

# Workers Power

25p/10p strikers

Fortnightly paper of the Workers Power group

FILE COPY

## Defend the Newham Seven



(Dennis Doran)

FOLLOWING THE FAILURE of the police to frame the Bradford 12 and the Newham 8 they have again tried to hang a conspiracy charge on a group of Asian youths. This time the case involves the Newham 7.

The case resulted from an incident in Newham last April. Following a series of racial attacks, which have recently been increasing in East London, members of the Asian community took action against the fascists, who were drinking in the Duke of Edinburgh pub. One Asian youth was arrested.

In the following week a further six youths were picked up and charged with conspiracy to commit criminal damage. The cops are obviously trying to set a precedent and make a conspiracy charge stick. This carries a much heavier sentence than simple criminal

damage or causing an affray.

Prior to their committal proceedings all of the youths spent time either in Ashford remand centre or Wormwood Scrubs. The committal proceedings at West Ham Magistrates Court were picketed by a large and vocal group of demonstrators. They were joined by a group from Birmingham who are also defending Kharmij Singh against a racist deportation order, and striking miners. Following the hearing conspiracy charges were dropped against 6 of the youths but one still faces the charge. The others all still face charges of affray and criminal damage. The same sort of support must be organised for the trial at Snaresbrook Crown Court as was seen at the committal case.

DEFEND THE NEWHAM 7!

# Thatcher goes for broke... LET'S BREAK HER!

EVERY TRICK THE Tories have tried has failed to break the miners' strike. They placed their hopes on avoiding power cuts by switching to oil in the power stations and stepping up imports of coal. Now, despite extra costs of £30 million a week the Tories' advisers are beginning to warn of possible fuel shortages by November.

They hoped to dent the miners' morale by engineering a 'return to work'. Thousands of riot police have been trained to herd the scabs through the picket lines. Yet even the same press that gave us 'Silver Birch' and hailed the beginning of the end for Scargill's NUM now confesses that the results have been insignificant.

Most importantly the Tories have tried to keep the miners strike isolated. The days and weeks ahead will test whether the miners can break out of that isolation and turn the words and phrases of the TUC into real action to score a decisive victory over Thatcher.

Thatcher has made it absolutely clear that she will fight to the bitter end to defeat the NUM. She told her toady Jimmy Young, "We can and shall carry on for a very, very long time". She repeated that the government has not budged one inch on the issue of pit closures. "Let me make it completely clear. It doesn't matter how long this strike goes on, we cannot do anything other than close uneconomic pits."

Her Walker has also repeated the government's insistence that they are not prepared to compromise or concede on this question. "This is not something on which you can have an arbitrator."

### WORDS INTO DEEDS

The Tories know that if they are to match these words with deeds they must start to do something about coal stocks at the power stations. The Stock Brokers, Laurie Millbank and Simon and Coates, are warning that coal stocks will be below the critical level of 6 million tons before December. Already the available stocks are unevenly distributed. The Scottish NUM says stocks are now very low at Longannet and Cockerhills. If Walker and Thatcher want to ensure that there are no power cuts they will have to get their hands on the 22 million tons standing at the pit heads.

Twenty two million tons is the equivalent of 687,000 lorry loads. This cannot be moved overnight. The Tories will have to act soon if they are to attempt to start moving that coal. And they know that if they use scab convoys or troops to shift it the entire labour movement will be put to the sharpest test for years.

Standing behind the lorry convoys and the scab herds are the courts. South Wales area has already had its funds sequestered. Derbyshire have been ordered not to expel scabs or discipline them for crossing picket lines. The High Court is poised to declare the entire strike illegal at the put up request of some Yorkshire scabs. Leon

Brittan has been inciting judges to hand out life sentences to picketing miners. The entire law and order machinery of the British state has been mobilised to smash the miners for Thatcher and the Tories.

In Congress House and Transport House the mood is starkly different. The entire weight of the official labour movement is pushing the NUM leaders towards a settlement. After the last round of talks broke down the TUC immediately called on ACAS to come in to the dispute. They arranged for the NCB and NUM to present their case to it. Willis, Buckton and Basnett have set up their own private meeting with the NCB.

While Thatcher fulminates against the 'enemy within' and wages an internal Falklands war these gentlemen are desperate for a settlement that will get the TUC out of the firing line. They see their offers of financial backing for the NUM and motions of support as means of securing a settlement as soon as possible, not as declarations of war against Thatcher. They are for peace at any price - even at the expense of the miners.

Thatcher and MacGregor are fighting to win all out victory over the miners. They will only settle in the miners' favour if they are roundly defeated. The labour movement must organise itself to deliver that defeat and it must do so now.

### NO SECRET DEALS,

### NO SECRET TALKS

Many months ago Arthur Scargill spelt out the demands of the NUM's strike. They included the withdrawal of the closure programme, the four day week, early retirement, a substantial pay increase and an end to the divisive productivity scheme. But the secret



talks with the NCB have centred only on the issue of closures. The break-downs have always been on the issue of defining an exhausted pit.

As the strike enters the winter months the NUM leadership must state unequivocally that it is fighting to secure all the demands of the strike and the reinstatement of every victimised miner. The shroud of secrecy that has surrounded the talks with the NCB and TUC must be torn aside. Miners must know precisely what their leaders are arguing and what the NCB is offering. Stan Crawford of Bevercotes NUM told one left paper, "I would like to see talks held in the open, as they were

during Solidarnosc's negotiations with the Polish government in the Polish shipyards four years ago. Then, the discussion was broadcast to the membership as and when it was happening."

We completely agree with him. The only alternative is that the media and NCB control what thousands of miners know or do not know, about the course of the dispute. Arthur Scargill should openly declare that far from joint complaints with the NCB about media harassment the NUM will now conduct all talks in the open and publicise them themselves.

### FOR WORKERS DEMOCRACY

The much heralded back to work movement has served to boost the picket lines in the threatened areas. In Kent there was a 30% increase after scabs went back at Tilmannstone. Panorama showed that 50% of North Derbyshire strikers are now involved in picket duty. In Yorkshire hundreds of previous stop-at-homes have swelled the lines at Kiveton and Maltby for example. This must be used to solidify and extend the strike.

If Thatcher is to be defeated we need the active involvement of the rank and file miners. It has been a weakness of the dispute to date that the strike has called on the energies of the active picketing minority while the majority have been left to sit the strike out at home. We need regular mass meetings of the strikers to maintain maximum involvement, counter the bosses lies and hold the union's leaders to account.

### HOLD THE COAL STOCKS FORM WORKERS DEFENSE SQUADS

The police invasion of Yorkshire, Kent and Durham villages to herd the scabs is being used as a dress rehearsal for moving the coal stocks. The bosses are openly gloating that the operation has shown that even mass pickets are no match for the trained and armed picket busting squads.

Miners must learn the lessons if the stocks are not to be moved. It is no use leaving it to the power workers to refuse to touch the scab coal. Pickets must be organised, trained and defended if they are to match the police. Every lodge must form its own workers defence squad out of the fittest and bravest young militants. They must ensure that they have adequate protection to stand up to the cudgels and truncheons of Thatcher's cossacks, and are backed up by massive numbers of pickets.

In order to hold the coal stocks and prevent the trickle of scabs the pit heads must be occupied and defended. Decisive action can take the initiative away from the police and NCB and turn every pit head into a rallying point for the strikers and their organised supporters.

Pit head occupations would foil the plans of the pathetic handful of scabs. They should be backed up by disciplinary proceedings against every miner who has worked in this strike. The Durham mechanics have announced the expulsion of three of their members who have worked at Wearmouth. Every

Continued on back page...

INSIDE: Israel

SOUTH AFRICA



But is Labour?

A HISTORY of the LABOUR PARTY

# THE ROAD TO LABOUR REPRESENTATION

THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY, officially formed in 1906, was a late developer. On the continent, mass workers' parties, most under some sort of Marxist leadership, had existed from the 1860s. From the outset, the British Labour Party was steadfastly reformist, geared to gradual reform of the worst abuses of capitalism rather than overthrowing it. Despite the fact that both Marx and Engels spent much of their later lives in Britain, in no major capitalist country except the United States was the influence of Marxism weaker. Not only was Marxism weak but the forces in favour of an independent working class political party were weak too. Why was this?

The root cause for the late development of a working class party in Britain as well as its reformist politics when it was formed, lay in the special nature of 19th century British capitalism.

Around 1850 Britain, the pioneer capitalist nation, entered a period of marked expansion, based primarily on the export of goods to developing capitalist nations such as America. For nearly three decades after 1850, British capitalism was "in the happy position of living in a world in which an expanding market and ever increasing profits seemed to be a law of nature." (A.L.Morton and G. Tate).

But side by side with Britain's economic expansion there developed inside of the British working class a mood of quiescence, even servility towards the ruling class. In contrast to the great revolutionary workers struggles of Chartism in the 1830s and 40s, the decades after 1850 witnessed the disappearance of an independent working class outlook in the field of politics.

There were good material reasons for all this. Quite simply the profits which accrued from Britain's industrial monopoly allowed the bosses to improve the conditions of whole sections of the working class. As Engels noted, English workers "gaily share in the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies."

However while all workers gained some benefit from this monopoly (between 1850-1875 real

wages rose by a third) the lion's share went to the skilled workers, the "labour aristocracy". This "labour aristocracy" made up some 15% of the working class as a whole. Its wages were as much as four times those of unskilled workers. Conscious of its greater earnings and special position at the top of the working class, the labour aristocracy tended to be both socially and politically satisfied with capitalist society.

The labour aristocrats were organised in craft unions, and thus dominated the labour movement as a whole. These craft unions excluded the great mass of unskilled workers. Whilst British capitalism was expanding, the craft union proved to be a rewarding field for class collaboration. In trade union matters the leaders of the craft unions, labour aristocrats to a man, sought to promote industrial harmony and minimise class militancy. The views of William Allen, secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, were typical: "We believe that all strikes are a complete waste of money, not only in relation to the workers but also the employers." (Emphasis added-WP). Class collaboration and class peace necessarily spilled over into the field of politics.

## LIB-LABISM

After a radical phase in the 1860s which led to the formation of the TUC and the Reform League Agitation the union leaders settled for an extension of the franchise which was far short of the universal suffrage. With the passage of the Reform Act of 1867, at most 30% of adult males in urban working class constituencies got the vote. Yet this enfranchisement satisfied the Labour aristocracy for the rest of the century. With the passage of the Trade Union Act of 1871 the unions settled down as a political appendage of Gladstone's Liberal Party.

The Trade Union Congress itself was inevitably impregnated with this Lib-Labism as it was called. In 1874 the first of a generation of trade unionists entered parliament as Liberal MPs. These men, as Frederick Engels pointed out, "ceased to be workers' candidates and turned themselves into bourgeois candidates."

Thus the period 1850-80 was one in which the working class lacked an independent class outlook. The upper strata of the working class, the labour aristocracy, had become bourgeoisified and acted as a conduit for bourgeois ideas into the working class. Indeed, so far had this infection of bourgeois ideas proceeded that Engels was moved to remark that "The English proletariat is becoming more and more bourgeois, so that this most bourgeois of all nations is apparently aiming ultimately at the possession of a bourgeois aristocracy and a bourgeois proletariat as well as a bourgeoisie."

