

Socialist Action

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For a Class Struggle Left Wing in the Labour Movement

October 80

Price 15p

LABOUR LEADERS MUST ACT

"Emergency action must be taken to alleviate unemployment, particularly among young people".
 "We call upon the labour and trade union movement to work together to remove this pile of human misery and the Tory government as soon as possible".

These calls to action were made by none other than Len Murray, TUC General Secretary, and the Labour Shadow Cabinet. They were made in response to the growing jobless total that is fast approaching the catastrophe of the 'thirties.

It seems as if we are all set for a major campaign to halt the Tory offensive in its tracks and replace it with bold socialist policies.

ACTION

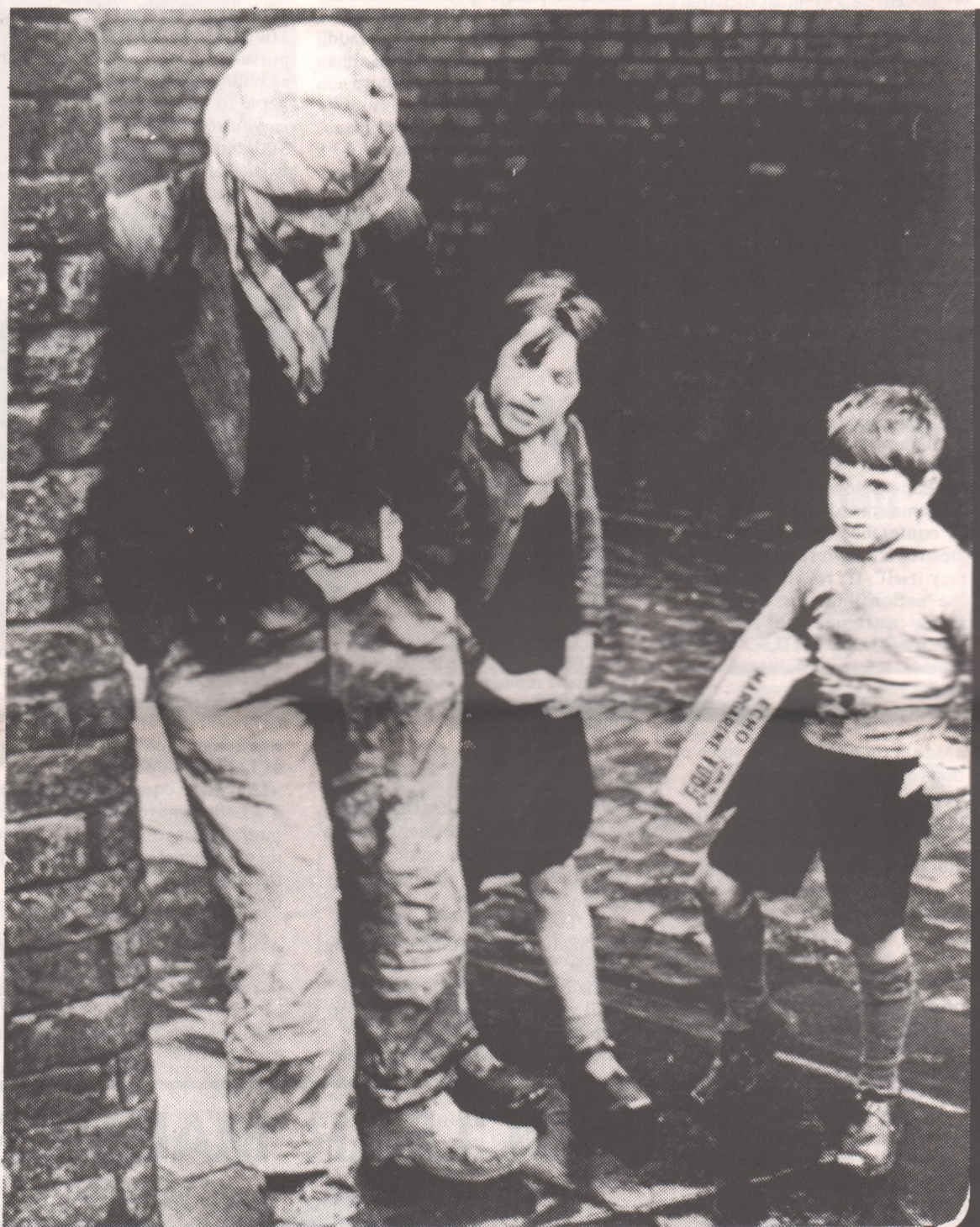
There is only one problem. Those

calls were not made yesterday or the day before. They were made last July. Just what have Murray and the labour leaders done since then to build the 'emergency' action they refer to?

Just what have they done to mobilise the labour movement in defence of jobs which are being axed at the rate of over 4,000 a week? The answer, of course, is nothing.

When Callaghan attended the TUC conference last month, the only

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STOP THATCHER'S NUCLEAR MADNESS

Bob Swart (Streatham CLP)



The Tories are going ahead with their nuclear madness. The Cruise missiles come out of US funds. Tory plans to replace ageing Polaris submarines with the new Trident ones do not.

At a time when Hesaltine has announced even more savage social service cuts - with health, housing and education in the front line - over £5 billion is to be poured into these nuclear time-bombs.

When it is realised that one single Trident could buy the equivalent of twenty-five new hospitals, then the government's sense of priority couldn't be more dramatically displayed.

OPPOSITION

Such nuclear madness has already

provoked a response from the labour movement. Last July's mass demonstration of over 20,000 - called by the Labour Party NEC - was just the opening shot of this resistance.

Since that time, there have been a series of rallies, marches & vigils up and down the country. In Manchester, over 2,500 marched on August 9th in opposition to Tory plans to import the Cruise missiles.

A thousand rallied in Carlisle and a march of 500 was held at York. A 75-hour vigil was held at the gate of RAF Greenhal Common - where the Cruise missiles are to be sited - with almost a thousand participating. Smaller local events have been held by revitalised CND branches.

MADNESS

Labour Parties, Young Socialists & trade union branches have played a prominent role in all of these actions. Evidence of mounting opposition can be seen from the fact that over 100 motions opposing the missiles have been submitted to this year's Labour Party Conference.

It is clear that the overwhelming weight of opinion in the labour movement is opposed to Tory plans to turn Britain into a nuclear dumping ground. It is realised, only too well, that -

- * it is madness to pour money into Trident when hospitals, schools & other social services are being axed;
- * it is madness to turn Britain into a prime nuclear target in the event

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POLAND

"It's the cheating and the lying that the government does. The truth must be told to the people - that's the main thing".

Anna Walentynowicz (MKS)

"Only free trade unions can make us happy, can give us a victory".

Lech Walesa

"This is what we fought so hard for. The unions will give us the possibility to control illegal action by the government and preserve our rights".

Machine Toolist, Gdansk

pages 6&7

Who stands for democracy?

At this year's party conference, over 60 amendments have been submitted on constitutional issues. These revolve around the three issues that were central at last year's conference: election of the party leader, re-selection of MPs and responsibility for the Manifesto. Below George Hold (Peckham CLP) takes up the importance of these issues as vital steps in democratising the party and challenges the right-wing counter arguments.

Just before the last election, the N.E.C. and cabinet met to discuss the election manifesto. Despite N.E.C. objections, the campaign Callaghan ran virtually ignored every major conference decision for the past 5 years.

There was, of course, nothing new in this. Callaghan's whole period in office was a slap in the face for the millions who voted and campaigned to put him there. From decisions to 'tighten' immigration laws to imposition of the 5% wage freeze, used against the low-paid public sector unions, the government's policies flew in the face of conference decisions.

CONTEMPT

The argument behind Callaghan's contempt for conference decisions has been spelled out pretty clearly by the 'gang of three' who recently threatened to split from the LP if much-needed reforms went ahead.

A Labour government, Shirley Williams argued, cannot be bound by conference decisions without 'destroying representative democracy itself'. Its role is to rule in the 'national' interest and not in the interests merely of a section of society.

Needless to say, Williams' arguments have always won the resounding applause of those Labour stalwarts, the Tory press, who are dead-set on muffling the voice of the workers' movement.

They have given the 'gang of three' more space to advance their views than is usually reserved for pundits like Enoch Powell.

DEMOCRACY

But just what is this 'national' interest MPs are supposed to protect as against the interests of working people? Just what is this idol Labour MPs are supposed to

bend the knee before instead of representing those who put them into power?

In a society dominated by the banks and giant monopolies, the national interest is clearly what serves to bolster *their* interests & increase *their* profits. The 'national' interest is, in this sense, a fraud, a cover-up for promoting the aims and investments of the big corporations.

When Callaghan introduced his wage freeze of 5%, just whose interest was that in? Was it in the



interests of working people or the giant monopolies who wanted workers' wages controlled while their profits soared?

FREEDOM

When figures such as Rodgers or Williams argue for the 'freedom' of government from conference decisions, they are arguing for a freedom to collaborate with the IMF, Tory inspired Civil Servants and big bankers to attack working people.

This is why they have let out a shrill voice of protest - calling for 'witch-hunts' against the left - when the issue of the government

heeding conference resolutions is posed. They know that conference, representing millions of working people, is in direct conflict with the needs and interests of big business.

If they were bound by conference decisions, after all, they wouldn't be able to create mass unemployment, slash the social services and freeze wages, would they?

FRIGHTENED

In defence of their 'right' to pursue such policies, figures such as Williams actually have the nerve to invoke 'democracy'. It is, you see, 'undemocratic' for 300-odd MPs to implement the wishes of the millions who put



them into office. It is so much more 'democratic' for them - in collaboration with unelected Civil Servants and bankers - to ride rough-shod over the wishes of Labour supporters.

They have equally argued that if a Labour government was accountable to conference, it would merely alienate large sections of the middle ground 'frightened' by the party's 'extremist' image.

Such an argument is comical. After 5 years of Callaghan's government - during which time he pursued a strict right-wing course - Labour's share of the vote last April was the lowest in post-war history. How on earth can soc-

ialist policies lose votes when Callaghan's pro-capitalist ones have demoralised and driven

CONFERENCE

The point is, if Labour's right-wing are so convinced a democratic party is wrong, they should leave. If they run as Labour members, if they are financed by and voted in by Labour supporters, they should abide by conference decisions. It's a free country.

At this year's party conference, the points up for discussion - mandatory re-selection of MPs, election of party leader & NEC responsibility for the Manifesto - are critical for moving towards



Rodgers, Williams and Owen - hiding their opposition to socialist policies under the banner of democracy.

a more democratic party.

They will also be critical if Labour is to win back, in the years ahead, its thousands of activists, its supporters in the unions and among women and Blacks. It has to show them it will pioneer their interests in office and not just restrict support to passing pious motions at conference which are left to gather dust on the shelf.

Benn: tell it as it is



I say to you candidly that even if the TUC were to say that there should be no cruise missiles sited here, and if the Labour Party conference were to say there should be no cruise missile here, there is no reason whatever to believe that a Labour government elected thereafter would in fact remove the cruise missiles. There is no reason to believe it, because there is no mechanism to ensure that it will happen.

Events in Poland in the last few days - which have indicated the desire for democratic control of the trade union movement in Poland - have come at a time that is very helpful for us. It indicates that it's not only in Britain that people in the labour movement want to control their leaders, and not have their leaders control them.

The only way that members of trade unions affiliated to the Labour Party can influence the manifesto for the next general election or be sure that the next Labour Government carries out that policy, is by supporting all three constitutional changes. If these changes were blocked by trade union votes at conference, the trade unions themselves would be voting to weaken their own influence on the Labour Party.

The political demands for full employment, the restoration of the welfare state and for peace, which will be coming from the TUC at Brighton this week, cannot be put into effect unless the trade unions vote in support of these same policies at the Labour Party conference, and vote to ensure that those policies are made clear in the manifesto and are carried out.

Rousing speeches at Labour Party conference, followed by massive votes in support of clear policies, raise legitimate expectations that if a Labour Government is elected those policies will be carried out. But if these policies can be vetoed by the Parliamentary leadership, for example on the abolition of the Lords, and completely different policies can be introduced that are not in the interests of the labour movement, for example, a compulsory wage restraint policy, confidence in the labour movement will be undermined.

The Labour Party can only defeat the Conservatives in the next general election if it says what it means and means what it says.

LCC calls union conference

The Labour Co-ordinating Committee (LCC) has called for a rank and file trade union conference this coming November 15th. Taking place at Leeds Trades Hall, it will discuss the possibility of joint action in the coming period between local Labour Parties and Trade Unions.

Such a conference has a serious potential. Not only could it lead to united action against Thatcher's attempts to hamstring the unions - through the Employment Bill - in order to ram home her mass jobless plans. Equally important, it will give the left in the Labour Party a real base - a class struggle base - on which to advance their fight against the Labour (mis)leaders.

