

# workers power

30p/10p strikers

Monthly paper of the Workers Power Group

## IT IS NO TIME FOR DEFEATISM



**THE DEFEAT OF the miners' strike has not had the effect that many commentators expected it to have. Certainly the left in the unions and in the Labour Party are in retreat. But Thatcher's great victory has brought her little joy - as yet. The Tories are trailing third in the opinion polls. They suffered serious set-backs in the county elections.**

The Alliance parties are making serious inroads into the Tory vote. The Tory 'wets' have organised a group of 'rebels' around Francis Pym. The CBI and leading industrialists are restive and demanding changes in government economic policy. And this in the midst of what *The Economist* calls "the nearest thing to a trouble free boom that (Britain) could expect from its usually anxious and sluggish economy." (17.5.85)

### THE ALLIANCE

*The Economist* reports a growth amongst politicians of all parties, and a majority of MPs, of the view that the rise in unemployment can only be halted by "more public borrowing and/or faster monetary growth". Despite Nigel Lawson's bullish rebuttal of these proposals before parliamentary committees the faith of the ruling class in monetarism is obviously flagging.

In the circumstances where it appears that both forces of left and right seem to have stalemated one another in the miners' strike, the forces of the centre are enjoying a surge of popularity. The Alliance is making inroads into the middle class voting base of the Tory party. Kinnoek and Hattersley have steered the Labour Party into a centre-ground position. Their emerging programme for Labour in the 1987 election is only a hairsbreadth from the Liberals'. The centre-right in the TUC - with its policy of avoiding any challenge to the Tory anti-trade union laws is gaining ground.

Yet it would be very foolish indeed for militants to adapt their perspectives and fundamental tasks to the present situation, as though it were going to continue for the next two to three years. Yet many on the left are preparing to do just this. They interpret Labour's modest recovery in the polls and the Tories' confusion as presaging a two year election campaign to kick out the Tories. Ken Livingstone, Tom Sawyer and whole host of ex-lefts have rallied to Kinnoek on precisely this perspective. Their view is that militant trade unionism has 'failed' and that the key task now is to build a broad popular alliance to vote Thatcher out in 1987/8. The Eurocommunist CPGB and those they influence in the Labour Party, clearly believe that this alliance will have to be broadened yet further to include the Liberals and the SDP. Many reject this with great force now, but if Labour cannot electorally marginalise the Alliance in the next year or so then this view will gain ground.

Some people will cynically point to all this as confirming the famous "pendulum theory" of British labour movement history - ie that periods of trade union struggle give way inevitably to periods of parliamentary political activity. Whilst as a theory it is worthless, as a description of successive periods it is true enough. The causes lie in the weaknesses and contradictions of trade unionism on the one hand and parliamentarism on the other. Trade unionism, even militant trade unionism of the kind represented by Arthur Scargill, cannot inflict a decisive, final defeat on the ruling class and its state. At best it can, as it did in 1972 and 1974, open the way to a Labour Government. But now we live in the era of mass unemployment, anti-union laws and with a huge paramilitary police force to back a determined Tory Government with an unpregnable parliamentary majority. Union militancy that jibs at becoming openly political and which does not go all out to lead the whole working class into a general

offensive against the government stands little chance of success. This was the real lesson of the failure of the miners' strike.

In contrast the old right wing leaders of the Labour Party and the unions, and the new right (the Kinnoek supporters in the unions as well as in the Party) are trying to bring home the message that Scargillism doesn't work, because it "went too far". That is what all the crap churned out by the likes of Ken Livingstone about "vanguardism" and "macho-militancy" is all about. We have to be clear, whilst defending Arthur Scargill's militancy every time against the wave of right wing critics - that his tactics did fail. But not because they went too far, because they didn't go far enough.

Nor is this an idle question of analysing the past. The 'new realists' who think Thatcher will be stopped by opinion polls, by by-election defeats and by the labour movement passively accepting the next round of Tory attacks are the real day-dreamers.

### PUBLIC ORDER LAWS

Thatcher will respond to the danger of defeat - and she needn't go to the country till 1988 - by using her next years to step up the attacks on the labour movement. Draconian new public order laws are planned to give the police even greater powers than they had in the miners' strike. The right to demonstrate, to hold mass rallies, will be at the discretion of police Chief Constables. The picketing laws will be hardened yet again. The Tories are planning an offensive on wages and the public sector which will make their past attempts look feeble. The next phase of rate-capping and attacks on local government will be far more serious than this year's. **The attacks will not diminish they will increase.** Those who say the lessons of 1984/5 are to avoid confrontation, are announcing in advance that they will



## BREAK LINKS WITH APARTHEID STATE!

The apartheid regime in South Africa is struggling to contain the massive upsurge in workers' struggles across the country. The 'normal' methods of brutal repression, far from destroying the mass movement, have in fact strengthened it.

In early May Andreas Raditsela, a senior steward in the Chemical Workers Union and Vice President of the Federation of South African Trade Unions was bludgeoned in police custody. He died shortly after of head injuries. Raditsela and his union had just achieved a successful struggle for reinstatement of thousands of workers in the Sasol State Oil Company who had been sacked after a general strike in November last year.

Andreas was only one of the recent victims of Botha's regime. In the last nine months over 350 blacks have been killed by security services in the townships. On March 21st at Langa, during the funeral service for those killed in a previous massacre of demonstrating workers at Uitenage, 20 marchers were shot by police, many in the back as they tried to flee.

This was how the South African state, to the day, celebrated 25 years since the Sharpeville massacre. Further protests led to the occupation by the military and police of a number of workers' townships south of Johannesburg with more killings. The Minister of "Law and Order", Louis Le Grange, justified the deployment of 7,000 armed troops and police by proclaiming South Africa "was moving into a potentially revolutionary situation."

Le Grange could well be right. South Africa is facing an unprecedented recession in a period where the black trade union movement has never been stronger. The various Trade Union Federations have a membership

of well over 600,000 today compared to a mere 40,000 in 1973. Unemployment now stands at over 3 million. Along with short-time, it condemns black workers to grinding poverty in a country they are entitled to little social security. Worse it means being shipped off to one of the apartheid state's barren and poverty-ridden "homelands".

The recent smashing of a major strike by goldmine workers, where 17,000 were sacked by the "progressive" employers of Anglo-American and "Anglo Vall" Corporations, demonstrated how the apartheid state is fundamental to protecting the employers' profits. The army's storming of occupied miners' hostels was immediately followed by the forcible transportation of striking miners back to their "homelands" or neighbouring countries.

The British ruling class is up to its neck in helping to bolster this filthy regime. Its little wonder that Thatcher plays host to Botha, when Britain still controls 55% of all foreign investment in South Africa - over \$8.7 billion. The massive struggles of the black trade unions, the treason trials of the democratic opposition leaders of the UDF and the constant atrocities of the Afrikaaner regime against the black workers of South Africa, means that the British trade union movement must redouble its efforts to aid the smashing of the vile apartheid state.

\* Fight for material support from British trade unions to the black trade union struggle in South Africa.

\* Smash British links with the apartheid state.

\* All out on June 16th Anti-Apartheid demonstration, 12 noon, at County Hall.

be for immediate and total surrender when these attacks come. They will be for a propaganda war only, to turn the viciousness of the Tories into votes against them in the future. Even this expectation is a mirage. Labour's vote is a shadow of the real strength of the labour movement - ie of its political and trade union fighting ability. If, in the next years, the unions, the councils, the constituency Labour Parties and the other political organisations of the left are defeated or worse, surrender without a fight, either Thatcher will recover her electoral ground or the Alliance will storm to power. The idea of beating the Tories and the Alliance by drugging the working class into passivity and by Labour pinching the Liberals' programme is a disastrous illusion that must be fought every step of the way.

