

SOCIALIST PRESS



Weekly paper of the Workers Socialist League * No. 177 * 28 November 1979 * 15p

Nicaragua:
which way
forward?
Centre pages

Housing Crisis Page 9

Charing X in Tory firing line

Victimisation of shop stewards and convenors is the Tories first step to attacking workers not only in British Leyland but also in the Health Service.

In London over the last 18 months a long succession of NUPE militants have been victimised in key hospitals as management has worked to prevent any possibility of widespread strike action against cuts and hospital closures.

And NUPE officials have time and again intervened to defuse action in their defence and ensure the sacking is upheld.

Now, at the Charing Cross

hospital, the workers are standing for their stand against the run-down of Manning levels, which has meant that skilled workers have been called upon to do unskilled work.

Their sacking has led to a determined five week strike by fellow AUEW members at the hospital, whose pickets have been controlling oil supplies.

But a brazen sell-out bid and an instruction for strikers to return to work issued by AUEW national officials last week triggered an intensification of picketing, which shut off oil supplies to the 798-bed hospital.

Surrender

AUEW national officials emerged from a meeting with management and proposed what amounted to a plan for complete surrender.

There should be a return to work on the basis of 'status quo' on a 1973 agreement, they said: except that the 'status quo' would involve the two sacked shop stewards being reinstated at a different hospital!

The District Committee of the AUEW correctly rejected this miserable formula.

But, latching on to a hope of smashing another section of resistance to the cuts, hospital management, backed to the hilt by the Tory press and media hacks, have hastened to blame strikers for putting cancer patients at risk.

A stage army of Charing Cross patients has even been brought down in an attempt to persuade tanker drivers to break the picket line.

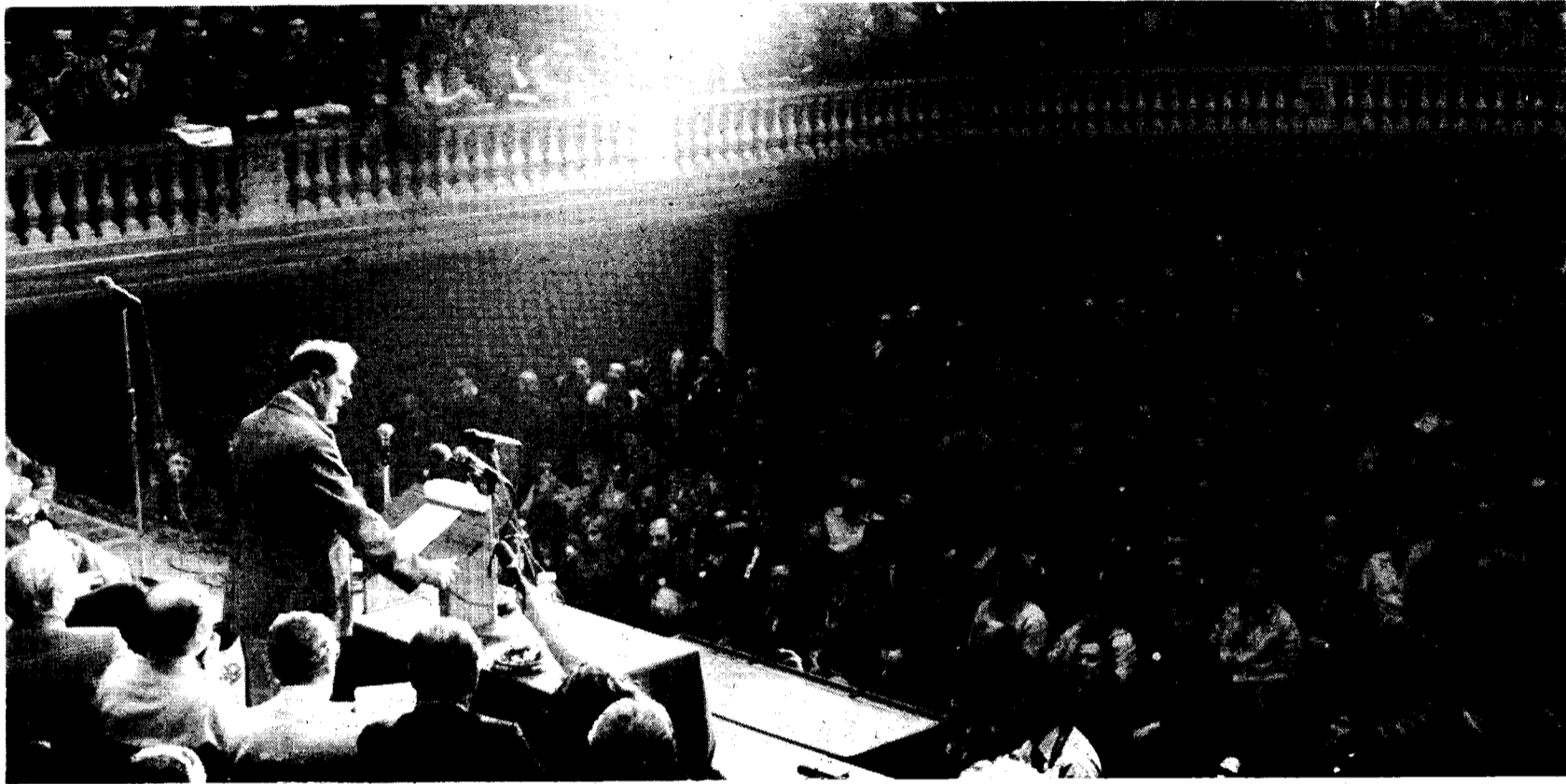
12 hospitals closed

Yet where have these angry patients and newsmen been while successive governments have been savagely axing hospital after hospital in London?

Since July, 12 hospitals—with 2,800 beds—have been closed in London. The total by March will be well over 3,000 beds cut, not by strike action but by government decree.

The cuts know no "special cases": children, the elderly, the

Cont'd page 11



Robinson addressing the rally in Birmingham Town Hall

BL SPEARHEAD FOR VICTIMISATION

CALL OUT ALL BL WORKERS!

Derek Robinson is still sacked!

British Leyland is taking a determined stand with reports that Edwardes has threatened to resign rather than reinstate Robinson.

The stand taking place is a major part of the Tory government's strategy. Edwardes and the Tories realised that ballots themselves mean nothing, they can only be used for propaganda purposes.

The plants due to receive work from those closed by Edwardes were sticking to the principled position of not accepting other workers' jobs.

In Cowley, for example, Bob Fryer and the stewards had turned away Castle Bromwich work.

Further sackings

The answer of Edwardes is to move to smash the trade union organisation in BL.

The sacking of Robinson is the action to do this.

If Edwardes is successful, this move will not only be followed by further victimisations in Leyland but throughout industry.

But as we go to press the strike has entered a dangerous stage.

Still over a week after Robinson was sacked the strike is not made official.

Now the talk is that it may be made official on Tuesday.

But time is on Edwardes' side.

Every day the capitalist press pours out its lies about a "back

to work movement" and exaggerates the activities of small groups of scabs.

The great weakness of the strike was the failure of the AUEW to promptly call it official at its meeting last Tuesday, the day after Robinson was sacked, and the failure of the convenors' conference on the same day to give a clear lead to the rest of the combine.

Instead a motion was passed calling on convenors to get "what support was possible".

And convenors were told not even to seek strike action if they thought they might be rejected!

Reinstatement

In addition advice was given to those plants like Rover and Cowley, who are on lay off pay, not to strike, but stay on lay-off pay and thus cost BL money!

On Monday, 4,000 workers marched through Birmingham to a rally in the Town Hall, calling for the reinstatement of Robinson.

But despite the obvious militancy and willingness to

struggle displayed by the marchers, no clear lead was given.

The most noticeable feature of the mainly TGWU-dominated platform was the absence of any representation from the engineering section of the AUEW—neither union President Terry Duffy nor the Midlands Executive Chairman Ken Cure was in attendance.

The question which hung over the rally was that of official support; not just whether the dispute would be made official, but what would be made official.

Would it simply be backing for those plants currently in dispute? Or would the AUEW and the TGWU take the action necessary to win the dispute which was to call out all their members throughout BL?

If they did this BL would remain closed until the official action was lifted.

But Derek Robinson, as first speaker, hedged on this key issue. He called only in general terms for official support.

He called on "our members

to respond in the maximum way possible—give money and respond to our calls".

Grenville Hawley, National Car Industry Officer for the TGWU, made an uncharacteristically militant speech.

He said the TGWU was supporting Robinson "because we are prepared to put our money where our mouths are".

Derek Robinson was elected on the Longbridge works committee to represent TGWU members as well as AUEW.

Hawley stressed that the TGWU had opposed the Edwardes plan and will continue to do so:

"We have said we will support any members who oppose the plan and this will not change."

Robinson, said Hawley, had been victimised "as many people have been in the past".

At this point a shout from the floor asked the question "what about Alan Thornett?".

Alan Thornett was victimised in 1974 and has remained victimised ever since. Not a finger has been lifted by the

TGWU in his defence (see p.11).

Hawley was completely caught and had to stutter that Alan Thornett is better off than Derek Robinson because he still has his job.

The most militant speech of the Rally came from TGWU national clerical officer Todd Sullivan.

He pointed out that after the Tories came to power, Thatcher had a meeting with Edwardes and the "1980 business plan" was scrapped.

Then came the latest 'Edwardes plan'.

He said the agreement Edwardes was looking for on the annual wage review "sets out on the destruction of trade unionism in every industry".

But this struggle will not be won by speeches or standing ovations, of which there were many at the rally.

It will be won by determined all-out strike action, which we have to demand be made official.

The rally went on to pass a resolution which avoided this crucial question and Stalinist chairman Jack Adams brushed aside calls from the Leyland Action Committee for a lobby of the AUEW EC the following morning to press for official support.

All of which shows that as BL management, on behalf of the Tory government, deliberately make Leyland a battlefield on which trade union strength is to be broken, there are a large body of 'left' talking convenors and union officials who have yet to reveal the full extent of their own class collaboration.

The coming struggles will expose to new layers of workers in struggle the complete inadequacy of the existing reformist and Stalinist union leaders in the struggle to defend even basic trade union rights.

A revolutionary, Trotskyist leadership must be built with urgency amongst BL workers to lead this struggle.

Crisis bites US car firms

As British Leyland, Chrysler/Falbot and Vauxhall managements lead an offensive against shop floor working conditions in Britain, US car manufacturers also face a mounting crisis of profitability.

A slump in car sales as a result of this year's US energy crisis has coincided with longer-term financial problems for the major car firms.

Cutbacks in production have now brought a staggering 140,000 permanent or temporary lay-offs of auto workers in car and lorry plants.

This week 15 whole factories will close down until existing surplus stocks have been sold.

And, though the main casualties in the sales slump have been the large US "gas guzzlers", General Motors have now closed two plants making smaller vehicles.

Indeed GM only scraped a profit in the last quarter through government tax credits. American Ford, meanwhile,

has announced a \$1 billion anticipated loss on its 1979 operation, offset to a certain extent by improved profits from Britain and Europe.

Ford management predict however that 1980, too, will see them in deficit in the US, and do not expect figures to climb back into the black until the following year.

Prospect of collapse

But they do not face the immediate prospect of collapse that hangs over the head of the Chrysler Corporation.

Chrysler Chairman Lee Iacocca has received an ominous mixture of good news and bad news in his bid to stave off bankruptcy.

Bad news: the Carter administration turned down his initial request for \$1.2 billion in Federal loan guarantees.

Good news: two months later the administration changed its mind—and offered \$1.5 billion.

Bad news: the \$1.5 billion is only available if Chrysler



Fraser (centre) with fellow UAW bureaucrats: now he is on the board of Chrysler

manages to raise another \$1.5 billion to match it on the private market.

Good news: Iacocca received an immediate cash bonus from the United Auto Workers union boss Douglas Fraser, who "volunteered" his members for a \$200 million pay cut over the

next year, and "volunteered" his retired members for a cancellation of a scheduled pension increase worth another \$200 million.

Fraser, in exchange, is to receive a seat on the board of Chrysler!

Bad news: despite this demonstration of abject servility by the trade union bureaucracy in Chrysler, bankers still don't want to touch the Corporation with a barge pole.

Indeed Chrysler's own bankers, Manufacturers Hanover have publicly stated that they will not lend the Corporation any money at all, since:

"We don't lend money in circumstances in which we don't expect to be repaid."

Other leading US bankers and bourgeois politicians, with the aid of course, of lobbyists reflecting the interests of Ford and General Motors, have also spoken out against any federal loan to Chrysler.

As Iacocca warns more and more stridently that the cash is running out, it seems increasingly likely that the Corporation, which has already lost \$721

million this year, will close down at the cost of 158,000 Chrysler jobs—and hundreds of thousands more in related industries.

Thus in the land of unfettered free enterprise the anarchy of the capitalist crisis is wreaking havoc in a fundamental section of the engineering industry.

And the treachery of union leaders—a common factor in every facet of the struggle in the capitalist countries is also having its reflection in the privately owned US steel industry.

Workers in US Steel's American Bridge division last week voted to resist a company plan to freeze their wages, despite threats that the alternative was closure.

Steel workers union leader Lloyd McBride had recommended acceptance of a three-year standstill on wages which would further the attempt by US Steel to impose lower pay rates for the 100,000 workers in fabricating steel plants than for the 400,000 employed in basic steel.

The lesson—whether in the US or in Britain—is the same. The anarchy of the system is

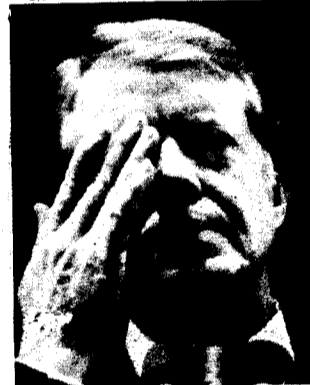
now destroying the forces of production, and throwing thousands of workers out of a job at a time when poverty and social need are rampant on a world scale.

