

# RED WEEKLY

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SATURDAY 3 APRIL

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# LABOUR ELECTION FRAUD



Behind the backs of the working class, 315 members of the clique known as the Parliamentary Labour Party are claiming the right to decide the leadership of the labour movement. There are 11 million members of the trade unions and 600,000 individual members of the Labour Party. These 315 people were elected only through the effort and sweat of these millions. Yet it is this tiny group which claims the right to decide who shall lead the movement others created.

And who will this gang elect? It is only too obvious. Five candidates standing four square for the continuation of Wilson's policies are in the running. Only one candidate, Benn, is even vaguely critical of the Government's policies -- and he will have been knocked out by the time this paper comes out. After that the charmed circle of 315 will settle down to discuss who can best sell the 'son of the £6 limit', the cuts and 1½ million unemployed to the labour movement.

## AXE-MAN

Put all this democratically to the labour movement and the result would be very different. Jenkins, one of the 'top contenders', would not even have the nerve to stand. It was Benn who topped the constituency poll for Labour's NEC while axe-man Healey was thrown off. Maybe Foot would win -- we wouldn't support him, but if he did it would be through a real fight in the labour movement with hundreds of thousands voting to his left.

No wonder the parliamentary clique won't take the election to the real democracy of a special Labour Party conference. Hiding behind the myth of 'parliamentary sovereignty', they display contempt for democracy and claim the right to dictate to the labour movement. On policies the situation is even



clearer. Only the 15-20 PLP votes which will be cast for Benn are in any sense at all a vote against the Government's policies. In a Labour conference the result would again be very different. Millions of votes were cast against the Government's policies last summer. The NEC voted against a recall conference because the parliamentary right needs at all costs to prevent any real fight between the left and right breaking out which is not confined to their charmed circle.

## RABBLE

Even worse for the right, at an emergency labour conference the policies put forward in opposition to the Government wouldn't be just those pathetically advanced by Benn. Policies of nationalisation under workers control, automatic cost of living increases to compensate for inflation, the implementation of the Labour conference deci-

sion in the health service could be fought for as a real alternative. How much the right needs to prevent the real alternatives being aired!

And finally what a hopeless rabble are the parliamentary left. They are playing a game within the Parliamentary Labour Party in which the enemy has loaded dice. Yet none of them have fought to have the leadership decided by a Labour conference rather than the parliamentary clique. They submit to rules which ensure they can't win. They can't even defend themselves, let alone the working class.

## LEFTS

And as for the lefts' policies -- what a farce! Not one of the Tribunites, who correctly voted against the £6 limit or refused to vote for the cuts, had the courage to come forward openly and say: 'I am opposed to this Government's policies. Vote for me for opposition to Wilson's Tory line.'

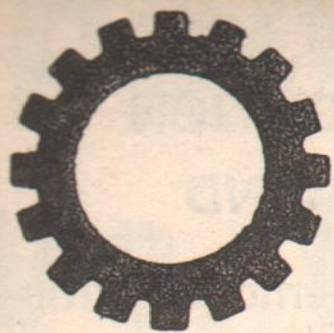
The best they can summon up is to vote for Benn, whose idea of criticising the Government is to stand like a naughty boy in the corner making faces at the teacher but not daring to do anything.

While this farce is taking place, the real fight against the Government's policies is going on elsewhere. Those who led the rail strikes against the cuts and the general strike against the cuts in Dundee are leading that fight. Those who vote against wage controls in the summer union conferences will be leading that fight.

The need is to organise these fighting forces into a class struggle opposition in the labour movement -- and only if the lefts begin to do this could they play a really major role in the fight against the Government's plans. That real fight will go on against whoever succeeds Wilson.

# LABOUR CONFERENCE MUST DECIDE





# ENGINEERING

## Call for fight against £6 limit

**RED WEEKLY LOOKS AT TWO NEW RANK AND FILE PAPERS**

An important step forward for the Birmingham labour movement in the fight against the £6 wage limit was announced at a public meeting on wage controls organised by the local Engineering Voice group last Friday.

Mick Rice, Chairman of the Lucas BW3 Joint Shop Stewards Committee, told the meeting that the Lucas JSSC had decided to write to all other shop stewards committees in the local engineering industry with a view to convening a meeting of shop stewards' dele-

gates prepared to mount a campaign against the £6 limit and any other incomes policy the Labour Government and TUC may devise.

Rice called for a mass lobby of the next AUEW National Committee in May as an initial focus for the campaign. The May NC will basically decide what sort of wages policy will be pursued by the AUEW in the engineering industry.

Militants should take up this fight in a practical way in all the localities. Where possible the initiative taken by the Lucas BW3 shop stewards should be repeated

in order to convene local action committees to fight incomes policy. Resolutions should be passed now in the AUEW opposing any repetition of last November's retreat when the NC reversed its previous position to support the £6 limit.

This also means that AUEW shop stewards committees and district committees should start mobilising their members now to lobby the May NC meeting. Where necessary, emergency shop stewards quarterlies should be convened.



Bob Wright—no fight against £6 limit

### Youth conference demands end to wage restraint

In November last year, the AUEW National Committee reversed its line on incomes policy and voted to support the £6 limit. Up till now, no significant opposition to this switch has emerged from within the union.

The Broad Left, embarrassed by Scanlon's drift to the right, has remained almost silent on the subject. Not one Broad Left manifesto for the leading positions in the current AUEW elections has openly come out in opposition to the £6 limit.

Now the tide has begun to turn. Last week's youth conference rejected an hysterical outburst from EC member Gavin Laird, attacking people who failed to support 'our socialist government and its socialist policies', and voted by a substantial majority to oppose the £6 limit and demand a recall TUC.

This should be the signal for AUEW members to launch a campaign aimed at the next meeting of the union's National Committee in May to force the union leadership to break with the policies of wage restraint and reverse their decision to support the £6 limit.

# PROBLEMS OF ORGANISING RANK AND FILE

The search among broad sections of the working class for an adequate response to the Labour Government's attacks has been underlined in the engineering industry with the recent appearance of two new rank-and-file papers.

Supporters of the International Socialists were already producing a paper called *Engineers Charter*. This has now been joined by *Broadsheet*, the official organ of the Communist Party dominated Broad Left in the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers; and a new *Engineering Voice* produced in the Birmingham area. Although the militants producing the latter are also associated with the Broad Left, there are certain differences in its political line.

What characterises both papers, however, is their lack of practical perspectives for engineering workers and any notion of mounting a real campaign for them inside the main unions in engineering. *Broadsheet* is almost entirely confined to the AUEW elections, centring its propaganda around the need to get 'lefts' like Bob Wright elected to official positions in the union.

### SUPPORT

Although it makes clear its support for full amalgamation in the AUEW (of the engineering, foundry, construction, and technical and supervisory sections), and its opposition to the £6 limit and unemployment, no practical measures are spelt out on how to fight for these aims. *Broadsheet* fails to mention the Assembly on Unemployment or the Right to Work March; nor does it take up the need to fight in the AUEW for the National Committee to reverse its acceptance of the £6 limit and submit a national across-the-board pay claim in the next round of negotiations.

All *Broadsheet* offers in terms of general solutions is a fight for import controls, a programme of public works, and the implementation of the Industry Act to boost investment. Nothing is said about how to resist redundancies where they take place — on the shop floor; and there is no mention at all of nationalisation under workers control of those companies failing to guarantee the right to work. As for import controls, at the

best this is a diversion from the fight against the real culprits — the multinationals which dominate engineering — and at worst an attempt to foist the unemployment caused by British employers onto the workers of other countries.

On amalgamation, the Broad Left's proposals are certainly preferable to the outright sabotage of the right wing. Unfortunately the methods they propose simply play into the hands of the right.

Thus *Broadsheet* continues to argue that officials in the technical and supervisory section, TASS (who are at present appointed) should not have to submit to re-election except as vacancies occur; instead of calling for the re-election of all officials by the whole membership. Secondly, they intend to leave the method of election undecided until a new Rules Revision Committee meets, rather than calling for factory

members who have joined the Workers League. However its supporters group also includes many independent militants disillusioned with the Broad Left, as well as members of other revolutionary groups like the International Marxist Group and International Communist League.

*Engineering Voice* mainly differs from *Broadsheet* in its open hostility to the £6 limit, which included the organisation of a public meeting in Birmingham last week on 'End Wage Controls'. But with this single exception, it makes no clear break with the political line and strategy of the Broad Left.

### URGE

In the present round of elections, *Engineering Voice* is uncritically supporting all the candidates being pushed in *Broadsheet*, including Bob Wright for Assistant General Secretary against the IS candidate, Len Blood. Nor does it differentiate itself in any way on the amalgamation proposals.

In articles on redundancies at NVT and Lucas, *Voice* does urge the need for a workers plan for industry — but without taking up the demand for nationalisation under workers control. This absence clearly leaves the road open to the right-wing project of collaboration with the bosses in a 'joint' plan, as has happened at NVT in Wolverhampton.

Like *Broadsheet*, *Engineering Voice* makes no mention of the Assembly on Unemployment or the Right to Work March.

### MACHINE

The danger here is clear. Although *Engineering Voice* represents a genuine attempt to break out of the blind bureaucratic manoeuvring of the Broad Left, it no way fights for a real political alternative. Many rank-and-file militants will therefore see little point in supporting a group and paper which doesn't appear to have any major difference with the Broad Left.

The likely outcome will be that in attempting to gain acceptance among Broad Left forces by compromising on political demands,

the whole reason for an organisation and paper independent of the Broad Left machine will disappear — and be seen to disappear in the eyes of the engineering union membership.

### LOBBY

Militants should nevertheless work with these papers and groups on the grounds that they do represent and organise layers of the union membership opposed to the class-collaborationist politics of the right-wing leadership. But the fight must go forward for a clear break with the policies of the Labour Government and the launching of action inside the AUEW to defeat them.

This must include building for a national lobby of the next AUEW National Committee to demand the rejection of incomes policy and acceptance of amalgamation to create one engineering union; and the organisation of local committees to build for such a lobby on the basis of opposition to all forms of wage restraint.

To carry such a fight through will also require demands which are nowhere to be found in the pages of *Broadsheet* or *Engineering Voice*:

\* Reject the £6 limit — for a national £15 across-the-board claim to be defended by automatic rises to match the cost of living.

\* No redundancies — work-sharing with no loss of pay — open the books.

\* Industrial action to defend jobs — nationalisation under workers control of all companies creating redundancies.

\* Amalgamation now, with all officials to be democratically elected by the membership at factory meetings with the right of immediate recall.

\* Recall the National Committee now to organise a fight against the Government's pro-capitalist policies.

JOHN GRAHAM (Birmingham AUEW).

**BROADSHEET**

**CONSOLIDATE AMALGAMATION**

The seven proposals

1. ONE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
2. ONE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
3. ONE RULES REVISION COMMITTEE
4. ONE FINAL APPEAL COURT
5. ONE FINANCIAL STRUCTURE
6. ONE COMMONS INSTEAD OF A SELECTION OF OFFICIALS
7. A QUARTERLY OF THE MEMBERS OF THE UNION

ballots in all official elections with the membership having the right of instant recall.

This manoeuvring attitude simply gives the right wing ammunition with which it can hypocritically attack the left as 'undemocratic'.

The new *Engineering Voice* being produced in Birmingham is at present edited by former IS

**ENGINEERING VOICE**

**YOUR ELECTION CANDIDATES** Pages 4&5

**END WAGE CONTROLS**

**NO TO CUTS IN LIVING STANDARDS**

Birmingham Engineering Voice PUBLIC MEETING

Speakers: SHINE ROBERTS, DEREK ROBINSON, MICK RICE

AUEW Hall, Holloway Circus

FRIDAY 19th March, 7.30pm

**ENGINEERING VOICE**

## Carworkers meet

The organisation of resistance on a national scale to the next wave of redundancies and speed-up in the car industry came a step closer last Saturday. A meeting of the committee set up in January at the Institute for Workers Control conference on the industry agreed to publish a draft workers report as the basis for a campaign that can begin to go beyond the traditional plant-by-plant response to the attacks planned by the bosses and the Government.

A public meeting around the report is already planned for Birmingham, where the speakers will include Tom Litterick MP and AUEW (TASS) shop steward Jim Shut — the author of the report, who was also involved in the preparation last year of 'Chrysler's Crisis — the Workers' Answer'. Copies of the report and information on the campaign can be obtained from: Jim Shut, 85 Sir Henry Parkes Road, Canley, Coventry.



# 'LABOUR CONFERENCE MUST DECIDE' says Ernie Roberts

Ernie Roberts is Assistant General Secretary of the Engineers' Union. Last Saturday he spoke at the Albert Hall rally ending the Right to Work March to London. This Saturday he will be the AUEW Executive's delegate at the National Assembly on Unemployment. *Red Weekly* asked him for his views on the Labour leadership fight.