The miners may have been beaten in a great battle. They are now suffering brutal attacks. But they were right to fight and they and the whole labour movement is in a better state because of their battle. They make a striking contrast with Jimmy Knapp whose response to a bosses' onslaught on jobs on the London Underground is to call a strike without any campaign or organisation of his members and then to

gratefully throw in the towel after one day! The problem is not that there is too much "vanguardism" in the labour movement, it is that the spineless leaders of our movement are more interested in retreating than organising their members for a fight.

The Great Miners Strike organised tens of thousands of pickets and active women supporters. The 2,000 miners' support groups created a militant minority in the Labour movement ready for action. We will need these militants in the coming struggles. They must be organised in every union into militant rank and file movements. The miners' support groups must help build these movements. They must group together to continue supporting the miners in the present and coming attacks they face from the NCB. They must get involved in and help link up the other struggles taking place.

They must help resist and turn the tide against the wave of defeatism from the rotten leadership of the labour movement. These bureaucrats sold out or sold short the miners. We can expect nothing but sabotage and betrayal from them in the coming months. We must take up now with the greatest urgency the building of a National Rank and File Movement. ■

# BY THE RIGHT - MARCH!

REALIGNMENT IS A very fashionable word at the moment. A quick look at a dictionary will give you a plain English definition. It means changing sides or changing one's position. The after-effects of the defeat of the miners and the collapse of the principal Labour Councils in the rate-capping struggle has made changing sides very fashionable in the ranks of the Labour Left.

It has encouraged Kinnock and Hattersley into stepping up the tempo of ditching the progressive elements of Labour policy in favour of a good old-style right-wing Labour manifesto based on promising little and intending to perform even less.

Kinnock has weathered the storm caused by his backstabbing of both the miners and the local government struggles. He hardly faced a storm in a tea cup. Hattersley leaves the hymns of praise to legality and the attacks on the 'loony left' and the 'dafties' to Kinnock.

Ex-poachers make the best game keepers. Hattersley has the serious job of banging together a new 'realist' policy for Labour in alliance with the New Realists of the TUC. Labour's 'Jobs and Industry Campaign' is a kite for just such a policy.

## SOCIAL CONTRACT

What does this policy mean? It is a new version of the Social Contract. Hattersley makes this clear enough (in the June issue of *New Socialist*) "I want to see trade unions and government sitting down in opposition and agreeing what is mutually desirable". The same old rhetoric of the 1970's social-contract rubs shoulders with the same old cynical denials that this is just a re-hash of the old 'incomes policy'. "Without exceeding more old-fashioned than normal, its very important to not think about it in terms of wage restraint. My package is frequently misinterpreted as a form of wage restraint. It includes that, but more." (our emphasis)

Hattersley positively relishes the lesson that Thatcher has taught the rebellious rank and file of the unions who smashed the last wage restraint in 1978/79. "Now I think the rank and file is much more amenable to partnership than five years ago. The trade union member thought five years ago that having free collective bargaining, as advocated by Mrs Thatcher, could make them better off. They've discovered that some of them are better off, but most of them are not." Compare Hattersley's message for the employed working class with his message to the bosses. To the workers he says: "We have got to appeal to the civilised and compassionate majority and say that you will have to do less well in order that there might be a reduction in unemployment."

To the bosses he says: "There has to be a high level of profits because we will not get the investment without high profits. One thing the Labour Party has learnt is not to worry about the level of profits, but the use to which profits are put." Then follows the old chestnut of pressurising the bosses to re-invest in industry via a profit levy.

Hattersley offers virtually nothing to the unions in exchange for this. One million will be taken off the dole queue - if the economic situation allows it. He will not even unambiguously promise the repeal of Thatcher's Anti-Union legislation. "We have to look at the legal position on its own merits" he promises.

## LIB-LAB PACT

Hattersley's policies cannot lightly be brushed off as those of one individual or of Labour's Right. Kinnockite Peter Hain has gone into print in the *New Statesman* calling for clear, coherent socialist values. Sure enough they include 'Incomes Policy' as "No government can avoid having a policy for at least the 40% of workers on the public payroll."

Of course he dresses this up as a means of helping the low paid. What Labour Incomes Policy is not sold in this way? After all, says Peter Hain, "Traditional trade union collective bargaining cannot achieve this."

Despite Kinnock's tirades against David Owen and his assertions that parliamentary majority or not Labour will-if it is the largest party - form a government - he and his followers are trimming Labour's programme to one that the Liberals could support. They could do so because it is not a hairsbreadth different from their own. At its best this is the Ramsay MacDonald strategy - take office and present a programme acceptable to the Liberals. At worst it is a basis for a coalition with them with one major hurdle in its way. Labour, are very loath to grant electoral reform and proportional representation.

Kinnock would prefer a Lib-Lab pact. But if the Alliance get nearly the same vote as Labour, or if they get more, then Labour may be unable to prevent an Alliance-Tory (minus Thatcher) government or even a grand coalition. Whichever particular option materialises Kinnock will be able to swindle Labour voters and the rank and file of the unions out of a whole series of important reforms (like repeal of the anti-union laws) on the simple grounds that the Liberals won't have them.

# AIRER, BETTER BRITAIN



Pig in the middle?

Kinnock claims the credit for Labour's very modest electoral victory and is using it to stifle criticism and move the party to the right. It is a lure which has drawn Ken Livingstone towards his camp. Livingstone now claims "I am not building support to challenge Kinnock, but winning support for policies. We have in Neil Kinnock a Labour leader who is infinitely open to persuasion." (*Sunday Times* 26 May) Perhaps but by whom? Certainly not by the left. Livingstone has suddenly rushed into the *Guardian* and the *Times* to explain his conversion. His capitulation on the rates issue is hypocritically presented as some sort of conversion to participatory supportive feminist politics. In a long confessional interview with Beatrix Campbell, the high priestess of Eurocommunist feminism, he is ritually absolved of his past sins - most notably 'virility'.

## SEXISM

How this will go down with Kinnock who openly proclaims himself part of the 'balls' wing of the party is far from clear. Quite how low the Euro's and the soft left have fallen is to be seen in this fundamentally sexist analysis.

Why is courage, fidelity to principles, willingness to take the lead, preparedness to stand alone when you believe you are right, even willingness to sacrifice job, career and even one's life supposed to be virile i.e. male qualities?

Why is femininity to be associated with being supportive (i.e. not criticising someone who has sold out) with compromise and retreat, with letting down your allies and pleading weakness? Livingstone and Campbell in fact adopt these repulsive sexist stereotypes.

In *Marxism Today*, the think tank of the new right in the labour movement Bea Campbell questions Livingstone "Success carries a vocabulary of heroism, martyrdom, sacrifice; another virility test?" and he replies "I think that is a very strong part of the left tradition, because there were times when people did die for the cause."

Were? Five miners have done so in the last twelve months. Dozens languish in jail! Hundreds have lost their jobs. What a pair of repulsive petty bourgeois egotists! The miners wives showed a hundred times more courage, sacrifice, and heroism than these two and in doing so struck more of a blow for women's freedom than all the feminist scribblers will do in a lifetime.

Far from being afraid of 'vanguardism' the working class needs a bigger and better vanguard of real fighters - women and men. The young miners and the miners wives showed us the people who can build such a organised vanguard - a rank and file movement and a revolutionary party.

