of prevention and cure. The more money and resources that are deployed the sooner they will overcome it. Britain has devoted virtually nothing to this research. Obviously the 'moralists' like Worsthorne wouldn't want to spend a penny in thwarting God's will.

In fact at the moment it is largely gay people who are the innocent victims of this terrible illness. Gays in general are also the victims of the hysteria both in terms of it heightening their own fears of contracting AIDS and being the butt of this anti-gay hate campaign.

The morality of the bosses and their head fixers in the Church and the media blame the victim for his or her own suffering. Worse they wish to extend the punishment to all gays. They do offer them an alternative of course - deny yourself full human (including sexual) relationships. Deny yourself the only, or the main, sexual pleasure you are capable of. Their 'morals' however are not ours. Their demand, 'oppress yourself or suffer public ridicule abuse, and legal and physical attacks'. Our morals - the morals the working class must fight to establish - mean freedom from this degrading and inhuman attitude. They mean total identification with the sufferer against a dreadful illness. They mean siding with the oppressed against their oppressors.

Socialists, working class militants, the whole labour and trade union movement must make a stand against the present witch-hunt. Not only must we resist and condemn all bans and discrimination but we must fight to tear aside the veil of embarrassed silence, hostility and hypocrisy which surrounds gay oppression. It must be discussed. Gays must have the full protection of unions at work against victimisation. They must have the right to form workplace caucuses to fight for their rights and to dispel ignorance and prejudice with educational material which combats the lies of the yellow press. ■

by Dave Stocking

Labour's first taste of power

BOSSES OR WORKERS

THE LABOUR MOVEMENT emerged from the first world war greatly strengthened in numbers. Trade union membership rocketed in the years 1913 to 1920, more than doubling to reach just over eight million. The status of the full-time officials shot up too. Their co-operation as recruiters for the slaughter of the Western Front and more importantly as policemen of the production line had been invaluable to the bosses.

With the Liberal Party split into two warring factions the trade union bureaucracy finally abandoned its long love affair with Liberalism. The State Capitalist measures of the war period had, it appeared, converted Britain's bosses to "collectivism." The cautious trade union officialdom, never wishing to demand from the bosses and the bankers what they had not previously signalled their willingness to grant, felt emboldened to accept that labour should have a "socialist" programme. "Labour and the New Social Order" was just what they were looking for.

It had a bit of idealistic rhetoric — an essential ingredient to combat Bolshevism. It stated that "what has to be reconstructed after the war is not this or that government department, or this or that piece of social machinery...but society itself."

How was this to be achieved? On this the programme was evasive. It had what it termed "four pillars of the house of tomorrow." Firstly was "the universal enforcement of the national minimum", ie a minimum wage or income. Secondly came the "democratic control of industry." This was a watered down version of the clause four "socialist objective." It was spelled out to mean "the immediate nationalisation of railways, mines and production of electrical power." The rest of industry — ie the decisive bastions of capitalist wealth and power — were merely to be subject to parliamentary and government 'controls' such as had existed during the war. The third pillar was "a revolution in national finance" which amounted to a capital levy and proposals to make taxation more steeply progressive and direct (ie to tax higher incomes and relieve the taxation which fell heavily on the poorest via indirect taxation of food, clothes etc). The last pillar proclaimed the need to win "the surplus wealth for the common good." This was a watered down version of gaining for the producers "the full fruits of their labour." What was "surplus wealth"? Certainly not the profits of the capitalist class. It was simply government resources, in effect taxation yet again, to be spent on housing and public service projects.

Thus 'Labour and the New Social Order' in no way threatened expropriation or destruction to the capitalist class. Indeed it was eager to motivate these state capitalist and social reform measures in terms of avoiding or softening class conflict. Thus when it called for the securing of the requisite of "healthy life and worthy citizenship" it was eager to assert that "this is in no sense a class proposal."

Also when warning against any reduction in the standard rates of wages the authors warned that failure to do so "will certainly lead to embittered industrial strife, which will be in the highest degree detrimental to the national interest... the government of the day must not hesitate to take all steps to avert such a calamity."

In fact as we shall see even these reform proposals proved wild utopian fantasies. In 1924 and 1929-31 Labour did not even attempt to implement them. They did however keep their promise to promote "industrial peace" by attack-

ing strikers and using the Emergency Powers Act. The problem that the Labour Party faced was that the ruling class had no intention of following Sidney Webb's doctrinaire schema of the inevitable increase of collectivism. Indeed it was about to demolish all the war-time controls and to denationalise and de-control as much of profitable industry as possible. The question facing Labour was could it even defend the state capitalist controls that it thought so highly of? This question was answered in the great industrial and political battles of the years 1918 to 1921. In each year between these dates nearly two million workers were involved in industrial disputes. In 1919 and 1920 key international political issues faced the Labour movement.

The intervention by British Imperialism against the young Russian workers state and the war in Ireland against British rule were the most important. The Labour Party was no friend of the Bolshevik Revolution. In the Labour daily the *Herald* H.N.Brailsford, a prominent ILP 'left-winger', condemned the Bolsheviks "reckless uncalculating folly in seizing power." and declared later that, "they have shown no trace of statesmanship". The *Labour Leader* the ILP's weekly carried similar denunciations by Snowden and others. To top the lot, at the Labour Party conference in July 1918 Kerensky leader of the Provisional Government overthrown by the Bolsheviks, was introduced by the platform to plead for anti-soviet intervention in the name of "democracy." Yet the Labour leaders' attitude to the Russian revolution did not go unchallenged

■ INTERNATIONALISM ■

As Lloyd George and Churchill threw their support, in terms of money and men, behind the White Armies and sent troops to Archangel and ships into the Black Sea the alarm of the whole working class movement mounted. In March of 1919 the Miners Federation demanded the withdrawal of British troops from Russia. At a joint Labour Party TUC conference in April, backed by other unions, they called for emergency action to carry out this demand. In fact it took the immediate threat of British intervention alongside Poland in 1920 to shake Labour into action. Again the initiative came from the rank and file. On May 10th London dockers refused to load a vessel called the *Jolly George* taking munitions to Poland. By June the Polish offensive had been halted and reversed by the Red Army. On August 6th the British Government issued an ultimatum to the Soviets with threats of intervention if they did not cease military operations. On August 9th a joint session of the TUC and Labour Party leaderships issued their own ultimatum: "—such a war (against Soviet Russia) would be an intolerable crime against humanity; it therefore warns the government that the whole industrial power of the organised workers will be used to defeat this war."

The combined leaderships convened a national Conference which in turn elected a Council of Action. In the principal towns and cities local councils of action were formed. Faced with this massive and unprecedented show of resistance Lloyd George backed down — much to Churchill's fury. The British Labour movement had just threatened to do what it had foresworn with the

most solemn oaths.

It had threatened — and indeed set about organising a political general strike in defiance of the constitutionally elected government. Indeed, leaders like J.H. Thomas almost gloried in their actions; "No Parliamentary effort" he told the delegates to the national conference "could do what we are asking you to do, and desperate as they are, we believe that the disease is so desperate and dangerous that it is only desperate methods that can provide a remedy." He continued, to cheers, that what was being proposed was no "mere strike" but "a challenge to the whole constitution of the country." This incident demonstrates just how far mass pressure can, in certain circumstances, force even Right-wing union leaders to go. It shows that "fighting talk" is not an exclusive monopoly of the left-wing leaders. Fortunately for the TUC and Labour leaders their fine words were not put to the test of action. The necessity for British intervention was lessened by a Polish victory in the Vistula and Soviet-Polish peace talks.