**Why do you think Wilson resigned?**

Well, Harold Wilson says that he took this decision several months ago and that he's carried it out now because he feels that he has done his stint. But I believe that the problems of society in Britain facing him had become too difficult; he has not been able to lead the country with these problems mastered, despite what he may claim.

He has had to go because he is unable to produce the solutions which are necessary to solve the problems of ordinary people in Britain.

**The new leader is being elected by the Parliamentary Labour Party. The left has for some time demanded that the leader should be elected by the Labour Party Conference — do you think that it is appropriate to raise that demand now?**

I am one of those who founded the movement called the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Party, and we have insisted that the leader of the party should be elected by the annual party conference. So should the deputy leader, just as the treasurer is now, and we will continue to campaign for this.

**Do you think that the Labour Party Conference should be recalled now?**

Yes, I am in favour of the whole of the labour movement being called together in conference for the purpose of considering the leadership question, but not only the leadership. What is more important are the policies which must immediately be put into operation to deal with the very serious matters which face the working class — not least the massive unemployment figures, and also the effects the crisis is having on workers' living standards as prices race ahead of wages.

It would be an important matter for the Labour Party Conference to be recalled for the purpose of considering its policies, the election Manifesto which was carried at a previous conference, and the election of a new leader for the labour movement.

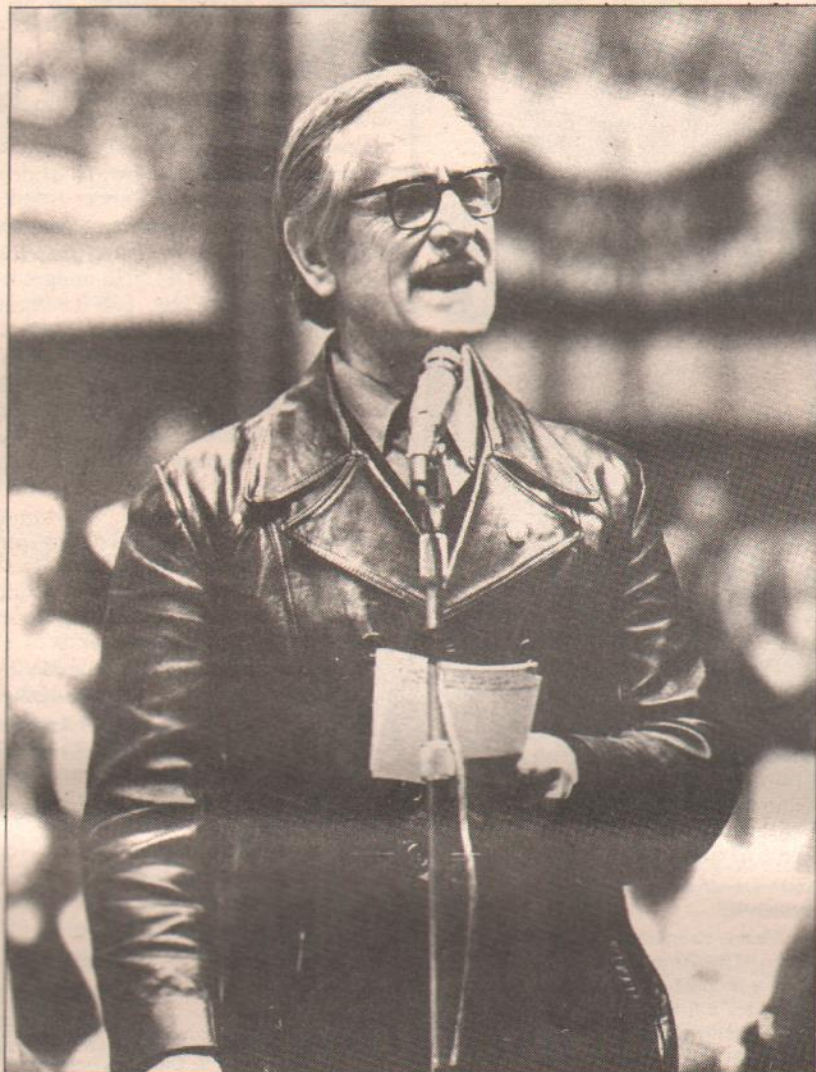
**Tony Benn has announced that he is standing. What do you think of his candidature?**

I believe that of the candidates, Benn has shown himself to be more in touch with the problems that face the working class; and the proposals which he has put forward to solve those immediate problems show this. His insistence on operating the policies of the annual Labour Party Conference is of considerable importance, as he shows himself to be a democrat.

He has also insisted on open government — there should be no secrets when dealing with the problems facing the working class, and no secrets when either the Parliamentary Labour Party or the NEC makes decisions. After all, they are meeting as the representatives of Labour Party members, and their decisions should be made known.

**Benn's manifesto makes no mention of ending wage controls. Shouldn't he at least have stood on a platform of opposition to the £6 limit and for measures which can**

guarantee a return to full employment?



I think any politician in the labour movement should be prepared to show where he stands in the continual conflict which exists between wages on the one hand and profits on the other. The conflict between wages and profits goes on day in and day out, and what is lost to wages goes to

those who live on profits. The workers who live on wages are at a clear disadvantage when their wages are restricted to a particular figure. In a system of society where capital is free to move and invest and do as it pleases, workers should also be free to sell their labour power at the best price they can get through free collective bargaining.

# 'Leave it to PLP' says Scanlon

Hugh Scanlon, President of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers, told the union's youth conference last week that the Executive Committee had decided not to make any representation to its sponsored MPs concerning whom they should vote for in the Labour leadership contest.

Scanlon attacked the notion that the broad workers movement should have any say in the election, on the basis that this would constitute 'interference' with the rights of the Parliamentary Labour Party. He justified this position by drawing a completely false parallel — since the AUEW opposed outside (bourgeois) interference in its own elections, the union should equally refrain from trying to affect the outcome of elections in the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Birmingham delegate John Graham, an IMG member, sharply attacked this view at the conference and said that it threw serious doubt on the sincerity of the AUEW leadership when they made noises about opposing unemployment. Passing resolutions calling on the Government to change its policies only made sense if it was linked to a clear fight for

a new leadership to implement such policies.

It was inconceivable, said Graham, that the present leadership of the Labour Party would be prepared to implement the measures necessary to bring about a return to full employment. In fact, the policies of the right wing are actually causing unemployment.

Graham demanded that the AUEW should immediately approach its sponsored MPs with a view to trying to commit candidates to support policies that would guarantee the right to work.

Scanlon's position should come as no surprise after his Glasgow speech expressing support for the Government's plans to cut social expenditure — a theme to which he returned at the AUEW youth conference. Scanlon has clearly moved to the right; the AUEW Executive's position of abstention on the Labour leadership elections is actually an expression of full support for the policies followed by Wilson. The task now is to organise opposition to these bureaucrats, not to play footsie with them.

# IN FOCUS

## The Labour leadership

There is real controversy over what attitude to take to Foot and Benn in the Labour leadership elections. It is therefore important for militants to take a clear position.

None of the candidates in this election are prepared to take up the crucial issues facing the working class and to put forward the policies — nationalisation under workers control, automatic cost of living increases to compensate for inflation, a programme of public works, implementation of the demands of the Working Women's Charter — which can begin to provide an adequate solution to the crisis. Nor are any of them prepared to fight for even the minimal democratic right of the labour movement as a whole and not the parliamentary clique to decide the issue of the leadership through a special Labour Party conference.

Only a candidate pledged to these policies could show a real way forward. On the basis of their programmes alone, none of the present candidates qualify for a vote. Benn's platform, for instance, contains three main planks: more import controls, which would only boost prices here and export unemployment onto the backs of workers abroad; more Government control of investment through the National Enterprise Board, where the lessons of British Leyland in terms of redundancies and speed-up are already clear; and more 'industrial democracy', which (again as at Leyland) means workers participating with management in decisions to cut their own jobs and living standards.

But one's position on an election can't be decided just by reference to adequate policies. It is necessary also to look at what social forces stand behind the candidates. In a general election a vote has to be cast for Labour despite the rottenness of its policies; when the only choice in the AUEW is between the Broad Left and the right, a vote has to be cast for the Broad Left though its policies don't come out clearly even against wage controls.

### The Central Divide

The immediate central divide in the labour movement today is for or against the central line of this Government. Around this divide the working class movement is polarising. In a fight between those who are for the policies of this Government and those who, however inadequately, are opposed to these policies, it is impossible to be neutral.

It is on this line of divide that the position of the two 'left' candidates, Foot and Benn, can be judged. Who stands behind Foot is clear. Certainly some workers who still remember his left reputation will support a vote for Foot. But Foot stands four square for the Government's policies. With him are the trade union bureaucrats who are the chief architects and pillars of this Government's policies. Indeed, Foot is the central linkman with the union bureaucrats in support of the Government's policies. A vote for Foot must be utterly rejected.

To take a position on Benn's candidature is more difficult. If one of the 'lefts' who had voted against the £6 limit and refused to vote for the cuts was standing, the situation would be clear. Despite the inadequacy of their alternatives, they would clearly rally those opposed to the Government's policies. We would not hesitate to call for support for such a candidate.

### Vote Benn - Just

Benn, on the other hand, is pursuing the policy he has been following for the last nine months — to refuse to break with the Government, but to attempt to differentiate himself from it on some points while remaining a member of the Cabinet. He is a cowardly bureaucrat whose sold ambition is to become leader of the Labour Party — something he is very likely to achieve in the late 1970s. But by opening up a crack with the Government's policies, and using it in his public campaign, Benn will appear to many workers as the one candidate in some way opposed to the Government's policies.

Even though he will probably later become the direct ally of Jones, Basnett, Scanlon and the others, at the moment he is not in alliance with them, and will undoubtedly attract around his candidature those opposed to the Government's policies. We cannot be neutral in a fight involving these forces. Under these circumstances it is correct, but only just correct, to support a vote for Benn.

The following resolution on the Labour leadership election was passed by a National Committee meeting of the International Marxist Group last weekend.

The main considerations determining our intervention should be:

(i) Our whole intervention in the election debate within the working class should be centred on the policies necessary for the working class, and the need to build a class struggle tendency in the mass organisations fighting for class struggle solutions, in the absence of any candidate in the election championing such a course. In line with this, we should put out no 'calls' on Labour MPs to vote for this or that candidate, but rather should explain our overall attitude to the different candidates in the context of our central political axis.

(ii) Our thrust against the lefts should therefore not lie in the way they vote but in the following:

(a) No-one in the Parliamentary Labour Party has come forward in this election and stood on a programme which will mobilise the class in defence of its interests.

(b) We demand that the lefts fight for democratic leadership elections by the Labour Party Conference.

(c) In explaining our policies we stress the central task in our action programme: the necessity for mass mobilisation of the class for objectives along the road to workers control and nationalisation. This must be combined with calling for the lefts to organise a class struggle tendency in the mass organisations against the policies of the Labour Government.

(d) While we explain that the result of the leadership election is secondary, we must be clear on our line and the method we use to reach that line. To the extent that the issue has any impact on militants (that is, mainly within the Labour Party) the main question involved is that of opposition or support for the Government's policies. Benn's candidature and his 'public' campaign will be seen as being in opposition to the policies and record of this Government. Our main emphasis will be to criticise Benn's programme and his failure to organise forces in opposition to the Government's policies. But given that we do not have the influence or support to ensure that an MP stands on an adequate programme to meet the crisis, where the issue is raised in the CLPs we should support a vote for Benn.

After Benn is defeated, we favour an abstention on the grounds that the election of any of the remaining candidates will signify only a continuation of the same policies.



health housing education social services public transport water supply consumer hygiene libraries

# APRIL 25 NO CUTS DEMO APPEAL BY NATIONAL CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

We are asking for your support for a demonstration on 25 April 1976 commencing at Hyde Park Corner, being organised by the Committee with the support of NALGO and the Socialist Medical Association (SMA) against the cuts that are being made in expenditure on the National Health Service, and against the growth of private health care.

The National Health Service is in a state of crisis. The Tories in December 1973 announced a series of reductions in expenditure, and at 1973 prices, expenditure for 1974/75 was cut by £111 millions, a decline of almost 30 per cent. The NHS budget is to be reduced by the Labour Government in 1976/77 by £38.8 millions, in 1977/78 by £93.2 millions and in 1978/79 by £152 millions. There is a rundown in the hospital building programme, yet over three-quarters of our hospitals were built before 1918, and areas like London are planning to close many hospitals over the next few years and there are further manpower cuts that are either already taking place or are being planned.

There is a shortage of nurses and technicians — an independent enquiry on nurses said: 'It is common ground that the overall manpower shortage is approaching 20 per cent' — yet many Area Health Authorities plan to reduce their manpower, including nurses and technicians. Waiting lists have risen to 18 months for tonsillectomy and 12 months for gynaecology, whilst similar operations can be obtained privately within weeks. Private health schemes and hospitals are flourishing as a direct result of the inadequacies of the state service.