It must be organised to stop the betrayals being prepared by Judas Kinnock. We can leave it to the likes of Livingstone and Campbell to whisper in Kinnock's ear. We should fight to ensure that they lose every shred of influence amongst the mass of the Labour Movement. ■

# KINNOCKITIS RUNS RIOT IN NUPE

THE WHOLE TONE of the NUPE conference this year was set by the first speech of Tom Sawyer. He is deputy General Secretary, NUPE's representative on Labour NEC and a top Kinnockite. He told the delegates that their job was to return a Labour Government because then we could end low pay, privatisation and repeal the anti-Trade Union legislation. We can then - 1988? - help the miners by introducing a non nuclear programme. In the meantime NUPE members must be united behind the executive's policies.

Every speech and resolution backed by the executive highlighted the practical meaning of this new found unity with Kinnock. The first casualties of this shift to the right were the Militant Tendency. Conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of their expulsion from the Labour Party. This is a far cry from last years conference resolution which called on the executive "to campaign forcefully against witchhunts in the Labour party".

The second casualties were those groups of Health workers who are in struggle at the moment. Conference consistently voted against any of them being given a platform.

The executive found it easier than in previous years to isolate militants and push through spineless policies. They wanted the conference to climb down on all battle fronts - on pay, privatisation and the anti-trade union laws.

The pay issue is always hotly debated in NUPE because the union has so many members on poverty line wages. The executive produced a document which they motivated as their definitive statement on pay. It is a disgraceful document.

In the section called 'building the campaign' there is not one mention of industrial action. Instead of plans for fighting now they concentrate on three other questions. Firstly, 'we must have a long term strategy', secondly 'we need to be realistic about what can be achieved' and thirdly 'we have to link short term pressure through pay negotiations with longer term plans for government action on poverty pay'.

The document blithely recommends a two year campaign on the issue. But the envisaged campaign will not be against the Tories. Instead it will be aimed at NUPE's own members with the object of winning them to realise the need 'to elect a government that cares about low pay'. Bickerstaffe told the conference explicitly that the executive was not calling for strike action but for what he called a more 'mature' approach.

Many of the members don't have such short memories. They remember 1979 - the winter of discontent - and the fact that it was a caring

Labour Government that was trying to impose cuts. Unfortunately the majority of conference delegates gave no voice to this memory.

Bickerstaffe described privatisation as being the heart of Tory policy. But he then proceeded to rip the heart out of ever resolution that called for national action against privatisation. Every day the privatisation offensive is increasing. The bosses are taking on one unit at a time and thus making a generalised fight back more difficult to organise.

However it has been met by pockets of resistance. The determination and courage of the women at Barking, Scarsdale and Addenbrookes ensure that these struggles continue. But there has been no national attempt to link these struggles together. Neither Barking nor Scarsdale militants were allowed to address the conference during the privatisation debate.

Militants did argue for the executive and conference to fight for national action from the members. In reply Bickerstaffe argued that strikes can only be called if we know we can win them. The executive will leave NUPE members isolated and severely weakened.

Eventually the executive tried to turn the conference into a jamboree dedicated to winning a yes vote in the ballot on the political fund. This is yet one more example of how the NUPE leaders are running for cover. Last year's conference called for "non-compliance with employment legislation where this conflicts with the interests of our members." This year these very words were used to justify compliance with this part of the anti-union laws.

The resistance to the executive was minimal. The propaganda of the Broad Left Organising Committee (BLOC) did not openly criticise the leadership's record and its betrayal of its members in struggle. Its fringe meeting was poorly attended. In its turn the SWP found itself in a contradictory position. Some of their members did urge national action against the executive's cop out. However, in line with their minimalist and pessimistic national perspective their fringe meeting was conducted on the twin themes of organising in individual workplaces and rejecting a call for a national rank and file movement.

Most non-aligned militants expressed a tremendous frustration at what they found at conference. They intend to carry on their own struggles. It is necessary to link these struggles together and, through that, attempt to build a fighting rank and file movement amongst health workers. Only in that way can the executive's passivity in the face of the privatisation offensive be defeated. ■

# LEFT DEFEAT IN CPSA

THE LEFT IN the CPSA was decimated at this year's annual conference. The open right wing gang around Kate Losinka and Alastair Graham won 26 out of a total of 29 executive seats. They staved off an attempt to commit the CPSA to total opposition to the anti-union laws and to action to fight job losses. Now the CPSA is once again well placed to spearhead a "new-realism" campaign in the Labour movement.

The right's victory is due to two factors. First was the left's inability to launch an effective pay campaign. In April sections of the left shattered the then left majority on the NEC by voting with the right to call off a one day strike and comply with the anti-union laws by calling a ballot.

The leadership had signalled its panic and its willingness to retreat even before the battle had begun. Despite the fact that the Executive launched no campaign to win the ballot for strike action it was only by the slimmest of majorities that the members voted not to strike. The debacle sowed

seeds of doubt in the minds of many CPSA members about the effectiveness of the left.

The second factor contributing to the left's recent defeat was the split in its ranks. Late last year the Communist Party and 'Labour Group' wing of the CPSA Broad Left, split to form Broad Left '84. The original Broad Left that the right wing group abandoned is dominated by Militant. The split meant a split vote in the Executive elections. The combined votes for Roddy (Broad Left) and Alderson (Broad Left '84) would have been enough to defeat Losinka. As it is she rode to office courtesy of the split. Although Broad Left '84 did get three seats on the Executive there is every sign that they have already made their peace with the Losinka/Graham gang.

The split occurred because of disagreements between Militant and the Communist Party and its allies in the 'Labour Group'. One issue was support for the miners' strike.

Another was whether or not to challenge Alastair Graham at annual conference. Disagreements over the DHSS Newcastle shift working strike and over apparent attempts by Militant to dominate the CPSA Broad Left at the 1984 annual Broad Left Conference, were the last straw.

In fact, the differences were built into the Broad Left from its formation in 1977. It was an electoral alliance of convenience. While the issue was ousting the right, unity could prevail. But when it came to the task of action the differences were bound to cause an explosion.

The split let Militant off the hook on several major questions. Most crucially the Broad Left majority in the NEC before the split failed to mobilise serious support for, or action alongside, the miners over issues like pay and new technology. After conference voted to support the miners the CP caved in to pressure to call a ballot on this. In the ballot to decide on whether the union should give a weekly donation from national funds to the NUM, the NEC - CP and Militant included - organised no campaign to secure a yes vote. They waited and watched - and the ballot was lost! While Militant blamed the CP and the Daylight Group for this, they themselves did not break from the CP and organise a campaign to support the miners.



Willis and Graham discuss the next hatchet job

## BROAD LEFT SPLIT

The split in the Broad Left widened over the Newcastle computer strike. Once again the CP were happy to flout official Broad Left policy. Once again Militant passively accepted this and refused to take the fight beyond the confines of the NEC. The CP and friends voted to scupper any plans to escalate the strike into other computer areas. This, undoubtedly weakened the chance of the strike's victory, but it enabled Militant, once more, to display its 'left credentials'.

In fact, the Militant argument for escalating that dispute came only after an extended period during which they had agreed that the strike should be contained in Newcastle. Roddy, of the Militant, had been against spreading the action, for fear that he would not be able to deliver. It was only management intransigence that eventually prodded Militant into calling for further selective action. In October 1984 Roddy wrote: "When it became apparent that the management... had decided to resist our strike for as long as possible, we called for the escalation of the strike to Reading and Livingston." (CPSA Militant)

There was no attempt to link the government's attack on Newcastle - where they wanted to impose new shift patterns - to the miners' struggle or to the CPSA's own impending pay campaign. The Broad Left, Militant included, worked to limit the struggle.

