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Fighting for a
workers'
government
Page 8



Bill Sirs

Steel: spread the strike!

Two weeks into the steel strike it is obvious that steel workers are increasingly confident that they have the power to extract a substantial wage settlement out of British Steel management.

Such is the militancy from the ranks that even right wing ISTC leader Bill Sirs has had to admit that he can no longer hope to settle for an offer of around 13%. "Our members would not have it", he declared ruefully, calling instead for an offer around 20%.

The fighting example set by

the steel strikers, combined with the intransigence of BSC management now seem certain to result in the remaining steel unions joining the strike after the rejection of their pay demands.

Stimulating

And, under pressure, the ISTC also seems certain to call out its members in the private sector.

But clearly the power of the strike is also stimulating workers in other industries to look towards action on their own claims.

Thousands of water and sewage workers seem headed for strike action to improve on a 13.1% wage offer.

A strike in this crucial area would almost at once disrupt supplies and services—and could create a huge confrontation if the Tories proceed with plans to use 15,000 army scabs.

Feeling for strike

And in BL, where the November pay review still hangs in limbo, with an insulting 5%-with-strings company offer on the table, shop floor feeling for a strike is building up.

Now is the time for action alongside the steel workers to defend living standards, and to confront the Tory offensive on jobs and social services.

Wherever possible the struggle must be taken up for the formation of *councils of action*, drawing delegates from all working class organisations, to coordinate, extend and strengthen the struggles now underway against the Tories, mobilise jointly to defend picketing rights, and create conditions to defeat and bring down the Thatcher government.

Steel: see back page

A heavy blow was struck at the right wing TGWU bureaucracy last week as left wing candidate Bob Fryer was re-elected convener of BL's Cowley Assembly Plant with a greatly increased majority in a shop floor ballot.

His sweeping 1,173-577 victory on an extremely high poll of the 3,500 TGWU members in the plant was even more significant, however, in that it came in the teeth of a desperate witch-hunt organised jointly by the extreme right wing and the Communist Party.

Recognising that Fryer's right wing opponent Jim Barson had no chance of winning mass support, the right wing alliance set out instead to alienate Bob Fryer's supporters.

They therefore produced a leaflet designed spuriously to connect Fryer and deputy convener Alan Thornett with the bombing tactics of the Provisional IRA.

Factory gates

A statement, drawn up in the name of one of the three TGWU branches on the plant, the 5/837 branch, was handed out to workers on the gates of the plant.

Referring to the national demonstration held in Oxford by Provisional Sinn Fein on October 20 last year, it declared that:

"Provisional Sinn Fein is the political front of the Provisional IRA. Branch members will be aware that this march was greeted with hostility by the people of Oxford, and Oxford Trades Union Council refused to support it. Many TGWU members have died or have been maimed or made homeless or jobless because of Provisional IRA activity in Northern Ireland and England" (original emphasis).

Silent of course about the TGWU members maimed, killed, made homeless or jobless by the activities of the British army and the Loyalist murder gangs in the six counties of Ireland, the leaflet went on to make the allegation that:

"Mass executions of TGWU working people have been carried out. The TGWU totally opposes such violence."

Was Bob Fryer, then being accused of being a member of the IRA, or conducting such "mass executions" of fellow trade unionists?

No, his 'crime' in the eyes of the 5/837 Branch leadership was that in a debate on the Oxford TGWU District Committee he waged a principled fight in defence of the right of

WITCH-HUNTERS ROUTED IN COWLEY ELECTION

Provisional Sinn Fein (a legal organisation) to march, and in defence of the 5/833 (Blackwells Bookshop) branch which had voted to participate in the demonstration.

Defend rights

It is, of course, vital that, even while criticising the tactics of the IRA, the right of the Irish people to struggle for their rights is defended in the labour movement.

The leaflet went on to point out that Fryer, together with the chairman of the 5/55 Branch and Alan Thornett, chairman of the 5/293 Branch had voted *against* a 5/837 Branch resolution.

That resolution declared that, as far as support from an Oxford TGWU branch for a Provisional Sinn Fein demonstration is concerned:

"The District Committee totally disassociates itself from such action and deplores it in the strongest possible manner".

In conclusion, the 5/837 Branch leaflet declared:

"The Branch Committee of the 5/837 Car Assembly Branch

(...) fully supports the District Committee in condemning Blackwells TGWU Branch's and Banner's involvement on a Provisional Sinn Fein march.

"We ask: On what grounds do Officers of the 5/293 and 5/55 and the Senior Steward oppose the District Committee's condemnation of this Branch?"

"We feel that the membership on this Plant is owed an explanation.

"Be sure to vote this week to elect a responsible Senior Steward."

Of course no socialist should be surprised when extreme right wing forces attempt to witch-hunt them for defending the right of the Irish people to struggle for self-determination.

Posters

Such witch-hunts will naturally intensify at times of elections.

Indeed only a few weeks earlier, in the run up to the elections, an anonymous right wing group mass leafleted the Cowley factories with thousands of copies of an expensively printed poster carrying photo-



Fryer addressing a mass meeting at Cowley

Stalinists attack Irish solidarity

graphs, names, addresses and telephone numbers of five Oxford trade unionists who had supported the Sinn Fein demonstration, in an obvious attempt to stir up reactionary violence against them.

But the deliberate intervention by the 5/837 Branch into the Cowley convenors' election was not written by the right wing. It was written by Tony Gallagher—a member of the Communist Party!

Gallagher was appointed by the right wing as stand-in secretary of the 5/837 Branch for the duration of the election.

He personally wrote and produced the scurrilous leaflet. Two out of the three people who distributed it on the gates were Communist Party members.

Gallagher himself had been the one who raised the issue of the Sinn Fein march on the District Committee and in the

Trades Council, as preparation for an all-out drive to secure the election of extreme right winger Jim Barson as convener!

The witch-hunt failed only because of the prompt action of Bob Fryer, who called a meeting of TGWU stewards on both day and night shifts within hours of the leaflet being distributed.

Unanimous

There followed a unanimous vote of night shift stewards and a 120-7 vote on the day shift to condemn the 5/837 witch-hunt (the seven were all committee members of the 5/837 branch, two of whom are Communist Party members!)

And, hours later, workers on the shop floor registered their profound contempt for the witch-hunters by voting overwhelmingly for Fryer.

The result is a further blow at TGWU officials who have

repeatedly attempted to victimise Fryer along with other key Cowley militants.

Fryer and Thornett were bureaucratically removed from the plant leadership in 1974 by the TGWU Midlands Regional Committee.

But in 1977 they were re-elected by shop floor ballot—only to be immediately faced with disciplinary action by the TGWU aimed at driving Fryer, Thornett and the 'Cowley 9' out of the union.

These moves were finally defeated last year. Fryer's re-election now demonstrates once again that a principled stand against bureaucracy and a struggle for the interests of the working class can rally mass support and inflict serious defeats on the right wing and their Stalinist allies.

Text of leaflet, p.11



INTERNATIONAL

Patriotic Front leaders rely on Rhodesian state repression

With gangs of pro-Muzorewa thugs reportedly rampaging through townships in Zimbabwe beating up political opponents, the Rhodesian army, airforce and auxiliaries continue to press home the advantage handed to them by the Lancaster House "settlement".

Over 20,000 Patriotic Front supporters are now herded into the assembly areas. And British governor Lord Soames has given the state forces a free hand to murder and terrorise those guerrillas that have so far refused to accept the total surrender "negotiated" by their leaders Mugabe and Nkomo.

Murdered

13 guerrillas were last week murdered in cold blood—as they made their way peacefully to an assembly camp.

And Soames last Monday authorised a full-scale air strike designed to obliterate a 450-strong guerrilla camp: the action was called off only 15 minutes before it was due to take place, after frenzied efforts by Patriotic Front commanders forced their followers to surrender their arms.

Socialist Press has consistently argued that the long term interests of the petty bourgeois nationalist leaders of the Patriotic Front were directly opposed to the interests of the workers and peasants of Zimbabwe.



Muzorewa

We have stressed that this conflict would eventually be paid for in the blood of anti-imperialist fighters.

Indeed, for the Patriotic Front leaders, the forcible herding of disarmed and impotent freedom fighters into the assembly areas amounts to nothing other than presenting their credentials for a place in a black bourgeois government in Zimbabwe.

For them, the presence of

the South African army at Beitbridge, the unchecked operation of Muzorewa's "auxiliaries" and the police action of the state actually assists a break from the demands and pressures of the most militant PF rank and file.

This nationalist leadership is in the process of extricating itself from the anti-imperialist struggle in a bid to qualify for a place in a pro-imperialist government.

This has not been without a price: the anger of PF militants and disillusion of the workers and peasants are clearly on the increase.

And, in placing capitalist "stability" and profits before the interests of the masses, the PF leaders will be forced to rely even more heavily in future on the repressive apparatus of the state to crush their former supporters.

The harsh material conditions that daily confront Zambian workers and peasants can only exacerbate their conflict of interests with the nationalist leadership.

No boom

The rapidity with which trade and financial links have been re-opened after the lifting of sanctions do not so much augur an economic boom to follow, but rather point to the quick profits there are to be creamed off by those capitalists who can take advantage of the current economic shortages.

The international capitalist recession is a bitter reality for the workers of Southern Africa for it compounds their suffering brought about by the ultra-exploitation of the migrant labour system that prevails.

Facing the possible short-term prospect of a vicious white racist reaction and the long-term necessity of repression by the petty bourgeois nationalist leadership, the workers and peasants are offered no way forward by the elections stemming from Lancaster House, but

only the possibility of grievous defeat.

The electoral victory of any section of petty-bourgeois nationalism, however radical can represent no gain whatever for the working class in Zimbabwe today.

Fraud

In any event the moves of the Rhodesian state and threats by Muzorewa make it clear that the "election" itself will be a total fraud in which intimidation and ballot rigging will play an equal role.

Workers and militants within the Patriotic Front must, dismissing the election, seize the opportunities created inadvertently by imperialism and the nationalist leadership to pose the revolutionary working class alternative to the politics of reformism.

Within the assembly camps and in the towns and rural areas the task of the independent organisation of the working class must be undertaken.

The arms of the guerrillas must be retained. But the armed struggle must be pursued not as the main thrust of the sterile politics of guerrillaism; instead it must be placed under the direction of the democratic organisations of the working class.

*No handing over of arms.
*No surrender to imperialist control.

*For the construction of independent Soviet-type com-

mittees of workers, poor peasants and fighters in the guerrilla armies.

*Cadres with military training to build workers militias in the towns and rural areas under the control of independent organisations of workers.

*For the nationalisation without compensation of all land, factories, mines and banks.

*For workers' management of industry and largescale agriculture.

*For a constituent assembly of democratically elected delegates of the workers and peasants linked to the dissolution of the capitalist state apparatus.

*Build a revolutionary party as part of a reconstructed Fourth International.



Nkomo

India's crisis not over

The overwhelming victory of Indira Gandhi's Congress-Indira party in the elections means that she will feel stronger in returning to the dictatorial powers (or as she says "law and order") that capitalism requires.

The results do not show, as the Western press claims, that "India is ungovernable".

What they show is something Lenin and Trotsky showed a long time ago; that the domination of imperialism and its crisis over the economically backward countries means that the national capitalist class of those countries cannot even allow bourgeois democracy.

Dictatorship

The massive interest payments payable by the Indian economy to imperialism have to be extracted through the exploitation of the workers and peasants: this means a rate of exploitation that must produce a revolt. That is why the capitalists have initiated dictatorship in so many of the underdeveloped countries.

Mrs Gandhi first introduced her "Emergency Powers" dictatorship in response to a strike movement of the working class. She was finally removed in a massive electoral defeat two years ago.

She was replaced by the Janata coalition whose sole policy was opposition to the Emergency Powers.

This was a coalition from the extreme right through to the



Gandhi

Socialist Party.

These people, as they had to run capitalism, soon came into conflict with the working-class movement whose energies were released after the overthrow of Gandhi.

The Janata itself used some of the "Emergency Powers". They soon started to split up and concentrate on their own way of running capitalism. They were shown up as offering nothing to the masses except corruption and exploitation. Hence the return of the Gandhi dynasty.

The real problem is the establishment of an alternative for the Indian masses that fights for the political independence and interests of the working class by struggling for a workers and peasants government in India.

The workers movement is in disarray. The Stalinist CPI was such a craven supporter of Mrs Gandhi's dictatorship that it has

been exposed in the eyes of the masses. The various splits from the CPI have gained some of its support but are equally as bad.

The CPI(M) is now the second biggest party in Parliament.

But it has repeatedly joined cross-class alliances "against dictatorship" and looks as though it will now join with bourgeois parties in a "united" opposition.

The CPI(M) is so craven that even the *Daily Telegraph* has admitted that it has the support of the business community in Bengal, which it controls.

During the power crisis in Calcutta last year they suggested handing the industry over to private enterprise as a solution.

As Gandhi is forced more towards imperialism she will be driven towards dictatorship.

The demand must go up for the workers' parties to break from the bourgeoisie and fight for a workers and peasants government in India.

Khomeini struggles to retain power

Convulsions are gripping every stretch of Iran as Khomeini's reactionary regime still struggles to keep a grip on state power.

The violent conflicts in Tabriz have given the most dramatic examples of this continuing crisis of the 'Islamic Republic'.

Hostility between the followers of Khomeini and the supporters of the Ayatollah Shariat-Madari has now reached a stage of virtual warfare in the capital city of Azerbaijan.