The purpose of the National Health Service was to provide free health care for all at the time of need. If the labour movement allows these cuts to continue, the reality will be a comprehensive private health service for those who can pay and a second-rate health service for those who cannot. The last Labour Party conference called for an end to all private practice — it is necessary for the labour movement to mount a united campaign for the implementation of that policy. The defence of the health service cannot be left to hospital workers alone.

It is for his reason that we seek your support and help for this demonstration. An ad hoc committee is co-ordinating activities for the demonstration and intentions to support, offers of help, or requests for further information should be addressed to: Dr Paul Stern, 55 Bridge Lane, London N.W.11.

Sponsors of the demonstration now include: NALGO, the National Union of Students, Sheffield AUEW District Committee, Sheffield District Labour Party, Southampton District Hospitals NUPE, Manchester NUPE, Manchester Trades Council.

New affiliates to the NCC itself include the London Co-op Political Committee, Harrow Trades Council, Hounslow Trades Council, and Hemel Hempstead Labour Party.



Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

Main job, says new president, is to resist the cutbacks announced in the Government's White Paper

## WARWICK STUDENTS ELECT REVOLUTIONARY PRESIDENT

The bitter struggles that were a feature on nearly every student campus over the last four years have opened up a deep crisis of leadership in the colleges. The failure of the Communist Party-backed Broad Left to push for action around policies that could pave the way for a fight against the massive education cuts now being made has opened the door for the right wing to gain many leadership posts in the colleges.

Warwick University also had its share of militant struggles. But in this college, students responded to the fighting politics put forward by the far left by electing the candidate of the large Socialist Society as President of the Students Union. Red Weekly asked the new President-elect, MARK WHYTE, about the background to his victory.

The consistent activity of the Socialist Society over the last two terms was the principal reason for my election. We have attempted to convince students that it is the present policies of the Labour Government which are the crucial issue facing them at the moment. Students need a clear perspective, both to understand the nature of these policies and the ways in which they can be fought. We have fought for this through motions to Union General Meetings, consistent propaganda, rallies, meetings and other activities.

Students are hit by Labour's policies both in the form of education cuts when they are at college and by unemployment when they leave. They are beginning to realise that it is not possible to defend education by themselves in a period of generalised capitalist crisis. The interests of students can only be protected if they identify themselves with the working class and unite with all sections of society prepared to fight the Labour Government.

At the same time, in opposition to the Broad Left, we have argued the need for a revolutionary perspective. It is not

just a question of trying to get the present right-wing leadership of the Labour Party removed or of trying to persuade the official leadership of the trade unions to change their line. Students should be supporting rank and file initiatives against cuts and unemployment even when this means opposing the official line of the trade unions.

We should be trying to pose demands like a sliding scale of public expenditure and for the opening of the books, which will actively carry the working class forward by drawing out their fundamental interests.

The main job for the future is to resist the cut-backs announced in the Government White Paper on public expenditure. I hope we will see an extension and intensification of the campaigns begun this year, and that student unions throughout the country will be active in developing opposition to the Labour Government.

The best way to do this is by building broad-based united front movements. This means playing an active part in the activities of trades councils, joint shop



stewards committees, and local cuts committees wherever they are established.

What is clear within the National Union of Students nationally is that faced with the bankruptcy of the Broad Left, only the revolutionary left can provide solutions to the economic crisis which can halt the growth of the right. I shall argue for support for the IMG slate at NUS Conference, although I do not fully accept the emphasis the IMG puts on replacing the present Labour leadership.

## SWANSEA FIGHTS N.H.S. CUTS!

Bob Stern, the AUEW convenor at Ford's in Swansea, congratulated the organisers of a meeting on NHS cuts in the town last week for 'digging deep and building the most representative meeting of the Swansea area labour movement since the days of the fight against the Industrial Relations Act'. Over 70 representatives of virtually every union in the area turned out to launch a campaign against cuts in the NHS.

### NURSES

The meeting was set up as a result of an initiative by shop stewards from the Morriston Hospital branch of the National Union of Public Employees, which has been very active in the struggle against pay beds over the last two years. Realising the impact of NHS cuts on the whole working class, and the difficulties facing healthworkers taking strike action, it was proposed to call a meeting of those workers organisations which had sup-

ported previous strikes at the Morriston (readers may remember the strike by local miners in support of the last nurses' wage claim).

An initial meeting backed by car-workers, miners, local government workers and students decided to launch a call for a full labour movement meeting. This was endorsed by Swansea Trades Council and local NUPE officials.

And just to show how seriously the Morriston healthworkers took their fight, they immediately made the worker who proposed this move a shop steward and Trades Council delegate!

### STEWARDS

At the meeting Janet Maguire of the National Co-ordinating Committee (NCC) outlined the devastating attack now taking place on the NHS and the need to draw together the initiatives being taken around the country. Another speaker

was local NUPE official Stewart Hastings, who detailed the cuts proposed in a recently published West Glamorgan Area Health Authority consultative plan.

A resolution proposed by the Morriston stewards was passed unanimously, calling for the reconvening of the TUC and Labour Party conferences to discuss policies opposing cutbacks in the welfare state, supporting the 25 April demonstration in London called by the NCC, and setting up a local committee to lead and co-ordinate a vigorous campaign throughout West Glamorgan.

The enthusiasm with which the meeting took up the proposals to fight the cuts, and the offers which came forward to distribute leaflets and bulletins in workplaces, indicate that Swansea workers are building exactly the sort of united front which can lead a real fight against the cuts both locally and nationally.

Swansea IMG.

## -WHAT'S ON-

- CAMPAIGN for Repeal of Immigration Act**—ad hoc committee to organise 11 April demo meets every Friday, 7.30pm, 152 Camden High Street.
- WORKING WOMEN'S CHARTER** Campaign national conference, 10/11 April in Coventry. Open to all bodies supporting the campaign. Discussion of perspectives, amendments to Charter, structures. Credentials from: c/o Helen Gurdon, Flat 4, 39 Newbold Terrace East, Leamington Spa, Warwick.
- AFTER the Right to Work March**—Central London meeting to plan and organise. All welcome. Mon 29 March, 7pm, the Plough, Museum St, W.1.
- BRENT NAC/WGCC** public meeting in preparation for 3 April abortion demonstration—Tues 30 March, 7.30 at Brent Trades Hall, 375 Willesden High Road, NW10 (Dollis Hill tube). Film, theatre group, and discussion. Further details from: Brent Women's Centre, 138 Minet Avenue, NW10 (tel. 965 3324).
- TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT:** Support the Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland! Public meeting with film, speakers and discussion. Fri 2 April, 7.30pm, Hammersmith Town Hall.
- UNEMPLOYMENT**—Hull Trades Council public meeting, Thurs 1 April, 7.30pm, Bevin House.
- HULL TRADES COUNCIL** Working Women's Charter group one-day conference—Sun 4 April, 11am—5.30pm Bevin House. Speakers: Marie Patterson (TGWU National Organiser), Tess Gill (NCCCL). Creche available.
- BIRMINGHAM** Working Women's Charter Campaign public meeting on the Sex Discrimination Act. Tues 6 April, 7.30pm, Digbeth Civic Hall. Speakers from NCCCL and national WGCC.
- RED BOOKS** comprehensive list of titles now available—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Trotsky, Mandel, Lukacs, Novack, Cannon, Deutscher, etc. Send s.a.e. for copy to: Red Books, 97 Caledonian Road, London N.1.

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- DEFEND THE RIGHT TO Work** badges—17p including postage from: Jo-Ann, 97 Caledonian Road, London N1. Bulk rates on enquiry (01-278 9526).
- GLASGOW** Socialist Forums—every Thursday in the Iona Community Centre, 7.30pm.
- 'DEFEND YOUR PUBLIC SERVICES'**—all-day public meeting organised by South-West Region TUC, Sat 27 March, 11am—4pm in the Lecture Theatre, Level 9, Bristol Royal Infirmary. Speakers include Ron Thomas MP. An opportunity to begin to centralise the fight back against the cuts in the Bristol area.
- 'ORGANISING for Health'**—Socialist Medical Association one-day conference, Sat 27 March, 10.30am—5pm at NUR headquarters, Euston Rd, NW1 (almost opposite Euston Station).
- STUDENT CONFERENCE** on Ireland, sponsored by North London Poly and Middlesex Poly student unions and TOM. Any college society or union can send delegates on the basis of self-determination for the Irish people. Sessions include debate with Broad Left. Sat 27 March, 10.30am, North London Poly, Holloway Road, N7. Social in evening. Details from Paddy Prenderville, 01-328 1545.
- ISLINGTON NAC BENEFIT** with West London Theatre Workshop's new play on women plus music and a film. Fri 26 March, 7.30pm, Old Red Lion pub, St Johns St, EC1 (Angel tube).

# APRIL 25...APRIL 25..



# The National Assembly on Unemployment

# RED WEEKLY

PULL-OUT \*\*\* SPECIAL PULL-OUT \*\*\*

Inside the labour movement an increasing polarisation is opening up between left and right. Faced with the divide of support or opposition to the policies of this Government everyone is forced to show where they stand. The 'lefts' of yesterday, Jones and Scanlon, come out openly for wage controls and the cuts. In a whole series of other struggles — on the railways, in steel, in the general strike against cuts in Dundee — new forces are coming forward to fight the Government. The Tribune group splits down the middle around those who are and those who are not prepared to support the cuts. The whole labour movement is being put to the test.

The right-wing in the labour movement is seizing on the opportunity provided by the confusions in the left wing. Massive restrictions on trade union democracy will follow the extension of secret postal balloting. The result will be a passive membership unable to participate in political debate. Already many trades councils have accepted the new 'Rule 14' with the TUC's gun at their heads. This rule binds trades councils to supporting only those activities which are in agreement with TUC policies.

## UNITY IN ACTION

The TUC itself has recommended acceptance of that section of the proposed amendments to the Criminal Trespass law which would make unofficial occupations liable to legal action. The right is beefing up its apparatus to deal with the rank and file.

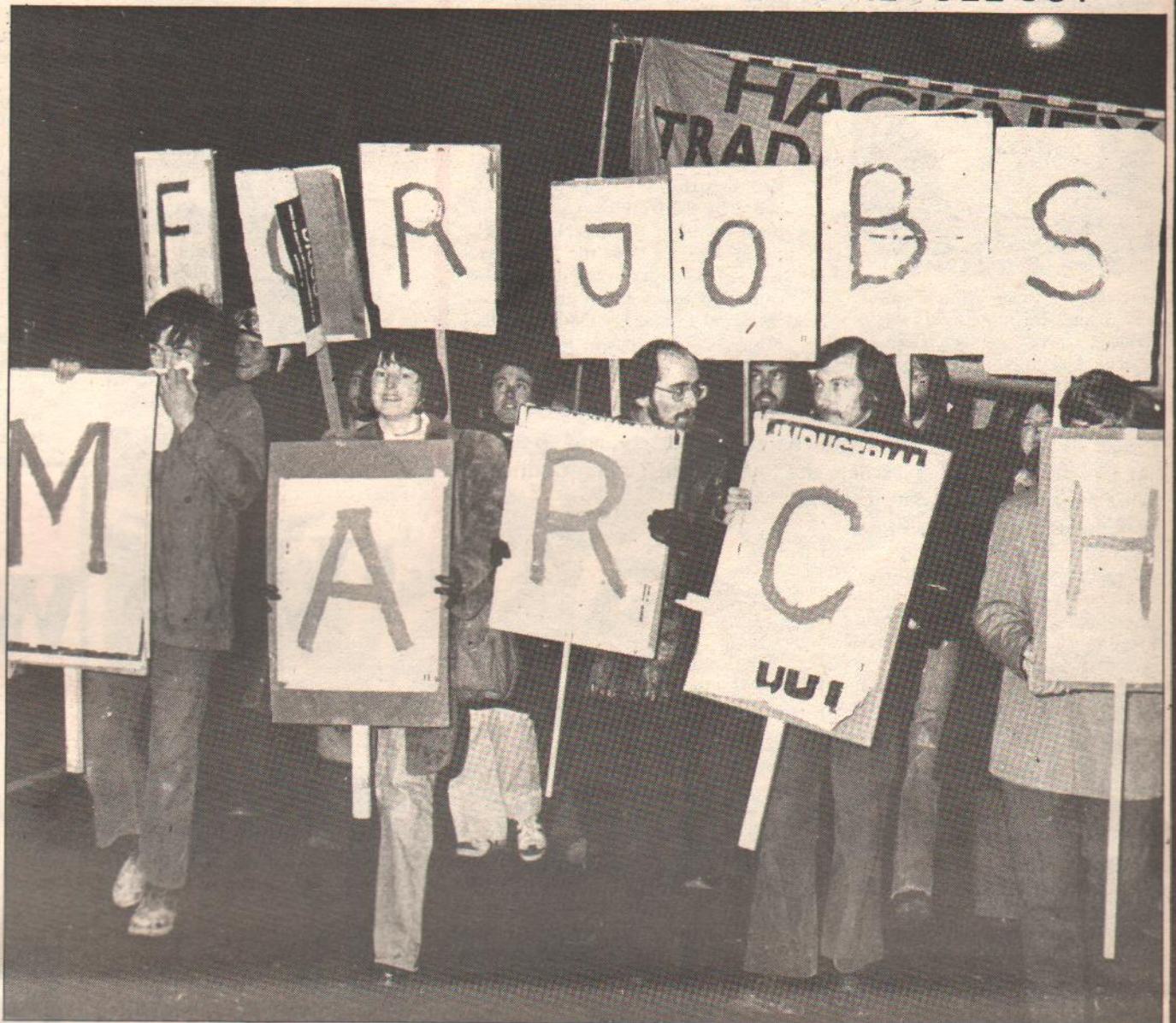
The National Assembly on Unemployment is in a position to stop the rot. Very many of those who oppose the Government's policies are attending this conference. What must be its tasks?