Worse, they were even in favour of getting other CPSA members to scab on the Newcastle strike. Roddy argued that the strategy was to force the government to provide an emergency service in local Unemployment Benefit Offices which would mean: "The cost of operating emergency procedures - even if confined to Newcastle and Washington - will force management to make concessions." (CPSA Militant - October 1984)

## ISOLATION

This position was terrible. Sanctioning scabbing meant increased workloads for non-striking members, increased their resentment against the strikers and kept the strikers isolated. An escalation of the strike was the only way to force concessions out of the government and thereby prevent pensioners and the unemployed suffering inconveniences for a lengthy period. This argument was never posed by Militant. The strike ended in a terrible defeat, and one that strengthens the hand of the right-wing.

The other issue that split the Stalinists and the Militant in the Broad Left was their relationship to Graham. Militant favoured a motion of no confidence in him at last year's union conference. His handling of GCHQ had enraged thousands of members. A challenge could have posed the issue of transforming the union (though Militant did not raise it in those terms).

Ray Alderson for the CP argued it was premature to challenge Graham. The Broad Left as a whole, however, voted to go ahead with the censure. The CP and its Labour allies simply breached the decision and voted against a no-confidence motion and Graham got away scot-free. Still Militant refused to draw the conclusion that the CP were an obstacle to

a campaigning rank and file movement. They refused to split with the CP wreckers. The CP were not so coy. After Roddy tried to conciliate to them at the last Broad Left conference, they walked out with about 100 delegates and formed Broad Left 84.

Many members voted for the Broad Left to cure the CPSA of its right-wing ills. Broad Leftists were elected to a majority to the NEC and on most departmental committees. This faith has been ill-rewarded. Neither of the new groups are committed to changing course after this debacle. Both want to maintain their existence as rival left electoral machines, claiming that capturing positions is the key to changing the union. A typical motion at the last Broad Left conference indicates this: "This conference recognises the primary purpose of CPSA Broad Left is to keep the right wing out of office in the CPSA." (our emphasis)

It is this strategy that left the Broad Left to sabotage the Birmingham and Oxford DHSS strikes in 1982 (Militant were then dead against escalation). The latest result is the Newcastle defeat and the collapse of the 1985 pay campaign. Rank and file militants must be won away from this dead-end Broad Leftism.

## REUNIFICATION?

The SWP's recipe of calling for the two Broad Lefts to reunite is no answer either. While Broad Left 84 maintain their position of specifically excluding Militant from membership it is clear that the Stalinists want only a movement they can bureaucratically control.

We need a strong, active rank and file organisation inside the CPSA. Only such an organisation, armed with a programme to meet the burning needs of its members, can defeat Graham and Losinka for good and turn the CPSA into a militant workers' union.

Of course fighting elections will form one element of a rank and file strategy. But this element will be subordinate to transforming the union and fighting the bosses. Alliances with left-wingers in the union will certainly be necessary in achieving rank and file control and fighting policies. But they will not be alliances for electoral convenience that actually block action.

Neither Broad Left in the CPSA offer this perspective. It is down to militants who agree with us to start the fight for it in every forum available. ■



# LEICESTER PROVIDES THE ANTIDOTE

The week of April 22nd -26th was designated "Health Focus Week" by the TUC. The health service union bureaucracies, aware that the very existence of their unions is threatened by the Tory's plan to privatise the ancillary services, called the week as the "spring board" of a campaign. Their aim is to draw the general public's attention to the dangers to the health service.

The trade union bureaucracy has set about trying to win over "public opinion" through "health canvasses", and the collecting of memoirs of what health care provision was like prior to the NHS. These may be of interest to academics, but are useless in stopping the Tory's offensive.

In stark contrast to the officials' plans, militants and revolutionaries in the Leicester Hospitals branch of NUPE won agreement to call official strike action, against privatisation, on the pay claim and also in protest at the local health authorities' avoidance of negotiations on a number of issues, including nurses shift patterns.

The demonstration on the day had the highest turn out of nurses Leicester has seen for many years. But the strike also showed up a number of further problems. Firstly, the isolation of militants in Leicestershire from others elsewhere in the

country. Secondly the need for a fighting militant leadership in all hospitals. This was clearly demonstrated by the failure of the NUPE convenor at the Leicester General Hospital to organise either a stewards' meeting or a mass meeting of the members. The result was a poor turnout in support of the strike call.

Leicester health workers were in the forefront in calling the National Conference of Joint Shop Stewards Committees in the Autumn of 1982. This brought together over 200 militants from all over Britain, and had the potential of being the basis of a national health workers rank and file movement.

Now the need is even greater. The bureaucracy's failure to lead leaves health workers at Addenbrookes, Barking, Scarsdale and other hospitals isolated in the face of the Tory offensive. A militant rank and file movement would be able to link up the struggles and co-ordinate action. It could build up a campaign that would be able to win the support that millions of trade unions showed for health workers on September 1982. In so doing it will halt the Tory offensive not only against the health service but against the working class as a whole. ■



Addenbrookes - isolated by new realists



Kate Losinka

# TORIES TARGET THE YOUTH, POOR AND JOBLESS

DESPITE ALL THE attacks on workers in recent months and years, British capitalism continues to be in deep trouble. The minor recovery over the last three years shows every sign of petering out. Over the first four months of this year spending by the government has increased by 9% as against a planned 3.5% (in part due to the effects of the miners' strike and increased unemployment). At the same time oil and tax revenues are plunging. Originally the Government budgeted on the basis of receiving £15.5 billion in oil tax revenue, but due to the fall in oil prices and the strengthening Pound this £13.5 billion has already been reduced to below £11 billion.

It is against this economic background that the government is undertaking its 'review' of the Welfare State. Under the guise of 'the biggest review of the welfare state since Beveridge' the capitalist class is in fact preparing the biggest onslaught on the poor and low paid, and in particular the young unemployed, since the 1930's.

The Social Security reviews, first set up in November 1983, have divided the complicated state benefit system into 5 main areas. Their intention is to seek out the areas where benefits can be slashed, or preferably, abolished. Their findings, if endorsed by the Cabinet, are due to be published in June in the form of a Green Paper. The Government is intent on legislating on these measures by next year.

Social Services Secretary, Norman Fowler, has attempted to sanitise this exercise by claiming that the Government wants to look at the system so that it can be rationalised. He talks of ensuring that the money goes to the 'deserving' rather than being dissipated amongst the 'undeserving'. This is a complete whitewash. The review was set up on a clear 'no extra cost' basis, but the stream of leaks and speculative reports in the press indicate clearly that the capitalists are intent on driving a growing section of the working class further into crippling destitution.

## ■ 'SAFETY-NET' ■

The ferocity of the coming attack is highlighted by the savage options that the ruling class is known to be discussing. The two main benefits targeted by the reviews are Housing Benefit and Supplementary Benefit. Housing Benefit is currently claimed by 7 million people; Supplementary Benefit by 3 million.

Supplementary Benefit, the so-called 'safety-net' means tested benefit, is already well below subsistence level. For example, a single person living away from home is supposed to live on a mere £28.05 per week, whilst a couple is supposed to live on £45.55 per week. This is supposed to cover all bills including fuel bills, new clothes etc, as well as food and other essentials. Under strictly defined circumstances it is possible to get additional help, and it is precisely these additional payments that the review is likely to propose for abolition. Thus extra money for heating for the sick and elderly, laundry expenses for the incontinent, the diet additions for the diabetic (sometimes worth more than £15 p.w. and often life-saving) may be scrapped.