The struggle must be to open the books of capitalist industry to elected workers committees, to expose to the working class the futility of seeking a way out down the capitalist road.

Instead the fight must be for occupations and mass strike action to force the nationalisation of basic industry and the banks without compensation under workers' management. Only a planned socialist economy can provide secure jobs and living standards.

And only a party of the working class, independent of the Democratic and Republican machines in the US, and offering a socialist perspective, can lead the vital struggle for a workers' government in the USA.

The fight in the UAW, and every other union in the coming period must be for a political break from Carter, Kennedy and the Democrats, and for the unions to take the lead in building a Labour Party in the USA.



Carter

New splits in Bolivian military

A week after she assumed office with the declaration that coups had ended for ever in Bolivia, interim President Lidia Gueiler has been faced with her first military revolt.

Army Commander General Luis Garcia who was appointed to the post by short-lived dictator Natusch has refused to surrender his appointment and, claiming he has the support of the entire army, seized the main barracks in Miraflores, La Paz.

Garcia's chances of success are limited since the rest of Natusch's high command have accepted their dismissal.

Held back

But, nevertheless, at least one armoured regiment is supporting him, and the pro-government "Institucionalista" faction of the military has held back from an all-out assault so far, presumably for fear of precipitating yet another division in the armed forces, this time in open battle.

Garcia's action illustrates not only the continuing danger of another attempt to impose a military dictatorship but also the critical divisions within the military and its manifest weakness in the face of the popular movement.

It is apparent that, despite all the raptures about the 'revival of democracy' in Bolivia over the last week, the reformist strategy is on the verge of collapse.

The conditions for revolutionary mobilisation, similar to those in 1952 and 1970-71, are becoming more and more auspicious.

Despite the activities of the bureaucratic leadership of the COB (TUC) the workers' movement has made substantial gains in recent weeks and it will be extremely difficult for Gueiler's government to make any more of importance without the support of the working class.

Maoists

Gueiler has appointed a cabinet drawn primarily from the official wing of the MNR led by Victor Paz Estenssoro—for whom she was once a private secretary.

The rest of the ministries go to the Christian Democrats, although the Maoist PCM-L has gained the portfolio for urban affairs—further indication of its



President Gueiler receives the presidential sash of office

total degeneration which has been marked by a serious loss of cadre, particularly in the mines.

The opposition MNR—led by Hernan Siles Suazo—has refused to join the cabinet but says it will, for the time being, support the government in Congress.

This, no doubt, will encourage further fighting within the bourgeois political apparatus as the crisis deepens.

The economy is in absolute ruins and it has become apparent that the army finally ditched Natusch when the IMF advised a currency devaluation.

Frightened

The last time this occurred, in 1972, the Banzer dictatorship was severely threatened by popular mobilisation and memories of the subsequent repression clearly frightened the Generals, in view of the opposition to Natusch that had already developed.

Natusch himself purloined £1.7 millions to pay his troops bonuses and keep them on the streets to uphold his dictatorship.

But as soon as the extent of the opposition became clear there was a massive flight of capital, reaching \$10 millions a day until the banks were closed.

Bolivia is now virtually without foreign resources and has a £1.5 billion foreign debt. The IMF is demanding that

the peso be floated but the regime is resisting, since the reaction of the working class will be uncontrollable.

Defence budget

The COB has yet to present its demands; but it has been talking of major cuts in the defence budget a substantial increase in the minimum wage, workers participation in the state mining corporation (COMIBOL), exchange controls and a moratorium on the external debt.

These demands, if implemented, would push the crippled capitalist economy to the verge of collapse—but they are not in themselves revolutionary demands.

Revolutionary Marxists must fight for transitional demands that clearly reveal the class nature of the economy and the question of proletarian power.

The independence of the working class must be developed through outright rejection of the bourgeois government and parliament, the establishment of soviets and militias and the building of a mass revolutionary party.

Only in this way will the proletariat be in a position to move to the offensive against the wilting organisation of the capitalist class.

Zionists in new crisis

The arrest of the mayor of Nablus in the West Bank area occupied by Zionist military forces in the 1967 war has provoked a huge crisis in the area itself and throughout the complex world of international diplomacy whose purpose is to deprive the Palestinian people of their national rights.

Mayor Bassam Al-Shaqa was alleged in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* to have said that he would 'justify and identify' with the PLO coastal raid in March 1978 during which over 20 people were killed.

The Mayor denies this, saying that he merely said such raids were inevitable as long as Zionist occupation of the area continued. Like virtually all Palestinians he of course identifies himself with the PLO and this in itself is probably enough to provoke the wrath of the occupation authorities.

Deportation

However, Mr Al-Shaqa is not in a position to confirm this personally since he has been incarcerated near Tel Aviv pending a probable court decision to deport him to Jordan.

Meanwhile, in the West Bank area itself, the entire town council of Nablus has resigned, together with up to 200 other councillors and all 25 mayors in the area.

Strike action in Nablus has been continuous since the arrest and demonstrations or sporadic violence are being reported every day from the area.

The Zionists have also decided to prosecute two more of the mayors, Kasim Khalef of Ramallah and Ibrahim Tavil of El-Bira, for 'assaulting police' during a trial over land seizures in the area.

Why is it that the Zionists have risked all the consequences of these actions, including the radicalisation of the Palestinians on the West Bank following the mass actions developing there, and even condemnation by the entire General Assembly of the United Nations?

Autonomy

Mayor Khalef explained it as 'part of an Israeli drive to eliminate the West Bank leaders most opposed to the criminal concept of autonomy'.

"Autonomy" is the proposal from the Camp David agreements between the Zionists and Egyptian President Sadat for a bantustan-style state in the West Bank area, of Palestinians under Israeli patronage.

But Zionist motives go beyond this.

The crisis-ridden Begin government, with numerous resignations in recent weeks and strong pressure from extreme right wing forces determined to expand land seizures, has been compelled to take action to make itself appear ready to adapt to such forces.

All the UN governments, including those who have supported every form of Zionist plunder in the past, are prepared to condemn Israel at this point in order to prepare the way for possible agreement with the Zionists to set up an independent West Bank state as a sop to the Palestinians.

Some such imperialist carve-up, which may even be forced

on the Zionists, is the greatest danger to the Palestinian liberation movement at this time.

There can be no compromise on the demand for the withdrawal of Zionist forces from all occupied territory by the ending of the state of Israel itself, and the establishment of a secular state of Palestine, in which rights of majority and minorities alike are guaranteed.

Demirel wins vote

Turkey's new right wing Prime Minister, Suleyman Demirel, received a substantial (229-208) vote of confidence in the National Assembly last weekend.

The programme he has put forward to resolve the political and economic crisis confronting Turkish capitalism includes the imposition of a new state of emergency Act, the institution of special courts to try 'terrorists', and new restrictions on Turkish trade unions and associations.

While these moves are cloaked in rhetorical denunciations of "terrorism" every previous repressive measure taken by the Turkish capitalist state has been directed almost exclusively against the left wing and the trade unions, while the toll of murders carried out by fascist gangs continues unchecked.

It is more urgent than ever that the Turkish workers movement break from the political alliance with the bourgeois RPP, led by former PM Ecevit, and turn instead to building a united working class front to bring down Demirel and create conditions for a workers and peasants government in Turkey.

WORKERS' LEADERS ENDORSE SPANISH ANTI-UNION LAWS

The Spanish parliament, the Cortes, is at present working out the details of one of the most systematic and minutely calculated legislative attacks on the working class ever enacted.

It is called the Workers' Statute (Estatuto del Trabajador).

The statute consists of the establishment of minimum 'norms' for wages, conditions, holidays, trade union rights and collective bargaining arrangements.

The statute is made to look like a series of reforms.

But in fact its minimum standards are far below those gained in struggle by the working class in some cases even under Franco's dictatorship.

And beyond the almost wholly fake reforms the Statute specifies the duties of workers to their employers; places all kinds of restrictions on free trade union activities including the right to strike; and grants all kinds of anti-working class rights to employers.

Collaboration

If it is enforced, the Statute will undermine in a fundamental way the rights of free and independent trade union organisation for which workers in Spain have been struggling ever since the declining years of Franco's own dictatorship.

The Statute is being steered through the parliament by the governing party, the UCD (Centre Democratic Union).

But the UCD is receiving the fullest possible collaboration of the largest of the parties which allegedly represents the working class, the PSOE (Socialist Party).

After two days of strong verbal opposition to the UCD in the debates on the statute, the PSOE suddenly fell quiet and began presenting only "responsible" amendments.

This was clearly the result of a secret deal between the UCD and PSOE leaders, the details of which have not been revealed but which is a further step towards coalition government.

The PSOE is now wholeheartedly in favour of the principle of regulating every

possible detail of the class struggle in Spain by legislation enforceable through the legal apparatus of the bourgeois state.

The PSOE has presented hundreds of amendments to the statute, but has uttered not a single word against it in principle, and has voted against hardly any of its provisions.

"Participation"

The PSOE is thus engaged upon a massive nationwide exercise in "participation" and class collaboration of the most treacherous kind.

As the PSOE members of parliament help to vote through the statute, their close allies in the bureaucracy of the UGT, one of Spain's two main trade union federations, have signed a wide-ranging agreement with the bosses' organisation, the CEOE, the Spanish equivalent of the CBI.

These developments have led to something of a reversal of the previous roles of the reformist (PSOE/UGT) and Stalinist (CP/Workers Commissions) bureaucracies.

During the immediate period after Franco's death it was the CP, led by Santiago Carrillo, which took up the most shameless right wing, class collaborationist position—publicly favouring the monarchy and the Suarez government; breaking strikes, and sabotaging demonstrations.

Of course the PSOE did its share; but it took advantage of the CP's gross collaboration to put on a "left" face on some of the issues—like the monarchy.

Today the PSOE leaders have handed the "left" mask over to the CP and the Workers Commissions.

"Opposition"

In parliament, the Workers Commissions general secretary Marcelino Camacho, has put up vehement verbal opposition to the Statute.

And the CP parliamentary group (along with Euskadiko Eskerra, the left Basque nationalists) have voted against most of the clauses passed so far.

The CP's opposition, however, is not one of principle.

They support the idea of the detailed regulation of the wages and conditions of workers through bourgeois law.

And their tactics have been to make a lot of noise, and present amendments.

They are against the Statute but in favour of a statute.

The reason for this shift is that the question of the Statute has become central to the CP's new tactic of "opposition" to the UCD government and the PSOE's collaboration with it.

Condemned

Addressing the latest meeting of the CP's Central Committee, Carrillo condemned the Statute, saying that it "could hardly be implemented under worse conditions" and that the UCD was:

"imposing texts which don't go as far as the gains already made by the workers".

The CP, he said, would mobilise the workers:

"including those who voted for the UCD and who must now realise that nothing but mobilisation would remind their MPs what positions to defend [!]"

Masterly hypocrisy

Carrillo, however, went on roundly to condemn the demand coming from many sections of the Workers Commissions to boycott the parlia-



Felipe Gonzalez embraces Suarez

Suarez with admirers

mentary debates on the Statute.

"Some radical currents" observed Carrillo with his usual masterly hypocrisy, "can be as sterile and dangerous as a policy of collaboration with the government and with the CEOE."

All this is part of a major opportunist offensive by the CP to cash in on the recent rout of the "Marxists" in the PSOE by right wing leader Felipe Gonzalez, and the crisis and weakening of most of the parties and groups to the left of the CP.

But since the CP's "opposition" is a totally unprincipled one, it may easily disappear as soon as it appeared.

If the present tactic looks like giving the green light to

working class mobilisations—which would threaten the unwritten pact between the workers' party leaders and the "democratic" Spanish bourgeoisie—then it can be safely predicted that Carrillo and Camacho would in no time at all do one of their famous 180 degree flips.

Already there is speculation that the UCD will decide to "buy off" CP opposition by accepting two or three CP amendments and getting the "reluctant" agreement of the CP bureaucracy to the Statute as a whole.

So it is plain that for Spanish workers to let the CP lead the campaign against the Statute would be a disaster.

A massive independent

mobilisation is needed against a government policy which the CP agrees with in principle—state regulation of wages and conditions, and the recognition of genuinely independent workers' organisations.

Some of the provisions of the Statute passed so far.

Overtime—prohibited for workers under 18; no more than two hours a day for other workers, rates to be at least 75% over ordinary hours.

Holidays—23 days a year minimum, 30 days for workers under 18 and over 60.

Weekend—minimum of 1 1/2 days off work.

Minimum wage—will be fixed by government every six months.

Probationary periods—two

weeks for unskilled workers. Working day—no more than nine hours.

Working week—43 hours.

Rights—the Statute establishes the right to free trade unions, to collective bargaining, to strike.

Duties—"to fulfil work obligations with good faith and diligence".

Equal pay—no discrimination by sex.

Redundancy—virtually no control of redundancies; even absence from work for "justified" reasons (e.g. illness) can constitute grounds for legal sacking.

Elected workers representatives are protected from arbitrary sacking during their term of office and for one year afterwards.

Portugal crisis election

The general election to take place in Portugal on 2 December is the result of a long political crisis.

The election was called by military president Ramalho Eanes in September, when the non-elected reactionary "technocratic" government of Mota Pinto was defeated in a parliamentary vote by the Socialist and Communist Parties.

The defeat proved that no feasible government would be able to gain a parliamentary majority.

At the same time the Socialist and Communist Parties, despite their parliamentary majority, refused to contemplate forming a government fearing that this would put them under unbearable pressure from the working class to implement anti-capitalist policies.

When Mota Pinto fell, Eanes, having talked about a reimposition of direct military rule, decided to appoint a caretaker government under a former associate of ex-dictator Caetano, Maria Lourdes da Pintasilgo and call general elections.