Dozens have been killed, and hundreds more injured in battles over the radio station and between rival demonstrations over the last two weeks.

Shariat-Madari's followers may now raise the slogan of 'Death to Khomeini', but their opposition does not represent a progressive alternative to the reaction and repression of the present unstable government in Tehran.

The democratic content of this movement has been firmly sealed by its leaders within the narrow borders of bourgeois democratic ideals and parliamentarianism.

This offers Iranian workers and peasants no way out of their present conditions of oppression and exploitation, and in reality the political options canvassed by Shariat-Madari's Muslim People's Republican Party have no existence inside Iran today.

The Azerbaijani Ayatollah is himself under house arrest in Qom, where his supporters have also been engaged in clashes with forces loyal to his fellow

citizen Khomeini.

This antagonism now seems to have spread to Tehran itself, where there are also signs of a falling-off of personal support for Khomeini even in the mass demonstrations boosting the 'Islamic Republic'.

A combination of ill-health and political despair has driven Khomeini into a fortnight's retreat before the presidential elections of 25 January.

In his absence, the 'Revolutionary Council' and its ministers continue to act with indecision and frequently at cross-purposes: one day presidential candidate Beni-Sadr announces the imminent nationalisation of foreign trade, only to be firmly contradicted the next by his colleagues, and so on.

Alongside this administrative charade, the occupation of the US embassy continues to throw every political figure into confusion and vacillation.

Now the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has introduced a new disturbance into the growing chaos.

Crowds possessed by religious hysteria may chant 'With God's help, we shall wipe out the Soviets', but the religious leaders and their aides can feel only too acutely the renewed threats now posed to their independence by an imperialist invasion to counteract the advance of the Soviet bureaucracy.

Against this background, the 'Revolutionary Council' has to face the problems of renewed hostility in Kurdistan, further violence in Baluchistan and Isfahan, sabotage in oil-

producing Khuzestan, and a growing list of obstacles to its precarious authority.

But Khomeini's government can still be thankful that it has not yet faced any organised opposition from its real historic enemy, the working class, whose strength was crucial in the overthrow of the Shah.

Denied leadership

Deprived of a political leadership from conscious revolutionary forces, the Iranian proletariat has not come forward to defend its independent class interests against Islamic reaction and threats of imperialist restoration.

But this time of grace for Khomeini must be nearing its bloody end.

The Iranian economy is in a state of havoc: the disruption brought about in the struggles against the Shah and worsened by the subsequent actions of the imperialists has been compounded by the economic 'policies' (if they deserve the name) of the 'Revolutionary Council'.

There are now 3,000,000 unemployed and the figure is rising rapidly day by day.

It is no wonder that Khomeini should retire to Qom for a break. Amid his prayers and fasting, the Ayatollah may be able to pass some time invoking the wrath of Allah on those leaders who succeed him.

For the question is no longer whether Khomeini can establish his dictatorship, but what combination of rival and opposition forces will strip him of the last vestiges of authority.

Imperialist alarm as Afghan coup consolidates

Reprinted unchanged
from SP112, August
1978

Soviet control



By Adam Westoby

Troops in Kabul

Afghanistan has been in the news since the left-wing army 'revolution' in April.

Demonstrations in Kabul culminated in the army coup of April 27 that toppled President Muhammad Daud.

It installed a government under Muhammad Nour Taraki, run in effect by his small Communist Party.

Since then the British press has emitted periodic noises of alarm that the country is being 'taken over' by the Soviet Union and/or succumbing to Communist revolution.

What is the background to this situation?

Afghanistan is one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world.

Virtual chattels

It is larger than France but with a population of only about 16 millions.

Almost 90% of Afghans are peasants (i.e. nomads), though much of the land is owned by a feudal aristocracy.

Less than a quarter of land is used, since much of eastern Afghanistan is formed of the Himalayas.

Average annual income is not much over \$100 per person.

Almost half those born die in childhood.

Women remain virtual chattels. Fewer than 10% of people can read or write.

In the villages the hold of Moslem priests has been virtually unchallenged; it weighs far more heavily than the power of the central government.

Localised

Afghanistan's social structure remains as it has been for centuries. What

economic advance there is extremely localised.

Kabul suffers traffic jams morning and evening but outside the capital there are only a handful of proper roads.

It remains greatly divided: there are over 30 mutually incomprehensible living languages.



Taraki

This very backward country is set at a strategic crossroads, with over 1,000 miles of northern frontier with the USSR, a similar length with Pakistan, a major border with Iran and a tongue of mountainous territory reaching out to touch China.

Poverty stricken

Under these conditions, politics in Afghanistan—including the relations of class forces within it—are necessarily shaped by the pressures of much greater powers—military, political and economic.

This is inevitable for a country in such a position, so poverty-stricken that its national income (\$2 billion a year) is approximately what the US spends on dry food.

Afghanistan has been a 'buffer state' at least since the early 19th century,

when her territories, and peoples became tennis balls in the 'great game' between Tsarist Russia and the British empire in India.

In the period after World War II the Soviet Union has devoted great effort and resources (since about 1954) to influencing Afghanistan.

'Neutrality'

She serves as a counter to the attempts by US and British imperialism to militarily encircle the USSR's south-west flank—originally through the Baghdad Pact treaties of 1954-55, following the CIA's overthrow of Mossadegh's nationalist regime in Iran.

The Soviet Union was then threatened by a ring of US bases in Turkey, Iran, Iraq (until the 1958 'revolution') and Pakistan.

Afghanistan's pro-Soviet 'neutrality', sealed by Khrushchev and Bulganin's ceremonial visit in December 1955, was the break in this chain.

"There is no doubt", Khrushchev recalled, "that if the Afghans hadn't become our friends, the Americans would have managed to ingratiate themselves with their 'humanitarian aid' as they call it."

The amount of money we spent on gratuitous assistance to Afghanistan is a drop in the ocean compared to the price we would have had to pay to counter the threat of an American military base on Afghan territory."

Khrushchev Remembers p.466

Since then, the USSR has been the main provider of aid—especially with road-building and the exploitation of natural gas in the northern border area.

And, even before the coup this year, the USSR provided 90% of equipment and training, and thousands of 'advisers', for the armed forces. (Up to 1956, Afghanistan's 'air force' consisted of a dozen biplanes of World War I vintage!)

Throughout more than twenty years of close and generous 'peaceful coexistence', however, the Soviet leadership never tried to do other than use Afghanistan as a 'buffer state'.

Effectively illegal

They never gave any real support to movements against the religious despotism that ruled the country.

The Communist Party,

for example, remained effectively illegal while the Soviet Union cultivated ultra-friendly relations both with King Mohammad Zahir and, after he was overthrown in 1973, with his cousin, President Daud.

The Soviet Union's involvement with Afghanistan—and the reactionary impact of Stalinism on Soviet policy—go back to the earliest days.

The first Soviet leader to organise military aid to help Afghanistan resist British imperialism (Leon Trotsky in 1919) did, so as part of the Bolsheviks' general drive to help the Moslem masses of Asia and the Near East emancipate themselves.

But by 1928, with the advance of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, the Afghan King Amanullah was the first monarch to be received on a state visit to Moscow.

'Progressive monarch'

Fifty years almost to the day before the coup in April, this year *Pravda* (already transformed into Stalin's obedient mouth-piece) welcomed him as one of the most progressive monarchs in the East as he arrived from his grand tour of western European

Since the mid-1960s, there have been sporadic strikes and demonstrations by students and small groups of workers, mainly in Kabul.

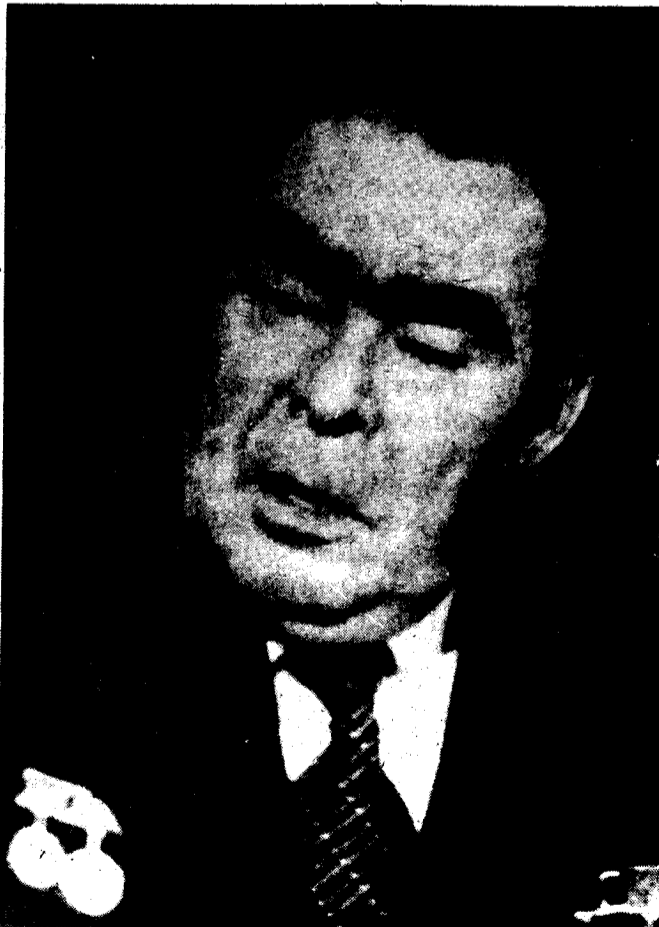
New importance

And the Indian Ocean has taken a new importance in the international military balance, with the USSR getting military facilities in South Arabia and north east Africa, and the US building new bases in the Indian Ocean and attempting to reconstruct a Pakistan-Iranian military axis.

The Soviet Union has for years supported the Afghan claim to Pushtunistan: a state to unite the Pushtus in Afghanistan (the biggest nationality in the country) with those in eastern Pakistan, and give landlocked Afghanistan (and thereby the USSR) a corridor to the Indian Ocean.

Pakistan and the US, of course, oppose the scheme.

Before he was ousted President Daud conducted close talks with the Palestinian government (both President Bhutto and, after he fell, military dictator Zia) on the Pushtunistan claim.



capitals.

Amanullah did have a policy of modernisation and mild reforms.

But in 1929 he was overthrown by a British-backed tribal-religious revolt (though not before rescinding his reforms in the attempt to stay in power).

Thereafter relations with the Soviet Union were cool until the 1950s.

In the last few years, however, quite new pressures have come to bear.

This may well have caused Moscow to think they needed in Afghanistan a more energetic counterweight to American power.

In any event, the army-Communist Party coup in April got the full support of the USSR, and caused the CP factions to sink their divisions.

Thus when papers such as the *Daily Telegraph* inform their Tory readers that Afghanistan is 'going Communist' because it is

infested with thousands of Soviet advisers, they are not pointing to anything new.

Soviet influence has been strong for years. From the British press such alarm is ironic: for well over a hundred years British imperialism unsuccessfully tried to 'pacify' Afghanistan for use against Russia.

The ignominious 'retreat from Kabul' (1842) stands as a monument to British military incompetence, dressed up as public-school heroism.

What the alarmist reports in the western press very probably do signal is the desire of the US and Britain to torpedo the Taraki government and recover some influence (if not a client state) in Afghanistan.

Parallel

They will be prepared to mobilise the most backward and feudal elements of society to do this.

Not only do they wish to retrieve their strategic positions; they are also worried at the possibility of a revolutionary impact on the working masses of the neighbouring states.

The Taraki government has promised land reform at the exact same moment as the Shah's dictatorship in next-door Iran is being shaken by mass opposition.

Neither the Soviet Union nor the Afghanistan government have a policy to 'sovietise' the country.

But they cannot leave it as it is.

There is a parallel with earlier events in Tibet, the even more backward country at the other end of the Himalayas, during the 1950s.

The Chinese workers' state reclaimed Tibet in 1950 (as an 'autonomous' region) but for over eight years Peking Stalinism peacefully coexisted with the serf-owning tyranny of the Dalai Lama and his Buddhist aristocracy.

Strong pressure

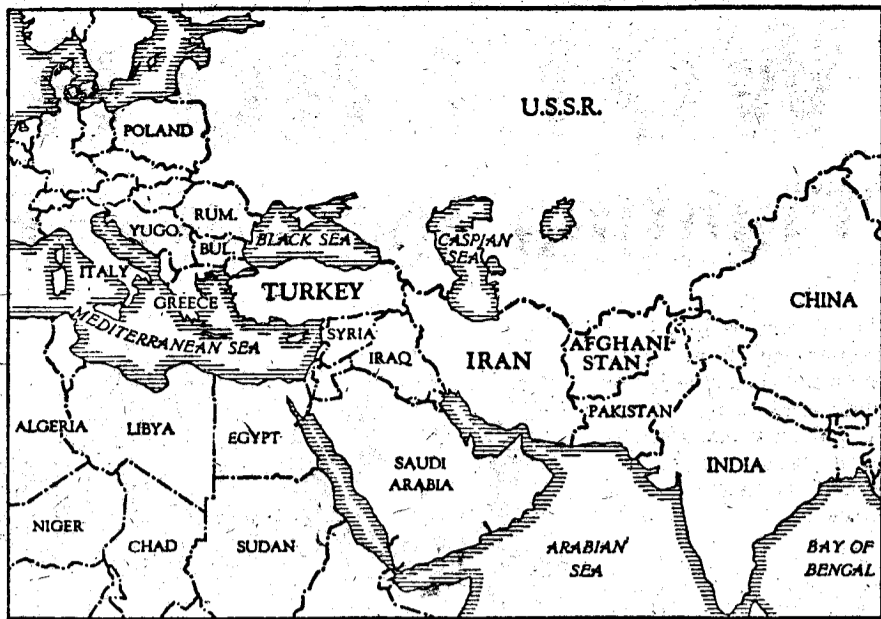
Only when the CIA sponsored an 'independence' revolt against their authority, in 1959, did the Chinese Stalinists destroy the old order and impose—for example—any significant land reforms.