The review is also likely to contain proposals to abolish Single Payments - one-off grants for such items as furniture for when you move or need new bare essentials, baby clothes for new born babies, decorating costs and funeral expenses. Such items may in future have to be saved up for out of weekly benefit rates, or the money loaned from the DHSS and paid back out of weekly benefit! Finally the Government is openly discussing plans to ensure that Supplementary Benefit will no longer cover the cost of water rates. So expendable have unemployed workers become that the capitalists apparently now regard it as a luxury to pay for them to drink!

## ■ HOUSING BENEFIT ■

The attack on the 7 million Housing Benefit claimants is no less severe. Housing Benefit is a subsidy (100% for those on Supplementary Benefit) on rent and general rates. The review is thought to propose that the unemployed contribute 20% towards their rates out of their Supplementary Benefit and 20% towards their rent (local authorities may be able to re-imburse the rent payments).

For those workers living on Supplementary Benefit this will most certainly drive their income to starvation levels. It is estimated that the measure will add an extra £150 to the unemployed's bill for general rates and water rates. This is equivalent to each single claimant losing 5 weeks' benefit per year.

Other planned changes include large cuts in the Housing Benefit paid to those not on Supplementary Benefit. The elderly (4 million pensioners get



Housing Benefit) and the low paid (of whom 1 million get Housing Benefit) will be particularly badly hit. This follows an already progressive cut in Housing Benefit since its disastrous introduction in November 1983.

The unemployed youth are also singled out for attack. Supplementary Benefit may be withdrawn from the under 19's who refuse to go on sweated labour 'training schemes', and £5 may be slashed off the benefit of those under 26.

A third area of attack is the State Earnings Related Retirement Pension Scheme (SERPS) introduced by all-party agreement in the 1970's. There are currently an estimated 11 million workers in the scheme. The capitalists are now getting cold feet over the fact that whilst the cost of the basic retirement pension will not rise in the next 40 years, the cost of the earnings-related element will rise £7.7 billion by the second decade of the next century.

The much publicised Lawson/Fowler argument has very little to do with scruples over leaving retired workers in a state of destitution. It has much more to do with how quickly the capitalists should proceed in dismantling what is left of the welfare state. Lawson, for the Treasury, and behind it the capitalist class, favours the straight forward abolition of SERPS, with no replacement. Fowler on the other hand wishes to sweeten the pill by replacing SERPS with compulsory private insurance schemes (later to be made voluntary of course). Lawson objects to the latter, as it could mean a loss of revenue of £1 billion through the extra tax relief required to subsidise payments to private schemes. At the same time the CBI estimates that compulsory private insurance would mean that employers would have to pay an extra £3 billion in private insurance contributions.

Quite simply Lawson represents that wing of the capitalist class which wants to immediately shed all responsibility for workers too old to produce profits. Fowler, on the other hand wants a



more modified attack. The debate is on the issue of pace, not principle.

The reviews especially single out women for attack. At the moment Family Income Supplement (a wages subsidy claimed by some 207,000 families) can be claimed by either partner. In future a new tax credit system is proposed which would mean that the credits would be paid via the man. In addition the means-test may become more stringent, with families earning more than £90 p.w. no longer qualifying. At present the Council of Europe's 'decency wage' is £108 p.w.

In addition Child Benefit, usually paid to the woman, may be frozen, or withdrawn from all but the 'most needy'. This would mean that women living with men who were working would in all probability cease to be eligible, thus depriving women of their only independent income. Maternity Grant is likely to be abolished.

Other changes on the cards are equally extensive. Unemployment Benefit may in future only be payable for 6 months, resulting in a loss of benefit to some 300,000 people. Free School Meals and Free Milk for those on Family Income Supplement and Supplementary Benefit may be abolished. The Death Grant may also go.

## ■ SECRECY ■

Whilst the dire state of the capitalist economy demands that the capitalists carry out these attacks, they are also aware of the possible consequences of these measures for social stability. For this reason the reviews have been the subject of an intense security blanket, with most of the information on the reviews taking the form of leaks and speculation. Indeed the discussions that followed the reviews were held under military-style security conditions. At a ten day conference held in Wilton Park, Sussex, hand-picked Civil Servants who met to discuss the reviews were only allowed to attend the part of the conference which affected them directly. Only about six Civil Servants were permitted to join Mr Fowler and other ministers for the whole conference.

The conference agenda contained one of the highest classifications - 'secret' - which means that

if material or information were published 'the unauthorised disclosure would cause serious injury to the interests of the nation'. This classification is normally used for background papers to foreign treaties containing sensitive economic and defence details. The proposals on the future of pensions were ordered to be destroyed immediately after reading.

Whilst the precise details of the forthcoming Green Paper are not yet known, it is crystal clear that the bourgeoisie is preparing to launch an attack on the unemployed, elderly, sick and low paid unprecedented in scale and ferocity since the 1930's. Alongside this onslaught have to go the measures necessary to quell any resistance. The recent proposals in the Public Order White Paper are aimed not just at the organised working class, but at suppressing any fightback, no matter which section of the working class it may come from.

For example the paper proposes that the charge of riot could be used against anyone using violence against property or people where 12 or more people are using or threatening violence. The charge would carry a maximum prison sentence of 10 years. Its potential for use against the urban unemployed and pickets is obvious.

Indeed the bourgeoisie have already taken measures of social control against the unemployed youth very akin to the apartheid laws in South Africa. From 29 April newly unemployed youth under the age of 26 are only allowed to stay in bed and breakfast accommodation in any one area for a restricted period of time. The DHSS will only pay for their rent if they move towns every 2, 4, or 8 weeks depending on the area. This is strikingly similar to the pass laws in South Africa which permit blacks and coloureds residence in a white area only on the basis of having a job...or 72 hours to look for one.

Effectively the new regulations will turn the young unemployed into a nomadic army, disorientated and preoccupied with their own physical survival. The regulations are clearly designed to make sure that the youth remain trapped within the confines of the family (which it is hoped will exert the necessary discipline on them) or remain unorganised and fragmented. In this way the capitalists seek to tire out the youth and rob them of the anger they so much fear.

## ■ 'LIVING-HELL' ■

The already paltry level of benefits means that unemployment throws millions of workers into real destitution. The proposals contained in the reviews, if implemented, will greatly accelerate the physical and moral degeneration of a significant section of the working class.

But we must be clear that the reviews are aimed not just at one particular section of workers, but represent an attack on the working class as a whole. As the conditions of the unemployed deteriorate, so the bosses will be more and more emboldened to use the threat of unemployment to bludgeon through the measures they want and need - wage cuts, speed-ups, productivity deals, job flexibility etc. The intimidation of the 'living hell' of unemployment will become a whip in the hands of the bosses.

The working class can only neglect the fight to defend the unemployed at its peril. The experience of the 1930's shows that, left to rot in the dole queues undefended, the unemployed can become prey to the sewer of racism and fascism. The disaffected unemployed today, can tomorrow become fodder for the storm troops of the bourgeoisie and fascists.

The fight to weld together the struggles of the unemployed and the employed is more urgent than ever. In order to fuse these struggles into the common struggle against capitalism we raise the following demands:

Equal rights of the unemployed to remain in their union paying minimum subs.

For all unions to open their doors to the unemployed. An immediate recruitment campaign to bring the unemployed into the unions.

For a national unemployed workers' union with full affiliation rights to the TUC, Trades Councils and the Labour Party.

The immediate index-linking of all benefits and restoration of the cuts to pre-1979 levels. No redundancies, voluntary or compulsory. No natural wastage or freezing of posts.

No overtime, no productivity deals.

Jobs or full pay.