But, if Eanes imagined that the elections would solve Portugal's political crisis, he looks like being very wrong.

Though in Portugal opinion polls are illegal, some leaked polls done by Spanish agencies are reported to have estimated that at present well over 50% of the electorate are "undecided".

If this is anything like true it can only point to a deep and thoroughly understandable contempt for all of Portugal's political parties.

The biggest loser of

committed support is very likely the Socialist Party of Mario Soares, now campaigning under the slogan of "Progress, Stability and Social-Peace".

The SP's period in government—in which it consistently imposed reactionary anti-working class policies—must have lost it much of the mass support which gained it the largest number of seats in the last parliament.

If the poll figures are accurate it does not look yet as if the CP's electoral alliance, the United People's Alliance has picked up the support the SP is believed to have lost.

This is no surprise either since in spite of the CP's recent demagogic "opposition" to successive governments, the Stalinists have studiously

refused to mobilise the working class in defence of the most basic material needs.

Revolutionaries in Portugal should call on the workers and peasants to ensure a majority for the workers' parties in the new parliament.

But this tactic should be seen as part of the fight to force the reformists and Stalinists to form a government independent of the bourgeois parties and implement socialist policies.

As they fail to do this so will they stand definitively exposed and be forced to make way for a new, revolutionary, working class leadership which can regain defend and enlarge the gains of 1974 which reformist and Stalinist betrayals have destroyed or endangered.



Pintasilgo

Basque militants arrested

Amid a sharpening crisis in the Basque country, police swooped and arrested at least 150 militants from left wing parties last week.

Those detained were members of Euskadiko Eskerra (linked to ETA, politico-militar) Herri Batasuna (linked to ETA militar), the Communist Movement (a centrist, Maoist organisation) and the LCR (Revolutionary Communist League, Spanish section of the "Trotskyist" USFI).

The arrests took place on the same day as a general strike organised by the same groups was called to protest against the latest killing of a Basque militant by the police.

This latest murder was of a young municipal councillor who was a member of the Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity) coalition.

About half of those arrested have since been released.

The new detentions add to the already tense situation in Euskadi.

They are the state's reaction to a situation in which it is already over the rack on the Basque question.

Since last weekend ETA (politico-militar) have been holding a UCD MP prisoner, demanding as conditions for his release the freeing of five long-term Basque political prisoners.

And a massive file of evidence is piling up of the continuation

of the most savage tortures against Basque prisoners in government hands.

The new evidence, first brought to light by an MP of Euskadiko Eskerra, has made the government squirm and has deeply embarrassed its bourgeois nationalist allies in the Basque Nationalist Party.

After 3 years of "democratic" political reform, and a month after the passing of the "Statute of Autonomy" the political reality of Euskadi has not changed so much since the days of Franco.

As a common slogan on Basque walls puts it:

"With the Statute, more repression!"



Carrillo

Bureaucrats clamour for import controls

The worsening plight of British capitalism on the world market was reflected recently by the conference decision of the Confederation of British Industry to call on the Tory government to impose selective controls on imports into Britain.

This bid to protect British employers against foreign competition of course flies in the face of Thatcher's stern "monetarist" policy.

This consists in exposing British capitalism to the full, icy blast of international competition, in order to weed out the weakest and least profitable sectors and press the strongest into a renewed drive for speed-up and rationalisation.

The policy has been imple-



mented through driving up the value of the pound through high interest rates—thus increasing the relative price of British goods on the world market and lowering the price of imported goods sold in Britain.

It is a policy rather similar to the old Spartan custom of leaving new-born infants on the roof of their houses overnight so that the weaklings perished and only the strong attained adulthood.

Deficit

The difference is that in many cases it is the oldest and most traditional British industries that are suffering the most from Thatcher's enforced process of natural selection (which has succeeded so far in driving the British balance of payments deficit to a massive £2.5 billion, and which is leading rapidly to the dismantling of British Leyland, the only substantial British-owned car manufacturer).

In particular the CBI conference echoed with the plaintive moans of employers in the textile industry—who point angrily to the increasing tide of low-priced imports from a wide range of countries.

The British textile industry pays some of the lowest wages available; but over the years employers have used the horrific exploitation of the workforce simply as a source of huge

profits, while investment in new technology has lagged way behind that of rivals in other countries.

The outcome is that British textile products are now out-priced and outpaced by their rivals.

But while the employers moan about this situation and plead for special protection, they find strong supporters among the trade union bureaucracy.

One of the latest is Jim Farrington, 'left' talking secretary of the Northern Textile and Allied Workers Union.

In his half yearly report last week he declared that:

"The situation is grim and unless the government acts quickly to stem the inflow of textiles into the United Kingdom, further closures are inevitable and many more thousands of workers will be forced to join the ranks of the unemployed."

Farrington thus offers his members and other textile workers not the prospect of a fight against the British employers who are depriving them of their right to work, but of an alliance with these employers, against a supposed "foreign" enemy!

"It is essential in the interests of the nation that the jobs of textile workers and the jobs of workers in other manufacturing industries are safeguarded to maintain a viable



US workers demand import controls

industrial base."

This same logic leads to unquestioning acceptance by union leaders like Farrington of speed-up on the shop-floor, of permanently low wages and of the right of employers to close "surplus" factories in order to make themselves "viable" at the expense of the workforce.

Nationalist

But he is not alone. In the footwear industry, steel, the car industry (above all British Leyland), and other manufacturing sectors union leaders, along with Tribune MPs have fallen over themselves in their eagerness to protect "British" employers against invading "foreign" competitors.

The irony is that such

nationalist class collaboration by union leaders is far from simply a British phenomenon. In the United States, in particular, trade union bureaucrats have been at the head of a vigorous protectionist lobby by employers urging Carter to impose controls on almost identical imported goods—textiles, steel, shoes, etc.

In other words the intensification of the capitalist crisis brings to the forefront the nationalist divisions in the ranks of the reformist labour bureaucracy that poses as the leadership of the working class.

Propertyless

As a propertyless class, possessing in every capitalist

country only its ability to work, the working class has no "national interest", no common cause with the capitalists who—whether "foreign" or not—derive their profits from the exploitation of workers.

Only a revolutionary, internationalist leadership, fighting closures and speed-up through strikes, occupations, nationalisation, and the struggle for a planned socialist economy, can defend the interests of the working class, and combat the reactionary, nationalist diversion of import controls peddled by employers and bureaucrats alike.

Joseph calls in the asset-strippers

Two more relics of the Labour government's efforts at systematised class collaboration bit the dust last week.

BL chairman Michael Edwardes embarked on a set-piece confrontation designed to sack and victimise Derek Robinson, the foremost defender of the discredited Ryder "workers participation" set-up, and to impose instead rule by decree over a broken shop stewards movement.

Resignation

And, in the same week, Industry Secretary Sir Keith Joseph pressed home the moves designed to force the resignation of the old National Enterprise Board.

Out went the 'trade unionists'—Lord "Broadleft" Scanlon, Power Engineers' leader John Lyons, and GMWU chief David Basnett; and out, too went chairman Sir Leslie Murphy, British Oxygen chairman Sir



PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

Basnett

Leslie Smith, Rio Tinto Zinc executive Alistair Frame, John Gardiner, chief executive of the Laird Group, and Sir Jack Wellings of the 600 Group.

Asset-strippers

And in came the asset-strippers, groomed for office by Joseph, and longing for a chance

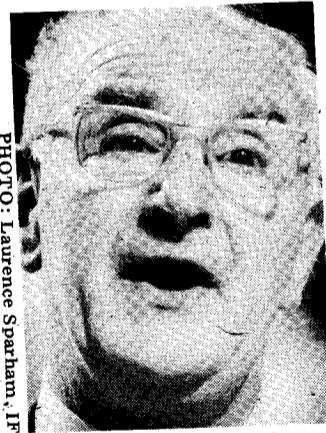


PHOTO: Laurence Spatham, IFL

Scanlon

to carve up the body set up by Labour in the illusory hopes of "planning" and stimulating a crisis-ridden British capitalism:

*The new chairman, Arthur Knight, a former chairman of Courtaulds, has spelt out his opposition to a state role in industry in his book *Private Enterprise and Public Intervention*.

*Deputy chairman Sir John King of Babcock International is on record as calling for Rolls Royce, BL and Alfred Herbert—the NEB's only really large 'holdings'—to be taken out of NEB control.

In a recent letter to the *Daily Telegraph* King declared that "The question of whether and how the NEB itself survives cannot have a high priority".

*Robert Clayton is technical director of GEC, which led the fight against the NEB setting up its microchip producer Immos—which clearly can only prosper at the expense of GEC profits.

...and ...



Knight

after the enforced sale of £100 million assets as part of Chancellor Howe's spending cuts.

Socialist Press has, from its very first issue, consistently fought to expose the class collaborationist role of the NEB which, as Basnett pointed out to the *Financial Times*:

"was a place where industry was working together to improve industrial performance".

The NEB as such represented an alliance between union leaders and leading capitalists, and an illusion of directing British capitalism in a progressive direction through the machinery of the capitalist state.

Though fronted by Tony Benn it was a set-up endorsed and launched by Harold Wilson and his entire right wing Cabinet.

But there can be no doubt that Joseph's decision to drive out the old board and wheel in the asset strippers is an advanced indication of fresh attacks on workers in the remaining NEB firms, and of a determination to allow the weakest sections of capitalists—now entering profound financial

Blunt sinks gag law

ONE substantial benefit to the workers' movement that has emerged from the midst of the "Fourth Man" affair has been the ignominious Tory retreat on the reactionary Protection of Information Bill.

The new Bill, designed to gag journalists and muzzle those fighting to expose the reactionary moves of the capitalist state had already received two readings in the House of Lords, and, amid a clamour of opposition, was entering its committee stage prior to submission to the Commons.

It was thus being introduced through the "back door", and introduced a wide new range of restrictions on reporting and investigating matters of

"security", "defence" and every aspect of the workings of the state.

The Bill provided for the word of a single government Minister to be sufficient to brand a piece of information as classified.

Select clique

But the expose of the "state within a state" operating in the Blunt cover-up, and the obvious fact that the whole affair would have remained in the hands of a select clique of military intelligence chiefs if the Tory Bill was already law, has made it politically impossible to proceed with the new legislation.



O'Fishall's Year

SOCIALIST PRESS 1980 CALENDAR

Price £1.00 plus 20p p&p
From Socialist Press, 31 Dartmouth Park Hill
London NW5 1HR



JENKINS BECKONS TO LABOUR'S TORIES

Further signs of the increasing restlessness of Labour's crypto-Tory right wing in the face of the growing militancy of the working class were shown by last week's call from Roy Jenkins for "moderates" to leave the party and form a new, "radical", centre coalition.

Delivering the Dimpleby lecture on BBC television, Jenkins called on those right wingers who find the growing rank and file demands for Labour Party democracy and for socialist policies quite intolerable to "break out, and mount a battle of movement on new and higher ground".

Recognising that the present Callaghan-Healey leadership clique is posed with the daunting, Canute-like task of holding back a mounting groundswell of opposition, Jenkins pointed out that the only other hope of salvation for the right wing was in a closer alliance with the trade union bureaucracy—who

also fear for the loss of their parasitic positions of power and privilege at the hands of the working class.

But for Jenkins even such a reactionary alliance would smack too strongly of the labour movement, and "would not be a healthy form of relief".

"Centre" forces

He would sooner see a split in the Labour Party, in which the considerable rump force of extreme right wingers would break off to join forces with the Liberals and similar "centre" forces in a new, bourgeois political formation.

His speech has been greeted by immediate opposition from a number of leading Labour reactionaries including David Owen, who on Friday spelt out the "deep entry" perspective which he and other right wingers are following.

"The most foolish course now", he declared, would be to talk of establishing a new party "just at the very moment when, at long last [!] we are beginning to fight back from within".

But there seems little doubt

that Jenkins—whose £70,000 a year, tax-free sinecure as President of the European Commission ends next autumn—only made his speech after taking soundings amongst the Party's extreme right wing, and as part of a deliberate plan for a return to British politics.

Labour Party members, however, should endorse Jenkins' call on the right wing to "break out" as soon as possible.

And those overgrown embryonic Tories whose beaks are too soft to crack the shell should be helped on their way—through a campaign in every constituency to remove them from leading positions and drive them from the Labour Party.

'Lefts'

Those 'lefts' like Dennis Skinner and Frank Allaun who have rushed to expose Jenkins' hypocrisy should be called on to explain just what they are doing to oust Jenkins' political co-thinkers—the Callaghan-Healey-Mason clique—from the party leadership and to prepare the ground for mass action to bring down the Tories.

WE MUST FIGHT FROM THE HIGHEST PERKS—I MEAN PEAKS!

WINE LAKE

BUTTER MOUNTAIN

£70,000 PER YEAR TAX FREE

Walk-out from Corrie committee

Labour MPs walked out of the sixth committee hearing on John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill last week in protest against the way in which the Tories are bulldozing through their proposals.

Willie Hamilton and Oonagh McDonald described the proceedings, chaired by Tory MP Mr Bonner Pink, as "a disgrace".

About-face

Amongst other blows struck against those fighting the Corrie Bill is the complete about-face by Tory Health Minister Gerard Vaughan on the upper time limit for abortions.

Only a fortnight ago he horrified anti-abortionists by declaring that the top limit should be 24 weeks, instead of the 20 called for by Corrie.

He cited the problems of detecting some foetal abnormalities prior to 18 weeks of pregnancy, and also argued against

any change in the present criteria for abortion.

And Vaughan went on to describe a proposed 22-week maximum as "the worst of all worlds".

But last Wednesday he went back to the Tory-led committee to present medical "evidence" to back a 22-week deadline—based on a letter from Professor Reynolds at University College Hospital, London.

Reynolds claimed that "a few" of the "small numbers" of babies born at 24 and 25 weeks survive in his infant care unit.