The great mass of the British working class played no role either in trade unionism or in politics. Yet the conditions for this slumber to be broken were maturing. The onset of the Great Depression in 1874 ended the golden high noon of British Capitalism. The Great Depression itself was a direct result of Britain losing its monopoly of world trade. Rival capitalist powers such as America and Germany were beginning to catch up. As Engels had foreseen, the loss of Britain's monopoly position would undermine the hold of the labour aristocracy and its pro bourgeois politics. When this happened, he predicted, there would be "socialism again in England." Although the rise of Imperialism would give the labour aristocracy a new lease of life, something Engels could not have been expected to anticipate, the intensified period of class struggle which followed the Great Depression was to see the revival of British socialism, the spread of trade unionism to the unskilled workers and towards the formation of the Labour Party.

During the Great Depression the working class experienced the highest unemployment levels for forty years. Even the privileged labour aristocracy had come under attack. In one year alone the Amalgamated Society of Engineers had lost 13% of its membership. Taking advantage of changed labour market conditions, employers had ruthlessly intensified exploitation.

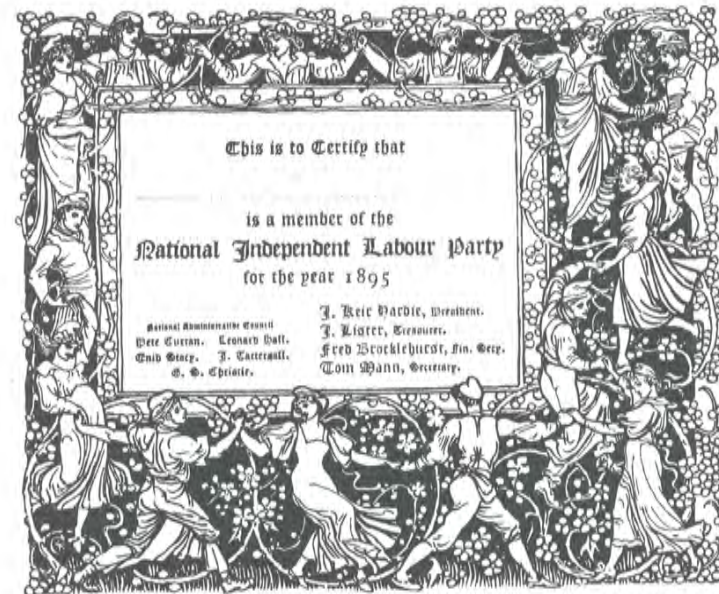
## NEW UNIONISM

A mild economic recovery in the 1880s allowed the bitterness and frustration of the working class to be translated into action. A wave of strikes followed. In 1888 there were 517 strikes involving some 120,000 workers. By the next year this had increased to 1,121 strikes involving 350,000 workers.

Out of this wave of militancy arose the "New Unionism". In contrast to the old exclusive craft unions, the New Unions were large general unions of the unskilled. Between 1888-92 trade union membership doubled to include nearly two million workers. The New Unions tended to be more militant than the old craft unions and would prove

Part one of a History of the Labour Party

by Jon Lewis



ILP membership card, 1895

to be a powerful lever in wrenching apart the alliance between the Liberal Party and the trade unions. However in this period of increased militancy, even the old craft unions were forced to take up a more militant stance.

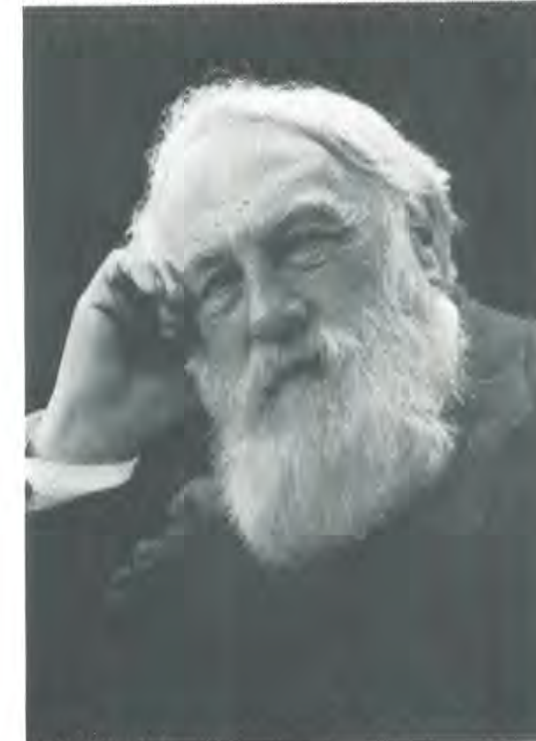
But perhaps the most important consequence of the Great Depression was that it had shown that the capitalist class had become "unable to manage the immense productive system of this country" (Engels) and that a Liberal employer when his profits were squeezed was as bad as any other. Nor were these lessons lost on the British working class. An advanced minority of workers turned to the establishment of socialist organisations.

As early as 1881 Engels, in a series of articles in the *Labour Standard* had been urging the formation of an independent workers party in Britain based on the trade unions: "At the side of, or above, the unions of the special trades, there must spring up a general union, a political organisation of the working class as a whole..."

Engels realised that in Britain it was necessary to take the fight for a workers party into the unions—indeed to get the unions to break with the Liberals and take in hand the fight for a workers party.

Engels hoped that by leading such a struggle revolutionary socialists could win the independent workers' party to the marxist programme. Unfortunately, the first marxist organisations to originate in Britain, the Social Democratic Federation and the Socialist League, proved both unable to understand, and unwilling to implement Engels' tactic.

The Social Democratic Federation (SDF), founded in 1884, had its origins in a grouping of radical workingmen's clubs called the Democratic Federation. The programme of the latter was a mix of old style Chartism and left Liberalism. The



H M Hyndman

man responsible for winning it to socialism was Henry Mayers Hyndman, the "Father of British Marxism". No more curious figure could be imagined for this role.

Hyndman himself was the son of a rich merchant and started his political life as a Tory. He became attracted to marxism after reading *Capital*. Hyndman's understanding of marxism always remained narrowly "economic" and therefore incomplete. He accepted the internal contradictions of capitalist economy led to economic crisis. Sooner or later one of these would lead to a decisive collapse.

In 1889, for example, Hyndman wrote in the SDF's paper *Justice*: "A very, very few years in any case must bring us to another economic crisis. .... That is why Social Democrats should never cease to point out to workers that this very collapse, if they educate themselves and make ready in earnest to make an end to the class war, will enable them to take hold once and for all of the great means and instruments of production and transport...."

Hyndman and the SDF did involve themselves in the unemployed agitation of the 1880s, per-

haps because they saw in this the imminent collapse of capitalism. Yet their greatest weakness lay in their attitude to the trade unions. The SDF was resolutely hostile to them until late in the 1890s.

The 1889 Manifesto of the SDF declared that in the victorious outcome of the class struggle the "trade unions as they now are cannot hope to participate".

At one level this was understandable. The old craft unions continued to be bastions of the pro-Liberal labour aristocracy. However the New Unions were beginning to understand the need for an independent workers party and pressurise the old unions in this direction. The possibilities this opened up for marxists were tremendous. But in turning its back on the trade unions, the very bedrock of working class organisation, the SDF showed itself to be hopelessly sectarian. The SDF's sectarianism was to prove to have important consequences for the formation of the Labour Party.

## PREACHING ON THE SIDELINES

By failing to develop a socialist policy for the trade unions, by failing to take up the struggle for a mass working class party based on and supported by the unions, Hyndman and the SDF left themselves little to do except preach Marxism. To limit oneself to propaganda in the midst of a powerful revival of working class struggle was the height of folly. Hyndman's lectures on Marxist economics and the inevitable collapse of capitalism remained abstract. He turned the SDF into a sect preaching on the sidelines. Worker militants learnt Marxist economics but had to guide themselves when it came to the actual class struggle. As Engels commented the SDF did not know how "to fasten on to the needs of the people."

Yet if the SDF stood aside from the struggle others did not. The SDF's sectarianism opened the spontaneous movement of the working class to deeply opportunist currents.

By the late 1880s there was a powerful movement inside the working class for a party which would carry on in the political sphere the struggle the unions had started. The bitter struggles of the New Unions, such as the Great London Docks Strike of 1889 (incidentally led by SDF member in clear opposition to the party's policy) continued to weaken the hold of Liberal ideas on the working class. Independent labour organisations such as the Bradford Labour Union were starting to spring up all over the proletarian heartlands of Britain. In Lancashire and Yorkshire a bewildering variety of organisations sprang up. The brief "Labour Church Movement" saw working class chapel-goers split away from the hold of Methodism.

## THE I.L.P.

Finally in 1893 the Independent Labour Party was formed. It represented an important advance for the working class and Engels greeted it with approval. He urged Marxists dissatisfied with the sectarianism of the SDF to fight for their politics within the new party. Yet the number of Marxists in Britain who did not owe allegiance to the SDF were tiny and unable to influence the direction of the ILP. Consequently the ILP bore the political imprint of its founder and leader, Keir Hardie.

Hardie, a miner and then a Miners Agent, produced a paper *The Miner* in the struggles of the 1880s. In 1889 he changed its name to the *Labour Leader* and helped found a Scottish Labour Party. The sole consistent thread of Hardie's politics was the need for a separate Parliamentary Party representing Labour. He never fully understood or sympathised with Marxism. His, and the ILP's outlook was summed up in the statement: "The ILP aims at the creation of a Co-operative Commonwealth founded on the socialisation of land and capital. Its methods of realising its objects are to educate the community in the principles of socialism and to secure the return to Parliament and to all elected bodies of members representative of its principles."

Hardie remained throughout his life besotted with the idea that parliamentary representation was the method par excellence of achieving Socialism. To this end Hardie was to tailor his socialist principles, such as they were. In particular, he was willing to adapt to the Lib-Lab union leaders and to the non-conformist religious back-



J Keir Hardie

# Socialist Organiser and the General Strike

MARTIN Thomas, one of the architects of the "Socialist Organiser Alliance" told his readers that "The function of Marxist slogans should be to enlighten, to clarify and to make more precise" (May 10th). If he added "to organise" we would not disagree with him. But during the miners' strike, the *Socialist Organiser* has heaped confusion on confusion in raising - and failing to raise - the General Strike slogan.

Before the present strike, the Tories' general election victory was a signal to the ruling class for a fresh offensive in the war to restore profits at workers' expense. Neil Kinnock had barely finished his first speech when the bosses' activated their battery of anti-union laws against the NGA.

SO would surely agree that all the other prongs of their attack - privatisation, closures, rate-capping - are underpinned by these laws. Every aspect of trade union action in every strike is now open to attack from the courts.

To defeat this legal onslaught workers need to respond on a class-wide basis. Sectional victories that leave the anti-union laws intact give the bosses another chance to use them in battles against other sections. For this reason an indefinite general strike against the anti-union laws is essential if they are to be smashed.