The creation of a united, campaigning Labour Party based on real support in the unions would be the best possible way to halt the Tories in their tracks.

For further information about the conference contact: LCC, 9, Poland St, London W1.

NUCLEAR MADNESS by Terry Viney (Croydon CLP-)



of a war; * it is madness to support the 'war hysteria' of a Thatcher or Carter whose sole aim is to prepare the ground for the 'bully-boy' tactics we saw in Vietnam or Iran.

PLEDGE

Despite this groundswell of opinion, however, Labour Defence spokesperson Bill Rodgers - and others

on the right - continue to support Tory plans to build up a nuclear arsenal. As David Owen recently explained: "Peace...is won by making a bargain and negotiating with the Soviet Union from a position of strength".

What is important at this year's party conference, therefore, is that it clearly commits itself against nuclear weapons and demands that its leaders - who claim to speak in

its name - abide by its decisions. Only a mass campaign by a united labour movement can prevent the introduction of Cruise missiles - planned for 1983 - and the shocking waste of money to be poured into Trident.

CAMPAIGN

The decision by the Labour Party NEC to support the mass demonstration in London on Oct 26th - called by CND - is a major step in this direction. Support for the demonstration must be carried into Labour and trade union branches in the weeks ahead to show Thatcher we mean business.

October 26th must, however, be the beginning, not the end. It must act as a springboard to rouse ever-wider layers in the labour movement into action against Thatcher's nuclear madness.

- NO CRUISE MISSILES!
- SCRAP MISSILES NOT JOBS!
- BRITAIN OUT OF NATO!

NEW PAMPHLET

The LABOUR PARTY

Which Way?

SOCIALIST ACTION 20

FOR A FIGHTING PARTY!

Anne Williams
(NUT)



Late last year Callaghan was almost booed off the platform of a central London anti-cuts rally. He was booed because thousands of trade unionists realised he had no intention of fighting the cuts or any of the other anti-working class policies the Tories are pursuing.

Labour leaders must act

PRESSURE

What Callaghan and his TUC allies have to be told is that we cannot wait another 4 years. Trips back and forth to Downing St and 'chummy' parliamentary debates are not enough. By the time Labour is returned, millions of jobs will have been scrapped and the social services mutilated.

Last February, the combativity of the steelworkers — and the support they won from other unions — showed that the labour movement is prepared to fight for jobs. The mass turnout on March 9th for the TUC demonstration and the 'Day of Action' in May only confirms this.

What is needed is to force the labour leaders to build on this feeling and to launch a campaign to kick the Tories out of office before it is too late.

POLICIES

The demo called by the Labour Party on November 29th is a step in this direction. It must be the start of a serious campaign, however, and should be based on a fighting policies:

- * For the 35-hour week! Redundancies must be opposed by a call for work sharing with no loss of pay.
- * Open the books! Where firms deny their ability to maintain a full workforce, let them open their books for honest inspection by trade union representatives.
- * Nationalise under workers' control! If firms are incapable of providing jobs — or are going bankrupt — they should be taken over under the control of the workers in the plant.
- * Stop the cuts! Instead of cutting social services, they should be extended to provide socially useful work for those 2 million on the dole.

His recent performance at the TUC last month merely confirms this. His sole message to the trade union movement, fighting a desperate battle for jobs, was that they should be willing to support a renewed struggle against the cuts and other anti-working class policies.

That, of course, is a 'do-nothing' approach which has created the present upsurge in the party. More and more party activists are realising that you can't fight the Tories — on cuts or unemployment — by chummy parliamentary debates & promises of what a future Labour government will do.

CHALLENGE

This challenge to the Callaghan leadership — which emerged openly at the last conference — has created major 'splits' in the party. Splits within the PLP and, most significantly, splits between the PLP and the NEC which has been more responsive to the mass pressure building up.

It has been the NEC which has headed the question of party democracy and which has begun to identify with the growing anti-Tory struggles in the country. It was, after all, the NEC which launched the mass anti-cuts rally last year, supported the 15,000 strong demonstration against Thatcher's racist proposals, and which is now leading the opposition to the Tories' nuclear plans.

PRESSURE

There can be no doubt that this shift to the left in the Party, in response to the growing anti-Tory feeling building up among rank-and-file activists, offers unique possibilities. The question is: will the left (particularly that around Benn) take advantage of them? Will it adopt policies and a course of action to take it forward?

Clearly, the test before it lies, in large measure, in its ability to link up with and lead the real struggles that are now developing against the Tories on issues as diverse as 'cuts' to 'racist laws'.

That certain strands in the left are aware of this can be seen clearly in Peter Hain's comments

that: "The Party is far too committed to parliamentarianism, so avoiding creating a mass movement outside capable of exerting sufficient power to make social change feasible".

Hain's comments mark a welcome change from the past where 'left' opposition was considered a matter of pious-resolution passing and not participation in the living struggles. It is this attitude — that sees the need of Labour to build the anti-Tory struggles — that will offer the party a real chance of growth in the years ahead.

MASS PARTY

One of the main concerns before many on the left in the party is: how can we 'revivify' it, how can we once again turn it into a mass party? Considering the decline in party membership over the years, such a question is not unimportant.

Building the Labour Party, however, is not an organisational question. It is deeply linked with the ability of the left to identify with and promote those campaigns working people are forced into to defend their rights and living standards against the Tories.

It is only by being seen as a party fighting for the interests of working people that it can draw back into its ranks those thousands who 'drifted' out under the Wilson/Callaghan leadership. Moreover, it is only by drawing in these forces that a real base can be laid for removing the Jim Callaghans and Shirley Williams once and for all.

PAPER STRATEGY

It is in this sense that the A.E.S. (Alternative Economic Strategy) supported by most of the NEC, is nothing more than a diversion. Calls for 'import controls' or for 'greater state subsidies' are not only incapable of defending the interests of working people.

Worse still, they have no value to the real struggles workers and their allies are involved in today. What use are pledges of what a future Labour government will do for people struggling now to defend their jobs, keep the local hospital open or oppose the racist logic of Tory immigration laws?

The real test before the left in the party — the test to see whether it can really win the confidence of

trade unionists and their allies — is by what it says and does now. Will it support the Lambeth conference against the cuts and support those councils refusing to implement Tory measures? Will it initiate and lead a mass campaign against the Tory policies which are leading to the worst jobless situation since the thirties?

DEMOCRACY

These are the questions that the left-wing of the party must address themselves to. A programme is not a blue-print, divorced from the living struggle, worked out on paper. It should be based on the real demands thrown up in struggle by workers and their allies in defence of their interests: 'For the 35-hour week', 'For a Sliding Scale of Wages', 'No Cuts - Build a Public Works Programme' etc.

The struggle for a fighting Labour Party also involves a struggle for a democratic Labour Party. Already, under mass pressure, the undemocratic mechanisms of Labour's right-wing have come under heavy fire.

Such an offensive has to be deepened in the period ahead to en-

sure that the PLP as a whole will become accountable to conference. As part of this, the left should unite against any attempt by the right-wing — backed up by their allies in the Tory press — to launch witch-hunts in the party and revamp the bans and proscriptions measures. All tendencies should have the democratic right to put their point of view in a free debate.

CLASS STRUGGLE

There can be no doubt that the present swing left in the party reflects the aspirations of millions of workers who want a leadership reflecting their interests against the Tories.

There is every opportunity, in the period ahead, for the party to reflect and take up those policies, making Labour a tool of working people organised around a clear class-struggle programme.

This is the surest way of ensuring that, when a Labour government is re-elected to office, it will be committed to representing the interests of the class that built it — the working class.

Socialist Action Discussion Forum

The Labour Party

Friday 24th October. 8pm. Conway Hall

A TASTE OF PRIOR'S LAW!

Mass picketing won a partial victory at the Brixton Unemployment Office last month. Union activists, Phil Cordell and Richard Cleverley — sacked some time before for 'excessive' union work — were re-instated by the Civil Service Board of Appeal.

While the Board agreed to transfer them to another office and refused to pay them for the time they were sacked, this was clearly a back-down on the part of the Civil Service.

The importance of the Cordell/Cleverley affair, however, was not just the fight-back against victimisation of union militants. It also clearly developed into a trial of strength between pickets and police trying to enforce the type of proposals contained in Prior's new Employment Bill.

ARRESTS

At first, the police placed no restrictions on pickets turning up to defend Cordell's rights. Gradually, however, they became more intimidat-

ing and obstructive.

They began restricting the number of pickets to two per gate, forcing others back onto a strip of wasteland opposite the UBO. When, on August 12th, a delegation of 12 — including 2 Labour MPs, Reg Race and Stuart Holland — went to speak to the police chief, a CPSA official was promptly arrested.

The surge forward of the crowd opposite in protest was met with gross police brutality as 17 pickets were arrested and placed on charges of 'obstruction'. The police action — which received a lot of publicity — is a clear foretaste of what we can expect when the Prior Bill goes through.

UNION LEADERS

What has been the attitude of the CPSA leaders? They were instructed by conference to take a clear lead in defence of Cordell and Cleverley. Instead of implementing conference decisions, however, and backing up members victimised for union activity, Thomas and others joined in the witch-hunt.

Spending most of his time denouncing Cordell for his political affiliations, Thomas actually went so far as to tell MPs Reg Race and Stuart Holland, who backed the picket line, to keep their noses out!

It was clear that Cordell and Cleverley's re-instatement was not won with any help from the leaders of the union. And this is the danger. If they were firm in their opposition to Prior's Bill, they could kick it out tomorrow. It is because some see it as a useful tool for disciplining their own militants that it is such a threat.

Phil Edwardes



CHILDREN LOBBY T.U.C.



Carol Rees (Peckham CLP)

"We Want More Nurseries!" was the demand raised by a number of women and children at a lobby of the TUC conference on September 4th.

The lobby was the first activity planned by the NCCC (National Child Care Campaign) launched only a month before at a conference in London of over 200 delegates from the labour and women's movements.

Calling on TUC delegates to begin implementing — and not just talking about — their 'Charter for the Under 5s', the lobby met with a positive response and many delegates agreed to ask their branches to affiliate to the campaign.

CUTS

Such support will be seriously needed in the coming years. However, the decision to cut local authorities' finances by another 2% will mean not only an end to building new nurseries but that

those few that already exist will be axed twice as fast.

Already, many local campaigns — such as those in Wandsworth or Stoke — are concerned with fighting the cuts in existing provisions. As Hesaltine's cash limits begin to be felt, we can be sure that many working mothers in other areas will begin to be drawn into similar struggles.

It will not be enough, however, for the NCCC just to support such local campaigns, fighting councils to preserve existing facilities or marginally extend them.

NATIONAL

Vital though this local work is, it will become increasingly important in the period ahead to launch a national initiative that will put the blame fairly and squarely where it belongs: on the government's shoulders.

Such a perspective could draw together all those fighting their local struggles, give them a

sense of strength and unity and make women's rights — the right to work — a national issue which cannot be ignored.

As with the National Abortion Campaign, a key element of building such action must be a struggle inside the unions and local Labour Parties to convince them that women's rights is an issue they cannot ignore or walk away from.

PLANNING CTTEE

The decision at the Steering Cttee on August 3rd to set up a Labour Party subgroup to work through the Labour Parties nationally is an important step in this direction. A similar orientation must also be taken towards the unions.

Publishing a regular newsletter and a booklet 'Nurseries: How and Why to Fight for them', agreed at the Steering Cttee, can be useful tools in publicising the campaign and getting information into the labour movement.

If the NCCC moves out boldly in the coming months — developing publicity and launching bold action — it could begin to draw thousands into concrete struggles for a women's rights.

If you would like further information about the NCCC — or would like to affiliate your local LP/trade union/women's group etc — please contact: NCCC, c/o Surrey Docks Child Care Project, Dockland Settlement, Redriff Rd., London SE 16.

WOMEN and JOBS CRISIS

Jane Ansell (Finchley CLP)

DIVISIVE

Back in 1952, when the welfare state was set up, Beveridge wrote: "The attitude of a housewife to gainful employment should not be the same as a single woman; she has other duties. In the next 30 years, housewives as mothers have adequate work in ensuring the continuance of the British race and British ideals..."

Millions of women may since have been drawn into the labour force — representing the single fastest growing area of union membership — but Beveridge's attitude still lingers on.

Society still sees women's role as basically a domestic one and places numerous obstacles in the path of her getting a job.

OBSTACLES

Married women, for example, currently occupy two thirds of the female labour force. While going to work, however, they are still expected to bear the burden of a wife and mother. This is reflected in the scandal of nursery provision which the Tories are trying to further reduce.

It is this view of women as child-minders first which explains the discrimination she finds in the workplace. First, she is hived off into jobs which are considered 'women's work' — typists, cooks, cleaners, teachers etc. — and unfit for men.