None born at 23 weeks has yet survived, admits Reynolds but claims "it is inevitable that one will, sooner or later".

Argument

On the basis of this tenuous nonsense, the vague possibility of a 23-week old foetus at some point surviving in laboratory conditions is transformed into an argument for forcing thousands of working class women to endure the agonies of an

unwanted pregnancy.

And John Corrie himself has willingly accepted the "compromise" deadline of 22 weeks, confident that this will defuse much medical opposition to the Bill.

Urgency

Meanwhile on the casting vote of the committee chairman, the word "serious" was reinserted into the criteria justifying abortions—spelling out the fact that without mass action by the labour movement to defeat and remove the Tory government, existing abortion rights will soon be destroyed.

Hence the urgency of the campaign for strike action and a mass lobby of Parliament against the Corrie Bill on 5 February; of forcing Labour MPs to vote against the Bill; and of mobilising health unions and the entire labour movement in action to defy the Bill should it be railroaded onto the statute book.

Blunt blew his last chance of getting any sort of mitigating copy in the press when he barred most of them from his press conference.

In the eyes of the *Express*, the *Mirror*, the *Star*, the *Sun* and the rest of the fuming hacks left standing in the rain outside the *Times* offices, this was the worst crime of all.

Not only had they failed to track down this devilish Russian spy, but they had to get their carefully emasculated version of events second hand while Blunt took smoked salmon with the editor of the *Times*!

It gave added outrage to the frenzied jingoism which covered their pages day after day.

Sober heart

Did the Queen know? Was she acting under orders? Is there a crime more foul than leaking 'our' secrets? Espionage has clearly taken over the role of patricide as the king among

crimes.

It is easy to ridicule the Pavlovian reaction of Fleet Street, and there has not been a shortage of bourgeois columnists prepared to do just that.

But behind its posturing exterior, Fleet Street has a calculating sober heart.

Industrial sector

On the morning of the day on which Derek Robinson was sacked the papers took an ominous and prescient note.

Background pieces appeared in all the papers explaining the recruitment of Soviet agents in the 30s—but stressing that the future aristocrats from Cambridge were no longer the target.

The new recruiting field was declared as the industrial sector of the British Communist Party.

There is little doubt that this 'information' was fed to the press in the knowledge that Robinson was about to be sacked.

Witch-hunts against the left

nowadays rarely take the form of singling out the Communist Party for special attention.

The obvious role of the CP as an arm of the bureaucracy in dampening down the struggles of the workers means that 'Trotskyite' has often become the catch phrase for all militants.

Las week this was entirely missing. Having identified the industrial wing of the CP as the enemy, the way was left open for the sacking of Robinson to be followed up with headlines labelling him "Robbo the Red".

In this way the Blunt affair has been consciously utilised as a tool for ensuring the best possible propaganda for Michael Edwardes.

Open conspiracies by the press are not frequent—in nine cases out of ten the instincts of well-trained reactionary newspaper editors can be relied on to achieve the effect which the capitalist class requires.

In the case of the Robinson sacking it is evident that these instincts were not thought to be sufficient.

PRESS GANG



Casualties of 1930s Stalinism

There has been one thing about Anthony Blunt on which there has been agreement from many quarters.

From Tory MP Julian Amery and his ilk on the extreme right there has been talk about 'patriotism' and treachery—subjects on which he should have intimate knowledge since his brother was hanged for working for the Germans in 1945.

From the reactionary government there has been talk of preserving their system from 'Marxist danger'—woe betide intellectuals or sons of the ruling class who decide they want to 'betray' the system which has given them so much privilege.

Even more interesting has been the reaction of Labour 'lefts' like Canavan and Skinner who have tried to argue that if there were not a 'state within a state', an 'establishment cover-up' then there would be an



Stalin 'efficient security service', able presumably to root out 'traitors' both external and internal, with greater expediency.

Canavan, from a puritan somewhat to the right of the Parliamentary opposition of the 1630s, concentrates on the vital question of 'did the Queen

know?'

Yet it is well known that the monarchy stands simply at the pinnacle of the anti-democratic, extra-Parliamentary forces which are determined at all costs to maintain capitalist domination.

Blight

However, there are more interesting aspects of the Blunt affair which has much to tell us about the development of socialism in Britain and about the blight on Marxism brought about by Stalinism.

What must be said is that the likes of Blunt, Burgess, Philby and MacLean took a decision to fight for the overthrow of capitalism during the 1930s and proceeded to do so at times with heroism and dedication.

That they came themselves originally from the 'establishment' cannot be held against them.

Nor can the fact that they

initially turned towards the Communist Party, at a time when few other 'Marxists' could seriously present themselves.

However, Blunt and the others turned to 'Marxism' at a time when, under Stalin, the Communist International was developing its policies of the popular front—an alliance of class forces against fascism without proletarian policies or proletarian leaders.

The policy of the Soviet bureaucracy was to defend itself from fascism by alliance with other sections of capitalism.

The use to which the talents and dedication of these people was put was therefore towards furthering the interests of the Soviet bureaucracy rather than the working class.

Diplomacy

Philby and the others could—and did—remain part of the 'establishment' because they

were deliberately turned into the world of diplomacy on behalf of the Soviet state.

Their efforts were not turned towards the emancipation of the working class, in Britain or elsewhere—where no doubt they might have made a contribution.

Much the same points could be made about the more public 'left' intellectuals of the 30s, like Auden and MacNiece, who worked with the CP on the basis of a liberal repugnance against fascism, without any political fight being taken up with them as Marxists.

One of their number, Stephen Spender, wrote a book called *Forward from Liberalism* which made it clear that he did not actually travel very far forward.

Spender soon went back to be an editor of the CIA-funded *Encounter* magazine.

Clearly Blunt ended up in that way also.

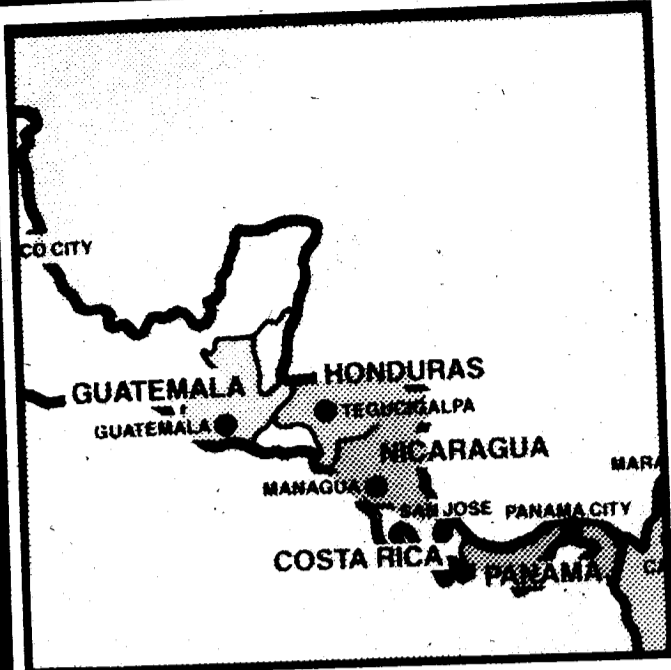
But he did at one point place the cause of socialism and the working class above that of the 'patriotism' in which he was brought up, and for this we should give him some credit.

'Patriotism' of that sort, as Samuel Johnson correctly put it is 'the last refuge of the scoundrel'.

Higher loyalty

Blunt's tragedy, along with that of many of his generation, is that their higher loyalty was to the bureaucratized Stalinist leadership and not to the working class and the fight for revolutionary leadership.

It is up to revolutionaries today to ensure that those few elements of the upper bourgeoisie who drop out should not become sucked back into accommodation to capitalism but become part of the workers' struggle against it.



Central America - a tinderbox of revolution



Sandinistas march in triumph

WHICH WAY FORWA

The FSLN regime in Nicaragua is now four months old. The revolution that overthrew Somoza and scored a major victory against imperialism has exercised an influence in the international class struggle out of all proportion to the apparent significance of the small Central American state.

This is evident not only in Central America itself, where the U.S. has been forced to organise a 'reformist' coup in El Salvador and isolate the barbarous Guatemalan dictatorship, but also in the rest of Latin America where the effects of the revolution have been particularly marked and herald a new period in the struggle of the working class.

Besides this, the Nicaraguan revolution has caused total havoc inside the world Trotskyist movement, precipitating a major split within the United Secretariat of the Fourth International on the basis of positions that range from simply wrong to downright treacherous adaptation to the FSLN leadership.

In such a situation the task of Marxists is to fight tenaciously for the political independence of the proletariat.

It is fundamental to Marxism that the inherent characteristic of the petty bourgeoisie is to oscillate between the two historic classes—the capitalist class and the working class.

When a petty bourgeois political formation such as the FSLN takes power, whether it be on the basis of the smashing of the old bourgeois state or not, it is pulled violently from side to side and is unable to establish a stable, class-based state.

This tendency is even more pronounced in the neo-colonial countries, and presents us with a historical anomaly in terms of the Leninist theory of the state. It is, in short, a transitory phenomenon; an intermediate period, shot through with contradictions.

There existed certain factions within the FSLN which, had there been the necessary external material or political support, could,



Victory rally: but capitalism still has not been overthrown in Nicaragua

revolutionary attack by imperialism, have swung towards the working class.

Castro's petty bourgeois nationalist July 26 Movement, in a developing economic/military alliance with the Kremlin bureaucracy, carried through such a turn in Cuba, resulting in the emergence of a deformed workers' state.

The cadre of the Guerra Popular Prolongada (GPP) tendency had been in the *campo* for an extended period (in some cases nearly twenty years), had lost many of its organic ties with the bourgeoisie and cultivated a ferocious antagonism towards the pro-imperialist state despite being immersed in the fundamental elitism of guerrillaism.

Equally the Tendencia Proletaria (TP) had moved away from the strategy of rural guerrilla warfare

and rejected vague catch all political formulations based on 'the people' and the 'working masses'.

'Leninist'

This tendency openly attacked the others for failing to develop a coherent revolutionary strategy on the basis of building a party in the working class, and declared itself to be 'Leninist', (Tendencia Proletaria, Documentos Basicos, 1 November 1978).

It cannot therefore, be said that these forces were from the outset lost to the socialist revolution.

But in practice their numbers were small, and since the GPP was differentiated primarily through its adherence to a particular military strategy and the leading cadre of the TP was composed almost exclusively of intellectuals, they lacked the ability to

counterpose a programmatic or organisational challenge to the dominant third tendency—the Terceristas.

This faction came into being on the basis of a popular frontist alliance with the anti-Somoza Nicaraguan bourgeoisie which along with the Latin American 'social democracies' (Venezuela, Costa Rica, Panama) gave substantial financial backing and prompted rapid recruitment on the basis of 'anti somocismo'.

This rapidly put the Terceristas in a strong enough position to impose their hegemony over the other tendencies through 'unification' early in 1979.

Tied to capitalism

Thus, as the FSLN entered the final battle with Somoza and imperialism, it was still committed and tied to a dissident element of the

It is quite clear that the extraordinary slaughter at the end of the civil war was the result of a last ditch U.S. attempt to bolster Somoza's Guard.

Yet after the Sandinista victory a rapid about-turn was made.

This was facilitated by the enormous destruction inflicted during the fighting, which made aid the most efficacious political weapon.

As U.S. Deputy Secretary of State, Warren Christopher, stated:

"With aid the chances will be enhanced [that the revolution] will move in the direction of a democratic regime . . . If we walk away we will almost certainly assure what we don't want, a communist or Cuban regime'.

Lessons of Cuba

Offers were made, requests encouraged, full promises held back and small quantities released to entice and threaten the new Government of National Reconstruction (GNR).

The lessons of Cuba had been learnt—there was to be no all-out blockade or any move to rehash the invasion attempt which led in Cuba to the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

This was a crucial turn by the U.S. imperialists, and the junta responded rapidly and emphatically—the bourgeoisie through instinct and the FSLN through its innate inability to present a coherent alternative.

Nevertheless it is significant that at the height of the war, *Barricada*, the official FSLN daily paper, was already laying the basis for a turn to the U.S. by quoting without any comment, Vance's pronouncement of the imperialist policy:

'We must not let ourselves get carried away by the myth that by stimulating changes and by stimulating relations with the forces of change, we can only help radicalisation . . . When we stimulate democratic change, economic and social justice, we promote our own long-term interests, including those related to our security'.

(*Barricada* June 27 1979)

After the victory the first logical step towards fortifying the 'middle way' was the inclusion of leading bourgeois figures in the GNR.

Far from employing these people discretely to

capitalist class.

But the political definition of the revolution depended on the process of the revolution itself; the social dislocation of civil war, extensive mass mobilisation, and the apparent smashing of the capitalist state apparatus.

Moreover, it was apparent that the role played by imperialism would be absolutely critical.

The U.S. pursued an erratic policy towards Somoza in the last months.

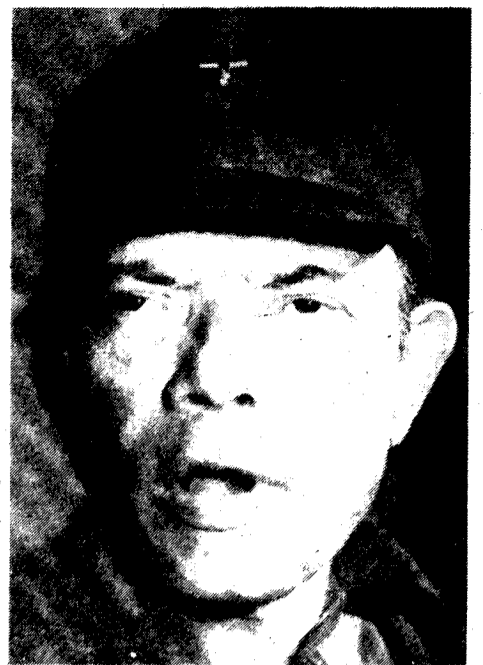
First it cut aid, then restored it; next it threw its resources behind the National Guard after the dictator announced his resignation in an attempt to reach a negotiated settlement with the bourgeois opposition—whilst simultaneously pushing the reactionary Organisation of American states to carry through a military intervention.



