

Workers Power

30p/10p strikers

Monthly paper of the Workers Power group



ORGANISE THE RANK & FILE!

A MONTH AFTER the end of the strike and thousands of miles from home Thatcher at last felt safe to crow over the defeat of the miners. She boasted that she had "seen off" the worst threat to Britain since the second world war.

The time and the place of her victory celebrations was indeed testimony to the fear the miners had inspired in the British bosses. She was touring the investors paradises of South East Asia, where low wages are kept low by crushing the trade unions completely or replacing them with government fake unions. Thatcher promised to make Britain just as attractive.

Carried away by constant praise from her hosts she even commanded inflation to come down to 3%. Like King Canute when he commanded the tide not to come in all she got was wet feet. Inflation promptly leapt up towards 7%.

At home, meanwhile, the bosses press cast a nervous eye on all this strutting and boasting. Even the fawning hacks of the Mail and the Express think she "overdid it". Even loyal Treasury Economists have described her predictions as ill-founded.

The truth is that the British ruling class know there is little grounds for triumphalism at the moment. Not only is Britain's feeble boom about to run out of steam but the enormously expensive victory over the miners has yet to show signs of being the marvellous investment Nigel Lawson claimed it would be.

CONSIDERABLE FIGHT

The working class, despite the yellow-belly crawling of most of its leaders, still shows signs of considerable fight left in it. Britain's bosses are muttering: "Surely we didn't cut short our boom and expose the myth of our impartial justice for nothing!"

Whilst Thatcher was trying to talk up a 'British Economic Miracle', the statisticians were showing it to be a mirage. The *Financial Times* warned that even if inflation again began to fall then "growth will come down with it". (20/4/85)

In a pessimistic editorial entitled "Questioning the Recovery", it warned: "...look back more than a couple of months and we see interest rates sharply up, competitiveness squeezed and export prospects eroded".

While the bosses are scared to predict a crisis of their own system for fear of undermining 'business confidence' important economic indicators point to one on the horizon.

Unemployment in the manufacturing sector continues to climb: 45,000 jobs going in this sector in 1984. Excluding North Sea Oil Britain's trade deficit is a massive £11.4 billion. Most significantly after a year of relatively high investment in industry in 1984 (up 13%), it is being predicted that this will fall by about 7% this year.

The message that the figures convey is that Thatcher's monetarist miracle has not taken place. Despite her claims, promises and



flights of fancy, Britain's economy remains locked into a spiral of short lived periods of weak economic growth which give way to deeper and longer periods of slump and stagnation.

The Tories hoped that their victory would virtually end resistance to their offensive. That it would terrify any section who thought they could resist. This hasn't happened yet.

Why has the miners defeat not been as demoralising as many had predicted? Firstly, the strike did remain isolated from the great mass of workers. Only the minority of militants and certain sections of workers totally identified with the struggle.

This was a tragedy for the miners but it partly explains why these workers do not see the miners defeat directly as their own. Thus, when they are in turn attacked, they still fight back.

In addition, the effect of the strike on the militant minority was very positive. It taught them rich lessons in class struggle trade unionism. The militants apply these lessons in some measure when the Tories attack. As a result whole sections can still move into battle.

Moreover, the minority prepared to fight is still there in the NUM itself. There were 50,000 prepared to vote a levy for the sacked lads. At Markham, Kiverton Park, Phurnacite, Westoe and Askern miners have fought the management offensive with strikes.

When the Post Office tried to impose new technology and introduce increased quotas of part-time workers postmen at Mount Pleasant struck immediately. Their action was solid and could have spread quickly.

When the UCW leadership called the strike off John Devereux, the branch secretary at Mount Pleasant, declared: "We are disappointed because our membership backed us to the hilt".

Alan Tuffin is working overtime to stop the postal strike that started at Northampton from becoming a national strike. Both postal strikes showed that militants could spearhead a fightback against hard line management provocations.

Other examples demonstrate that amongst key layers of workers the will to fight exists. In the CPSA over 50,000 voted to strike. On the railways 12,000 came out for the one day strike on April 17th against the closure of the Springburn workshop. Yarrow shipyard workers occupied to prevent the management riding roughshod over agreed procedures for the privatisation of the yard.

The existence of this resistance spearheaded by a militant minority is of vital importance. If this minority can be organised into a united force - a rank and file movement within every industry, and a National Rank and File Movement to unite them - then we can turn the tide on Thatcher.

At the same time we can begin to bring to account and replace those cowardly leaders who have allowed the rot to set in. It is at the top that post-miners' strike defeatism and demoralisation is at its most total. Union leaders left and right are spreading and preaching every form of surrender.

Kinnock's public relations campaign for staying within the law at all costs and waiting till the 1987 election strengthens this mood. In a situation where all effective trade unionism is outside the law this advice amounts to a total ban on fighting back.

The 'New Realists', never defeated, are once again on the offensive. Now Duffy, Hammond and Graham are arguing for a no-strike, comply-with-the-law strategy. Graham, with Communist Party help, got the CPSA to call a ballot in line with the anti-union laws.

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T & G needs workers' democracy!

SUDDENLY, ALMOST ONE year after the event, the Press and TV are full of allegations of fraud in the T & G's election for General Secretary. When the first charges of electoral malpractice were made to the union last summer an investigation was ordered into the Bristol election, the results declared invalid and the officials concerned were disciplined.

Now, many months later, it seems that every region saw widespread irregularities. Northern Ireland and the London region would appear to have benefited Ron Todd, but extraordinarily high polls in favour of George Wright have also been reported from South Wales.

The reason all this has been trumpeted now is the Tories' need for a renewed offensive on the unions in the wake of the defeat of the miners. The right-wing of the ruling class have always opposed the absence of postal balloting in the 1984 anti-union laws. They have been looking for a safe target to re-open their campaign.

NEW REALISTS

In addition, they now sense the possibility of adding the T & G's 1½ million votes to the New Realists of the TUC by means of a new ballot for Moss Evan's successor. In that re-run election the Press would not tire of presenting Wright as the victim of a Broad Left plot - a man whom the membership of the T & G should now support.

But what of the allegations themselves? There is absolutely no doubt that elections in the T & G are wide open to manipulation by the various 'machines' which operate within the union. This is a reflection both of the non-involvement of very many rank and file members and of the consequences of very large geographical branches which have virtually no contact with their members at all.

The most common complaint was that members did not even know that the ballot had taken place until the results were announced. This indicates that the election was not even discussed by those entitled to vote for it.

Neither postal balloting nor recourse to the bourgeois courts will help the interests of T & G members outraged at their loss of voting rights in their own union. Postal balloting simply means that the informed and uninvolved members receive a ballot form out of the blue and the arguments and advice they hear only come from the press and TV.

MASS MEETINGS

The best way to overcome non-involvement and the malpractices it generates is to hold elections at mass meetings in work time. Here the union members can hear the candidates, or their supporters, argue their positions and then vote in full view of the membership either by raising hands or by the division system. The vote should then be immediately announced, any challenges can be dealt with on the spot and then no-one would be in any doubt about the results.

The form of the electoral system, however cannot be divorced from the need to overhaul the union from top to bottom. A rank and file movement needs to be built. It should start by making its officials elected, which they are not at the moment. Against the new realists the T & G must be built into a fighting union once more. ■

AMNESTY FOR ALL SACKED MINERS!

LABOUR LEFT IN RETREAT

THE RIGHT-WING in the Labour Party are smiling again. Things are going their way. After sitting out the storm of the years 1979-81, when they were rounded on and abused by an ascendant Labour left, they have regained the initiative.

For this they thank Neil Kinnock. They believe he is well on the way to restoring the Labour Party in their image: a party that promises little for the working class and performs even less. In particular, the likes of Hattersley, Healey, and Kaufman are delighted with Kinnock on three counts.

Firstly, that he kept the Labour Party from supporting the miners strike, indeed, that he helped to 'defeat Scargill'. This will be enormously important in helping the New Realists in the TUC deal with the Labour Party.

Secondly, that he has salaried the constituency based Labour left. In the Livingstones and Blunkets he has recruited a new 'fake left' with campaigning talent but with a fundamental loyalty to Kinnock and the imperative of an election victory.

By doing this Kinnock has saved the right-wing of the PLP from de-selection - not one has been de-seated despite the earlier huffing and puffing. He has also managed to keep the pressure firmly on the Militant by expelling several more of their supporters with scarcely a ripple of protest. The split in the left camp has also effectively shipwrecked the rate-capping campaign.

Thirdly, Kinnock is well on the way to overturning the 'electoral liabilities' which the left policies of the 1979-81 period represented. A Kinnock Labour election manifesto would be a re-run of the 1979 one - perhaps less adventurous.

Standing as a marker for future victories against the left is the 'ideological charter' presently being considered by a sub-committee of the NEC. Its final shape will depend on how successful Kinnock is in the battles that lie in the immediate future - against the black sections and the CLP's which recognise them, for example. At worst any new charter will be a witchhunters' manual. The 'broad church' will find its pews swept clean of dissenters. After the defection of prominent municipal left-wingers like Blunkett and Livingstone into the growing camp of 'critical Kinnockites', the Bennite left is much reduced and increasingly isolated. Nearest to Kinnock stand groupings like the Labour Co-ordinating Committee and papers like Tribune.

They have a similar message. The NUM and Arthur Scargill were wrong not to call a ballot. Violence on the picket line - the miners' fault by implication - did the Labour Movement in general, and Labour's electoral prospects in particular a serious disservice. Taking its cue from the feminist-reformist Bea Campbell, *Tribune* sneered: "It is no longer enough to beat manly hewers' chests and expect governments to quake in their boots".

■ FEMINIST PACIFISM ■

The men and women of the mining communities will treat this feminist pacifism with the contempt it deserves. Courage, the will to fight back, collective action, resistance to being beaten and bludgeoned are for them and should be for the whole Labour Movement qualities deserving the highest admiration.

The most these lickspittles will allow by way of criticism is that perhaps Neil Kinnock was a little too distant from the struggle, but those who call him a scab or a traitor are beyond the pale. They are the 'Amnesty for Neil Kinnock Brigade'.

The numbers joining this campaign have increased as Labour enjoys a modest revival at the opinion polls. Yet, worse, this defection has obviously effected even the harder lefts around Benn and Skinner. They have launched no sharp post-mortem as to Labour's role in the strike.

In fact Kinnock and the PLP majority should be mercilessly pilloried for their actions in backing up Thatcher's propaganda. They should be censured, stood against in re-selection procedures, and for all leadership posts in the party and on the NEC. This should be done regardless of its prospects of immediate success. Why? Because these people are proven traitors.

The whole Labour Movement needs to be warned and electoral contests are a very prominent way of doing this. Moreover they will allow the powerful minority of the rank and file who actively aided the miners' struggle and were disgusted with Kinnock to express that disgust. Further the 'lefts' who stood by the miners and who are willing to stand up to Kinnock could greatly increase their support in this way and organise it. To do otherwise is to throw a veil of silence over the Labour leaders' treachery.

The silence and weakness of the left is encouraging Hattersley and Kinnock to trample on the policies and conference decisions of the last four or five years. Labour's 'Jobs and Industry

Campaign' like Hattersley's 'alternative budget' marks the triumph of 'New Realism' in the Labour Party. John Smith, Shadow Employment Secretary proclaims with breathtaking cynicism: "There will be no hostages to fortune in the predictions of the numbers of jobless Labour will take off the dole queue within a specified period".

This 'realism' fits in well with Hattersley's budget which promised less Government stimulated expansion of industry than the proposals of the Liberals! Hattersley sneered at Steel for not recognising the realities of government.

The Kinnockites are also busy with the New Realists at the TUC drawing up plans for a 'new partnership'. "Confrontation must be replaced by co-operation", "industrial democracy", "negotiated change" and similar empty jangling phrases are about to pour out from the Trade-Union - Labour Party Liaison Committee. Hattersley constantly hints at the need to "plan income growth". What does all this mean? The answer is plain enough; wage restrictions and union management collaboration to achieve this.

■ "FIRM LEFT" ■

In the face of these developments what is left of the 'hard left' is regrouping. Taking the lead, *Labour Herald* has proposed a new coalition of "firm left socialists"! The proposed basis for a re-alignment is threefold - to mobilise support against Thatcherism, to "develop a firm left programme for the socialist transformation of our society and fight for its adoption by the Labour Party" and to ensure its implementation when Labour is in office.

It would be a progressive step for those lefts within the Labour Party who supported the miners in deeds not just in words, and who oppose Kinnock, to unite in action in support of the struggles going on now and to expose and remove Kinnock. But *Labour Herald's* platform, like that of its rival "hard left" papers, is inadequate and shot through with illusions.

The Miners' Strike has shown that class society does not stand or fall with parliamentary majorities nor is the Labour Party an instrument capable of overturning it. The underlying notion of giving Labour a set of "socialist policies" and creating a system of accountability and mass pressure to see that it implements them is a utopia.

Power lies in the banks, the boardrooms and the barracks. "Ah," say the 'hard lefts' "we know that but we have to prove it to the workers who have terrible illusions in parliamentby getting them to devote all their efforts to giving Labour a set of 'socialist policies' and then trying to force it to carry them out. When Labour fails or the bosses tear up their own constitution then all will be revealed and hey presto... the revolution!.."

This is a wretched, evasive mix-up of open reformist politics and tactics with a secret "revolutionary" perspective for the insiders - those in the know. It is not Trotskyism but a sad degenerate centrism. It proved impotent in providing the miners with a strategy and tactics for victory in the 1984/85 strike and it will be equally powerless to provide a means of exposing and overthrowing Kinnock before the 1987 elections.

The perspective for these years is not simply one of waiting for an election victory. In these years Britain and the world economy will plunge into another capitalist crisis. The wretchedly inadequate measures Hattersley proposes for today will be pathetic faced with unemployment soaring upwards yet again. Yet their response will be to turn their promises and programmes to what is possible; that is, what the bosses will allow which will not be reforms for the working class but more and more concessions from it.

The working class needs now and will need then not a party of surrender and betrayal. Not an election machine, not a broad church for praying for favours but a disciplined mass fighting party determined to lead the working class to power.

If this is our perspective then we need to say so fearlessly. In no sense is this sectarian for it is not counterposed to being in the middle of every struggle against capitalism and its agents. The united front for action - in the unions and in the Labour Party - can test the programmes and the leaderships in today's battles.

In the Labour Party what is needed is not some



further juggling with names, "hard", "firm" or "serious". Today's serious leftist is tomorrow's Ken Livingstone or even.....Neil Kinnock. What is needed is a revolutionary left with a revolutionary programme. Ready to defend Tony Benn and Dennis Skinner when they fight, when they stand up for the miners, but not merging its programme with theirs.

Only on this basis can the militants within the Labour party help free millions of workers from the hold of Judas Kinnock. Only on this basis can the struggle within the Labour Party help create a party capable of destroying not only Thatcher but the capitalism that spawned her. ■

by Dave Stocking

LPYS CONFERENCE: GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS

EASTER WEEKEND IS the time when the Militant Tendency hold their annual bean-feast - the Labour Party Young Socialists Conference (LPYS). With the heroic struggle of the miners just behind it and rate-capping on the agenda, this was a vital opportunity for the LPYS to hammer out a clear and practical programme to mobilise working class youth against the Tory offensive.

However, the Militant don't consider this a working conference. To them it is just a rally to impress their periphery. As a result the LPYS doesn't function as a fighting organisation.

Long repetitive debates are bureaucratically chaired to ensure that opposition speakers barely get a look in. This year an emergency resolution calling for Kinnock's resignation over the miners' dispute was not accepted as it "wasn't an emergency". The usual debate apologising for the police ('workers in riot gear?') was taken to be more important.