■ SANKEY COMMISSION ■

The same miners conference back in 1919 which first called for action in defence of Russia also threatened strike action if the government refused to meet Kent demands for the nationalisation of the mines, higher wages and shorter hours. The government's response to the miners demands was to buy time through the appointment of a Parliamentary commission of the mines, the Sankey commission. The immediate strike threat was averted, since the MFGB, with the support of the Labour Party, agreed to co-operate with the commission.

The interim report of the Sankey commission agreed in favour of nationalisation. The government, though, were not prepared to concede. Yet again the miners union backed off from confrontation. It decided instead to appeal to the TUC for concerted action by the whole movement. The September 1919 TUC Congress 'supported the miners' by calling a special congress for December to decide on action! When this met it decided against industrial action and in favour of "political action" — ie a "Mines for the Nation" propaganda campaign. The campaign was a total flop. The moment critical had passed. The employers and the government rallied their forces and passed over to the offensive. The miners were, in little over a year, to be forced to fight but on ground of the employers choosing. Thus in 1919 and 1920 the militant trade unionism of the miners failed to secure the objective they had been striving for throughout the war — the full nationalisation of the mines. The Reformist politics of the Labour Party like wise prevented it from combining with the miners to win this demand of 'Labour and the New Social Order.' At the point where an industrial, direct action battle for a political objective was posed albeit a reform which did not not challenge capitalism in its fundamentals, the most militant union in Britain backed off. The MFGB passed the buck to the TUC and the "political wing." The latter promptly sold out the struggle.

The next two years of strikes and lock-outs were defensive economic battles. They were *sectional* struggles ones which it proved difficult

or impossible through 'normal channels' to mobilise solidarity action around. Indeed, when the Triple Alliance was put to the test — on April 15th 1921 — to resist the coal-owners unilateral imposition of wage reductions and lengthening of hours, the railwaymen and the transport workers left the miners in the lurch.

"Black Friday", as this incident was called, was a crippling blow for the whole Labour movement. It shattered nearly a decade of growing belief and confidence in militant industrial unionism. It strengthened illusions in the need to 'turn to politics' in the shape of the Labour Party and electoralism. The exclusive, or preponderant reliance on trade union action which had characterised the syndicalist militants from 1912 onwards had led to enormous missed opportunities in the years 1917 to 1920. Now these militants were to learn the hard way.

A minority however were learning, not only from bitter experience, from the defeats of 1921 and 1922 but from the new experience of the victory of the Russian revolution and from the political party that led it — the Bolsheviks. Here they discovered an altogether different politics and party. It was a politics not hide bound by respect for the bosses' parliament. Rather it was a politics that knew how to combine economic and political demands into a mass offensive against capitalism and its state. It could lead and promote a class struggle trade unionism which could transcend the purely economic and trade union issues in struggle.

Naturally enough the Labour leadership waged a merciless fight against the emerging, tiny forces of British Bolshevism at all levels, just as they did the Russian revolution at an international level.

MacDonald and Henderson, eager to contain the influence of the Bolsheviks played a central role in 1919 in the resurrection of the 2nd international which they saw — in MacDonald's words "as the only real bulwark against Bolshevism short of military execution". (*Labour leader* 14.8.1919) The Berne conference in 1919 which

■ DEMOCRACY ■

MacDonald and Henderson attended to accomplish that task issued the following statement of principle: "...firmly adheres to the principles of Democracy. A reorganised society more and more permeated with socialism cannot be realised, much less, permanently established, unless it rests on the triumphs of Democracy... Those institutions, which constitute democracy are a government responsible to parliament."

The problem for the Labour Party was an immediate one. At the height of the Polish intervention in Russia the Communist Party of Great Britain was formed in August 1920. They wrote to the Labour Party requesting affiliation. The Communist Party sent with its request three resolutions adopted at the Convention which defined the objects, methods and policy of the party. The sum of these was a declaration for the Soviet system and a repudiation of the reformist view that socialist revolution can be achieved by the ordinary method of parliamentary democracy.

■ DOCTRINAL PURITY ■

Henderson on behalf of the Labour Party Executive rejected the application — on the grounds that the objects of the CPGB "did not appear to be in accord with the constitution, programme and principles of the Labour Party". To this the CPGB replied with a series of questions: "Did the Labour Party Executive rule that acceptance of Communism was contrary to the party's constitution, principles and programme?" — of course — it would mean a negation of the sham of parliamentary democracy. "Did it decisively and categorically reject the soviet system and the dictatorship of the proletariat?" — of course had it not explained its great respect of the Constitution. Perhaps most important in the light of recent witch-hunts in the party — "Did it propose to exclude from its ranks all those elements at present in the Labour Party who hold this means to be necessary in order to achieve the political, social and economic emancipation of the workers and did it impose acceptance of parliamentary constitutionalism as an article of faith on its affiliated societies?" The honest answer to all these questions was "yes", though Henderson didn't dare put it so frankly. Instead he simply replied that there was an "inseparable difference between the two parties."

Of course there was. Lenin himself had made this clear when he described the Labour Party as a workers party only in the sense that its membership was comprised of workers, its policies and leaders were thoroughly bourgeois. The Labour Party never declared to be an exclusive party based on a unified political doctrine. It allowed affiliation of political parties with wide



Some rank and file militants took in the truth at a glance. At an ILP meeting one Clydeside shipyard worker shouted: "A workers government, 'ye ca' it! It's a bloody lum hat (top hat) government like a' the rest". (*The Clydesiders* R.K.Middlemass)
Photo — left to right MacDonald, Thomas, Henderson, Clynes.

ERS GOVERNMENT?

differences to it and it had the affiliation of millions of trade unionists. As the "political wing of the trade unions", as it liked to call itself it showed no desire to defend its doctrinal purity. Only against the communists was it such a stickler. Lenin advised the young CPGB to continue to apply for affiliation whilst they could continue to criticise the Hendersons and MacDonalds from within.

The latter half of 1921, 1922 and the first half of 1923 were bleak years for the working class. A massive slump threw over two million on the dole (17.8% of the insured population in March 1922). Even by the end of 1922 the figure had only fallen to just below one and a half million and was never to fall below the million mark throughout the 1920's and 1930's. Union funds were swallowed by the payment of unemployment relief - £7 million in 1921 alone. Union membership slumped by over two million. A bitter series of defensive struggles against an employers offensive, most notably the Engineers' lock-out, resulted in defeat after defeat. Not until 1923 was there important signs of a recovery of fighting strength.

A series of strikes broke out in this year which



Labour party poster

were mainly unofficial - led by rank and file militants, often communists. The builders, the farm workers, seamen, boiler makers and most dramatically the dockers came out on strike demanding wage increases. This growing strength of the rank and file was reflected in the growth of a Miners Minority Movement in 1923.

Meanwhile the electoral growth of Labour continued. The general election of 1922 which followed the decision of the Tories to ditch Lloyd George and his 'National Liberals' once the post-war crisis had passed, saw a big advance for Labour. The Labour vote shot up from 2,370,000 to four and a quarter million. Its total share of MP's went up from 75 to 142. The new Tory Government was unstable, divided and unlikely to last for long. At Labour's 1923 Conference the party, for the first time seriously contemplated the prospect of office. Sidney Webb set the tone with a presidential address; "The inevitability of gradualness cannot fail to be appreciated. The translation of socialism into

■ CLASS WAR ■

practicable objects is the task on which we have engaged for a generation, with the result that fragments of our policy have been successfully put into operation by town and county councils and the government itself. The whole nation has been imbibing socialism without knowing it. It is now time for the subconscious to rise into consciousness." Labour was, said Webb, on the "threshold of power." When it took power it should remember "that the founder of British Socialism was not Karl Marx but Robert Owen. Owen preached not class war but the doctrine of human brotherhood."