Using aid as a weapon - Carter



Sandinista militia women



Tomas Borge

WARD IN NICARAGUA?

fulfill necessary technical tasks under FSLN direction, the Sandinistas began almost immediately to hand them back control over the commanding heights of the economy:

'Some people have asked whether the government is the FSLN or the GNR... The truth is that the government Junta is in charge of all the high functions of the state.

There, the FSLN, which at the beginning took charge of the country, is now in the process of handing over the administrative and government apparatus to the Junta.

(Daniel Ortega, member of the Joint National Directorate of the FSLN, *Barricada* July 31 1979)

From the very start, the reconstruction the Junta sought to carry through, was to depend on international finance capital.

At the same time as Robelo, the millionaire on the Junta, was embracing with Castro in Havana, both bankers brought in by the guerrillas and the FSLN leadership itself were negotiating for loans from Venezuela, the EEC, the IMF and the private banks.

According to Arturo Cruz, president of the national bank:

'We are fully aware we have to work with the IMF and submit to a certain discipline. We don't want to be the mavericks of the world...'

Closely linked to this was the question of arms sales and military training.

Reprimanded

The supposedly 'Marxist' Minister of the Interior, Tomas Borge (who protests that he is as much influenced by John Steinbeck and his mother as by Lenin!) declared that there were "serious indications that the U.S. wants to change its attitude". He reprimanded his second-in-command for threatening to buy arms from the Soviet Union, and indicated that approaches would be made to Belgium and the U.S.

These arms are destined for a "small, efficient, professional army", rather than the popular militias.

Far from strengthening the militias as the armed expression of the independent working class, the FSLN is moving rapidly to disarm all those not under its direct control:

... the militias are

being concentrated and trained to incorporate them into the army". (Commander Luis Carrion, *Barricada*, July 27 1979).

Lest there should be any illusions in the possible proletarian character of this new force, the Programme of the Junta spells out with absolute clarity that:

'The members of the National Army will not be allowed to engage in political party activities, but their political rights as citizens will be guaranteed'.

(Programme of the GNR *June 1979 para 1.12*)

These moves to reconstruct a capitalist state apparatus that had been destroyed by the civil war rest firmly on the categorical pronouncement that:

'private property will not only be respected but absolutely guaranteed'.

(Commander Bayardo Ace, *La Prensa*, Buenos Aires, August 1 1979)

"Mixed Economy"

Jaime Wheelock, Minister of Agriculture and leader of the TP, who a year ago was inveighing against the 'petty bourgeois hegemony' of the other tendencies of the FSLN, is now vigorously pursuing the policy of "a gradual advance towards a mixed economy" outlined in the Junta's programme, and has proved one of the foremost proponents of 'caution'.

The nationalisation of Somoza's property, which comprised 25% of all industry and 40% of all workable land, was a political necessity imposed by the mass mobilisation: but state control of the national banks was a move required by capital if any form of control was to be placed on the bankrupt economy.

Similarly, the state monopoly on the export of agricultural produce is the only possible means in which sales of this year's disastrous cotton and coffee crops can be optimised on the world market.

No basic assault

These developments have altered the configuration of capitalism in Nicaragua; but in no sense do they represent a basic assault upon it.

Quite the reverse, they are the most efficient means of defence, and have been supplemented by a consolidated effort to defend private property relations in

the countryside.

The state agrarian reform agency, INRA, and the official peasant trade union ATC have ejected peasants who spontaneously occupied land.

And in some areas, such as that around the city of Leon, which was liberated early in the civil war by the GPP and where extensive redistribution was encouraged, this has led to considerable tension.

Against evidence

Against this overwhelming evidence that the FSLN is moving towards the reconstruction of the bourgeois state it is widely argued, in the capitalist press as much as in the pages of *Socialist Challenge* or *Intercontinental Press*, that the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS's) have been built into organs of popular power through which the revolution can be carried forward.

There can be little doubt that the precursors of the CDS's played a vital part in the revolution, and had the potential to become soviet-type organisations. Moreover, they are virtually the only organised means of expression for the masses, and have demonstrably unsettled the bourgeoisie.

However, it is not the job of Marxists to gawp uncritically at the enthusiasm of popular participation.

Not independent

The CDS's, for all the gains they represent, are not the independent organs of the working class; they have been established under the political direction of the FSLN which has in the process relieved them of police or military functions and retained the right of appointment of the 'delegates' for security on each committee.

Closely connected to this control from above is the growing offensive against those groups that pose the question of working class independence and attack the FSLN leadership.

The most outstanding example to date has been the expulsion of the Simon Bolivar Brigade, the causes and consequences of which will be dealt with separately in another article.

Less publicised, but no less important, are the campaigns against the Maoist

Frente Obrero (Workers Front) and Movimiento de Accion Popular (Popular Action Movement) whose paper *El Pueblo* has been subject to suppression and whose militants have been arrested as 'counter-revolutionaries'.

Trade union leaders who are close to or members of the 'Trotskyist' Liga Marxista Revolucionaria (LMR), (which once described itself as a sympathising organisation of the USFI but in view of USFI instructions for it to dissolve itself into the FSLN is unlikely so to remain) have also been arrested, and the LMR claim that one at least is dead.

It is certainly true that the FSLN has subsequently been forced to release many of these militants—but when questioned about the activities of the Maoists and the LMR, a Sandinista told a member of the WSL two weeks ago "these people are our class enemies... we are at war with them."

The 'generous revolution' that released hundreds of Somoza's butchers has yet to prove itself capable of maintaining such a benevolent attitude towards working class militants.

No intention

But this revolution is very jealous of its 'generosity'; the FSLN has reiterated on numerous occasions that it has no intention of 'exporting' the revolution to the rest of Central America.

They have announced that Nicaragua is a 'special case': that they are incapable of providing assistance to other movements, and that if they did so they themselves would be crushed.

Here is one of the most cogent expressions of the FSLN's nationalism and capitulation to imperialism.

It is against these developments that our next article will make an assessment of the sundry slogans and policies put forward by would-be Trotskyist forces for the Nicaraguan revolution.

Soviets

We do so in the context of arguing that the political task for Trotskyists is to take up the struggle for a workers' and peasants' government in Nicaragua.

This must centre on the construction of independent organs of the working class—from trade unions through

to soviets and proletarian militias.

In the countryside, the peasants, whose legitimate desire to expropriate the "anti-Somoza" landlords are being held in check by the FSLN regime, must build committees that will link up with the workers in the towns in the struggle against the exploiters.

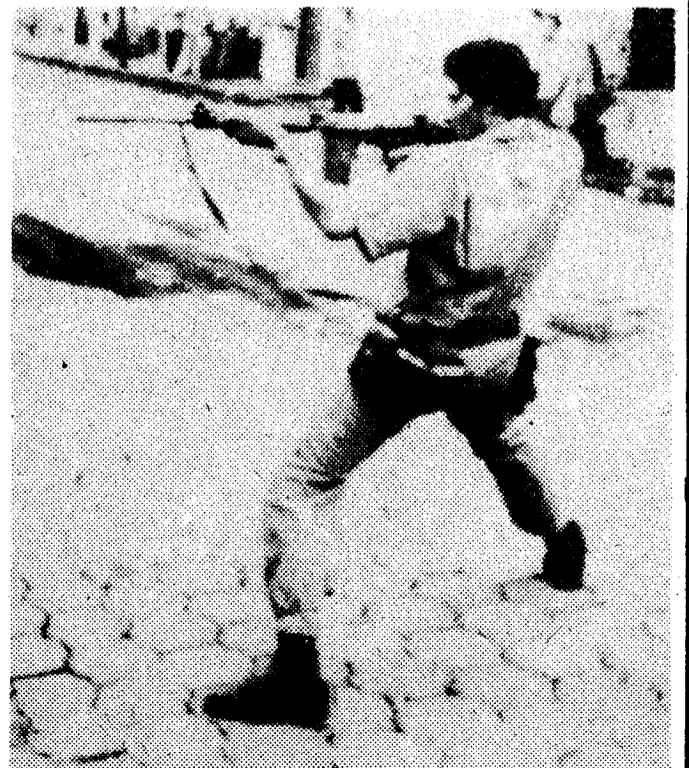
Nationalisation

A central agitational demand must be that the "proletarian" tendencies within the FSLN take up the struggle for the full scale nationalisation, without compensation, of the means of production under workers' management, and the land, which must be placed under the control of the peasants' committees.

Elected committees of workers must be established to open the books of industry and agriculture and, jointly with the peasants, formulate a socialist plan for production.

Such a struggle will expose the real role being played in the government by the millionaires, bankers and bourgeois politicians, who are using the fall of Somoza to protect or even enhance their own power at the expense of the Nicaraguan masses.

These figures must be ousted from the government and their centralised standing army—with its developing links with the Panamanian dictatorship—disbanded.



Final days of the civil war

and replaced with the arming of the working class.

Imperialist overtures and all forms of secret diplomacy must be rejected—while tangible aid and assistance must be publicly demanded from the international workers' movement, and the Stalinist regimes in Cuba, the Soviet Union and the deformed workers states of Europe and Asia.

At the same time full solidarity and assistance must be given to the revolutionary struggles throughout Central and Latin America which offer the only long-term way forward from the national isolation of Nicaragua to the necessary United Socialist States of Central America.

Trotskyist party

To press through the fight for this kind of internationalist and consistent socialist perspective, a principled, Trotskyist party is essential.

Only through such a party persistently defending and extending the political independence and leading role of the Nicaraguan working class in the struggle for socialist revolution, can the waverings and retreats of the petty bourgeois FSLN leaders be combatted, the possibilities of the full restoration of bourgeois dictatorship averted and the necessary permanent revolution in Nicaragua brought about.

OPEN UP THE ARCHIVES!

Man of Marble offers an astonishing insight into the workings of the bureaucracy in Poland and into workers' responses to it.

These responses vary from resistance, to cooption into the bureaucracy and even personal breakdown.

It helps a great deal in understanding the film if you know that the ending—the visit to the cemetery showing clearly that the hero was killed in the 1971 uprising—has been cut.

Nevertheless it is hard to believe how the film was allowed to be made.

While there is a flourishing underground press in Poland, and relative cultural 'freedom', the film has undoubtedly only had extremely restricted showings there.

The political knowledge it assumes shows however that it is aimed at Polish rather than Western audiences.

As a film within a film it portrays two periods, the 1950s and the 1970s.

The earlier period draws on a lot of documentary and other archive film—much of which can never have been publicly shown.

It shows the early stages of building the major steel town Nowa Huta, the drafting in of peasant labour, the appalling conditions, the machinations of the bureaucracy and—amid the suffering—the tremendous achievement.

A young diploma student decides to make a film of the Stakhanovite bricklayer Birkut, and to unravel the mystery of his fall from fame and his 'disappearance'.

The monumental statue based on him lies discarded in the locked recesses of the deserted state museum amidst mediaeval treasures.

Propaganda film

With the cooperation of the television archivist she not only sees the 1950s propaganda film of him laying 30,000 bricks in 8 hours, but also many other old films and clippings which show a different picture.

It is only by dint of great



Gierk

daring and persistence that the film student, accompanied by an elderly cameraman and a sound assistant, manages to collect the information, mainly from Birkut's former associates, to reconstruct what actually happened.

Put-up job

In fact his Stakhanovite 'achievement' nearly killed him. It was a put up job initiated by a careerist film director and backed by the bureaucracy as a means of raising work norms.

He did rise to fame however and toured backward areas giving bricklaying demonstrations—always shadowed by the secret police.

In one village, however, he is passed a burning, acid-soaked brick which permanently injures his hands.

Both he and his more politically conscious helpmate, (both of whom began their work careers by pelting and chasing off a bureaucrat with fish from the mud flats of Nova Huta in protest against inadequate rations) understand this worker's hostility.

Pru Chamberlayne reviews the film "Man of Marble" by Andrej Wajda, showing at selected cinemas around the country.

Birkut throws himself into a drive for workers' housing and becomes a popular hero.

The security forces are worried and cause his helpmate to 'disappear'.

Birkut wages a relentless fight to trace him.

Even his efforts to appeal to his union branch are foiled by the bureaucracy.

In desperation he takes to drink, flings a burning brick through the door of the secret police and hands himself over.

His friend has already 'confessed' to being an agent.

Birkut himself begins by confessing, but then begins to ridicule the proceedings and renounces his capitulation.

In 1956 amidst the uprisings which brought Gomulka to power they are both rehabilitated.

Birkut even casts the first vote in the ballot staged to

legitimise the Gomulka regime.

He retreats from a political fight saying 'one only has one country'. But he disappears.

The film director rose to fame and fortune on the lies and betrayals of his propaganda film.

Alcoholic wretch

Birkut's wife, who lives film-star like in a chalet-style house with a restaurant owner, is, beneath the glitter, an alcoholic wretch, wracked with remorse and guilt for her abandonment and public denouncing of Birkut as a secret agent.

By contrast the scene with the film student's night porter father in their attractively furnished but tumbledown apartment shows him to be a straightforward and sincere man, sympathetic and perceptive.

The portrayal of modern



Poland tends to be handled sardonically.

It is hard to tell whether the American brashness of the main character, the film student with her bizarre clothes and behaviour, using every sexist ploy in the book, is teasing, or a genuine fashion model of emancipated women in modern Poland.

Lovely

She is most intriguing. And lovely. Generally, the film luxuriates in the scenes of Western style living while also deprecating them.

The fate of the student's film hangs in the balance at the end, as must the fate of 'Man of Marble' itself.