Second, she receives lower rates of pay. It's not so much a question of not getting the same rate as a man. It's a question of being eligible for only a small range of female jobs which are seen as less important and are therefore worse paid.

TORIES

The Tories' economic policies will only worsen the situation. At a time when women are seeking to challenge their second-class status, Thatcher's government wants to push us back into the home as 'domestic servants'.

Cutbacks in the social services will not only mean women's jobs will be axed at a faster pace than men's. Cutting nursery provision, Old People's Homes etc. will place on the shoulders of the family — that is, the woman — all the tasks that should be undertaken by the state.

Moreover, the Tories' Employment Bill will worsen the situation further by denying women, who have children, the automatic right to re-employment.

If the Tories succeed in their offensive, it will not only be a setback for women's rights, but for all working people. Thatcher knows that, by creating a climate that woman's place is in the home, she can weaken and divide the labour movement's response to her policies.

She knows that she can turn men against women in the scramble for jobs that is opening up as unemployment looms ever larger on the horizon.

She also knows that, by making women dependent again on men, she can create a conservative 'brake' on the militancy of male workers and their readiness to strike. The action by wives of Hadfield steelworkers — opposing the strike — is the type of labour the Tories want to develop.

LABOUR

Fighting back against the Tories therefore means fighting to win the labour movement to pioneer and support women's rights. Although women are half the present workforce, only 32% are unionised — a fact which reveals the attitude of union leaders to women workers.

Moreover, even when unionised, women are seriously under-represented in the union structure. In CAWU, for example, with over 80% women membership, women occupy a minimal number of places on the Executive Committee.

If women are to preserve — and extend — their rights, they must fight to win the labour movement to take women's rights seriously.

FIGHTBACK

This means getting the unions to pioneer women's rights in concrete action. The fact that the TUC was pushed into supporting mass actions against the Corrie Bill was a good example of what can be achieved with some determined effort.

Similar struggles have to be waged to make the unions — and Labour Party — take up the fight against nursery closures, the need to unionise women and to seek affirmative action in job prospects.

Why should women — purely on account of sexual bias — be excluded from a whole area of employment from engineering to shipbuilding? In certain countries, such as the USA, major break-throughs in these fields have occurred. It's time we had break-throughs of our own here.

Beyond Fragments

by Sylvia Brookes

The much-awaited 'Beyond the Fragments' conference took place on the last Saturday in August in Leeds. Over 1400 activists, involved in various local activities, turned up firmly clutching their copies of the now-famous book.

Overcoming the 'fragment' — and charting a way forward — was, however, more difficult than any of them had thought. After a full day's discussion — in workshops and plenary sessions — the only thing they could agree on was to hold another conference in several months time.

SURPRISING

This is hardly surprising. The 'Beyond the Fragments' current born was out of a rejection of the traditions of the marxist left. The authors of the book — basing themselves on the experience of the 'libertarian' wing of the women's movement — advanced a different 'method' of politics which, they claimed, the marxist left had overlooked.

Such a method opposed to the idea of a clear programme one based upon

'personal experience', 'local actions' and organisational 'diffuseness'. The aim of the conference was to see how far this new 'politics' could be carried forward and, perhaps, organised around.

It is difficult to see, however, how any form of unity can be created when politics is seen not as coming together around a set of ideas but purely around 'personal' experience. People don't have the same experience

EVIDENCE

This was shown most clearly in the afternoon workshops which were all asked to discover "what we have in common as socialists". The 5-minute reportback revealed, at the plenary session, that it wasn't very much.

Any idea of uniting together around a set of common actions — such as fighting the attacks being launched by Thatcher on social services, employment and union rights — was firmly rejected. That smacked too much of being part of the tradition of the far left which, of course, many activists disagreed with.

Moreover, the idea of seeking to build an organisa-

tion uniting together the single-issue campaigns people were active in was also rejected. It would involve, wouldn't it, agreeing on a limited programme and smacked again too much of that dreaded word 'party'.

NEGATIVE

The only point of agreement that seemed to emerge at the conference was a common hostility to the far left. This hostility was directed against the stress placed by marxists on a serious organisation, clear programme and need for national action against the Tories.

At a time when such activity is desperately needed — as the mass anti-Corrie campaign showed — the criticism of the 'left' by the conference marked a clear political retreat. It represented a middle-class retreat away from the political struggle in favour of 'personal, life-style' politics.

The only point that seemed to arise is: why bother to organise a conference to discuss how are you are not going to do anything.



A female plumber is still a rarity

Racist Net Tightens

Late last month, the Tories published their White Paper on Nationality. 'White Paper' is apt. The document represents yet another stage in the hate campaign launched by the government against Black people.

As Rudi Narayan, well-known Black activist, explains in his recent pamphlet 'Passport to Racism': "...it is not numbers but race and colour that is the driving force



London-Heathrow Airport Arrivals Mike Sheridan (IFL)

behind the government's nationality proposals".

RIGHTS

The importance of these racist laws is not only that they discriminate against Black people at the ports of entry. It is that they help create a climate of legalised racism which permeates the lives of all those Blacks already here.

Under the provisions of the 1971 Immigration Act, suspected 'illegal immigrants' can be arrested *without warrant* and deported *without right of appeal*. This denial of democratic rights gives the police the green light to harass and intimidate the Black community.

The recent 'fishing raids' we have witnessed - carried out with gestapo-like precision - are a few examples of the police in action. Is it any wonder that areas like Southall and Brixton live in a constant terror of police raids?

IMMIGRATION

Under the White Paper's proposals, citizens are divided into those whose ancestors were born in this country - the overwhelming majority of whites - and those whose ancestors weren't. These latter - mainly Black - are then sub-divided into two further categories.

Such a division merely mirrors that already in operation under the 1971 Immigration Act. What in effect it means is simply that, while white Commonwealth immigrants will be free to come and go as they please, Blacks will be rigorously kept out. It enforces the present colour bar.

Such racist bias is clearly in line with Thatcher's 'concern', before the last election, that there was a threat of the country being

Len Wagstaff (Vauxhall CLP)

DEMAGOGUES

Unfortunately, the Labour leaders find it difficult to challenge the racist bias of such acts. Jim Callaghan and others were only too willing -- when in office -- to implement the 1971 Immigration Act and devise a Green Paper on Nationality which is virtually identical to the Tories' present one.

The dangers of this attitude are only too obvious. By backing down before the racist offensive, they have helped give credence to the idea that Blacks are a 'problem' and have opened up the labour movement to racist demagogues.

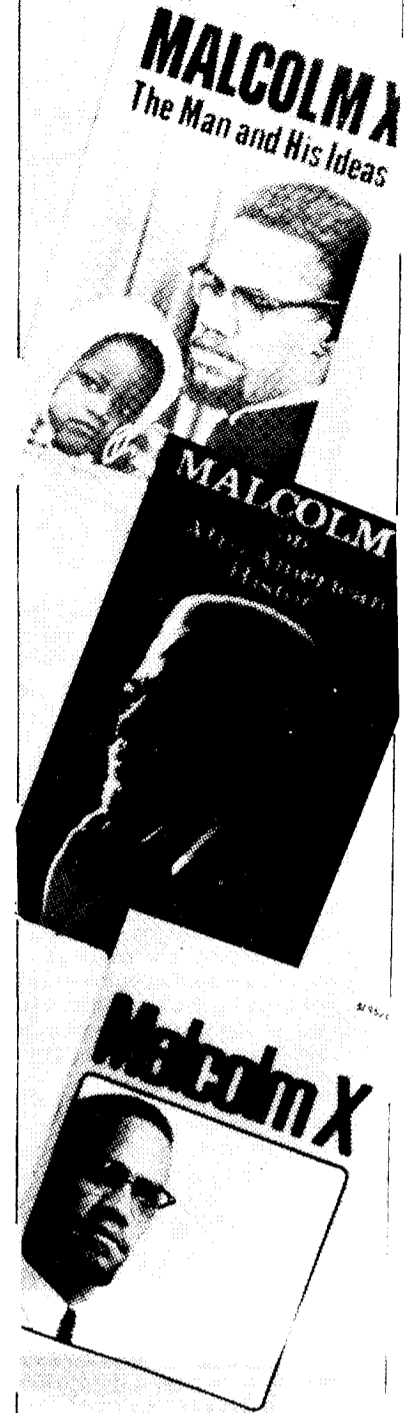
Such a situation can be lethal at a time of mass unemployment and lead - unless challenged - to certain layers of workers seeing Blacks not as allies but as a threat in the years ahead.

FIGHT-BACK

Opposition to the Labour leaders' weak-kneed attitude is mounting, however. The mass CARL demonstration of 20,000 last November won the support of both Black organisations and the Labour Party. That promising beginning must now be built upon.

Already CARL has promoted a number of meetings nationally - from Brixton to Bristol - to win support against the Nationality Act. It is considering a conference this Autumn and a mass rally early in the New Year.

Such action will be vital if the Tory racist curbs are to be defeated.



Copies available from:
PO Box No 65,
London SW16 1NN

S.L. CARL

by Mark Challen (Peckham YS)

Over 100 people - representing the Black and labour movement - packed a S. L. CARL meeting on September 10th to discuss the racist nature of the present immigration laws and the proposed Nationality Act.

The opening speaker, J. Plummer (JCWI) dealt with the racist bias in the current immigration laws. An estimated 200 Blacks, for example, are at any one time languishing in jail without reason and without the right of 'habeus corpus'. Their rights, he stressed, are even less than those detained under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The second speaker, Rudy Narayan, was more eloquent and emotive. While Plummer gave the facts of the situation, Narayan explained the oppression Blacks suffer - under the immigration laws - from first-hand experience. He laid particular stress on the past - and present - reluctance of the Labour leaders to take up the defence of Black rights.

STOP THE TORY RACIST LAWS

Although John Tilley (Labour Lambeth) concentrated on the 'particularly obnoxious' aspects of the Tory Nationality White Paper, he echoed Narayan's point that Labour's record was a disaster. The previous Labour government's Green Paper on Nationality was, he said, worse than the present Tory one.

The problem of the Labour Party's attitude was underlined further by contributions from the floor which explained how the Labour leaders, instead of fighting racist laws, has competed with the Tories in introducing them.

The general feeling of the meeting was that it would take a growing movement - mobilising thousands on the streets - before they could be forced to defend Black rights and implement conference decisions to repeal the racist immigration laws.

The general enthusiasm of the meeting - reflected in the £82 collection at the end - showed that building CARL into a mass movement was the serious aim of all concerned.

If you would like further info about CARL, contact: B' Swart, c/o Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, SE 5.

AFGHANISTAN: Debate

Terry Shew (Peckham YS)

"Whatever Workers Action might say, the truth of the matter is that it has backed down before the anti-Soviet hysteria being whipped up by Carter and Thatcher".

This was the message Tony Roberts gave in a debate organised between *Socialist Action* and *Workers Action* last month, at Lansbury House, on the question of Soviet involvement in Afghanistan.

PROGRESSIVE

Roberts, of *Socialist Action*, went on to explain that, despite the bureaucratic nature of the Soviet leadership, the entry of the Red Army into Afghanistan is a progressive act.

"They did not go in -- as in Czechoslovakia -- to crush the workers and peasants but to defend their interests against the CIA-inspired guerrillas out to overturn the massive reform programme there".

This reform programme, he pointed out, was a major step forward. The PDPA had launched a mass literacy drive, granted rights to women, recognised trade unions, organised land reform and given autonomy to oppressed national minorities.

DEFENSIVE

Moreover, he pointed out, the Soviet intervention was not an act of aggression (as pointed in the



Western press). It was clearly designed to protect their borders from what was seen as a direct threat if a Washington-backed regime managed to seize power there.

It was because the Soviet army had destroyed the CIA-inspired guerrilla bands -- masquerading as 'freedom fighters' -- that the Western press had launched such a virulent campaign. They have since used this intervention -- which scotched their manoeuvres in the area -- to launch a mass outcry against the USSR and to justify their nuclear arms race.

"It is a primary task of socialists", he concluded, "not to join in the hysteria against the USSR -- which in this instance is protecting workers rights -- but against the West which is cynically using it as an excuse for rushing into a war drive". Speaking for *Workers Action*, Sean Matgamna ridiculed the idea that the CIA was involved in promoting guerrilla resistance to the PDPA regime. He argued that the real problem was that the Stalinist PDPA lacked any social base among the workers and peasants and that its reform programme was

bureaucratically installed.

The Soviet intervention was designed to prop up this minority regime which was losing contact with the mass of the population. Such an intervention, however, clearly helped the 'reactionary bands' by alienating workers and peasants still further.

In that sense, while calling for an exposure of the Western hypocrisy, it was also necessary to demand the withdrawal of Soviet troops which have not defended but threatened -- progressive developments in Afghanistan.