Instead of serious discussion and the attempt to develop political answers to the delegates' questions, we were treated to anecdotes about YTS schemes or heroin addiction, a few statistics and regular calls for world socialism.

The fruits of this attitude were clear to see. After 1984's noisy debates with young miners bussed in from all over the coalfields, we had what was generally reckoned to be one of the worst conferences ever. Contrary to the Militant's figures there were barely more than 1,000 visitors with 69 fewer delegates than last year and an NUM caucus of only 15 young miners!

Militant's resolutions consistently refused to fight for action now, preferring to wait for a Labour Government with a Socialist Programme. This is true of their policy on everything from nuclear disarmament to gay rights.

A resolution on YTS, instead of condemning its use by Labour Councils and calling for a TUC boycott, didn't go beyond demanding trade union supervision and inspection with the topping up of wages.

When it comes to National Liberation Movements they sloganise about working class unity and the need for socialism, while refusing to give support to anti-imperialists such as the

PLO or IRA. This is justified by having an Irish Militant member speaking on the terrible strife these 'individual terrorists' help perpetuate.

Militant echo the prejudices of advanced Labourite workers who do not wish to side with Thatcher but naively believe it possible to impose British-type trade union solidarity onto the sectarian state.

However, Militant supporters will have to come to recognise that the anti-democratic action of Britain overseeing and enforcing partition has created systematic oppression of the anti-unionist minority. As a result they have been forced to give allegiance to forces such as the IRA or INLA who defend the nationalist community.

■ MISTAKES ■

The same mistake is seen in Militant's attitude to democratic questions such as defence of black section in the Labour Party. Instead of focussing the attention of youth on the roots of racism and its pernicious effect in setting white workers against black, Militant attack black sections for 'splitting the movement'.

Fortunately there were other groups at the Conference besides the Militant, the two main ones being Class Fighter (Socialist Organiser) and Revo (Socialist Action). Unfortunately neither managed to offer a principled revolutionary alternative for working class youth.

It was obvious that at this conference Revo effectivel' dropped any attempt to defeat the Militant politically in the YS. Instead they are attempting to organise a broad current of left Labourites, (possibly including the LCC) through a number of YS activists' bulletins - each a kind of young 'Labour Briefing'.

The politics of these bulletins is mainly, uncritical tailing of lefts such as Scargill and

Benn, with a strong current of feminism thrown in for good measure. Criticism of Militant centres on their refusal to campaign for the rights of oppressed groups, while the main core of their political degeneration - adaptation to Labourism - naturally goes unchallenged.

The new left, which the bulletins hope for, is intended to 'open up' the YS and side step Militant's main base of support.

This opportunist project will not work. The middle class milieu of 'radical' CLP's to which Socialist Action orient simply does not exist in the YS. Even if it did, the main task is to fight for real revolutionary politics, not a livelier brand of reformism.

Unlike Revo, Class Fighter at least claims to provide revolutionary leadership. But their Conference bulletin failed to make an analysis of the questions raised by the miners' strike - in particular the need for a rank and file movement to fight for solidarity action and a general strike.

Also despite their previous opposition to the demand, Class Fighter is now in favour of a working class women's movement, although they present this in a typically ambiguous way. Their Conference Bulletin talked only of 'an autonomous women's movement' in order to appeal to feminists. Most significantly they completely failed to mention the need for a revolutionary party.

What working class youth need now more desperately than ever is not a routinist and bureaucratic organisation pledged only to passing motions in the bowels of the Labour Party. We do not need an organisation too cowardly to openly fight for a revolutionary programme.

A truly revolutionary youth movement must turn towards the real struggles of youth, the fight to organise unemployed youth, the fight against police harassment of black youth, the struggles of women workers and the fight against the ever more real threat of an imperialist world war. Above all it must be clear that it cannot and does not try simply to transform the Labour Party, but fights for a real revolutionary workers' party. □

by John Stuttle

THE STORY OF CLAY CROSS

WITH THE CONFRONTATION between the government and the rate-capped Labour councils now entering its second month, it is instructive to look back at a previous confrontation between central and local government - Clay Cross in the early 70's.

During the 1960's the Labour group in Clay Cross stood on a programme of radical social reform or as David Skinner, one of the Clay Cross councillors dubbed it, 'practical politics in action'. Clay Cross, an impoverished mining town, had a strong Labour tradition since the late 1950's. Enjoying an overwhelming majority on the council, the Labour group carried out a major programme of slum clearance, and by 1970 had cleared 90% of all slum property. They also embarked on an extensive programme of home improvement and modernization, as well as increasing council house stock through the large-scale purchase of privately owned houses. In June 1972 they launched a campaign to 'run the private landlord out of town'. As well as a programme of Council house building they also introduced free bus passes for OAP's and the handicapped, free TV licenses to OAP's, and built three social clubs, and a sports centre.

SOCIAL REFORM

This programme of social reform was one of the targets of the Tory Heath government elected in June 1970. Their assault on the working class had three different aspects. First, to run down real wages through the use of inflation and the imposition of productivity deals. Secondly, to cripple effective union resistance by anti-trade union legislation - the Industrial Relations Act. Thirdly to cut public expenditure on social services in order to pay for tax cuts for business.

It was to partly fulfill the latter aim that the Tories passed the Housing Finance Act (HFA). This Act, which received the Royal Assent in July 1972, aimed to prevent councils subsidising additional public expenditure through rates rises, whilst holding council rents down. The Tories aimed to take one and a quarter million tenants out of rent control, and enable the doubling of



David Skinner surveys...

council tenant rents for five and a half million people by 1976. Through this Heath hoped to cut government subsidies by £200 - £300 million.

The HFA aimed to force councils to set a 'fair rent', but clause 50 made it clear what this meant, namely, a rent that represented "the return that it would be reasonable to expect on it as an investment."

The Act meant that Clay Cross was under a legal obligation to raise council rents by £1 from 1st October 1972. On September 4th the Council made clear its defiance by passing a resolution refusing to comply with the Act and raise rents. When the dead-line for raising rents passed, 42 authorities throughout the country were still

holding out against the Act. On 13th November Geoffrey Rippon, the Environment Secretary, issued a default summons on the Clay Cross Councillors giving them 16 days to issue notices to their council tenants informing them of the rent increases. This the Councillors ignored. In the meantime the District Auditor was sent in, and within a matter of weeks he had decided to charge the Councillors 'jointly and severally' for the losses that had arisen as a result of their 'negligence and misconduct' in not increasing rents.

They refused to comply and lodged an appeal. Needless to say the case was lost. The Councillors were ordered to pay £2000 costs and they were debarred from holding public office for the next 5 years. Leave of appeal was also refused.

The other main thrust of the Council's defence was equally ineffectual. They called a rent strike which was then called off 6 weeks later in order to raise money to cover legal costs.

COURTS

Although the Councillors resolutely ignored their debarment from office, as well as the order to raise rents, time was not on their side. They failed to learn the lesson of their previous encounter with the courts, and brought a case against Geoffrey Rippon and Herbert Harrison, the District Auditor, accusing them of being responsible for creating the situation where the Councillors could be surcharged, by delaying appointing a Housing Commissioner for a whole year. The essence of the Councillors' case was that they were being singled out for 'punishment'. Predictably the case failed, although leave to appeal was granted. Denning, who heard the appeal in January 1974 was scathing in his attack on the Councillors and upheld their debarment from office.

Back in Clay Cross the Councillors managed to erect a holding position against the government by continuing to refuse to collect any rent increases from their tenants, and with the co-operation of their rent collectors prevented the Housing Commissioner (now appointed)

from doing so over their heads.

Time, however, was running out. In April 1974 Clay Cross District Council was due to be amalgamated with Dronfield UDC and Chesterfield RDC to form the new North East Derbyshire District. In September 1973 the newly constituted (but not yet operative) council had voted by a majority of five to continue Clay Cross' policy of non-cooperation. However in March 1974, just before the new Council took over, this decision was overturned. The result was that rents could then be raised, effectively nullifying the previous 18 months of defiance on the part of the councillors. ■

by Ann Taylor



...the writing on the wall?



LIMITS OF INTRANSIGENCE

LOOKING BACK AT the fight against the HFA over ten years later it is easy to get the impression that Clay Cross struggled alone. Yet initially the number of councils which declared for a struggle were much greater. As with today's rate-capping debacle, however, deeds didn't match rhetoric.

In Sheffield in June 1972 100 labour Councils met to plan defiance and rejected Antony Crosland's pleas for compliance. Throughout the country's council chambers in the early summer councillors declared much along the lines of Camden: "So the Council won't impose 'fair rent' and it won't put up council rents this year". However only 42 out of 1,200 nationally were defiant on the October 1st 1972 deadline for compliance with the Act. By January 1973 only 6 were left, as the mere threat of legal sanctions forced one capitulation after another.

This political frailty served to emphasize just how important independent tenants' organizations were to resist a Labour climbdown. There were dozens of rent strikes by council tenants throughout 1972 and 1973. By the end most were against Labour Councils' attempts to impose the rent rises.

As in the case of Tower Hill Estate in Kirkby near Liverpool, resistance led to resisting tenants being thrown into jail for contempt of court. The attitude of most Councils to Tenant Associations was ambivalent. This was true of Clay Cross itself. Most of the 11 councillors didn't see the need for them in the early stages of the struggle.

SUPPORT

Why did the Clay Cross Councillors fail? Although they had widespread support from the community - 84% supported the rent strike and they did consistently well in local elections - they did not adopt a strategy of mobilizing the trade union movement against the Housing Finance Act. Instead they relied on trying to manipulate the legal system, collective defiance and sheer moral rectitude. Charlie Bunting, the Chairperson of the Housing Committee might boast, on hearing Denning's decision: "We have one judge, not those three in there; that's our conscience and our conscience is clear", but a clear conscience is no compensation for defeat.

The period 1972/74, during which Clay cross confrontation took place, was one of heightened class struggle in Britain. The miners had just smashed Ted Heath's pay policy in February 1972, and by July the question of a General Strike against the Industrial Relations Act, and in defence of the Pentonville Dockers, was clearly on the agenda. This was the very time that Clay Cross

was heading for its confrontation with the Tory government - the very month the Housing Finance Act received the Royal Assent! Yet no attempt was made by the Councillors to link the fight against the Industrial Relations Act with the fight against the Housing Finance Act and Heath's pay policy and to mobilize workers into an all-out class confrontation with the Tory government.

Within certain limits some councillors at Clay Cross - such as David Nuttall - recognized the importance of wider trade union support against the HFA. For example, Scargill pledged the S. Yorkshire NUM's support for the Council more than once, as did the Derbyshire NUM. But this bureaucratic pledge was never honoured.

What action was forthcoming was because tenants organisations had built up local contacts with rank and file trade unionists. Thus, when Tower Hill tenants were arrested in Kirkby for non-payment of rent three local factories went on strike the next day.

INTRANSIGENCE

The Clay Cross council's stand was distinguished by the degree of intransigence of the council. But they could never break out beyond the reformist political outlook of simple non-compliance with the state. Clay Cross is etched into our political memory because their willingness to take the personal consequences of non-compliance stands in stark contrast with the spineless fakery and careerists like Livingstone and Blunket who lead today's Labour councils, and who formed a majority twelve years ago.

But we also remember the fight because it lasted so long. This was due to the fact that the successful struggle of the miners in 1972 and the Pentonville Dockers against the Industrial Relations Court, forced the Tories onto the defensive on all fronts. Hence they proceeded slowly and cautiously against Clay Cross.

Only a revolutionary political force leading all these separate struggles into a unified fight against Heath and the bosses' state could have overcome Clay Cross' isolation. Moreover, only such a force could have prevented the dismantling of the successes of this period by the Labour Government after 1974.

More than a decade on from these events reformist moral intransigence has less capacity than ever to lead, or even begin a fight against a more ruthless and prepared Tory Government. The rate capping campaign of 1984/5 has served to underline the treachery of Labour's leadership and the impotence of left reformist resistance. □

Preaching surrender

THE INTERVENTION OF the national Labour Party leadership in the period 1972-74 was calculated to disarm the resistance of the councils to the Tories. As with Kinnock and Cunningham today, Wilson and Crosland then preached passivity: "Don't talk about defying the law - that is not only wrong in principle, it is not the best thing for your tenants" was Crosland's advice.

In May 1972 local elections Labour made major gains in some areas, such as Liverpool, on a specific pledge to resist the HFA. Given the general resistance to the Tory government on every front a united campaign could have turned the HFA into as dead a duck as the Industrial Relations Act.

Yet the NEC of the Labour Party issued a document stating that it had "decided that it is not possible to give advice to local authorities on a national basis." Instead, they counselled that appeals on an individual basis be launched and an attempt made to minimise the increase - a strategy which proved utopian.

As usual the Labour leadership's policy involved a rejection of rank and file opinion as reflected in Conference policy. At the 1972 Labour Party Conference, a resolution was put calling for support for the authorities defying the Housing Finance Act and for retrospective legislation from the next Labour government to relieve Councillors of any penalties incurred as a result of their defiance.

The NEC issued a statement saying that it could not guarantee that there would be any payment should such comrades be victimised and that it could "make no promise of any kind that it will prove possible". The NEC wanted the motion passed with Conference's acceptance of this qualification, which would have effectively nullified

the original motion. In the event the resolution was passed without the NEC's reservation, and against the advice of the Party leaders, by a majority of 4 to 1.

Despite the fact that this was now Conference policy, the NEC subsequently took legal advice and decided that it could not offer any promise of financial assistance - only the repeal of the Act by the next Labour government, and the removal of disqualification.

Nor did the Labour government, which came to power in February 1974, bring any salvation for the beleaguered Clay Cross Councillors. Indeed, its conduct was in flagrant disregard for Conference policy, and amounted to nothing short of back-stabbing. Antony Crosland, the new Secretary for the Environment, refused to extend the Labour government's rent freeze to cover the £1 rent rise being demanded of the Clay Cross Councillors. Furthermore, he refused to withdraw the Housing Commissioner unless the council obeyed the law! Finally, on 4th April just after North East Derbyshire District had taken over, Harold Wilson announced that there was no way that the government could underwrite the fines and surcharge against the council. In time-honoured fashion he stated: "The law of the land, however unfair, however oppressive, must be obeyed until it is repealed".

Although the NEC supported a regional fund to help cover the legal costs, the Councillors were saddled with fines and surcharges. Moreover the Labour government never honoured Conference policy to remove the Councillors' disbarment from office. To the ignominy of the Labour Party they were forced to serve out their time. ■

BIGOTS ATTACK WOMEN'S RIGHTS

ENOCH POWELL, inveterate champion of reactionary causes, has taken up the struggle against women's rights and the freedom of medical science to alleviate human suffering.

This is no surprise. The man spent the late 1960's inciting racial hatred and the early 1970's pioneering the early version of Thatcherite monetarism. Then he decamped to Northern Ireland to put himself at the head of Orange bigotry. Hence he makes a suitable figurehead for this crusade.

Powell's **Unborn Children (Protection) Bill** is a serious threat to all women. On its second reading it achieved a massive 172 vote majority. It comes up for its third reading on May 3rd. Whilst on the face of it its sole concern is with experiments on human embryos, it marks the beginning of a new onslaught on abortion rights.

The Catholic Church and its creatures - the SPUC and LIFE campaigns - went all out to get two million signatures on a petition supporting the Bill.

The Bill proposes criminal penalties to prevent "a human embryo being created, kept or used for any purpose other than enabling a child to be borne by a particular woman." Doctors or scientists who break this law will face up to two year prison sentences if the Bill is passed.

Powell and other supporters of the Bill mask their attacks with a fake concern for "life" and the "rights" of the "human individual". In fact they wish to trample on the real rights of actual human beings in the name of "life" that is only potential and rights that are entirely fictional.