First there is the need to establish unity in action of all those prepared to fight the Government's policies. This unity must centre on actions which attack the employers and the Government's policies. The 26 November demonstration on the right to work was a big step forward. The strikes on British Rail and all the other fights against the cuts are another. But all too often people are left to fight alone.

## DEMONSTRATION

Votes and resolutions are fine, but people should be judged by actions not words. All those at the Assembly, particularly the left leaders in the trade unions and Labour Party, should be pledged to organise full support for all workers going into struggle. If those MPs who refused to vote for the cuts openly campaigned in favour of strikes against unemployment and the cuts, that would really be an effective move forwards to actions — and the Assembly must demand that they do this. The Assembly itself should support the NALGO and NCC demonstration against cuts in the NHS on 25 April and name a day for national industrial action against unemployment and the cuts.

Secondly, a real programme capable of meeting the crisis must be hammered out. Parts of this are already being accepted in the labour movement. Big minorities in every union, majorities in some, are opposed to wage controls. Massive opposition exists to the cuts. But it is necessary to go further. These are the beginning and not the end. The only policies which can really begin to pro-



Broad-based march for jobs in Hackney last Friday evening, organised by the local Trades Council

vide a solution are those of nationalisation under workers control of industry, automatic cost of living increases to compensate for inflation, implementation of the Labour Party conference decision on the health service, a campaign for the demands of the Working Women's Charter.

Thirdly, the forces prepared to fight against the Government must be organised into a real class struggle opposition in the labour movement. The left is only organised in a small number of unions — and even then, as with the Broad Left in the AUEW, not openly and democratically. What is needed is caucuses in every major union, trades council and Labour Party around the policies necessary to fight the Government's measures.

It is clear who are the people who can begin to be organised into such an opposition. Out of those struggling against the cuts, those who support the demand for the recall of the Labour Party Conference and those at the Assembly itself a fighting organised left wing could be formed.

A call from the leaders at the Assembly could rally and organise thousands. The campaigns, caucuses and action committees which exist on many issues could begin to be forged into a class struggle opposition to overturn the supporters of the Government's policies.

For these steps to be taken, however, a drastic change in the character of the National Assembly is necessary. Anyone who attended conferences of the old Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions knows the completely undemocratic practices pursued by their Communist Party organisers. They may claim now to stand for democracy in Eastern Europe, but no one can believe that when they don't even stand for democracy in the conferences they organise. No circulation of resolutions in advance, no procedure for alternative resolutions. These are all the old tricks of the Communist Party. The first fight is for democracy in the conference. This is a key to beginning every other fight from the National Assembly on Unemployment.

Photo: LAURENCE SPARHAM (IFL)

# BUILD A CLASS STRUGGLE OPPOSITION



**DAVE BURN**, a delegate from the 1,500-strong Islington branch of NALGO, feels it is particularly important for the Assembly to take up the fight against cuts in the social services.

Things are very bad in my area. We have got nine per cent unemployment, cutbacks in all social



services, the closure of a hospital, and the axe hovering over two others.

The Assembly has got to take

up the cuts in the social services. The £3,000 million so far announced up to 1979 constitute a major attack on the living standards of the working class — a cut in the social wage, you might say.

The Health Service in particular is in a terrible state. It is already cut to the bone, and these proposals can only mean more hospital closures, unemployed nurses, doctors and ancillary workers, and the mushrooming of private practice. One law for the rich, one for the poor.

My union is supporting the campaign against the cuts in the NHS, and the national demonstration called by the National Co-ordinating Committee Against NHS Cuts for 25 April. I hope the Assembly will vote support to the demo because this issue cannot just be the concern of those people working in the health service or the public sector. It is everybody's fight.

**RON THOMPSON** is a member of the General Management Committee of Sheffield Park Constituency Labour Party, and also an AUEW shop steward and a delegate to Sheffield Trades Council. What are his views on Saturday's big event?

This Assembly will be the most representative gathering of the rank and file of the labour movement for years. With over a million unemployed and not a finger being lifted by the TUC leadership, the Assembly is crucial.

But in my view, it isn't enough to gather about 2,000 people together and declare we are opposed to unemployment. The crucial question is how the rank and file will be organised after 27 March, and what policies the Assembly will adopt for a struggle against the Government's attacks.

The fact that it takes place this week and I still haven't seen any indications of what will be proposed threatens to make the Assembly a waste of time. How can the delegates discuss seriously?

I have got a clear idea of what's needed. Whether I or any other rank-and-file will get a chance to express our ideas at the Assembly is another matter.

## FOCUS

The first thing that is needed is action. The best way the Assembly could come to grips with this burning need is to name a day for national industrial action against the cuts and unemployment. This would act as a real focus for developing a campaign.

But you also need alternative policies to mobilise trade unionists and the rest of the working class. These policies should take as their starting point the intention that the capitalists should pay 100 per cent for the crisis of their system. If there is a shortage of work, then the books of the firm should be opened to determine just how much

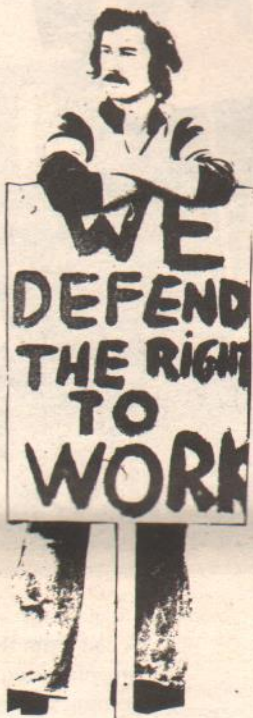
work is available to be shared out without any loss of pay.

A major step towards this principle could be taken by launching a national struggle for a 35 hour week, which so many unions profess to support but do nothing about. Those industries who can't give this basic right to work should be nationalised.

The Assembly must also take a stand on wages. The acceptance of the £6 limit was based on an 'understanding' that it was necessary to reduce unemployment. For those who have eyes to see, it's plain that this was a lie from the start. Any form of wage restraint should be absolute



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)



# 'We want fighting policies AND a

tely opposed, and the demand for automatic increases in pay to compensate for increases in prices should be adopted as a central plank of the Assembly's policies.

Cuts in spending at this time can only have a disastrous consequence on unemployment. It's a load of rubbish to say that these cuts will help industry. They have been made to pay off the Government's debt charges. To meet unemployment, what is really needed is the opposite — a programme of useful public works to employ the jobless and meet social need.

## TIRED

The tired old line which we will hear from some of the speakers about 'controlled reflation' and import controls does not come anywhere near a solution. Some of these people use import controls to say that British workers have got some sort of common interest with British bosses. I think they are a diversion besides having the effect of throwing workers abroad out of jobs — like with import controls on Portuguese textiles.

Only by workers controlling production can you guarantee the right to work.

I know that it might embarrass some people to adopt these ideas, because it would mean conflict with the so-called left-wing leaders in the trade unions. Scanlon's recent statement of 'complete and absolute support' for Government policy shows just how bankrupt is the Communist Party's strategy of making any action dependent on an alliance with these 'lefts'.

## WAR

The fact of the matter is that to take the working class forward in the fight against unemployment, this Assembly will have to declare war on all those who support the policies of the present Government — and that includes Jones and Scanlon.

**LINDA SIMON**, a member of the National Society of Metal Mechanics, told us about the problems facing unemployed youth and women.

As Secretary of the Birmingham Trades Council Youth Advisory Committee, I find that working class kids are being hit particularly hard right now. Forty per cent of the unemployed are under 25 and there is already a permanent pool of unemployed school leavers beginning to grow — kids who have never had a job and maybe never will. In January almost 200,000 young workers had been unemployed for more than 13 weeks, compared with 102,000 in July — an increase of 95 per cent in only six months.

Black kids are even worse off: the level of unemployment is twice as high for them.

I was a delegate to the Women's TUC this year, and some interesting facts emerged there about the particular situation of women. Figures for the rise in unemployment between January and September 1975 were 48 per cent for men, but 121 per cent for women.

These figures are bad enough, but they don't even include women who were part-timers and didn't pay the full stamp — the majority of those made redundant over the past period.



A survey published in *Women's Own* last week revealed that seven out of ten women looking for work are left out of official statistics. So the real figure for the rise in women's unemployment could be as high as 200-300 per cent!

Redundancies against women are far too readily accepted. The Sex Discrimination Act and Equal Pay



**ISLAY FULLERTON** is a delegate to the Assembly from the Wandsworth association of the National Union of Teachers. She is particularly concerned with the fight against cuts in the public sector.

Teacher unemployment is the mark of a deeply sick society. There are now about 2,000 unemployed teachers in London alone.

This gives the authorities the chance to chop back on teacher training colleges. In my area, two training colleges have merged leading to a 60 per cent cut in staff and a reduction of the student level from 1,500 to 800. All the part-time and temporary lecturing staff in the colleges have been sacked.

And of course this isn't the end of the story. Because less schools are planned, more building workers get thrown onto the already huge scrapheap.

Nationally, the Government say that there are only just under 4,000 teachers unemployed. But this isn't true. The National Union of Teachers, having conducted its own survey, reckons that with the cuts there could be over 15,000 teachers un-

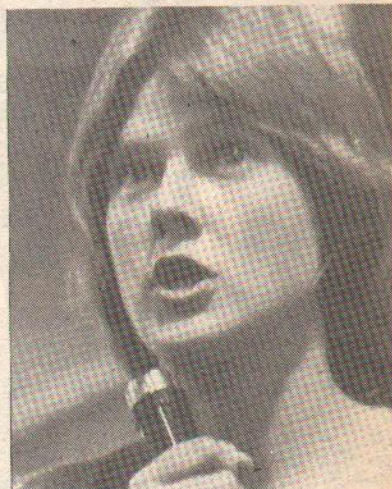


Photo: CHRIS DAVIES (Report)

employed by next September. The reason for the big gap in the figures is that a huge proportion of these are women, who return to the home and don't bother to sign on at the exchange. Eighty-six per cent

# BANNED!

One organisation not supporting the Assembly is the clerical workers' union APEX. This doesn't mean that APEX members are somehow unaffected by the scourge of unemployment, but that their national leadership has lined up with the TUC in immediately crying 'Red' when action against unemployment is organised.

An angry APEX member wrote to Red Weekly after his branch's decision to send a delegate to the Assembly had been rescinded on the orders of the APEX leadership. A circular from the union's Executive Council dug up an EC regulation passed in November 1962 as justification for their ruling that: 'Branches cannot associate or financially support the "Assembly on Unemployment" or any body that sponsors it, nor can any unit within the union be represented at this "Assembly on Unemployment".'

Also enclosed with this diktat was a

list of proscribed organisations — presumably to refresh the memories of regional and local bureaucrats who may have trouble in selling acceptance of wage cuts and redundancies to their members. Those listed include the Communist Party, APEX Action, the British Czechoslovak Friendship League, and the International Socialists.

These proscriptions are used to divide up the labour movement for the benefit of the bureaucrats. A fight for united action must go hand in hand with the ending of all bans and proscriptions in the labour movement.

The real irony of the story is that the day after this ruling was pushed through, 146 redundancies were declared in one of the factories which make up the membership of our reader's branch. Has the APEX leadership any ideas on how 'support for TUC policies' is going to help these workers?



Act mean that many male workers think that women are now 'equal', without understanding that their position in the family has not changed. In fact the slashing of the social services means that women are bearing the brunt of these cuts.

And it is not that women are pin money earners. The *Women's Own* survey showed that three out of five women see their income as essential to the family, while a quarter of these are the sole bread-winners anyway.

We have got to demand not only the right to work, but women's right to work specifically. If this isn't done, people will just accept that women should be first down the road.

The Working Women's Charter has got an important role to play in this, because it draws out the relationship between women's situation at work and in the home, and shows that the fight for the right of women to work has to be a fight both against redundancy and against the cuts.