## SLOGAN RECANTED

This too was recognised by the SO's editors. At the time of the attack on the NGA, SO saw the need for "Massive generalised strike action - a general strike in solidarity with the NGA and against the legislation and the government that brought it in" (November 24th). But in an early example of the "clarity" they could bring to the slogan they recanted in the same breath: "Yet in 1983 the call for an all out general strike - no matter how correct and necessary - seems so wildly unrealistic that we have not been able to use it for the front page headline."

The General Strike was correct, necessary and wildly unrealistic! This timidity on the part of the comrades doubtless reflects the pressure of uncertainty and hesitancy which infects the militant minority after a period of retreat. While we need to take account of this mood, our job, as revolutionary communists, is to overcome it by arming the militants with a programme for action. SO avoids this task.

In its attempt to bridge the gap between necessity and reality, SO ends up dumping its own programme. Instead it took up the call for a 24 hour general strike. This is no more than a demand for a protest. It would do very little, as the GCHQ "day of action" showed, to reverse the Tories' plans. Under the circumstances it was a thoroughly insufficient demand. In mitigation, the Socialist Organiser Alliance pleaded that the call was a preparation for an indefinite general strike. Yet their

failure to argue for that higher objective hardly helped to put it on the agenda. The Alliance was crossing the bridge in the wrong direction!

Not content with this degree of "precision", the Socialist Organiser Alliance simultaneously raised the demand on the TUC to "organise for a general strike"! Now we agree that the leaders of our movement should be put on the spot by placing demands on them. But that means making sure our calls on them are calls for action. Moreover it needs to be the action necessary for the task in hand. We have established the necessity for an indefinite general strike. Our call on the leaders should be backed up by attempts to spread strikes already taking place and the building of cross union rank and file action committees to control the strike and hold the leaders to account. To call on the TUC leaders to "organise" a general strike does not come near to putting them on the spot. The reverse is true - it lets them off the hook. They can claim that they are "organising" and tell the rank and file to leave it to them. They can use the excuse of "organising" a general strike to delay calling one. They can, behind the smokescreen of "organising" delay a general strike and derail existing sectional struggles.

The demand on the leaders to prepare or organise for a general strike turns out to be dangerous and, by postponing the argument for action necessary now, cowardly. Once again the Socialist Organiser Alliance's most striking characteristic is their timidity.

If the movement was not ready for the necessary action in late 1983, during the NGA strike, would it be judged ready by the sages in SO in the midst of the 1984 miners' strike?

In the early days of the strike clearly not. On March 28th the recipe remained "A one day all-out stoppage should be called immediately...." and "a campaign on these lines could start developing the perspective of an all out general strike."

## TIDE TURNING

By April 26th however they register that the call to organise for the general strike "has not met a very good response". A week later they sense the tide turning to "open up possibilities for extended general strike action...". Indeed it could only be a matter of time before the slogan "General Strike" would hit the front page headline in defiance of November's editorial!

On June 28th they duly obliged. John O'Mahoney explained. "This movement is capable of a general strike." And "We need a general strike right now." What had changed? At the battle of Orgreave the police had kept coke moving but "The press said Benn had called for a general strike. In effect he had." The general strike was now not only correct and necessary but also courtesy of Mr. Benn's

speech at a meeting in East London, realistic! After years submerged in the Bennite milieu it was natural that the Socialist Organiser Alliance should take their cue from the master. Benn had said "No one need wait for permission to begin". For Socialist Organiser that warning came too late.

In the minds of O'Mahoney and friends the possibility of a general strike must have been receding during August. Because at the very moment when it was essential to raise the demand on the leaders, at the TUC conference where they are most visible to whole sections of militants, SO dropped the slogan in favour of the vacuous, "Don't Rat, Fight". Of course the TUC responded with fake unanimity "We will fight". If *Socialist Organiser* had tailed Benn's advance to the general strike slogan, they tailed Scargill's retreat from it.

Their treatment of the slogan during the strike to date underlies the method demonstrated over the NGA. Rather than argue for what is necessary, they argue for what they believe to be possible. Marxists call this method "opportunism". Our starting point is a struggle for what is necessary, even against the odds. What is then possible is determined by the extent of that struggle not by the pre-ordained assessments of opportunists.

## ADAPT AGITATION

Of course only a fool would argue that there had been no change in the mood of militants over the months. While we revolutionaries adapt our agitation to such changes, we will not change our strategic line. The Tories still need their union laws and we still need a General Strike to smash them and secure victory for the miners.

But if *Socialist Organiser's* misuse of the slogan has consistently allowed the trade union leaders off the hook, there is another aspect of their use of the slogan which is fraught with peril for the working class.

In the same May 10th article, Martin Thomas launches into a polemic against the slogan "General strike to kick out the Tories." He correctly points out that such a slogan only says what we are against, not what we are for. He points out too that the logic of such a slogan is for a general election. But then he adds: "An actual general strike will start around an immediate limited issue or group of issues. The job of socialists is then to fight to develop the movement through workers' self organisation, workers' councils, working class administration of essential services and a workers' government."

The question Thomas leaves unanswered is what sort of workers' government and by what means it is to be brought into existence. On other occasions SO has been more explicit. A workers' government will be "a Labour government account-

**Socialist ORGANISER**

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## ORGANISE FOR A GENERAL STRIKE!

**Scargill says: bring rail out!**

**AUEW calls for TUC day of action**

Page 2: In 7. Miners strike; Page 3: Stop the general election; Page 4: Fight for a general strike; Page 5: Scargill; Page 6: Labour Party; Page 7: Strike against the Tories; Page 8: Labour Party; Page 9: Miners' Conference; Page 10: International; Page 11: King George; Page 12: C. J. G. (C. J. G.); Page 13: C. J. G.; Page 14: International reports

table to the movement" (Editorial in SO April 14th). This is because "the Labour Party is the only conceivable immediate alternative to the Tories." (Ibid.) Indeed an article called "Forward to a General Strike" by Alastair Jamison in SO argues that: "A Labour Government under Genghis Khan would be better than what we've got now." (June 21st). While we do not know Khan's line on pit closures, we do know the Labour Party's - it closed more pits during its last period in office than the Tories have so far managed to close.

Dressing a Labour government in the mantle of a "Workers' Government" is a radical literary compensation for SO's opportunist position. To suggest that because Labour is currently the only electoral alternative to the Tories and therefore must come into office through a general strike is to abandon all the possibilities lodged in such a strike. Once again SO end up imposing pre-ordained restrictions in the name of the "possible". A general strike opens up new possibilities. It raises the whole working class into struggle. It faces them squarely with the question of who will rule society. It opens up the prospect of self-organisation through creation of councils of action in every locality. If revolutionaries can build on these developments then Labour need not be the only alternative. The general strike could move forward towards the overthrow of capitalism, through an armed insurrection, and the establishment of workers' power. By excluding such a possibility SO are simply justifying their refusal to fight for a revolutionary outcome of a general strike. Despite their protests they are sanctioning an electoral outcome and the establishment of a Labour government. This explains why, under the headline "Kick the Tories Out", SO uncritically quote Scargill's promise that "we will pave the way for a general strike to elect a Labour Government..." (May 17th)

In the past we have criticised the Socialist Organiser Alliance for their near exclusive Labour Party orientation. In the miners' strike their members have, in many places, switched their orientation to the workers in struggle. However the shift in practical work is not matched by a shift in political perspective. The SO's fluctuating use of the general strike slogan underlines the fact that politically they continue to tailor their politics, subordinate their "Trotskyism" and choose their slogans to suit their hoped-for left reformist allies. ■

by Dave Jenkins

ground of the emerging Labour Movement of Northern England. This led him to denounce the idea of class struggle and to argue that socialism was "practical Christianity".

"The propaganda of class hatred is not one which can ever take root in this country. Man-kind in the main is not moved by hatred but by love of what is right." Clearly, this "ethical" socialism, the means of righting wrongs, owes everything to Methodism and nothing to Marxism. Moreover it leads right back to subservience to the interests of the bosses. It makes Labour's independence purely organisational. Since Hardie's "socialism" was to be achieved by the steady accumulation of reforms, strictly on the parliamentary road, this allowed for endless compromises with the Liberals.

Since the ILP had little to guide it getting MPs elected to Parliament except a distant prospect of socialism sometime in the future, it soon found itself dependent for its ideas and programme on the middle class socialists of the Fabian Society.

## THE FABIANS

The Fabian Society had been formed in the same year as the SDF - 1884. Its leading lights Sidney and Beatrice Webb, Bernard Shaw and a number of other self-consciously middle-class intellectuals. They early on rejected Marxism and the whole conception of class struggle. Its outlook is well summed up in a statement of policy issued in 1896: "The Fabian Society is perfectly constitutional in its attitude; and its methods are those usual in political life in England....It sympathises with the ordinary citizens desire for gradual, peaceful changes as against revolutionary conflict with the army and police, and martyrdom. It recognises the fact that Social Democracy is not the whole of the working class programme and that every separate measure towards the socialisation of industry will have to compete for precedence with numbers of other reforms. It therefore does



Sydney Webb

not believe that the moment will ever come when the whole of socialism will be staked on the outcome of a single General Election or a single Bill in the House of Commons as between the proletariat on one side and the proprietariat on the other. Each instalment of Social Democracy will only be a measure among other measures...."

Since socialism would come on the instalment plan and since no class, let alone the "crude and ignorant" workers would bring it about, the Fabians logically opposed the formation of a separate Labour Party. Their policy was that of permeating the existing parties - Liberals and Tories with socialist ideas or rather with projects for socialist measures. Thus until 1906 they worked on the London County Council with the Liberals in a "progressive Party". At every step the working class took towards political independence the Fabians were to be found urging the working class not to do it.

In this they did not succeed. But they did influence the content of the ILP's politics. And it was the ILP that put its stamp on the Labour Party from the outset.

## TYPICALLY SECTARIAN

Yet there was nothing inevitable in this. If the SDF had implemented Engels' tactic, marxists could have won the political leadership of the ILP. But instead in typical sectarian fashion, the SDF refused to participate in the formation of the ILP.

Proving at least consistent, the SDF decided to display its sectarianism at an even more critical point in British working class history. An economic slump in the 1890s furnished the conditions for a renewed capitalist offensive that was to culminate in the Taff Vale Case of 1901. In the space of a few years, all the legislation protecting trade unions the bosses had so magnanimously handed out in the period of capitalist prosperity, were wiped out. Since the Liberal Party was impotent to stop this attack, hardly surprising given that its backbone was the very employers leading the offensive, the trade union leaders reluctantly moved to form an independent workers' party. The 1899 TUC narrowly passed a resolution to convene a special congress "to devise ways and means for the securing of an increased number

of Labour members in the next parliament."

A year later this special congress, the Labour Representation Committee, was convened and over 250,000 trade unionists were affiliated to it. At the Conference held in London on 27th and 28th February 1900 the SDF proposed a resolution that the "representatives of the working class movement in the House of Commons shall form there a distinct party based on the recognition of the class war and having for its ultimate object the socialisation of the means of production, distribution and exchange."