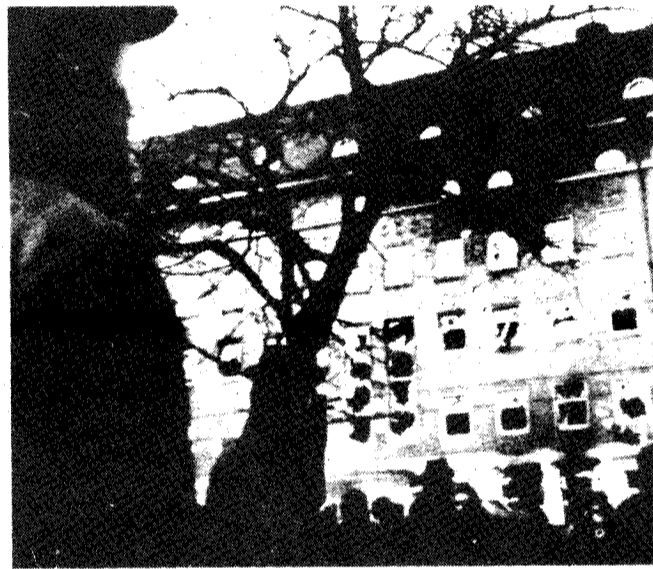
In the censored version Birkut's death is never explained. Nor is the pointed shot showing that his son works not in any old shipyard, but those at Gdansk, whose uprisings brought Gierk to



power in 1971.

This censorship also explains the imbalance in the film, and the lack of overt criticism of the bureaucracy in the most recent period.

Certainly one of the many messages of this beautifully made and brilliant film is 'open the archives!'



CP headquarters in Szczecin, Poland, after 1970 workers protests

CDLM conference and the General Strike call Letter

London SE5
19.11.79

Dear Comrades,
In *Socialist Press* 174, in your report of the CDLM conference you wrote that, 'an amendment from Workers Power calling for preparation for the demand of a General Strike against the Tories was accepted in outline'.

This is an incorrect presentation of our position and the amendment.

The Workers Power resolution stated, in full:

"This conference resolves to campaign throughout the labour movement for a general strike against the Tories' proposed anti-trade union laws.

"Within section disputes that are taking place CDLM propaganda should be aimed at generalising these disputes, linking them to others and pointing out the general nature of the Tory attacks, focussing them towards the goal of a general strike.

"The councils of action that conference is proposing should have as their target the fight for and eventual organising of, a general strike.

"To do this they must be rooted in the organisations of the working class genuine delegate bodies embracing the widest possible layers of the rank and file workers.

"They should ensure that all

picket lines are defended by building units for physical defence, based on the pickets or occupations that exist, and by mobilising mass pickets of the local labour movement.

"The call for a general strike should form a central plank of the CDLM's work and propaganda."

In proposing the resolution I spoke specifically against the 'General Strike against the Tories' slogan on the grounds that, in any period of widespread action against Tory policies, this would have the demobilising effect of implying a call for a general election.

It is for this reason that the resolution identifies the anti-trade union laws as the focus for general strike action because they are the main strategy of the ruling class at the present time.

In addition the conference committee accepted an amendment which deleted the slogan "for cost of living clauses in all agreements" and replaced it with:

"Fight for a sliding scale of wages—1% rise in take home wages for every 1% rise in the cost of living—as calculated by the workers themselves in the form of committees of trade unionists and housewives.

"Against all reliance on the official price index and 'threshold clauses'."

In the context of the Ford claim, which includes such a threshold agreement—the danger of vague calls for 'cost of living clauses' should be obvious.

Despite its acceptance the original slogan still appears in your page 4 text of the conference resolution. This is not our idea of 'democracy in the labour movement'.

Yours fraternally,
Steve McSweeney
for Workers Power.

WE REPLY:

The Workers Power amendment on the general strike was in fact incorporated into the text of the full resolution as reprinted in *Socialist Press* 174 (appearing immediately beneath the tell-tale sub-headline "General Strike").

"It is vital that sectional disputes that take place around the anti-union laws and other Tory attacks are generalised and focussed on the goal of a general strike.

Councils of action should be fighting for and preparing to organise a general strike . . ."

The variation in wording to which comrade McSweeney objects appeared in our 200-word summary of the conference on another page.

But in our defence we would point out that—if anything—a 'General Strike against the Tories' is a more comprehensive and satisfactory perspective than the restrictive demand for a general strike simply "against the Tories' proposed anti-trade union laws."

If calling for a general strike against the Tories could be seen as "a call for a general election" surely one aimed simply at a single piece of legislation could amount to little more than a protest action designed to force Thatcher to retreat on it?

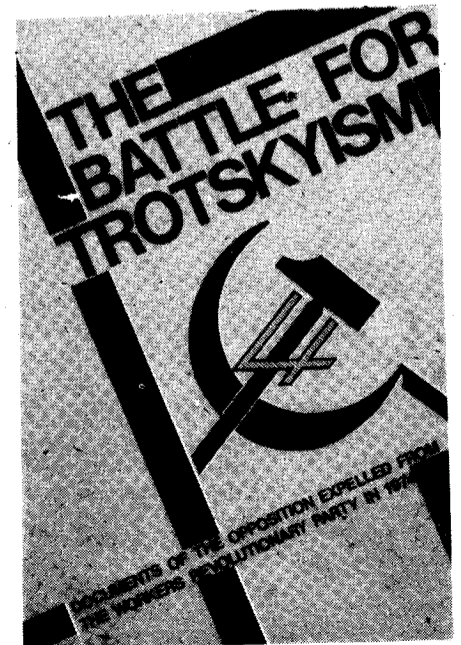
Secondly, the full text of the Workers Power amendment on the sliding scale of wages was also incorporated into the text of the resolution as published in *Socialist Press* 174; but it is true that in the concluding slogans (all of which appear in an inevitably abbreviated form) the original formulation was not changed.

In terms of democracy in the labour movement we would point to the considerable amount of CDLM conference time allotted to speakers from Workers Power, which had not participated in the organisation or building of the conference and had only a token presence at it.

We hope that, now these points have been answered the comrades will see the need to participate in the meetings and

activities of the CDLM organising committee, focussing less on verbal quibbles and more on practical struggle. That is our idea of the fight for leadership in the working class.

OUT NOW!



Second edition of the opposition documents presented inside the WRP by the present leadership of the Workers Socialist League
With a new introduction
Price £2.50 plus 20p postage and package from
Workers Socialist League, 31 Dartmouth Park Hill
London NW5 1HR



GLEC leader Cutler with Tory cronies

IMPACT OF TORY 'SALE OF CENTURY'

Many local councils have now voted to sell off council houses at knock-down prices.

The Tories and Liberals responsible for this action have carried out this cynically, amid sneering jibes of 'hypocrisy' at opponents who live themselves in private dwellings.

The accusation that people who live themselves in private houses are 'hypocrites' and have no right to criticise council dwellers, who merely want to have some security and an end to ever rising rents, might appear to have an element of validity to it.

Council housing was originally conceived as a means of appeasing the potentially revolutionary working class in the aftermath of the first world war.

By-product

Most social reforms are granted only when the ruling class is faced with the loss of all its property, as a by-product of the revolutionary struggle.

The initial conception of council housing was to provide homes for the mass of workers who were unable to save the necessary capital for a deposit on a house.

The petit-bourgeois conception that anyone could save the necessary capital if they tried, and that only shiftless, feckless people failed to achieve the status of home owners (through squander and bad house-keeping not to mention 'loose living')—still prevails, even to the present day.

The very same people generally either live on expense account salaries or at least constant staff status salaries that enable them to save consistently.

Most manual workers however do not enjoy such luxuries.

Arrogant

They come into the 'hourly paid' category. But time and time again the negotiators of hourly paid manual unions find their elementary demands for 'staff status' met with smug, arrogant smiles coupled with euphemistic evasions from well-heeled, complacent managers in company suits, with company cars parked in reserved parking lots, who are looking forward to superior company-subsidised meals in the luxurious staff canteen (unless they are dining out on the company's expense account).

The same managers can look forward to uninterrupted periods of saving, with a guaranteed salary, free from lay-offs, free from waiting days prior to sickness benefit, and with regular salary increases despite periods of incomes policy, coupled to tax avoidance schemes, and all manner of company perks.



Council housing in Paisley a historic gain for the working class, one which, along with the health and education services, the Tories are now trying to dismantle.

Mixed blessing

The fact that some manual workers do find the necessary money for a deposit on a house does not alter the fact that there are still many who do not—particularly those in non-skilled jobs, working in the mass production industries that are particularly prone to lay-offs.

It was mainly for these workers that council housing was originally conceived as a means of buying off the militancy after the First World War.

A 'land fit for heroes' first of all had to include a decent low rent house for workers unable to put up the money for a mortgage.

There is no doubt that this concession from the bosses was

In the case of the health and education services the social gain is fairly obvious to most workers; but in the case of council accommodation, after the enormous rent rises in recent years and the gradual collapse of the direct works maintenance workshops, workers can be forgiven for looking upon council houses as a mixed blessing.

Rents in many areas have now escalated to levels compar-

able with mortgage repayments, thanks largely to the betrayal of the tenants' struggle against Heath's 'fair rents' Act under the last Tory government.

Direct works maintenance departments have also been substantially decimated—thanks again to the same betrayals by reformist politicians and trade union leaders.

Now, with council housing in the run-down state that it is, and new council housing at a virtual standstill, the Tories and Liberals have seized upon workers' fears in order to opportunistically undermine the concept of social ownership, in the same way they have done for years in other areas of the public sector.

Not available

Yet the fact that many workers now live in private accommodation is not because of any secret ideological preference for the private ownership of property or 'the freedom of the individual', but because the years of stagnant house building programmes has meant that council houses are simply not available, particularly in the cities.

In Liverpool, for instance, council plans to build no more council houses but to offer generous subsidies to contractors to build private houses, together with the wholesale selling off of existing stocks of council houses at knock-down prices are well advanced.

Anyone wanting to have a council house in the Liverpool area has to be way up the points system or move out of the city to one of the 'overspill' towns, miles away at Skelmersdale or Runcorn—that is if you are lucky enough to be able to find a job there (a condition of residency).

20 year mortgage

If workers live in private houses it is certainly not for the privilege of having a twenty year mortgage around their necks.

Tory claims that people want the chance to own their 'own' homes is like arguing that workers want the chance to be exploited by private enterprise instead of nationalised firms, under capitalism.

The sole reason for workers opting to buy their council houses is in the hope of seeing an end to the endless drain on their wage packet and in the hope of altering the design to their own tastes, free from bureaucratic dictates.

It has nothing to do with any preference for private property.

Nor, under a socialist planned economy, in which housing provision would be planned to match social needs, would it be necessary to prevent

those who chose to do so from owing their own houses.

Instead the focus would be on the elimination of private landlordism, and offering every worker the chance of a decent home at reasonable cost.

At bottom, of course, the council sector is not truly 'public' or socially owned property.

Like all property in the public sector—whether it be nationalised industry or the hospitals—it is surrounded on all sides by a parasitic private sector—construction, development corporations, banks, etc—which exists solely to milk it dry.

The profiteering of this sector negates the 'social' ownership and subjects it to the anarchy of the profit system.

So when workers opt to buy and thus transfer their council house to the private sector, it is a vain and misguided attempt to escape from the capitalist anarchy of the money lenders which causes endless rent rises in the 'publicly owned' council sector.

Yet these same money-lenders operate even more aggressively in the private market—as the current 15% mortgage rate can testify.

Headlong rush

Of course the generous offers from Tory and Liberal councils to sell off houses at knock-down, bargain prices—a fraction of the price in the private market—attract tenants to the prospect.

All talk of resisting these tempting offers in the interests of preserving existing stock for people who cannot afford deposits in the private sector are forgotten in the headlong rush by individual workers to grab the bargain offer while it lasts.

In this sense the dilemma is analogous to the problem of 'voluntary' redundancies.

Indeed, while the employer offers superficially generous payments to persuade workers to leave his employment, he is looking to the long-term profits to be derived from the increased exploitation of the remaining workforce, and the benefits he can look forward to from a permanent pool of mass unemployment as a means of holding down wages, and possibly even breaking strikes.

Similarly, in flogging off council houses by the hundred and by the thousand, the Tory government looks forward eagerly to the profits to be coined in by the construction firms, bankers, estate agents and Tory landlords from the hundreds of thousands of workers who will as a result be forced to pay through the nose in the private sector.

Today's apparent "bargain" for the individual is tomorrow's misery for whole sections of the

working class as a whole.

Meanwhile the new Housing Bill, which specifies a statutory "right to buy" for council tenants is to be bulldozed through Parliament under the leadership of millionaire Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine.

A survey by Shelter shows that a massive 60% of all councils are opposed to this new provision in the law, and it is even opposed by 30% of Tory-controlled councils.

Of course some Tory councils that have attempted to implement such policies already—including the GLC—have run into problems, since even the "cut price" cost of selling the houses creates mortgage payments way beyond the reach of the average wage earner tenant.

In other words, the provision of the "right to buy" for existing tenants could end up being merely the beginning of the "right to sell" for Tory councils—eventually squeezing working class families out of council housing.

Another new report just published in Nottingham, analysing the sales of council houses in the city, estimates that the real impact of council house sales is a financial loss to the local authorities.

The sale of 100,000 council houses would, they estimate, cost a staggering £1,200 million—more than the net yearly payment to the EEC!

But the Tories are relentlessly forging ahead. Heseltine's Bill includes a Clause 30 which gives him the right to intervene personally:

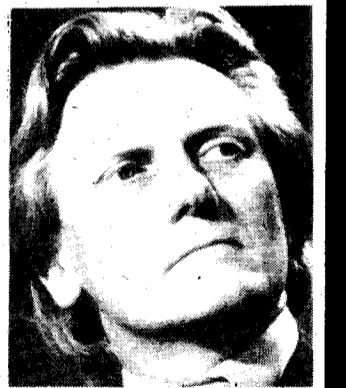
"to settle any issue in relation to the sale of a dwelling whether arising from dispute or delay, if it seems expedient to him to do so."