Tibet has now been 'structurally assimilated' to the Chinese Stalinist state.

Although Afghanistan, of course, is not legally part of the Soviet Union, the pressure for Moscow to bring it under firmer and more direct control is real and strong.

But in doing so the Stalinists and their allies in the state machine are fearful of arousing the masses.

The unleashing of real struggles—on the land and for national rights—would release forces they could not easily bring under control or use as a bargaining counter with imperialism.



WOT? NO HATS?

'Fighting the cuts'-TUC style

Postal workers have been struggling up front paths with an additional burden in recent weeks: a package of TUC publicity material circulated to selected union bureaucrats and branch officers.

Thudding through letter boxes all over the country have come expensively-produced plastic TUC wallets bearing the proud title "TUC Campaign for Economic and Social Advance".

Inside are a range of metal and stick-on badges, and single copies of two posters, one leaflet and two car stickers with the meaningless slogan "Forward to the 80s, not back to the 30s!"

There is also a grandiosely-titled cardboard "TUC Briefcase", purportedly containing "a series of briefing notes on issues raised by the TUC's Campaign".

Inform TUC

In reality, it contains only one vacuous leaflet, which winds up offering the reader some "things to do"—such as "Protest to your MP; your local paper; your Councillor..." and "Inform the TUC about what you are doing".

One thing is clear: the TUC itself is spending a great deal of our money in a futile and transparent attempt to cover over the fact that it is doing absolutely nothing to fight the cuts at local or national level.

Its pathetic gestures of a national demonstration on March 9 and a "day of action"—lunchtime meetings!—on May 14 are designed to allow the Tory bulldozers to complete their demolition of social services.

But while the TUC continues to block serious policies of strike action and occupation to stop the cuts, many union bureaucrats will be disappointed that its American-style synthetic propaganda splurge has gone off at half-cock: after all, there are no flashy cardboard campaign hats to wear!



TUC cuts cover-up kit

Newham cuts fight off to a shaky start

Saturday 15 December saw the first conference of Newham Against Cuts.

The campaign is a joint initiative of the Newham North East Constituency Labour Party and the West Ham Trades Council.

The conference was attended by about 50 delegates representing Labour Party branches, the local NUT and NALGO branches, Newham Women's Group and North East London Polytechnic Students Union.

The Council Labour Group was not represented.

From the introductory report the central conflict came out sharply.

No rate increases

Carolyn Sikorski, for Newham NALGO, after outlining recent cuts made by the Labour Council, rejected a policy of rate increases to maintain services.

She correctly argued that the effects of a rate rise is simply to pass on the impact of the cuts to the workers of the area.

Preserving local services in this way would reduce the spending power of the ratepaying households.

The opposite position was taken by Tribune Graham Lane, for the NUT.

While agreeing to a 'no cuts' position, he wanted rates to rise in order to increase the education budget.

He was in favour of something he called a 'high social wage'. Although nobody would disagree with more money being spent on education, Lane's formulation amounts to no more than a demand on the working class to spend more.

Headed off

For West Ham Trades Council, Ray Offley tried to head off the issue.

In his view the campaign should be directed against the Tories, and not focus on the decisions made in the Council, which were completely circumscribed by central government controls.

Unfortunately the issue would not go away. Councillor John Plant, representing Kensington Ward Labour Party, argued that it was possible to build a campaign which would force the Council into conflict with government instructions to make cuts.

Although everyone recognised that the right wing leadership of the Labour Group itself had no interest in fighting the cuts, as their recent statements about 'opposition within the law' made clear, many of the councillors were honest socialists who hated the idea of reducing local living standards.

The responsibility of Newham Against Cuts was to show them that the local workers were determined to oppose the cuts by all means

available to them and would not pull back from direct confrontation with the Tory government.

If this degree of confidence was to be developed there had to be a clearly defined programme of action.

The campaign had to begin from a recognition of the fact that constitutional protest against the Tory cuts was useless and that the Tories were driven by the economic crisis which they could not resist.

An equal level of determination was needed for effective resistance. The campaign should decide to oppose all cuts and rate increases.

If this led to government action such as the imposition of a Commissioner, this should be opposed by occupations and by rent and rates strikes to make the Commissioner's work impossible.

Opposing

Despite Lane's claim, several NUT delegates spoke to oppose the rates increase policy.

There were also, several proposals for spreading the campaign into nearby areas and to achieve some more penetration into the industrial unions in the area.

Possibly the most extraordinary contribution came from local MP Nigel Spearing, who called for local people to act as 'good neighbours' to reduce the impact of the cuts while we wait

for a new Labour majority in Parliament.

NALGO delegates angrily replied that this meant in practice no fight and leaving it up to women to work harder to substitute for reduced services.

At the end of the meeting, much to the relief of the Tribunites, they were able to avoid voting on any policy.

This was argued as being in the interests of maintaining a unified campaign. There is to be a further conference open to all shop stewards in Newham at which policy resolutions will be considered and voted on.

The effect of this further delay is that the Tribunites have removed the campaign as a source of pressure on the Council in the period during which it begins to draw up its budget for 1980-81.

There will be efforts to call a further public meeting to keep this pressure up, backed with resolutions passed through Labour Party and trade union branches.

BLOODY SUNDAY
March to commemorate
murder of unarmed
Irish civilians by British
army.

Sunday 27 January
Birmingham
Details next issue

Murrays: an appeal

We reprint below an appeal from those campaigning in support of a struggle by the Irish anarchists Noel and Marie Murray for conjugal rights.

In SP 124 we outlined the way in which Noel and Marie were railroaded into prison on dubious evidence for their supposed involvement in a bank raid in which a garda was killed.

The trial was held before the Special Criminal Court where there is no jury and the sole evidence was a 'confession' which the anarchists claimed was secured under duress.

One of the campaigners was acquitted during the trial and

has subsequently turned his attention towards Noel and Marie's defence.

As we later reported the appeals procedure has been exhausted to no avail. The comrades have decided to focus attention on the inhuman treatment that they are suffering.

While our slogan remains 'Free Noel and Marie Murray' we think that their current campaign can play a useful part in focussing attention on the plight of political prisoners both in Ireland and elsewhere and we urge readers of *Socialist Press* to help where they can.

Copies of SP 124 can be obtained from *Socialist Press* price 25p including postage.

Dear Friends,

A group of concerned people in Ireland have decided to raise funds in support of a legal action which is being taken by a prisoner there.

Marie Murray is a prisoner serving a life sentence in Limerick prison in the south of Ireland. Through the Irish and Strasburg courts she is trying to win conjugal rights with her husband Noel Murray who is also serving a life sentence in the Curragh Military Prison.

At present they have only one hour visit every three or four months.

There are conjugal rights to a certain degree in South American and Scandinavian countries. If Marie Murray's legal case is successful it would change the existing situation for all prisoners in the state.

The costs involved in taking a case of this nature to

Strasbourg are very substantial and will cost thousands of pounds (anything up to £7,000). As it is impossible for any prisoner to obtain legal aid for a civil action to procure this type of money on their own, we have set up a committee and opened a bank account where money can be sent.

If you wish to support this legal action, more information can be obtained from the address below. If you could send information about conjugal rights in your own country it would help us in our case.

Crossed cheques to W. Gaj and R.D. Stenson, account no. 48034381, Bank of Ireland, Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2. If you wish to send information and literature please send it only to R.D. Stenson, 15 St. Aiden Park Road, Fairview, Dublin 3.

No platform for fascists!

Attempts by NF leader John Tyndall to re-organise his group in Leicester (following the defection of the bulk of his East Midlands members into the new British People's Party) ran into problems when local anti-fascists decided they also wanted a hand in the "reorganisation".

Tyndall's aim was to reform the Leicester Branch with a view to taking on Anthony Reid-Herbert's BPP and regaining their local headquarters, lost in the split.

Cloak and dagger

But despite the most elaborate cloak and dagger security anti-fascists got wind of the NF's arrangements and moved

in to disrupt their cosy plans.

Before the already disoriented local NF supporters could enter the meeting they were confronted by a group of 20 anti-fascists who had harried them on their way through town.

In line with the policy of 'No platform for fascists', they were physically blocked as they tried to enter the building, and in the resultant fighting one NF member was hospitalised and several others hurt.

The response of the NF was to denounce this as "unfair". Clearly they are less than happy about any situation where the boot is on the other foot.

The reply of all anti-fascists must be to intensify the struggle for a position of 'No platform' in the trade unions, for the formation of workers defence squads and for the physical breaking up, by the labour movement, of all fascist groups and meetings.

Such a policy must be combined with a political struggle against those reformist leaders whose refusal to fight in defence of workers' wages, jobs or social services help create the conditions of frustration exploited by the fascists.

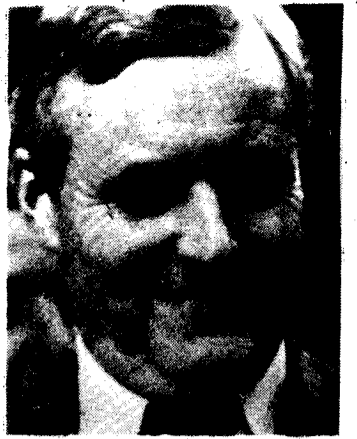


Saturday 19 January
Nationwide day of activity
to raise £10,000 for the
Southall Defence Fund
Support local activities

Sunday 20 January
Picket of Pentonville
Prison
Free the Southall prisoners
March from Euston Station
Assemble 1 p.m.

Crypto Tories renew Labour witch hunt

By John Lister



Still bruised from the clubbing meted out to Callaghan by delegates at last year's annual conference, the Labour Party's extreme right wing is now openly hunting for revenge.

But with local Labour Parties increasingly under pressure from a militant working class seeking a means of struggle against Tory cuts, closures and anti-union laws, the problem that faces the right wing is how to reassert their authority.

Cut off noses

The danger that many fear is that they will wind up simply cutting off their noses in order to spite their face.

This is because in combatting elements within the Labour Party that are pressing for socialist policies, for Party democracy, and for an end to the line of the reactionary Callaghan-Healey leadership, the right wing winds up having to choose between two unsatisfactory options.

*They could launch a full-scale McCarthyite witch-hunt against any socialist element that stirs within the Party.

Some are plainly looking to this option, despite its evident disadvantages. The results of this would be unpredictable: in



Owen—warning against party split

some areas Party organisation would be reduced to a flimsy shell of time-worn careerists and right wingers, incapable of mobilising the electoral support on which the PLP rests.

In other areas the witch-hunters themselves could be defeated, and the position of Labour militants could be consolidated.

*Or alternatively, in line with the idea floated by bloated Eurocrat Roy Jenkins and given

a cautious welcome by shadow minister William Rodgers, Labour's extreme right wing could simply proceed to split the party and attempt to establish along with Liberals and possibly a few 'left' Tories, a new, "centre" party free from any embarrassing links with the working class or socialist rhetoric.

This, too, is a major gamble, which would effectively hand over control of the Labour

Party itself to the left wing, and could well throw its advocates into a political limbo—denied votes from both working class Labour supporters and from hard line Tories.

Fight inside

This is plainly what concerns right wing spokesman David Owen in opposing this scheme and calling on the right to fight it out inside the Party.

The reemergence last week of the rather tired old report by Labour's former National Agent Reg (now Lord) Underhill is another expression of this

dilemma facing the would-be witch-hunters.

Retreating from a full scale war against those adhering to the very idea of socialism they have attempted instead to pick a more restricted but inescapable target: the 'Militant' group.

'Militant' is an obvious target for the extreme right because of its considerable support, particularly within Labour's youth movement and its ostentatious socialist and even Trotskyist rhetoric.

Anti-communist

For veteran anti-Communists like Underhill, the fact that such an outward political face is combined in practice with a stubborn refusal to carry out or support any serious struggle within the Labour Party for the removal of the Callaghan-Healey leadership is seen not as a reason for soft-peddling on a witch-hunt, but as evidence of Militant supporters' perfidious and devious tactics.

But for the fake lefts of the Tribune Group, the opportunist search by the Militant for a group of MPs to support their positions within the party offers an alluring prospect of a 'left' cover.

Benn, Heffer and others, along with left-taking NUPE leader Alan Fisher have repeatedly utilised the Militant in efforts to repolish their tarnished image as radical 'socialists'.

Perhaps this is one reason why the NEC's organisation committee has once again turned down a call for the publication of the Underhill report.

The report itself has now been promptly leaked to the press to facilitate a coordinated Tory intervention into the Labour Party.

In contrast, the same committee voted to recommend that the expulsion in Oxford of a TGWU GMC delegate, Socialist Press supporter, Ted Heslin, be upheld.

Two other socialists, Peter McIntyre and Ken Williamson, whose membership applications had been rejected, were recommended to reapply.

The political crisis confronting the Labour bureaucracy offers a vital chance for socialists to struggle for a principled programme within the party.

No bans

But a precondition of such a struggle is the fight by all Labour activists against all right wing witch-hunts, and against bans and proscriptions on socialists.