Job-sharing on full pay. Share out the existing work amongst all workers with no loss of earnings by shortening the working week.

For an immediate programme of public works - schools, nurseries and homes - to be implemented under workers control. ■

# MATING CALLS ON THE LEFT

THEY ARE PLAYING the "Unity Waltz" again. Labour Herald, Labour Briefing, Socialist Action and Socialist Organiser have led off the dancers. Artfully worded invitations are flying backwards and forwards. The aftermath of the Miners' defeat and the departure of Meacher, Blunkett and Livingstone for a ball at the Palace of Westminster has provided the pretext for a new round of awkward manoeuvring.

All the signs are that it will end with trodden-on toes and frayed tempers among the would be unifiers.

The basic problem all these groupings have is that they represent differing and competing political positions, while pretending that their papers are some kind of open forum or rallying point for the Labour Left.

All represent a disguised bloc between a group of journalists who think of themselves as Trotskyists, and an assortment of left reformist MPs, councillors, Labour Party and union activists. Each paper tries to "hegemonise" the Bennite left without distinguishing its supposedly revolutionary politics from its reformist supporters.

## Socialist ORGANISER

They all have problems when they inevitably discover that yesterday's 'hard' left has become today's 'soft' left. They share an inability to put betrayals down to much more than parliamentary careerism. Some papers like Socialist Organiser (SO) occasionally try to cover their tracks. They have decided that the:

"collapse of the GLC was the culmination of the whole strategy of the local government left".

In reply to the unity advances of Labour Herald they proclaim:

"we need a full and open discussion not just on the personal fate of Ken Livingstone, but the whole record of the local government left."

This is very true. One might take it as good coin if SO had not been the pioneer of the muddle and confusion over strategy, tactics and political characterisation that led the whole of the Municipal Left to disaster.

SO jumped off the bandwagon just before it crashed and now stands by the roadside muttering: "I told you so".

In reality its critical stance is the product of its disappointed hopes of taking over the leading role on the Labour left.

Labour Briefing - whose only element of political distinction is the ambiguous slogan printed on the front page of each issue, "Labour take the Power" - replied to Labour Herald:

"We strongly agree with this sentiment and call for Left Unity. We feel however that it would be wrong for any one group or campaign to pretend that it alone can be the vehicle for such unity".

## LONDON LABOUR 30p BRIEFING No 20 JUNE 1982 LABOUR TAKE THE POWER!

This innocent reply effectively thumbs the eye of Labour Herald (LH) who of course are 'unifying' a new national organisation via a series of public meetings in all the main towns and cities.

In our view LH is disqualified from being the focus of unity, not because of its 'sectarianism', but because of the mishmash politics which combine elements of centrist pseudoTrotskyism with Left Reformism.

LH - now prominently sporting sacked GLC deputy John McDonnell - has issued what appears to be a very militant statement. At first glance its headline "Challenge Kinnock's Road" seems to contrast sharply with the wave of "realism" overtaking the softer elements of the Left.

John McDonnell, writing in the June Labour Briefing, talks boldly of a re-alignment that separates itself from reformists:

"It is inevitable in struggle that the Labour Party will divide along traditional lines between those who are genuinely seeking a socialist transformation of our economic and social system and those who are basically reformist and will accommodate in struggle."

He argues that the miners' strike and the Ratecapping struggle have seen:

"the development of a firm socialist rank and file in the party which having learnt the lessons of the struggle are now committed to coming together to build a socialist party".

This all appears very firm... until one realises just how distant LH's perspective of struggle really is. Let us take Kinnock for example. LH is going to fight him. This is the: "campaign against the Party Leader", of which windy Ken is: "not prepared to be a part."

What do our 'firm socialists' reply to this charge? Why they accuse Ken of slandering them. They protest:

"Ken may be mixing us up with another journal on the left, so let's say it again. We are for challenging Kinnock the policies, but not Kinnock the person."

And what about Kinnock, the leader of the Labour Party? Kinnock the scab on the Miners' Strike? Kinnock the scab on the fight against ratecapping? Kinnock the arrogant enemy of Black sections? Kinnock the witch-hunter? Kinnock the would-be liquidator of most of the gains of the democracy movement?



Should he not be called to account now with the blood still red on his hand? Would not many thousands of miners and their supporters rally to an honest, no holds-barred witch-hunt of this man. But LH claims this would be:

"premature and damaging".

Where have we heard this before? Last year it was also premature. Will next year - perhaps the year before election year - be a propitious time? Not for LH we can be certain. But never mind,

"The task of the Left goes far wider than changing the men at the top of the party".

These old tricks are classic on the Left Reformist and Centrist Left. In this base material world of ours policies are put forward by persons. To defeat policies you must defeat the people who represent them. Of course removing Kinnock and Hattersley will not remove reformism. But no serious struggle against reformism can ignore the fact that here and now the removal of these two would be a serious blow against the Right.

LH claim that it is impossible to win now. Perhaps, but not to fight means to acquiesce to Kinnock's leadership. It is worse than fighting and losing.

An open fight would give an opportunity to campaign in the constituencies and in the unions. It would organise those with the guts to stand up to the Old and New Right with their witch-hunt threats.

Instead of fighting now LH wants to take the wider view. Again this is the oldest trick in the book. The more distant and broad the perspective, the easier it is to skip over the struggles here and now!

The distant perspective of 'building a socialist party' is left completely vague in its implications. What is its programme to be? Is it to be one of 'democratic socialism' - that is a reformist programme or a revolutionary one? If it is

the latter then how does LH propose to transform the party of Kinnock and Hattersley into the party of Lenin and Trotsky? People who are joining them in this venture have a right to know where they are going and what is likely to happen on the way. That is just what they will not learn from LH.

At a greater distance from the Unity manoeuvres stands Socialist Action (SA). It is not so keen on uniting with the likes of LH and SO. It is out to overcome its past failures by merging with the Bennite and Scargillite 'current' as thoroughly as possible.

It represents an international political tendency that, wherever you put it down, immediately turns the colour of its surroundings. It is Sinn Fein green in Ireland, Labour Party pink in Britain. In Britain perhaps the best analogy for SA is that of the Cheshire Cat. It has been slowly fading away for several years - now little is left apart from its gigantic smile.

SA is smiling because of what it terms the 'rise of forces to the left of the Communist Party'. Who are these forces? They are the Bennite Left in the Labour Party and what they curiously term:

"the current represented by Arthur Scargill's leadership in NUM."

## Socialist ACTION

They are important because they represent:

"only one part of an entire international process."

"All these phenomena, while part of an international process, are of course at totally different degrees of development. The FSLN and NJM are revolutionary socialist organisations. Sinn Fein is a revolutionary nationalist formation. The Scargill current of the NUM is a class struggle force. But all are part of the international process breaking to the left of Stalinism and the Communist Parties. It is this process on an international scale which has opened up the way to Marxists to gain real contact with sections of the working class".

SA piles up confusion on confusion. Leaving aside their errors of characterisation with regard to the Sandinistas and the New Jewel Movement - who have made no serious moves to overthrow capitalism and who both have or had powerful Stalinist wings within them - the evasiveness with regard to Scargill hits the eye.

Marxists used to analyse political tendencies in terms like reformist, revolutionary, centrist with indications of the direction of development of each of them. For SA terms like 'class struggle force' absolve them from this difficult task. The critical qualitative differences between these tendencies are obliterated by the statement that they simply represent 'different degrees of development'.

## Marxism Today

Of course if you believe the Tony Benn of today is the Daniel Ortega of tomorrow your 'optimism' will lead you to a series of inevitable conclusions. There is one condition for Marxists - they should join in the process too:

"Marxists in Britain have to break with their primitive conceptions of Marxism and their 'infantile' ultra-left past."