The working class was soon to gain its first experience of just how gradual the Labour Party's 'socialism' was. Indeed it quickly became apparent that it was not capitalist society that had been imbibing socialism without knowing it for decades. Rather the Labour Movement had been imbibing capitalist Liberalism under the Fabian label. The result far from being socialism was not even a serious dose of social reform.

An election was called for the December of 1923. Labour's manifesto revealed the effects of the lure of power. For the first time since 1918 the manifesto contained no mention of public ownership. Gone were the promises to nation-

alise the mines, the railways and the power industry. It did promise an international conference to revise the infamous Versailles Treaty which had imposed crushing reparations on a defeated Germany. It promised full diplomatic recognition and the opening of commercial relations with Soviet Russia. It promised minor reforms at home and in the Empire which Philip Snowden promised would "be gradually grafted on to the existing system." This was of a piece with the sentiments expressed by J.H. Thomas in October 1923: "We love our empire. We are proud of the greatness of our Empire." Labour might reform aspects of the colonial administration but had no intention of freeing the enslaved colonies.

When the election came Labour enjoyed only a marginal increase in votes - 4,348,00 - but received a substantial increase in seats - up to 191. This left it in a distinct minority with the Tories still the largest party. Nevertheless the ruling class politicians in the Tory Party and in the Liberal Party calculated it was best to allow Labour to take office without having any real power.

Thus Baldwin, the Tories new leader was of the opinion that the Labour Party's 'calculations were that the discontent in the country coupled with want of action on our part would have swept them into power and us out by 1926. And I believe myself that that would have happened.' Asquith one of the Liberal leaders, noted that Labour was being allowed in "...with its claws cut. The experiment could hardly be made under safer conditions". Neville Chamberlain a leading

■ WEAKNESS ■

Tory put his finger on it when he observed that Labour in office "would be too weak to do much harm but not too weak to get discredited".

Philip Snowden later recalled the private cabal at the Webbs where Labour's strategy was decided. "there were two courses open to us. We might use the opportunity for a demonstration and introduce some bold Socialist measures, knowing of course that we should be defeated upon them. Then we could go to the country with this illustration of what we would do if we had a Socialist majority. This was a course had been urged by the extremewing of the party, but it was not a policy which commended itself to reasonable opinion. I urged very strongly to this meeting that we should not adopt an extreme policy but should confine our legislative proposals to measures which we were likely to be able to carry. We must show the country that we were not under the domination of the wild men".

Ramsay MacDonald announced his intention of acting as a proxy Liberal Government: "I want to gain the confidence of the country. I shall suit my policy accordingly." What this meant was soon to be clear enough. He was seeking the confidence of the bosses. To gain this he was quite prepared to lose the confidence of workers in struggle against these very bosses.

Macdonald started as he meant to continue by assuring King George, who was alarmed by the singing of the Red Flag at a celebratory Albert Hall

■ STRIKES ■

rally, that "they had got into the way of singing this song and it will be by degrees that he hopes to break down this habit."

The Government's attitude to workers' struggles was straight forward. It opposed them. In fact a railway strike was in progress when it took office. ASLEF was opposing wage reductions for locomotive men. Jimmy Thomas' NUR had accepted them. Many NUR drivers and firemen joined ASLEF on strike. Tom Shaw for the government stated "we had no sympathy for this unofficial strike, and that all the resources of the Government would be used to prevent the four essential services, light, water, food and power from being stopped."

In February a national dock strike was given the same treatment. MacDonald announced that the Government would "take what steps are necessary to secure transport of necessary food supplies" - ie he would break the strike.

The union leaders - Ernest Bevin and Ben Tillet caved in. Tillet claimed he had never "heard the same menacing threats or the same expressions of fear" from Tory or Liberal ministers. Bevin used the excuse - to become only too familiar to future generations - "We were bound to listen to the appeal of our own people".

The miners were swindled with a Minimum Wage Bill. Their leaders called off a strike on the promise of this legislation only to see the Liberals and Tories chop it up in the committee stage in the Commons. The worst and most glaring proof that this government was a capitalist government came with the London Traffic strike Tramwaymen, and busmen struck in March 1924.

The tube workers threatened sympathy action and asked the government to intervene and take over all transport services in the capital. MacDonald intervened all right - on the other side! He announced that "the major services must be maintained" and invoked the hated Emergency Powers Act. On April 1st the King signed a proclamation declaring a state of Emergency. This 'April Fool' message from the Labour Government to the workers who elected it shattered many illusions.

Abroad Labour was as trenchant in its defence of the bosses' Empire. MacDonald telegraphed India, where nationalists' expectations had been aroused by the advent of a 'socialist' government, saying: "no party in Great Britain will be cowed by threats of force or by policies designed to bring Government to a standstill." And to prove his point he introduced detention without trials in Bengal. In Bombay during a cotton workers strike troops opened fire with a resulting fifty casualties. Indian Communists were arrested and jailed for "conspiracy to deprive the King of his Sovereignty."

Only under considerable pressure was MacDonald persuaded to start the process of normalising Anglo-Soviet relations. When he did he demanded

■ ANTI-COMMUNIST ■

the reparations of all British (bosses) investments and debts from the days of the Tsarist regime. His speech at the Anglo-Soviet conference was hailed by *The Times* as "firm". MacDonald, who acted as his own Foreign Secretary was an easy tool of the Foreign Office. One senior official remarked. "He is the easiest Foreign Secretary I have ever had to manage".

Even Labour opponents were shocked at the weakness of its actions in government. Lloyd George wrote: "They have come in like a lamb. Will they go out like a lion? Who knows? For the present, their tameness is shocking to me".

The underlying reason which eventually decided the Liberals to get rid of MacDonald was the Anglo-Russian Treaty. Fundamentally the capit-

alist parties did not want any breach of the economic blockade of the Soviet Union. However they had to await a pretext as this issue was not one that could increase their popularity. They found it in a foolish anti-communist measure of the Government. J.R Campbell acting editor of the Communist Party's paper *Workers Weekly* had written an article calling on soldiers not to turn their guns on fellow workers in the class war. The Government opened a prosecution for sedition, then dropped it.

The Liberals, seeing their pretext, voted against the government in the Commons. MacDonald himself forced this vote into a vote of confidence and called a general election. At the height of the election campaign the Foreign Office produced a forged letter from Zinoviev, president of the Comintern, purporting to be encouraging mutiny in the army under the cover of restored diplomatic relations. MacDonald accepted its authenticity and protested to the Soviet Government. By thus confirming the Tory and Liberal press outcry, he unleashed an anti-communist campaign that had disastrous for results Labour.

The election resulted in a loss of forty Labour seats though Labour's total vote increased by over a million due to it contesting more seats. It was the Liberals who were really trounced, losing over two thirds of their seats and thus giving Baldwin and the Tories a solid majority for their anti-working class crusade.

The first Labour Government had proved a number of things. That it was not a workers but a bosses' government was shown by its actions at home and abroad. Not only did it take measures of repression like a Liberal or Tory Government against strikes and nationalist struggles. It had an added weapon. It could persuade the union leaders to listen to the appeals of 'our own men'. MacDonald, Snowden, Clynes and Henderson were 'the enemy within' inside the labour movement and doubly dangerous at that. They were bosses men leading the labour movement. Their 1924 fiasco opened the gate to a Tory Government which was to inflict the bitter defeat of 1926 on the working class. ■

by Sue Todd

PARLIAMENT IMPOTENT

THE PONTING AFFAIR and the ease with which Thatcher's government has sailed through it unscathed reveals much about the essential sham of "Parliamentary Democracy". The government has defended its right to mislead and keep in ignorance the "sovereign" parliament in the inter interest of national security.