Roger Freeman, MP for Kettering who presented the petition to parliament said "The newly fertilised human embryo is a real, living individual human being. The petitioners oppose all practices that discriminate against the embryo or violate his/her human dignity and right to life."

The Bill indeed rests on the idea that from the moment an egg is fertilised it becomes a human being. Its life, must, therefore, be protected in law.

The frenetic concern of SPUC and LIFE for the rights of a potential human being is in



marked contrast to their concern for actual human individuals. The Church teaches that the world is a 'vale of tears'. It has opposed or denigrated each and every attempt to fundamentally improve the human condition.

When humanity was largely at the mercy of natural disasters, from floods to famine, the Church insisted these were acts of god. They were punishments for sin which it was blasphemous to seek to avoid.

Humanity, armed with science and technology marched forward to conquer these evils brushing aside the hordes of black-robed parasites who fought progress every step of the way.

■ SUFFERING ■

For the working class this gospel of despair must be rejected. Human beings from the earliest days of our species have shown capacity to change our environment, our social organisation and our means of producing the necessities of life. The development of technology and science enable us to conquer disease and want.

Our concern should be to improve and protect the life of human beings. People like Powell and the Catholic Church who talk about 'life' being 'sacred' are not defending the real living humans on this planet - women who suffer

repeated pregnancies because they do not have the means to regulate them - or the children who do not have enough to eat and who succumb to disease because of exploitation and under-development.

If they kept their mystical ramblings to themselves and their unfortunate dupes, that would be one thing. But the Churches wish to impose their morality by law on all of us. They wish to use the fictional Rights of Human Life to take away the real rights of women, men and children.

How can we define a 'human being' and when does it have 'independent rights'. For us the answer is straight-forward. When it becomes a physically separate entity. When it is born and becomes an object of social care and begins social intercourse. Up to that point the rights and care belongs to the mother of whose body the foetus is a part.

To argue that from the time of conception human life has been formed involves an idea about life which rejects its social and material existence. It substitutes a mystical belief that a 'soul' has been created when two sets of chromosomes come together to form the fertilised egg.

■ CONCEPTION ■

One supporter of Powell made this quite clear. Harry Greenaway (MP for Ealing North) believes "that life begins at conception and that all life is made in the image of God".

How a fertilised egg resembles the image of god we will leave to the theologians! But a fertilised cell cannot be considered a human being in any way. No mysterious 'life' has appeared either since both sperm and ovum were living cells before fertilisation.

Yes, it includes the potential chromosomes and genes to create an embryo and then a foetus and then a baby. But between the start and the end of that process there are many other moments or new stages.

In fact, over half (60%) of fertilised eggs do not even reach the stage of implanting in the womb. Of those which do implant and create a pregnancy many more result in spontaneous abortion (miscarriage). In turn half of these are due to major abnormalities in the embryo which are incompatible with life!

An embryo or foetus is not yet a human being. It is part of a long process which can, in a minority of cases, lead to a pregnancy and childbirth, but in itself is no more than a group of cells. Their destiny depends on many other factors, most importantly the body of an adult woman and the conditions she exists in.

The pro-LIFE brigade argue that life begins at conception and, therefore, the embryo or foetus has equal rights with other human beings. More precisely they argue it has a right equal to the woman whose body it is in.

Even this argument is phoney. What they are saying is that its right is superior to the woman's. She has no right to decide what to do with her body. They regard abortion as murder and think that women should go through with each and every pregnancy regardless of their mental, social or physical well-being.

We believe that a woman who is an existing human with a mind, purpose and a real life, should be able to decide what happens to her body. She should be free to plan to have children or not, and to have an abortion if she has an unwanted pregnancy. Powell's Bill thus heralds a full blown attack on abortion rights.

■ CONTRACEPTION ■

Even contraception would be threatened because some methods work by interfering with implantation of the fertilised egg. The coil works by making the womb unsuitable for implantation. Therefore, under a law which states each fertilised egg is a human being, use of the coil amounts to a criminal act every month!

The 'morning after' pill which is a fall-back mechanism for some women works by interfering after conception. Future, safer methods may also be developed along new lines, and would be threatened by the principle established in Powell's Bill.

The Bill is also an attack on all women who would wish science to relieve them of the nightmare of their babies suffering from genetically transmitted defects. The Bill is a blow aimed at scientific research which is finding answers to these problems.

The development of techniques which can

help previously infertile couples to have children is very important. Yet unfortunately they are not available to poor women as it is still largely available only in the private sector.

Powell would ensure that these techniques become no better by banning research, and in fact test-tube baby techniques would be less effective under his rules.

Research on human embryos holds the key for many areas of health, particularly the prevention of genetic defects being passed on. It may help women who conceive but whose embryo then fails to implant. It will aid the development of new methods of contraception.

Of course research on these questions is in no way ideal. Some sections of the women's movement have supported the idea of legislation to control research which they see as being dominated by men intent on interfering with women's bodies.

Here again feminism plays into the hands of reaction as it does over the pornography and censorship issue. The problem with research in health and other areas is that individual doctors and scientists may be very committed to alleviating suffering. They are nevertheless motivated

also by financial questions.

Patrick Steptoe, who did the initial work on test-tube babies has made a substantial amount of money out of women's infertility, and is keeping the techniques with the private sector where he will make even more money.

Much research is funded by drug companies who aim to create a drug or technology they can then sell and profit from.

In order to have the most effective research guided by need rather than profit all drug companies and research establishments should be nationalised. Workers in the research industry, the NHS and health service users need to control the research projects and use of resources.

As revolutionaries we are fighting for all research and science to be directed towards alleviating suffering and making progress. Only when we achieve real control over such areas can this become a real possibility.

Its full and genuine realisation depends on the destruction of the capitalist system that spawns reactionary ideologues like Powell and condemns thousands of women and handicapped children to misery. ■

by Helen Ward



Trade unionists demonstrate against the Corrie Bill, 1979

ASSEMBLE
SHP
LINCOLNS
INN FIELDS
WC2

OPPOSE THE POWELL BILL!

DEMONSTRATE

SATURDAY 27 APRIL

27

Abort Powell's Bill

IT IS CLEAR that the Powell Bill is a reactionary move. Yet when it came to its 2nd reading 44 Labour MPs voted for it with only 41 of them against; the rest were conveniently elsewhere.

On questions like this MPs are always given a 'free vote'. They are seen as a matter of conscience even though the Labour Party is pledged to defend women's rights and has conference policy supporting free abortion on demand.

We must demand, through the Labour Party and trade unions, that the PLP puts a three-line whip on MPs and they are told to vote against the Bill.

One of the main organisations fighting against Powell is the National Abortion Campaign (NAC). It has been struggling against successive attempts to change the 1967 Abortion Act for the past 10 years. Each time an attack is mounted such as the White, Benyon and Corrie Bills in the 1970's, NAC emerges to lead the campaign. Although NAC and women in the labour movement succeeded in getting many trade unions and the Labour Party to take up the question of abortion, they have never succeeded in getting a positive commitment to extend the legislation so as to provide free abortion on demand on the NHS.

Whilst supporting the initiatives of NAC in fighting attacks such as Powell it is only honest to look at why an offensive campaign has never been built. NAC exists to draw together all sorts of people on the single issue of abortion. It is prepared to work with people such as David Steel when it comes to defending the 1967 Act.

But the key idea of a 'single issue' campaign based on tactical alliances generally means diluting the politics to suit these notables. When NAC fought against the Corrie Bill it dissolved itself into the Campaign Against Corrie and dropped the fight for free abortion on demand.

What is needed to secure the rights of all

women for NHS abortions is an offensive struggle of the working class with industrial action to force the government to concede. Relying on parliamentary alliances is useless as can be seen from the vote on Powell's Bill.

Obviously, pressure on MP's by lobbying and letter writing is necessary, but mass pressure is far more important than individual actions. Widespread strike action both against Powell and for the demand for free abortion have a hundred times more effect than petitioning would.

The Catholic Church have always proved better at petitioning than NAC. The Churches have the resources and coercion to get all their followers to sign. We have to reply to such massive reactionary lobbying with the methods of class struggle telling Powell what he can do with his petition.

Many will say that it is pie in the sky to argue for industrial action in support of women's rights. At the moment success is unlikely if we rely on the TUC leaders who shiver at the thought of leading any strike action.

However, we do not rely on these misleaders. We must try and build a movement of working class women based in work places and communities which can really force the trade unions to act.

The miners' wives organisation has shown us the potential of organising women. We must use this opportunity to launch a lasting, national organisation of working class women which will be fighting for women's rights on questions such as abortion, and contraception. The movement could also embrace the struggles for jobs, equal pay and adequate services.

Only with such a movement based in, and mobilising the power of, the working class can we ensure that moves like Powell's and the Government on such questions will always be well and truly defeated. □



ONCE UPON A time the AUEW was the jewel in the crown of the old style Broad Left. By diligent electioneering the Communist Party led Broad Left got the firebrand Hugh Scanlon elected as president of the AUEW. The terrible days under the right-wing leadership of Carron were said to be gone for good.

In 1978, a little over ten years after Scanlon took office, Terry Duffy beat the Broad Left to become President. He teamed up with the Salvation Army activist and union General Secretary John Boyd. Together they began to turn the AUEW into one of Britain's most right wing unions.

Boyd has since been replaced by Gavin Laird. Duffy is about to retire and hopes to be succeeded by Bill Jordan, divisional organiser for the Birmingham area. Laird and Jordan, if he is elected, are set on continuing the AUEW's rightward course.

NO STRIKE AGREEMENT ?

The gutter press campaign to secure victory for Jordan has already started. Back in August the scab loving *Daily Mail* gave a full page over to "the man who is about to defend Britain's second biggest union against all-out onslaught from the militant left." *The Mail* listed Jordan's charms - he favours Japanese (and EEUPTU) style single union, no strike agreements. He wants a "spirit of co-operation" with the bosses. In the Labour Party he has tried to conduct witch-hunts against the left.

The record of Duffy in office provides a sombre warning to militants of what they can expect unless Jordan is defeated. Internal democracy in the union has taken a battering with branch meetings going from fortnightly to monthly.

The members of Section 1 have so far been denied money due to them as refunds after the Executive abolished Superannuation Benefit for them. The refunds themselves were paltry in comparison with what members paid in over the years. Unemployment and sickness benefit has been scrapped altogether.

DICTATORSHIP

The Executive has ruled the union in a dictatorial fashion. It has changed rules via the National Committee instead of Conferences. It has ignored rulings of the Final Appeal Court in cases that have gone against it. This happened when John Boyd sacked two workers at the head office in Peckham.

He claimed they were using union facilities to help left-winger Bob Wright win an election he was contesting. The union's appeal court found the men not guilty. Boyd refused, with impunity, to give them their jobs back. On the other hand

TERRY DUFFY - BOSSSES' NARK

Boyd and Duffy blatantly used the union's journal, in violation of union rules, to get Duffy re-elected as President.

The whole purpose of getting an iron grip on the union is to tame the militants. Duffy hates strikes like the plague. They upset his plans for turning the AUEW into a company union. His speeches to lavish dinner parties, eg the Engineering Employers Federation, have made this clear.

STRIKES SABOTAGED

He has referred to strike action as an "out-moded concept". To prevent the members from taking action Duffy and Laird put forward the following proposed rule change for the Rules Revision Meeting this year: "Only the Executive Council and in the case of a general strike the National Committee may authorise or endorse the calling, organising, procuring or taking of industrial action of any kind whatsoever or the making of threats to call, organise, procure or take such action."

If this rule change ahead then the executive will have robbed their membership in factories throughout Britain of the right to take immediate action against the attacks of their bosses!

Duffy's record of sabotaging strikes shows that he practices what he preaches. After coming to office he was bound by AUEW policy to fight for a 35 hour week. He confined the campaign to one-day stoppages. He called the campaign off after getting a 39 hour week offer from the bosses and hailed it as a victory.

However, the gain was offset by his acceptance that less hours meant more work from his members. For the hour off the work, engineering manufacturing industry got a 15% increase in output.

The trade off involved a massive loss of jobs. The increased workload was accompanied by a drop in AUEW membership from 1,217,000 in 1979 to 950,000 in 1983 reflecting massive unemployment in the industry.

After this 'victory' Duffy went on to allow the AUEW Longbridge convener to be sacked by Michael Edwardes. He stopped his members striking for Robinson's reinstatement.

In the early 1980's he sabotaged a whole number of local disputes, notably Laurence Scotts. After a few months of this epic strike the Executive cut off strike pay and refused to spread the action.

TREACHERY

Since Thatcher's re-election Duffy's real triumph in treachery came with the Austin Rover strike in 1986. Desperate to prevent a link up with the miners, Duffy and Laird accepted Austin Rover's pay offer even though their members in the industry rejected it.

When AUEW members in Austin Rover struck, along with other unions, they were met with the bosses' use of the anti-union laws. Duffy and Laird were quick to act. A letter went out from them on November 6th to all Austin Rover Group full-time officials warning them "that under no circumstances must you be party to any action which purports that the Union is in favour of the current dispute..."

According to Laird, writing in the December 1984 union journal this was because the: "Executive Council had already made clear to our members its view that Austin Rover's final offer



Duffy accused Ford bosses of selling out after they awarded a higher pay rise than the one he had wanted to impose on them!

should have been accepted and that the strike should not have taken place."

Duffy and Laird complied with the anti-union laws. They also took government money to fund postal ballots. Both actions were in defiance of the TUC 1982 Wembley Conference decisions. Duffy would no doubt like to retire having done his best to get those decisions reversed this September. ■

by Pete Leyden



Derek Robinson - Architect and victim of the Broad Left

pay policy. On the Conference floor Scanlon, grinning defiance, stood up and cast the AUEW vote for Phase 3.

He followed this up in early 1978 by voting against supporting the Firemen's strike in opposition to Phase 3 at the TUC, then having taken a holiday in the Bahamas, came home and retired. Enter Duffy stage right.

This miserable tale cannot be explained simply by blaming Scanlon the man. It was the policies of Broad Leftism that shaped the man.

ELECTIONEERING

In 1967 the Broad Left based everything on getting Scanlon elected. They offered nothing in terms of using that election to transform the union into a democratic class struggle union. When the AUEW right-wing won the switch to postal ballots for all elections, the Broad Left had no answer in terms of real workers' democracy. John Tocher wrote in the Broad Left's former paper, *Engineering Voice* in 1971: "...the Postal Ballot is here to stay. The collective, left progressive movement must ensure this system works equitably and openly." (No. 8)

The Broad Left in the AUEW placed everything on the election of officials not in building

rank and file strength. *Engineering Voice* was a voice for the left officials not a paper organising the militants. It was infrequent and not sold widely. Broad Left meetings were not regular forums for planning campaigns. They were held mainly during election times.

Most importantly the policies of the Broad Left were based on a perspective of piecemeal reforms. In the 1970's in particular this resulted in the trade-off between Scanlon and the Labour Government. The feeble Employment Protection Act was deemed worthy of wage cuts for AUEW members in return.

At no point did the Broad Left organisation challenge Scanlon. It was not a rank and file organisation that could have done this. It became a frail network of election agents. It eventually withered into non-existence.

REBUILD RANK & FILE

The Broad Left hopes to revive itself around the Tocher campaign. We will intervene in that campaign. But we will fight against any re-run of the old style Broad Left. Against its purely electoral perspective and passive programme, we will fight to rebuild the shop stewards' movement in engineering as an authentic organisation of the rank and file. □

NO MORE LORD SCANLONS

TO PUT AN end to the horror story of the AUEW under Duffy's reign, the right's dominance must be broken. The question is how? After years of leading at best a half-life, the Broad Left around the paper *Engineering Gazette*, are putting up John Tocher to challenge Duffy's heir apparent, Bill Jordan.