This gives Heseltine and his cohorts the right to ride roughshod over elected local authorities and their housing plans—or to take them to court.

The fight against this Tory attack on housing must be combined with the struggle against colossal rate and rent increases due as a result of Thatcher's spending cuts, cash limits, inflationary policies and high interest rates.

Wherever possible tenants associations must be built or mobilised to work jointly with the local trade union and labour movement in the struggle to open up the full accounts and plans of local housing departments and town councils, of their bankers, contractors and suppliers, to elected labour movement committees.

This would reveal the reasons behind the total inadequacy of existing housing provision, and expose the profits being creamed off by private exploiters in the building industry and in interest payments to the banks.



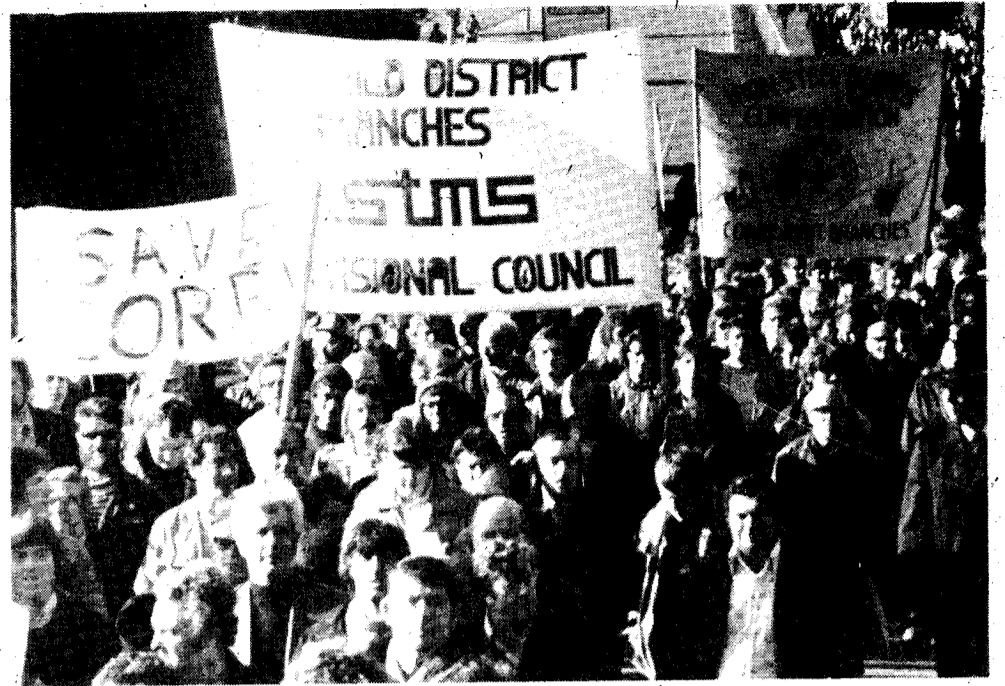
Millionaire Heseltine

Rent increases must be fought by any means including where possible rent strikes linked to mass strike action to defend any tenant victory.

Labour councils must be forced to take a stand in opposition to the sale of council housing, and for a programme of house building related not to the "cash limits" laid down by Thatcher but to the needs of the working class.

There must be no increase in the rates. The only cuts that should be made is a refusal to meet interest payments on outstanding loans. And the anti-working class policies of the Tory government must be confronted head on, with a mass mobilisation of the labour movement and an appeal for supporting action on a national level.

Only when the Tory government is brought down and a government answerable to the working class put in power by mass action can the housing question be resolved in the interests of the workers.



Pay round "madness" -bosses



Prior

Blastfurnacemen's new threat to BSC closure plan

The present pay round, according to CBI chief Sir John Methven, shows 'all the characteristics of certified madness'.

His view was endorsed by Employment Secretary James Prior who urged employers to back the government's efforts to "restore a sense of economic

reality" to the working class. The "reality" of capitalism is of course one of mass unemployment plunging living standards, a destruction of sections of the means of production and a reverse of previous social progress.

No to NUJ offer!

Negotiations on the NUJ claim for provincial, journalists have come to a grinding halt with the 30% claim being met by a 'final' offer averaging 14.5%.

Expected from the members this year. Instead of building support for a renewed assault by the provincial membership—who struck for seven weeks last year to reach a 14.5% offer—the negotiations have sought to damp down chapel militancy.

The same message came from BL personnel director Pat Lowry, who urged firms to spend less time "howling in anguish" and more time spelling out "the cold and sometimes brutal economic facts that we face".

Following a humiliating management rebuff for their 25% pay claim, Blastfurnacemen's leaders last week began sounding off with surprise threats of strike action against BSC's programme of plant closures.

now at Corby, following the vote by members of the Iron and Steel Trades Confederation at Shotton to abandon the fight to save their jobs and simply negotiate redundancy payments.

threatened overtime ban and selective strikes even if other unions fail to support; and the growing list of jobs under threat in BSC create conditions where a firm lead can produce a struggle against closures.

YOU SHOULD JOIN US!

With workers by the thousand taking to the streets to oppose Tory policies there is plainly no lack of militancy in the organised working class. Yet the existing trade union bureaucrats and Labour leaders—whether right or left—have no perspective to offer those workers prepared to fight in defence of jobs, living standards, social services and democratic rights.

dictions of the anarchic capitalist system force the wholesale closure and destruction of the productive forces of society, only a socialist planned economy on a world scale offers a way forward.

But the same reactionary message is embodied in the arguments of those union leaders that argue for workers to base their demands not on the need to defend and improve jobs and living standards, but on the "viability" of a particular capitalist firm.

A ballot is to be held, with a recommendation from the union's executive for a national strike.

Aggressive stance

A 3,000-strong mass meeting at Corby voted overwhelmingly to continue their efforts to prevent the closure of the steel-works—though they have still not adopted the vital policy of occupying the plant, which alone can offer the necessary focal point for national strike action.

But, for all their militant puffing and blowing, the right wing bureaucrats in the steel unions have shown little stomach for a fight.

Please send me more details of the Workers Socialist League.

To achieve such perspective a leadership is needed which, in today's struggles fights to advance workers beyond trade union militancy, protest politics and illusions that capitalism can be abolished through parliament.

The pressing of legitimate and necessary demands thus appears to the bosses as "madness".

Boosted

General Secretary Hector Smith, who only a few weeks ago was enthusiastically boosted by BSC management as an advocate of ruthless de-manning and speed-up, insisted that:

But policies in defence of jobs have yet to be finalised at Cleveland and at Port Talbot, where BSC last week announced a further 2,300 redundancies by next March.

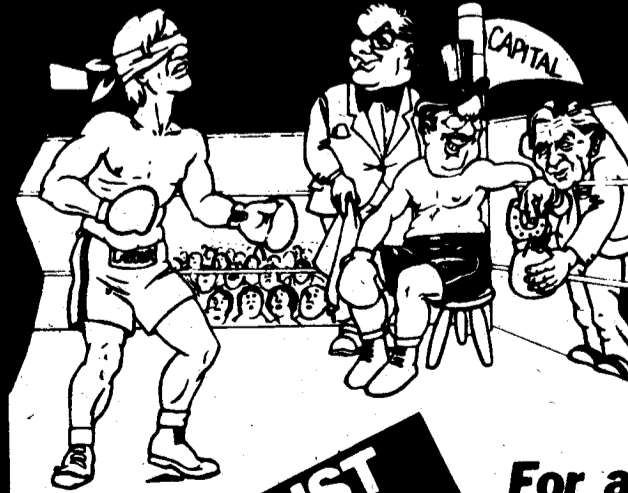
Stall action

Their every tactic has rather sought to stall action and wait for demoralisation to set in among the workforce, before stepping in to negotiate terms for "voluntary" redundancy.

Name
Address
Send to: WSL 31 Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

The Workers Socialist League is a Trotskyist movement fighting day in and day out to build such a principled leadership in the working class in Britain and internationally. We invite all readers of Socialist Press to seek more details of the WSL and its work and to join us in the struggle for socialism.

DON'T GO INTO THE FIGHT BLINDFOLD!



GET SOCIALIST PRESS For a clear lead in the struggle against wage control, cuts and redundancies

SUBSCRIBE to Socialist Press

RATES:

Trial sub (UK): 10 issues, only	£1.75
Six months	£6.00
One year	£11.00
Europe: Six months	£6.50
Rest of the World: Six months	£8.00

Please send me trial sub/six months/one year of Socialist Press. I enclose

Name
Address

Send to Socialist Press, 31, Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR.

St Benedict's: support needed

A workers' committee has taken over the running of St. Benedict's Hospital for geriatrics in Tooting, South London.

The committee, which includes representatives from NUPE, COHSE, AUEW and EETPU as well as the Royal College of Nursing, has pledged to keep the hospital open despite the plans of Merton, Sutton and Wandsworth AHA.

The AHA's announcement of plans to close the hospital completely by July 1980 triggered the preparation for the workers' takeover.

Nurse Anna Finlay of the RCN told *Socialist Press* that the AHA had attempted to avoid normal procedures in closing the hospital by describing it as a "temporary closure".

As a result management dodged prior consultations, and circumvented the Community Health Council.

Unanimous

The workers' response was to set up the works action committee several weeks ago.

When the District Management Team announced that 50 patients were to be moved to the Bolingbroke Hospital before Christmas, the action committee called a mass meeting, which voted unanimously to prevent the patients from being moved.

At the same time nursing staff refused to accept jobs in other hospitals.

The occupation, which began on November 15, has the support of all sections of staff, and local GPs have agreed to

continue referring patients to St. Benedict's.

Hospital management are at present staying well in the background—no doubt weighing their options for a new initiative.

Local union branches and the Wandsworth and East Merton Trades Council have declared support, and practical backing has come from ambulance drivers, who are refusing to move patients.

Receded

Last Saturday an ambulance crew were instructed to take out a patient, but stopped at the picket line, rang up their controllers, and told them that they were not prepared to move the patient.

The firm and militant action of the St. Benedict's workers has so far stopped the District Management team in its tracks.

But the danger has not receded. It is certain that management will come forward with new, and more sophisticated tactics in their attempts to defeat the occupation and shut down the hospital.

Already there are signs of preparations on three main fronts.

*Funding is being withdrawn for agency staff in some departments—particularly occupational therapy.

*The contracts of some junior doctors run out in February. The AHA could well plan not to renew these and thus gradually strip the hospital of medical cover.

This was the tactic which finally precipitated the defeat of

the 30-month work-in at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital.

*By not replacing ancillary and nursing staff who leave, the AHA can whittle down manning levels at St. Benedict's, adding to the strain on those maintaining the work-in. It is crucial to fight such attacks on standards at the hospital.

Such tactics should come as no surprise.

While workers have shown through their experience that work-ins can halt hospital closures, it follows that management will have learnt from their experience that, by playing for time and counting on the isolation of an individual struggle, they can hope eventually to win the day and shut down the hospitals on their list.

The St. Benedict's work-in can succeed in preventing the closure. But only if it becomes the centre of growing working class action against the cuts throughout the health service and the wider labour movement.



NUPE leader Fisher



COHSE leader Spanswick

It was the real threat of, widespread supporting strikes that held back management from the final closure of the EGA for 2½ years.

The St. Benedict's action committee must urgently seek pledges of supporting strikes from throughout the local labour movement and the London area, and demand that NUPE and COHSE leaders—whose official policy is now for occupation against hospital closure—call national action in their support.

Any 'inquiry' should take place only after such reinstatement is agreed.

PHOTO: Andrew Ward, Report

PHOTO: Laurence Sparham, IFL

Betrayals that led to BL offensive

To many Leyland workers, the offensive on shop floor rights and conditions by Edwardes will appear to use a series of new techniques: in particular the secret ballot and brazen victimisation of Combine Committee chairman Derek Robinson.

But these tactics are not new. They have been tested before in BL—and not only by management.

To their shame TGWU bureaucrats have until now been at the forefront of such attacks on their own members.

In this respect, the sacking of Derek Robinson certainly did not start two weeks ago with the publication of the Combine Committee pamphlet "The Edwardes Plan and Your Job". It started 5½ years ago in Cowley with the victimisation of Alan Thornett, Deputy Convenor of the Cowley Assembly Plant and a Trotskyist.

As always, attacks on Trotskyists are followed by attacks on the Stalinists and the whole labour movement.

BL management withdrew recognition from Thornett because he had failed in his "duty" to get his section back to work during a strike over a broken agreement.

After a 3 week strike which closed down Cowley he was reinstated as a sectional shop steward, but remains victimised to this day as convenor or deputy convenor.

Just over two years later in August 1976, four more shop stewards were victimised in Cowley—their "crime": defending a young Asian worker from persecution.

After a two week strike was sold out they remain victimised to this day.

The role of the TGWU in opposing the Robinson victimisation has of course been stronger than that of his own union the AUEW.

But in 1974 and 1976 it was the TGWU officials at national, regional and local level who led the way in attacking shop stewards and breaking up basic shop floor organisations which had taken many years to build.

When Alan Thornett was victimised and subjected to a massive press and TV witch-hunt—possibly more vicious than that directed against Derek Robinson today—TGWU General Secretary Jack Jones moved through the Region 5 Committee to set up a Regional Inquiry into the company's case.

He used that inquiry to set off a chain of events which are still reverberating through the

Midlands Region of the union. In its report, the inquiry cleared Alan Thornett of all allegations levelled by the management.

But they found Bob Fryer the plant convenor, guilty of "bringing the union into disrepute."

Fryer had never been a subject of the inquiry. He was not involved. No charges had even been laid against him.

But this decision had a purpose.