In doing so they have reaffirmed that where the real interests of the capitalist class are at stake the ruling class will tolerate no parliamentary obstruction. The fact that the pathetic Labour 'opposition' has been unable to challenge Thatcher over the issue is not just because Kinnoch is tactically inept, but because on this fundamental question both parties are in agreement.

On May 4th 1982 the General Belgrano was sunk with the loss of 368 lives. On the same day John Nott, Defence Secretary told the Commons the Belgrano was "close to the total exclusion zone and was closing on elements of the task force". A few days later he told the Commons it was "manoeuvring to attack our surface vessels". On television in the election campaign, Thatcher declared "It was not sailing away from the Falklands". Of course these were all lies.

The Belgrano was steaming away from the exclusion zone. The government spy centre had intercepted messages that made clear the Argentinian government had ordered the Belgrano back to port. The "War Cabinet" had to quickly change the "rules of engagement" in order to sink the battleship outside the "exclusion zone." They informed the Argentinians of this change 5 days later! In order to conceal all this Heseltine and Stanley, the Armed Forces Minister, concealed information and misled both the Commons and the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House.

When Clive Ponting had the nerve to reveal to the Commons that they were being systematically misled he too discovered what resources the capitalist class have at their disposal to defend their interests. The judge, Justice McCowan, spent six hours lecturing the jury on the fact that Ponting had "no defence", that the interests of the state were indeed those defended by the government of the day, not by parliament. Only an extremely old democratic right "trial by jury" thwarted the government's intentions. Despite attempts to pack the jury through wholesale political vetting by Scotland Yard and the Special Branch Ponting was found not guilty. A result that sent the *Sun* and backbench Tory MPs into paroxysms of rage over the failure of the Special Branch to weed out Labour Party members!

Despite this blatant trampling on Parliament's rights the parliamentary Labour Party was incapable even in its own terms of unseating Thatcher

or any of her ministers. Why? Because on the fundamental question of defence of British imperialism's interests in Latin America and the Malvinas/Falklands the Labour Party stands with Thatcher. In supporting the British ruling class, retention of the Falklands as a potential, now actual, military base, albeit under the disguise of defending the islanders' bogus rights to national self-determination, Labour has to support all the actions which flow from it.

Thus it was no surprise that not one Labour MP voted against the government's motion which approved the sinking as "a necessary and legitimate action in the Falklands campaign". If you agree on the need to maintain an imperialist base in the Falklands you can hardly complain about the methods used!

Labour as a 'party of government', a party that has always, and will again in the future, govern in the interest of the bosses, must defend the same interests of "national security". As Mervyn Rees, ex-Labour Home Secretary declared in the debate on the Ponting affair - had he been



minister, the civil servants' "feet would not have touched the ground out of the department" in similar circumstances. For any party which governs for the bourgeoisie, the maintenance or defence of Parliament's rights comes a poor second to the defence of their political masters' interests.

The Ponting affair gave a glimpse of the real power centres in British society, the capitalists, their government executives, the police and the judiciary, and 'national security' in the shape of armed forces and the secret services. These real bastions of capitalist power will not and cannot be conquered by taking over parliament which as the Ponting incident shows cannot even defend its own right to information. □

by Stuart King

WILL THE EUROS'

FORWARD MARCH BE HALTED?



Hi-De-Hi!
The Euro
camp wave
bye-bye
to Chater

THE CIVIL WAR inside the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) has entered a new, perhaps final, stage. It opened with the decision of the January Executive Committee (EC) meeting to expel the editor (Tony Chater) and deputy editor of the *Morning Star* (David Whitfield) along with four London District Committee members.

It could end at a specially convened May Congress of the CPGB in a formal split with the "Euro-communist" leadership and a majority of delegates purging the whole Chaterite wing of the party, together with other oppositionists such as Straight Left and The Leninist.

The most visible and well publicised side of this faction fight has been the battle for control of the CPGB's daily paper - *The Morning Star*. Only once since August 1982 when the rift became public did the Chaterites appear to have the upper hand - during the summer of 1983. Starting with the November Congress of that year, however, an alliance of the Eurocommunist tendency, centering around the CPGB's monthly journal-*Marxism Today*, and the party centre, asserted its grip on the party itself. Now the Executive Committee has added a weekly paper- *Focus*- to its arsenal in preparation for a final reckoning with Chater.

The ideological battle behind this bureaucratic faction fight goes back to 1977 and the debate over the new draft of the Communist Party's programme *The British Road to Socialism*. It was a battle given new impetus in 1979 with Thatcher's first election victory.

■ BRITISH ROAD ■

The debate between the Chaterites and the Euros has always taken place within a fundamental agreement on the strategic line of the *British Road* the essentials of which Dave Cook sums up in the February 1985 issue of *Marxism Today*: "The British Road does contain a clear commitment to socialist democracy, to a non-insurrectionist strategy, and the need for a left and ultimately revolutionary majority to be expressed in a parliamentary majority...."

Thus there is no difference between these two factions on this fundamentally reformist perspective of the *British Road*. Both reject as "outdated" Lenin's insistence that Parliament, as part of the bourgeois state machine, has to be smashed and replaced by a state of a new sort based on workers' democracy - soviets. Both agree that parliament can be used, by obtaining a "left" majority, to implement, at some point, a socialist programme. Both agree that this "left" majority, in the country and in parliament must consist of a "broad class alliance" involving "progressive" "anti-monopoly" sections of the capitalist class itself. Where they differ is on the question of the role of the official trade union and Labour movement in this perspective and the importance of the Soviet Union to it.

The Chaterites claim to defend the "leading role of the working class" in such an alliance, while the Eurocommunists increasingly reject it. But of course the "working class" for the Chaterites and the *Morning Star* is not represented by the

rank and file but by the "left" and not so left sections of the trade union bureaucracy and Labour Party. The possibility for a "left advance" relies above all on ensuring the election of left trade union leaders like Buckton and Knapp (or Scanlon and Jones in a previous period) and the election of a "left" Labour Government which will pursue "progressive policies" as a step on the road to socialism.

The defence of such a government and the possibility of going beyond it to a national, peaceful road to socialism, above all depends on the "actually existing socialism" in the Soviet Union and other "communist" states. Not only are they examples to emulate, but they are a force for world peace and an ally against any attempts by imperialism to subvert such a progressive government.

It is on these two key questions, which have underpinned the tactics of the CPGB over the last forty years, that the Eurocommunists have chosen to do battle. It is no accident that their triumph



Martin Jacques opens a yawning gap in the party

within the Party comes at a time when the industrial base of the CP is at its weakest.

The Chaterite tactics within the trade unions were pursued in the 1970s through a development of Broad Lefts in the trade unions as foot soldiers for "left" trade union leaders. These tactics led to a complete debacle for the CP's industrial strategy when Scanlon and Jones blocked with Wilson and Callaghan to enforce the social contract and dramatic cuts in living standards on the working class. Having aided the disarming of the working class through their misleadership of important sections and in the process destroying much of their own base the Chaterites are now paying the price to the "new thinkers" in the party.

The ideologues of the Euros in the CPGB- such as Stuart Hall, Martin Jacques, and Bea Campbell, look for inspiration to Antonio Gramsci, the Italian Communist languishing in Mussolini's jail in the 1920s and 30s. After the defeat of the Italian working class Gramsci perceived the failure of the Italian revolutionary situation of 1919/20 and the later triumph of fascism as proving that a revolutionary assault on the capitalist state was

inappropriate for the imperialist democracies in the West. The state was too strong for a direct assault to succeed. Instead, to prevent the working class vanguard being divided off from the masses, a new, more gradualist strategy was needed.