Instead the fire must be directed at the crypto-Tory right wing that stands opposed to the fight to bring down Thatcher, and unashamedly committed to a programme of class compromise and betrayal.

Embargo crisis faces imperialists

The problems facing the American labour movement are amply illustrated by the recent action of the leadership of the International Longshoremen's Association.

These supposed leaders of the workers' movement have outdone Carter in their pro-imperialism and extreme chauvinism, by ordering East Coast dockers to refuse to service Russian ships or cargoes destined for the USSR.

This embargo will hit the economy of the USSR, at least in the short-run, much harder than Carter's grain embargo and frenzied diplomatic manoeuvres. In fact the grain embargo is a dangerous double edged sword for the Carter administration.

The Americans do not, of course, sell grain to the Soviet Union for humanitarian reasons but because these bulk sales keep up the price paid to the American farmers—a significant force in American politics.

Carter scored a victory in Iowa (a major wheat-growing state) at the time of his election with his pledge never to use food as a political weapon.

Now that the price of wheat has slumped on the futures market to its legal minimum it's easy to see why that was such a popular pledge.

In the USSR the grain embargo has had no such chaotic effect.

This year's harvest was well below plan, so the extra wheat shipments are important—but it would be wrong to imagine that the embargo will cause widespread bread shortages.

The shortages will affect livestock feed primarily and so will lead to slaughtering this winter—which may cause long-term planning difficulties.

Bread shortages or price rises will be steadfastly avoided by the bureaucracy, because of the threat they pose to their own stability.

The grain embargo is also, of course, not universal.

The EEC have tentatively agreed, but the Argentinian dictatorship has declared its intention to continue to deal with the Russians.

The imperialists face similar problems when considering other sanctions against the USSR: trade with the workers' states benefits the capitalists as well as the Stalinist bureaucracy.

This is particularly true of recent investment projects and partnerships, and technological deals between capitalist multinationals and industry in the workers' states.

The encouragement of such deals has been a major part of the economic strategy of the bureaucracy, faced with huge productivity and technological problems as well as a decelerating growth rate.

Their cancellation would represent a significant blow against the Stalinists' strategy and exacerbate the crisis in these misplanned economies.

However, it would be diffi-

cult for the imperialist governments to cancel such deals since they have the advantage for the capitalists, of undermining the property relations in the Soviet Union.

They also provide a significant source of profit only recently opened up to them.

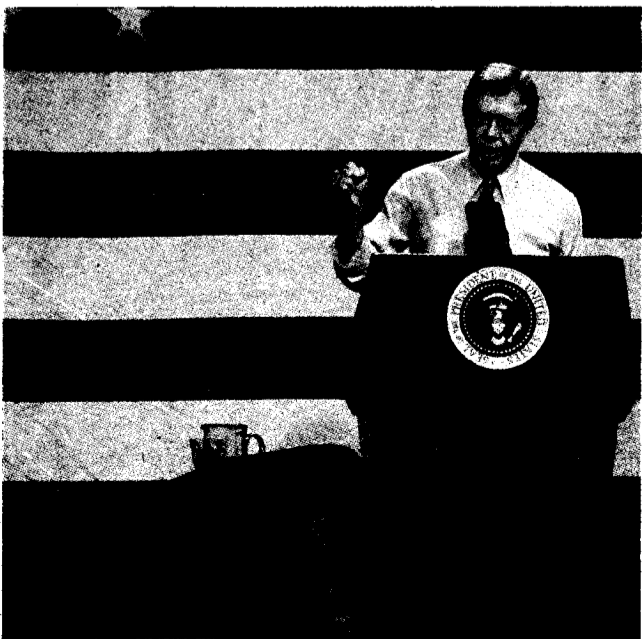
Carter is at present desperately trying to get the cooperation of the EEC on his moves towards sanctions and is now calling for a ban on all food exports.

The opposition, however, is equally fervent.

France and West Germany are particularly hostile, because of their involvement in the kind of deals that are able to flourish only in a climate of detente.

There is no painless way for the imperialists to damage the economy of the Soviet Union.

This is the problem confronting Carter, and one which is particularly acute when the capitalists' economies are already in a state of severe crisis.



Carter—showing his muscles?

PRESS GANG



The press had gone easy on the steel strike in the hope that it could be wound up early.

But as the picketing spread lurid accounts of the dreaded 'secondary pickets' began to crowd the front pages. The union was 'out of control'. Strike committees were tearing up the instructions of their leaders.

The Daily Mail interviewed Bill Sirs and Sir Charles Villiers under the headline 'The Two Faces of Crisis'. Large photographs showed them looking glumly out of the page.

Sir Charles Villiers is: "an old soldier with wounds and medals to prove it" . . . "a 6' 4" tall ramrod master . . . the eternal Senior Officer—listening to subalterns' advice, yet confident in his own judgement and absolutely determined to go his own way . . ."

"There's autocratic Norman blood there. His folk came over with William the Conqueror, though not, to his regret, on the first day."

He doesn't smoke or drink and:

"from a sense of social obligation rises at 6 a.m. and tries to be in bed before 11.00 p.m."

The Mail writes:

"As his stand forces flying pickets and police into confrontation, he says: 'I'm trying in my little way to make Britain better. That's what I'm on about, d'ye see? By better I mean more understanding, more clever, more successful, richer'."

In his way Sirs is treated

with more respect by the Mail. The press does respect the labour bureaucracy. The feeling is mutual.

Sirs plays his interviewer a tape of a meeting with British Steel in which the Teeside Managing Director Derek Saul says "I am not very much impressed by the rhetoric I have heard in whatever dialect".

Before he plays the uproar which follows, the Mail notes that Sirs tells his secretary to put her hands over her ears. "The nicest word she heard was 'poofter'".

But the bureaucracy—aspiring to the ideals of the Daily Mail itself—is also vulnerable at such times.

The paper notes: "There was nothing left-wing about the way he ran his expensive two-garage house in Hatfield, where he runs in the morning and sees the lights go on in the homes of stockbrokers and insurance executives who are his neighbours and like him for what he is."

Sirs provides the classic bureaucrat's explanation for leading the strike.

"If I had tried to persuade my people to compromise on a wage offer which is practically nothing, I would have lost my credibility. They would have led me and not me them."

Behind the calls in the press for tougher picketing laws and for strike breaking measures lies a growing uncertainty of which the Mail interviews are only one symptom.

The most dramatic shift has come from the Sunday Times,

which at the beginning of the strike, congratulated the government for staying detached but has now dramatically changed its line.

It outlines the way in which the strike has hardened:

"The fact that they very nearly accepted a modest rise linked to productivity, no longer means that a little more money would do the trick. The climate is now quite different."

"Plant closures and job losses as well as current wage demands are being drawn into what is now a wide challenge, sincerely felt, to the government's policy for the industry, and to some extent for industry in general."

"In our view the issue is now whether intervention should come before or after several weeks of probably irreparable damage has been done to British industry. We suggest the sooner the better."

The paper goes on to blame bad management for the crisis in steel, and proposes fewer job cuts, a bigger wage rise and the cancelling of some of the massive interest charges British Steel has to pay, in return for productivity.

This 'solution' is of course no solution. But when the paper that has consistently argued (and practiced) confrontation management now pleads for classic Labourite horse-trading with the bureaucracy, it is an indication of the lack of confidence with which important sections of the bourgeoisie now view the Thatcher government.

Declaration of Intent

We reprint here the final text of the Declaration of Intent adopted on December 31 at the International Pre-conference hosted by the Workers Socialist League. The resolution, endorsed by all seven organisations with delegate status at the Pre-conference, is a commitment to conduct the necessary discussions and joint work to ensure that within the next two years the organisations concerned would establish the basis for the formation of a democratic centralist international tendency, pledged to fight for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

1

*More than 40 years after the founding of the Fourth International, the historical crisis of humanity still remains reduced to the crisis of revolutionary leadership.

*In its deepening economic and political crisis, imperialism is challenged at every turn by the proletariat and the other oppressed layers of humanity in their struggle for an end to exploitation, oppression and the abolition of universal want.

*Mass struggles against despotism and military dictatorship have rocked the allies of imperialism throughout the world.

*Struggles for national liberation have ousted colonial rulers from vast tracts of Asia and Africa, and continue to this day despite all the concerted military power of US imperialism and its fellow oppressors.

*As the bourgeoisie toys with its last card of fascism (most obviously in Turkey) or military dictatorship, workers have surged forward to confront this threat of renewed barbarism.

*Even while they seek in vain to resolve their crisis, the capitalists meet militant resistance from the organised strength of workers acting with strikes and occupations to defend jobs, wages, conditions and social services against attacks from the employers, the state and the IMF.

*Even in their metropolitan homelands, the imperialists cannot rest easy.

*New layers are constantly thrown forward into these struggles, and women workers in particular have fought to lift the dual burden they bear as wage-labourers and the object of sexual oppression.

*At the same time, young workers, school and college students have been in the vanguard of struggles against imperialism and oppression (South Africa, Iran, Nicaragua), and across the world the militancy and revolutionary enthusiasm of the youth have played a vital part in igniting action against the attacks of the bourgeoisie.

*Over the last 30 years, the international proletariat has made powerful gains, but also suffered serious defeats and setbacks.

*Yet its enormous objective strength remains chained by the historic crisis of proletarian leadership.

2

*The contradiction between the needs of the proletariat and the actions of its leaders is as massive today as it was at the time of the struggles to found the Fourth International.

*Workers have fought in

heroic struggles towards political revolution in the degenerated and deformed workers' states (above all, Hungary in 1956), yet these independent movements of the revolutionary proletariat have been crushed by the political tyranny of the Stalinist bureaucracies.

*To fulfil their revolutionary aspirations these workers need a new, conscious leadership from the forces of Trotskyism.

*Workers in struggle against imperialism confront not only the forces of capital and the repressive apparatus of the bourgeois state but also their own leaders—the reformists, Stalinists and petty bourgeois nationalists.

*The mass forces in struggle against imperialism and against the ruling Stalinist bureaucracies objectively need a new, revolutionary leadership to replace the counter-revolutionary betrayals of the old leaders.

*The best elements in these struggles are actively searching for that leadership.

*Yet most of them can discover only the constantly shifting varieties of centrism and degenerate fragments of the Fourth International.

*For a new element has now compounded the crisis of proletarian leadership: that is, the crisis of the Fourth International itself.

3

*Today the Fourth International no longer exists as the world party of socialist revolution founded by Trotsky and the forces of the International Left Opposition in 1938. Indeed it has been disrupted both politically and organisationally by revisionist tendencies.

*We have come together because its banner has been dragged through the swamps of opportunism and/or sectarianism by the leaders of the the USFI, OCRFI and IC, which have abandoned the principles and the method of the Transitional Programme. In reacting to these problems, groups such as the IST have plunged into the extremes of sterile sectarianism.

*But the Fourth International will not be reconstructed as the world party of socialist revolution through the formation of another international organisation which puts itself forward with sectarian arrogance as the entire body of world Trotskyism.

*We recognise the urgent need to develop, with both the leadership and the membership of these groupings, the fullest possible discussion on the continuing post-war crisis of the Fourth International, and on the lessons which this holds for the struggles for revolutionary programme in today's class struggle.

*The recent split in the



SWP leader—Barnes

USFI over Nicaragua has led to the formation of a joint Parity Commission by the Bolshevik Faction, Leninist Trotskyist Tendency and OCRFI—with the declared objective of convening an open conference of the world Trotskyist movement on the crisis in the FI. Only if such a conference is genuinely open and devoted to thorough debate on the key questions Trotskyists have faced or are facing can it constitute a step forward on the path towards the political clarification necessary for the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

*Beyond the ranks of these larger groupings there lies a host of organisations which identify themselves as Trotskyist and declare as their ambition the reconstruction of the Fourth International.

*Confined for the most part to national isolation until now, some of these groupings will play the key part in the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

*But alongside them, the most developed militants from workers' struggles must be drawn centrally into this battle, together with those forces prepared to break politically from the bankrupt leaderships of the USFI, OCRFI, IST and IC, or ready to develop beyond a history of centrism, petty bourgeois nationalism or feminism.

4

*On the basis of agreement with the programmatic report "The Transitional Programme in Today's Class Struggle" and with the general lines of the "Programmatic Basis", we now declare our intention to build a democratic-centralist international tendency, committed to the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

*This tendency will work to develop and expand the political fight for the reconstruction of the FI to lead the struggles of the proletariat and its potential allies towards the revolutionary seizure of power and the world dictatorship of the proletariat.

*From this conference our organisations have established an international liaison committee to act as

the focus of our political discussions prior to the founding conference, and to draw up a document stating the conditions of membership of the tendency, as well as to plan and commence coordinated intervention by consistent Trotskyists in the fight to reconstruct the Fourth International.

*This document will bring together the tendency's programmatic positions as the fundamental tasks confronting a Trotskyist leadership in today's class struggle.

*The tendency itself will be formed only after principled agreement has been reached both on these conditions of membership and on national perspectives and tasks for the member organisations, together with a full commitment to enter into international discipline.

5

*We issue the following call to all those forces engaged in the revolutionary struggle for international socialism:

*The crisis of the Fourth International has added a new dimension to the historic crisis of proletarian leadership in the epoch of imperialist decay.

*That crisis can be resolved only through the reconstruction of the Fourth International, to raise once again the banner of revolutionary communism and unite the workers of the world behind the leadership of one world revolutionary party.