A recent meeting of around sixty militants from the South of England met to plan the election campaign. While every militant should vote for Tocher and the other Broad Left candidates, a Broad Left dominated Executive will not cure the ills that the AUEW is stricken with. Many of the ills are a legacy of the Broad Left's former domination of the union. Hugh Scanlon prepared the way for Terry Duffy.

In 1967 the Broad Left succeeded in getting Scanlon elected President. His election platform promised major changes after the Carron years. In particular he had called for a meaningful national annual pay claim. Given the differences in earnings based on local agreements in engineering, this was an important unifying demand. No sooner was 'our Hughie' elected than he boycotted his own programme. The pay claim was ditched in favour of a three year deal.

In 1972 worse followed. The Tories were set to impose incomes policies. A national engineering strike could have dealt an early killer blow to their plans. In a deliberately provocative move the EEF broke off negotiation. The Broad Left dominated Executive retreated. They refused to call action on a national scale. Instead they recommended that each plant take action on its own.

Militants in Manchester and Sheffield did organise action. In Manchester 30 factories were occupied against a management lock-out. The struggle was bitter in Manchester. Scanlon refused to give national support. None other than John Tocher, in alliance with right-wingers, worked to settle the dispute on a factory by factory basis, leaving only five factories fighting on to the bitter end.

SOCIAL CONTRACT

By the time the Labour Government came in 1974, Scanlon had betrayed every promise made in his election address. Moreover he had been re-elected in 1970 for life, because of his age, and was not accountable in even the most minimal sense. Under Labour Scanlon worked hand-in-glove with Wilson and Callaghan to impose the wage cutting Social Contract.

Any engineering disputes that challenged Labour's income policies - the Leyland Tool-room strike, and the Heathrow strike were notable examples - were sold out by Scanlon. Worse, he mobilised his Communist Party lackeys in the Broad Left to denounce these strikes as adventurist and anti-socialist, so as to block rank and file support for them.

Scanlon's final insult to his members and favour to the bosses came in 1977. It put his elevation to the House of Lords beyond doubt. At the Blackpool TUC Conference the AUEW delegation voted to oppose Phase 3 of Labour's

THE KEY ELEMENTS OF OUR PROGRAMME ARE:

- Rebuild the AUEW branches as factory branches meeting in work time with no loss of pay.
- For shop stewards' committees in every plant; for District committees to be made up of shop stewards; for monthly meetings of all shop stewards in a district.
- For the annual election of all officials; for all officials to be accountable, recallable and paid the industry's average wage.
- Scrap the postal ballot; all elections and key discussions to be taken by mass meetings with voting by a show of hands.
- Break the block vote; for voting in the TUC and Labour Party on a proportional basis to reflect differences in the union in accordance with their support at annual conference; all delegates to be elected from the branches.
- For the amalgamation of the AUEW on a democratic basis; no merger with the EETPU as proposed by Duffy.
- Fight the capitalist offensive - no redundancies, cut the hours not the jobs; for workers' control of manning levels, hiring firing, speed of work and hours worked; open the books of the companies to workers' inspection; nationalise the entire engineering industry under workers' control and with no loss of pay; for the automatic recognition of all strikes as official; for occupations to fight closures.
- For annual national wage negotiations on the Minimum Time Rate to be brought back; for a 1% rise for every 1% rise in the cost of living as calculated by committees of workers and housewives.
- For real equality for women engineers - equal pay for equal work; open the union to women workers with places for women reserved on all committees in the union; for a democratic, fighting women's section.



AFTER BURYING THIER third leader in three years the Soviet

bureaucracy has taken the uncharacteristically bold step of appointing its youngest Politbureau member to the highest party post. Unlike his two predecessors, Mikhail Gorbachev should have ample time to make his mark before senility and death intervene. The real problem for him and his supporters, however, is whether it is possible for the Soviet bureaucracy to discover the means for reversing the symptoms of stagnation and decay in the system they preside over.

The victorious October 1917 Revolution crushed the economic power of the bosses and landlords. Through the mechanism of workers' councils (soviets) the working class put an end to the anarchy of capitalist production.

They overthrew the rule of the 'market norms' which sections of the Soviet bureaucracy wish to re-introduce. Before 1917 capitalist production demanded that the question 'how much profit' be the only guide to what was produced.

The isolated decisions of individual businesses could only find social expression in the market place. Here the anarchy and wastefulness of capitalism was truly revealed as certain goods found no buyer and elsewhere the desperate need for other goods went unmet.

As a result chronic shortages of basic necessities and huge reservoirs of unwanted labour were inherent features of pre-revolution Russia. These features blight the lives of countless millions in the imperialist and semi-colonial world today.

Naturally, having inherited economic backwardness, and hence scarcity of resources, the triumph of the plan over the market could only be gradual. Yet the revolution provided one indispensable condition for this triumph; namely, the conscious collective control of production nationally by the workers themselves.

PLANNED ECONOMY

Through their Soviets the rational calculation, *in advance of production*, of what goods are needed and in what quantities they were required became possible. This was, and remains, the goal of socialist production.

The history of the USSR provides ample evidence of the superior potential of economies based on post-capitalist property compared with economies ruled by the blind laws of the capitalist market. The First Five Year plan increased Soviet production by 250% in the late 1920's and early 1930's when world capitalism was reeling under the effects of severe recession.

Between 1928 and 1940 Soviet coal and iron production increased fivefold, steel production fourfold and chemical production tenfold. The economic system created as a result of the

overthrow of capitalism following the October 1917 workers' revolution was able to centrally allocate and deploy resources.

Thus it was able to withstand and eventually defeat German imperialism and rapidly reconstruct in the post war period. Between 1956 and 1960 Soviet national income was still increasing by an average of 9.1% a year. Such achievements are directly attributable to the dynamism and strength of an economy that is based on post-capitalist property relations.

Yet this planned economy also shows a tendency to stagnation that is itself the direct result of the political mechanisms that govern that economy and the whole of Soviet society. It exhibits unevenness and irrationalities that have their roots in the system of bureaucratic rule that Gorbachev now inherits.

In the 1920's and the early 1930's the working class and its political vanguard was systematically and ruthlessly deprived of political power by a privileged caste of bureaucrats who rallied to the banner of Joseph Stalin against Leon Trotsky. Since that day the institutions of the Soviet economy have been shaped in order to defend bureaucratic privilege and maintain the political oppression of the Soviet working class.

BUREAUCRATIC CASTE

The result is that the only force that has the knowledge and will to develop and extend the productive forces is deprived of political power over the planned economy. The plan's fundamental structures and mechanisms are the creation of the bureaucracy. This bureaucratic caste increasingly shows itself to be incapable of utilising the undoubted benefits of a planned economy beyond the stage of constructing a heavy industrial base and allocating resources to priority sectors such as defence.

Compared with the heady days of the 50's and early 60's growth rates have slowed dramatically. Last November the Soviet Press claimed that National Income was increasing by 3.1% and productivity by 4%. In January of this year those figures were down to 2.5% and 3.8% respectively. This marks a continuation of a downward trend in growth rates that have dipped to an average of 2.8% between 1976 and 1980.

Such growth rates are extremely bad news for the Soviet bureaucracy. Firstly, they make it all the more difficult for the Soviet leadership to meet the consumer needs of the Soviet masses. The shoddy or inadequate nature of most consumer goods is a permanent spur to popular discontent against bureaucratic rule. This is kept in check only by the regime retaining at least the semblance of gradual improvement.

Secondly, they place a considerable strain on the Soviet leadership's ability to match Reagan's war drive with an economy that is far weaker and more backward than that of US imperialism. This backwardness can be seen

in the economy as a whole. Agricultural productivity in the USSR is about 25% of the US level. Industrial productivity is about 60%. In the field of computers the USSR lags dramatically behind its capitalist rivals. The arms race demands that either the USSR accepts Reagan's global political terms or bends its resources of skill and high technology ever more towards the defence sector at the expense of the rest of the economy.

The 1985 budget includes a 12% increase in defence spending in the face of Cruise, Pershing and the Star Wars project. The problem facing the Soviet bureaucracy is to inject sufficient dynamism into the rest of the economy to both sustain the Soviet Union's defences and satisfy the material needs of the masses.

In the past the Soviet bureaucracy was able to offset some of those problems as a result of hard currency earnings from the export of raw materials. Oil exports have recently accounted for 80% of the USSR's foreign currency earnings. Such earnings were not only an important means of affording imported technologies from the advanced capitalist economies. They also helped to underwrite the Soviet economy, its arms burden and the Comecon economies that in general benefitted from a hidden subsidy of Soviet raw materials purchased at below world market prices during the 1970's. The Soviet bureaucracy is now facing problems on this front too. Official statistics admit that Soviet oil production fell last year for the first time. In short, the contradictions of bureaucratic planning are mounting. □



WHERE WILL GORBACHOV TAKE THE

director at every turn has to seek dozens of permissions, argue everything backwards and forwards." It is natural for the bureaucracy to look to the mechanisms of the capitalist market to solve the problems of their stagnating economy. Important sections of the bureaucracy advocated such a solution in the Khrushchev period. Hungary's 'market socialism' has received the quiet sanction of the Soviet bureaucracy. The post-Mao Chinese bureaucracy is unleashing the market mechanism as its key to modernisation.

They are looking to Gorbachev to give them far greater 'self-sufficiency' in their enterprises as their prescribed means of revitalising the economy. To this extent they want a degree of 'freedom' from the central bureaucracy. But they are also anxious that Gorbachev will 'free' them from the minimum guaranteed wage and job security that the Soviet system has historically been obliged to afford its workers.

The managerialists within the Soviet bureaucracy want Gorbachev to carry through a major decentralisation of the planned economy in order to give them greater leeway to act as independent economic units. Their views are prominent in the Soviet press. Fedorenko of the Central Institute for Mathematical Economy is openly advocating that the regime abandons central planning. Aganbegyan of the Institute of Industrial Economy is advocating the sweeping extension of managerial rights.

The problem however is not only that such an extension threatens the traditional cohesion of the central economy. It would also pose the even starker question of what norms should govern production, distribution and exchange within the Soviet economy if centralised planning is to be downgraded.

INCENTIVES NEEDED

The Soviet managerialists and their bureaucratic spokesmen (sic) look to "market prices" and "incentives" to govern the operation. All the evidence suggests Gorbachev agrees with them. In an April speech to industrial managers, Gorbachev criticised the Soviet economy for the fact that "one factory puts out an old fashioned product of low technical quality, consumer goods that do not correspond to what the public wants, yet still goes on as normal and sometimes thrives". His answer is to tie each enterprise's material rewards to innovation: "Whoever is producing goods up to the level of modern demands, he ought to have moral and material advantage. But if a factory's production is continually not meeting meeting quality standards and not keeping up to date, then that should inevitably tell on the material position of his workers".

The entire speech was couched in the terms of achieving managerial self-sufficiency: "We will not achieve the goal of self-sufficiency if the

director at every turn has to seek dozens of permissions, argue everything backwards and forwards."

It is natural for the bureaucracy to look to the mechanisms of the capitalist market to solve the problems of their stagnating economy. Important sections of the bureaucracy advocated such a solution in the Khrushchev period. Hungary's 'market socialism' has received the quiet sanction of the Soviet bureaucracy. The post-Mao Chinese bureaucracy is unleashing the market mechanism as its key to modernisation.

TERRIFYING ALTERNATIVE

The real alternative is all too terrifying for the privileged and deeply conservative caste. It would be for the working class to seize political power and democratically plan the economy in their own interests and on the basis of their initiative and experience. It is in that force and not the smug boardroom directors that the key lies to taking the planned economy forward.

However it is precisely the bureaucracy's fear of the working class that has historically inhibited the Soviet bureaucracy from embracing the full logic of the market.

Central features of the Soviet economy have been preserved on the basis of its non-capitalist nature to the direct advantage of the bulk of the Soviet working classes. That market forces have not been supreme means that housing and transport are extremely cheap. The state was subsidising meat, milk and dairy products to the tune of 48% in 1980. The 'laws of the market' would destroy these historic gains.

This way seems an economically attractive option to the most shortsighted functionary - food subsidies account for 10% of the state budget, their abolition could free new resources for investment - but it would arouse the anger of the Soviet working class. The Polish working class has served notice that a bureaucracy attempting to organise its economy on market lines is liable to find itself confronted with a working class organisation with the traditional means it resorts to in market economies - trade unionism and strikes. For that reason the Soviet bureaucracy is hesitant to embrace the Hungarian market model which Politburo member Romann pointedly described as "unique" at last month's Hungarian party conference.

Gorbachev and co hope to avoid working class resistance by increasing incentives to the most productive workers who remain silent about what Pravda called "much more serious measures against the lazy". Gorbachev called for a revival

ON TO A MARKET ECONOMY?

GIVEN THE PRESENT economic stagnation in the USSR it comes as no surprise that Gorbachev could state "we cannot remain a major power in world affairs unless we put our domestic house in order". But how can Gorbachev put his house in order? The system of bureaucratic planning has created a massive army of privileged bureaucrats who have little motive or taste for change. They have even less interest in socialist advance which would see their privileges eliminated as the workers manage the planned economy in the interests of greater equality.

Their hidden luxury apartments and curtained limousines are the ill-gotten gains of a caste of bureaucratic parasites. They have to try to keep the scale of their privileges, like the passes to their special stores, secret from the Soviet masses. The 'official' ideology of the regime which claims to represent a continuity of the communist tradition of Marx and Lenin cannot legitimise their power or wealth.

OFFICIALDOM CORRUPT

The last years of Brezhnev saw them able to flaunt their privileges and power rather more flagrantly. Corruption in their ranks became far more open and brazen. Yet it is precisely this giant caste of officials that govern every aspect of the functioning of the planned economy. They rely on the security apparatus (KGB) to stamp on all manifestations of opposition to their rule. They smother and stifle the real living potential of the planned economy.

Staring Gorbachev in the face therefore is the political problem of how to alter the means by which the bureaucracy, of which he is a child, administers a relatively ailing planned economy.

Gorbachev rose to power as a protégé of both Sustov (Brezhnev's ideological chief whose base in Stavropol was later administered by Gorbachev) and Yuri Andropov.

Andropov's short-lived attempt to solve the inherent problems of a bureaucratically planned economy were twofold. They give us some indication of the path that Gorbachev is likely to tread. Andropov's first watchword was 'discipline' - bureaucratic discipline over the workers. He instituted regular police snatch raids into shop queues, beer bars and steam baths in search of absentees.

In addition he brought in discipline over the most blatant examples of excess and inertia amongst the bureaucracy itself. One quarter of local party officials were sacked under Andropov in 1983.

Top Brezhnevites were not immune. As Cherenko's health failed and Gorbachev's star rose in 1984 so that crackdown increased its momentum. Moscow's top food store manager was shot for corruption. Brezhnev's minister of interior - Shchokolov - was stripped of his rank and died in mysterious circumstances. The press is regularly railing against corruption and evidencing executions and demotions as the fruit of the vigilance campaign.

Alongside Andropov's discipline drive went a major experiment in decentralising the Soviet economy. A limited number of plants were singled out for a significant increase in managerial independence to decide on supplies, products and outlets independent of the central planning agencies. The experiment is being hailed in the press as a success, with enterprises scoring productivity increases of twice the rate secured in the non-experimental sector.

A crucial base of support for Gorbachev lies

REVIVING DETENTE?



ON AN INTERNATIONAL scale the Soviet bureaucracy faces a series of contradictions no less acute than those that face it at home. In fact they all stem from the same root, from its role as liquidator of the political power of the Russian proletariat and of international proletarian revolution.

Since the mid-1930's the Soviet bureaucracy has played a consistently counter-revolutionary role in the struggles of the world working class and the anti-imperialist movements of the 'Third World'. In France and Spain in the mid-30's they sabotaged revolutionary situations, blocking the road to working class power in the name of the defence of democracy against fascism. As a result, fascism triumphed over a demoralised working class.