This means that Marxist must reject all the infantile stuff about 'alternative leaderships', 'revolutionary parties' and so on. Above all they must cease criticising the forces of the international process. The CP, it turns out, really won the argument with these old Trotskyist ideas:

"It is little wonder that in struggles with these types of ideas the CP has come out with far more credit than it deserves."

SA says we must turn to the agenda of Marxism Today:

"- for at least the Communist Party has the merit of addressing itself to the most important questions in British and world politics"

Of course SA wants to give modified answers. The Communist Party (CP) used to define proletarian internationalism as uncritical support for the Kremlin. SA wants similar support for the Sandinistas. The CP wants a 'Broad Democratic Alliance' with the women's and peace movements and eventually the liberals, which renounces reformist socialism as an immediate goal. SA wants an 'alliance for socialism' made up of the Bennites in the LP, the Scargillites in the unions, and the women's movement, CND, the gay and black 'movements'.

## Socialist Worker

In the unions SA argues that we must replace old-style Broad Lefts with a "class struggle left-wing". What's the difference? Well it's the type of leader you have:

"There is a qualitative difference between the politics of an Arthur Scargill and that of Jimmy Knapp."

SA gives the whole credit for the NUM's magnificent struggle to Arthur Scargill and sets itself the task of boosting his reputation and covering up the mistakes of this representative of the 'international process' in Britain.

Despite all the guff about breaks 'to the left of Stalinism' SA has observed the swing to the right of the CP, seen a vacant spot and offered to fill it. The only 'process' they will be taking part in is their own liquidation from centrism to reformism.

'Unity' is in season away from the Bennite left too. This Spring has seen the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) uttering mating calls to, of all organisations, Militant. This has naturally entailed dropping its sharp criticism of the Militant's 'reformism'. The SWP's approach, in the light of the continued and worsening effects of the 'Downturn' and the Miners' Defeat is that they would do better to huddle together like cows in a thunderstorm.

## Militant

Buoyed up by their belief that things are inevitably getting better and better Militant are unlikely to give the SWP's proposals the time of day. What we can say about all this talk of unity is that it lacks the most elementary seriousness. It will therefore only result in increasing cynicism and despair on the left.

Political unity can only be advanced on the basis of a programme and a disciplined, democratic centralist, revolutionary party. This does not yet exist and has to be built. The road to it lies through political struggle against Left Reformism and centrist confusion. Unity in action is possible now. Indeed it is vital to stop the retreat of the leadership in the Labour Movement. On what must it be based?

Support for all workers in struggle, especially when their struggle runs up against state repression and legal harassment.

Building rank and file resistance and co-ordination independent of the bureaucracy and their defeatist deals with the government and management.

Critical support to those leaders - in the Labour Party and the Unions - who fought both the bosses and their agents in the Labour Movement.

Here and now this means mobilising maximum support behind the miners' continued resistance to pit closures and victimisation - whatever deals the NUM leaders may strike. It means supporting rank and file organisation in the NUM and in all other unions - with the support of 'left' leaders if possible, without them if necessary.

In the Labour Party it means fighting Kinnock and the witch-hunters. It means fighting the betrayals of the 'New Right'. It means putting militant shop floor based organisation at the centre of all struggles including that of fighting rate-capping.



# ANDEAN REPUBLICS

## PERU; Apristas Head For Power

ALTHOUGH THE RESULTS have yet to be officially confirmed, the April 1985 Presidential Elections were a resounding defeat for the ruling conservative Popular Action Party (AP) of President Belaunde Terry whose vote slumped to 5% from its 45% showing in the 1980 elections. The bourgeois nationalist APRA party achieved its highest ever vote, just below the 50% it needed for an absolute majority to avoid a second round contest between the leading parties. The right wing Popular Christian Party (PPC) increased its vote to 13%, while the newly-formed left wing electoral coalition - the United Left (IU) won around 23%

The results are a clear indication of popular discontent with the Belaunde government's "monetarist" attempts to deal with the intense economic and political crisis which faces the country. Since that government took office in 1980 real wages have dropped by 50% (inflation is now heading for 200%), industrial production fell by 12% in 1983, 14% in 1984; and unemployment and underemployment has reached 60%. Malnutrition now affects 6 out of every 10 Peruvian children. The foreign debt has risen from \$9.6 billion in 1980 to \$13.5 billion in 1984. The conditions for recent loans from the IMF are further cuts in public investment and the removal of remaining food subsidies. In addition to this, the government has reversed some of the land reforms introduced by the reforming military government of Velasco in the early 1970s. It is now possible for the banks to take peasants' land, mortgaged by them in an attempt to get credit.

However the government has not been able to fully carry out its monetarist programme because of growing opposition from the working class and the peasantry, as well as from small businesses and professionals who have also felt the growing crisis of the Peruvian economy.

The regime has increasingly been forced to rely on the army to suppress strikes and street demonstrations. There were recently major strikes by teachers and civil servants. In the countryside the government has been unable to prevent the spreading influence of the "Sendero Luminoso" guerilla movement centred on Ayacucho, despite handing over "counter-insurgency" operations to the armed forces, resulting in the deaths of at least 5,000 peasants since 1980.

At present 18 provinces in Peru suffer military rule where torture is common and "disappearances" widespread.

### VAGUE PROMISES

In order to both contain popular discontent and to carry out the further austerity measures demanded by the IMF, major sections of the Peruvian ruling class are looking to the APRA party. The Popular American Revolutionary Alliance (APRA) was founded in 1919 by Haya de la Torre. Starting as a populist nationalist party calling for reforms to emancipate Peruvian and Latin American capitalism from feudal and imperialist overlordship, by the 1950s and 60s APRA had become extremely conservative. It often made alliances with the landowning oligarchy and was viewed sympathetically by US administrations. The death of Haya in 1979 produced an internal struggle which resulted in Alan Garcia winning the leadership. His grouping has shifted the party towards a social democratic position, with APRA becoming a sympathising section of the Socialist International. Still retaining the "radical" heritage of Haya's early anti-imperialist rhetoric, the APRA with its wide support amongst the northern middle class and within sections of the working class, is the ideal vehicle to replace the discredited Popular Action.

APRA never published any programme for the elections, Garcia preferring to campaign on the vacuous populist slogan "My commitment is to all Peruvians!" While making vague promises to make agriculture "a priority" through defending the existing agrarian reform and contemplating subsidies, his campaign was accompanied by a virulent anti-communism directed against the United Left (IU). To reassure the bourgeoisie that he would deal properly with the economy through more austerity measures he declared that the former military regime's Finance Minister, Javier Silva Ruete, and its central bank President, Manuel Moreyra, both with monetarist leanings, would be prominent in economic policy making in the new government.

The United Left (IU) not only failed to improve on its 29% vote in the 1983 municipal elections, but appears to have lost ground to the APRA. Estimates give the IU 23% of the vote. The IU is the latest in a long line of left electoral blocs

since parliamentary democracy was restored in Peru in 1978. Formed in 1980 as a successor to the break up of previous electoral blocs - POLEP, ARI - the IU is led by the "Marxist" mayor of Lima, Alfonso Barrantes. It includes the pro-Moscow Peruvian Communist Party, Revolutionary Vanguard, the bourgeois Revolutionary Socialist Party, made up of supporters of the military regime of General Juan Velasco, and the Maoist Revolutionary Left Union (UNIR). Through the PLP and UNIR the bloc also has the support of the leadership of major unions including the teachers, miners, students and the campesino peasants federations (CCP). Significantly, unlike previous left blocs, neither of the main "Trotskyist" organisations in Peru, the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT - USFI section) or the Revolutionary Marxist Workers Party (POMR - previously a section of the OCFI) are part of the United Left.