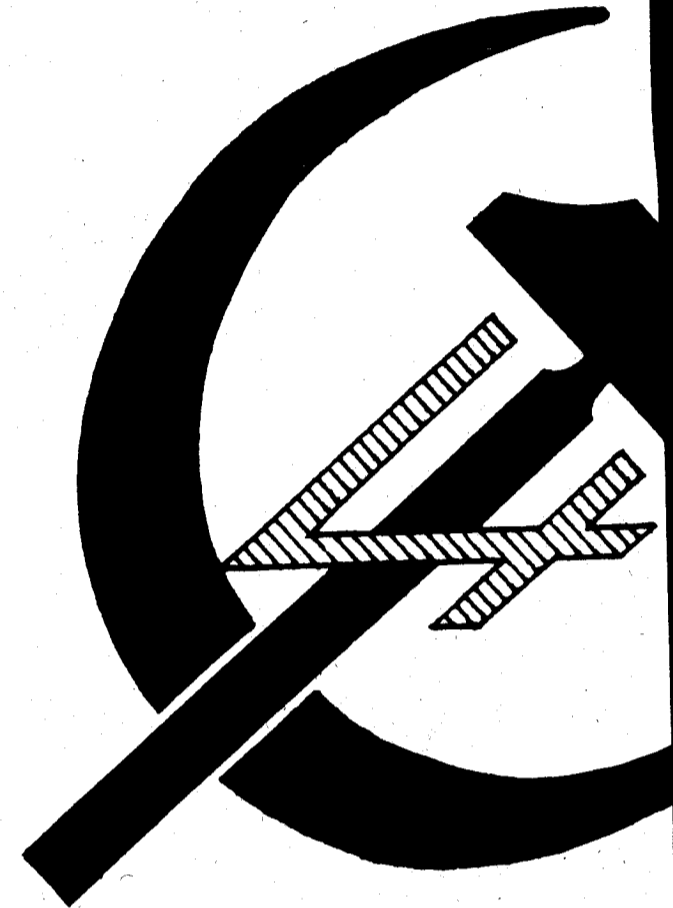
*Opportunism and sectarianism offer no way forward to the international proletariat, and they can play no part in advancing its struggles.

*We take our stand on the traditions and experiences of the communist movement, as embodied in the decisions of the first four congresses of the Communist International and in the founding documents of the Fourth International, and we declare our resolve to struggle relentlessly against all attempts to dilute or distort these principles.

*Being in no way sectarian, we do not oppose our own interests to the independent class interests of the revolutionary proletariat,



Mandel



iat, and set as our task the building of independent Trotskyist parties as national sections of a reconstructed Fourth International.

*Today our forces are small, but they will grow through the consistent and determined orientation we give to workers in their struggles against imperialist oppression, against the political dictatorship of the Stalinist bureaucracies and the betrayals of their existing leaders.

*History offers no alternative to humanity but a relapse into barbarism or the reconstruction of the Fourth International to lead the proletariat to achieve its historic tasks.

*The same stark alternative lies before all those forces who are prepared to struggle for socialist revolution and the world dictatorship of the proletariat.

*Unite with us now in the revolutionary unity of programmatic agreement, or stand on the sidelines as the courage, strength and determination of the proletariat are betrayed by today's leaders to a future of poverty, misery, fascism and war.

FORWARD TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE FOURTH INTERNATIONAL, WORLD PARTY OF SOCIALIST REVOLUTION!

Presenting the opening report to the international pre-conference, WSL Executive Committee member John Lister stressed the necessity to develop the 1938 Transitional Programme on which the Fourth International had been founded.

"The Programme was not written as a dead letter, to be preserved in a pot and wheeled out for annual exhibitions. It was designed as a guide to action in the real world. As such it is worthless if not tested, developed, enriched and enlarged in the context of the world struggle of the proletariat for socialist revolution", he said.

Pointing to the objective problems faced by the post-war Trotskyist movement in this fight, comrade Lister stressed in particular the unexpected development of the post-war capitalist 'boom', and the continued existence and expanded role of Stalinism on a world scale.

Contradictions

Within each phenomenon lie contradictions which it is vital for Marxists to recognise. The 'boom' itself, for instance, must be understood as containing the seeds of today's slump.

"The vast and rapid accumulation of capital during the boom turned inevitably into over-accumulation—the over-accumulation of capital relative to the possibilities for the extraction of profit from the exploitation of living labour."

And the contradictory role of Stalinism, too, must be grasped if Trotskyists are to offer workers a consistent political lead.

"It is not enough simply to insist that Stalinism in 1979, in 1938, is 'counter-revolutionary through and through'. We must understand the increasing importance of Stalinism in the development of the world class

Lay a f

ing a firm basis for ull discussion

By Terry Smith

The adaptation to Castroism and the petty bourgeois nationalist forces of the FSLN in Nicaragua by the American SWP was a development of its earlier Pabloite capitulation to the Vietnamese Stalinist invasion of Kampuchea.

But on the other hand the Bolshevik Faction, which has emerged defending the orthodox policy of building a Trotskyist party in Nicaragua, was itself not free from vacillations during the summer of 1979.

It was the BF's intervention in Nicaragua, through the Simon Bolivar Brigade which has brought it into conflict with the FSLN forces, and forced a change of line.

"Nicaragua is no single issue, no isolated development, stressed comrade Lister. "It is the latest outcome of a historical process of development in the world class struggle over the last 30 years—a process which has time and again left would-be Trotskyists rudderless and confused at crucial points.

"The FI can no more be "reconstructed" today on the basis of agreement on Nicaragua alone than it could be seriously reunified in 1963 on the basis of agreement on the single issue of Cuba".

"While pressing for the most active campaigns of solidarity with the Nicaraguan proletariat and for a programme to advance their struggle, we must deepen and develop our understanding of the overall importance of the Nicaraguan events for the development of the Trotskyist movement."

In the discussion which followed a Danish delegate from the Trotskyist Workers League (TAF) emphasised the need for further theoretical investigation of the post-war capitalist economic "boom", which had not been foreseen by Trotsky or the Trotskyist movement.

Doesn't fit

"It would be wrong to claim that the Transitional Programme fits all the facts of the post-war period when it doesn't", she argued. A TAF amendment, adopted by the pre-conference, stressed the importance of further work on these questions, to develop an analysis based on a development of the writings of Lenin and Trotsky on imperialism.

A delegate from the Italian Bolshevik Leninist Group (GBL) also underlined this point, while stressing the GBL's general agreement with the main document.

The Nicaraguan events have produced not a new method among the USFI majority, but a revival of Pabloism, he declared.

This can be seen in the way the USFI has adapted to Castroism, and attributed a leadership function to the petty bourgeois FSLN.

But it is impossible to reduce everything to discussion on the Nicaraguan question—the events there have produced from the Bolshevik Faction and the LTT a series of political positions and shifts of policy which in no way amount to a correct political perspective.

No regeneration

We must neither abstain from characterising the forces that have come together in the Parity Commission nor place faith in the possibility that the internal debates now taking place amongst Trotskyist forces offer the possibility of a regeneration spontaneously taking place.

The lessons of Portugal and

of Nicaragua refute the argument that revisionism will correct itself in a pre-revolutionary or even a revolutionary situation.

A critical note was struck by an observer from the Austrian IKL, who while stating agreement with the document's sections on the method of the USFI and the IC, declared that there was little point in simply denouncing past errors.

It is wrong to say that the Transitional Programme is still valid and alive today, she argued. And it is wrong to say it simply needs developments and additions.

The Transitional Programme was written for a specific period of time, giving specific perspectives. A revolutionary programme must relate to the problems of the recent past and look forward to the future. We can't do this at the moment.

It is necessary instead to reconstruct the programme. In particular we must explain how it is possible that the working class has for so long endured a class collaborationist leadership. Revolutionary politics cannot be reduced to a question of proletarian leadership. We must also take account of the attitude of mind of the working class.

General lines

An observer from Workers Power agreed with the IKL; the problem was that the main document put forward only general lines of policy.

"We would agree on the criticisms of the politics of the USFI and OCRFI and on the workers' government section. But the programme is so general that it may well hide a series of differences over method and tactics", he said.

To found an international tendency without practical agreement on strategy and tactics in the class struggle is to risk building on sand.

In contrast to this a delegate from the Bolshevik Workers League of Chile (LOB) strongly declared her general agreement with the document, and the pre-conference's method of approach to the question of building an international tendency.

"We oppose a tendency built on only one point of agreement. But neither do we favour discussing every minutest detail as a precondition.

"This is not only utopian but (given that every national grouping can hold tactical differences) it would hold back the construction of an international tendency.

"We will not discuss our tactics with just anyone: only with those forces with whom we are in general agreement."

Method

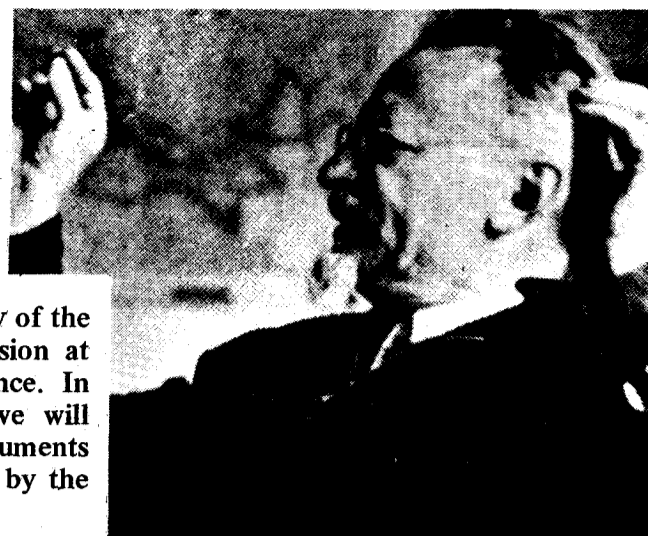
An observer for the Fourth Internationalist Tendency outlined their historical origins in a split with the OCRFI on programmatic questions and differences on the method of constructing the Fourth International.

He emphasised that the FIT does not regard itself as "the" Fourth International—merely a tendency fighting for its reconstruction.

"We understand the need for discussion with forces that consider themselves Trotskyist. In this sense we think that debate and common work is the fundamental basis for the construction of the FI".

The comrade went on to warn of the possible dangers of the Open Conference to be convened by the Parity Commission, while stressing that the

We present below a summary of the two main reports and discussion at the International Pre-conference. In next week's Socialist Press we will publish extracts from the documents put forward to the conference by the Italian GBL.



Trotsky

FIT does not hold an abstentionist position on it.

He proposed an organised discussion between the FIT and those forces represented at the preconference, declaring that the programme put forward by the WSL was an adequate basis for such a discussion, though there are points which the FIT wishes to raise.

There seem to be fundamental areas of agreement—particularly on the validity of the Transitional Programme. Tactical differences can never prevent work in a common tendency. It is necessary to distinguish tactical from strategic questions in such a discussion.

A detailed series of amendments to the draft document was moved by a GBL delegate, who stressed that they were all in their view consistent with the general line of the document as a whole.

The majority of these were, in fact, accepted by the WSL delegation, while some others pointed to areas where further discussion is necessary—in particular on the post-war economic boom and the question of the social overturn in Cuba following the 1959 revolution.

The next section of the agenda was introduced by a report from the WSL Executive which stressed the historic continuity of the Transitional Programme and its method from the Communist Manifesto, through the first four congresses of the Communist International and the struggles of the Trotskyist Left Opposition.

The programme and its demands were therefore not specifically related to the year 1938, but the embodiment of a method and principles fought for over a whole period by Marxists.

Experiences

Stressing the need for an international tendency whose national groupings take up the struggle to carry such a method into the practice of the class struggle, he went on to examine some of the experiences, achievements and problems of the WSL in such a fight.

In the ensuing discussion speakers from the Austrian IKL and German Spartacusbund strongly challenged what they regarded as an attempt to

generalise experiences from the British class struggle, when things are very different in other parts of the world.

There are periods, they argued, such as the 'boom' period of the 1950s, in which the Transitional Programme and its demands are not relevant, and it is not possible to mobilise workers in conflict with their reformist leaders.

In Austria and Germany today, they continued, the class struggle is quiescent, and it is impossible to mobilise the working class. Strike figures in Austria are estimated in minutes lost per year. This is partly because inflation is only 4% and there is virtually no unemployment.

The comrades were also highly critical of those speakers who suggested that a strategy for intervention into the German and Austrian proletariat might require a tactical orientation towards those workers at present around the Social Democratic parties there.

A rather different criticism was levelled by the observer from the Irish Workers Group who felt that the general line of the document failed sufficiently to "flesh out" strategic principles with an analysis of problems in fighting for them.

He cited the differences between the three main Trotskyist currents in Ireland—PD, LWR and IWG—as a case in point.

An FIT speaker focussed attention on the section of the document on Permanent Revolution, which he thought the least adequate—particularly on the question of the 'united front' in semi-colonial countries.

"The problem here is that it is not counter-revolutionary workers' parties, but petty bourgeois and bourgeois nationalist leaders who hold back the masses for long periods".

A speaker from the US Socialist League (DC) referred to the growing economic crisis of imperialism, which threatens to disrupt the class equilibrium of even "stable" capitalist regimes such as those of West Germany and Austria.

And an observer from the US Trotskyist Organising Committee underlined the uneven and combined development of the proletariat and its struggle by pointing to the low level of unionisation and lack of even a reformist working class party in the USA.

The reply to the discussion specifically warned of the danger—exemplified in the contributions from the Austrian and German comrades—of basing an assessment on subjective impressions based on a single country, or on the apparent acquiescence of the working class to the positions of its reformist and Stalinist leaders.