DEBATE

The debate that followed was both lively and informative, speakers from both sides putting forward their views in turn. A key focus for the debate that followed was the USSR's motivation in entering Afghanistan.

If, as Matgamna implied, the USSR moved into Afghanistan on an 'expansionist' move, one speaker pointed out, that would seriously undermine one's analysis of it as a parasitic bureaucracy of a workers state. Surely, the speaker continued, socialists' criticism of the USSR is that -- as in Vietnam -- it has been prepared to sell out revolutions around the world in order to gain 'detente' with the west.

Why on the earth would it jeopardise this 'detente' merely to invade a backward, poor country? As Roberts summed up, such a move just wouldn't make sense.

Editorial

BI-WEEKLY SOCIALIST ACTION

Socialist Action has been coming out for almost a year now on a monthly basis. Its supporters are active in most of the struggles in the labour movement - from the fight against the cuts to that against racist immigration laws - and the paper always seeks to reflect these struggles in its pages.

Against the lies and distortions that appear in the Fleet Street press, it has always sought to take up the interests of those in struggle and publicise them as widely as possible.

We have increasingly felt, however, that a monthly *Socialist Action* is inadequate for this task. The attacks launched by the present Tory government have led ever wider layers of working people to be drawn into action in defence of basic rights and living standards - from the fight to keep open St Benedicts hospital to the struggle for nurseries (both threatened by the cuts)

For *Socialist Action* to reflect these struggles - to become a paper to publicise them and argue for them - it must come out more regularly. It must become a tribune arguing for class-struggle policies within the labour movement against both the Tories and their right wing 'shadows' in the Labour Party.

FINANCE

We have therefore decided to set a dead-line for a bi-weekly *Socialist Action* next Easter. Moving towards a more regular publication will, however, need funds.

Unlike the Fleet Street press, *Socialist Action* has to exist on a shoe string. It only manages to survive on the sales it makes and the donations which you - our readers and supporters - give us each month. If we are to be able to go bi-weekly next Easter it will mean launching a serious fund drive to mount it in the interim period. Taking into account the ravages of inflation, we have therefore set a goal of £10,000 to be achieved by next Easter as the minimum required to come out more regularly.

One of our supporters in Vauxhall has already donated £200 to kick the fund drive off. Whether we reach our target of £10,000 in the next six months will depend on what you - our readers and supporters - are prepared to give. For this reason we would urge you to 'dig deep' to help us reach our objectives.

FUND CHART

In future issues of *Socialist Action* we intend including a 'fund chart' to trace our progress towards meeting the target of £10,000. Whatever you can manage to give will therefore be gratefully received. A particularly helpful way of contributing would be to take out a bankers order making regular contributions to the paper every month.

What We Stand For

Socialist Action sees as its central aim building, within the labour movement, a class-struggle left-wing fighting for socialist policies against those which lost Labour the last election and disillusioned thousands of Labour supporters.

Such a left-wing should support not only policies in the interests of working people but also their allies among the youth, Blacks, women and oppressed national minorities. It is only by showing that Labour champions the rights of all the oppressed and exploited that a really united offensive can be organised against the Tories (and their right-wing allies in the labour movement).

Socialist Action believes that a fighting left wing should be built around the following demands:

- * Hands off the unions! No curbs on the right to strike or picket!
- * For the 35-hour week! End unemployment by work-sharing (with no loss of pay) and introduce a mass public works programme for those already on the dole.
- * Oppose all wage curbs. For wage increases tied to the cost of living to offset inflation.
- * Open the books of all companies claiming inability to pay a decent living wage or threatening redundancies. Nationalise those that put profit before people.
- * Tax the rich not the poor. No cuts in the social services - for social spending to be tied to increases in the cost of living.
- * For women's rights. For the right of all women to abortion on demand, free nurseries, equal pay and opportunity. Support NAC.
- * Fight racism. Repeal all racist immigration laws. Defend the right of Black people to organise as they see fit in the community & labour movement.
- * For the right of all oppressed nations to determine their own future - Get the troops out of Ireland now!
- * For a safe environment. End nuclear reactors and base an energy strategy on coal. Explore alternative energy resources.

Socialist Action supporters, while fighting for the above demands, seek the widest possible unity of all forces in the labour movement around concrete issues. They also seek to encourage the widest democracy in the labour movement to allow all currents to argue for their point of view and for decisions to be mandatory on Labour leaders.

If you would like to know more about Socialist Action - or contribute to it - write to: Socialist Action, PO Box No 65, London SW16 1NN.

POLAND: Workers W

by Steve Randell
(Lambeth Central CLP)

Faced with a massive workers' upsurge that has shaken the country, the Polish government has been forced to beat a major retreat. The deal it signed with Baltic port workers on Sept 1st was a staggering blow to its own bureaucratic rule.

The extent of this retreat can be seen from the fact that it was forced to concede the right of workers to form free trade unions and to strike - two central demands of the MKS (Interfactory Strike Committee).

As Lech Waleśa - the most prominent strike leader - commented: "We've gotten all that's possible in the current situation. It's what we wanted and dreamed of - we've got independent trade unions".

FIRST STEP

Winning the right to organise in independent unions was not the only concession the repressive regime was forced to make to get the workers back to work.

It was also compelled to pledge to limit censorship, meet many of the strikers' economic demands, allow access to the media by religious groups and release more than two dozen dissidents arrested for supporting the strike wave.

Freeing well-known anti-bureaucratic activists such as Jacek Kuron from jail, the government was forced to agree that "Radio, television, the press and publishing houses will serve to express the multiplicity of thoughts and opinions".

STRIVE WAVE

The massive upsurge that led to this breakthrough for socialist democracy had a modest beginning. It started around opposition to the sharp rise in



Strikers defend gates of Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk. W organizing center for strike movement.

meat prices announced by the government on July 1st. It was soon apparent, however, that this was only a spark to the long-smouldering hatred by workers of the repressive regime that exists in Poland.

Strikes began to spread. Within weeks, Gdansk, a major port of the Baltic sea, was paralysed. More than 50,000 out of the city's 500,000 workforce downed tools, led by the workers at the Lenin shipyard. Soon after, shipyard workers, bus and streetcar drivers in the

neighbouring cities of Gdynia and Sopot struck.

By August 18th, there were over 149 workplaces reportedly closed in these three cities. Moreover, strikes began to spread to other Baltic ports, to Warsaw and Lodz and - most significantly of all - to the coalfields in Silesia (base of Communist Party leader Eduard Gierek.)

STRIKE CTTEES

Rejecting the state-controlled

Thatcher's and C

J. McLaughlin (EEPTU)

As the strike wave in Poland grew, Western leaders tumbled over each other in order to identify with the Polish flag. On his election drive in Alabama, President Carter exclaimed that "The working men and women of Poland have set an example for all those who cherish freedom..." Similar words have come from Mrs Thatcher.

But as they identified with the workers of Gdansk and Szczecin, the words must have stuck in their throats. For they know all too well that the strike victory in Poland cuts right across their aim of convincing workers - in the USA or Britain - that they will have to accept massive sacrifices in the years ahead.

UNION RIGHTS

What was the central demand of the Polish strikes? For free trade

unions and the right to strike. How can Mrs Thatcher praise their efforts 'in the cause of freedom' when her government was elected on a union-bashing programme? Isn't Prior's 'Employment Act' designed to destroy those very rights the Tories pretend to support in Poland?

And what about the demands for protection against inflation and a shorter working week that were central to the Polish trade unionists' strike? Hasn't the Thatcher government, at a time when inflation is raging at over 20%, indulged in major confrontations with workers over pay demands? Weren't the steel workers supposed to be the first lambs to be sacrificed in her drive to lower living conditions?

FREEDOM

The hypocrisy of the Tories -

and their right-wing allies in the Labour Party - can be seen even more clearly on the question of civil rights. Some of the key demands of the Polish workers were for greater freedom of speech and access to information about Poland's socio-economic situation.

How the Tories can support this when - more than any other government since the war - they have clamped down on civil liberties is a mystery. Didn't the Tories encourage, for example, the British Steel Corporation's lawsuit against the BBC for refusing to reveal the 'mole' who leaked 'secret' documents?

Didn't the Tories - on their coming to power - arm the police with greater powers to victimise and intimidate pickets and the Black ghettos?

REASON

The real reason the Tories -

in Mass Struggle



ers are using the shipyard as

which directly challenged their special privileges and repressive rule. The demands for 'freedom of speech' and an end to the perks enjoyed by the secret police and party apparatus were cases in point.

RESPONSE

The immediate reaction of the Stalinist leadership was, of course, to denounce the strikers as 'anti-socialist'. Eduard Giereck appeared on television and — as in the previous strike waves of 1970 and 1976 — denounced the threat of "anarchist and anti-socialist groups". Dissidents began to be arrested and Soviet intervention 'threatened'.

If Giereck's point was true, of course, it would be a damning indictment of a supposedly 'socialist' government that they had performed so badly that the workers preferred a return to capitalism.

But the demands of the Polish workers were crystal-clear. They were not asking for a return to capitalism but an end to bureaucratic rule. As Walesa said: "We don't want to change the socialist ownership of the means of production, but we want to be real masters of the factories."

BUREAUCRACY

What the workers were demanding — what they have demanded in the three strike waves that have hit the country — is an end to Stalinist totalitarianism. A clear example of this was seen, just before the strike wave began, in the case of one Maciek Szczeplanski, a protege of Giereck himself.

Szczeplanski was dismissed from his role, as head of the state Radio-TV Committee, for

corruption. This guardian of 'proletarian right-thinking' was accused of owning ten lavish residences (some equipped with swimming pools) and of raking off a million dollars out of a deal he negotiated between Polish and British TV.

For Polish workers, faced with a sharp rise in meat prices, Szczeplanski symbolised the whole ruling caste. It was against this caste — and not against the socialised means of production — that the Polish workers were turning their hatred: a caste which keeps them in the dark as to the real facts, denies them elementary rights and — while calling on them to make sacrifices — lives off the fat of the land.

CONCESSIONS

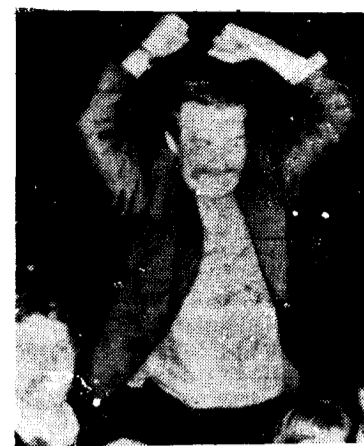
Faced with the rising determination of Polish workers, the bureaucracy's mixture of threats and appeals cut no ice. Even the Church — which had previously won some credibility as a defender of human rights — began to be discarded when it came to the aid of the regime and urged the strikers, on August 23rd, to return to work.

Aware that the strike could not be broken, and frightened that its demands might escalate still further, it was at this point that 're-shuffles' among the bureaucratic leaders began to occur. On Sept 6th, it was announced that Giereck had suffered a 'heart attack' and he was replaced by Stanislaw Kania.

The credibility of Giereck's 'heart attack' can be measured by the fact that this is exactly the same excuse used for the replacement of Gumulka during the strikes ten years earlier. The real facts are, of course, that Giereck's usefulness was used up and that a new leader was needed to negotiate a series of 'concessions' with the strikers.

WHAT THEY FOUGHT FOR

- * Abolition of 'commercial prices'.
- * Selection of management on the basis of qualifications and not party membership. Privileges of the secret police and party members to be eliminated.
- * Introduction of food coupons for meat and meat products.
- * Reduction on the age of retirement for women to 50 and men to 55.
- * Conformity of old-aged pensions with what has actually been paid in.
- * Improvements in the working conditions of the health services to insure full medical care for all workers.
- * Assurances of a reasonable number of child-care centres and kindergartens for working mothers.
- * Paid maternity leave for 3 years.
- * An increase in the commutor's allowance from 40 to 100 zlotys.
- * A day of rest on Saturday workers in the 'brigade system' to be compensated for the loss of a free Saturday with increased leave etc.
- * Acceptance of free trade unions in accordance with convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation.
- * Guarantee of the right to strike and the security of strikers.
- * Guarantee of the right of free speech and publication.
- * The release of all political prisoners.



Strike leader Lech Walesa

- * Right of mass media to spread information about the strike, the formation of Strike Committees and its demands.
- * Making public information about the strike, the formation of the socio-economic crisis in Poland and allowing all sectors to take part in the discussion on a reform programme.
- * Compensation of all workers taking part in the strike.
- * An increase of 2,000 zlotys (£25) a month in the basic pay of all workers.
- * Guaranteed automatic increases in pay on the basis of increases in prices.
- * Full supply of food to the domestic market — exports being limited to surpluses.

OPPOSITION

One of Kania's first speeches promised democracy and satisfaction of the strikers' demands. The agreement by the bureaucrats to recognise free trade unions — and the right to strike — is clearly seen by them as a necessary concession.