In this strategy a new socialist culture and politics would be built up in the everyday experience of "the people". Eventually, through a "war of position" the elements of socialism in society would surround the state and make socialism possible. It is easy to see how Gramsci's later writings become a beacon for every revisionist seeking to push a gradualist parliamentary road to socialism.

But the Euros use Gramsci to go beyond a justification for a parliamentary strategy- a position held in common with the Chaterites. They argue that 1979 and the victory of "Thatcherism" represented a major "ideological defeat" for the working class which makes a Labour Government let alone a left one an impossibility in the next period. Further, they argue, that "Thatcherism" represents a qualitative break with traditional conservatism. It is a creeping "authoritarian populism" which demands a broad popular front of anti-Thatcher forces on a minimal programme. Such a programme if it is to have a broad appeal, cannot employ demands for "socialism". While never actually invoking the term "fascism" as a justification for the new popular front their argumentation clearly seeks to draw close parallels to the 1930s.

Recently Pat Devine summed up this analysis: "It argues that the post-war consensus and the particular features of post-war social democracy have been undermined; this has happened through a combination of social change, failure by the Labour Governments to deal with the deepening economic crisis, and growing disillusionment with the bureaucratic and paternalistic welfare state.... The Radical Right is in the process of seeking to build a new right-orientated, historic bloc of social forces by fragmenting the opposition and hijacking accumulated and justified discontent with the previous consensus. They are creating a new consensus held together by an ideology of individualism and popular authoritarianism."

In this situation what is urgently needed is a strategy for creating a new, left historic bloc of social forces which will constitute a political majority for radical democratic politics." (*Marxism Today*, February 1985)

■ NOT SOCIALIST ■

In a recent issue of *Focus* Jon Bloomfield made clear that these "radical, democratic politics" were certainly not socialist. He posed the question: "Does the crisis require an immediate Socialist response or is the initial objective to mobilise the broadest range of forces around a more limited set of demands that can isolate and defeat reaction?" (*Focus*, 31 January)

He rapidly answered this by attacking a *Morning Star* article which had the temerity to call for the removal of the Thatcher Government and its replacement by a "Socialist government of a new type" i.e. a left Labour Government committed to the Alternative Economic Strategy.

It is Stuart Hall's writings which provide the ideological underpinnings for this perspective. To justify it he has to systematically exaggerate both the ideological strength of "Thatcherism" and its "hold" over the working class as well as what makes it "qualitatively" different from previous forms of Toryism. It is symptomatic that even on the question of unemployment Hall claims that Thatcher "so far continues to win the battle for hearts and minds" (*The Future of the Left*)

Yet it is clear that Thatcher's policies are deeply unpopular and detested not only by the majority of the working class but by whole sections of the "middle classes". Thus 70% of those questioned in various opinion polls put the fight against unemployment as the number one priority despite Thatcher's contrary position.

The *British Social Attitudes* survey recently revealed that 89% of those surveyed called for more state aid to create jobs. The same survey showed that 64% were against a two-tier (Private/State) health system and 85% were against reduced

state spending on health and education. This is indeed a strange reflection of the "ideological hegemony of Thatcherism". Again it is symptomatic that Hall and the Euros seized on the "Falklands Factor" to demonstrate the strength of Thatcherism in mobilising nationalism within the British working class. They completely ignore the pivotal role of the Labour Party under Foot, in aiding the spread of nationalist poison. The working class is blamed for attitudes taught to it by its leaders!

Although Hall points out, quite correctly, the role of the Labour Governments of 1964-70 and 1974-79 in discrediting the "social-democratic" programme with its attacks on the working class through incomes policy, cuts in social services etc, he wants to draw from this, not the need to present an alternative socialist programme as a way out of the crisis, but the need for a retreat from such a left social democratic alternative. The ideological and material role played by repeated Labour Governments in demobilising the working class, fostering chauvinism on Argentina, Ireland immigration controls, and the EEC is ignored. The real defeats of the class struggle are likewise ignored. Instead the Euros bemoan the fact that the working class has, like one hypnotised, fallen under the ideological grip of Thatcherism.

■ ANTI - WORKING CLASS ■

It is little wonder therefore that Eurocommunism has rallied to its banner such rabidly anti-working class feminists as Bea Campbell who thinks the "white male working class organisations" the trade unions and perhaps the Labour Party are irretrievably sexist and bound up with "outdated" "male" forms of struggle. For the Euros, Greenham, the Feminist Movement, CND, are precisely the forms of all-class organisations which can make up, along with the Social Democratic Party, the new anti-Thatcher alliance. Far from making the links between the oppression of women and the system of class society which maintains it, and therefore drawing the connection between the struggle for women's liberation and socialism, at all costs such "divisive" class questions must be kept out of the autonomous movements - and not only the women's movement but out of the Gay and Black movements as well.

This is also what leads to the ferocious denunciations of the "fundamentalists" and "sectarians" who within CND argue for the dismantling of NATO, and dare to suggest that it is the imperialist rather than the Soviet Union which is leading the war drive. The Eurocommunists are desperate to maintain the peace question as a non-class, non-party issue. For the same reason defence of the Soviet Union is seen as an embarrassing hangover. Unlike the Chaterites the Euros have no material reason for an uncritical stance towards the Soviet Union- the financial support for the *Star* and more importantly the material links between the Trade Union bureaucracy in Britain and the Soviet trade unions. Indeed in their attempts to appeal to ever broader democratic layers such positions are only an embarrassment.

Essentially there is nothing new in the content of these Euro-Stalinist positions. They could be heard in the 1930s. Only then the exceptional threat to democracy was not "Thatcherism" but fascism which required that the independent, class, anti-capitalist demands of the working class be put to one side. Then they said the "natural ally" of the workers was the "liberal" or "democratic" bourgeoisie; today it is mainly the movement of the socially oppressed, predominantly petit-bourgeois.

Now, as then, they are bankrupt and reactionary politics which lead the CP to systematically restrain, derail or suppress independent working class struggle. Whether it be in the guise of the physical intimidation of People's Marchers in 1981 and 1983 who wished to make the march political and use it as a means to mobilise the unemployed against the Tory attacks, or the sabotage of mass picketing in the miners' strike in case it frightens off the clerical support for the "case for coal", the political consequences of Stalinism have been deadly for the working class. ■

by Keith Hassell

RUGBY RETREATS ON GAYS

LAST WEEK Dennis Law, Tory Chairperson of Rugby Council personnel subcommittee, decided to get off what fellow Tory Ron Ravenhall described as "a slippery slope which would lead to discrimination and crucifixion of a minority". He is referring, of course, to the Tory council's decision to positively discriminate against gay men and lesbians by withdrawing the words "sexual orientation" from their equal opportunities employment code.

It has taken 5 months of lobbying, petitions, public opinion polls (!), nearly 20 arrests and several pounds of tomatoes to get this bigoted clique to change their minds.

This affair has resulted in the Council junking the whole code for a new, and totally

non-committal formula. It states that no job applicant or employee will receive less favourable treatment or be disadvantaged by conditions or requirements which cannot be shown to be justified. Now they are going to tack a sexual orientation clause onto this while making no reference to women, blacks, the disabled etc! The campaign to defend the activists arrested during the campaign against the council is continuing.