In Eastern, Central and Southern Europe at the end of the Second World War revolutionary situations were betrayed either through the imposition of puppet capitalist governments resting on the Soviet armed forces, or by disarming the armed partisans of the resistance movements.

In China and Indochina the stalinist parties attempted deals with their local bourgeoisies and with the major imperialist powers. It was only the offensive of imperialism itself that forced certain stalinist parties to defensively topple their enfeebled local capitalisms. Even then they did so only where the class struggle of the proletariat and peasantry had been contained and tied up in a bureaucratic strait jacket.

The result was not international proletarian revolution but a series of duplicates of the USSR. These states were degenerate from birth, headed by bureaucracies as hostile to international revolution as the Kremlin oligarchs themselves. Yet these bureaucrats - whilst they are saboteurs and grave diggers of the world revolution - still depend on it.

Without the objective aid which the class struggle of the proletariat and the anti-imperialist battles of the oppressed peoples bring to these bureaucracies, imperialism would be able to concentrate its vastly superior economic and military force on crushing and breaking up these states.

BLOCK TO REVOLUTION

Yet the full potential of this aid is itself undermined by the policies of the Kremlin bureaucracy and the stalinist parties. Instead of providing revolutionary leadership to the world's working classes, as did the early Russian workers' state under Lenin and Trotsky, the stalinist bureaucracy duplicates the programme of the Social-Democracy and the Labourites: parliamentary reformism and class collaborationist coalitions with bourgeois parties.

This is justified partly in terms of defence of the socialist countries by aligning "peaceful and progressive forces" against the warmongers. But it effectively blocks proletarian revolution which can provide the only decisive defence of the workers' states.

In the countries oppressed and exploited by imperialism stalinist policy is oriented to supporting reactionary regimes that are friendly to the Soviet Union.

Thus, far from Moscow being the 'centre of world revolution', it is the centre of a profoundly counter-revolutionary force within the world workers' movement. Yet despite this the Soviet Union, with its post-capitalist property relations and its armed forces, is still a historic gain of the world proletariat and therefore to be defended unconditionally against imperialism.

Its existence contributes to the strength of the world workers and anti-imperialist forces because it denies a vast area of the globe to direct imperialist exploitation. It economically and militarily gives a degree of support to states and peoples resisting imperialism. Fear of its strength and influence obliges the major imperialist powers to make concessions to their own working classes.

The Soviet - and other workers states' bureaucracies - however receive less support than they would were these states healthy proletarian dictatorships; that is living examples of workers' democracy and consistent helpers of the exploited and oppressed.

ANTI - WORKING CLASS

The repulsive features of anti-working class repression - from Hungary in 1956 to Poland today - alienate the western working class, making it easy prey to its own bourgeoisie's anti-communist propaganda. The support of the Soviet Union for various dictatorships in the Middle East has wrecked the stalinist parties there and disorientated their labour movements.

Last but not least, the Kremlin's world politics force it to rely predominantly on a huge standing army and enormous weapon system to defend it, not only against imperialism, but against its own working class.

A healthy workers' democracy would be able to rely in a large measure upon an armed militia of the working class. This would reduce the profession standing army to economically tolerable proportions. Instead the Kremlin has to maintain a ruinously huge military and police apparatus - the GPU, the 'militia' (in fact a capitalist style police force) as well as a huge standing army.

This military burden is an enormous drain on the resources of the planned economy. Unable to mobilise the conscious force of either its own or the international proletariat, the Stalinist bureaucracy is forced into an arms race with imperialism.

Imperialism's arms build-up against the Soviet Union forces the USSR to reply in kind or accept the terms of imperialism itself. The imperialist powers remain strategically committed to restoring capitalism in those states where it has been overthrown and to maintaining their grip on the semi-colonial world. That is the purpose and function of their nuclear arsenals.

ARMS RACE

There are a number of reasons why the Soviet bureaucracy is anxious at present to reach an arms limitation agreement with the West. Firstly, the arms race is placing an enormous strain on the Soviet economy. Not only is it extremely expensive but it also distorts the already highly uneven Soviet economy.

Despite one third of all state investment going into agriculture, Soviet farming remains backward and inefficient. In an attempt to improve food supplies the regime is calling on citizens with private gardens to bring their produce for sale on town markets and improving facilities for them to do so.

In comparison, however, within the same economy that fails to meet many elementary consumer needs, Soviet science leads the world in the use of high-energy lasers in nuclear fusion. An easing of the arms race would allow the bureaucracy greater opportunities to tackle the problems of the most backward sections of the economy.

The heightening of the Cold War tensions and a worsening of Soviet relations with the West has also threatened to cut off the flow of technological imports into the USSR. At present the bureaucracy has its eyes on Thatcher's Britain as a potential trading partner and provisioner.

Gorbachev's 1984 London visit was aimed at smoothing the way for a boost in trade and for improved relations with Thatcher. Pravda has recently praised Britain's international role. The Soviet leadership is particularly anxious to coax Britain into providing a plastics plant and a man-made fibre complex to boost its own consumer goods sector.

In order to prove that Thatcher was right when she said: "I like Mr Gorbachev. We can do things together" the regime has sacked the miners' union secretary Belousov who publicly declared his union's intention of stopping the transport of Soviet coal to Britain during the miners' strike.

Following in the footsteps of the Polish bureaucracy's scabbing, the Kremlin bureaucracy is signalling that it can be trusted to put its

trading and diplomatic interests before its formal allegiance to the working class.

The Soviet bureaucracy's drive to reach a closer accommodation with imperialism has major repercussions on Soviet relations with anti-imperialist movements and governments attempting to assert their independence against imperialism. Throughout the 1970's and 1980's Soviet military support for key Third World regimes saw the bureaucracy's influence spread in Angola, Mozambique and Ethiopia as well as Cuba.

SEMI - COLONIES

In its own way this also served to place a considerable strain on the Soviet economy. In the early 1980's Soviet subsidies to Cuba were running at 9 million dollars a day.

But it also damaged the bureaucracy's relations with the imperialist powers. All the signs now suggest that the Soviet bureaucracy has seriously re-assessed its commitments in the semi-colonial countries. It has carefully refused to become embroiled in Nicaragua to the evident displeasure of Fidel Castro who studiously absented himself from Cherenko's funeral.

Angola and Iraq are now openly flirting with the West. Mozambique has joined the World Bank and made its own non-aggression pact with South Africa. There is no evidence that the Soviet bureaucracy is actively discouraging the integration of these regimes within imperialism's orbit.

The Gorbachev regime has already made its commitment to improving relations with Peking clear and public. The highest level Soviet delegation was sent to China last December. A 1 billion dollar, 5 year trade agreement has been agreed and talks are continuing on normalising relations between the USSR and China.

MUTUAL INTEREST

The mutual interest in a form of rapprochement is understandable. The Soviet Union maintains between 300,000 and 400,000 troops on its Chinese border. Any easing of tensions that would lead to troop reductions in Asia could buttress the Soviet bureaucracy's defences against imperialism.

From the Chinese bureaucracy's point of view not only would potential troop reductions lessen their military burden but improved trade could bring with it spare parts and equipment for plant that was built in conjunction with USSR in the 1950's.

However the obstacles to a major improvement in relations remain considerable. The Chinese leadership plays the anti-Russian card as a means of obtaining maximum backing from the West. Soviet backing for Vietnam remains an obstacle to Chinese designs in South East Asia. The Chinese leadership is opposed to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Despite these the Gorbachev regime has good reason for seeing improved relations with China as being an important means of advancing its interests.

COLONIAL ARMY

The most intractable problem facing the new regime concerns the role of the Soviet Army in Afghanistan. The USSR sent troops to Afghanistan to prop up the tottering PDPA regime which was losing the civil war against imperialist backed reactionary forces on the USSR's southern borders. To that extent its armies supported the progressive side in the civil war.

However, the Soviet armed forces had no means of advancing the cause of those progressive forces. Under strict Soviet insistence the Kabul regime declared its willingness to undo most of the progressive measures such as land reform which had enraged the reactionaries.

More and more the Soviet Army took on the appearance of an army of colonial occupation, a factor fatal to the PDPA as a party of the Afghan proletariat. The result is that the base of the PDPA is weaker than it has ever been. The Soviet Army, despite 100,000 troops and indiscriminate terror of Afghan villages, has proved incapable of subjugating the rebels.

Its attempts to seal an agreement with Pakistan and Afghan emigre leaders, doubtless at the expense of the PDPA, have come to nothing. Gorbachev will be under pressure to take decisive action to settle one way or another a protracted war that is increasingly unpopular in the ranks of the armed forces themselves.

Either the total military occupation of Afghanistan and its assimilation into the USSR or a withdrawal could solve the Soviet bureaucracy's problems. What ever the case this would mean the end of the Kabul regime.■



by John Hunt

of the Stakhanovite tradition last December.

In his speech he was referring to Stalin's creation of an aristocracy of privileged shock workers in the 1930's whose work-norm busting achievements earned them large bonuses and the mortal hatred of the rest of the workforce whose work norms were readjusted upwards as a result.

Whether the lower paid soviet workers will be prepared to accept the insecurity and low pay for themselves in order to finance the more productive shock workers and successful directors is yet another dilemma facing the bureaucratic architects of managerial socialism. The increase in inequality that Gorbachev and his friends are keen to embrace could serve to further fuel the fire of working class discontent.■

Gorbachev's next move

If Gorbachev and his supporters are to bring about decisive changes they will have to act swiftly to get their hands on the key levers of bureaucratic power. Central for them here is to clean out the leftovers of the Brezhnev/Cherenko era in top posts and replace them with their own nominees. The new Party Congress due for later this year or early next will give them the opportunity to create a Central Committee majority supportive of Gorbachev.

All previous indications suggest that the swollen conservative bureaucracy will attempt to close ranks and block changes that could destabilise their rule and threaten their privileges. Those sections of the bureaucracy who oppose change will argue that decentralisation would undermine the rule of the central apparatus.

In turn, this may threaten to divide the bureaucracy along regional and national lines and thus make it more vulnerable to working class opposition. They will demagogically pose as the defenders of 'socialism' against the advocates of 'market forces'.

In their turn the managerialists will argue that change is a burning necessity. Under the cover of encouraging 'self-sufficiency' they will theoretically promise the Soviet working class greater independence and initiative.

At the first Central Committee that

Gorbachev presided over he called for the further raising "of the role of the soviets, the activation of the trade unions, the Komsomol and popular control". Such promises will seem attractive to sections of a working class that is deeply aware of the repressive reality and stagnating effects of bureaucratic rule.

Soviet workers must not allow themselves to become the footsoldiers of either bureaucratic faction. A dogfight in the highest ranks of the bureaucracy may serve to temporarily relax the bureaucracy's grip on society. In that case the workers can use that opportunity to organise their independent forces.

The task of revolutionary Marxists in the USSR is to win the argument with soviet workers that they can organise and fight for their own interests against the bureaucracy. They must argue that the interests of the working class lie in seizing political power in the USSR once again through a political revolution against the bureaucratic usurpers.

The historic gain of the October Revolution can only be defended and maintained when the planned economy is directly and democratically managed by the workers themselves. The only alternative is for the workers to see their gains ever more eroded by the USSR's bureaucratic leaders.■

ISRAEL IN DISARRAY

THE STATISTICS OF Israel's military defeat are telling enough: over 650 Israeli soldiers dead since the invasion of 1982, compared to 106 between 1967 and 1982. Of course, Israel's reprisals are vicious and indiscriminate.

As a consequence, having expelled 7,000 Palestinian fighters in 1982 (some of whom are returning), Israel has now to contend with 700,00 disaffected Shiite Muslims on its northern border.

Three years ago the Shias and Palestinians were at each others' throats and the northern border had been more secure than at any time in its 34 year existence. All that has now changed.

This defeat has shocked large sections of Israeli society and the withdrawal is supported by all classes. Even jingoistic papers like *Yediot Aharnot* have joined the withdrawal chorus.

Today 17% of new recruits are unwilling to serve in South Lebanon. Nor is the occupied West Bank untouched by these events. Lately there has been a marked revival in the Palestinian resistance there.

However, we need to remind ourselves of the original reasons for the invasion against which the military defeat has to be measured. First on the agenda was the aim of physically liquidating the PLO infra-structure in Lebanon, of halting the ascendancy of PLO influence, of stemming the tide of Palestinian nationalism, particularly in the occupied territories, by smashing their only independent voice.

To a certain extent, the Zionists have been successful in these goals; the military rout of the PLO has been followed by divisions and splits which have left Arafat's pro-Jordan 'moderate' wing very much in control - at least for the moment. Israel and the US hope to further encourage Arafat into public recognition of Israel's right to exist.

■ FAILED ADVENTURE ■

Secondly, with Egypt removed from the Arab military equation by the Camp David Peace Treaty, the strategy was conceived of neutralising Syria by bringing Lebanon, or part of Lebanon, into Israel's sphere of influence. With regional hegemony thus achieved, Israel hoped to incorporate the occupied territories into Greater Israel and dictate peace on its terms to the checkmated Arab states of the Eastern front.

But the Lebanese adventure has failed, the region stubbornly refusing to be reshaped, and Israel is now being forced back towards its own borders. Far from destabilising Syria, Israel has succeeded only in strengthening Syrian influence in the region.

Syria has even gone so far as to use the Shiite militia - Amal - to destroy the influence of the Sunni muslim militia, Marabitum, in Beirut. This was used by Arafat as a vehicle for rebuilding the

strength of the PLO in Lebanon. This manoeuvre has now created an enormous crisis with the Sunni Prime Minister Rashid Karani resigning his post.

In turn, this defection threatens to break up the fragile coalition of interests that holds the Lebanese state together. By Syria overplaying its hand Israel may still benefit out of the present situation. It may yet succeed in preventing the emergence of a unified, pro-Syrian and anti-Israeli Lebanese state.

For example, with the withdrawal has come the re-emergence of Christian-Muslim-Druze fighting. Samir Geagea has put himself at the head of an anti-Gemayal Christian opposition with a programme that amounts to breaking up Lebanon into different mini-states.

■ LABOUR SAYS NO ■

The widespread unanimity over the withdrawal from the Lebanon is partly cause and partly consequence of the National Coalition government put together out of the 1984 elections. The fact that Labour are back in office for the first time since 1977 helps to explain the disappearance of the independent peace movement which was so vocal in 1983.

Many 'friends of Israel', particularly in the British labour movement which has traditionally strong links with Israel, believe that the Israeli Labour party is a qualitatively better proposition than their right-wing Likud rivals, and that Labour is currently a prisoner of Likud in the coalition government.

Such illusions should be dispelled, for, in fact, any differences between these two parties are purely tactical, and Labour's commitment to the expansionist all-Jewish state has been demonstrated many times in the past. Thus it was that in last year's elections the Labour Party campaign slogans, promoted by full page advertisements stated:

Labour says no -
No to a return to the 1967 borders,
No to the uprooting of settlements,
No to negotiations with the PLO,
No to a Palestinian state..."

■ LIMITED DEFEAT ■

These four 'noes' reflected Labour's belief that Israel's security lay in the retention of massive 'security areas' in the occupied territories and in complete rejection of the PLO.

Settlement and expansion has always been promoted by Labour as a polite, pioneering activity. It was Labour that built the first West Bank settlements immediately after the 1967 war.



Whilst emphasising its desires for talks with Jordan, successive Labour governments handed over huge areas to Israeli settlers until the patchwork of Israeli and Palestinian areas that remained negotiable could not possibly appeal to anyone.

Finally, a further factor in limiting Israel's defeat is the continued solid support of the USA on the one side, and the importance of the surrounding bourgeois Arab states on the other. During March Mubarak of Egypt, Fahd of Saudi Arabia and the Jordanian Foreign Minister all went cap-in-hand to Reagan for money and political backing. They were politely shown the door.