They probably hope, however, that by limiting the role of the unions to issues such as 'pay and conditions' and by getting the strikers to recognise the Communist Party as the leading force in the state, to retain their political control.

If so, they are indulging in wishful thinking. The Polish free trade unions — which are now being built — will not be fobbed off that easily.

LEADERSHIP

As they develop and grow, they

will become the key instrument in advancing the demands of all workers who have come to see them — and not the government — as representing their true interests.

This was shown in the strike itself which raised far more demands than merely economic ones: the lifting of censorship, the freeing of political prisoners, an end to persecution, access to information on Poland's economic and social problems — all these are part of the strike and will continue to be advanced by the new leaders thrown up by the MKS.

In fighting for these demands, the independent trade unions can become a central instrument for leading Polish workers to complete the struggle for genuine workers' democracy and socialism.

Thatcher's Hypocrisy

and right-wing Labourites — have professed sympathy for the Polish strikers, even though it sticks in their throat, is quite simple. By posing as champions of the Polish strikers, they hope they can blunt the full impact and example of this working-class struggle.

They hope to twist it to try and re-inforce anti-communism by falsely identifying the Stalinist bureaucrats as 'communist'. But the more the facts about Poland become known — what the strikers are doing, saying and fighting for — the more such efforts will fall flat.

FACTS

The facts are that the strikers in Gdansk and Szczecin were not acting to re-introduce a capitalism that was thrown out over 30 years ago. They know only too well that the

nationalised and planned economy has made possible great advances in industrialisation and the social services.

What they were challenging was the concentration of power in the hands of a parasitic bureaucracy which maintains its privileges by preventing them from democratically controlling economic decisions.

Bureaucratic handling of the economy, by this ruling caste, had led to economic stagnation, shortages and inflationary trends which the bureaucrats hoped to resolve by cutting the living standards of Polish workers. This is what the increase in meat prices was all about.

FACADE

The aim of the mass upsurge in Poland was, in this sense, not to undermine socialism but to eradicate those forces who are its

worst enemy. This was practically admitted by the *New York Times* (Aug. 30) which stated:

"... both the Communist authorities and the capitalist bankers recognise a convergence of interests in stability — so much so that one Western banker who asked not to be cited by name said that if the Russians actually did intervene in Poland, the nation's creditworthiness might actually increase".

Behind the facade of sympathy for the Polish workers, they really fear and hate them because, in defying the Polish bureaucrats' austerity plans, an example can be set to Western workers to combat their austerity plans.

GAINS

In this sense, the massive victory won by the Polish workers is grim news indeed for the



Strikers in Gdansk discuss the demands to put to the government

Thatcher and Carters of this world, no matter how much they pretend otherwise. It has set an example to workers everywhere how to use the enormous power they possess to defend their interests.

It has taught them to defend their right to unionise, to defend their right to a job and decent living standards, to defend their right to determine how they — the producers of all wealth — should run the economy.

Equally important, it has shown workers the true face of communism which resides not in the bureaucratic misleaders but in the workers who formed the strike committees. This, in itself, will break down anti-communist prejudice, not build it. It will make it harder for Mrs Thatcher and her ilk to get workers to accept 'cuts' while, as part of her war drive, she lavishes millions on obsolete weapons.

FASCISM: How to fight it

Over the past decade, the question of the NF has loomed large in left circles. What does it represent? What sort of threat does it pose today? How should socialists deal with it?

These are the questions that have been a major source of debate on the left and led to numerous polemics. Below, Bob Swart — leading anti-racist campaigner — looks at the experience of the past ten years and seeks to draw some conclusions.

Q. Are there dangers in using the word 'fascist' lightly.

A. If you read the radical press, you can often find figures from Enoch Powell to the Rev. Ian Paisley referred to as 'fascist'. The fact that such diverse figures can be labelled in this way is a sign of the confusion over the term used.

This can be dangerous. Careless definitions can actually 'lull' people as to the real dangers of a fascist threat when it arises. This is what happened in the 30s when the German CP labelled the Social-Democrats as 'social-fascists' and refused to unite against them in a serious struggle against Hitler's blackshirts.

Q. What are the conditions for the rise of mass fascist movement?

A. The most important point is that a mass fascist movement can only develop out of a serious defeat for the workers' movement. Fascism finds its social base in the 'middle

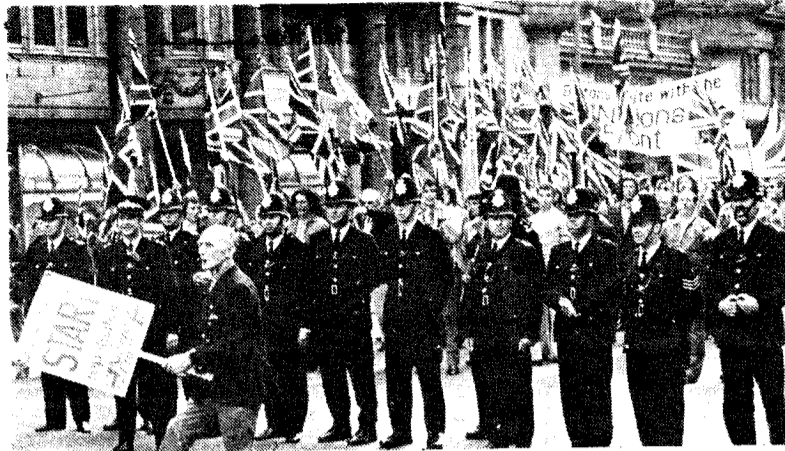


Photo: Andrew Wiard (Report) National Front march in London

strata' and unemployed — all those who are 'squeezed' by the crisis and who are demoralised by the inability of the workers' movement to solve it.

It is out of these demoralised layers that the fascists begin to recruit by posing as a 'radical alternative' to the formulas of either the workers or ruling class parties. You can see that today with the attraction the NF exerts over young, unemployed worker youth.

If the workers' movement is bold however, in fighting for a solution to the crisis, then many of these from the 'middle strata' and from the unemployed can be won to the

perspective of socialism.

Q. Is fascism a threat today?

A. To read a lot of the 'left press' with their 'No platform for Fascists' slogan — you'd think it was just around the corner. That's wrong. The major threat to the workers' movement today doesn't come from a small, insignificant ultra-right group but the Tory government.

To pose the NF as a major threat can actually distract people from the real menace of the Tories who are seeking to attack the unions, create mass unemployment, sharpen racist laws etc. Only if the Tories get away with these attacks will wide layers

become demoralised and the fascists grow.

The key task of socialists today is not to concentrate on the NF but on defeating the Tory offensive. Many on the left — so keen to indulge in anti-NF activity — are reluctant to get involved in a serious campaign, for example, to stop the racist laws (such as CARL).

Q. Just the same, the racist and chauvinist traditions in the labour movement can be played on by the NF to gain support.

A. Of course, and this is why it is important to take up these issues which are breeding ground for the ultra-right. By building mass action against racist laws, against abortion restrictions, one is undermining the potential for fascism to grow in the future. It is much more important, at this stage, than confrontations with the NF.

Q. Nevertheless, the danger is that unless one stops them while they are small, it will be too late.

A. No-one doubts that the fascists will have to be stopped by force. The question is — by whom? The campaign led by ultra-left groups to break up the NF's meetings etc is based on a totally wrong assessment of the situation today.

It may temporarily discourage the NF but it does nothing to eliminate the breeding grounds of fascism — racism and chauvinism etc — which will provide plenty of future NF

members in the period ahead.

Q. Do you think confrontations then are counter-productive?

A. At this stage they are. Of course, if the majority of workers in a given community were prepared to tackle the NF — as they did Mosley's blackshirts in the East End in the 30s — that would be quite different.

It is quite different for a few isolated groups, with no backing in the labour movement, to do so. In the first place, such 'vanguardist' actions only leave the mass of workers as 'spectators'. In the second place, it suggests that the left, instead of fighting for democratic rights, is seen as being involved in a campaign to destroy them.

Our task is not to substitute for the workers movement. Our task is to politically win the workers' movement so that it can begin the job of eradicating the NF filth.

Q. What about calling on the NF to be banned by the government?

A. That would be a major error. It would be a mistake to call on the government to suppress anyone's rights. The left will easily be the first to suffer any curtailment of democratic rights. Look what happened a few years back when the ANL made this call. All demonstrations — of the left and right — were cancelled.

Even if our meetings are attacked — as they have been — calling on the government to ban the NF is still an error. Instead, we should call for the formation of defence guards. By posing the NF as the aggressor, intent upon destroying democratic rights, it will be possible to win wide layers who will see these thugs in their real light.

Following the defeat of Labour in the last election, a major debate has opened up in the Labour Party. Both the politics and undemocratic manoeuvres of the Callaghan leadership have come under sharp fire.

What attitude should socialists take to this development? Is it a process to be supported and participated in or, on the contrary, to be criticised as a 'dead-end'?

Below, Steve Freeman of the SWP and Mike Rodney of Socialist Action put forward their views.

SWP

Since I don't think that your article on the SWP and the Labour Party helped explain the differences between Socialist Action and the SWP, I welcome your offer allowing me to try and clarify these differences for your readers.

What I think Cde Rodney's article failed to do was to spell out a number of hidden assumptions about the Labour Party. It is these assumptions I wish to focus on.

To begin, we should ask ourselves the question: is the LP a bourgeois party with a working class support, or a workers' party with a degenerate (or deformed) leadership? Without actually saying so in so many words, it is the latter view of the LP that your article puts over.

You say, for example, that the LP was 'born out of the struggles of the unions', that 'it remains the political arm of the trade union movement' & that '10 million workers continue to vote for it'.

While nobody can deny these facts, you use them to imply Labour is a workers' party. Therefore, you see a need to 'struggle against its bureaucratic leaders'. It would follow from your assumptions that socialists should join this party to change its degenerate leadership. This is what you see as the 'way forward for the labour movement'.

BOURGEOIS

The SWP sees the LP as a bourgeois party with working class support. But by what criterion should marxists decide the class nature of a political party?

First, it is not according to who votes for it. Millions of workers vote Tory, probably greater numbers than any other class, yet this does not make the Tory Party a workers' party.

Second, it is not according to the membership of the party. Perhaps the majority of NF members are working class in origin but this does not make the NF a workers party.

Instead, marxists need to consider the nature of the party's politics in order to understand its class nature. In this respect, it is the politics of those with real power in the party rather than the latest recruit which is crucial.

TRENDS

The two major political tendencies in the LP are liberal-imperialism & reformist socialism. These strands are represented on the leading bodies of the party, the NEC, the PLP, among the Party leaders and within the trade union leadership.

The right-wing are liberals, not socialists. They support social reform and welfare (if we can afford it) at home, while abroad they support US and British imperialism (e.g. Vietnam, Ireland, Iran).

The left reformists are more difficult to pin down. On one hand, ideologically, they do argue for socialism and do articulate the discontent of workers. But politically, they are also influenced by capitalist thinking. For example, they see the state machine as an instrument for achieving socialism. Marxists therefore have always warned of the dangers of left-reformism.

In power, it can provoke a violent reaction from the ruling class, yet it does not prepare the working class politically how to deal with such a reaction. Allende was a tragic example of left reformist socialism in practice.

DOMINANCE

Right-wing dominance is built into the structure of the Labour Party. The federal constitution of the trade unions' bloc vote and the independence of the PLP was designed to ensure that, while the rank-and-file might have a big say at annual con-

DEBATE: Socialist

ference, this would not be translated into political power.

In effect, this means that rank-and-file socialists do the leg-work to delude the parliamentary majority for the liberal-imperialist leadership...

Hence, we must conclude that, despite the fact that millions of workers vote Labour and that the majority of its membership is working class, nevertheless the LP is a bourgeois party.

This conclusion has been proven time and again when the LP forms a government.

REFORMS?

The reformist socialists now realise that they will never gain real power in the party without reforming the constitution. They hope to transform Labour from a liberal-imperialist party into a bourgeois-socialist party. To achieve this, of course, they need marxist activists to join Labour and help them to power. Hence the left-reformists now talk a great deal about 'transforming' Labour.

The danger for marxists is that they themselves may become so seduced by left-reformist sweet-talk that they become advocates of 'transforming' Labour. If you wish to follow left-reformists and start talking loosely of 'transforming' Labour, then you ought to make it clear what is being transformed into what.

KEY TASK

As the world recession brings new threats to the working class, it becomes increasingly necessary to create a new political force. On the right, the fascists are trying to create a new party founded on different theories, principles and methods to the Tories.

On the left, all marxists must take seriously the need to build a new party on different theories, principles and methods to 'labourism'. Such a party must be built on the historical and international experience of workers' struggles: for example, the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution, and the Span-

ish Civil War. Only such a party, founded on marxism, can be called a workers party.