The ILP delegates opposed this with a resolution "in favour of establishing a distinct Labour Group in Parliament who shall have their own views and agree upon their policy, which must embrace a readiness to co-operate with any party which, for the time being, may be engaged in promoting legislation in the direct interest of Labour."

The ILP motion was carried by 53 votes to 39. The chronic parliamentarianism of the ILP's position is obvious with its nod in the direction of the Liberals. "Independence" would be purely organisational. The SDF's resolution was much more principled and at least they sought to win the Labour Party to socialism. The ILP delegates voted as they were to do up to the First World War - against any commitment of the Labour Party to socialism. The SDF's mistake was their sectarianism and tendency to give ultimatums to the mass organisations of the working class. A year on from this conference they presented the same resolution and when it was again rejected they walked out. This exit occurred just at the point that the Labour Party was about to "take off" in terms of affiliations to it by the unions. Once again the SDF was scolded from the arena of class struggle just when it was needed. ■

In the next part of the series we will look at the formation of the Labour Party's politics and organisation from 1900 to the adoption of Clause IV in 1918.

# LABOUR'S RACIST RECORD

TRADITIONALLY MOST BLACK voters in Britain vote Labour. Labour prides itself on being the party of racial equality. Many Labour rank and file activists would go further and claim Labour as the anti-racist party. This image explains why 80% of the black vote goes to Labour. It is a view shared by many in the black communities, both Afro-Caribbean and Asian.

However the reality of Labour's record belies that view and betrays that support. Not only have Labour governments carried out thoroughly racist policies, but black people have been consistently underrepresented at every level of the party. The present campaign for black sections in the party has been greeted by the leadership with outright hostility.

When this issue is debated, and all too likely defeated, at the Blackpool conference in October, Kinnock, Hattersley and Kaufman will have carried on a dishonourable tradition.

Like Wilson and Callaghan before them, they see Labour's racist policies on immigration as a necessary part of their electoral wares. Potential voters hold racist views on this subject and have to be accommodated. An effective, organised black pressure group within the party might make it impossible for Labour to pursue its immigration policies and garner in the black vote at the same time. Moreover Kinnock and Hattersley realise that if Labour's black supporters found their full strength a further blow would be struck to the conservative forces' domination within the party.

While in opposition Labour has always offered black people promises to do away with discrimination through legislation. In the 1960s they set up the Race Relations Board (RRB) to promote "racial harmony". In the 1970s, after the virulent outburst of racism spearheaded by Enoch Powell, Labour set up the Commission for Racial Equality. Like the RRB this body signally failed to improve the lot of black people. Indeed far from moving to equality blacks suffered increased social discrimination as unemployment soared. By the end of Labour's first fifteen months in office, unemployment had risen since a starting point in 1973 by 65% for the whole population and 156% for black people. The Counter Information Services reported that under Labour: "In many urban areas at least 60% of black youth are without work."

As Labour's social contract drove down wages and drove up unemployment, the backward elements amongst white workers, began to blame black people for the crisis. In this atmosphere the fascist National Front, selling itself as the racist party, made big gains. Vicious physical attacks became commonplace in the inner city areas where



Andrew Ward (Report)

Coventry, 1981: anti-fascist demonstration

the racists' agitation was most intense. They claimed the lives of a number of victims. The NF's provocative marches, their ability to expose the total impotence of the race relations legislation all went unchallenged by the Labour Government.

Indeed the police themselves, steeped in racism and used to harassing young blacks on the streets, were given the go-ahead to crack down on those who were opposing the fascists. In August 1977 the fascists staged a demo in Lewisham against "black muggers." The fascist riff-raff took a beating from the anti-fascists thanks to the fact that local black people joined the counter-demonstration en masse.

Labour Home Secretary Merlyn Rees rushed to the aid of...the police! The riot shields, high speed vans, flying wedges and so on - now familiar to every picketing miner - were tested out at Lewisham. It was the first occasion the riot shield had been used in Britain. It was of course regularly used in Northern Ireland.

In 1979, again with Merlyn Rees' approval, the SPG were sent in to defend the fascists' meeting in Southall the heart of London's Asian community. The bloody handiwork of these goon-squads left Blair Peach, an anti-fascist, dead. He was bludgeoned to death by an SPG officer using an "unauthorised weapon". Merlyn Rees trenchantly excused these terror tactics against anti-racists.

Labour's response to the Tory and Fascist raising of the bogey of black immigration was to attempt to pre-empt them by offering a milder version of immigration control themselves. Thus the thoroughly racist notion of a "black immi-



Lewisham, 1977: Police defended the Front, Labour defended the Police

grant problem" was made respectable within the Labour Movement. The fascist and Tory racists like Powell were able to stampede Labour into one racist measure after another.

In 1962 the Tories instituted the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, aimed at limiting "coloured" immigration. Despite denouncing this at the time, within two years Harold Wilson was himself defending and indeed extending the Act. In the 1964 election a Tory candidate, Peter Griffiths, won the Smethwick constituency with the principal slogan "If you want a nigger neighbour Vote Labour."

His success panicked Wilson who unilaterally reversed the then party policy (opposition to all immigration control) to bring in tighter restrictions. Wilson and Peter Shore had, in fact, carried out this policy reversal prior to the election in an insert in the 1964 Manifesto. It read: "Labour accepts that the number of immigrants entering the United Kingdom must be limited.....a Labour Government will retain immigration control."

Sure enough in August 1965 the Wilson government renewed the 1962 Act and added a rule explicitly restricting "coloured immigration". In 1968 a hysterical campaign by the yellow press warned of an "uncontrolled flood of Asian immigrants from Kenya", (this from the supposedly "Labour" *Daily Mirror*). The campaign easily panicked Labour into the 1968 Kenyan Asian Act. It rushed through parliament in one week this act by Home Secretary James Callaghan. This act barred most of the Asians, who held British passports, via a work related voucher system. It left 150,000 Asians stateless for reasons Wilson laughably claimed were not "racial" but "geographical"

## RACISM GROWS WITH FEEDING

The 1968 legislation did not satiate the racists. Far from it: racism grows with feeding. Powell called for more. Heath added his call for an end to all primary immigration from "New Commonwealth" (ie. black) countries. Dockers and meat porters in London struck and marched in support of Powell. Callaghan did his best to oblige by further adjusting the rules in 1969 to debar New Commonwealth citizens from entering Britain to marry fiancées and settle, and stipulating that entry certificates would be required from anyone entering. Eventually the Tories, in 1971, finished the job off with an Act in that year stopping all primary immigration.

The Labour government of 1974-9 took up where Wilson had earlier left off. Despite a Labour Party conference decision to repeal the 1971 Act, the government did nothing of the sort. Home Secretary Rees admitted on television that the laws were designed with the specific purpose of keeping black people out and that they would be toughened not repealed. Virginity tests were carried out on women immigrants, humiliating them and degrading them. The Tories' Nationality Act, creating first and second class citizenship on the basis of nationality, was pioneered by a 1976 Labour Green paper. Even Foot got into the act issuing a Department of Employment memorandum stating that work permits for blacks should not be renewed if a white worker became available for the job.

At the same time Labour stepped up the use of the Illegal Immigrants Intelligence Unit. This police body carried out so-called "passport raids" on black peoples' homes. Between 1975 and 1977 it had taken 3,148 black people into custody. It operated as one more means of intimidating Britain's black population, one more means of trying to make them feel insecure and unwelcome.

When pressed, Labour's leaders reply that their record is not racist and that immigration laws are common-sense. They plead about the need, in any country, to control the number of people, black or white, coming into the country. In other words, these leaders admit to playing the numbers game. They concede that at times of high unem-

ployment it is necessary to keep out foreigners, specifically black people, for fear that they will take "our jobs". They concede the racist myth that unemployment, bad housing and all other social ills are partially to blame on the numbers of black people here.

This myth can be easily exposed as nonsense. Its perpetrators in the Labour leadership ought to be pilloried for spreading it. Black people are the principal victims of unemployment not its cause. They were encouraged to come to Britain to fill vacancies that, during the boom, most white workers did not want. For instance of the West Indians in London in 1958-9, 55% had to take on jobs that were well below their qualifications (See the *Socialist Challenge to Racism* p.7). This was repeated the length and breadth of the country. Then when public services were cut and factories closed it was these "unskilled" black people who found themselves first onto the dole. Thus unemployment is always higher for black people.

The equation of the number of unemployed with the number of black people leads directly to the "send them back" argument. Just suppose black people did return "home" - would that result in the NCB keeping open "uneconomic pits", would it mean that BL would reopen its plants at Speke and Bathgate, or the re-opening of the steel plants that have been closed down by Ian MacGregor. Obviously not. These plants have

been closed for one simple reason - they are not profitable enough for the bosses.

Of course the bosses always blame the labour force for the crisis of their system. Too high wages were to blame. There is a surplus of labour. The unemployed should "get on their bikes" following Tebbit's advice and move. Black workers who have "invested" all their working lives in Britain are encouraged to get on their boat by the racists. Always it must be the people who must fit in with the needs of the profit system. Racism divides the black and white victims of this system. White workers infected with this poison are diverted from settling accounts with their own tormentors into attacking their fellow sufferers. No wonder the boss laughs all the way to the bank!

## COMPLETE & UTTER OPPOSITION

Immigration laws are part and parcel of the official racism of British society. They give state approval to the "problem" and arm the immigration officials, judges and police with weapons to harass and intimidate the black communities. The only principled policy is complete and utter opposition to these laws which divide and weaken our fight back against unemployment.

In the Labour Party the fight to enforce party policy on the repeal of the immigration laws must be stepped up. The formation of black sections could play a role in that fight and in the struggle to commit Labour to active anti-racism. But they are only a form of organisation - open to bureaucratic control, reformist leadership and manipulation by careerists. The mere organisation of black sections then, is no panacea. If they are to be prevented from simply becoming a ladder to leadership for careerists they must be won to fighting policies. They must link up with other sections of the Labour movement, embattled unions like the NUM for example. They must campaign against all racist laws and the inhuman deportation campaign currently being waged by the Tories. On unemployment, police harassment, racism within the Labour movement, black sections must wage vigorous and active campaigns.

If they are built on this model then black sections can be turned into effective weapons against racism. If they are not, in order to get them legitimised by the party a bureaucratic deal is done with Kinnock and Hattersley, then they will be condemned to passivity. They will be of no use to the black workers and youth in Britain. Militants must ensure that this is not allowed to happen.■

by Laura Williams

Staying Power: the history of black people in Britain reviewed by Jon Lewis

YOU WOULD NOT know it from the history text books, but black people have been living in Britain for hundreds of years. Racism has done a lot to keep them "hidden from (written) history". While the exploits of Mr Livingstone in "darkest Africa" are known to all British schoolchildren, few learn about the doings of black radicals in all-white Britain. Peter Fryer's book *Staying Power*, by excavating the history of blacks in Britain is an attempt to remedy this situation.

Drawing upon a wide range of historical sources Fryer paints a detailed picture of the life of blacks in this country from the third century AD, since as Fryer says, "There were Africans in Britain before the English came here!" These Africans were part of the Roman army of occupation which withdrew from Britain at the end of the fourth century. An unbroken black presence in Britain stretches back nearly 500 years, with the first black British born in around 1505. Most of the book is concerned with exploring this presence up to 1948, and for the period thereafter it offers only the barest historical outline.