The USA is confident that the bourgeois Arab states have little choice but to remain tied to the US and so there is little need for Reagan to diversify his basis of support within the Middle East beyond Israel.

Anti-imperialist fighters who justly take comfort from Israel's present setback must, however, come to terms with the unpalatable truth that the lack of political movement by Israel or America reflects the bankruptcy of the various forms of 'anti-imperialist' ideologies in the Middle East.

The pan-Arab movements of Baathism and Nasserism - so strident in the 1950's and 1960's - were left either broken, backed or fundamentally compromised by imperialism as a result of the 1967 war. Millions flocked to the banner of Palestinian nationalism after that point. However, a succession of defeats, culminating in the 1982

invasion of Lebanon, has left the PLO split with an Arafat majority on a pronounced right-wing trajectory.

■ FAILED IDEOLOGIES ■

To-day, the role of unifying the Arab masses across different Middle East states has fallen grotesquely to Islamic fundamentalism. But under its sign revolution has long turned to counter-revolution in Iran: the Islamic states of Libya, Sudan or Saudi hardly arouse the fervour of the oppressed by the force of their 'anti-imperialism'.

The crude and anti-democratic character of this ideology will place severe limits on its revolutionary appeal, notwithstanding the courageous actions carried out under the name of Militant Islam by the Lebanese Shiites.

Zionism and its godfather - imperialism - despite recent reverses, remains strong. Each variety of petit-bourgeois or religious nationalism has failed to fundamentally reverse the reactionary gains of Israel since 1948.

Only the building of a party of revolutionary Marxism, of Trotskyism, around the programme of permanent revolution could take advantage of Israel's present difficulties and dispatch Zionism to the abyss. ■

by John Rubinstein

HANDS OFF SUNDERLAND POLY

AT THE NATIONAL Union of Students (NUS) Conference this Easter a motion from the Executive was passed which aims at the suspension of Sunderland Polytechnic from the NUS. This threat will be carried out if, after a period of six months, the Poly has not reversed its ban on the pro-Zionist Jewish Society at Sunderland.

To understand the issues at stake it is necessary to go back a couple of months to a union meeting at Sunderland Polytechnic - attended by over 1000 students - which reaffirmed established policy that Zionism is racist. In response the Jewish Society immediately and provocatively inserted a clause into its constitution insisting that it would 'discuss and promote an understanding of Zionism'.

Given that the NUS at Sunderland already had a policy of 'No platform for racists and fascists' it was predictable that once pushed into a corner, the Executive would ban the Jewish Society. And so it did, setting up an alternative 'non-Zionist' Jewish society in the process.

The UJS labelled this a 'stooge union' and with national NUS and UJS backing organised an effective boycott and demonstration in Sunderland of a couple of thousand against the ban. The charge of 'anti-semitism' was hurled again and again at Sunderland Poly.

So what attitude should socialist students take? The first reaction must be to rally to the defence of Sunderland Poly against their threatened suspension. The fact is that the union has debated this issue more than once, and latterly in front of large numbers. If any political error has been made then those who wish to see it

reversed should mount a campaign on all the issues involved.

The action of the National Executive of the NUS is particularly deplorable. They have been quick to throw the rule-book at Sunderland for 'anti-semitism'. But when they had the chance to mount a real anti-racist campaign they attacked and sought to isolate the anti-racists; for example, during the long struggle to oust National Front organiser Patrick Harrington from the Polytechnic of North London (PNL).

Secondly, we need to be clear what is the nature of Sunderland Polytechnic's 'crime'. They are absolutely correct to recognise Zionism as a form of racism. The NUS and UJS denial of this is to be expected. But they have found good advocates for their position in *Socialist Organiser*. SO have argued that Zionism simply means 'support for a Jewish homeland' and that there is nothing inherently racist about that.

□ ZIONIST RACISM □

Of course, many people on the left in Britain, Europe and USA share the view of certain currents in Palestinian nationalism that a Jewish State can and should be recognised, but that it should and can be a state in which Arabs are allowed to live harmoniously alongside Jews.

But we are dealing not with utopian projects but the Israeli Zionist State as it emerged historically and as it now exists.

The small but disruptive colonial settlement of Jews in the Palestine Mandate of Britain in the

1920's and 1930's was part of a conscious political design of imperialism which, under the leadership of the USA, reached a fatal conclusion in the years 1945 - 48. The dispossession of land and the brutalisation of those remaining Palestinians was at the core of the creation of the Israeli state.

And the grand design of this project, ably and viciously fulfilled to this day: to subdue and fragment Arab nationalist opposition to Imperialist domination of the Middle East. The racism of Zionism ideology has periodically gone from legitimisation of the second-class status of Arabs, to the actual denial of their existence. ('There are no such people as Palestinians' - Golda Meyer)

Nor must we forget that Zionist racism corrodes relations between Jews in Israel. Today there is growing tension between the more privileged and established white Western Jews and the oriental - Arab and Black - Jews.

No, the error of Sunderland Poly lies in their chosen tactics for combatting Zionism. While *Workers Power* fights for 'no platform for Fascists' we do not support the slogan 'no platform for Racists'.

This is for two reasons. First, it blurs the qualitative distinction that divides racism from fascism. Clearly, racism can develop into fascism, or incorporate it. Rabbi Kahane and his Kach party are such a current within Zionism. What unites fascists, and thus poses such a threat to the Labour movement, is their aim to crush independent working-class and democratic organisations and propaganda and even liquidate their leaders. We oppose such movements everywhere and

fight to deny them public platforms from which they organise support for the suppression of democracy.

But racism permeates the whole labour movement from top to bottom. We applaud Sunderland Poly's determination to stamp out racism. Yet racists don't usually seek to destroy their unions for example. Rather racism sets workers against each other and undermines united action.

We certainly aim to remove racist leaders but by the exercise of workers' democracy. But the idea of 'banning' racism as such is 'unworkable' as it leads logically to the banning of racists when the best policy would be a political campaign against their ideas and policies.

Secondly, and connected, banning denies opportunities to mobilise and politicise students against racist manifestations. We believe it important to distinguish between cultural activities of the UJS and events which aim, for example, to apologise and sanction the present actions of Israel.

When the latter, we would favour mass demonstrations and protests to make sure the anti-Zionist message got through. If the opportunity is denied us then disruption of events may be justified in order to get a hearing.

Thus, we think Sunderland Poly should reverse its policy of 'no platform for racists' but only in order to redouble its efforts to combat Zionism wherever and whenever it raises its ugly head. □

by Richard Gerrard

SOUTH AFRICA ABLAZE

THE MASS DEMONSTRATIONS in Uitenhage in mid-April underline the continuing crisis confronting South Africa's racist apartheid regime. For eight months the regime has faced strikes, demonstrations and violent protests by hundreds of thousands of black workers. For eight months it has reacted with repression and brutality against its black opponents. The seven killed at Uitenhage are the latest in a list of victims that now numbers over 400.

This new phase in the struggle was ushered in last summer by two significant events. First was the total failure of Prime Minister Botha's new Constitution. This sought to bring coloured and Indian representatives into stooze, solidly apartheid assemblies. It left the black African majority (76% of the population) unrepresented. The almost total boycott by the Coloured and Indian populations rang the death knell for this particular piece of window dressing.

The second event was when black mineworkers took part in the first 'legal' strike in the industry as a result of the refusal by the employers to substantially improve the starvation level wages. In one day of strike action, ten workers were killed and hundreds injured as police and security guards attacked striking workers. That put paid to any illusions that the black trade union movement would be able to establish a 'normal' trade union co-existence with apartheid.

The struggle since the summer has centered on the largely black townships, especially those on the Eastern Cape. Protests at rent hikes, forced removals and police repression have been widespread. Much of the black anger has been directed at the black collaborators within the community who had participated in the township councils, set up by Pretoria as fake local self-government for the black population.

■ STRIKE ACTION ■

Every action has been met by increased repression, including the gunning down of a crowd walking to a funeral in Langa on the 21st of March. This occurred 25 years to the day after the massacre at Sharpeville, when 69 were killed on a peaceful protest against the pass laws. After the Langa massacre Botha instituted a judicial inquiry to assuage liberal opinion. But at the same time, the government announced a ban on meetings organised by the United Democratic Front (UDF), the largest anti-apartheid alliance, and 28 other organisations. Work boycotts are also outlawed. Meanwhile leaders of the UDF and the Transvaal Regional Stayaway Committee, which organised a regional two day general strike last November, are awaiting trial on treason charges.

Twist and turn as it may between cosmetic reform and repression, Botha's government in Pretoria is unable to find a solution to its problems. It is trapped by the contradictions within apartheid itself, with conditions made worse by the deepening problems within the world economy. The essence of apartheid is the forced maintenance of a migrant labour system. Black Africans are not citizens of South Africa. They are subject to a battery of laws preventing the majority having any permanent rights to settle in 'white' urban areas. Besides this, there are many inequalities in health care, education and so forth. This system has two important consequences. First, cheap labour is guaranteed to national and international capital. Second, better jobs and services are reserved for the white working class, which therefore gives its allegiance to the ruling Nationalist Party - representing the majority of the South African ruling class.



in South Africa. This meant less revenues from gold and a depreciation of the Rand. The recession that had hit the rest of the world in 1981 hit South Africa in 1984. An average of 12 enterprises a day closed. Inflation soared to 16% and the regime was forced to plead for a rescheduling of its 20 billion dollar foreign debt. Around 70,000 black workers in engineering lost their jobs in 18 months ending December 1984. Insolvencies increased by 30%. In all there was a 5% fall in business activity, the car industry being one of the worst hit sectors.

The underlying problems in the South African economy mean that it will not necessarily be able to bounce back with a recovery in gold prices. The high profit rates of the early 1970s were not and cannot be sustained. Labour may be cheap but its productivity is low. As a result South Africa has not been able to break into international markets to sell its goods. Its restricted internal market cannot compensate for this failing. The downward spiral is therefore likely to continue.

Here lies the dilemma of the South African rulers. They tried to alleviate this problem with a series of 'reforms' from the late 1970's onwards. These were designed to allow the growth of a skilled section of the black African working class to overcome the desperate shortage of skilled labour. This section were given limited rights to settle in urban areas instead of being shunted off into the black 'homelands' - the 17% of the land reserved for black Africans to scratch a meagre existence when not required on the labour market.

Reformers also hoped that this layer would provide a stabilising element in the townships and provide the base for the growth of a black middle class. The townships were to be allowed local 'self government' with their own Councils.

At the same time, Pretoria also moved to enforce 'peace' with its neighbours in southern Africa. It hoped to consolidate its economic domination of the region through further trade. This necessitated an end to the war with the liberation force SWAPO, in Namibia, which South Africa occupies. It meant forcing Angola to halt its support for SWAPO, and forcing Mozambique to prevent the African National Congress operating from its guerrilla bases there. A Pax Pretoria throughout the region would have extended the market and provided increased stability to attract further foreign investment.

Recent events in the black township of Ekangala, have graphically illustrated the failure of one set of 'reforms'. Pressure from the white population meant that the new section of semi-permanent black workers, with some residency rights, could not be settled right by the 'white' cities. Plans have therefore developed for an industrial, and black residential belt north east of Johannesburg, an outer belt of the Witwatersrand. Black workers had moved out and preferred the marginally more pleasant environment. Rents were higher, but skilled workers could afford them. A residents' association was formed and recognised. Minister Gerrit Viljoen boasted on US television about this shining testimony to the governments' reform-

ing policy.

Yet, within a few days of this speech last month, a protest meeting had been broken up and community leaders were in hiding from the police. The government had announced that in line with the plans for Grand Apartheid, Ekangala township was to be absorbed into the kwaNdebele 'homeland'. Its 5,000 residents would find what few rights they had removed.

The racist realities of apartheid - its dependence on the maintenance of a white population united across the classes by a white supremacist policy - have thwarted all attempts at reform. Further, the failure of South Africa to build and retain foreign investment in manufacturing industry means that there is no room for the creation of a layer of skilled black workers and 'middle class'. In 1983, exports of machinery, vehicles, instrumentation and other manufactured goods as a percentage of total exports was only 2.3%.

In these circumstances the strategy of the main opposition group, the UDF, is both inadequate and dangerous. Inadequate because it keeps alive hopes of 'reform' brought about by pressure from international liberal capitalists. The Kennedy visit, organised by the Reverend Alan Boesak of the UDF, was one example of this strategy at work.

The truth is the visit did not budge Pretoria one inch. It is dangerous because it diverts the working class from the tasks of the day. These tasks call for strike action against apartheid. The clerics, like Bishop Tutu, busy wooing international capitalist liberal opinion, will find such action damaging to their efforts. They will work to contain it. In so doing they will block the action necessary to destroy apartheid once and for all.

■ HIGH STAKES ■

There can be no hope at all of 'reforming' apartheid out of existence. The white ruling class have far too much at stake to make any fundamental alteration to their system. The mobilisation of the vast black proletariat in a political offensive against the regime, and the capitalist system on which it rests and depends, is the only road to liberation.

Only the proletariat has the social strength to cripple the regime. Only the proletariat can rally behind it the masses of urban and rural poor. To achieve such a mobilisation the proletariat needs a revolutionary party that will not compromise with apartheid and will not stop short of the complete destruction of capitalism in South Africa ■

by Sue Thomas

DOWN WE GO! \$ \$ \$ \$ \$ \$

THE RECENT ANNOUNCEMENT of a mere 1.3% increase in the Gross National Product of America sent shock waves through all the board rooms of the capitalist world. The fact is that since the middle of 1984 the American economy has been stagnating. Since then industrial production has fallen by more than one percent. The reason is not hard to find. It is the loss of profits resulting from the strong dollar.

The strong dollar results in a loss of profits in two ways. Firstly, due to cheap imports. Exporters to the USA sell their goods in dollars. When they convert these dollars back into their local currency they find the strong dollar results in more of their own currency. They therefore make an extra profit. This allows them to reduce the dollar price of their goods in order to increase their sales. Provided they do not reduce their dollar price too much, they still end up with an extra profit.

□ ON THE EDGE □

On the other hand, American producers faced with these cheaper imports are forced to reduce their prices and so they lose some profits.

Secondly, American exporters or their agents have to sell American goods in the local currency of the country to whom they are exporting. The strong dollar makes American goods expensive when converted into local currency. Accordingly if American exporters want to compete they have to reduce the dollar price of their goods. Once again this leads to a loss of profits.

Little wonder then that profits fell by 7% in the USA during the second half of 1984 (that trend is continuing). In manufacturing the fall was even greater at 20% leading to a fall in the rate of return from 10.8% to 8.4%. And this despite the lowest wage settlement since records began, a pitiful 2.6%, well below the inflation rate.

Cheap imports have torn the economy apart. No industry has been spared. From the so-called 'rust belt' industries like autos and steel, to the most prestigious industries like electronics, American companies have seen their market shares contract. In 1984 the electronics industry recorded its first trade deficit (USD6.8 billion). More depressing for the American capitalists, 46% of all high tech capital goods purchased in the USA were imported. These developments have led American capitalists to ponder whether America is being reduced to nothing more than Macdonald's hamburger joints interspersed by shops selling Sony equipment.

The decline of American manufacturing has added to the problems of the American banking system. Alongside manufacturing we must add the oil/gas industry and farming. The farming community alone owes USD220 bn, or more than double what Brazil owes. The international debt crisis has tended to distract attention away from America itself, where the components for a banking crisis already exist.

The American economy therefore remains poised on the edge of a new recession, despite the temporary relief afforded by the weakening dollar.