A workers' party would aim, at some stage, to win the popular support of the workers in the struggle for power. All marxists should agree on this, regardless of whether they think this or that particular group provides the best base for such a party.



IN OR OUT

Once we are clear that the LP is a bourgeois party, and that a key task is to build a marxist workers' party, then we can usefully discuss whether infiltrating Labour helps this objective. Certainly, infiltration may be a way of spreading marxist ideas and recruiting people.

It is a way but not the only way. The SWP was itself in the LP in the early 60s. Especially if you are a small group, Labour with its liberal attitude to 'entryists' provides possibly the best environment for survival and growth. However, there are also political dangers of adapting too much to left reformism if the political basis for membership is not made clear.

Therefore it may be useful to make a distinction between principled and opportunist entryism. The former attempts to break Labour Party activists from illusions in Labour. The latter provides new marxist arguments to reinforce illusions in Labour. It was this opportunist entryism that the article

was guilty of.

GUILTY

The article was guilty of the same of the LP (implicitly presenting it as a degenerate workers' party in need of reform). Second, you forgot to mention that an important task today is to create a marxist workers

party whose politics is opposed to bourgeois parties like Labour. Third, by advocating reforming Labour as 'the way forward for the labour movement', you have in fact become advocates of Tony Benn's line. It is on these three points that Socialist Action should clarify its positions.

We in the SWP are fully aware that in the LP there are many socialists honestly struggling for socialism. We also know that our formulation of the LP as a bourgeois party may offend them, but it would be politically dishonest to soften our position or gloss over the class nature of the party in order to make ourselves more acceptable to those socialists moving towards marxism.

We do however believe that there is a real need for co-operation between socialists inside and outside the LP around issues of mutual concern (e.g. the NF at East St., the Brixton dole picket, immigration laws, the Right to Work campaign etc). Such co-operation, where possible, is of over-riding importance in the struggle against the Tories.

BLACKS VICTIMISED

By Liz Easton (Hackney CLP)

Lawyers are planning to sue Hackney police following an 'anti-mugging' operation in the borough on Friday 12th September. 18 young Blacks were held for nearly 24 hours and then released without being charged. The incident, it seems, occurred after a mugging in the area was reported to the police who then swooped on a large crowd of Black youth nearby, stopped and searched many of them and took 18 into custody.

SPG

The criticism Commander David Mitchell has received for this action will not have come as a shock to him. Ever since becoming head of Hackney police last year Mitchell has been at the centre of controversy over his policing methods. He first brought the SPG into the borough early this year - despite council opposition - and has publically expressed a 'hard line' attitude on street crime and race relations. Deputy leader of the Council, John Kotz, said again this weekend what has been said many times before - that this man is not good for race relations in Hackney.

CRIME?

In a TV programme shown earlier this summer, Comm. Mitchell expressed his astonishment that some people, on leaving pubs at closing time, failed to go straight home. Many of these people, it



seems, arouse the good Commander's wrath by chatting on street corners, an activity he clearly considers detrimental to public order. From what happened on Friday night, it would appear Mitchell would like the people of Hackney to restrict their nocturnal behaviour still further. It is evidently no longer necessary to hang around street corners to become the automatic object of police attention - merely to be walking home is sufficient to attract the attention of the police.

BLACK

Particularly if you are Black. Isn't it odd that a large number of Black youth should be stopped, searched and questioned simply because they were in the vicinity of an alleged 'mugging' last Friday.

Is the so-called incidence of street crime being used as simply another excuse by

the police to harass the Black community - particularly the young Black community? Does being in the vicinity of a crime automatically bring you under suspicion if you are Black? The fact that of the 18 youths arrested not one has been charged would seem to indicate quite strongly that the 'mugging' issue was merely an excuse to harass the Black community as happens in areas as diverse as Brixton to Bristol. Mr Stanley, a lawyer involved in the case, is now suing the police for wrongful imprisonment of his clients. Such a move, if successful, is welcome in that it might make Hackney police more hesitant in making mass arrests in future.

Even more welcome would be campaigns against laws such as 'sus' and others which are used by the police at present as legal umbrellas under which they can victimise and harass Black people with impunity.

Socialists & Cannabis?

What should the attitudes of socialists be to drugs - particularly cannabis? Should they support or oppose them? Below, Phil Dent replies to John Hicks' article in last month's issue of *Socialist Action*.

John Hick's article on cannabis, last month, contains many correct points which socialists should support. He suggests there is no scientific basis to prove cannabis' harmful effects and that keeping it illegal only gives the police - under the drugs act - an excuse for harassing people, particularly Black youth.

Such points are correct. It is also correct to conclude - as John did - that socialists should therefore support the 'Legalise cannabis' campaign.

EVIDENCE

While supporting an end to anti-cannabis laws, however, we should be careful as socialists - not to confuse this with support for the taking of cannabis itself. Fighting for the right of people to take it is not the same as advocating taking it.

There are two reasons for this. First, John is right to say there is no solid evidence to prove cannabis' harmful effects and that government-commissioned reports (suggesting it 'impairs the brain' etc) are clearly biased and to be regarded with suspicion.

At the same time, however, we have to admit that there is equally no evidence to prove that the effects of cannabis are harmless. Until unbiased research has been undertaken, we should be cautious

- as socialists - in asserting ideas that "there are no known harmful effects". We just do not know.

CHOICE

Secondly, it is not exactly true to suggest cannabis is merely another 'relaxative like nicotine or alcohol. We should recognise that for many young people - facing no future except the dole lines - cannabis may become a way of 'opting out' of their seemingly hopeless situation.

Instead of facing up to the problems they face - and seeking to change them through action - they can seek a 'personal' escape. They can be aided in this by the shadier sides of big business who make a fortune out of trading off peoples' despair and misfortune.

This is not to suggest that cannabis is just one aspect of a 'drop-out' culture. It is merely to say that it can become a means of personally escaping from a situation instead of seeking social solutions to it.

VICTIMISATION

While, therefore, we should oppose all anti-cannabis laws - which are part of a 'whole repressive legislation in capitalist society' - we should be very wary about advocating its use.

Certainly, until and when such anti-cannabis laws are removed, socialists should not get involved in its use which can only play into the hands of the police who - as John correctly says - can thereby 'harass and intimidate people'.

ists & the Labour Party

SA

A few years ago, fringe groups like the SWP were writing off the Labour Party as a 'premature corpse'. The left forces that have emerged in the party - and which are attracting wide union support - now presents them with a problem.

This problem is aggravated by the fact that, as part of its swing left, the Labour Party has taken the lead in initiating action on a wide range of issues from the anti-cuts demo last November to the anti-nuclear rally this month.

These moves are no accident. They reveal the pressure on the party by wide layers of workers who see the need to fight for solid anti-Tory policies not in fringe groups but in the party they built, finance and vote for: the Labour Party.

CHARACTER

Cde Freeman's article is an attempt to justify the SWP's sectarian stance in the face of this development. The points he raises to defend SWP practice are a series of hoary old chesnuts which were rejected, in the marxist movement, years ago.

They can be boiled down essentially to three points: that the Labour Party is a 'bourgeois party' (albeit with working class support); that as a result, it cannot be 'changed'; and finally, that it is necessary to be outside it building ... the SWP. Let us examine these in turn.

Cde Freeman starts off by denying there is any essential difference Labour and the Tories. As he insists, it is politics which defines the class nature of a party and - on the record of previous Labour governments - one is as bad as the other.

DIFFERENCE?

But hold on a minute. Isn't there a contradiction here between what Cde Freeman writes and what the SWP does? Didn't the SWP, at the last election, call for a vote for Labour (albeit grudgingly)? If Labour is a 'bourgeois party' - as bad as the Tories - why vote for it? Isn't it a principle that socialists never vote for 'bourgeois parties'? Isn't that called crossing class lines?

In fact, of course, the SWP vote for Labour - and not the Liberals or Tories

shows that, in practice, they do recognise a difference between Labour and the other parties. What essentially is this difference?

It is not just because workers support it (after all, as Cde Freeman says, many workers vote Tory and socialists don't call for a vote for Mrs Thatcher). The SWP called for a vote for Labour because they recognised implicitly what it is a different kind of party from the others.

TORIES?

The Labour Party was created, at the turn of the century, by the unions which had broken with the capitalist parties. In this sense, it remains the political wing of the union movement, dominated by the unions both through its block vote at conference and through its financial support and voting power.

Whatever Cde Freeman may say, the break with the capitalist parties and the launching of a new party based on the unions was a major step forward. In no way can that party facily be equated with the Tories any more than the TUC - which also sells short its members - can be compared with the CBI.

If Cde Freeman was consistent in his argument, if the Labour Party is to be written off as 'bourgeois' then so should the unions that dominate it. Is Cde Freeman suggesting that socialists don't work in unions either because they are dominated by the same leaders who dominate the Labour Party?

LESSONS

At one stage in his article, Cde Freeman suggests that socialists should be guided by 'the historical experience of workers struggles'. We would agree. Wouldn't it, in this respect, be useful to be guided by - and draw the lessons from - the sectarian mistakes of the young British Communist Party?

He might discover that they came out with exactly the same lop-sided formulas on the Labour Party as him. He might also find that Lenin fought hard against this 'infantile' view and called on the young CP to affiliate to the Labour Party.

Cde Freeman has a bit of a problem here. Was perhaps Lenin, like the Cdes of Socialist Action, breeding illusions in reformism as well?

CHANGE

But why did Lenin call on the CP



to join the Labour Party? He clearly knew like Cde Freeman - that the party is dominated by 'liberal-imperialists' and 'reformist socialists'. MacDonald is the 20s is no better than Callaghan in the 80s.

He clearly grasped something that Cde Freeman doesn't. He grasped that while he had seen through the reactionary leaders of the party, thousands if not millions of workers affiliated to the party - hadn't. And he realised that you cannot break those workers from such leaders by standing on the sidelines preaching.

If Cde Freeman seriously considers this is the way forward, that he has joined the company of other illustrious sects (from the ILP to the SPGB) who can be seen, every Sunday, gathering at Hyde Park to preach the superiority of socialism.

BASE

The point is that - regardless of the wishes of the SWP - millions of workers are not looking to the 'fringe left' for the answers to the problems they face. They are looking at the Labour Party - the party built by the unions - for such answers.

This is, after all, the base of the 'left' development in the party headed by Benn. The SWP might feel Benn has no intention of introducing socialist policies

and Socialist Action might agree. Thousands of workers do have confidence in Benn, however, and they are not going to see through him by sectarian groups throwing mud from the sidelines.

All that will happen is that Benn will be let off the hook and groups like the SWP will become (as in fact they are) marginalised.

EXPERIENCE

The task of socialists is not to stand outside this process. It is to be in the Labour Party, fighting side by side with other forces and calling on Benn - if he is serious - to put his politics into practice. This will allow thousands to go through a concrete experience with the Labour leaders (right or left) and draw real conclusions about them.

Whether or not one believes the Labour Party can be 'transformed' is not the key question. Socialist Action doesn't believe that the party, as it is, will be capable of transforming society in a socialist way.

What it does recognise is that the forces for such a transformation will arise in the debate and fights within the Labour Party. It is by going through a concrete struggle with the reformist leaders - on issues as far apart as the cuts to unemployment - that growing layers will be educated in class-struggle

methods and policies and form the basis of a mass revolutionary party.

PARTY

This is why *Socialist Action* would designate Cde Freeman's position as sectarian. Building a party, for Cde Freeman, is to stand outside the living process of the class struggle and preach from the sidelines.

But does he really believe that a mass party in Britain will be built by recruiting one or two cdes every few weeks? On the contrary, the forces for such a party will be built up in the course of major struggles inside the mass organisations of the workers' movement. Benn might not be part of it but the thousands who support him undoubtedly will.

Helping this process demands a clear programme, confidence in one's ideas and a non-sectarian approach. It means working and arguing with other cdes in the unions and Labour Party and winning maximum support on clear issues. It means participating in a democratic debate. That is the path *Socialist Action* has chosen.

UNITY

Despite differences with the cdes of the SWP, we - like Cde Freeman - would hope that socialists should collaborate on as many concrete issues as possible (inside and outside the party). We hope that the cdes of the SWP will support the mass anti-nuclear campaign of the Labour Party, the anti-cuts action launched by the Lambeth Labour Group, the CARL mobilisation built mainly by Labour Party wards.

We would hope - however - that in the longer term, cdes of the SWP would 'ease' unity in action by joining the Labour Party, where there exist a number of tendencies arguing democratically for their views.

Such work in the Labour Party is not - as Cde Freeman says - 'infiltration'. The Labour Party is the political wing of the trade unions and, as such, contains within it a wide spectrum of views democratically argued out. This may appear strange to Cde Freeman who exists in an organisation hardly noted for its democratic norms but it is true of the Labour Party.