Women are also usually the first to go in any voluntary redundancies. I work at a car components plant in Birmingham, Wilmot Breedon. We had voluntary redundancies of nearly one third very early on. People

feared that the company would collapse, and left in the hope of getting a job elsewhere.

Those left behind are now suffering for not persuading them to stay. Conditions have deteriorated terribly, and the machinery is being set up — with Government grants to impose big speed-ups.

This Assembly will be useless if it is just another moan session. Very little action has been taken to date. Apart from the open sabotage of the TUC, it's obvious that although everybody opposes unemployment, very few people know exactly what to do about it.

If you go to almost any trade union meeting you find that the question is often treated as a moral one, with militants calling on each other to end overtime and impose a 35-hour week. What they refuse to see is that their members will not do this unless it is part of a national plan to safeguard living standards by opposing the £6 and any other wage limits, restoring the cuts in public spending, and fighting throughout industry for a 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

I really hope we see some *action* from this conference instead of another lot of wind.



One of the star speakers at the Assembly will be Ray Buckton, the leader of the train drivers' union ASLEF. Buckton's most recent contribution in the fight against unemployment has been to persuade drivers on the Eastern Region to return to work after many of them had struck against the cuts in services and alterations in work rotas. Now they are to be left to fight out the implementation of the cuts depot by depot, as a substitute for a national fight against the very fact of them.

It is not surprising that this has happened. The leaders of ASLEF and the other rail unions, despite their so-called joint campaign against the cuts, had already accepted at a national level the cuts which the Eastern Region men were fighting at a local level.

Stronger opposition is now developing, however. On the Southern Region, drivers at Gillingham, Brighton, Guildford and elsewhere have met. Boldly — and bravely, given the abject capitulation of their leaders — they have decided to start strike action against the cuts on 20 April with or without official backing.

### LEADERSHIP

This is the day on which the cuts on the Southern Region are due to be introduced. Drivers stand to lose £15 a week in earnings owing to reductions in week-end shift working.

'If they cut just one train, we will cut the lot', a drivers' spokesman told a *Daily Mirror* reporter last week. Their purpose, he said, is to 'save the railways and help the travelling public in the long term'.

This weekend Assembly delegates must confront Buckton with a single question: will you or will you not support and extend to other regions the Southern Region drivers' action? No amount of evasion and rhetoric about 'fighting for socialism' by Buckton must be allowed to obscure the issue.



Photo: JOHN STURROCK (Report)

# ng tion'



of those who were unemployed in the NUT survey were women.

Despite this situation, the NUT leadership has provided no support for action against these redundancies. They have stood by and allowed the victimisation of Mike Colley, a teacher who went on last October's demonstration against the cuts organised by the South East Region TUC. Teachers all over the country have had to take action off their own bat, refusing to cover for absent colleagues.

That's why my association is supporting the lobby of our next National Executive meeting, to demand action. But we have not got much confidence in the present leadership of the union to carry out a real campaign. I am also active in the London Action Committee which is campaigning for a no-cover policy and compiling its own register of unemployed teachers.

I hope that the Assembly realises the connection between the cuts in education and the general problem of unemployment, I also hope that it decides to take some *action*.

## Another return to the

### thirties

marches then.'  
— FRANK JONES, an unemployed wood machinist from Liverpool.

MICK GOSLING reports:

The brutal assault by police on the Right to Work March in North London last Friday must not go unanswered in the labour movement.

The 80 marchers had walked 300 miles from Manchester, attempting to spread the message of the fight for jobs, when they were set about by police literally on the doorstep of Hendon police station. As Tommy Douras from Liverpool told the press conference: 'Do you think we'd have picked on a busload of coppers outside a police station when we were only a mile from the end of the day's march? Come off it. You know what happened. They picked on us.'

In the National Union of Railwaymen's canteen at Willesden on Friday night, I was told dozens of harrowing stories by the remaining marchers about what had happened to their comrades.

Like Colin Calvert from Manchester. He had his right arm stamped on by police. The pain was terrible. Because Colin's right arm is only a stump — he lost the rest in a machine six years ago.

Like Mike Lynch, a 5ft 2in miner from Dunfermline who was dragged into Hendon police station unconscious. The march first aid person Joe Cronshaw was arrested when he went to attend him.

Like Paul Bryden from Bristol, who has a bad cartilage and walks with a limp. He told me how he hobbled over towards John Deason when the police seized him. He was kicked and batoned to the ground. And despite his pleas,

a policeman broke Paul's walking stick over his knee.

The National Assembly on Unemployment must pass a resolution condemning the police attack, demanding that Home Secretary Roy Jenkins instruct the police to drop all charges, and calling on all delegates, and sponsoring bodies — including the 40 Labour MPs, Scanlon, Buckton and 'lesser' union leaders — to wage a campaign in defence of the 44 arrested, including a trade union inquiry into the whole affair.

Responsibility for this attack doesn't simply rest with the police. It also rests with those misleaders who have failed to wage any fight in the workers movement against Labour's mass unemployment policies. Obviously the police want to intimidate the unemployed from fighting for the right to work — but only the enforced separation of the jobless from the trade union movement due to the policies of its leaders makes that possible.

*Red Weekly* has several times criticised the International Socialists for masquerading behind the banner of the Rank and File Organising Committee, in practice counterposing it to the National Assembly on Unemployment.

This has meant two things: firstly there was no clear call to all those forces committed to *action* against the policies of the Labour Government to organise the march; secondly, the Communist Party (which denounced the march) and the Labour lefts have been let off the hook because their useless policies have not been confronted through linking the march to the fighting programme for jobs that needs to come out of the Assembly.

But the labour movement as a whole and militants at the Assembly must not let the sectarian practices of the IS allow the CP to enforce its own brand of Stalinist sectarianism at the Assembly. They must unconditionally defend the arrested and campaign for the dropping of all charges.

Help defend the 44! All monies to: Right to Work Campaign Defence Fund Treasurer, 46 Prince George Road, London N16.



The Assembly on 27 March will almost certainly be the largest gathering of labour movement delegates to discuss unemployment since the 1930s.

With a lead from the Assembly's organisers — the Communist Party and the Labour left — 27 March could see the launching of the most powerful rank and file movement ever seen in this country. Certainly the industrial 'muscle' will be there. It is a fighting programme that is missing, along with the commitment to build an organised labour movement opposition to the right-wing policies and leadership of the Labour Party and trade unions.

Yet such a movement was built by these same forces — in name, at least — in the early 1920s, and in a similar situation.

## FIERCE

It was the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party in May 1924 which definitively inscribed in its perspectives the building of a National Minority Movement:

'The growing opposition movements now springing up in the leading trade unions, industries and the Labour Party are the first expressions of the concrete raising of the demands of the workers and of a definite challenge to the existing leadership. The CP welcomes these minority movements as the sign of the awakening of the workers...

'(But) the various minority movements cannot realise their power so long as they remain sectional, separate and limited in their scope and character. The many streams of the rising forces of the workers must be gathered together into one powerful mass movement which will sweep away the old leadership and drive forward relentlessly to the struggle for power.'

The adoption of this line was itself the result of a fierce debate inside the young Communist Party involving the direct intervention of the Third International and its Red International of Labour Unions. In 1922 the Third International or Comintern adopted a series of theses on the united front, which basically said that in the absence of a direct revolutionary onslaught for power the major task of the Communist Parties was to develop the united class front of the workers organisations to defend and advance the positions of the working class and through this process lead the workers towards the struggle for power.

## YELLOW

This involved important changes in tactics. The Red International of Labour Unions, for example, had previously characterised the Amsterdam International (the body to which the trade unions still supporting social democracy adhered) as 'yellow'. It was them or us. Now a rapprochement was sought with this same yellow body, with the Russian trade unions demanding admission.

Not surprisingly, such changes caused some confusion in the ranks of the British CP. William Allan, secretary of the revolutionary breakaway United Mineworkers of Scotland, was to write later of the struggle to launch the National Minority Movement: 'Sneering descriptions of the NMM were given in the Party as an "attempt to dress a red man in a pink cloak"'. Surely the task was to build the Communist Party as such, not give credibility to fake lefts!

Indeed, despite the proddings of the Comintern and the Red International of Labour Unions, it was not until late in September 1923 that the CP's paper *The Worker*, under the banner headline 'The Rank and File Must Build a Minority Movement', wrote: 'In every union rank-and-file forces must be gathered (1) around a definite fighting policy, (2) around concrete demands for union consolidation and reorganisation, (3) around the necessity for creating a new ideology amongst the union membership, (4) around the necessity of

# THE LAUNCHING OF THE MINORITY MOVEMENT

A FIRST LOOK AT ITS LESSONS FOR TODAY  
by Mick Gosling



The Minority Movement's greatest success was perhaps the election of its candidate Arthur Cook as Miners' Secretary

training and developing a new leadership to replace the old.'

In fact the CP's most successful industrial work in the early 1920s had already been conducted in the Miners and Engineers through the building of sectional Minority Movements. Under CP influence, Unofficial Reform Committees in South Wales, Fife and Lanark, Yorkshire and the North of England coal fields had agreed in March 1921 to form a Mining Section of the rank-and-file National Workers' Committee Movement.

In the wake of 'Black Friday' a month later, when the miners had 30 per cent wage cuts enforced upon them as a result of the collapse of the Triple Alliance between miners, rail and transport workers, the Communist Party launched a 'back to the unions campaign'. In line with this district conferences were held in the pits in late 1923 as part of the '100 per cent trade union' campaign which prepared the way in January 1924 for the launching of the Miners' Minority Movement and its paper *The Mineworker*.

## MINERS

Its policy, including affiliation to the Red International of Labour Unions, centred around demands for a single miners union to replace the Miners Federation, a return to the 1914 rate plus the 2/- a shift extra recommended in the Sankey report, and the six hour day.

The Miners Minority Movement achieved its greatest success before the national movement was launched. In January 1924 the arch right-winger Frank Hodges resigned as Miners

Secretary to become a member of the Labour Cabinet, and the resulting election swept MMM candidate Arthur Cook to victory. Cook was no longer a member of the Communist Party but a member of the Independent Labour Party.

## TUC

A few months later, in May 1924, the Metal Workers Minority Movement was also launched amongst the Engineers.

In August 1924, 270 delegates representing 200,000 workers (there were only four million trade unionists at this time) gathered in London to launch the National Minority Movement. Along with basic demands for a £4 a week minimum wage and a 44-hour week, the National Programme of Action called for workshop and factory committees, workers control over industry, and industrial unionism. Also included was the demand for a stronger TUC General Council with control over the Labour Party.

It had been part of the CP's industrial policy since 1922 to turn the General Council into the 'General Staff' of the labour movement.

## UPWARDS

But this was always coupled with the demands for the formation of factory and pit committees, and the struggle to base trades councils on direct representation from the factories and give them delegates to the TUC.

The MM programme provided a basis for action for individual militants, syndicalists and Labour

Party members as well as Communists, and the overall programme formed the basis of a challenge to the right-wing leadership. And by adopting a complex federal structure involving affiliated union branches, trades councils, unemployed committees and actual Minority Movement groups, held together by a strong central body, the MM was able to unite these diverse forces behind a single programme. From 271 delegates in 1924, to 443 in 1925, to 547 delegates representing 957,000 workers in March 1926, the growth of the Minority Movement seemed all upwards.

## LEFTS

But other more contradictory developments were also taking place. An Anglo-Russian trade treaty was signed in 1924, and what on the surface appeared to be a very successful TUC visit to Russia took place. The first however was used to downgrade attacks on the first Labour Government, meaning that the Minority Movement developed no

programme of opposition to the Mac Donald leadership. The second brought the TUC lefts — Alonzo Swales, A.A. Purcell and George Hicks — to centre stage in the General Council.

The core of the apple was becoming rotten. Under the influence of the incipient Stalinism of the Soviet Union, the Comintern and RILU were increasingly subordinating the tasks of the world proletariat to defence of the Soviet Union.

Between Red Friday 1925 — when the Government was forced to retreat at the prospect of a General Strike in support of the miners — and March 1926 when the MM called a special conference, no preparation was made by the MM for the inevitable confrontation with the Baldwin Government. The necessary united front with the lefts had been turned into a united pact in silence about these people's role in any decisive confrontation.

The slogan 'All Power to the General Council' was divorced from the struggle for new forms of organisation to control it. The subsequent betrayal of the working class in the General Strike, and the destruction of the Minority Movement as a serious force in the labour movement, were simultaneously prepared.

## FERMENT

Many similarities exist between the early 1920s and today, when the task facing socialists is to challenge the right-wing leadership of the workers movement in a situation where revolutionaries cannot immediately pose themselves as an alternative leadership. Such a leadership will only be forged through protracted struggle with and against the lefts for the removal of the existing leadership.