It is true to say that the recovery in the USA, largely the product of government deficit spending has helped the rest of the world capitalist economies out of their recession. In 1983/84 exports to America were the sole reason for the increase in world trade. Estimates vary, but it is agreed that between 50% and 70% of the growth of capitalist economies outside America, was due to the recovery of the American economy.

The world capitalist economy is therefore parasitically dependent on the growth of the American economy. This is true for rich country and poor country alike. In Japan where the internal market is stagnant, all industrial growth has come from exports to America. As for the indebted countries like Brazil or South Korea, it has only been their exports to America that has enabled them to avoid defaulting on their loans. A

collapse of the American economy can thus only bring all these countries down with it.

The petering out of the American 'mini-boom' marks a very real watershed between restrained rivalries and open hostility. The battle cry hanging over Washington these days is "trade war", both against Japan and to a lesser extent the EEC.

Of all the major capitalist nations, Britain has most to lose. Not only has much of its increased exports gone to the USA but the strong dollar has served to underpin the profitability of North Sea Oil (whose oil is sold in dollars). A further fall in the dollar will dramatically reduce the Sterling income the oil companies receive and hence lead to larger and larger falls in their profits.

□ STRUGGLES AHEAD □

The outlook for the world capitalist economy is therefore not nearly as rosy as Thatcher likes to paint it. It is in fact very bleak. That is why Thatcher had to defeat the miners and why she cannot make any concessions on rate-capping. It has only been the defeats of workers, and the resulting harder work, lower pay, fewer services etc. that has propped up the rotten capitalist system these last 15 years. But even these attacks are proving insufficient to restore capitalism.

If inter-imperialist rivalry deepens in the months ahead Thatcher will look to ways of restoring competitiveness. We can expect the moves to abolish wages councils to be brought forward. Even the maintenance of real wages for those at work - hitherto a plank of Thatcher's electoral success - will be reversed. Workers need to re-arm for the struggle ahead. □

by Derek Brown

NUM~PANIC AT THE TOP

THERE HAS BEEN no let up in the NCB's drive to take maximum advantage of the NUM's defeat in the Great Strike. They are pressing ahead on all fronts.

The NCB policy of sacking and victimising militants continues. Scottish director Bert Wheeler has not budged one inch on the sacking of 200 Scottish miners, most of whom were branch committee men. More men are now sacked in Notts than at the end of the strike. From Phurnacite in South Wales to Manvers, Manton and South Kirkby in Yorkshire, the picture is one of management deliberately picking on the best militants for the chop.

The management has taken advantage of the NUM's retreat and Nacods' shoddy betrayal last year to step up its closure programme. Two of the three workshops in Scotland, Lugar and Newbattle, are now due to close. This can only serve to confirm the rumours that the NCB have their sights set on axing two-thirds of Scots pits in the immediate future. They have already announced plans to close Frances colliery.

In Yorkshire the NCB has made plain its intention to close Ackton Hall. In South Wales, the NCB are repaying Emlyn Williams and Kim Howells for their sounding of the retreat by closing Bedwas and Celynen. They are set on closing St. John's and attacking Maerdy and Tower by refusing to link those pits underground. That the Nacods' agreement was not worth the paper on which it was written is shown by the NCB's refusal to put Frances and Bedwas through the supposedly 'sacrosanct' Review Procedure.

In every pit the management are doing everything they can to clamp down on discipline. They are showering new insults and indignities on the miners, changing shift times, work conditions and traditional payments wherever they can get away with it. In North Derbyshire, Area Director Moses, who pioneered scab-busing to break the strike, has written to the union laying down the terms of his post-strike regime.

In his letter he insists that "Branch officials



For how long will the rank and file applaud Scargill?

ever that it can flaunt the discipline of the union with the backing of the courts and the management and without serious resistance from the NUM nationally.

In the minority striking areas, the scab officials have been trying to make life hell for the ex-strikers by ruling them out of membership and trying to debar them from standing for office and from voting at branch meetings. They are understandably worried that these men of backbone have learnt so much in the strike that they could run rings around them given half a chance.

BACK PEDALLING

In the face of this offensive, the leadership of the NUM is continuing to retreat and back-pedal. Those 'left' officials most influenced by the Communist Party are doing their utmost to wash their hands of any responsibility for the defeat and to blame it on the very tactics of industrial militancy that launched and sustained.

In the April *Marxism Today*, Scots Vice-President, George Bolton, argued that the strike failed because "Much more attention should have been spent on trying to win public opinion." By this he meant not using militant tactics that would alienate 'public opinion' and underestimating the important role the Church could play, in the course of the dispute.

In the same magazine, Hywel Francis tries to draw the same lesson — that the strike failed because it did not create the 'alliances' necessary to mobilise public opinion against the Tories.

The area leaderships most influenced by these ideas are now actively promoting their own particular recipes for retreat. For example, regional (although they like to call them 'national') campaigns to defend 'their' particular coalfields. The South Wales Congress is one such example.

Not to be outdone, the Scots NUM is now singing a similar nationalist tune. At the April Scottish TUC, George Bolton called for the formation of a 'Scottish Assembly' which would "fight for Scottish shipbuilding, Scottish railways, Scottish steel and for the Scottish coal industry, and if we had a Scottish Assembly, the Coal Board could not victimise the 200 mining families." The Welsh and Scots leaderships are actively promoting further regional fragmentation in the vain hope that they will find local allies in the Church, the professions and even the Chambers of Commerce, which will keep their pits open where the national strength of the NUM failed.

OVERTIME BAN

These were the same leaders who led the way in urging the lifting of the overtime ban. They laughably claimed that it was a way of getting talks with the NCB going again. As Jack Collins of the Kent NUM quite rightly said at the delegate conference that lifted the ban, these men were betraying all the sacked men when they urged the dropping of the major sanction the NUM had against a management that was desperate to see coal production start as quickly as possible.

It would be wrong, however, to place all the blame for the retreat on the Right and the 'soft Lefts' of Scotland and Wales. Far too many 'Lefts' have been hiding their own backsliding behind a smokescreen of attacks on other areas.

Nowhere, for example, did the area leaders take up the challenge and mount a vigorous campaign for a 'Yes' vote in the ballot for a levy in support of the sacked men. In fact, the entire executive has been responsible for a major retreat in the face of the anti-union laws, the threat of scab unionism and the NCB's offensive.

According to the *Guardian*, it was none other than Arthur Scargill himself who, "broached the idea of a further deal for 1986" in April's pay talks with the NCB. The report has not been denied. If it was true then Arthur Scargill was already admitting defeat in the next pay round, trying to take what he could now and giving voice to the demoralisation and exhaustion that permeates the Executive.

The NEC's approach to the 1984 anti-union laws is another pointer to their defeatism. The NUM has always been committed to leading the battle within the TUC against compliance with these laws. Now all the signs are that the NEC intend to reframe the union rule book in accordance with those laws and in a manner that will mark a setback for those fighting to transform the union into a democratic fighting body.

The rule book will be redrawn, depriving the President of a casting vote. In that way Arthur Scargill, who always said he was prepared to stand for re-election, can become President for life under the 1984 law.

To protect national officials they will only be able to be removed by a two-thirds majority of the relevant conference, executive and individual membership. While this is presented as a means of helping the likes of Henry Richardson it could as easily be used as a means of protecting useless officials from the wrath of the militant rank and file.

LEGAL ATTACKS

No strike will now be made official unless it is sanctioned by the NEC. The published commentary says the alternative would have involved the executive in "positively refuting any industrial action in any area if they are to avoid legal action against the union." This is a cynical evasion.

In effect it means that area and pit strikes will be left, "unofficial" unless the executive says otherwise — and the local leaders will, therefore, be liable to action by the employers. Unofficial pickets will be similarly personally liable.

There is only one way the NEC could avoid 'refuting' industrial action. That would be to declare all strikes and pickets automatically official and fully backed by the union. The NUM leadership have quite deliberately done otherwise. Scargill and Heathfield, no less than Williams and Bolton, are framing the rules to clamp down on the kind of militancy that rebuilt the union in the late 1960's, the militancy which stopped Thatcher in her tracks in 1981 and spread the Great Strike of 1984.

In the name of protecting the union's official funds, militants are to be made prey to the bosses' courts. The extreme right wingers, Duffy and Laird have done exactly the same in the AUEW. It is a disgrace that Scargill is copying them.

Executive elections will now take place according to an individual ballot as Tebbit's law demands. This is a slap in the face for all those militants who were so rightly suspicious of the individual secret ballot as a means of deciding for or against a strike.

The individual ballot leaves workers to decide in isolation, separated from the knowledge of the collective intention and resolve of their work-

mates. It is readily open to the bosses' manipulation through the press and media. The alternative is for all decisions to be taken by a show of hands after full and democratic debate at mass meetings.

The proposed rule changes show that the entire leadership is running scared of the Tories and their courts. They are running scared of the militancy of the miners, should it rear its head again and throw them into another fight with the bosses. They are trying to lock the miners up back in their regions, protect the officials from rank and file control and outlaw local strikes and flying pickets by changes in the rule book.

The changes do involve provision for greater discipline over the union's component areas. However, the NEC's present stance towards the scab officials shows how right Lynk, Prendergast and co are to presume that they've got off scot free for their scabbing operation. There are no plans to discipline them and they know that they can call the tune in their own area, confident that Scargill does not want to break with them.

SCAB EXPULSION

After all, it was Arthur Scargill who toured Durham urging the area union to stop expelling their own scabs. Durham NEC 'left' Stobbs justified this on the grounds that it was embarrassing the National Union in its plans to stop Notts from breaking away. If it led to a strengthening of the Colliery and Allied Workers' Union then the Notts area might split with them. But you can't beat the scabs by being soft on them. Unity with Lynk and Prendergast means leaving the field clear for them to organise a company union within the NUM and gives them the option of breaking away when they, and their highly placed advisers, see fit. Better to have the fight out with them now.

The union's ranks must be cleansed of scabs, the scab officials should be banned from the NUM for life. This will prove in practice to all but the most hardened of scabs that it is only a union which fights that can truly represent the interests of the members against the NCB.

BUREAUCRATIC LINKS

Arthur Scargill and Peter Heathfield won't break with the scab officials. Neither are they prepared to organise the rank and file against their 'wavering' one time friends of the Broad Left, principally Williams and McGahey. After the overtime ban was lifted, Arthur Scargill signalled his opposition to the decision, "The position of Peter Heathfield and Arthur Scargill has been well-known. We have been consistently in support of the overtime ban and have made that clear." But such nods and winks to the militants are dishonest. In truth, Arthur Scargill has never been prepared to actively organise outside the charmed circle of officials against other members of that charmed circle. To that extent he remains a link in the bureaucratic chain that ties him to Taylor, to Williams and Bolton and, eventually, to Lynk, Jones, Toon and Prendergast. ■

by Dave Hughes



must accept that the manager and his staff will manage the mine and all operations there at." Complaints and grievances will only be discussed with the union as long as the pit is working, 'normally' to the management's satisfaction.

The NCB even want the police presence maintained to enforce discipline. MacGregor has warned that acts of "intimidation" against scabs will be dealt with immediately by the police, working hand in glove with the NCB.

This has given scabs the confidence to try to intimidate ex-strikers. In Betteshanger a major investigation was launched against twenty militants at the behest of a scab. The scab claimed that he had been hit about the head with a hammer. This despite the fact that doctors could not find a mark on him! No matter, his claim enabled the management to put the frighteners on the militants.

It is no wonder, then, that the open bosses' agents within the workforce are becoming more brazen by the minute. The scab breakaway Colliery Trade and Allied Workers' Union is openly recruiting in Durham with the tacit backing of management and in conjunction with the Notts, Leicester, South Derbyshire and COSA leaderships.

With the backing of Thatcher's adviser, David Hart, the Notts executive is more confident than



WOMEN'S CONFERENCE ~ TURN OUTWARDS

Midlands Women Against Pit Closures have called a National Women's Solidarity Conference to be held on 4 May. This important initiative should be supported by all women who have been active around the miners' strike and all other women in struggle.

The Midlands women explain: "The 1984/5 Miners' Strike stirred many of us into action. We started by supporting the NUM in their fight for jobs. We ended resolutely determined in our fight for communities, against this government and for our rights."

With the widespread attacks facing working class women over pay, jobs, services and privatisation, it is essential that this conference begins to organise a united fightback. A movement of working class women based in the workplaces, the unions and the communities must be built using the miners' wives movement as a spearhead.

The conference should discuss the ways to go out from the mining communities to reach other women workers. Meetings of women workers in hospitals and factories should be organised where miners' wives can speak and argue for a coordinated fight over jobs and services. Building practical links with other women in struggle such as hospital workers in Barking, teachers and council workers can organise better picketing, financial support and solidarity action.

The women who have supported the NUM need to discuss the relationship to the union. The NUM has offered individual supporters

associate membership by invitation of the Executive. Wives' groups should demand automatic rights to observe and speak at all levels of the union without having to be sanctioned by the Executive. The support given in the strike was not conditional. The wives' groups should get funding from the NUM - without strings attached! They should also fight for the NUM to take up questions facing women workers and give its full support to women in struggle.

Building a working class women's movement is an urgent task. We cannot leave it to the leadership of National Women Against Pit Closures who seem set on a subordinate relationship to the NUM. Pressure must be put on them - at their conference in the summer - to become a more democratic and militant organisation. ■

Details of the conference:-
Sat May 4th. 10 am.
Digbeth Civic Hall,
Birmingham.

(creche available)

Details and credentials from Womens Solidarity Conference.

7, Frederick Street,
Hockley,
Birmingham,
B1 3HE
(021) 236 1240

>>> CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Tuffin did the same in the UCW strike. Hammond of the EETPU, with TUC blessing, has fixed a single union, no-strike deal at Hitachi. Duffy is about to do the same for the AUEW with Nissan. Duffy is also taking £1 million government cash for union ballots in open defiance of the TUC. Meanwhile, Willis benignly watches the TUC's policy torn up.

The response of the left trade union leaders is helping the right. The NUM and ASTMS are busy redrafting their rules to comply with the anti-union laws. NUPE are busy singing the praises of the bosses' ballot system.

After CPSA Communist Party NEC members caved in to the government's threat to use the courts over the ballot issue one of them warned: "This does not mean that we accept Tory legislation in the future".

Nonsense. By accepting it in April the CP have ensured that the right will always win when it comes to bowing before the courts.

Ray Buckton and Jimmy Knapp are continuing their role of talking class struggle and carrying out rotten compromises and surrender. First they slapped in a wage claim for 33% and talked tough. Then they meekly accepted 4.85% claiming their members did not want to fight because they were demoralised by the miners' defeat. Yet 12,000 railway workers responded to the one day strike call in Scotland.

These fakery are past masters at dredging up reasons for why now is never the time to fight. Last year they left the miners in the lurch for a paltry one percent increase. The militant minority who want to fight will, nine times out of ten, find these heroes ranged against them.

That is why 'Broad Lefts' tied to these gentlemen are a non-starter in terms of the struggles ahead. The 'left leaders' are

increasingly advocating an alternative to 'old fashioned' trade union struggle; namely, broad popular campaigns aimed at wooing 'public opinion'.

Recipes for regionalist campaigns involving alliances with churches, professional people, the Alliance and even Tory wets are being advanced. 'Left' Jimmy Airlie of the AUEW has already called for forging of a "broad alliance of the Scottish People". Scottish jobs, it seems are to be put before those in the rest of Britain. Being Scottish is more important than being a member of the working class.

This culminates in the project of an Anti-Thatcher Alliance including all classes. The recent report of the all-party Employment Institute (led by Wilson, Callaghan and others) reveals that a popular front alliance to Thatcher is being considered even by sections of the ruling class.