Nor was there a period in which the demands and method of the Transitional Programme could be said to have been irrelevant to the class struggle. The 1950s, for example, saw the Korean war, Suez, struggles for political revolution and the Cuban revolution. In each case the Programme had a perspective to offer.

Only in the struggle for a programme of independent action in conflict with the bureaucracy—even if this struggle begins from a situation of isolated propaganda work—can workers be broken from reformism.

It is not a question of rejecting revolutionary propaganda as such: rather we must beware of seeking to do no more than simply carry out propaganda work, and thus turn our organisations into small circles divorced from the working class.

The struggle for the programme is the struggle to mobilise the working class on its demands—demands which when acted upon form the bridge from existing trade union consciousness to the consciousness necessary for the socialist revolution.

With amendments



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Armed guerrillas fighting Shah's forces in the Iranian February revolution

FIGHTING FOR A WORKERS

By John Lister



Lenin

GOVERNMENT

Why communists say 'vote Labour'

As the Tory government presses ahead with a ruthless attack on workers rights and living standards, there is widespread sympathy and support for the call for mass action to bring them down.

But what is less clear to workers who have only just experienced five years of Labour cuts, Labour wage controls, and Labour government attacks on trade union and democratic rights, is what should replace the Tories.

Are we in favour of swapping Thatcher for Callaghan? If not, what policy do we advocate to break out of this vicious circle of Tory and right wing Labour governments?

Why is it that—at the present stage in the struggle—the WSL calls for the replacement of the Tories by a Labour government, and for workers to demand of that government a programme of socialist policies?

As a revolutionary socialist organisation, of course, the Workers Socialist League starts out from the necessity to mobilise the mass of the working class to overthrow the capitalist system, nationalise without compensation the privately owned banks, trusts, land, factories and other means of production, and destroy and dismantle the state apparatus set up by the capitalist class to protect that private property—the standing army, police, bourgeois courts and judiciary.

Facade

We stand for the removal of the present disguised dictatorship of the bourgeoisie—marked under the facade of parliamentary democracy, in which all the real decisions are in fact taken by the capitalist class and its appointed state functionaries.

In its place we fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat, in which the massive majority of the population could impose its will upon the tiny minority of exploiters and reactionaries.

We fight for a socialist society in which democratic decisions are taken in elected workers' councils, and in which the economic resources and latest developments in technology can be planned and utilised for the benefit of the majority of the population in Britain and on a world scale.

But we know that this, communist, view is not at present shared by the majority of the working class. This comes as no surprise. There is a material reason for it.

Reformist

For two centuries British workers like countless millions of workers throughout the world have time and again sought an answer to their problems through reformist, trade union struggles: struggles which have at times posed major crises for a confused and divided ruling class, but which have been containable within the bounds of capitalist society.

It is in the nature of things that, sooner than face the daunting task of overthrowing the whole existing social order, workers will seek first of all to utilise any means which seem to offer an easier method of resolv-



Tory conference: what next after defeating Thatcher?

ing their problems—seeking reforms within the system.

Workers seeking to defend and improve their conditions have continuously come into conflict with their exploiters; and in periods where capitalism has been expanding, certain concessions—some of them important concessions—have been won.

These concessions in turn reinforce the view that reforms within the system can provide for the needs of the working class.

Mass trade unions, reflecting this approach, have been formed.

Their leaders, however, thrust forward initially as the spokesmen for the demands of the workers, find themselves increasingly under pressure from and drawn into collaboration with the employers.

Transmission belt

From their national vantage point at the head of the workers movement these leaders then act as a brake upon the development of working class consciousness.

Similarly mass reformist parties, such as the Labour Party, while to a certain extent reflecting aspirations of the working class for reforms obtained through Parliament, inevitably act as a transmission belt whereby the leading ranks are drawn increasingly into the machinery and institutions of the capitalist state and relay the views and ideology of the ruling class in the ranks of the workers themselves.

Under the combined influence of its reformist trade union and political leaders, whose personal power and privileged bureaucratic positions rest upon the perpetuation of the capitalist system, the work-

ing class is continuously directed along lines of seeking piecemeal concessions from the capitalists or even using the capitalist state machinery to accomplish an illusory 'gradual' parliamentary transformation to "socialism".

But the present period is one of profound, historic crisis and dislocation of the world capitalist system, within which British capitalism, initially the dominant industrial power, is in particularly grave decline.

In place of the reforms and concessions it made in the past, the British capitalist class, represented openly by the Tory government, is now forced to stand at the forefront of an international bosses' offensive designed to strip workers of jobs, rights and living standards in a hell-for-leather rush to restore profitability.

Those leaders who in the past have offered reforms within the system have now to persuade workers to cooperate with a worsening of their conditions in order to preserve the system: there are no serious reforms to be obtained.

It is in this crisis that the seeds are sown both for mass struggles that can bring down the Tory government, and for the political break by large sections of workers from the pipe-dreams and illusions peddled by their reformist leaders.

Tooth and nail

To defend rights and living conditions that they have regarded as automatic in the last period, workers must now wage a tooth and nail battle against the employers, the Tories, and whole sections of the trade union and Labour bureaucracy.

Callaghan, for instance, has from the outset declared the

course of the class struggle.

The exposure of the reformist leaders must take place under conditions of the struggle to bring down the Tories and to force through alternative, socialist, revolutionary policies which alone can meet the material needs of the working class.

The right wing of reformism stands increasingly opposed to any such struggle. It rejects moves designed to defeat the Tories, and itself eagerly embraces the same reactionary capitalist policies.

Fifth columnists

As the working class moves into battle against the main enemy, it will increasingly recognise the need to fight these fifth columnists within its own ranks.

But at such a point the acute danger is that in rejecting the right wing of Labourism, workers will be persuaded that the smooth-talking 'left' wing, with their verbal opposition to Callaghan and vague calls to bring down the Tories can offer an answer to their problems.

This is why it is crucial for Marxists to focus on the exposure of the actual role which these 'lefts' play in practice as a cover for the right wing and as more 'militant' advocate of seeking socialism through parliamentary reforms.

The 'lefts' have no coherent alternative policy to counterpose to the Callaghan-Healey leadership: they are incapable of offering to workers the necessary principled lead. Their commitment to nationalism (import controls) and to tinkering with the capitalist economy means that they must eventually collapse into the arms of the right wing.

We must ensure that workers are brought into conflict with these 'lefts' at the moment they pull back from the fight.

For this reason, without in the least bit peddling illusions in

the 'lefts', it is necessary to give them critical support insofar as they speak out against and oppose the right wing, while at the same time pressing them to go further, and to put their 'left' words into practice.

Burnt out

We must direct the attention of workers to the burnt-out shells of former 'lefts'—such as Michael Foot—who have abandoned the pretence of opposition to the right wing; and those that parade occasional 'left' speeches while keeping their heads down whenever a struggle erupts.

In this way we create conditions in which workers looking to their traditional leaders for a way forward against the Tories, experience the retreat of the 'lefts' from the necessary fight; and at the same time we spell out consistently the alternative revolutionary route that must be followed.

We call therefore at present for the return of a Labour government, but not one where Callaghan and Healey are simply allowed to return to the policies of 1974-79.

This is why we call on workers in Labour Parties and union branches to put down demands on the Labour 'lefts' to campaign for the removal of the Callaghan/Healey leadership, and for its replacement by leaders prepared to implement socialist policies.

Transitional demands

And we combine this with propaganda and agitation for a system of transitional demands for the defence of jobs, wages and social services, and with the struggle to mobilise independent working class action on such demands.

And within such struggles we fight to direct workers to the building of independent organ-

Experience

In the course of such mass action large numbers of workers can, given a correct lead, make the kind of political development that is required. As Lenin pointed out:

"Revolution is impossible without a change in the views of the majority of the working class, and this change is brought about by the political experience of the masses, and never by propaganda alone."

(Left Wing Communism)

The task before revolutionaries is therefore threefold: (a) fighting to develop and extend the partial struggles that erupt, to the level of mass class action against the Tory government; (b) fighting within such struggles to expose the inadequacy and treachery of the existing mass leaders of the working class; and (c) building a mass revolutionary party capable of leading the struggle for socialism.

It is to a large extent the success that revolutionaries have in the second of these tasks—the exposure of the existing leaders—that will determine the future



Callaghan

isations to take forward the fight for their class interests—elected strike committees, occupation committees, prices committees, open the books committees and councils of action.

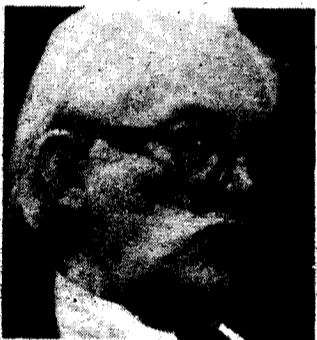
We stress that, as such bodies emerge and grow in scale and scope, they will come to represent the class strength of the working class, through which it can and must challenge the power of the capitalist class and the bourgeois state machinery.



PHOTO: Laurence Spahani, 15/1

Classic 'left' Skinner

As soon as such a development becomes a possibility, it will be essential to combine demands on the Labour leaders with the fight to make them responsible to the councils of action, and the call for a government based not on the rigmarole of Parliamentary democracy, but on the tangible power and living demands of the organised working class.



Burnt out: Foot

Insofar as any 'left' is prepared to take up some or all of these demands and fight in the interests of the working class, we offer him or her critical support.

But at the same time we stress that the fight for these demands as a whole requires the revolutionary mobilisation of the working class—a task from which 'left' reformists shy away, and which requires the building of a mass, revolutionary party.

And we contrast to the class collaboration, confusion and betrayal of simply another Labour government under a Callaghan or a Benn the call for a workers' government, a government responsive to the needs and demands of the workers' movement and committed to the struggle for workers' independent interests.

If we resolutely and successfully press the fight for a revolutionary party we are convinced that in the course of the coming struggles and political experiences growing sections of workers will come to recognise with us that the only consistent workers' government is, in fact, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and that the only real solution to their problems is to fight, with us, for the overthrow of capitalism to bring that about.

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Mass anti-nuclear demonstration in the USA

Fonda's CED: the limits of single issue radicalism

Special report
by Barry Atkinson

In late September 1979, in the shadow of the crippled Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, the California Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED) launched an unprecedented presidential-style tour of 50 cities in 15 key presidential primary states.

For the next month, CED leaders Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda made speeches, gave interviews and conducted meetings with a broad spectrum of political activists, union leaders and elected public officials.

In this they were joined for short times by well-known figures of the left flank of the Democratic Party and liberal activists including United Farm Workers President Cesar Chavez, Rev. Jesse Jackson and the President of the National Organisation for Women, Eleanor Smeal.

Nationwide debate

The declared aim of the tour was to build and strengthen links with grass-roots organisations throughout the USA and to trigger a nation-wide debate on issues such as inflation and energy, within the context of a programme of "economic democracy".

Fonda described herself as a modern "Pauline Revere", raising a clarion-call to the nation about the dangers facing the U.S.

Immediately afterwards, Fonda took off to make movies, Hayden went into isolation "to write a book" and the rest of CED had surprisingly little to say about the policies of the rash of presidential candidates that entered the race for the 1980 nomination in early November, or indeed on any major issue.

Did CED run out of steam? Did the organisation built with Fonda's money outstrip its popular support? Or was there some substance to the rumours in LA 'left' circles that some threat had been made, perhaps to Fonda's acting career, that encouraged the adoption of a low profile?

In any event, and whatever happens in the future, the emergence of a pressure group to the left of the US Democratic party is an event worthy of some attention, especially when it generates as much support as CED.

What is CED and where is it going?

CED was born in the summer of 1976 out of the campaign to win for Tom Hayden the Democratic Party nomination for the United States Senate in California.

Hayden, who was a leader of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and of the movement to end the Vietnam war in the 60s, lost to the incumbent, John Tunney, despite an extremely strong showing.

Chicago

This success was especially remarkable as Hayden had recently emerged, cleared of all charges, from the shadow of a six month trial and three years of reviews after being accused of conspiracy for anti-war actions in Chicago, culminating in the historic demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

Stressing "issues not personalities", CED built up a remarkably strong influence on Californian politics, far in excess of their small membership (3,400 at the start of 1979), by supporting candidates for public office who campaign on the principles of "economic democracy".

In part this must be due to their close links with California Governor Jerry Brown, but many of CED's policies clearly gained substantial grass-roots support that forced the passage of measures against opposition which even Brown's patronage had been unable to overcome.

They were the driving force behind the recent passage of solar energy bills in California, in the fight to phase out nuclear power in California.

Through their influence on the Solar Cal council (a body which is chaired by Hayden and was created by Governor Brown's executive order to co-ordinate the state's solar policy) they won a ban on utility companies monopolising solar energy resources.

Rent control

They have been active in rent control struggles in Los Angeles and Santa Monica and are fighting for a tenants' bill of rights, which will include eviction protection and controls on discrimination against tenants with young children.

They are campaigning for the right of workers to know what toxic chemicals they are exposed to during their work and for companies to be accoun-

table for exposing workers to carcinogenic agents.

They propose accountability in the spending of the 3 billion dollar windfall which large corporations received in reduced property taxes in the wake of "Proposition 13", the recently introduced measure which cut property taxes throughout the state of California.

So what is "economic democracy"? CED defines this as "the idea that the principles of participatory democracy should be extended into the economic system".

In more detail this is loosely defined as sharing power to make economic decisions between consumers, workers and management.