Send donations to
Rugby 18 Defence Fund,
C/o GALOP and LESPOP,
38 Mount Pleasant,
London WC1 OAP.
Make cheques payable to GALOP (Rugby)

RESISTANCE TO PINOCHET MOUNTS

IF THE PINOCHET Government believed that it could solve the deep economic, social and political crisis currently wracking Chile then they have been speedily undeceived. Far from the intensified repression halting the mass struggles of the working class, the urban poor and the students, it has hardened this resistance and made it more determined.

On the other hand the changes within the institutions of the dictatorship have failed to consolidate the forces of the Right. The bourgeoisie has not been able to unite behind Pinochet. The economic changes introduced by the ministers Escobar and Collados were a recognition of the failure of the policies of the Chicago boys - the free market economists of the Milton Friedman school. These changes themselves failed to produce the hoped for economic upturn.

The economic crisis of this backward capitalist economy have been deepening over the last months. The new ministers tried to reverse some of the policies of the "free market". For example they raised import tariffs, but this measure means nothing in a situation where half of Chile's export earnings go to service the 18,000 million dollar debt.

Also the banks are failing to make profits and their debts are accumulating as the Chilean peso falls against the dollar. Contributing further to this crisis has been the fall in the value of copper. In August 1984 it was 57cents per pound producing a commercial deficit of 66.4 million dollars.

■ LIMITING THE STRUGGLE ■

The policies of the Economic Minister have satisfied neither the workers, who have been subjected to an inflation rate of 40% in the price of basic necessities and a wages freeze, nor the IMF, who have demanded that ever sharper austerity measures be imposed on the Chilean masses.

The ministerial crisis of the last weeks led to the replacement of the ministers for the Interior and the Economy. Throughout all these events

Pinochet continued his plans to renew the dictatorship by a new "11th September" - ie. a coup which would restore the dictatorship to its full severity. These new manoeuvres must be understood not only in relation to the internal situation in Chile but also as a product of US foreign policy.

On one side sections of the American bourgeoisie are in favour of creating a bourgeois opposition to Pinochet, including sections at present friendly to the regime. However they are afraid that even a minor destabilisation like this could produce a collapse of the whole system. This proposed re-alignment and unification of the bourgeoisie would take place around the Christian Democrat and National Parties. It would exclude the left.

The differences of Pinochet have weakened the influence of the faction of the American bourgeoisie pushing for such changes. Moreover it does not hold the whip hand in Washington. Since Reagan's re-election he has made plain his determination to root out "communism" - ie. anti-imperialist and working class resistance to the United States - in his "backyard".

This re-affirmed anti-communism has borne fruit for the Chilean dictatorship. A few weeks ago the Inter-American Development Bank gave a loan of 30 million dollars to Pinochet. Reagan has decided to stick by Pinochet because the US cannot afford to see another area of instability opened in South America. In addition Chile could prove much more difficult to handle than Argentina or Brazil. The dismantling of the Argentine dictatorship and the "liberalising" of the Brazilian one took place in the context of there being a clear bourgeois alternative to the military. This is not the case in Chile. A revolutionary crisis is a likely result of the crumbling of the dictatorship.

The renewed support of the American imperialists for Pinochet's repression cannot for long contain the struggles of the Chilean workers. On the contrary, even though at the moment many workers and students are on holiday, large demonstrations are still taking place against the regime.

For example the student unions used the v-

to organise voluntary work amongst the peasants. This was immediately declared illegal because of the state of siege and curfew. When the students defied this ban 240 were arrested. But the regime was forced to release them because of the pressure from workers and students.

The sacking of the two ministers, Onofre Jarpa (Interior) and Luis Escobar (Economy), plus the previous sacking of the ambassador in the Organisation of American States (OAS) Monica Madariaga, increased the isolation of Pinochet, turning the bourgeois opposition further against him. This also fuelled the disagreements within the Christian Democratic Party between those who favour using the Chilean Communist Party to control the workers and those who think the Stalinists should be kept at a safe distance.

■ IDEALISED DEMOCRACY ■

The Democratic Popular Movement in this situation is still carrying on with its programme of creating a liberal bourgeois democracy within Chile. This programme limits the struggle of the masses to the winning of an idealised "democracy" which preserves the capitalist economy and the forces of the capitalist state. It shuts off the workers and the urban poor from the only solution to their crying immediate needs as well as their historic interests - the socialist revolution.

Bourgeois democracy will offer these masses only austerity programmes and army and police repression. It would only lead to a new and bloodier version of the Popular Unity debacle of the early 1970s. In fact it is being used as a basis for a compromise with the Army itself. This craven class collaboration - given a militant gloss by urban guerrillaist spectacular blows - cannot destroy the dictatorship.

Only the independent class action of the proletariat can lead all the oppressed of town and country to the destruction of Pinochet's regime. Mass strike action leading to an insurrectionary general strike can alone pave the way to not only the smashing of the dictatorship but also



prevent its replacement by another anti-working class government which would force the masses to pay the cost of Chile's crisis.

What is needed now is the building of a united front of the workers' parties and unions which will ally itself to the peasants and all oppressed and exploited classes and strata. The final objective must be to replace the dictatorship with a workers and peasants government, based on workers and peasants councils and an armed militia made up of the working and exploited masses. In the struggles for this objective a revolutionary communist party, capable of leading the masses to final victory, must be forged. ■

by Diego Mocar

APARTHEID UNLEASHES MORE TERROR

EARLY THIS YEAR, the South African apartheid regime talked of reform and negotiation. Its latest actions, however, reveal the regime's true face with the carefully planned attack on the black squatter settlement Crossroads, and the jailing of leading anti-apartheid leaders, including Albertina Sisulu and the black trade union leader Thozamile Goweta.

It is not the first time that Pretoria has played this hypocritical game. Only last year Botha introduced a new "reformed" constitution. This allowed coloured and Indian representation in Parliament but none for black Africans who make up 73% of the population. He hoped to assuage "world opinion", convince investors that South Africa was still a good bet for their money and buy off a layer of middle class coloureds and Indians. When this ploy was decisively rejected by a massive boycott of the first elections to the stooge parliament, the South African state swung into action. Hundreds of those who had organised the opposition, including leaders of both the United Democratic Front (UDF) and the National Forum, the major opposition bodies, were rounded up and imprisoned.

■ FURTHER ARRESTS ■

Later in 1984 there were further arrests, including those of UDF leaders who had sought refuge in the British consulate in Durban, and of leaders of the massive two day "stay away" (general strike) of black workers in the Transvaal in December.

As 1984 drew to a close, problems mounted for Botha. Besides the strike action, school students continued their boycott of the second class education they are consigned to under the apartheid system. In the black townships there was continuing unrest and attacks on the "stooge" black councillors who had taken seats in the township councils.

These local "leaders" are seen as collaborating with the regime because the councils are window dressing for the apartheid system. They merely give the appearance of Africans running their own affairs. In fact those in the townships are hemmed in by apartheid's restrictions - unable to live elsewhere in the cities and often unable to live per-

manently in the townships. Under apartheid all black Africans are supposed to be "citizens" of one of the homelands which make up only 17% of the total land in South Africa.

The unrest in the townships - including a crime wave almost inevitable in the miserable and unstable conditions - was met by police repression. A report estimated 2 deaths a day between August and November.

US support is vital in underpinning the racist regime. Reagan and Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, have stuck by their



Botha - aiming for reform?

policy of "constructive engagement" - which means that US funds can go on making profits in South Africa. This is justified on the grounds that the US can then encourage further reforms from within. But black opposition to apartheid in the US itself combined with continuing unrest in South Africa is making both politicians and businessmen increasingly uneasy.