To prevent the bureaucracy sabotaging today's class battles and Stalinist and Labourite reformism channelling them into an anti-working class popular front, the militant minority needs politics as well as organisation. To deal with the Tories economic strategy, the anti-union laws, and the vicious repression of the state, militants need political answers that pit the interests of the working class against that of the bosses. Only a revolutionary party committed to the overthrow not only of Thatcher but of capitalism itself, can arm the militant minority with the necessary politics. We need a party that has as its goal the establishment of a state ruled by workers and an economy planned to meet human need. To get it we have to ensure that every partial struggle is not only settled to the immediate advantage of the workers involved, but is also one more nail in the coffin of the capitalist system.

HELP US BUILD THAT PARTY
AND BURY THAT SYSTEM!

NCB ON RAMPAGE

Workers Power talked to an NUM member
from Renishaw Park, North Derbyshire.

WP: What has it been like in your area and pit since the end of the strike? What have the NCB been up to?

We've had an open letter from Moses (Area Director, WP). It says - "If current performance from Renishaw Park is not satisfactory and unless immediate improvement is brought about, I will consider what further action I should take. I will refuse any payment whatsoever to men at Renishaw Park who are failing in their responsibility to give a fair days work."

WP: Faced with this attack what has been the response of your union officials and the area leadership?

The attitude of our leaders is "we can't do nowt while all them blokes who are going through the lamp cabin keep accepting what the coal board are pushing on them. Until they stand outside this union box (his office, WP) you can't do anything".

RANK & FILE ORGANISE TO FIGHT BACK

DESPITE THE RETREAT by the officials, rank and file miners have not let the NCB or their officials have it all their own way. Westoe miners struck for 48 hours over the sacking of a workmate. Phurnacite picketed out Penrhwiweiber, Tower and Lady Windsor before the South Wales Executive got them back to work. Askern went on strike over bonus payments on April 17th. Scotland's Eric Clarke was given a rough ride when he told his sacked men to sign on the dole and, thus, accept their sacking.

However, the militants face an enormous battle both to prevent the officials' retreat and to offset the effects of the March defeat on the bulk of the NUM's rank and file.

There are signs of real demoralisation in the union's ranks. The levy ballot showed this to be the case. So too does the scale on which voluntary redundancy offers are being taken up. The NCB is confident that, at the present rate, voluntary redundancies will allow them to close certain pits without even going through a review procedure.

Bedwas has voted to accept closure. Five hundred of the seven hundred and fifty workforce at Frances are said to have accepted the NCB's redundancy terms. The NCB is claiming that close on 3,000 of Scotland's 12,000 miners have applied for VR. Hundreds took redundancy forms at one of Yorkshire's most militant pits, Hatfield Main.

Nothing in the NUM leadership's present policies has the faintest chance of stemming the mood of retreat. Sections of the membership will take every executive climb down as further evidence that no fight is possible. The regional divisions opening up in the NUM will leave targeted coalfields like the North-East, Kent, Scotland and South Wales to face the prospect of fighting alone or accepting defeat.

In that context it is down to the militants in the areas to organise the political fight to reverse the retreat and raise the fighting confidence of the union. The April 13th rank and file conference, attended by approximately 100 miners from Yorkshire, Kent and the Midlands coalfields, could prove a vital starting point here.

Hard work by some of the strike's veteran militants made this gathering possible. Given the tradition of reliance on officials which is so prevalent in the NUM, the fact of the conference taking place was an important achievement in itself, one which we unreservedly welcome.

In Workers Power's view, however, the conference owed it to itself and the NUM membership to hammer out a programme for rank and file action against the NCB on all fronts of their offensive. Most of those who attended thought this was premature. However, the conference did commit itself to building a national rank and file movement that would campaign for the re-instatement of the sacked miners (no one else is organising such a national campaign) and for those miners who are class war prisoners.

The fight to re-introduce the overtime ban, agreed by the conference, will be an important part of this campaign. It will prove a thousand times more useful to the sacked lads than the calls coming from sections of the leadership that they should sign on the dole and wait for a Labour government to re-instate them! □

Our secretary told me he'd had a telephone call from the Derbyshire Secretary asking him what he was doing about this twilight shift they've put us on.

The Area Secretary says "what do you mean what are we doing about it? We'll accept it!! WP: How do the best militants feel about the NCB's attacks and local secret deals by the union to get some men their jobs back?

A lot of them are going along with the don't rock the boat line. There's just an odd few here there who are disgusted by what's going on. The majority of the officials have told them more or less not rock the boat and to keep in line. The hard militants seem out on their own and can't seem to do anything.

WP: What about the scabs who broke the strike early on?

They seem confident but they are keeping a low profile. The few branch meetings they've been invited to they have not attended. I know they're confident because in the end they are in the majority in Derbyshire. They are very pally with the management.

WP: Are you in favour of expelling the scabs?

Definitely. Earlier on I thought about it and wasn't sure. Now I am. While we've got them, we'll never have a national NUM. They'll always try and divide us - especially the super scabs. We should do something.

They ought to be confronted if they still want to be in the NUM. If they do they ought to behave like NUM members and they ought to be made to pay for their crimes in this strike.

WP: Do you think there has been backsliding on the part of the leadership at a national as well as a local level?

Yes; definitely. In some areas more so than in others. But there must have been some backsliding altogether, even on the NEC. On the 50p levy it didn't matter which way the vote went. The National Executive was off the hook. Cos if the vote went no - like it did - people like Jack Taylor could say 'Look at what your own blokes have done'. They'd throw it in your face.

If they'd voted yes, the NEC wouldn't have to do owt about the sacked men. It got them off the hook whichever way it went. It wouldn't look bad on them.

On Rule 51, I tell you most of the militants were going barmy about it. They were expecting - everyone was saying - 'When are they going to use it?' If they did use it, they could nip the scab union in the bud. It was took out for nothing if they didn't do it.

The militants couldn't understand why it wasn't used. Then they got round to thinking that it might be used against us. If they didn't use it for scabs then who is it for? - those who are rocking the boat.

WP: What do you see as the main tasks facing rank and file militants?

The main task now is to have a rank and file movement to take up the tasks the NUM won't take up. I'm a bit disappointed that this has not come about yet with all the talk being more or less about amnesty. If we're not careful that could become the be all and end all of everything.

It's got to get bigger and its got to join up all the areas. Its got to change the NUM so that we can definitely have another go again when the Tory government wants to go for pit closures.

I think what should be at the top of the list for the rank and file movement is not amnesty but pit closures. Potentially the rank and file movement is fantastic. It could grow. I'm a bit sceptical of how it is at the moment, but its only after one conference.

I was upset that the first resolution didn't get through. I still think it can be good if we get enough delegates from all the areas. The miners are very down and they need something to look to. I don't think they'll get it from the top or the branches. They need to see that something is going off. They need to see that we're not just going to lay down.

WP: Will there be problems with the national executive over trying to build the rank and file movement?

I think there could be problems because I don't think the NEC would be very pleased about it - because its more or less telling them that they're not doing their job right, and I think that's right. That's why we need this rank and file movement to keep arguing with these people at the top and keep them on their toes!

We need to push them into what we want and what we want to fight for. They just want to carry on the same way. ■

workers power

Strike to stop rate-capping

LEADERS OF THE rate-capped councils plus Liverpool met Patrick Jenkin on April 17th. They appealed once again for a relaxation of the spending limits. Once again, Jenkin sent them away with a flea in their ear.

But what else could they expect? By that stage only eight of the original seventeen councils were still refusing to set a legal rate. The speed and manner of the Labour collapse could have only confirmed him in his resolve. Days earlier Haringey council was the latest to capitulate with a 15% rate-rise.

Two weeks earlier Lewisham Council Labour Group's campaign collapsed amidst scenes of pure farce. The Labour majority failed to turn up to their own Council meeting thus allowing the Tories to set a legal rate! The Councillors were detained at another meeting to decide on their own legal rate.

Some Labour Councillors expressed satisfaction afterwards that the Tories had done their dirty work for them. Unfortunately it is not these fools who will suffer the consequences of redundancy



and privatisation which their political cowardice will inflict on working class people in Lewisham.

Labour and union activists should bring these people to

account immediately. Their lame excuses and assurances should be exposed for what they are: pathetic rationalisations for political cowardice and impotence that is the hallmark of Labourite reformism. Some are unnerved by the prospect of court action bringing their municipal careers to an end.

called 'hard left' around Ted Knight (Lambeth), Hilda Keen (Hackney) and Margaret Hodge (Islington) claim they will stick it out. Yet Hilda Keen welcomed the High Court decision of April 16th demanding that Hackney set a rate on the flimsy ground that the judge gave them 6 weeks to patch up their differences with Jenkin!

The bolt hole of even these 'hard left' heroes is to save their reputations by being voted into splendid isolation. Meanwhile, the rest of us pick up the bill in terms of lost jobs and services.

CRIPPLED

All are crippled by their inability to politically organise a national campaign of resistance based on all-out industrial action by the unions. By muzzling the rank and file and using house-trained local union officials in a mere propaganda war the councils have refused to mobilize the only forces the Tories would be impressed by.

Nor can we place any trust in the remaining Councils! Sheffield's David Blunkett, new 'critical convert' to Neil Kinnock, has long been pursuing a tactic of deferring the setting of a rate until Jenkin comes up with a compromise. Referring to the April 17th encounter with Jenkin he said: "After the meeting the council have every intention of setting a rate. If we had given way several weeks ago we would have been accused of simply not trying. We are trying to get a better deal and delay is a tactic to try and get the secretary of state to be reasonable."

A few of those left in the fray claim to be engaged in more than such cynical posturing. The so

called 'hard left' heroes is to save their reputations by being voted into splendid isolation. Meanwhile, the rest of us pick up the bill in terms of lost jobs and services.

Yet it is not too late for the unions to launch an offensive against the Tories and the Rates Act. Indeed it must be done immediately before more councils bottle out. Nothing short of immediate all out strike action by all local government unions will shake the resolve of the Tories.

STRIKE ACTION

Already many trade union branches have voted in principle for strike action to defend jobs and services. And the newly formed National Local Government Co-ordinating Committee, an alliance of shop stewards across all Council unions, has pledged joint strike action if any Council or worker is hit by the effect of government grant cuts or rate-capping.

But there are two major weaknesses with the trade union response to date. First, there is too much dependence for a lead on the Council Chamber. As a result, the initiative has been left with Councillors too long; faced with their collapse the unions must act independently now.

Strike action is the only weapon which will restore some of their 'resolve'. We cannot continue to rely on the unreliable. We must further demand of them that they refuse to pay the interest charges to the banks and that they put their resources at the disposal of the stewards' committees.

Second, the threat of strike action is being defined as selective action in some quarters. This is partly because of the harmful effect of withdrawing services has on the recipients, partly because of a fear that some sections of the workforce will not respond to the call.

Yet the blame for this lies squarely with the union committees who by and large have not taken the resolutions and argumentation back into the workplace. At best

they have left the argument at the stage of convincing people what 'good value for money' council services are.

Of course, not everybody will heed the call for action. But the possibility of splits developing in the ranks will be greatly reduced if all decisions are taken at mass meetings where the arguments for all out strike action can be explained.

Some who are fearful of taking action reason that in the wake of the miners' defeat, we are powerless. That is not so, particularly if the rank and file quickly learn the lessons of the miners' strike.

First, total closure of all services will produce a terrible hue and cry in the bosses' press and TV because of the devastating effect it would have on the lives of millions of people, sadly, many of whom are worse off and defenceless.

Naturally, Government and media will blame local government workers. But we will be demonstrating to the rest of the working class just how essential the services are - the very services which Thatcher and Jenkin plan to savage.

The argument about where the responsibility lies will provoke a political and constitutional crisis. After all, these Councils were elected, some re-elected, precisely to defend services. Many workers who voted Labour will support us. More will join.

SAD TRUTH

This support is critical. Thatcher has been crowing that not one group of trade unionists came out on strike in support of the miners. This sad truth holds the key to the miners' defeat and to our potential success. From the word go, local authority workers must organise to spread the strike to win solidarity action and not simply argue for cash, important as this is.

Public meetings should be called by Joint Shop Stewards' Committee Committees and Trades Councils for this purpose. Delegates from local government must speak at shop stewards' meetings, tenants' associations and factory gate/workplace meetings. They must explain to workers why we are forced to take action. The case for supporting strike action to win a speedy victory must be put.

ACTION COUNCILS

Action Councils must be built out of such public/trade union meetings including those already in action such as the teachers. If such a campaign does not speedily become a mass force - with street demonstrations drawing in the whole working class population into mass defiance of the hated Tory Government then it can be isolated and ground down by media pressure and legal harassment.

Crucially though, the argument must be taken into the private sector. Most working class families depend on local government for services at some time in their lives. Strike support from the private sector could hit the bosses in their pockets.

In combination with the inevitable political crisis, this could bring great pressure on the Tories. Only this course holds out the chance of snatching victory from the jaws of defeat. ■

Open the books

ONE OF THE most criminal aspects of the whole rate-capping debacle has been the deliberate deception involved on the part of the council leaders. Six months ago we were told that 1984/85 was the year to fight because there was no way cuts could be avoided.

Even now the remaining 'hard left' insists, at least in private, that the Tories' controls make it impossible to juggle with finances, levy the maximum rate and thus avoid job and service reductions.

Rank and file union support was gained largely on the pretext that the limits of 'creative accounting' had been reached. Yet since Reg Race's GLC budget became the excuse for Ken Livingstone's retreat, workers are being told the opposite as each council caves in.

In fact Leicester led the way in this quick change act - 'discovering' the possibility of making a budget. Now Haringey even had the gall to claim that after all the dire predictions they have come up with a 3% growth budget!

What cynics! What contempt for their own workers whom they treat - like their finances - as so many figures to be manipulated. During the campaign the financial officers

of each council have made public in the unions just as much or just as little as they felt was expedient. Only a narrow clique of council leaders and officers knew then and know now what the real position is.

What do they expect the reaction to be next year when the Labour councils plead bankruptcy once again, when they claim 'crunch time' again. The effects of crying wolf like this is to sow apathy, cynicism and demoralisation amongst the council workforce and the local labour movement.

When the Tory wolf comes for these Town Hall heroes they will call for mass action in vain. Council workers should not let themselves be deceived in this way. The Joint Shop Stewards Committees across the country should demand that the councils completely open the books. We do not mean glossy briefing documents to a few union leaders, we mean full access to all the financial accounts of the town hall, a full laying-bare of the capital assets and current spending of the whole council. This will be an important step in the direction of the unions taking full control of this and any future local government campaign. □

MRCI conference

AT EASTER THE Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International held a five-day school and Conference. Delegates from the MRCI sections in France, Germany, Ireland, Britain and a Chilean comrade participated in the discussions.

Present also was a delegation from the IKL (International Communist League of Austria) who have opened discussions with the MRCI with the aim of affiliating to it.

Discussions ranged from the international aspects of the British Miners' Strike to the crisis of the Pinochet regime in Chile.

All sections of the MRCI as well as the IKL had participated in serious solidarity work with the miners in 1984/85. Speaking tours and fund-raising in France, Germany, Ireland and Austria were organised.

School sessions included the Irish National Question, the General Strike

tactic, the origins of the Popular Front in France, the nature of Women's Oppression and the tasks and nature of a Fighting Propaganda Group.

The MRCI commissioned a series of major documents for its full conference in the Autumn. These included theses on Stalinism, on the Irish National Question and resolutions on Nuclear Power & the Ecology Movements and Defence of the USSR. In addition a major International Economic and Political Perspectives document was commissioned.

In the coming months the MRCI sections will be continuing the work of winning support material and moral for the sacked and imprisoned miners.

The discussions and written exchanges will go ahead with the IKL as well as the discussions agreed with the GOR, the RWL of Sri Lanka and the Bolshevik-Leninists of Germany.

All sections of the MRCI are convinced that its Autumn '85 Conference will mark a new stage in the struggle to build an international tendency of revolutionary communists.

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