Why the ruling class and their professional miseducators who write history should need to suppress the history of blacks in this country becomes obvious on reading *Staying Power*. As Peter Fryer shows, blacks here have always actively "asserted their humanity, dignity and individuality in the teeth of racist beliefs and practices". Fryer's book is above all a testament to four centuries of black resistance to racial oppression. The riots of 1981 are only the culmination point in a history of resistance that began with runaway slaves in the seventeenth century.

One of the most persistent myths propagated by the ruling class concerns a certain William Wilberforce who, outraged by the inhumanity of slavery and fired by Christian compassion and a British sense of justice, campaigned successfully to end slavery. Last year, at a commemorative service held to mark the 150th anniversary of Wilberforce's death, Margaret Thatcher said as much. Such a myth may be important in perpetuating the notion of a 'free and just' society, but as Fryer shows there is not a grain of truth in it.

Most of the blacks who came to this country

## A PROUD

in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did so as slaves, and worked as 'servants'. Indeed it became all the rage amongst the rich to have a black servant. And it was these black servants who freed themselves. They did this not only by individual acts of resistance but also by collectively demanding wages, which signified 'free' status.

The mainstays of the abolitionist campaign, far from being Good Christian Gentlemen like Wilberforce, were the lower class artisans, precursors of the modern working class in whose ranks black radicals like Equiano and Sancho played a prominent role. Some taste of radical opposition to slavery comes from Fryer's account of a meeting held by Sheffield campaigners in 1794, attended by thousands of artisan radicals. A unanimous resolution passed at this meeting called for the abolition of slavery and the slave trade, for nothing less would avenge "the ages of wrong done to our Negro Brethren". As Fryer says, "The unity in struggle of black and white working peoples found practical expression on the streets of British provincial centres in the 1790s".

The question which remains of course is why did this unity between black and white working class people remain the exception and not the rule. By the early twentieth century anti-racist traditions in the working class were all but dead. The year 1919 saw full scale race riots against blacks in Cardiff and Liverpool. Despite his excellent historical research Fryer does not come up with a correct answer to this question. Racism was fostered as a part of popular culture from the 1880s onwards. As Britain and the other imperialist powers divided up Africa and Asia they justified their actions in seizing large parts of the globe from 'the natives' by claims that the 'white man' was naturally superior, ordained to rule etc. This racism had a double use in that, with the waves of immigration from less capitalistically developed countries it was possible to divert British workers' indignation against their own terrible conditions and exploitation into hostility to the immigrants. In the nineteenth

# IMPERIAL TYPEWRITERS FIGHTING RACISM IN THE UNIONS

TEN YEARS AGO five hundred Asian workers went on strike at the Imperial Typewriters factory in Leicester. For thirteen weeks these workers fought a courageous battle. Their enemies were legion - the management, racist whites in the workforce and union and the then strong and vocal Leicester branch of the National Front (NF).

The story of this strike holds lessons for militants today. The issue of racism and how to fight it within and outside the labour movement is still a vital one. The current struggle at Kewals in Birmingham by Asian workers shows this. The demands and needs of black workers are still being downplayed by the leaders of the unions and Labour Party. The Imperial Typewriters strike was a milestone in the struggle to overcome this indifference to racism.

The strike took place at a time when the poisonous fumes of racism were spreading. British capitalism had been hit by a major economic crisis and scapegoats were in demand. In fact the 1.5 million black people living in Britain constituted only 2% of the population. Of these over a third had been born in Britain. The 1962, 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts had reduced immigration to a trickle. Yet this tiny minority were, because of their colour, being blamed by Enoch Powell and the fascists openly, Tory and Labour leaders more subtly, for all of the country's social ills.

The TUC was, as on most issues, woefully complacent. While it called for the repeal of the 1971 Immigration Act it organised no union opposition, no demonstrations, protest campaigns, nothing against the Act. The Labour Party itself went into the 1974 election without any mention of the 1971 Immigration Act. Nor was there any announcement by the Party of any plans to repeal the Act.

Not surprisingly this period saw the growth of the NF. In particular in Leicester where in the February election they polled 9,000 votes. They fielded 54 candidates in February and 90 in October, guaranteeing their right to radio and TV time to present their racist policies. Kevin Gately was killed by the police during a counter-demonstration to the NF on June 15th at Red Lion Square where they were protesting against the supposed "amnesty for illegal immigrants".

Black workers were, in fact, not the cause of unemployment or low wages, they were victims of these evils. They were, when lucky enough to be employed, concentrated in sweatshops, badly organised and low paying factories, or working at the low paid end of the public sector. Within factories black workers tended to be discriminated against by management. Given the absence of

any positive campaigning by the unions the management, unfortunately, often found allies amongst the white section of the workforce. Imperial Typewriters at Leicester was typical in this respect.

There were 1,600 workers, 1,100 of whom were Asian. There were no black supervisors and only one Asian shop steward. Workers were on a piece-work system, with women receiving a basic rate of £18 per week and men £25 per week. In addition they were supposed to receive bonus rates. Asian workers were told that they had a daily target of 200 machines. This they rightly believed was higher than the quotas allocated to white workers. The union, the TGWU, refused to take up their grievances. Yet it was subsequently found during the early days of the strike that an agreement made between management and the TGWU in 1972 had set the bonuses on 168 machines per day. Heaped on top of these grievances were the many petty restrictions such as having to ask permission to go to the toilet.

On May 1st 1974 39 Asian workers, determined to fight the regime of racist tyranny, walked out of Section 61. Twenty seven men and twelve women struck. Within days, after the discovery of the extent of the quotas fiddle (they had been conned out of £4 per week for nearly 2 years) 500 other workers joined the strike. Production was reduced to 50% of normal. By the end of May very few typewriters were coming off the lines at all.

## WHOSE CONSPIRACY?

In the face of this revolt the TGWU revealed, so to speak, its true colours. It not only refused to make the strike official but actively discouraged white workers from joining the strike. Even the local MP Tom Bradley (Labour) was called in to urge them to return work and adopt the "proper procedure". George Bromley (the local TGWU union negotiator) spent his time whipping up racism. He claimed that the strike was being run by outside agitators and Chinese Communist money, and that the attacks on him and Weaver, (the local convenor) were an attack on the whole TGWU. Bromley was hoping to alienate potential support from other trades unions and also split the Asian community with a Maoist red scare. In fact he argued that the whole dispute was part of a wider conspiracy covering other local factories like Dunlop Palmer and Walker Crisps. "We know where the problems will occur, and know which factories it will occur in. We know who is going to lead it, and we also know what propaganda is going to be put out. There are certain people

The problem with this analysis is that it does not explain why racism survived the abolition of slavery. Fryer detaches racist ideology from the economic conditions which support and sustain it. "Long after the material conditions that originally gave rise to racist ideology had disappeared, these dead ideas went on gripping the minds of the living". This is seriously and dangerously wrong. How can racism be said to be a 'dead idea' in a country in which in nearly every major city racist attacks are on the increase.

What Fryer leaves us with is a racist ideology developed by the plantocracy (the class of sugar planters and slave merchants that dominated the English Caribbean colonies) in the seventeenth century, which has floated unchanged over the subsequent 300 years. This fails not only to account for changes in the incidence and nature of racism, but its very continuation.

Furthermore, if racism is held to be a floating and independent set of ideas, there can be no necessity for the overthrow of capitalism as the precondition for its final destruction. According to this analysis it must follow that the position of blacks as a reserve army of labour and scapegoats for capitalist economic crisis, and the competitive relation of black and white workers for the scarce jobs and resources that are the everyday reality of the capitalist system, hold no bearing on the continued existence of racism. Whatever Fryer's personal views, the danger of this analysis is that it does not offer black and white working class unity as the crucial weapon to defeat racism. It is a view that risks legitimising the arguments of some black nationalists that the struggle to defeat racism requires a struggle between races, instead of one between classes.

Despite these criticisms, *Staying Power* is a remarkable book and one that should be read by all socialists. For amassing the information contained in this book (including some 200 pages of footnotes) Peter Fryer is owed a debt of thanks. More importantly, the book shows blacks who are fighting racial oppression today that not only do they have a history here, but that it is one to be justifiably proud of and drawn upon in the struggles ahead. For black and white alike it is an encyclopaedia of anti-racist arguments. □

Peter Fryer *Staying Power: the history of black people in Britain* Pluto Press 1984 £9.95 (pbk)



Imperial Typewriters' strikers on the march

who do not want a settlement - unscrupulous people who do not want industrial peace."

He argued that the strike was not made official because only a fraction of the workers were on strike. A branch meeting was never called to discuss the issue because Bromley believed that a lot of the people would not turn up because 'they would have been told not to turn up'. Then he argued, "You would have a situation of 400 instructing that 1,200 had to come out whether they wanted to or not".

As the strike began to bite Weaver constantly blocked any attempt by management to organise talks. He refused to recognise the strike committee representatives Khetani and Patel. This, he claimed, was due to neither of them having the right to be shop-stewards because of a local TGWU ruling, which only allowed members of two years standing to be elected as shop-stewards.

The local Trades Council likewise refused to support the dispute. The strikers were heavily reliant on money received from local factories with a large Asian workforce.

The strikers were demanding: the backdating of their bonus to January 1973; an end to the use of racialism by Management to divide workers; democratic elections in the trade union.

Management's response was swift. They issued notice to the original 39 that if they did not return to work they would all be sacked. Seventy five of the strikers were subsequently sacked, but the workers refused to accept their cards and instead sent them back. This action by the bosses merely strengthened their resolve.

With the active involvement of the majority of the strikers at daily mass meetings and with 50 - 200 workers constantly manning the picket line the strikers' ranks were made solid. There was also full and active involvement of the women strikers who raised their own demands for equal pay. They rejected the intervention of the Race Relations Board as a 'toothless bulldog'. They set about organising a national solidarity committee. Many strikers travelled around the country speaking at meetings and attending picket lines of other disputes in Nottingham, Leeds, and London as well as organising 3 national rallies in Leicester. When morale was low (particularly during the 2 week holiday period) they held a couple of concerts and organised day trips to Skegness.

Two hundred strikers lobbied Transport House in London but instead of making the strike official the national leadership opted for an enquiry. Although this was carried out in June, it was not published until October - long after the strikers had been forced to return to work.

The strikers had little reason to have confidence in the TGWU. Over the previous two years the union had sold out on a succession of strikes from Malmic Lace, E E Jaffe, Jones Stroun, British Celanese and Harwood Cash in 1973 through to Perivale Gutterman and Coventry Art Castings in early 1974. Sadly, Imperial Typewriters was eventually added to this list.

The key factor in the eventual weakening of the strike was its isolation. The role of the TGWU and its refusal to make the strike official was a decisive blow. The failure to extend the strike pushed the strikers into seeking a damage-limitation compromise. They agreed to return to work purely on the basis of a "no victimisations" deal. However, instead of resolving the dispute this proposal provoked a racist backlash from the largely white scab force.