A deep ferment exists in society but often the battles being fought are in isolation from one another at a time when only a united struggle holds out the possibility of lasting success. This poses very sharply the need to develop a united class front against the capitalist class and their agents in the labour movement leadership on the most central issues of the day — opposition to any form of incomes policy, in defence of the right to work and against the cuts — and to tie in other political campaigns to this task.

## FAILED

A clear challenge to the right-wing leadership was the promise of the early Minority Movement. It never fulfilled it because it failed to combine its united front offensive towards the lefts with a ceaseless denunciation of their vacillations and unreliability. It failed to differentiate between the building of the Minority Movement and the independent tasks involved in constructing the revolutionary party itself.

Nevertheless the background to the launching of the Minority Movement — and later the National Left Wing Movement in the Labour Party, to which we will return in subsequent articles — is rich in lessons for socialists today as they strive to build a class struggle opposition to the rotten policies and leadership of the Labour Party and trade unions.



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# TROTSKY ON THE LEFT REFORMISTS



Events such as the Tribune revolt in the House of Commons over the Government's White Paper on public expenditure, the support of 40 Labour MPs for the National Assembly on Unemployment, and the candidature of Benn in the Labour leadership contest all pose the question of what attitude revolutionaries should take to left reformists.

How far left will they really go? When they move left is it correct to form united fronts with them, or does that merely give them a 'left cover'? Under what conditions can such united fronts be formed? It is practical questions like these which increasingly confront revolutionary Marxists today.

The following section of Trotsky's pamphlet *The Third Period of the Comintern's Errors* is one of the most thorough explanations of this question in the literature of Marxism. Starting from the experience of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee, an alliance which was formed in the mid-1920s between the TUC and the Russian trade unions, Trotsky clearly explains the basis of united front tactics as applied to the lefts. It provides an important background to all discussion of this problem today.



Our strategists still have not understood the lessons of the Anglo-Russian Committee. The mistake was not in making an episodic agreement with the General Council, which was actually moving to the 'left' in that period under the pressure of the masses. The first mistake was that the bloc was concluded, not on concrete practical goals clear to the working class, but on general pacifist phrases and false diplomatic formulas. The chief mistake, however, which grew into a gigantic historical crime, lay in the fact that our strategists could not immediately and openly break with the General Council when it turned its weapons against the general strike — that is, when it turned from an unreliable partial ally into an open enemy.

The influence of the radicalisation of the masses on the reformists is quite similar to the influence that the development of a bourgeois revolution has on the liberals. In the first stages of the mass movement, the reformists move leftward, hoping in this

way to retain the leadership in their hands. But when the movement surpasses the limits of reform and demands from the leaders a clean break with the bourgeoisie, the majority of the reformists quickly change their tune.

From cowardly fellow travellers of the masses, they turn into strikebreakers, enemies, open betrayers. At the same time, however, some of them, not necessarily their better elements, jump over into the camp of the revolution. An episodic alliance with the reformists, at the moment they happen to be compelled by circumstances to make a step or half-step forward, may be unavoidable. But it must be understood beforehand that the communists are ready to break mercilessly with the reformists the moment they jump back.



Heffer—one of the 37 Tribunitis who brought about Wilson's defeat on the cuts

The reformists are betrayers not because they carry out at every given moment and in every one of their acts, the instructions of the bourgeoisie. If that were the case, the reformists would have no influence on the workers and consequently would not be needed by the bourgeoisie. Precisely in order to have the necessary authority for betrayal of the workers at the decisive moment, the opportunists are compelled during the preparatory period to assume the leadership of the workers' struggle, par-

ticularly at the beginning or the radicalisation of the masses. From this follows the necessity of the united front tactic, wherein we are compelled for the sake of a broader unification of the masses to enter into practical alliances with their reformist leaders.

It is necessary to understand the historic function of the social democrats as a whole in order to force them step by step out of all their positions. The present leadership has not even a trace of such an understanding. It knows only two methods: either....to tail-end the social democracy (1926-28), or, by identifying social democracy with fascism, to substitute ineffective abuse for revolutionary policy. As a result of the last six years of zigzags, the social democracy is stronger and communism weaker. The mechanical directives of the Tenth Plenum can only serve to worsen the already poor situation.

Only a hopeless ignoramus can imagine that with the miraculous power of the 'third period' the working class as a whole will turn away from the social democracy, driving the whole reformist bureaucracy into the fascist camp. No, the process will develop in a more complicated and contradictory fashion.

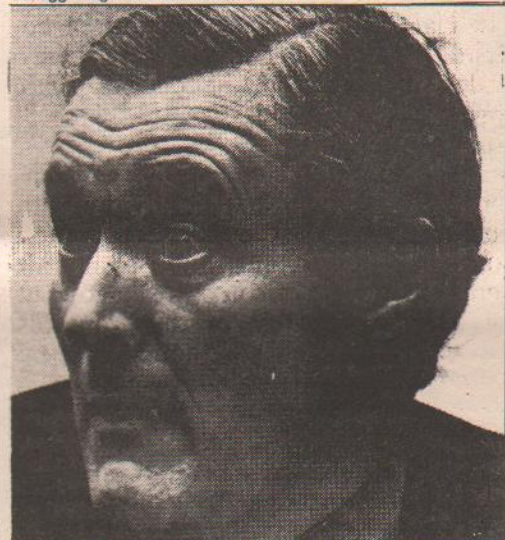
A growing dissatisfaction with the Social Democratic government in Germany and with the Labourites in Britain, the transformation of partial and isolated strikes into mass movements, etc. (when all these developments actually do take place), will have as their unavoidable consequence — all the Molotovs had better mark it well — a leftward turn of broad layers of the reformist camp, just as the internal processes in the USSR necessitated the leftward turn of the centrist camp, to which Molotov himself belongs.

The social democrats and those of the Amsterdam International, with the exception of the more conscious right-wing elements (Thomas, Herman Mueller, Renaudel types, etc.), will be compelled under corresponding conditions to assume the leadership of the advance of the masses, in order to confine these advances within narrow limits, or in order to attack the workers from the rear when they overstep these limits. Although we know that in advance and openly warn the vanguard about it, nevertheless, in the future there will still be tens, hundreds and thousands of cases when the commun-

ists will not only be unable to refuse practical alliances with the reformists, but will have to take the initiative in such alliances so that, without letting the leadership out of their hands, they can break with the reformists the moment they turn from shaky allies into open betrayers.

This policy will be unavoidable, especially in regard to the left social democracy, which during a genuine radicalisation of the masses will be compelled to oppose the right wing more decisively, even to the point of a split. This perspective in no way contradicts the fact that those in the leadership of the left social democracy are often the most pernicious and dangerous allies, collaborators of the bourgeoisie.

How is it possible to refuse practical alliances with the reformists in those cases where, for example, they are leading strikes? If there are very few of such cases now, it is because the strike movement itself is very weak as yet and the reformists can ignore and sabotage it. But with mass participation in the struggle, alliances will become unavoidable for both sides. It will be just as impossible to block the road to practical alliances with the reformists — not only with the social democratic masses, but in many instances also with their leaders or more likely with a section of the leaders — in the struggle against fascism.....



Benn—could not be said to betray on instructions of bourgeoisie

NEWSREEL COLLECTIVE were formed last year to fill the need felt on the left for quickly made topical films which could serve the needs of specific campaigns as well as the general interests of the working class struggle.

Their first film, *An egg is not a chicken* (20 mins, £5 to hire), dealt with the campaign for free abortion on demand. Following this, *Newsreel* were given a £12,000 grant for six months by the British Film Institute. With it they made *Republica* — fighting for workers power (20 mins, £5 to hire), *On the side of the people* (48 mins, £10 to hire), and a film about housing struggles, *Housey Housey* (35 mins, £7 to hire).

They are now making a film about

unemployment, but the refusal of the BFI to give them a further grant means that they will be unable to finish it without more money. So they are mounting two benefit shows on Wednesday 31 March and Friday 2 April at 7 p.m. in the Collegiate Theatre, 25 Gordon Street, London W.C.1. (near Euston) where on the side of the people, *Housey Housey*, and part of the unemployment film will be shown, followed by discussion.

Tickets are £1.20 or 80p for subscriber-members of the Other Cinema. We urge all our London readers to support these events.

Newsreel's films can be hired from: Other Cinema, 12-13 Little Newport Street, London W.C.2. (01-734 8508/9).

## Ric Sissons reviews a new film on Portugal

# "On the side of the people"

*On the side of the people*, the Newsreel Collective's latest film about Portugal, traces in a clear and well documented way the events leading up to the events of 25-26 November. As in the Collective's other film about the revolutionary upsurge in Portugal, which dealt with the struggle at *Republica*, the 'stars' are not Gomes, Azevedo, Carvalho, Soares, Neves or Cunhal — they are the workers and peasants in the factories, on the land and in the barracks. It is there that history is being made, and the Collective have done an excellent job in capturing the mood of the masses in struggle.

The film picks up very well the often spontaneous attacks of the workers and peasants against the Portuguese ruling class. It deals not only with the bastions of the working class, such as the Setenave shipyards and *Republica*, but also with occupations of empty houses and the establishment of a creche in which local soldiers work. The Portuguese workers and peasants have no 'welfare state' — instead, they have been attempting to create and run their own social services.

Such moves begin to pose an alternative power to that of the bourgeois state apparatus, and have therefore run into increasing opposition from the Sixth Provisional Government. Following 25 November, reliable soldiers and para-military police have been used to break up attempts at self-organisation.

One local clinic has been raided several times under the pretext of arms searches, but it still survives.

No film on Portugal can be taken seriously if it does not mention the question of the agrarian reform and the contrast between the north and the south. This film makes the comparison vividly.

In one series of shots we see people crawling on their knees to the Catholic shrine of Fatima, who supposedly appeared in 1917 to warn against the spectre of communism. On the other hand the film shows a thousand armed southern agricultural workers mobilising to take back a herd of cows that their former boss had stolen from them. These different scenes highlight a division and unevenness that the revolutionary movement in Portugal cannot ignore.

*On the side of the people* is easily the best film available on the events in Portugal, but it does have certain political weaknesses. Firstly, while it does cover the mass actions of the workers and peasants, it doesn't underline the fundamental failing in the inability to organise, coordinate and centralise the organs of popular power. How else is it possible — having explained the collapse of discipline in the army and the inability of the ruling class to impose its solutions — to understand the failure of the working class to challenge the bourgeois

state in a systematic fashion?

Secondly, the film makes very broad generalisations about the politics of the Communist Party and the Socialist Party, as well as hardly mentioning the role of the PUR (Revolutionary United Front). The worst mistakes occur in relation to the Socialist Party, where the film falls prey to the trap of the ultra lefts and centrists in Portugal who dismiss the SP as social fascist. By using shots of a joint SP and PPD demonstration, the film gives the impression that the SP is a party with no base in the working class.

Obviously the SP has a thoroughly bourgeois leadership, but nevertheless it also has an important base in the workers movement. If you do not understand this point, how can you explain the growing divisions within the SP? For example, some recent elections within the SP have seen a contest between two slates, one backed by Soares and the other put up by worker militants unhappy with the party's present course.

Points such as these need to be clarified within the workers movement in this country, and the film can certainly play a major role in opening up such discussions. As an introduction to meetings it is excellent. We would urge all our readers to ensure that it is shown in their area as soon as possible.

Ric Sissons



This picket of the Indonesian Embassy in London was mounted on 18 March as part of a worldwide moratorium against the Indonesian invasion of East Timor and in solidarity with the liberation fighters of Fretilin. British complicity is particularly blatant—Indonesia receives more British aid than any other country outside the Commonwealth except Pakistan.



● What sort of experiences arising from the work of the Ligue made you decide to launch a daily paper?

I'll reply in two ways. Firstly, the development of the Ligue had reached a point where we were clearly strong enough to initiate struggles and even affect the course of events. The PTT (Post Office) strike in November 1974 is a good example, where we had a very important influence through the Red Mole (*Taupe Rouge*) groups.

But the problem was that this possibility of influencing the course of events was limited by a publication system centred around a weekly. We saw during that strike how difficult it was to respond to the developing situation — a daily could have been a decisive weapon for influencing the course of the struggle.

But secondly, the daily fits into a certain conception of how to build a revolutionary party. This conception was advanced in the Theses of the Tenth World Congress of the Fourth International and taken up by the First Congress of the LCR.

Very briefly, we have the conception that the way in which a revolutionary party will be built will not take the form of a quantitative growth of a single organisation, but will arise out of the fusion between a core of revolutionary Marxists and what we call the broad vanguard through a process of splits and fusions within the extreme left. With this perspective, it seemed to us absolutely essential to wield a political weapon, namely the daily, which would allow us to reach and influence these militants of the broad vanguard.