Against this background, pro-government newspapers in South Africa such as Die Burger started to float the idea of talks with the African National Congress (ANC). In part this is a reflection of pressure from a seriously worried white population. A December poll showed that 42.9% of whites were in favour of negotiations with the ANC. By the beginning of February, a package of "reforms" seemed to be taking shape.

■ SHALLOW REFORMS ■

Besides the idea of talking to the ANC, these included the scrapping of the notorious Immorality and Mixed Marriages Act, the establishment of a new government forum where African opinion would be heard, the opening up of 44 selected business areas to traders of all races and the possibility of freehold rights for some Africans in "white" areas of South Africa. A close examination of these reforms shows that the fundamentals of apartheid - the division of land and denial of fundamental political and social rights - remain. Only a small layer of middle class non-whites would benefit from the "reforms".

On 21st February, conservative MEP Lord Bethel was allowed to visit imprisoned ANC leader Nelson Mandela. Opposition South African MP Helen Suzman later announced that Mandela offered a truce, on condition that Pretoria recognised and legalised the ANC, released political prisoners, and started negotiations to end the system of apartheid. Reports filtered into the western press of secret meetings between "verligtes" (reforming members of the ruling Afrikaaner National Party) and ANC representatives in Lusaka. Whether or not any of this is true, it certainly was not enough to impress Botha. He went on to make Mandela an offer he couldn't accept - his freedom, on condition that he denounced violence in the struggle against apartheid.

That, of course, was quite impossible for the ANC, who have had a strategy of guerrilla warfare since the failure of peaceful campaigning in 1960. It would be quite impossible too, for the African masses, daily faced by the violence of the apartheid state. A mass rally in Soweto heard a message from Mandela rejecting the offer.

■ DAWN RAIDS ■

Botha then felt "justified" in unleashing another wave of massive repression. Dawn raids on Tuesday 19th February landed nine more United Democratic Front leaders in jail. A new Treason Trial is planned - the severest penalty for treason is death, long imprisonment certain.

Meanwhile, heavily armed police surrounded and attacked Crossroads residents fighting against the planned demolition of their homes. While the minister of Co-operation and Development, Dr. Viljoen, has agreed that black people living in existing "legal" black townships may stay, the government will continue with plans to get rid of the squatter camps. A new township Khayelitsha, is being built 20 miles from Cape Town centre, well away from the "white" areas. But many of the inhabitants of Crossroads would not even be able to live there, they would be forced back to the homelands and even worse poverty than they live in now.

■ CONTINUED MISERY ■

The very existence of the apartheid state spells continued misery and oppression for the black masses. The repeated crises of the regime prove that those masses are not accepting their fate passively. They are fighting back. Their struggles need to be harnessed into a decisive confrontation with the white supremacist regime. To achieve this a revolutionary party needs to be built and its key task is to organise the huge black working class to lead the rural poor, the unemployed, and all fighters against apartheid in a battle to smash the Pretoria regime and replace it with a revolutionary workers and peasants government. □

by Sue Thomas

FIGHT THE TUC TRAITORS

IN THE WAKE of the TUC General Council's endorsement of Thatcher's surrender terms for the NUM and their public testimony to her reasonableness many militants are asking whether anything can be expected of these traitors? To this we can give a short answer - No.

These bureaucrats were so delighted to get their snouts back in the Number Ten trough that any humiliation for the NUM seemed a cheap price to pay. Never mind that the "marvellous woman" (as one of these wretches was reported to have called her) was only using them as errand boys. After all they have been virtually unemployed for the last five years.

They have repeatedly refused to lead the unions into battle. From the steel strike of 1980, through to the NGA and GCHQ disputes they have blocked and sabotaged every major struggle. Baron Epping Forest (Lionel Murray) was the first invisible TUC General Secretary. In return Thatcher gave them little or no recognition beyond the lowest grade of peerage possible to enter the geriatric fancy dress party in the House of Lords. It took twelve months of heroic struggle by the miners to get Norman Willis through the door of 10 Downing Street.

■ WHY FIGHT? ■

But if no assistance can be expected from Willis, Basnett, Lyons, Buckton et al, why do we argue that the NUM and rank and file militants across the whole union movement should demand money and action from them? Why should we fight to force these traitors to call a general strike?

The reasons are straight forward. The TUC and the sell-out general secretaries have control of our unions. They control the executives and the funds necessary to mobilise the aid and action the miners need.

It's not only the miners' vital interests that are at stake. If Thatcher is allowed to smash the NUM she will launch a series of vicious attacks against the dockers, railworkers, printworkers and council workers. Every one of these isolated struggles will face the same legal attacks that the NUM has suffered. Picket lines will be smashed, funds seized, militants framed and imprisoned.

The miners are still holding their own on the field of battle against the full forces of the bosses state. While they are doing so we have an infinitely better chance of turning the tide against Thatcher than we will have if we let them go down.

To smash Thatcher the combined action of the maximum number of workers is necessary. Certainly this will not come about from the initiative of the likes of Willis or Buckton. But

neither will it happen purely spontaneously. *It has to be fought for.* Workers Power has fought for this from day one of the strike.

We have argued that this was no ordinary "trade dispute". The government has invested billions to smash the NUM. It is the protagonist in this completely political dispute. We argued that it was disastrously wrong for the NUM to make no demands for action on the TUC for the first six months of the strike. We argued that at the September TUC Arthur Scargill let the TUC off the hook by not demanding clear, unambiguous and immediate solidarity action. He should have demanded a general strike against the legal attacks on the NUM broadening this out into an offensive against the anti-union laws. Worse he put the NUM on the hook of 'negotiations' when it was plain that only a massive strengthening of the forces engaged against Thatcher could even force her into making significant concessions on the pit closure programme.

Nothing is ever won in negotiations. At best they can register what has been won on the battlefield of the class struggle. However a great deal can be lost through negotiations. The forces of the NUM have been demobilised, kept on the defensive. This has slowly but inevitably eroded the strength and morale of the miners.

Restriction to a defensive position spells defeat in any battle. This was precisely what the TUC demanded in return for its fake "support". No serious extension of the support the NUM had won before September was delivered as a result of the September deals at the Trades Union Congress or at the Labour Party Conference.

■ NOT NEUTRAL ■

Both Willis and Kinnock have continued to pose as neutral negotiators. But they are not and cannot be neutral. Since they lead and control working class organisations that should be being used to aid the miners their 'neutrality' is in fact *acting against the miners.*

Is this situation inevitable? Is their hold unbreakable? Not at all. The unions consist of hundreds of thousands of militants who hate Thatcher and support the miners. If they took action, made propaganda, used their credibility with the millions of union members they *could* break the leaders' stranglehold. Why haven't they? Well for one thing the NUM leaders - the most militant and respected leadership in the labour movement - have not told the truth about the TUC, *nor has it called on the rank and file militants to break the paralysing hold of the other union leaders.*

To win now, after twelve months, the miners must break with the inertia of the last six months. They

must also break with their own political passivity within the labour movement. If they are not prepared to offend the false, two-faced friends at the top of the unions they will not win the real support of the millions of rank and file they so desperately need. How can it be done?

The South Wales and Durham regions of the NUM have called for the re-convening of the full trades union congress. This is correct enough as far as it goes. Now, after the TUC's open passage to the side of Thatcher and Walker in return for coffee and biscuits they must be pilloried before a full Congress. But the call must be linked to the fight for that re-called Congress to be forced to take action. We must demand that the Congress expel from the TUC all unions sabotaging either the September decisions - feeble as they were - or those who refuse to carry out the mass action needed to support the miners.