CED sees the need to develop "new politics" around the issues of inflation and energy that puts the blame for the US economic crisis "in the profit needs of private corporations".

Hayden sees the need for "a dramatic innovative view of where America should be going in the '80s".

No intention

He hopes to "trigger a nation-wide debate similar to the popular debates that surrounded slavery in the 19th century and the causes of the Depression in the 1930s".

They disclaim any intention of building a nation-wide organisation, but maintain that the issues facing America require national attention.

They have been often accused of really just being an organisation for drumming up support for Governor Brown's presidential aspirations.

Though CED denies this, it maintains that:

"Those candidates who respond most positively to the challenge that we lay out are likely to get the most support from the network of progressives that exists out there".

If not a support group for Brown, then is CED a vehicle to advance the political aspirations of Hayden?

Certainly Hayden and Fonda are central to the policies and financing CED, and Fonda has declared that she would like to see Hayden President of the United States.

But this would be a sterile and utterly cynical view of the courageous if inadequate stands taken by both Hayden and Fonda on major political issues in the US in the teeth of often violent opposition from the

right.

On the face of things CED seems like an attempt to resurrect the anti-Vietnam war energy of the '60s and direct it towards contemporary issues.

CED has gained the support of many individuals and some local political organisations across the US. But what CED sees as its strength—a collection of "single issue" activists—is clearly one of its major weaknesses.

Hayden and now CED lack support from blue-collar workers, in general, and organised labour, in particular.

Without any substantial power base the hopes of establishing "economic democracy" is just a dream.

The idea that large corporations can seriously be induced by grass-roots organisations like CED to share power with consumers and labour, is hopelessly utopian.

Their rejection of the idea of nationalisation under workers control is the expression of their retreat from confronting the

basic issues of who appropriates surplus value.

Despite the opinion of many US journalists, and of extreme right wing US tax activist Howard Jarvis, CED is not an American form of socialism.

Tinkering

It is a reformist attempt to tinker with an ailing system, that ignores the realities of capitalism.

However, the ready response to the activities of CED and similar groups and the massive abstention rate in US elections show that there is a widespread will to fight capitalism and its system of two capitalist parties in the US.

The question, as always, is one of leadership and correct policies.

It raises ever more urgently the issue of how to establish in the USA a labour-based party committed to a programme of socialist policies to challenge the Democratic/Republican stranglehold.



Hayden (left) with Fonda



Angling for radicals—Jerry Brown



LEEDS STRIKERS FIGHT CLOSURE

Civil Servants' pay sell-out

The New Year opened with the news for 600,000 Civil Service trade unionists that they have barely any hope of obtaining a wage settlement this year that begins to keep pace with the rate of inflation.

Their deal will not even compare favourably with that of workers doing similar jobs in the private sector.

Government engineers' and technologists' pay claim for 1979 was finally settled at the end of the year only a few days before the final instalment of the claim—due in April of last year—was payable.

Selective action

After seven weeks of selective strike action during the summer—which succeeded in bringing government defence establishments practically to a halt—the union, the Institution of Professional Civil Servants, accepted that the dispute over the claim should go to a once-and-for-all decision by an arbitration tribunal.

The offer made by the employers, the Civil Service Department, was a cynical interpretation of the 'comparability' findings.

The technologists needed increases of about 40% to bring their pay levels up to those in outside industry, where government pay policy had been avoided by hidden fringe benefits.

The settlement they have been forced to accept is little more than £100 a year, on an average salary above the employers' offer.

Insulting

This insulting award was made not by the tribunal itself, which was divided, but by its

chairman, a judge, who, in following a growing trend in the giving of judge-made law, blandly disregarded the terms of reference established by the tribunal.

It is obvious that this presages a bitter struggle for all Civil Servants in this year's pay battle.

The pay comparability system, which was designed to remove Civil Servants' pay negotiation from political influences will be manipulated by the Tories to prevent Civil Servants from getting a fair wage and will ensure that they end up with an even worse deal than usual!

At last year's conference of the Civil and Public Services Association a motion to with-

draw from the pay research system was defeated by only four votes.

All Civil Service unions must now call for an end to comparability—and for a wage protected against inflation with no trading off pay rises for loss of jobs!

*At their last meeting on 7 January the National Executive Committee of the IPCS voted to withdraw from pay research, i.e. comparability, in the light of the P and T grades claim.

This is obviously a welcome and progressive step and must be given support by the membership against the backlash from reactionary members which is thought will take place.

Writs have been flying in a bitter struggle by the 160 workers at the EPCO engineering plant in Leeds.

The dispute began on December 13 when AUEW members threw out a fraudulent 6% pay offer, coupled to a productivity deal with as many strings as a grand piano. Management have claimed that the amount on offer was in fact 16%.

Dismissal

But on New Year's Eve strikers received a letter of dismissal from managing director Oxley:

"Your current 'strike' action constitutes a repudiation of your contract of employment. The company accordingly accepts that repudiation.

"Your employment with this company therefore terminates with effect from 31 December, 1979."

Two days after this sacking of the entire manual workforce, management announced the closure of the EPCO plant. Their "dismissal" letters had been little more than a ploy to evade payment of redundancy money.

And the 6% offer had been exposed as little more than a manoeuvre to provoke a strike as a cover for the closure.

Giant combine

EPCO, indeed, is far from being an isolated small factory: it is part of the giant Booker McConnell multi-national combine, which has 39 subsidiary firms around the world.

In a period of slump in the engineering industry, the premature dismissal of the workforce is clearly an attempt to secure 'rationalisation' on the cheap—with redundancy pay being given only to white collar workers.

But the workforce has not given up the struggle. A group of workers gained entry to the plant and staged a work-in to prevent the closure—only to be confronted by a High Court writ.

Outside, picketing is continuing on the plant, though police have imposed a limit of 10 pickets on each gate.

There are bitter memories of previous redundancies at the plant, in which the then Stalinist leadership accepted 100 sackings without a fight.

But if this occasion is to be different, the EPCO workers will need the full support of the Leeds

labour movement in the struggle to open the books of EPCO and Booker McConnell, step up the occupation and picketing to prevent the removal of equipment, and fight for national and international blacking of other Booker McConnell subsidiaries in the fight for full reinstatement on the basis of the 17% pay claim.

LOBBY AGAINST CORRIE FEBRUARY 5!

JOHN CORRIE'S Tory anti-abortion Bill comes up for its third and final reading in Parliament on Friday February 8.

It contains a package of proposals to make abortions even harder for working women to obtain.

The TUC, which called a 60,000-strong demonstration against the Corrie Bill in October has done nothing since to mobilise a struggle to halt the Bill or challenge its implementation.

The National Abortion Campaign, however, has taken the initiative and appealed for a mass lobby of Parliament on Wednesday February 5 to

oppose the Bill, supported wherever possible by strike action. This lobby has the backing of the SE Region TUC.

We urge Socialist Press readers to support this crucial lobby, and to prepare in the health unions and throughout the labour movement for a struggle for action to defend existing abortion facilities and rights against Tory legal attacks.

On 8 February NAC has called an assembly of women at Central Hall, Westminster, which must be made the focus of the continuing fight for the right to free abortion on demand.



IPCS pickets during their struggle last summer

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.

These can only be defended through policies which start from the independent interests of the working class, which, as an international class, has nothing to gain and everything to lose from attempts to restore the profitability of their "own" employing class.

In a period where the contra-

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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.

To achieve such a 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 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.

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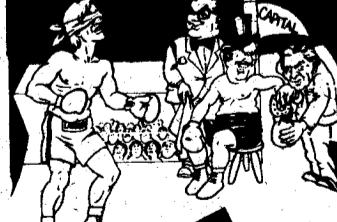
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This is no way to defend Robinson!

Last Sunday's labour movement conference called by the Austin Join Shop Stewards Committee to defend Derek Robinson has thrown the campaign into deeper crisis.

Not a single demand at the Birmingham conference was directed towards the nub of the issue—the role of the AUEW Executive Council—during the entire five-hour jamboree. No calls were made for a lobby of the crucial meeting of the EC on January 22 where the outcome of the union's so-called "inquiry" into Robinson's sacking will be revealed.

No call

No calls were made to mobilise support for the convening of an emergency AUEW National Committee meeting to overrule Duffy and the EC.

Nor was there even a call to extend the campaign in the AUEW branches—300 of which have now condemned the EC's handling of the Robinson case—to ensure that the necessary 250 branches demand under Rule 15 paragraph 5 a ballot on the removal of the entire Executive Council.

Not a single criticism of the role of the Communist Party—which has refused to confront or expose the treacherous role of the Executive Council was to be heard from any of the carefully selected speakers.

Inquiry

Derek Robinson himself, in a long speech, made no criticism at all of Duffy and Co.

He did not even condemn the inquiry—a move so obviously designed to smash the strike and defuse his support.

Instead, as a substitute for any fight, Robinson at the end of his speech called on the embarrassed gathering to stand to sing "We Shall Not Be Moved".

The only AUEW official on the platform was Divisional Organiser Bill Jordan.

He supported Duffy to the hilt, and bitterly criticised "ill-prepared actions" which "fizzle out after a few days"—a clear reference to the six plants which correctly struck in defence of Robinson, only to be ordered back by the AUEW Executive.

'One of many'

Jordan went on to play down the Robinson sacking as "one of many" at the present



Robinson—who will overcome?

time.

Yet Robinson is chairman of a Combine Committee covering 160,000 workers.

He is the convenor of one of the biggest plants in Europe. And he was sacked for nothing more than his comments, expressed in a trade union publication.

Jordan's predictions that the inquiry would find in Robinson's favour found little credibility amongst the delegates.

Significantly, in view of the fact that Derek Robinson is a leading Communist Party member, the "left" flavour of the conference was provided not by CP speakers, but by Arthur Scargill and Les Huckfield, Labour MP for Nuneaton.

Huckfield reported that he had the support of the Labour Party National Committee for Robinson's reinstatement.

Time for action

Scargill said it was a time not for inquiries but for industrial action.

He said that South Yorkshire NUM were ready to respond to any call to force Robinson's reinstatement.

TGWU Region 5 Secretary Brian Mathers took the prize for hypocrisy.

After organising two witch-hunting TGWU inquiries in Cowley which broke up the shop floor organisation in the BL Assembly Plant and became a blueprint for Duffy in the victimisation of Robinson, he had the nerve to stand on the platform and implicitly criticise the AUEW handling of the case. Mathers, the architect of the

secret ballot as a means of electing TGWU convenors, and even branch officials in the Cowley Assembly Plant, even went on to criticise secret ballots because such methods "allowed the press to decide".

The only floor speaker to the left of the CP who was called to the rostrum announced himself as a supporter of the International Spartacist Tendency.

He was a member of the EETPU, although not delegated from his branch.

For a movement which trains its members to talk about the importance of a "hard programmatic struggle" he had little to say. His speech contained not a single reference to the role of the Communist Party—the key question of the Conference.

He was also soft on the AUEW bureaucrats, raising not one of the key demands which could put them on the spot, simply calling in general for "strike action".

He ended with abstract calls for a general strike to bring down the Tories and for a "workers government".

Despite the outcome of the conference, clearly designed to do nothing, the campaign for Robinson's unconditional reinstatement must proceed.

A mass lobby of the Executive Council must be called on January 22.

The campaign for a recall National Committee and for the ballot on removal of the EC must go ahead.

And, throughout BL, preparations must be made for strike action to force Robinson's reinstatement as convenor at Longbridge.

Cowley stewards recognised

After two years of pressure an important breakthrough has been made against management in the BL Cowley Assembly Plant.

Three shop stewards, banned from office by both BL management and the TGWU bureaucracy have been restored to office following their successful re-election in December.

Shortly before the elections the breakthrough came in the TGWU. Repeated approaches from the plant leadership to both the Regional Committee and the General Secretary resulted in a letter from the Region restoring their credentials.

All three were then elected by their sections as stewards—in most cases they had been repeatedly elected each year although remaining unrecognised.

Vigorous

Following the election, vigorous representation to management by the convenor Bob Fryer resulted in their recognition by management.

The three stewards, Dave Pinnington, Andy Brown and Perry Cullen were victimised in August 1976 by a scarcely concealed conspiracy between TGWU officials and BL management.

A fourth steward victimised with them—Tony Homer—has since left the plant.

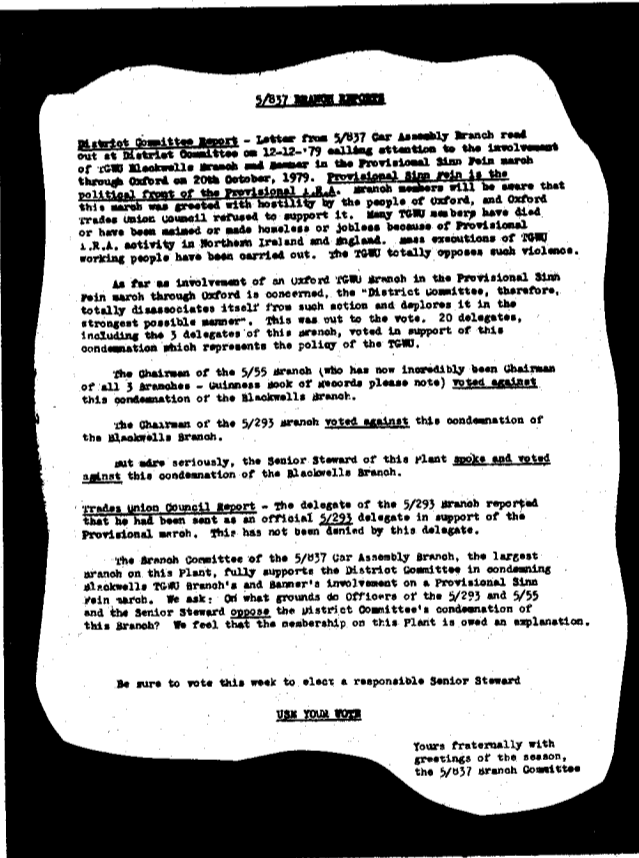
They were accused of organising and addressing a mass meeting in defence of a young Asian worker who had been sacked.