We think there exists in France today an audience large enough to keep the paper alive — that's to say, between 10-20,000 unorganised militants who are looking for political answers and aren't getting them from the Stalinists in *L'Humanite* nor more generally from the Union of the Left [the electoral bloc between the Socialist and Communist Parties and a few Left Radicals], nor in the pages of *Liberation* [a libertarian daily sponsored by Sartre] whose political project is rather unrelated to the concerns of trade union militants. This layer of up to 20,000 militants needs an instrument which will enable it to intervene in a daily fashion against the reformists.

● What kind of debate has there been on the role of the paper?

Within the Ligue the debate on the paper very quickly misfired because it was begun on the wrong footing. It was around two positions; one said we need a Trotskyist daily, and the other replied that we need an open daily. In the end it evolved a bit, and we reached virtual unanimity on the following conception.

We want to bring out a daily which will be the organisation's paper, which doesn't hide its colours. The articles will defend the line of the Ligue.

But, and it's a very important qualification, we want it to be a paper to which the different components of the broad vanguard can relate: a paper where different political currents can express and defend their points of view, in which trade union branches, action committees, struggle committees, women's groups and so on can argue their point without thinking that we'll go and cut an article, etc. We want to have a militant daily for the organisation in which, at the same time, a large place is reserved as an open tribune where all those who in some way represent the broad vanguard can express their point of view.

# rouge

15 March marked a historic step forward for the world Trotskyist movement with the start of a daily publication by the French paper *Rouge* (organ of the Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire, French section of the Fourth International). John Watts asked PIERRE JULIEN, who edits the section on French Politics, what the role of the new paper will be.



As for the extreme left, there's hardly been any debate with other currents. *Lutte Ouvriere* published an article welcoming the daily *Rouge* and encouraging us. The group which is the most worried is certainly the PSU (Unified Socialist Party — a classic centrist organisation, nominally double the size of the Ligue). The daily will give us a formidable weapon for influencing certain militants of the PSU and winning them over — and they know it.

● How were you able to collect such a large sum as 2 million francs (over £200,000)? What effect did such a campaign have on the Ligue itself and its relationship with its periphery?

The final sum was 2.3 million francs, which is an enormous amount for France. No group to the left of the Communist Party has ever collected more than 30-40,000 francs before, and we collected it in only eight months.

This confirms that there exists today a potential public, very large in relation to us, which has accepted the financial effort necessary to make sure the daily will come out. The money was not collected in the form of large sums from a few — on the contrary, it was made up of small sums from very many people prepared to make a sacrifice for the fund-drive.

Those involved came from a far wider circle than our sympathisers in the Red Circles. Once these people start reading the

paper we will have to discuss whether to set up Readers Circles which would be different from the Red Circles.

Take Italy as an example: we are sure that a paper like *Lotta Continua* finds it is selling 5-10 copies in practically every small town and large village in Italy. We'll probably find the same. People will be buying *Rouge* in a town where we don't have a single militant or even a sympathiser. The problem is to arrange some way of meeting and having discussions with these people.

● How is it that the paper will have such a far flung audience?

In France there's a unique nationalised system for distributing papers called the NMPP which distributes papers to shops and kiosks throughout France. All the papers go through it, and it's obliged under law to distribute any paper which conforms to a certain number of criteria set out in a code.

The daily *Rouge* starts coming off the presses at 11.30 pm, is bundled, labelled and taken by lorry to an NMPP centre which despatches them by train and plane to the provinces. The later copies go to the Paris region. It should mean that we are in every kiosk in France the next morning.

● But if members of the Ligue will not be selling the paper, won't there be a

problem in integrating it into the life of the organisation?

That's true, and we've tried to resolve it in two ways. Firstly, many militants will arrange with a kiosk to buy four or five papers every morning, which they will sell later at their place of work to sympathisers, and anyone else interested in the paper.

Secondly, we'll be bringing out a 16-page paper on Saturday which has more the character of a magazine — like the old weekly *Rouge*. This can be used for all sorts of sales by militants over the week-end in the markets and so on.

● How is the paper structured internally? Has there been any discussion on the division of labour and that sort of thing?

Let's first distinguish the editing from the production side. Editing is made up of two main editors — Alain Krivine and Daniel Bensaid. These have the mandate of the Ligue's Central Committee to resolve any political problem which may arise in the course of editing the paper. They basically have the final decision if, say, an article doesn't reflect the line of the organisation. And of course they are responsible for the overall thrust of the paper.

Beneath these editors, the paper is divided into five sections: French Politics; Workers' Struggles; International; Daily Life; Culture. One person is responsible for each section, which then has several journalists working for it.

Once the articles are written you've got the Editing Committee which exists on all papers — two comrades who cut, correct and decide where the articles will go, etc. Then you've got composition, lay-out, plate-making and finally printing, bundling and despatch.

Our general thrust is to try as much as possible to suppress the division of labour. But we are faced with two constraints. The first is that certain types of work involve a high degree of skill — for instance, those who work on the web-offset printing machine can hardly be replaced by those on the editing side.

On the other hand, there are a whole series of jobs which could be handled collectively by all the full-timers. The journalists' job is a lot more interesting than composing all day or doing the lay-out, so we want to see that the journalists have manual tasks to do in the course of the day. But the problem is that so far we don't have enough journalists to do anything else than write up the newspaper — otherwise it won't come out.

What would be good is if they could handle the switch-board, do the cooking in the canteen etc. as well. But today we don't have the means to do this.

● Don't you feel that the existence of a bourgeois newspaper, *Le Monde*, which provides not only detailed information but also sometimes very competent analysis is a major problem?

Yes, it's a big problem. Generally speaking, we are trying to produce a daily paper which is serious and informed, which carries analysis and which doesn't necessitate having to buy another one. But we have to compete with other papers at the level of information — notably *Le Monde*.

I might say, however, that while *Le Monde* is particularly well informed on international affairs, it doesn't have people all over the world who are engaged in struggle. Often we will be able to pull scoops on *Le Monde* and everyone else by being part of the Fourth International. Just when *Le Monde* begins to feel a bit marginalised, a bit of a spectator — that's to say when the real struggles break out — we will have first hand information of what is going on.

Our main advantage is that *Le Monde* is an evening paper while ours will hopefully arrive in the morning. So there isn't a total competition between the papers. But what we must avoid like the plague is to turn *Rouge* into a morning paper made up of last night's supper (*Le Monde*) dished up with some Trotskyist sauce. That would be a caricature of a daily.

To conclude: we want a paper which contains all the news necessary for the public we are writing for — a real daily paper which can compete with anyone at the level of news and information. But secondly, we define our paper in relation to three things:

1. It's got to be a militant paper which states its position, which campaigns.

2. It's got to be a weapon for struggle; in other words, by its analyses, by its news, by the proposals it makes, it must serve its public, notably worker militants looking for answers in a situation where they are already breaking from the reformists.

3. It must provide an arena for debate; a paper where there is a continual confrontation of ideas.





# SPANISH 'REFORMS' COME APART AT SEAMS

The Spanish Government is still reeling from the massive wave of working class struggle that erupted in the Basque country in the first week of this month.

All its 'reform' schemes have come apart at the seams under the impact of the working class upsurge. It is currently trying to patch things up a bit with a scheme to legalise the activities of the opposition parties which don't advocate 'violent subversion, the destruction of the legal order, or the installation of a totalitarian regime' or 'by any means whatsoever attack the unity, sovereignty, independence or security' of Spain.

This 'blank cheque' would give the dictatorship a free hand to repress whom it chose. It has already been made clear that under no circumstances will legalisation be extended to the Communist Party or the far left groups who are in the leadership of the current workers' struggles.

A clear sign of the dictatorship's

intentions is that this 'reform' has been brought in at the same time as another...completely outlawing picketing.

At the same time the powerful right wing of the dictatorship, frightened by the recent displays of working class power, have started to rattle their sabres. Last Friday, top right-wing politician Antonio Giron told a rally of fascist Civil War veterans that he and his supporters would never tolerate 'the disappearance of the authoritarian system inherited from Franco'. Giron is in a good position to keep this promise because he is a leading member of the Government Commission set up to prepare plans for political reform!

●A hundred Spanish militants in London attended a meeting last Saturday organised by the LCR-ETA VI (Spanish sympathising organisation of the Fourth International), on the topic of 'Espana en marcha' (Spain on the move). After speakers from the LCR-ETA VI had discussed the current political situation in Spain and the tasks of revolutionaries



**With the blood of one of the murdered comrades, someone had written a word on the street...**

With the blood of one of their murdered comrades, the striking workers of Vitoria wrote out their demand for freedom on the paving stones where he fell.

Now the Spanish Government has arrested three of the leaders of the Vitoria general strike. These militants have been transferred from the Basque country to Madrid for trial by a kangaroo military court on charges of 'subversion'.

The British labour movement must immediately take up this case and demand that these militants are released and all charges against them dropped, that all political prisoners are freed, and that all laws against trade union activity are scrapped.

This is something in which the Committee set up out of the 14 February Solidarity Conference with the Spanish Working Class should be giving a lead. Every delegate to that conference should write to Messrs. Paynter, Buckton and Jones demanding that they take action on this question, as well as moving their own protest resolutions.

Last Saturday a Francoist political court imprisoned eight militants accused of being members of the LCR-ETA VI and receiving *Combate* (the LCR-ETA VI's paper). Ignacio Olano Goena, also accused of organising self-defence pickets, received a two year sentence, and the other seven sentences ranged from one year to four months.

following the recent general strike in the Basque country, militants from most of the major groups on the Spanish left - including the Communist Party and the Socialist Party - had a chance to take the floor and present their point of view.

For further information on the activities of the LCR-ETA VI in Britain write to: LCR, c/o 97 Caledonian Road, London, N.1.

## 7 DAYS in the 6 COUNTIES

JOHN MAGEE reports from Belfast

'I believe that a woman's place is in the home' - Loyalist MP Harold McCusker, successfully arguing against the extension of the recent Sex Discrimination Act to the North of Ireland despite the fact that the Six Counties have been subjected to direct rule from Westminster since May 1974.

Northern Ireland has always been a hard-line puritan society. Like the Catholic Church in the rest of the country, the Northern Protestant Churches have constantly opposed the reform of family law - with the result that many of the basic reforms concerning divorce, married women's property rights and abortion which apply in Britain have never been extended to the Six Counties. The 1967 Abortion Act, for instance,

simply doesn't apply here. In 1975 more than a thousand women went to England to have abortions, paying about £100 each. Clearly this just isn't an option at all for working class women.

As for the one piece of recent British legislation in this field which does apply, the Equal Pay Act, it has gaping holes in it and has made little impact on the conditions of employment of most working women here - even in the public service. In the Civil Service, for example, the bottom grades account for 85 per cent of women employees but only 45 per cent of male employees. Outside the public service the situation is even worse.

Women workers are also being hit particularly hard by the economic crisis. Traditional areas of female employment such as textiles have been drastically cut back, and the slashing of public expenditure has forced many women in jobs such as cleaners, nurses and teachers on to the dole.

The role of British imperialism, propping up the sectarian undemocratic Northern Irish statelet, has ensured that women have been too divided to organise around their own oppression as a sex. While many women have played an important role in both the anti-imperialist and industrial struggles, their specific demands have largely been ignored.

Recently, however, there have been signs that this may be changing. One development has been the formation of a Socialist Women's Group in Belfast with a manifesto which recognises 'the struggle for women's liberation as an integral part of the struggle for socialism'. The SWG places itself firmly in the ranks of those opposed to British imperialism, and asserts that 'the effective liberation of the working class - women and men - requires the creation...of an Irish Workers State'.

Another organisation recently launched here is the Women's Rights Movement. The WRM, however, concentrates on the purely formal rather than the more insidious aspects of the oppression of women. One of its main demands is for parity with Britain - which not only ignores the inadequacies of the British legislation, but fosters the illusion that a solution can be found to women's oppression by strengthening the link with Britain.

Women in Ireland, both North and South, can only advance their struggle for liberation on a clear class position that admits the relation between the oppression of women and the exploitation of the working class. Equally, if the revolutionary movement is to involve women not just as supporters but as active participants in the fight against imperialism, then it must show a genuine commitment to work for the demands raised by women to end their oppression as a sex.

## IRELAND'S OTHER CRISIS

# Part 4 The economy & the national question

In previous articles we have explained the origins of the economic crisis gripping Irish society and the social explosion that is building up. It would be very easy to separate this off from the events in the North. But this is to miss the heart of the matter.

As we have shown, Irish capitalism is quite incapable of developing independently. Its future is absolutely tied to foreign investment. As a direct consequence, any project for rescuing Irish business must also involve cooperation with the British in solving their problems in the North. The dominant party in the coalition government, Fine Gael, understands this very well.

Moreover, Fine Gael appreciates that the same conditions which provoked the troubles in the North underlie the social crisis in the South. They know that if this underlying economic connection ever reaches a political level, and the southern working class reaches the same high level of militant struggle and self-organisation that the northern minority has achieved from time to time, then there will be precious little hope for Fine Gael or its backers.