■ FALSE REALISM ■

Unity is a marvellous thing, but the unity of panic and retreat is not. What we need is the unity of those who are prepared to stand and fight. A minority can stop a retreat, can rally the demoralised majority, as long as they are not afraid of standing alone in the first place. The miners, the rank and file railwaymen and seamen have stood alone for far too long.

However to leave it at that, at calls on the TUC would be worse than useless. It would not mobilise any new forces for the struggle and might just be an alibi for inaction. Buck passing 'left' leaders would say, "Look, we call on them to do something, they didn't and without them we can do nothing." This false realism is a pessimism which is based on a lack of will to fight. If we demand that the leaders act, we must mobilise the rank and file both to force them *and to act independently* when the leadership continue to block and betray.

We should call emergency meetings of every base unit of the labour movement that has given support to the miners. There we should propose demands for action from the leadership and set in train the organisation of action from below, of links and organisation at rank and file level.

The miners support groups, the trade trades councils, the Labour Party GMCs the union branches or stewards committees must convene action conferences.

The Tories have outlawed solidarity. The union leaders have and will let them get away with it. We must preserve and re-build this solidarity - the heart and soul of trade unionism, from below, now and in the weeks and months to come. ■

FOR A NATIONAL RANK AND FILE MOVEMENT!

International Women's Day/ One Year of the Strike

CELEBRATION

Florence Colliery Welfare Club,
North Staffordshire

8pm March 8th 1985

organised by Midland Women
Against Pit Closures

▶▶▶▶▶ continued from front page

and MacGregor's boots with the same enthusiasm as Willis. The TUC guidelines have not been worth the paper they were printed on. The TUC leaders will now take the break-down of talks as their cue to *openly* turn on the miners and sabotage their struggle.

On the one hand we must renew will defended mass picketing at the pit heads and power stations whatever Williams, MacGahey or Taylor say. But vitally important is that the militants give the lead in taking thousands of miners out to their fellow workers to put the case for joint struggle against this hated government.

This means linking all these workers who are supporting the miners into *delegate action councils*. It means directly appealing to rank and file workers and joining with them to force their stewards and officials to act. It means linking up with every group of workers under threat from the Tory offensive. Militant miners must take the lead in placing the NUM in the vanguard of a generalised struggle against the Tories.

Many militants will be relieved that the prospect of surrender was averted at the time of the last delegate conference. But it is not enough to have scuppered one more climb down. The official NUM leadership has set the strike on to a path of retreat. Only by reversing that path and leading the strike forward can militant miners make sure that the executive raises no more white flags, that Willis gets his grubby hands off the dispute and that the strike can be held solid and taken forward on the road to victory. ■

NATIONAL WOMEN'S SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

hosted by:
Birmingham Trades Council and
Midland Women Against Pit Closures

An opportunity for miner's wives to reach out to women workers, get them to the conference, build solidarity and start a national organisation of working class women.

provisionally: Birmingham, 30 March
details from: Women's Conference
Steering Committee, c/o TURC,
7 Frederick Street, Birmingham B1

CHESTERFIELD MARCH 9th

WOMEN AGAINST PIT CLOSURES
NATIONAL MARCH
AND RALLY

WORKERS IN ACTION



Teachers' pay strike

THE TWO MAJOR teachers unions (NUT and NAS/UWT) now seem on course for the biggest battle over pay seen in years. The fact that arbitration has been ruled out by the NUT conference has meant that industrial action this year is aimed at achieving an increase in the employers' "final" offer of 4% and not to force them to arbitration - which in fact they have already offered to the unions.

Early on in the negotiations, which are meant to reach an agreement by April 1st, the employers argued that more money would be available this year (up to 7% extra) if the teachers renegotiated their terms of employment. They wanted to make contractual what at the moment is considered by most teachers to be a matter of "goodwill", for example, lunch-time supervision, parents evenings etc.

The NUT so far refused to bargain away conditions for a few pennies more, whereas the other unions have indicated their willingness. The NUT's stance has been strengthened by Education Secretary, Keith Joseph's statement in the Commons that no more money in fact would be made available. This should serve to turn more moderates into militants over this year's claim.

On the eve of the three day selective strike action, the local employers in Solihull have taken the NUT and NAS/UWT to court to stop the action. They have argued that the present no-cover policy is not a withdrawal of good will but a breach of contract. As such the employers insist that ballots of the NUT members need to happen under the 1984 Trade Union Act before action can go ahead. If the courts uphold this line then conditions of service will rapidly deteriorate, never mind be negotiated away.

Faced with all this the Executive's action proposals are flawed. The issue of cover is crucial. If as the Executive claim we are not obliged to cover, then why do we cover at all? It is no good attempting to take union

action if we wish at the same time to appear as "caring professionals" who do not want to turn children out onto the street. Too often we fight with one hand behind our back. It is managements' job to sort out the running of the school. It is our job to prosecute our pay claim as effectively as possible.

Just how should this be done? The union's insistence on selective strikes affecting a few areas at a time is not likely to budge the employers. In fact it is a sign of the Executive's hesitancy in carrying out the fight. The NUT Executive has refused to ballot schools in the strongest inner city areas, such as ILEA. In any case it was this self same action that led to such a humiliating defeat last year.

National indefinite action is crucial to force the employers to back down. At the very least a nationally sanctioned all-out strike on March 6th, linking up the pay claim with the rate-capping threat to teachers' jobs and the miners' fight must be fought for.

There must be a special rule-change in order to do away with the ludicrous situation whereby strike pay (sustentation) has to be paid at a rate equivalent to net pay. Only the preparedness to defend ourselves with the degree of self-sacrifice shown by the miners will show the employers we mean to fight to win. What we lose in money has to be set against what we can win in terms of conditions and job security.

There must be an immediate and mandatory levy of the whole membership (with the expulsion of those who refuse to pay) in order to build up the sustentation fund, which should be paid out at a flat rate with allowance in cases of proven need.

Finally, there should be a call for an all-out national strike after it is carried by a majority of 50% plus one on a show of hands in each school and aggregated nationally. A boycott of all exams must be consistently applied. By these methods we can defend our conditions and jobs and achieve our full claim of £1200. ■

Birmingham Post Office

A STRIKE BY 230 engineers at Birmingham Head Post Office has now entered its second week. It started when management suspended an engineer for not operating blacked equipment. His reinstatement has been promised provided engineers work normally.

The local POEU (now National Communications Union) branch have refused to bow to this blackmail. Birmingham Post Office engineers have been working to rule in response to management plans to cut 50% of engineering jobs in the next three years. The first phase of this plan, outlined in a leaked document - was already in operation. No engineers had been recruited to replace retired/resigned members in the last six months.

This is undoubtedly part of a national drive against Post Office workers. In line with the Tories general assault on workers' organisations and living standards the Post Office has been given the green light to drastically restructure, ie worsen, working practices and

conditions. New technology, flexible staffing, and mechanisation all mean massive job losses.

In the face of such an attack Post Office workers will need to forge a united fight back in defence of their jobs and conditions. They will need to commit their unions, POEU (NCU) and UCW, to joint all out strike action.

The current strike in Birmingham has startled management, previously no engineer had been on strike for over 24 hours! To strengthen their stand they must link up with UCW members. Cross union solidarity action would bring the Post Office to a halt. It would serve notice to the Post Office than any attempts, now or in the future, to attack jobs and conditions will be met by similar action by all Post Office workers. As the Maerdy miners who visited the POEU picket line signified, solidarity action is key to any victory of workers in struggle right now. □

workers power

SUBSCRIBE!

NAME

ADDRESS

Send £3.50 to the address below to receive 10 issues of the paper. Make cheques or POs payable to WORKERS POWER, and send to: Workers Power, BCM 7750, London WC1N 3XX