A two-week strike by assembly workers took place in their defence, in defiance of union officials (who supported the management's action).

This was eventually sabotaged by the intervention of the TGWU Regional Committee, who called a Regional Inquiry into the Company's action.

That inquiry found the stewards guilty, and removed their stewards' cards.

CP slams Irish struggle



THE LEAFLET reproduced above was distributed on the gates of the BL Cowley Assembly plant on the day of the elections for convenor by two Communist Party members and one right winger from the 5/837 TGWU Branch. It was written by Communist Party member Tony

Gallagher. The Provisional Sinn Féin demonstration referred to was called in support of the struggle by republican prisoners in the 'H' Blocks at Long Kesh for the restoration of prisoner of war status. It was supported by several union branches, including the Blackwells 5/833 (ACTSS) branch and the Oxford NUJ.

At the Trades Council a proposal to support the march was ruled out of order by President John Power. The "Chairman of the 5/293 Branch" is Alan Thornett. The "Senior Steward of this Plant" is Bob Fryer.

The right wing led 5/837 Branch has never been "the largest Branch" in the Assembly Plant, and has dwindled drastically in size since it was set up by the bureaucracy with company support in 1977.

- *Black all steel supplies and imports.
- *Strike action and pickets to shut down the private steel-makers!
- *No to the closure plan! No settlement on pay without agreement to retain all existing jobs at BSC!
- *Build councils of action!

FIGHTING THE CUTS
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Mass meetings must reject BL offer!

The Leyland Cars negotiating body, the LCJNC is still trying to slow down the process of calling action on pay throughout BL.

This is despite the fact that the review date was last November 1 and the company has not increased its insulting offer of 5% for the vast majority of workers with strings that would smash virtually every local agreement.

BL Senior Stewards met last Thursday and gave the LCJNC the power to call whatever action necessary.

The LCJNC met the company again on Monday but instead of calling immediate mass meetings and strike action when talks broke down, decided to call a ballot of the membership.

They have called a ballot because they realise their members will vote no and make an easy propaganda point.

But the company already say they will not accept the result of the ballot.

The reality is that this use by the unions of a ballot instead of mass meetings will be utilised against the Leyland workers in the future.

Leyland workers should demand mass meetings at which to vote, and immediate strike action to link up with steel workers.

No half measures of work-to-rules or overtime bans will do.

LIAISON COMMITTEE FOR THE DEFENCE OF TRADE UNIONS

Conference

Saturday 26 January at 10.30 a.m.
Friends Meeting House,
Euston Road, London

Credentials available from Jim Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Road, Ilford, Essex

Steel strike... from back page

by a leadership prepared to challenge the very concept of capitalist "viability" and to struggle for a socialist society.

This must be one of the few crumbs of comfort to be derived by the Tories from the present situation.

In other respects the problem confronting Thatcher is considerable. Any concession on wages to the steelworkers will be seen by millions of workers as a major gain forced through determined action.

Picketing

Yet a refusal to increase the pay offer will obviously create a rapidly developing situation in which picketing threatens to grow to equal or exceed the

levels of the lorry drivers' strike last year, and in which further sections of British capitalism are driven deeper into crisis.

Already as picketing bites, some employers are admitting that their stocks are nowhere near as large as suggested by the press.

Certainly the early days of the strike offer no grounds for hope that the action is about to crumble: and in the course of the struggle anti-Tory feeling on the picket lines is developing day by day.

On one picket line in Sheffield, lorry drivers were being asked firstly which way they voted in the last election, and only secondly for their union cards!

These conditions are far from favourable for any attempt

to rush through and enforce new Tory anti-union laws.

The Tories' difficulty is the labour movement's opportunity. The demands for action to support and extend the steel strike must be redoubled, and councils of action formed in each area to draw in and mobilise the entire local labour movement.

Bring down Tories

Within such councils of action the manoeuvres of the bureaucracy to isolate and restrict the steel strike must be exposed, and the struggle taken up for a policy of general strike action to bring down the Tory government.

At the same time Labour Party members and trade unionists must call on those MPs who

SOCIALIST PRESS



TUC moves to limit steel strike

The steel strike is bringing to life the worst nightmares of steel union and TUC leaders, of the employers and of the Tory government.

As the workforce, held back from a national strike for over 50 years, for the first time flexes its considerable muscles and recognises its own strength, bureaucrats who have built their positions on a lifetime of class collaboration and capitulation find themselves struggling to keep control, and in some cases dragged along with the movement.

Strict national instructions against picketing private steel firms, stockholders and steel users are being daily flouted by militants in virtually every area.

Called out

So great is the pressure that ISTC leaders themselves have been forced to take steps towards calling out their members in the private sector.

Not satisfied with the stand of their officials, militants in Sheffield last week staged a picket of the strike headquarters demanding that the claim be raised to 20%.

They could not have been the only ones. A few days later

EPLF victory

In the Horn of Africa, a major victory has been won by the forces of the Eritrean Popular Liberation Front over the occupying armies of the Ethiopian "Marxist" dictatorship, the Derg.

The victory came after a 13-day assault on the town of Makfa by Ethiopian armed forces.

Makfa is the last significant town remaining in the hands of the EPLF after last year's offensive by the Derg's armies—backed up by Soviet and Cuban "advisors".

On December 27, the EPLF forces broke through the siege and after two days of battle routed the 20,000 troops of the Ethiopian 3rd Division, and the 508 tank group.

The Derg's forces were forced to withdraw to Afabet, and were then evacuated by Russian warships from the port of Marsa Teklay, which is itself under siege from the EPLF.

Major losses were inflicted on the Derg's army and this victory has dealt a decisive blow to crush this stage of their offensive against the struggles of the Eritrean people for self determination and national independence.

*Victory to the EPLF!
*Forward to socialist revolution in Eritrea and Ethiopia!

Bill Sirs himself was taking up the call for a 20% settlement.

Meanwhile, in Yorkshire, steel industry electricians are proposing to picket power stations in the hopes of cutting power supplies to private steel producers, and pickets continue to extend their operations on a whole range of selected targets.

Redundancies

In Scotland the strike committee has confidently announced its intention of stopping all movement of steel. One company, Steel Stockholders, has already agreed to close down for a month, following intensive picketing.

As strikers dig in for a tough fight, the attention of union officials has shifted from securing a swift sell-out on pay to frantic efforts to prevent the strike spilling over into a fight against BSC's planned 50,000 redundancies later in the year.

Focal point of this official sabotage has been the general strike called by the Welsh TUC for January 21, in which South Wales miners were due to spearhead a major struggle against the steel closures and related pit closures.

As this date has drawn closer, the pressure has increased for a postponement of an action which would offer a lead for workers all over the country in their struggles against Tory cuts and closures.

The NUM National Executive struck the first blow, offering only "moral support" to the Welsh NUM in its action—though there has been speculation that other NUM areas might come out in support.

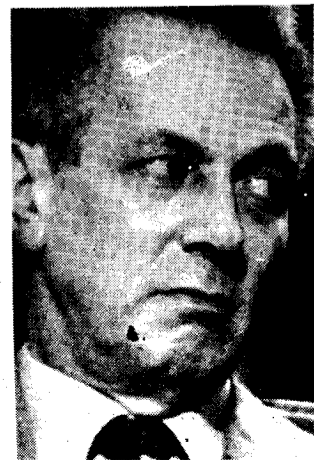
Turned down

But this was followed up by the TUC, which turned down a correct appeal for support from the Welsh TUC.

Behind a veneer of vague waffle about "serious industrial consequences" if BSC did not withdraw its closure plans, the TUC went on to urge the Welsh TUC to call off its January 21 general strike.

Instead, suggested the TUC, they should take out court injunctions against BSC management whose announcement of closures might be against the law!

As we go to press it seems likely that under this pressure the January 21 action will be



Joseph

postponed—at least until March 3.

Such a delay would offer the steel union leaders a breathing space in which they will hope to settle the pay dispute and obtain a return to work, with the closures issue still unresolved.

Under these conditions they would have a far better chance of completing the sell-out on jobs, which they have never had any intention of defending.

The very last thing that the union leaders wish to see is an explosion of struggles to general strike proportions, in which the issue placed on the agenda would be the defeat, removal and replacement of the Tory government.

Nor do they wish to find themselves committed to the

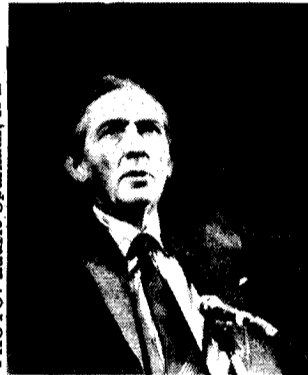


PHOTO: Laurie Sparham, IFL

Murray

defence of jobs—a fight which could only be carried through

Continued page 11



Sheffield steel workers turn away lorry

Stop the war moves Defend the USSR!

President Carter is eagerly seizing the opportunity presented by the Stalinist invasion of Afghanistan to rebuild his shattered electoral image and reinforce US military and diplomatic links with anti-Soviet regimes.

But in Britain, too, the Thatcher government has been quick to exploit the new situation as the basis for a sabre-rattling tour of "affected countries" by Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington, boosting formerly flagging imperialist pacts.

Alongside the overt military measures—the US rearming of the Zia dictatorship in Pakistan; the supply of US military hardware to the Chinese Stalinists; and the extended use of US bases in Turkey—go Carter's Cold War economic sanctions designed to cut food supplies and technological trade with the Soviet Union.

By giving the imperialists a custom-made pretext for such aggressive measures, and by conducting an invasion calculated to alienate the Muslim masses of the Middle East, the Kremlin bureaucracy has therefore opened up increased danger to the Soviet Union.

Imperialism, itself in an acute economic and political crisis, is drawn irresistibly towards the hopes of reconquering the vast potential markets and sources of surplus value in the deformed and degenerated workers' states.

Even prior to the Afghanistan invasion, Carter had embarked upon a massive arms build-up and laid plans for a huge tactical strike force for operations in the Persian Gulf and Middle East.

Now, under cover of opposing "Soviet imperialism" the imperialists will press ahead still faster with these moves.

They will be backed up of course in each country by the most chauvinist elements of the labour and trade union movement. In the US anti-communist dockers' leaders have already blacked Soviet shipping.

In Britain the Labour Party NEC has adopted a motion from Eric Heffer calling for a withdrawal of Soviet troops—a step which could only lead in present conditions to an immediate imperialist takeover in Afghanistan.

A motion for withdrawal has also been passed by the AUEW Executive. But such sentiments are not restricted to social democrats: leading Communist Party members on the NUM Executive, including Mick McGahey also backed a unanimous call for the withdrawal of troops—in line with the policy of the British CP.

The Workers Socialist League, as a Trotskyist party, defends on principle the nationalised property relations of the Soviet Union against imperialist attack.

Condemn invasion

We oppose the imperialist war plans and all the hypocritical propaganda about the invasion from US imperialists who slaughtered millions in Vietnam and Cambodia.

While we condemn the act of invasion, we do not call now for the withdrawal of Soviet troops: this would simply provide an ideal opportunity for imperialism to consolidate new, aggressive forward positions on the very borders of the USSR.

The political overthrow of the Stalinist Kremlin bureaucracy and the struggle for the national rights of the peoples of Afghanistan and within the deformed and degenerated workers states is not a task for imperialist exploiters; it is a revolutionary task for the masses—for which we struggle to build a conscious Trotskyist leadership.

FUND: A SPECIAL £3,000 APPEAL

A £3,000 Special Fund has been launched by the Workers Socialist League at a Special Conference held last weekend.

WSL Executive member John Lister, in launching the fund, detailed the material advances that had been made over the past twelve months as a result of the sacrifice of the WSL members. These achievements included the launching of the Woman Worker paper, the publication of the first issue of the International Discussion Bulletin and the republication of the founding documents of the WSL in a second edition of The Battle for Trotskyism.

The expansion of the work of the WSL both

nationally and internationally would pose an even greater challenge in terms of finding the necessary material resources needed to enable that work to proceed, comrade Lister said.

In particular, the launching at Christmas of the Trotskyist International Liaison Committee and the WSL's commitment to materially assist that Liaison Committee would require extra funds.

At the same time, the WSL was planning to

purchase an A4 printing press in order to enable it to produce leaflets and journals under its own control, and if necessary at short notice.

The response from the comrades present was enthusiastic with £702 either pledged or collected at the meeting.

The fund is the largest ever launched by the WSL and it is planned to raise the fund in two stages, the first half by Easter and the second half by the end of July.

Every possible avenue must be explored to ensure that this fund is raised and the work to which the money is allotted is able to proceed.

Just as important, the regular Socialist Press Monthly Fund must not be allowed to suffer because of the increased sacrifice that will inevitably be demanded of readers and supporters of Socialist Press.

Let's get the new Special Fund off to a really good start.

All donations should be sent to:
Socialist Press Special Fund
31 Dartmouth Park Hill
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