### Internment

It is this that explains the furious - almost paranoid - campaign of the coalition government against the Republican movement. Full scale internment still exists in the South. The Irish police, the Garda Siochana, has been falling over backwards to give other European police forces a lesson on the prevention of terrorism. IRA suspects can be jailed on the word of a police officer, and a Bill has just gone through the Dail (parliament) allowing for the deportation of Republican prisoners to Britain.

How is the left organising against these policies? The Communist Party

of Ireland is firmly convinced that civil rights and economic independence are a precondition for successful workers' struggles. But as this outlook contradicts the whole of Irish economic history - since economic independence is impossible within the framework of capitalism - the CP is increasingly stuck for a line.

Thus they take up the Bill of Rights approach to the northern question and appeal for greater democracy in the South. At the same time they call for an extension of Ireland's fishing limits, and for withdrawal from the EEC. In short they end up as a weak echo of the bourgeois nationalist Fianna Fail.

### Mutual

The recent CPI conference saw the consummation of their long standing romance with Official Sinn Fein. Mutual congratulations were exchanged, but very little else was achieved.

A link between an organisation that has an appreciable base in the Irish trade union movement and one that has taken part in the northern struggle could have had real possibilities - of becoming a major reformist influence at the very least - were it not for two things. The first is a failure on the part of the Officials and the CP to break with the trade union bureaucracy. Thus when bureaucrats of the Irish Transport & General Workers Union tried to call off unofficial action at Dobson Fibres in Waterford, the advice given to the workers by Official Sinn Fein was to do just that.

The second block the Officials and the CP put between themselves and a mass base is their sectarianism. This has taken some ugly forms. When the Irish Republican Socialist Party split from the Officials, what can only be called a vendetta was opened up by the Official



leadership.

Elsewhere in the Irish political spectrum, however, debates are starting to emerge which may give Irish workers the prospect of a clear political strategy for their struggle. The revolutionary left is extremely small, but its chances to put forward its ideas are increasing. For instance, at Dobson Fibres part of the leadership of the struggle was made up of an alliance between members of the Young Socialists and of Provisional Sinn Fein.

In general, the truce in the North has resulted in increased involvement in industrial action in the South on the part of the Provisionals. But they have not yet drawn the theoretical lessons of this experience. Above all, they do not grasp the full scope and depth of the crisis. They have not understood, for instance, the break with the old influence of the Church that the women's movement potentially represents, nor the extent to which the issues raised by the women's movement (equal pay in particular) challenge the economic position of the southern ruling class and thereby their collaboration with the British.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, the Provisionals still display uncertainty on the relationship between the northern and southern struggles. They have correctly grasped that the issues are likely to be settled in the North. What must be added, however, is that this will only come about on the basis of all-Ireland mobilisations. The whole weight of the Irish working class must be brought to bear against imperialism. That requires a broader and deeper political strategy than the Provisionals have yet acquired.

But the possibility of a real socialist alternative is not as remote as it sometimes seems. When the IRSP split off from the Officials, it showed that forces already exist which are willing to take up the debate needed to work out a real political strategy for the Irish revolution. The IRSP itself has since split. Too many of its leaders couldn't break from the organisational methods of the Officials. Nonetheless, its history indicates where political clarity will come from.

As Irish militants struggle to assess the history and achievements of Republicanism, revolutionaries will have ever greater opportunities opened up to them.



# 'PRIVILEGE' Vs. WOMEN'S RIGHTS

# RED WEEKLY

As the mass mobilisation for the 3 April abortion demonstration reaches its peak, a small group known as the House of Commons Privileges Committee will be meeting in the depths of Westminster to discuss whether the refusal of the National Abortion Campaign to give evidence before the Select Committee on abortion constitutes a breach of parliamentary privilege.

The Select Committee was reconvened early last month after more than a hundred Labour right-wingers, led by Harold Wilson, had joined the vast majority of the Tories to push it through by 313 votes to 172. Less than a week later the six pro-abortion MPs on the Committee resigned. They stated that it had simply become 'a device to undermine the main provisions of the 1967 Act by severely restricting the grounds on which abortion is legally available'.

The Select Committee, a majority of whose members are opposed to any form of legal abortion, was now further exposed as a fraud. So NAC decided to refuse a request to give oral evidence to the Sel-

ect Committee on 1 March.

Members of the NAC Steering Committee explained at a press conference that the Committee had already shown itself to be incapable of fairly considering the evidence. They announced their support for the MPs who had resigned from the Select Committee and urged others not to replace them.

An anti-abortion Tory MP, Sir Bernard Braine, immediately claimed in the House of Commons that NAC's refusal to appear before the Select Committee amounted to a breach of privilege. He also claimed that a NAC statement quoted in *The Times* - 'There is no way that this Committee can look at our evi-

Support is building up all over the country for the National Abortion Campaign demonstration for free abortion on demand. The demonstration, next Saturday 3 April, will assemble at 1.30 p.m. at Speakers Corner before marching to Trafalgar Square for a rally with speakers and entertainment.

Over 60 organisations and prominent individuals in the labour movement have sponsored the demonstration, and several hundred pounds in donations have been received. Thirty thousand leaflets, 10,000 posters and thousands of large badges reading 'March for abortion rights - 3 April' have been distributed already. More are available from NAC.

Coaches are so far known to be coming from Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Bristol, Canterbury, Chelmsford, Lancaster, Leicester, Liverpool, Manchester, Norwich, Nottingham, Preston, Sheffield, Sunderland, Tyne-side, and York.

Further details can be obtained from NAC, 30 Camden Road, London N.W.1 (01-485 4303).

ence logically and fairly' - constituted a gross contempt.

On 3 March the Leader of the House moved 'that the matter of complaint... be referred to the Committee of Privileges'. *Every single MP - women, lefts and all - assented to this procedure.* 'No Member being willing to act as Teller for the Noes, Mr Speaker declared that the Ayes had it' (*Hansard*).

This is not the first time that the MPs who claim to support abortion rights for women have failed to make a stand, subordinating the interests of the mass of women to obscure parliamentary procedure. The same thing happened last year, when no resistance was put up to Barbara Castle's report incorporating the first set of restrictions recommended by the Select Committee.

The Privileges Committee will now try to establish whether a breach of privilege has occurred, and if so what action to recommend. If necessary the offenders can be instructed to appear before the bar of the House to answer the charges - with jail as a possible penalty.

This was the threat that forced Yorkshire miners' leader Arthur Scargill to withdraw his statement that NUM-sponsored MPs should lose their sponsorship if they voted against union policy. But now NAC has stepped in where Arthur feared to tread.

## CLIQUE

Unwilling to give its evidence behind the doors of an exclusive and biased Select Committee, the last National Planning Meeting of the NAC decided to respond to the Privileges Committee in the same way - to try to force the parliamentary clique into the open by demanding that it deal with the Campaign as a whole. If NAC is summoned to answer charges, it will be interesting to see if these parliamentarians can find a venue large enough to hold the tens of thousands of NAC supporters who would undoubtedly wish to appear on such an occasion.

Gwyn Vorhaus



The Privy Council last week rejected Dominican militant Desmond Trotter's appeal against the hanging sentence imposed after his frame-up trial. This picket outside the Fast Caribbean High Commission was the immediate response in London.

## Your Big Chance

To make sure that every delegate to the Assembly on Unemployment can get an introduction to our politics, we have printed 2,000 extra copies of our pull-out. Therefore we must have stepped up contributions with the end of the £10,000 IMG Fund Drive - firstly from those branches who did not make any substantial contribution to the successful meeting of the target, Nottingham, Coventry, Canterbury, Portsmouth, Reading and Basingstoke, Southampton and York. Now is their big chance!

Other branches should not fall back into the habit of seeing finances as a side issue from political work. Our thanks this week to a Dutch comrade, £5; North London IMG, £25; Leeds IMG, £12.50; Orkney reader, £10; Leicester IMG, £5; and Birmingham health workers, £5. Please send all donations to Red Weekly Fighting Fund, 97 Caledonian Road, London N.1.

## Anti-abortionists fight back

This week the 'pro-life' organisations are holding a 'Witness One Million' week of action and prayer, culminating on Mothering Sunday (28 March) when 'services should stress the gift of life and motherhood. The emphasis during the week should start with reparation and dwell on the sanctity of unborn life, closing with joyful celebration of conception, birth, motherhood and parenthood.'

Meanwhile, the anti-abortionists of the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child and LIFE have been giving evidence to the rump Select Committee on the Abortion (Amendment) Bill. Professor J. Scarisbrick, chairman of LIFE, claimed that abortion was leading to 'national suicide' and turning Britain into a nation of geriatrics. And that well-known pro-hanger and pro-lifer, MP Jill Knight, says in a Conservative Party pamphlet: 'Just because the birth rate is high in places like India, it is foolish to assume that we should stop having babies in Britain.' Preferably white and middle class, of course.

## NOT ROSY

For 'places like India' the outlook is anything but rosy. Whilst anti-abortionists get all steamed up about one million abortions in eleven years, it was last year estimated that 50 million babies would perish by 1980 of diseases of poverty, whilst others would suffer irreparable damage. These diseases are the direct result of the existence of capitalism and imperialism, systems propped up fervently by the leading opponents of abortion like Jill Knight and Leo Abse.

According to Christopher Derrick, a speaker at the first International Rally of the European Pro-Life Organisation in 1974, pro-lifers 'more often than not' believe in the 'just war' and 'they tend to be right-wing'. Certainly, the Pope gave American intervention in Vietnam his blessing. The hierarchy of most of the world's religions tend to be anti-abortion (the practice of the female half of their flock is beside the point). The Archbishop of Canterbury is supporting 'Witness One Million'.

But anti-abortionists do not rely merely on the interventions of God to get their way. Their main tactic is to

block legislation or to attempt to reverse pro-abortion laws. By threatening to withdraw votes if legislators do not support them, a small minority of anti-abortionists can carry more weight than voters concerned with a candidate's total programme.

In the United States, for example, the main attack is on the front of 'state rights'. The Supreme Court's decision that anti-abortion legislation was unconstitutional over-ruled any restrictive legislation in the individual states. Virginia State then outlawed the advertising of New York abortion facilities - but this has now been declared unconstitutional, too.

In New Zealand, where abortion is only allowed on very limited grounds, and where SPUC is very active, the 1975 Hospital Amendment Act requiring licences for private abortion centres has been declared unconstitutional, thus opening the way for out-patient abortions at lower cost.

But the anti-abortionists continue to fight back. In Belgium Laissez-les Vivre was set up last year and attempts were made to start a 'help' organisation in Dublin. In Holland the 'European Doctors' Initiative' petitioned Queen Juliana

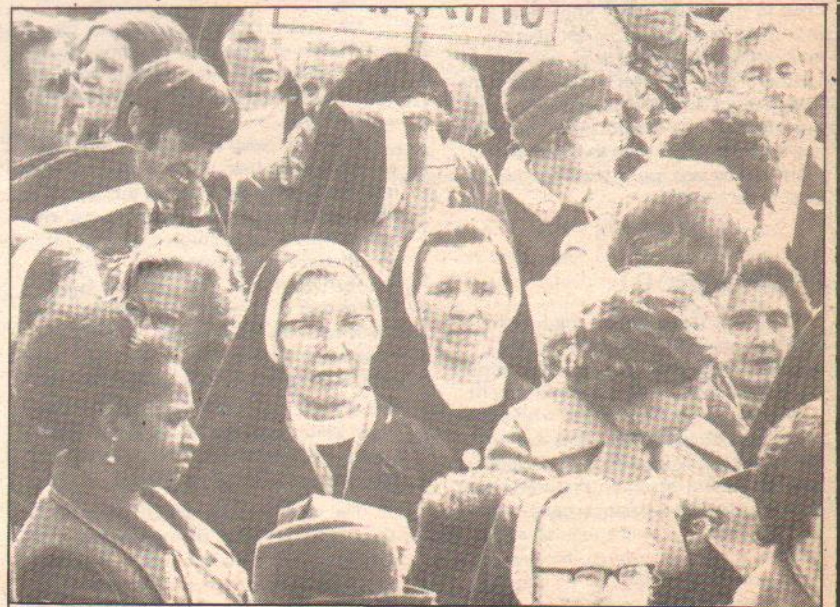


to close abortion clinics on the grounds that the 'commercialised mass liquidation' of 'children' from other European countries violated the Treaty of Rome. And since a liberal abortion law was passed in Austria, a petition against it has been organised by 'Aktion Leben'.

Meanwhile, anti-abortionists in Britain have responded to the growing pro-abortion support and activity (shown, for example, by the latest National Opinion Poll commissioned by *Gay News*, which indicated 54 per cent in favour of abortion on demand) by forming a joint organisation bringing together SPUC, LIFE, Women for Life, Society of Innocents, sections of most of the churches, and other such groups.

The 3 April demonstration is a chance to show them the breadth of support they are up against.

Leonora Lloyd



Section of a recent anti-abortion demonstration organised by SPUC

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