On the basis of this travesty the report recommended the breaking up of the most important trade union body on the Cowley Assembly plant—the powerful 5/55 branch.

Secondly it recommended that fresh elections be held for all trade union positions—not in the traditional way (at branch meetings and shop stewards meetings) but by secret ballot.

They brought in this new principle, of which Edwardes is now so fond, because, as Edwardes knows today, you can win a ballot if you choose your time right and use the press and TV in the right way.

After four weeks of press witch-hunts Fryer and Thornett could not, of course, win the election. An extreme right wing leadership was installed.

But Jack Jones and Regional Secretary Brian Mathers did not stop there. They gave total backing to the new convenor, Reg Parsons, who openly and proudly declared that he intended to stamp out Trotskyism in Cowley in the name of the viability of BL.

When the four stewards were victimised in 1974 things had gone much further.

There was no attempt to cover up anything. Support for the victimisation was openly presented as the official TGWU position.

At the mass meeting which followed the withdrawal of their shop stewards credentials, District Secretary David Buckle argued that management "had a case" and fought (unsuccessfully) for a return to work.

The strike cracked after two weeks with the proposal for a further Regional Inquiry.

On the return to work Parsons told the press "we have finally put the Trots to bed". Now we will "drive them out of this industry".

The Inquiry found them guilty and endorsed the Company's decision to remove them as shop stewards.

In August 1977 the same inquiry report was used to further split the trade union movement on the plant.

This time it was the 5/293 branch under attack, the very branch created by the bureaucrats in 1974.

Its "crime" was that Alan Thornett was now its chairman. They created a third branch the 5/837.

But the move was ineffective. In December 1977 Alan Thornett and Bob Fryer were elected back to office by the very secret ballot system introduced by Jack Jones in 1974.

You would have thought Jones might have accepted defeat after 3½ years of effort.

But no! No sooner was the election over than charges were laid against Alan Thornett, Bob Fryer and seven others under the disciplinary procedure of the TGWU.

They were charged with disrupting a meeting of the union's Oxford District Committee. Within two weeks Alan Thornett was recommended for expulsion from the union and the others with being banned from all office for life.

Yet they were all people who had just been elected to office by mass votes of the membership.

They faced a 15 month struggle simply to stay in the union.

In April of this year the charges were dropped.

But the damage had been done. Victimisation of stewards had become the order of the day.

All the elements are there now with the Robinson case.

The precedents have all been set by the TGWU bureaucracy—from the secret ballot to the use of the momentary mood, even down to victimising Robinson for a signed document (something which was a major feature of the ritual trials at Regional Office throughout the Cowley 9 period).

In addition management have seen the impact of victimisation on the plant.

Although the left won the election in December 1977 the shop floor movement had been almost destroyed in the intervening period.

Two years later it has only been partially rebuilt.

Last year, John Power, AUEW convenor of the Cowley BL Service Division plant was sacked.

After a strike and a professional sell-out by Terry Duffy (which he did little to fight himself), Power was reinstated, but not recognised.

The effect on the morale and militancy of the Service Division has been dramatic.

Robinson's victimisation shows the function of all these events.

The rot must be stopped! Robinson must be defended by all out official strike action, along with the six stewards in the Oxford area who remain victimised.

Charing Cross

mentally ill, the handicapped and casualty treatment are all victims of the Tory axe.

Thousands of people will suffer, and some will die as a result.

Yet when workers take a stand against the impact of the cuts and in defence of standards at a major hospital it is they who are witch-hunted and pilloried in the press!

The Charing Cross engineers must be defended: if they are victimised it will give the green light for a new war on manning levels throughout the NHS.

Suspended

But there are still damaging calls for the victimised stewards to be reinstated but suspended on full pay, pending an inquiry.

Such an outcome, as has been proved time and again in such disputes, would be the kiss of death for the struggle.

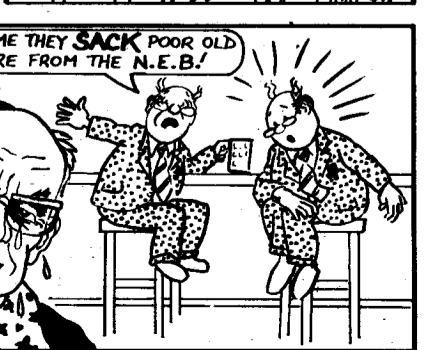
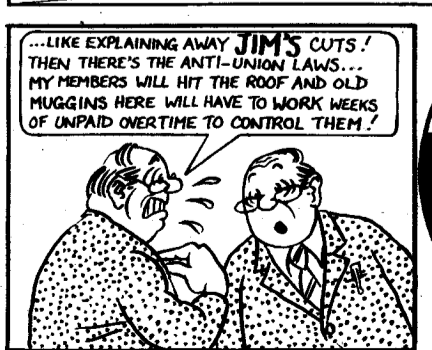
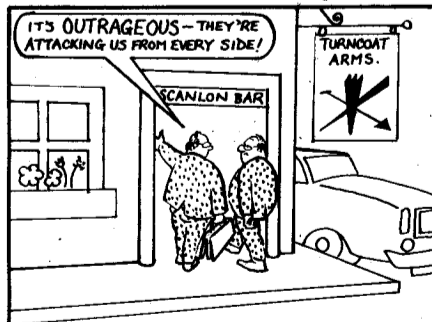
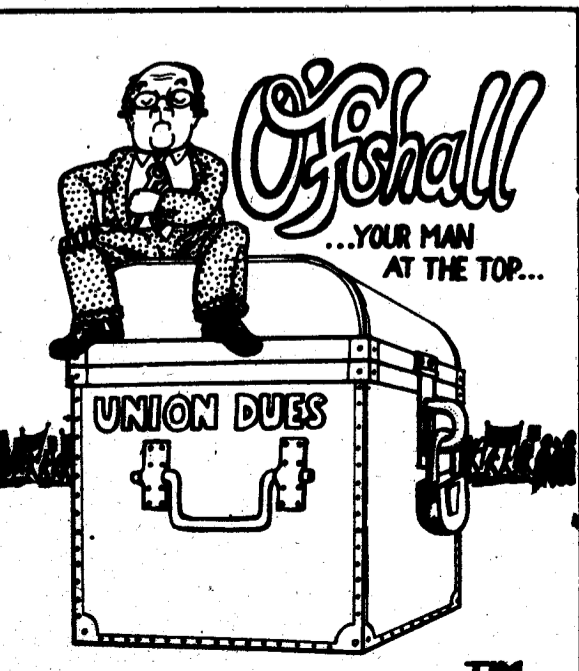
From front page

The two victims would remain barred from the workplace—but, because they would receive full pay it would become virtually impossible to persuade their fellow trade unionists to strike in their support.

The advantage is thus handed to management, who are then free to spin out proceedings for weeks or months until militancy on the question has ebbed—before implementing the sacking.

Literally thousands of militants have found themselves victimised as a result of such a formula. And, with management at Charing Cross plainly determined to destroy union organisation in the hospital as a part of their move to impose spending cuts, it is essential that the fight proceed for full unconditional reinstatement.

Any 'inquiry' should take place only after such reinstatement is agreed.



SOCIALIST PRESS



US IMPERIALIST

HANDS OFF IRAN!



The threat by the Iranian regime to place the 49 US Embassy hostages on trial as "spies" has prompted Carter to warn of a military intervention should any of them be harmed.

But the political blow to US imperialism from such a trial would flow not so much from the exposure of the real activities conducted behind the reinforced doors of American embassies around the world.

Rather it would arise from the apparent ability of a nationalist regime in a former imperialist outpost to stick up two fingers to the imperialist warmongers with impunity.

Damaging

At a time when revolutionary struggles are simmering throughout Central and Latin America such a development would further damage the ability of US imperialism to maintain its dominance and exploitation.

But at the same time the economic war between the Iranian regime and US capitalism has escalated, with potentially even more damaging results.

On Wednesday, after the Iranian regime failed to make a regular interest payment, a consortium of major Western banks, headed by Chase Manhattan, declared the regime to be in default on a \$500 million loan, raised in 1977 under the Shah, and began proceedings that would effectively call in the loan.

And it was met by a sharp response from the Khomeini regime.

Finance Minister Hassan



Bani Sadr (who doubles up as minister for foreign affairs) declared on Friday that Iran would refuse to pay outstanding foreign debts.

Though there was initially some doubt as to the authenticity of this statement, Bani Sadr's position has since been amplified by Khomeini himself, who on Monday called for a "holy war" on all fronts against the United States.

The last two weeks have therefore brought a series of events that contain all the seeds of a major financial catastrophe for world capitalism.

*The Iranian regime, attempting to withdraw its

deposits from US banks, has had them unilaterally "frozen"—(ie stolen)—by the Carter administration. This could well lead to other governments deciding to pull out their holdings from the USA in case they, too, forfeit them in a future dispute with US imperialism.

*In retaliation, Iran has now refused to accept dollars as payment for shipments of oil. The consequent drop in demand for the dollar threatens a new slump in its price, as oil importers swap their dollar holdings for a selection of other currencies.

Solid currencies

And a further fall in the dollar could persuade other oil exporting countries to opt for more solid currencies, too.

*On top of this the Iranian default on the \$500 million loan—the first major default since the war—threatens to pull out the plug on a network of related loans. The main casualties now that the US has confiscated \$8 billion of Iranian assets would be West European banks.

*The Iranian refusal to meet foreign debts adds a new dimension to this situation: it could even spell bankruptcy for sections of Western banking, or precipitate a chain reaction in which loans all over the world are suddenly called in.

Semi-disbelief

So far the potentially explosive consequences of these moves have been held back, as bankers wait in semi-disbelief, trying to assess whether or not the Iranian regime will be enticed back from the brink,

and how to protect their own interests without precipitating an all-out crash.

But should confidence crack or a substantial dumping of dollars take place, the pressure on a desperate Carter to launch a military attack on Iran would mount—possibly to breaking point.

With anti-Iranian hysteria being consciously whipped up by the US mass media and the Western press the ground is being laid for an onslaught on a nation that refuses tamely to carry the yoke of imperialism.

Should this be the event, socialists in the USA and Britain would need to be in the forefront of the struggle for action to defeat the imperialist war moves and defend the Iranian people from external aggression.

The task of ousting Khomeini's bigoted Islamic regime and installing a workers and peasants government in Iran is one to be tackled under the leadership of the courageous Iranian proletariat.

For this task a conscious, Trotskyist party must be built in Iran.

NOW AVAILABLE
International Discussion
Bulletin
towards the reconstruction
of the Fourth International
75p including p&p
from WSL 31 Dartmouth-
Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

SETBACK FOR A TOUT

Gerry Fitt, founder member of the Catholic petty bourgeois party of Northern Ireland—the SDLP—resigned last week accusing his party of going soft on the Provos.

His resignation has been mourned by the British government and the British press as wrecking chances of the Atkins Conference going ahead.

In fact Fitt's resignation is itself a reflection of the fact that the conference was always doomed as anything more than a public relations exercise.

'Irish dimension'

The SDLP's condition for attending talks was that they should have an 'Irish dimension'.

This is the phrase continually used to suggest as much as possible to republicans and as little as possible to Orange Protestants.

Mostly it fools neither side. Fitt's differences with his party go back a long way.

As the party's only MP he has acted independently of it and off his own bat promised Tory Minister, Atkins, that the SDLP would join the planned talks.

Despite his attacks on "very extreme Republican sentiments now being expressed within the inner councils of the SDLP" there is no chance of the party actively opposing imperialism.

But at its annual conference in early November a resolution from mid-Ulster calling for withdrawal of troops to barracks and for negotiations with "all political and paramilitary organisations who belong to the Irish tradition", picked up a quarter of the votes.

No solutions

At the bottom of the division, however is the growing recognition by SDLP supporters that the party has no perspectives or 'political solutions' left.

Demoralisation among the occupying forces, increased success by and support for the Provisional IRA, and the continuing domination of Loyalist politics by the Paisleyites have

ensured that 'consensus politics' have never been less relevant.

Paisley has accepted the invitation to talks to underline that in his view the Atkins proposals for local authority-type powers in Ireland make no concessions to the Catholic right wing.

The official Unionists, on the other hand, demand that there be no conference or discussions outside Westminster.

While the Tory plans lie in disarray, the opportunities for the intervention of a consistent revolutionary perspective are more favourable than for many years.

But though the Provisional IRA's courageous and unyielding battle is capable of frustrating the best laid plans of British



Fitt

rule, it cannot and will not provide that critical intervention.

Under the pressure of events, most notably the Pope's visit, the socialist rhetoric of the Provisional movement has come increasingly unstitched—leading recently to an explicit disavowal of Marxism in *Republican News*.

There is no short cut to the building of a revolutionary party and such a party must be built.

The need for agitation in Britain over demands on political status for republican prisoners, the immediate withdrawal of British troops and for the self-determination for the Irish people as a whole is greater than ever.

The defeat of British imperialism in Ireland through the direct intervention of the British working class has to be the basis of solidarity work.

FUND

It's going to be a hard pull if we are to reach our £750 target by the weekend. With only £601.73 in, we are left with £148.27 to find in the next few days.

Our thanks, this week to Castleford miners Alan and Bob among other readers who contributed to the fund.

Christmas time is expensive for everybody, but we must not let our fund slip. So can we have a supreme effort to clear the outstanding November fund and get a really early start to the December fund which we must try and raise before the Christmas holidays start.

All donations should be sent to:

Socialist Press Monthly Fund
31, Dartmouth Park Hill, London NW5 1HR

Workers Socialist League

Anniversary Rally

SATURDAY
DECEMBER 8
2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

100 YEARS SINCE BIRTH OF TROTSKY
FIVE YEARS SINCE WSL FOUNDED

New Ambassadors Hotel
Upper Woburn Place
London WC1

Speakers from WSL Executive
Committee, plus film.

Tickets £1.00 or £1.50
at door.