Socialist Action supporters see themselves as part of the Labour Party with clear ideas on where they think it should be going.

Import Controls - No Answer

by Phil Dent (NUT)

About the only area of the economy working at present is the Tories' economic strategy. Just look at a typical week in the Tory 'success chart':

- * British Leyland - 4,000 clerical jobs axed;
- * Clark's Shoes - 700 redundancies;
- * AI Industrial Products - 300 jobs to go;
- * John Myers - 1,900 sackings;
- * Ferodo - 100 jobs lost;
- * Firestone Tyres - 600 jobs lost;
- * Hoover - 200 jobs lost.

The jobless total is rising week after week, day after day. And it's quite deliberate. As Eric Heffer pointed out in the Commons recently, throwing thousands on the dole will, the Tories calculate, force wages down and profits up, thus making British industry more competitive.

CONTROLS

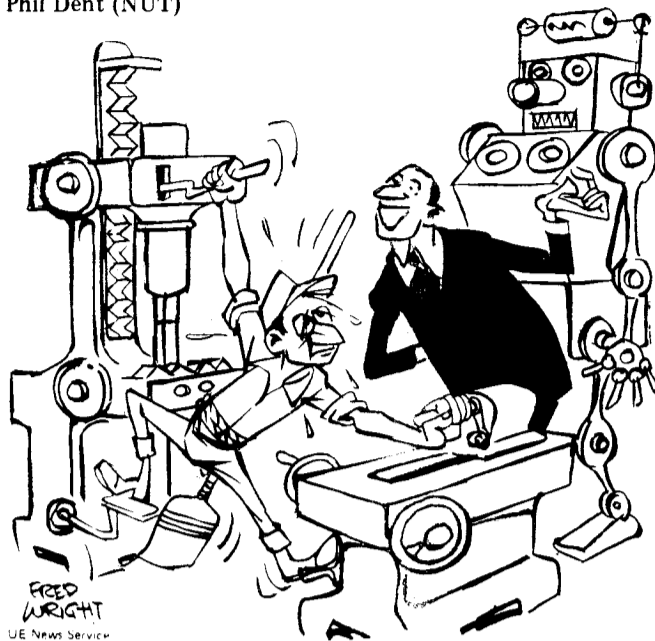
This growing jobless total has prompted many in the 'Labour left' to advocate import controls as a solution. This is not the sole plank of the AES, of course, but it is seen as central in combatting the rising dole queues.

Such a view has rapidly caught on and now the TUC - and a wide body of workers - see them as key if jobs are to be protected. Tariffs are being demanded to keep out Japanese cars and electrical goods, US chemicals and Polish shoes...the list is endless. Even French 'Golden Delicious' have not escaped.

But are import controls - or 'selective' controls as their supporters call them - a real solution to mounting dole queues? Far from it.

WHOSE INTEREST?

What those who raise such dem-



'Science has learned how to eliminate the misery, monotony and drudgery of your job. You're fired!'

ands do not realise is that, at a time of shrinking world markets, all capitalist countries are in crisis. Lengthening dole queues exist in all countries from Japan to France, Britain to the USA.

The demand for import controls raised by the Labour left is also being raised in other countries, such as the USA, where the United Auto Workers leaders are now arguing just as strongly for protection of the home car market. Nationalist anti-import feeling is running so strong that UAW members have actually vandalised Toyota cars.

Once import controls really started, retaliation and a trade war would be bound to follow in which the working class of no country would benefit (least of all Britain with its dependence on exports). It was, after all, the 'seige economy' mentality which provoked the 'thirties' slump,

NATIONAL INTEREST

Import controls are not only inadequate to stop growing jobless queues but they are also a diversion from solving the problems of unemployment. By blaming foreign goods for the jobless total, advocates of such demands call on workers to identify with the interests of their own (national) firms.

Workers at Leyland, faced with massive redundancies, are encouraged not to fight Sir Michael Edwards but to join with him in calling for a halt to Japanese car imports.

Such a position only leads to blunting the class conflict in favour of a 'national interest' in which the employers are let totally off the hook. 'Foreigners' are to blame and not the capitalists of this system who are, of course, the main force

for attacking workers' rights & living standards.

INTERNATIONALISM

Equally important, such a demand leads towards 'exporting' unemployment. Instead of calling on workers in different countries to unite against big business, it calls on workers in Britain to 'compete' with workers in France or Germany for the limited jobs that are available.

The reactionary implications of this demand do not have to be spelt out. By encouraging a nationalist outlook, it can play into the hands of right-wing demagogues who argue that it is not only foreigners' goods but foreigners themselves who need to be kept out. Isn't this the logic of Tory immigration policy?

CLASS-STRUGGLE

Far from fighting for 'import controls', what is needed in the fight for jobs are clear class-struggle policies.

In the fight against redundancies, the labour movement should call for *work sharing with no loss of pay* (the 35 hour week).

If employers argue they cannot afford such measures, then the call should be made *Open the Books*. Let trade unionists examine the accounts and determine whether or not a company can sustain a full staff. If it can't, then the demand should be raised for it to be *nationalised under workers' control*.

At the same time, for those millions already on the dole, the labour leaders should be forced to build a mass campaign against the cuts, calling for a bold *Public Works Programme* to employ those on the dole in socially useful tasks.

ANTI-DRAFT DEMOS



by GRAHAM WEIGHT

In the United States at present, the government is trying to draw attention away from the growing economic crisis by the threat of war. The hysteria whipped up over Afghanistan or Iran has been used by Carter to introduce a registration of youth between the ages of 18 and 20.

Regan only 'mirrors' Carter's position when he says that the USA has to project a 'strong' image abroad, and that rather than being liked, the USA needs to be 'respected'.

The threat of the draft has led to mass demonstrations in the USA by young people who have no intention of being used as cannon fodder in the wars of Big Business. Under the slogans 'We Won't Die for Exxon', they have taken to the streets in large numbers. The Young Socialists Alliance (YSA) has been to the forefront of these anti-draft mobilisations.

CONSCRIPTION

With the USA about to re-introduce the draft, Britain will be the only country in NATO which doesn't have some form of conscription for youth. While the Tories have, so far, only hinted at the idea of bringing back conscription, it is possible they are thinking on these lines.

With youth unemployment running so high - and with cut-backs in job programmes - it could become an attractive option for them. What better way of keeping rebel youth out of 'trouble' - that is, from opposing their bankrupt system - than by giving them a couple of years in the army.

If there is any indication that the Tories are thinking that way, it will be a serious task of the Young Socialists to launch a major campaign against conscription.

ARMY

But - in one sense - they don't have to. Indications already are that, with no other future ahead of them except years on the dole, many school-leavers are beginning to look at the army as an attractive proposition. Recruiting figures are up. At least in the army, many think, there is a chance to learn a trade which will stand them in good stead in the years to come.

This makes all the more urgent the need for the Young Socialists to take up seriously the question of youth unemployment. It means that the YS campaign on this issue must become relevant to the needs of all young people who see nothing before them except a career on the dole.

YOU WON'T BELIEVE IT!

At the end of August, Mr Edward Nevin sued the US government for 'negligence' in his grandfather's death. His grandfather, it appears, died back in 1950 of a rare form of pneumonitis.

Just why is Mr Nevin going to these lengths and just what has the US government got to do with it?

Well, Mr Nevin has only just acquired an official army report which details experiments in biological warfare. Only four days before his grandfather's death, it appears, the army sprayed a 'germ cloud' over San Francisco to test its effect. The bacteria - *Serratia Marcescens* - spread 117 miles and was inhaled by about 800,000 people.

Yes, you read it correctly. In order to test out 'defences' against germ warfare, the Pentagon calmly sprayed a cloud of bacteria over San Francisco to test its effect. The San Francisco. Other civilian-conducted experiments, the report goes on, were conducted in places such as the New York Underground.

The army, of course, is contesting Mr Nevin's suit - even though it is officially recorded that San Francisco witnessed an unprecedented outbreak of a rare infection shortly after the 'trials'. The claim they conducted the experiment in good faith and on 'scientific information' believed accurate at the time.

By the way, it appears that such tests were a joint exercise between the American and British armies. Do you know of anyone who died of pneumonia 25 years ago? Or more recently?

Len Wagstaff

Housing Act Nightmare



As the Tory axe descends on local authorities, one of the worst hit areas will be housing. The estimated 31% cut for 1981 will - when inflation is considered - virtually bring local council housing programmes to a stop.

Yet it is precisely at this time that the Tories have launched a £1 million advertising campaign to encourage council tenants to buy their own houses.

What this will mean for millions of tenants who are senior citizens, single parents or who are living off supplementary benefits doesn't bear thinking

about.

HOMELESS

Selling off the best council properties will, clearly, deplete what is available for those unable to afford their own homes. As far as existing council tenants are concerned - the very young and old living in 'tower blocks' - it will clearly reduce their chances of 'transferring' to better accommodation.

For those still seeking accommodation, however, it could create a night-

Sabina Roberts (Streatham CLP)

mare. The over 1 million still registered on council waiting lists will have an even dimmer hope of being housed than at present. They will (like 2 million more) be forced to remain in slum housing (officially labelled 'sub-standard') indefinitely.

Moreover, the reduction in available housing will mean that councils will be hard put to fulfill legal obligations to the homeless. When it is realised that 50,000 are registered as homeless every year, the amount of misery the Tories are creating becomes manifest.

SOLUTION

The government, of course, has offered its solution to these problems in the new 'shorthold tenure' created by the Housing Act. All this means is that private landlords will be empowered, from November, to let property under a 'shorthold' agreement which limits security of tenure.

They hope this will encourage landlords - at present reluctant to let property - to open the doors again. In reality, all it does is open the door to the type of Rachmanite exploitation that existed before Labour ended it.

The Tories, it seems, are not only trying to cut social services, destroy jobs and erode living standards. They are - literally - taking the roofs from over peoples heads. It will need a serious fightback from the labour movement to stop it.

A key element of this would be for Labour councils to refuse to sell council housing, continue their building programmes - despite the cuts - and link up in a national campaign, like that called by Lambeth, to force the Tories to back down on their policies.

Bolivia: REPRESSION MOUNTS

by Dave McLeod

While Bolivia is no stranger to military coups, the regime installed by Gen. Luis Garcia Meza in July is already one of the most bloody and vicious in Bolivian history.

Gen. Garcia Meza, who seized power with the help of the Argentinian junta, is openly comparing himself with Chilean dictator Pinochet who overthrew Allende in 1973 and instituted a reign of terror against the workers' movement.

According to Meza, his regime will stay in power "as long as is necessary to eliminate the marxist cancer, be it five, ten or twenty years".

TERROR

Independent sources place the number of prisoners held at over 2,000, while the army itself admits to holding 500 people. Col. Luis Arce Gomez has stated that political prisoners now in custody will be placed in forced labour gangs to build roads in the Eastern jungles.

There have been widespread arrests of trade-union and political figures as well as journalists, church leaders and

would have been for a government resulting from the election to have taken power, but this represented for us a high degree of risk because of the possibility that it would spread ideas contrary to our way of life and the permanence here of the military government".

RESISTANCE

The Argentine-backed coup was met by general strike and armed resistance from Bolivian tin miners. The military were able to decapitate this, however, by a lightning strike at the headquarters of the COB (Bolivian Workers Federation) and capturing many working class leaders.

Nevertheless, resistance continued for over two weeks in the mining areas of Oruro, Huanani, San Jose and Catavi. In Catavi, miners and peasants stormed army barracks with shotguns and dynamite, fighting a five-hour battle before retreating.

Although open resistance to the Garcia Meza coup has ended, there are signs that it still continues underground. Last month, Zuaro declared from the



Bolivia's jails hold an estimated 2,000 political prisoners.

teachers. Mary Helen Spooner, a US journalist held by the junta for 7 days, described the techniques used in interrogation.

"I was warned", she said, "that if I failed to give them what I wanted, I would be killed or mutilated". Spooner was later released on August 12th as a result of international pressure

COUP

The Bolivian military coup took place to stop Hernan Siles Zuaro taking office following his victory in the presidential elections. Zuaro headed a reformist coalition (UDP) which included the pro-Moscow Communist Party.

Following the coup, in which Argentinian security forces played a key role, Argentine military dictator Videla promised the new Bolivian regime over £100 million in financial assistance. Videla was quite open in explaining his backing for the coup. In his words:

"...the formally correct thing

underground that he was assuming the presidency "in clandestinity as the only and legitimate representative of the Bolivian people".

ISOLATED

In addition to trying to crush the Bolivian masses, the new regime — following the butchers in Argentina — is seeking to smash the revolutionary upsurge in central America. Its first diplomatic move was to break relations with the Sandinistas in Nicaragua.