The convenor, Weaver, threatened a walk-out if all the strikers were taken back. The TGWU sent in a full-timer from Nottingham, Reg Harris, to try and sort things out. Eventually, he proposed a deal which allowed all the strikers to return to work while leaving outstanding matters such as bonus negotiations, shop floor democracy and internal racism to a later date. The deal was accepted by the strikers who returned to work on Monday 22nd July.

As threatened, the return to work was greeted by a walk-out of 500 white and a few Asian and West Indian workers who had not been on strike. The day after 300 of them assembled in the Trades Hall where they arrived at a decision not to cooperate with a list of 25 people who they claimed were the 'trouble makers'. Batstone (vice-chair of the Leicester district committee of TGWU) put the case to the meeting "sooner or later someone had to stand up and be counted. The Asians cannot come here and make their own rules."

The TGWU report did little to help the situation. It was a neat balancing act between preserving the reputation and the power of the old racist order in Leicester and acknowledging the

case made out by the strike committee. Its failure to deal with the issue of race, claiming that was the province of the Race Relations Board investigation, was an open betrayal of the interests of black trade unionists. The report made three sets of recommendations:

1. an improvement in communications - copies of rules and agreements to be made available in Asian languages;
2. that discussions should take place with the company on the National Agreement on bonus schemes;
3. a re-examination of the two year rule for shop-stewards positions.

While the strikers saw it as a vindication of their position and claimed it as a great victory, they in fact had received nothing tangible from the union. Certainly the grievances which had originally brought them out were yet to be redressed.

Throughout the strike it was obvious that the NF had inside information. Later Anthony Reed-Herbert (NF organiser in Leicester) was to say to the press, "We have members at Imperial, pretty well from the boardroom downwards. We have sympathisers in trade union positions in the factory". When the strikers returned to work the local branch produced a leaflet calling on 'Britons to unite against the atrocious betrayal'.

The role of the union and the way the final settlement was carried out - above the heads of the workers at regional and national level - did nothing to challenge the growing racism within the plant. The vile NF propaganda fell on fertile ground.

Despite the efforts of the returning strikers to win over the white workers the workforce was divided. Racism amongst the whites had caused them to cast in their lot with the bosses against their fellow workers. The bosses had successfully implemented a strategy of divide and rule. Later in the year the parent company, Littons, decided to close its two UK factories at Leicester and Hull. While the Hull workers occupied their plant the divided workers at the Leicester plant offered no resistance. A 1976 CIS report accurately described the situation in Leicester Imperial Typewriters at the time of closure, "The Leicester workforce, weakened and demoralised by racist divisions, was in no position to fight over the closure and black and white workers alike lost their jobs." (CIS Report 1976)

## LESSONS LEARNT

There can be no question that, in the end, the strike was defeated. But defeats mean that battles have been fought and lessons can be learnt. One lesson taught to many Asian workers, as shown in 1977 at Grunwick, was that they had the power as workers to fight, to take on their oppressors and exploiters. One woman striker graphically explained the impact of the strike on her consciousness, "The first day I returned to work, my foreman asked me what I had gained in the last 12 weeks. He was making fun of me I know. But I told him that I had lost a lot of money but I had gained a lot of things. I told him I had learnt how to fight against him for a start". (Cited in Amrit Wilson *Finding a Voice*)

Black workers everywhere had been given an example of how to fight by the Imperial Typewriter workers.

They had also been shown by the defeat who they had to fight. The principal blame for the racism of the workforce lay with a union leadership that refused to combat racism by uniting its members around common anti-boss goals of struggle. For the demands of black workers to be taken forward a fight within the unions is needed. The attitudes of, at best, indifference and at worst, open racism, had to be rooted out. They still have to be rooted out from today's unions.

For this reason the best tribute that militant workers, black and white, and revolutionaries can pay to the courageous Leicester strikers of 10 years ago, is to continue their struggle. The struggle to end discrimination in employment and social life; the struggle against police harassment of black youth; the struggle to smash all the immigration laws; the struggle to open the unions to black workers who have been for far too long cold-shouldered by their paternalist white 'brothers'. These are the struggles we must take up and win in the interest of building the real unity of workers against their real enemy, capitalism. ■

by Breda Concannon

# HISTORY

century it was the Irish, in the early twentieth century the Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe were singled out for racist attacks.

After the Second World War during the boom of the 50s, with the forced abandonment of the old Empire Britain's rulers soft pedalled on their racism, encouraging large scale immigration because of the labour shortage. The return of economic crisis in the sixties and the seventies saw the stepping up of official and unofficial racism - in the press, on radio and TV. This racist ideology went hand in hand with a series of ever more restrictive immigration laws.

The function of this racism under capitalism is to divide the working class and to deflect it from seeing the real cause of social evils like unemployment and crime. Capitalism occasionally needs immigrant labour. It brings it in and then turns it into a scapegoat to face the wrath of indigent workers during an economic crisis.

The British bosses used exactly this divide and rule tactic in the nineteenth century against imported Irish labour. They are doing the same today with the black labourers brought in from the Commonwealth after World War Two.

In other words racism is an integral feature of capitalist society in its final imperialist phase. It is maintained courtesy of capitalism. The destruction of racism inside the working class - the struggle for active black and white unity - must, therefore, be linked to a struggle to destroy capitalism. Fryer does not really understand this. His book does not answer why racism exists inside the working class today.

Instead he draws a rigid distinction between race prejudice and racism. Race prejudice is "relatively scrappy and self contradictory" and arises on sudden and limited contact between countries and ethnic groups. In contrast, he argues that racism is a relatively systematic and internally consistent. The slave trade and the slave method of production in the English colonies laid the economic base for "all those ancient scraps of myth and prejudice to be woven into a more or less coherent racist ideology" i.e. racism.

# SOUTH AFRICA



## Black workers

THE SOUTH AFRICAN apartheid regime is being torn by a deep and violent crisis. In the black townships - the urban areas where African, Indian and Coloured workers are 'permitted' to live - protests against price and rent rises have succeeded in forcing another round of temporary concessions.

School students continue their boycott of classes. After the successful boycott of elections to the fake 'multi-racial' parliament, six leaders of the Indian community who had led the boycott claimed sanctuary in the British consulate. They did so to avoid further detention by the regime. This forced an embarrassed Mrs Thatcher to allow them to stay while negotiations and legal proceedings took place.

The new constitution has failed miserably to bring political stability to South Africa. Moreover the South African economy shows no sign of recovery. As the dollar continues to ride high, the international money sharks are not buying gold. Western investors and the Pretoria regime are also worried about the threat posed to their profits by the continued growth in organisation and resistance on the part of leading sections of the country's 5½ million black workers, one million of whom are now organised in trade unions.

Furthermore, events of the past few months have shown the determination of the militant black working class to oppose collaboration or compromise with the racist bosses and their state. This has been illustrated in both community and trade union battles. A feature of the resistance in the townships has been the discrediting of the black politicians on the stooge town councils. The Lekoa town council, which had previously voted through rent rises was forced to go into hiding to avoid the anger of the community, leaving the white racist police to deal with the situation. When, despite 40 being killed in the Lekoa area townships in three weeks, the protests continued, Esau Mahlali emerged from hiding to announce a further postponement of the rises.

On the industrial front, the National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa, which organises both gold and coal miners, staged its first ever 'official' strike action in mid-September. The union won recognition from some of the mine corporations last year, and membership now stands at 100,000. The mineowners have responded in two ways. Some have refused recognition outright, while others, led by Anglo-American, have tried to incorporate the NUM into the machinery of negotiation and conciliation. This latter tactic has had some success.

The NUM leadership put in a wage claim for 25%, despite a call from the December 1983 conference for a 60% claim. Delegates had decisively rejected the idea of settling for deals which just kept pace with inflation and insisted that the task of the NUM was to end the poverty line wages. This pressure did force NUM leader Ramaphosa to reject the Chamber of Mines' June offer of 14%.

However, instead of calling immediate strike action, the NUM leaders, anxious to preserve their recognition agreement with Anglo-American, stuck to the laid down procedures for industrial conciliation, which meant postponing action for two months. Some miners refused to wait and 1,700 miners struck in June and July. Unfortunately they were defeated by massive police repression with 2 miners shot dead in Coronation Colliery in Natal.

This month, a day's official action by 40,000 miners forced a small increase in the offer which appears to have been accepted at least by the union officials. Strike action did continue in Waterspan, Durban Deep and Vleikom, spreading to mines where the NUM is not recognised. Seven black

## BLACK UNIONS VERSUS APARTHEID

TRADE UNIONS IN South Africa are marked by the racist society. The unions of the white working class have developed into protectors of white labour aristocratic privilege, the best skilled jobs and the wage differential shown in diagram 1. Organised in the South African Congress of Labour (SACLA) and the Trade Union Council of South Africa (TUCSA), these unions deliberately excluded black workers until the phenomenal growth of black unions in the 1970s forced TUCSA to set up 'parallel' unions. TUCSA's intention is to set up sweetheart deals with the employers, using the check-off and closed-shop system to prevent the growth of the independent black unions.

The black and non-racial unions have had to struggle for their very existence against the repression of the state and the opposition of employers and white unions. In the 1960s, the South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) was forced underground by repression. At the time of the major strike wave by black workers in 1973, all strikes by African workers were illegal.

During the 1970s, the state attempted to contain and curtail the growth of black workers organisations. They implemented a series of measures requiring registration of unions to allow their participation in Industrial Councils (which determine wages and conditions). In this way, the regime was aiming to encourage the development of a tame trade union bureaucracy within the black unions. By collaborating with such a bureaucracy the regime was hoping to create a safety valve for itself. It hoped to see a black bureaucracy whose primary interest lay with the preservation of the collaborationist union apparatus but whose 'negotiations' with the government could be portrayed as an example of apartheid's 'concessions' to blacks.

The meteoric growth of black trade union membership, (see diagram 2) matched by its resilience and fighting capacity thwarted the regime's plan to domesticate the 'independent' black and non-racial unions. In 1981 and 1983, the government changed the law so that unions that had refused to register were also considered 'legal'. They were allowed access to the machinery of the Conciliation Boards. Yet as the miners' strike shows, the very existence of these unions poses a fundamental threat to the regime. To turn this threat into reality means, in the first place, overcoming the divisions within the black union movement.

The multiplicity of the independent unions and divisions between them is a source of strength for the bosses. For instance the Iron & Steel employers speak with one voice - the Steel and Engineering Industries Federation, but six different union bodies put in six different claims this year! The fight for 'One Union, One Industry' and for a single Trade Union Federation of the independent black and non-racial unions is a priority for militants.

The independent unions fall into three broad groupings. First, those such as the National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa (NUM) which are affiliated to the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA). Then there are those affiliated to the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU). The third grouping of unions are those unaffiliated to the major federations.