The new regime, however, remains isolated. Besides the Argentinian and Brazilian juntas, the only governments that have recognised it are those of South Africa, Taiwan and Israel. The junta is well aware of this isolation and is clearly worried by it.

It is up to socialists to fight to keep it isolated — both at the diplomatic and trade levels — and to exert as much pressure as possible to help save the lives of the junta's political prisoners.

Union Victimization



Police action against pickets is mounting. At the King Henry factory in Manchester, over 11 pickets were recently arrested trying to stop a car — carrying scabs — accelerating through the picket line.

The King Henry dispute is a long term one which has been smouldering for ever 5 years now. Although ACAS recommended union recognition back in 1977, the management has refused to do so.

Union members get the sack more frequently than non-union staff and the general turn-over is high (with more than half the present workers being employed for less than 6 months or so). The manager is presently being prosecuted for employing 13 and 15-year olds.

The factory has a poor safety record with 2 men and a women having lost 3,3 and 4 fingers in the machines in the last 18 months. The fight to build the union against this type of record was clearly urgent.

On July 6th, a convenor was elected but he got the sack the following day for so-called 'spilling flour'. 23 workers have been on strike since that time. Hollins agreeing so far only to re-employ 4 of them.

Mass pickets have therefore been mounted every Tuesday and Friday morning at 6.30 which usually gain the attendance of about 70 people. Support — both on the picket lines and in cash — is needed. Please contact: S. Willett, 361, Hyde Rd., Manchester M12 5 ET.

POST BAG

Dear Cde,

A group of North London Labour activists are trying to set up a North London CARL group. The success of activists in South London — who recently held a 100-strong meeting attended by trade unionists, LP activists and representatives of Black groups — shows the real potential today for challenging the Tories' racist curbs.

Anyone interested in building such a group should contact Mike Rodney, c/o 58, Auckland Rd., London SE 19.

Mike Rodney
(Finchley)

Dear Socialist Action

Would you please send us 5 copies of the *Socialist Action* pamphlet "The Labour Party — Which Way?". I think it is very relevant to the debate now opening up in the party and will clarify many of the issues in dispute.

Mike Hopkins
(Stoke-on-Trent)

Dear Cde,

Gramam Weight's article in the last issue — "Whatever Happened to the ANL?" — seems to me to be departing from your usual non-sectarian attitude.

It is true that the ANL didn't take up the need to fight racist immigration laws and thus lacked a long-term perspective in the fight against racism. While this is true — and explains its present state of disarray — we shouldn't overlook the positive achievements of the ANL.

Whatever Cde Weight may say, the ANL was the main

factor in blocking the growth of the NF. If it hadn't been for ANL actions — such as that at Lewisham — the NF would be in a much stronger position today.

Secondly, in order to block the NF, the ANL mobilised thousands of young people — Black and white — in political action. Maybe we think it didn't offer these youth a long-term perspective but it did mobilise them. That can't be a bad thing, can it?

While I support the formation of CARL — and agree with Cde Weight's comments on its importance — we shouldn't overlook the positive development represented by the ANL.

Anne Bythe
(Colchester)

Dear Socialist Action,

I have been reading your paper for some time now and have been impressed by its non-sectarian attitude. Please find enclosed £3.00 for a year's subscription to *Socialist Action*.

John Phillips
(Bolton)

Dear Cde,

Mike Rodney's article in the last issue of *Socialist Action* ("SWP: Outside, looking in...") was spot on. I was a supporter of the SWP some time back but left it — to join the Labour Party — because of its sectarian attitude.

None of us in the left of the Labour Party has any illusions in the party leadership. The point simply is that you can't fight this leadership — the Callaghans and Healys of this

world — by 'mud-slinging' from the outside. The SWP may sound very 'revolutionary' but what is it concretely doing to remove the present leaders who dominate the movement?

Nothing. The only way to lead a real struggle against them is by being in the Labour Party and fighting their pro-capitalist policies & undemocratic manoeuvres. The present debate is a first step in this direction which only the politically blind can ignore.

The SWP's stance outside the party will doom it to isolation & ensure that it shrinks into another of those sects littering the British left.

Tim Robinson
(Lambeth Central CLP)

Dear Cde,

Cde Frank Viney's call to priorities the stand against nuclear arms is certainly well-timed! This year's LP conference has seen over 80 resolutions tabled on this issue.

Most of them support the NEC campaign against Cruise Missiles and call for a firm assurance — by a future Labour government — to fold them up.

While opposing nuclear weapons, however, many link it with trying to create a 'nuclear free zone' in Europe. What is *Socialist Action's* view on this? Would it mean subordinating unilateral disarmament until other countries were prepared to follow suit?

Karl Harrison
(Finchley)

All letters to: The Editor, Socialist Action, c/o 58 Auckland Rd., London SE 19.

Socialist Action

BUILD ANTI-CUTS CONFERENCE

"The fight against the government has to be made this financial year. It can't wait..."



Since coming to power a year ago, the Tories have slashed the social services to the bone. Now, Environment Secretary Heseltine has decided to turn the screws still further.

£200 million is to be lopped of money promised local councils this November and 14 councils — mainly Labour — are to lose another £19 million for alleged 'over-spending'. Lambeth, Hackney and Islington are to be

cuts called for by the Tories — rate rises appeared a solution. These include the councils Heseltine is now penalising like Lambeth who sought to offset cuts by raising rates by an astronomical 49%.

As *Socialist Action* and others pointed out at the time, however, hoping to fend off a fight with the Tories by rate increases was illusory. First, it merely passed onto working people the burden

a call for a national conference this November to begin a fightback against the Tory Attacks which threaten to destroy the welfare state.

The aim of the conference was spelt out by Knight himself: "The object of the labour movement must be to force a change in government policy or, if that isn't possible, to force the government out".

"The conference will bring together the public sector unions, local councils and the labour movement generally, to say that unless a stand is made, then what faces trade unions and labour councils is a reduction in jobs and services". Such a call has the backing of local Lambeth public sector unions.

RESPONSE

As Ted Knight explains, there is no longer any way out of the dilemma facing Labour authorities: either jobs and welfare services have to be cut wholesale or else a fighting stand has to be taken now.

It is no longer possible to hang onto office (cutting as delicately as possible) — while awaiting the return of a Labour government in four years time to restore the losses. Under Heseltine's axe, there will be nothing left to restore if councils submit to the Tory directives.

As Geoffrey Drain (NALGO Gen. Sec.) put it, replying to Heseltine's latest measures: "The continued pillage of local government will leave cities deprived and their population with even fewer services".

FIGHT

Lambeth's call for a conference to organise a fightback against the Tories is, in this sense, more urgent than ever before. It offers the chance for a united fight against the Tories and can avoid a situation where councils can be picked off in isolation.

Already, half a dozen Labour councils, a number of CLPs and delegates from public sector unions — such as NALGO, NUT, T&GWU, NUPE etc — have agreed to give their support.

That support now needs to be extended in the coming weeks. The outrage of union and labour leaders at the last round of cuts — particularly from NEC members — has to be turned into positive backing for the fight back which Lambeth Council is organising.

CALL

The first aim of the conference should be to agree on a united "no-cuts" position in the face of the Tory attack. There is no way in which Labour councils should be prepared to do the Tories dirty work for them.

The second aim should be — as Ted Knight indicates — to get an agreement among delegates to fight in the unions and Labour Parties for joint action to force the Tories to back down, or else remove them from office.

A key element of this will be solid support in the public sector unions for strike action to bring local authorities to a halt. The alternative will merely mean services dwindling beyond repair and thousands of jobs being lost.

by Tim Robinson (NALGO)

SOUTH AFRICA: STRIKE WAVE SPREADS

by Pete Marais

The strike wave that shook South Africa some months back has still not abated. Although the authorities recently broke the 10,000 — strong municipal workers strike in Johannesburg — expelling more than 1000 strikers — it was a hard and bitter trial of strength.

On July 24th, about 2000 Black workers walked off their jobs to demand higher pay. The next day, the municipal authorities sacked 1350 of them. This provoked an even broader strike and, by July 28th, some 10,000 Black sanitation, transport, gas, health, and electricity workers had joined in.

Although the workers were eventually forced back to work — after severe police repression — for four days they brought Johannesburg's public services to a halt.

SPREADING

Moreover, only a few days



after the ending of the municipal workers' strike, in Secunda, hundreds of Black construction workers downed tools at a vital Sasol synthetic fuel plant. This time, despite police attacks on the pickets, the workers stood firm and won major pay increases.

Similar strikes have developed elsewhere. In Johannesburg, a month-long strike by the city's Black bus drivers forced substantial wage increases and recognition of their union. Black journalists, and other workers, at the *Post* newspaper won salary awards up to 28%.

In Cape Town, the widely-supported strike by hundreds of Black meat workers entered its third month.

FERMENT

The importance of Black workers' strikes is not just that they have advanced living standards — in the teeth of rampant inflation — and the right to organise their own independent unions.

Such struggles have, necessarily, become entwined with the general upsurge against the white minority regime — symbolised by the mass student protests and ghetto uprisings — and have given that opposition a backbone.

This was dramatically revealed by the June 16th and 17th strike in Cape Town when more than 200,000 Black workers downed tools in solidarity with the student protesters and the victims of the regime's brutal police measures (which included school children murdered in cold blood).

MILITANCY

The militancy of the Black population has become so widespread and sharp that even those Black leaders who have traditionally co-operated with the white minority have been forced to take their 'distance'.

One of Prime Minister Pieter Botha's major aims, in recent months, has been to foster divisions within the Black population — which is composed of Africans, Coloureds (those of mixed ancestry) and Indians — by creating pro-government councils of African and Coloured collaborators.

This scheme collapsed last month in face of almost unanimous Black opposition, even from among those he expected to co-operate with it.

STABILITY

As it has done with previous periods of Black unrest, the apartheid regime has tried to deal with the situation by escalating repression. Thousands of students and Black leaders are still languishing in the apartheid regime's jails.

Moreover, as a sign of how serious the regime views the growing strike actions, the South African army still remains on a war footing. Not even during the upsurges of 1976 and 1977 were such extreme measures taken.

Such measures are a sign of the fear developing in upper echelons as the racist minority feels itself both 'isolated' by the wall of Black African states surrounding it and 'threatened' by the Black radicalisation in its own country.

And it is correct to feel threatened since its 'hard stance' has not been able to stem the growing aspirations of South Africa's working class. As an editorial in a leading South African newspaper lamented "there are restive times ahead on South Africa's labour front".

Anti-Cuts Conference

Camden Town Hall

Labour groups, public sector unions and stewards committees, CLPs and Trades Councils are invited to the Conference. Six Labour Groups have already supported the call and a big turn-out from Labour Parties and unions is expected.

For details write to: 'Local Government in Crisis Conference', Organising Committee, Room 103, Lambeth Town Hall, Brixton Hill, London SW 2.

Called by Lambeth Council

November 1st 1980

penalised still further by £3 million in government aid axed for community projects.

The result of course, will not only be massive reductions in housing and other social services this year but widespread redundancies. An estimated 29,000 jobs will be lost in addition to the 35,000 already lost this year under government imposed cuts.

DILEMMA

For many local councils last year — reluctant to push through the

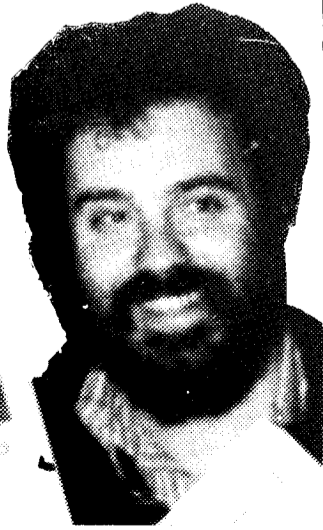
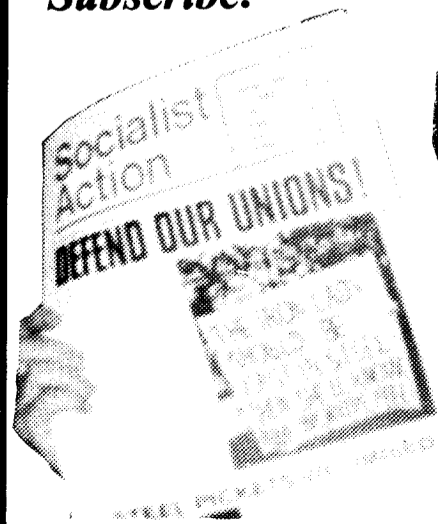
of the crisis and, secondly, it was not a long term solution since rates could not be raised every year as Tory cuts worsened.

That message has now sunk home. Only recently, faced with the latest round of Tory cuts, Ted Knight (Lambeth Council Leader) admitted: "The rates would have to be raised so high that it would not be practical".

FIGHTBACK

It is in response to this situation that Lambeth Council have issued

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