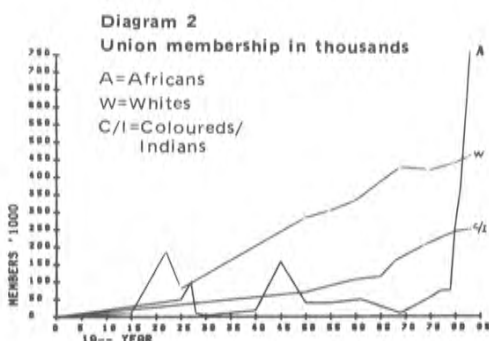
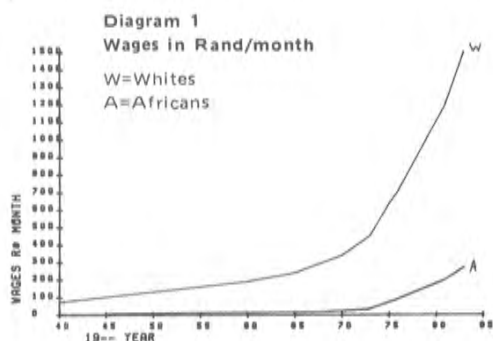
Unity talks aimed at setting up one trade union federation have taken place over two years, and those affiliated to CUSA and FOSATU, together with a number of previously unaffiliated unions, agreed in Spring 1984 to form a new federation. However, some important unions remained outside including the South African Allied Workers Union (SAAWU), which claims 26 unions under its um-

brella, with a membership of around 50,000. The two other general unions are also outside the new federation.

Apart from organisational conflicts the real reason underlying this continuing fragmentation is political. SAAWU stayed out, apparently because it maintained its long running position that the Federation affiliate to the United Democratic Front

(UDF). The other unions rejected this. This debate posed the question of how apartheid is to be fought. The UDF had been set up to oppose Botha's new constitution. In another article on this page we deal with the nature of the UDF. The point is that the dispute reflects the failure by the leaders of the black union movement to hammer out a common political strategy to smash apartheid.

Hammering out such a strategy and unifying the unions on the basis of it is an urgent task for militant black workers. Such a strategy must incorporate a programme of action to overcome the miserable economic conditions apartheid imposes on the non-white working class. And, because really independent black unions are incompatible with the existence of the racist state it must unite workers on the basis of: no collaboration with the regime; active opposition to all the racist laws and the 'homelands' system; down with the apartheid regime. By organising massive strike action to further these aims and by organising defence groups based on the unions to ward off the attacks of the trigger-happy, rhino-whip wielding police, the downfall of the regime will be hastened. ■



# IN TERMOIL

by Sue Thomas

miners died in the struggle for trade union recognition.

The miners' strike in South Africa illustrates the potential power of the black working class. It shows also the problem of building unions in the teeth of intense repression and the dangers of opting for a class collaborationist course in exchange for union recognition.

The whole apartheid regime centres on the maintenance of a cheap labour system. Black workers are denied all security in work or residency. Mine-owners revealed this when they threatened to import new black labour from the 'homelands' (the 17% of South African land designated as territory for the African population which is 73% of the total population) to break strikes. The fight against poverty wages thus inevitably poses the question of the fight against the apartheid laws and the state that enforces them.

The question of how the enormous power of the black working class is to be mobilised in the fight against apartheid is now at the forefront of the debates conducted by militants in the worker and democratic movements. Years of struggle have continued to rock the apartheid regime, but not yet to destroy it. The huge peaceful mass mobilisations of the 1950s were crushed by brute force, the heroic acts of sabotage worry the regime, but don't seriously threaten it. The revolt of the black youth in the 1970s brought a new layer to the fore but sections of that Black consciousness movement turned to concentrate on local community projects which cannot challenge the central power of the state.

The black working class on which the whole apartheid edifice rests, could topple this state. The starting point for organising the forces to do this is in the black trade union movement. ■



The United Democratic Front (UDF) has been in the forefront of the powerful opposition to P.W. Botha's fake 'multi-racial' constitution. Formed in August 1983 at a convention attended by 2,500 delegates, the UDF produced leaflets, organised and canvassed for a boycott and ensured that Botha's project was discredited. Providing it is not banned this considerable success will ensure the continued existence of the UDF. This will pose even more sharply a question already being asked by groups of militant workers and socialists in South Africa; what class interests predominate in the UDF?

The UDF is a form of popular front, that is it brings together some unions and other predominantly working class organisations with the churches and organisations such as the African Chamber of Commerce and the Athlone Professional and Businessmen's Association. Of course the real ruling class forces of South Africa, the white employers, are not present and black businessmen do have an interest in the removal of apartheid. However, the danger in such an alliance is that these petty-bourgeois forces will hold back any working class action which jeopardises their own position.

The UDF's perspective of building a multi-class opposition to the apartheid state is not new. It is the policy which has been pushed for many years by the South African Communist Party and the

## Beware the Popular Front

African National Congress. Their Freedom Charter of the 1950's limited itself to a number of democratic demands so as not to alienate the churches and their petty-bourgeois allies.

As the independent unions have grown, a new layer of leaders has emerged which appears to be critical of the popular front perspective. However, they have used this as a justification for the unions to stand aloof from political organisations. This was most clearly expressed in a speech by Jo Foster a FOSATU leader, in 1982. Foster argued that, "All communities are composed of different groups, and for a workers' organisation to ally itself with every community group or action would be suicide for a workers' organisation." He went on, "It is, therefore, essential that workers strive to build their own powerful and effective organisation even whilst they are part of the wider popular struggle. This organisation is necessary to perfect and further workers' interests and to ensure that the popular movement is not hijacked by elements who will, in the end, have no option but to turn against their worker

supporters." (Azania Worker No.1)

Foster's argument for keeping clear of organisations like the UDF can lead to economic positions, "politics isn't the business of the union" which is clearly impossible to sustain in a society in which the denial of democratic rights, restriction of land ownership and the maintenance of the cheap labour system are so intertwined. David Lewis, General Secretary of the General Workers' Union (GWU) openly called, in 1983, for the unions to keep out of politics in the interests of trade union unity, saying, "Unions will inevitably be organisations that incorporate a great diversity of political views and affiliations." (South African Labour Bulletin)

In practice, the unions opposed to political affiliation have found themselves forced to embrace political struggle. FOSATU worked alongside the UDF in the boycott campaign, financing the production of 'Don't Vote' badges and stickers, and its militants propagandised against Botha's constitution. The debate between militant leaders has

moved away from the terrain of whether the unions should be involved in political questions and onto how they should.

Jo Foster appears to argue for the unions themselves to become the necessary political worker workers' movement, a position which underlies the insistence by FOSATU for a new union federation which is tightly organised. This has led the leading SACP theoretician, Tousaint, to polemicise publicly against the FOSATU leaders, insisting that "A union is not a political party."

Certainly the South African working class needs a party. However, it does not a party like the SA CP which is intent on tying the workers to popular front alliances and which subordinates their demands and the struggle for socialism in order to maintain those alliances. Neither does it need a reformist workers' party emerging out of the trade union bureaucracy whose perspectives are based on coming to terms with South African capitalism and guaranteeing their position within it rather than seeking its overthrow. It needs a revolutionary workers' party which can successfully lead the struggle to smash the apartheid state and destroy the capitalist system which sustains it. Led by such a party the black proletariat of South Africa will put itself at the head of the small traders, peasants and the landless in an alliance which really can establish a socialist Azania. ■

## CRISIS COALITION IN ISRAEL

IN THE FACE of a deepening crisis Israel's two major political parties - Labour and Likud - have formed a government of "national unity" to share the spoils of office between them. The recent election results underlined the growing tensions within Israeli society. The Likud coalition, which had ruled since 1977, lost 6 seats in the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) where it now holds 41 seats. Labour - the "natural" party of government from 1948-1977 - also lost seats and now has 44 in the 120 seat Knesset.

On the left, the Communist Party (Rakah) backed Democratic Front held on to its seats. In addition the newly formed "Progressive List for Peace" - a loose coalition of Jewish anti-war liberals and Arab nationalists dismayed with Rakah's record - picked up two seats.

At the other end of the political spectrum small extreme Zionist parties either consolidated themselves or made small gains (as did, for example, Tehiya). The election was particularly notable for the election of Kahane of the Kach party for the first time. This odious ultra-Zionist distinguishes himself from the other theocratic dictators in the Knesset by his call for the forceable expulsion of all Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories. That this hateful specimen takes votes from Likud testifies to the extreme Zionists' ability to cynically exploit the desperate plight of many of the poorest oriental Jews.

### IRRITATION

Outside Israel the major reaction of Zionism's many friends has been one of irritation. The inability of Likud or Labour to form a majority government is seen as undermining the Israeli bourgeoisie's ability to take decisive action to deal with its economic crisis.

Inflation is running at over 400% and the regular wage increases can no longer keep pace. Faith

in the shekel (Israel's currency) has plummeted and there is massive dollar buying which is fast eroding Israel's precious foreign currency reserves which are needed for trade. Economic growth has been virtually stagnant for 2 years.

During its last year in office Likud took some half-hearted measures to meet financiers' demands for a massive cut in borrowing and public spending in order to restore stability and imperialism's confidence in the economy. In October it declared the shekel devalued by 23%, cut 12 food subsidies and lowered the government budget by 2 billion dollars. The prospect of an impending election and the impact of strikes in the early summer prevented Likud from going any further.

European and US imperialism favoured a working majority for Labour and its leader Peres. This was for two reasons. First, their organic relationship with the Jewish working class (through the trade union federation-cum-business corpo-

ration Histadrut) put them in the best position to push through an austerity package.

Not being beholden for votes to the poorer Eastern Jews, as is Likud, they could also be less restrained in attacking them.

Secondly, Labour was seen as the best party to lead Israel into conciliation with the bordering Arab states. Having dealt a serious blow to the PLO in Lebanon, Reagan is keen to open up a period of conciliation and appeasement.

### WHIM

The outcome of the election does not offer the best conditions for achieving either of these aims. With another election possible at the whim of either Labour or Likud, neither partner will wish to be called to stand before the electorate at a moment's notice as the architect of an austerity package or a "sell-out" withdrawal from Southern Lebanon.

Despite this Israel is not about to break down into total economic and political chaos. The reason for this is simple. The USA will not let it happen. Israel is a unique agent of US imperialism's interests in the Middle East.

Israel has acted, through military action (1967, 73,82) and diplomatic pacts (Camp David 1979) to prevent the emergence of a unified anti-imperialist Arab force in the region which could challenge imperialism's interests in the area. In order for Israel to continue to perform this task the USA has willingly underwritten the costs of Israel's defence and economic growth. Since 1948 the USA has given free some 26 billion dollars in aid. In 1983 alone Israel received 2 billion dollars which was 30% of all US overseas aid that year.

In many ways Israel acts as an overseas branch of the US economy, in particular specialising in arms development and production. About 20% of Israel's GNP is spent each year on defence (and the

occupation of South Lebanon is adding another 7%). Arms sales represent 25% of the nation's industrial exports and this sector employs a third of the workforce.

This militarisation of Israeli society is a reflection of its nature as a settler state. It had an artificial and bloody birth at the expense of the Palestinian Arabs. It has only been able to maintain itself through permanent expansion - the redrawing of Israel's frontiers and the annexation of Arab land. The frenzied pace of new settlement on the West Bank - stolen from Jordan in 1967 - and the de facto annexation of South Lebanon are witnesses to this.

Both the major bourgeois Zionist political groupings - Labour and Likud are committed to the maintenance of this state of affairs. Labour is more satisfied with the status quo and electorally appeals to those sections of the skilled working class with the greatest interest in the status quo. Likud and the Zionist right demagogically appeal to, and manipulate the anxieties of the marginalised Oriental Jews. To many of them the call for new annexations and settlements appears as a solution to their miserable plight by holding out the promise of land at the expense of the Arabs.

### MARGINAL DIFFERENCE

During the election campaign, Labour attempted to make electoral gains amongst the Oriental Jews at Likud's expense. As a result the differences between Labour and Likud became marginal.

Labour's four point programme for the elections was: No to the dismantling of the settlements; No move from the Jordan river; No renouncing a unified Jerusalem; No negotiations with the PLO.

A principled alternative to Zionism must be constructed in the face of the Likud-Labour coalition. Its programme must be anti-Zionist and anti-imperialist. There can be no reconciliation with the expansionist Zionist state. A secular workers' republic of the whole of Palestine must arise out of the revolutionary destruction of Zionism and its state. ■

by Keith Hassell



Shamir and Peres: Toasting unity too soon!

# T&G SET TO CROSS PICKET LINES

THE SECOND NATIONAL dock strike this year ended in abject surrender by the TGWU. Not only did they leave the miners to fight alone but they acceded to BSC management's demands for scab coal and agreed to cross NUM picket lines to deliver their side of the bargain.

At the very heart of the dispute was BSC's move to break Hunterston TGWU's solidarity with the miners. Lurking behind the dispute were the Port Employer's plans to break up the Dock Labour Scheme. In the recent strikes they were testing their strength and that of the opposition. In the aftermath of the sell out the miners have been betrayed and the dockers left far weaker in the face of the Port Employers.

The Labour Party placed its machinery at the disposal of the settlement. For Kinnock and co the dockers' strike, like the miners strike, was an unfortunate threat to Labour's electoral credibility as the party of conciliation and compromise. The Hunterston agreement was drawn up with the direct participation of Shadow Transport Secretary John Prescott who was in contact with Kinnock and Orme at every stage in the talks. Prescott was backed to the hilt by Scottish TUC secretary Milne, TGWU regional secretary Wyper (both CP members) and, of course, National Docks Officer, John Connolly.

## TGWU SURRENDER

The deal met every one of BSC's demands. Coal will be shipped into Ravenscraig at the management's required rate of 22,500 tons a week in the near future. In return BSC gave nothing. They gave no assurances on the use of scab non-scheme labour in the future and the TGWU did not even ask for any. As Connolly confessed, "I don't think we would be successful in getting any." Moreover, Connolly declared the union's intention of sticking to the deal even should the Scottish NUM picket Hunterston in the aftermath of Arthur Scargill's repudiation of the T&G's shameful deal. Connolly told the press, "If the miners put on a picket line the unions concerned will work their policy. On the



Scab coal on the move through the docks.

basis on this decision we will continue to work the agreement. We will continue to operate the dock at Hunterston."

The surrender of the TGWU will hearten the employers. During the strike South Wales TGWU published a confidential document of the Freight Transport Association which includes the British Shippers Council. It makes clear that the employers are pressing hard for the Tories to break up the Dock Labour Scheme soon. The document reveals that, "Interested parties (port authorities, shipowners, importers and exporters) are speculating whether

the government are now prepared to scrap the iniquitous Dock Labour Scheme.

The general opinion is that opportunities exist now that will not recur within the lifetime of this government or at any other time in the next 20 years."

Dockers must learn the bitter lessons of this surrender. Either they must organise against their traitorous leaders or the employers will push ahead with their planned attack on organised dock workers. ■

## WORKERS IN ACTION

### NACODS Strike?

AS WE GO to press, there is a real chance that NACODS members will vote to strike against the NCB. This would be a major blow to MacGregor and the Tories. In August, NCB management ordered NACODS members to cross picket lines — in armoured buses and under police guard if necessary. Pay was withheld from men who would not comply. The move was one part of the 'Silver Birch' operation to try to start a major, 'back to work' campaign.

The Coal Board's tactics have backfired. Not only did their back to work movement fizzle out but they also engaged the NACODS membership. Not content with issuing their orders, management publicly, and deceitfully, claimed that NACODS had agreed to them.

A NACODS strike would be an enormous boost for the NUM. Most importantly it would bring the Midlands coal field to a standstill. That would not only tighten the squeeze on Thatcher in the power stations but also be a big boost to the confidence of the striking

miners in the scab areas. A NACODS strike would also put a stop to the small scabbing operations in the solid areas.

In the early days of the dispute, NACODS worked as an intermediary between the NCB and the NUM, trying, with Labour's Stan Orme, to engineer a compromise settlement. It must not be allowed now to use a strike, or the threat to call one off, to pressure the NUM into any kind of climbdown. NUM militants must ensure that NACODS is not used by the NCB to kick start yet another 'back to work' campaign if the Board can reach a rotten compromise with the NACODS leadership.

The NACODS ballot recommends strike action against the August terms and the pit closure programme. The NCB may well try to avert a strike by offering to pay up docked wages and to negotiate new terms for NACODS. Militants in both unions must make sure that, if the strike call succeeds, NACODS stands firm alongside the NUM against all pit closures and stays out until total victory. ■

### Broad Left Cover For Bickerstaffe

TWENTY NINE NUPE members attended the inaugural conference of the NUPE Broad Left on Saturday 22nd September. The meeting discussed a strategy against privatisation and constructing a broad left programme for NUPE. Both the resolution on privatisation and the proposed programme fell far short of answering the real problems faced by militants in NUPE.

At the last NUPE conference a resolution was passed which called for national strike action alongside the Barking Hospital strikers - making this the focal point of a fight against privatisation. Within 24 hours the Health Service National Committee had reduced this to London based action only, coupled with a national day of action.

Dull-timers and national officials subsequently went out of their way to ensure that the day of action was a failure - fulfilling the prophecy they had made in opposing strike action over Barking.

Effectively, the Broad Left started

out to the right of the national conference decision. Militant also successfully proposed an amendment calling for the struggle against privatisation to be brought forward and linked to the current miners' strike. "When the miners win we will be stronger," said the Militant chairwoman. But if NUPE was won to fighting privatisation now it would give both us and the miners a far better chance of winning.

The programme put forward as a basis for a Broad Left campaign in NUPE was a typical list of Militant demands for a future socialist Labour government. It contained no action proposals or any of the demands except for the usual call for a massive campaign which any NUPE official can be heard calling for. It contained no strategy for the rank and file transformation of NUPE whilst calling for the election of full-time officials. The programme explained, "The NUPE Broad Left does not see this as an attack on the authority of our present leadership or the vast bulk of NUPE officials, but a demand that could only strengthen and extend democracy and rank and file participation in our great union."

Led by Militant the Broad Left will clearly offer no fight against the left-talking officials. It has no perspective of building a rank and file movement in NUPE independent of these bureaucrats. This is because, as the whole discussion on privatisation and the miners shows, Militant have no strategy independent of the left bureaucrats. ■

## Thatcher goes for broke... continued from front page

area should do the same to its scabs and the national union must state clearly to the scabs in the Midlands coalfields that failure to come out immediately will mean expulsion from the union.

Occupations would also free thousands of rank and file miners to carry out the tasks of the day. We need teams of rank and file miners visiting every workplace winning action in support. We need teams of food and money collectors, and we need pickets on all plants where coal is used or moved. The dispute cannot be left to the NUM negotiators, any more than it can to the TUC's inner cabinet, if the forces are to be mobilised to break Thatcher's war drive against the working class.

Another advantage of occupying the pit-head would be that they can fend off the NCB's spurious "safety risk" claims. Thatcher has said a long strike will close more pits than MacGregor's closure programme. The Tories and the NCB will happily destroy faces and entire mines rather than let the NUM win. By occupying the pit heads the NUM can foil management's sabotage tactics. In conjunction with NACODS safety work can be done in the interests of the miners not the Tories and the Coal Board.

### WINNING SUPPORT

A victory over Thatcher need massive backing from the organised working class. Time and time again this dispute has shown that this backing will not be won through deals struck between the NUM leaders and other trade union officials.

Right wing leaders like Sirs and Hammond have tried at every point to deliberately stab the miners in the back. The 'lefts' have reneged on their deals too. Twice Buckton and Knapp have negotiated their way out of strike action against British Rail. Twice the TGWU, thanks to the treachery of John Connolly, has been defeated on the docks. The union ran scared from the prospect of waging an all out fight alongside the miners.

The message must be taken to organised workers everywhere that it is in the interests of every worker for Thatcher to be defeated at the hands of the miners. As area and branch organisations meet to discuss the implementation of the TUC resolutions it is vital that miners are present at every meeting to urge decisive action. In every area Trades Councils must call delegate conferences immediately to plan the implementation of the TUC's support for the NUM. The right wing will moan that the strike is political and should not be supported. We must take their argument head on.

Yes, the struggle is political. It is about whether the best organised section of workers or the employing class get their way. The outcome of this political showdown will decide what happen to millions of other workers, to their trade unions, their welfare services, their jobs and their standard of living. This is why workers should not stand on the sidelines waiting to see what happens. That is why the miners need more than financial aid and promises not to cross picket lines if they are to succeed. Every worker with a pay claim, or in conflict with their employers must bring forward the claims and fight for them now, while the time is ripe, alongside the miners.

The NUM has been clobbered once by the courts. Nearly 6000 miners

have been arrested. The Tories are poised to move the coal stocks. In the face of this the TUC and the Labour Party are doing all in their power to coax Thatcher into a 'reasonable settlement' at the NUM's expense. To the TUC leaders who speak up in support of the miners we say, fight to get GMBTU and TGWU members in the power stations to back the miners. Your members have it in their power to stop the power stations if they refuse to handle scab, imported or opencast coal, touch any oil and refuse to cross miners picket lines. You must call on them, campaign for them and organise them to do so.

The miners need that support more than any amount of interest free loans. But such action would bring thousands of workers into the firing line of Thatcher's police and courts. Her courts would declare such action illegal immediately and the TUC leaders know and dread that. To flinch from all out political struggle against Thatcher and her anti-union laws is to sell the pass to the Tories and MacGregor.

In the Falklands war Thatcher and her class showed the lengths to which they will go to maintain the system of exploitation and oppression that they live by. They will go to the same lengths against the miners. That is why it is futile for Buckton and Basnett to hope that TUC support for the miners, untested and unspecified, will make Thatcher back down. The Tories have prepared this conflict too long. Too much is now at stake for them to end the dispute except in victory or surrender.

The TUC leaders command the forces that can make Thatcher surrender. They will not do so by recourse to ACAS or private talks with MacGregor. They can do so by calling a General Strike now to win the miners strike and destroy Thatcher's anti-union laws. As well as taking action to back the miners and turning the TUC's words into deeds militants in every union must organise to force the TUC to deliver a crushing blow to the Tories and win every demand of the miners. **FOR AN ALL OUT GENERAL STRIKE NOW!** ■

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