### REFORMIST PROGRAMME

The IU stood on a reformist programme in the elections. It called for a moratorium on repayment of the foreign debt, for increased nationalisation of the economically important US-owned copper mines, and for a parliamentary, "Peruvian road to socialism." Barrantes was keen to present the United Left as the defenders of Peru's bourgeois democratic institutions and has been at pains to distance the United Left from "terrorism", backing Belaunde's counter-insurgency terror against Sendero Luminoso in 1984 and rejecting calls for a future government to negotiate with the guerillas, saying "we will never conciliate with terrorism". (reported in *Guardian* 12.4.85) The army would be kept in Ayacucho but "subordinated to the civilian authorities". Barrantes never



Garcia's APRA wave the flag of national unity

explained how an IU government would deal with the massive imperialist onslaught which would follow any serious steps taken against exploitation - through the foreign debt, let alone against US companies in Peru. Not only would such a government face everything Nicaragua is now facing, but the Peruvian army has shown itself to be more than willing to oust any government which even attempted it.

Of course Barrantes did not deal with this because he knew such promises were only aimed at winning the support of the working class and peasants at the elections. Such policies would have been quickly dropped and replaced by austerity measures, an experience the Bolivian workers found out to their cost through the UDP government of Siles Suazo.

Already Barrantes had demonstrated, as Mayor of Lima, his willingness to attack workers' struggles. Before the elections a wave of strikes and mobilisations by public sector workers and by shanty town dwellers demanding basic amenities in a municipality controlled by the IU, was denounced by Barrantes, who declared "the present struggles are endangering the elections and they are being motivated by Sendero Luminoso infiltrators" (quoted in *International Viewpoint* 20.5.85)

Meanwhile APRA demagogically supported the striking workers helping to undermine IU's elec-

The following two articles look at the current economic and political crises afflicting Peru and Bolivia, imperialised countries which are not unique in feeling the impact of the new period of economic recession and slump in the imperialist heartlands. In particular the articles examine the role of the sections in these countries of one of the largest world groupings which claims the revolutionary heritage of Leon Trotsky - the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (U.S.F.I.).



toral support. Following the elections, despite the fact that as the second party to APRA, IU should have entered a second round involving only APRA and IU, Barrantes declared he was withdrawing, allowing APRA to immediately assume power! Barrantes clearly neither has the stomach to seek power in a situation of crisis nor does he wish to "offend" APRA, the future governing party.

The response to these important political developments by the Peruvian section of the USFI - Hugo Blanco's PRT - has been predictable. The PRT has not used their position outside the IU to warn the workers and peasants of the role of the leadership of this electoral bloc. They have not attempted to demolish Barrantes' "Marxist" credentials and win over in struggle the disillusioned rank and file of the IU. Instead the PRT has concentrated all its efforts on getting into the IU and preserving its "unity".

The policy of the USFI section in Peru, repeated by other sections throughout Latin-America, is one of concentrating on stitching up unprincipled electoral blocs to gain "revolutionary influence" in Parliament. It has proved itself bankrupt not only for the masses of Peru but also for Blanco's own party.

In 1978 Hugo Blanco, with a considerable reputation amongst the masses as a leader of the peasant land struggles in the early 1960s, was presidential candidate of the "Workers, Peasants Students and Peoples Front" (FOCEP). It was an alliance of the PRT with the POMR, the pro-Albanian Bandera Roja and prominent independent socialists. Despite gaining 12 1/2% of the popular vote and being hailed by the USFI as a massive advance for Trotskyism and the revolutionary movement, this motley alliance of centrists and Stalinists quickly fell apart.

An attempt to cobble together a similar bloc in 1980, including PRT, Maoists and the UDP led

by Barrantes - the Revolutionary Left Alliance (ARI) was even shorter lived. It collapsed having done disastrously in the elections because of enormous political differences within it.

By 1984 the PRT, led by Blanco, was a completely marginalised and tiny organisation on the Peruvian left. Far from learning the lessons from the USFI's opportunist get-rich-quick tactics, Blanco's PRT did the opposite. It was not the parliamentary opportunism and rotten electoral blocs which fell apart at the first serious test which was at fault. The mistake was supposed to have been the PRT's previous "sectarianism". Blanco in a self critical interview in *Intercontinental Press* (10.3.84) bemoans the fact that the PRT made a principle of not joining the IU because it contained the small bourgeois party the PSR. After all if you can run in an electoral bloc with Barrantes, the Peruvian Stalinists and the Maoists, why not with the heirs of the "progressive" generals' regime of Velasco? As for the IU itself, "We feel the character of the United Left has not yet been decided. It can become a revolutionary front that leads the Peruvian masses to power, or it could turn into a reformist front that holds them back." And this is still the position of the PRT and the USFI today even after the elections and the role of Barrantes in them. Thus *International Viewpoint* can declare, "It is an essential task to maintain the united front and defend it against divisive adventures out of line with the experience of the workers and the evolution of their consciousness, to bring about a revolutionary convergence within IU." (I.V. 20.5.85)

### DEGENERATE 'TROTSKYISM'

The Peruvian PRT provides a worked example of degenerate "Trotskyism" demonstrating its uselessness to the workers and peasants in the struggle for socialism.

Blanco's party is willing to tie itself to the programme and methods of the IU, which in practice are those of its leaders, in particular Barrantes. Blanco's party itself is so riddled with parliamentary cretinism that it is incapable of exposing the uselessness of the IU's parliamentary road.

Blanco reveals this in his discussion of how to avoid a Chilean type coup against a potential IU government. He appeals to the Peruvian constitution with its "right of insurgency against illegitimate authority". He turns revolutionary agitation amongst rank and file soldiers into explaining to them that "insubordination against civilian authority is a crime punishable under the constitution" (*Intercontinental Press* 11.3.84) The fight for workers' and peasants' councils, for arming the workers, is replaced by demands for "popular assemblies" and organs of "popular power". These are to be no more than mass pressure adjuncts to be used by municipal and parliamentary "left" governments in their struggle with the bourgeoisie.

In practice in its desire to enter the IU, the PRT peddles precisely the same politics which led the Chilean working class to disaster in the Popular Unity days of Chile. Far from offering a revolutionary alternative in Peru, the USFI offers a strategy which plays into the hands of "Marxists" of the Barrantes type. It can only lead the Peruvian workers to disaster. by Stuart Crosswaite

Hugo Blanco's PRT provide no answer for the masses



### STILL AVAILABLE !

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# IN CRISIS

## BOLIVIA; Failed General Strike Paves Way For Right

WITH ELECTIONS IN Bolivia due for July 14th it now looks certain that one or other of the major right wing parties will triumph. Victor Paz Estenssoro, leader of the MNR - H, the man who helped demobilise the 1952 Bolivian revolution and pave the way for a military takeover, looks like beating Hugo Banzer's ADN (Banzer was military dictator between 1970-76).

The fact that these two parties will battle it out for first or second place shows the complete collapse of the support for the 'left' UDP government because of the role it has played since 1980 in undermining and demobilising the workers' and peasants' struggles.

The UDP came to power in 1980 as a result of a massive general strike which drove the military from power. It was a classic 'popular front' government made up of the bourgeois nationalist MNR-I, which drew much of its support from the peasantry and middle classes, the MIR, a right wing social democratic current affiliated to the Socialist International, and the Bolivian Communist Party (PCB).

The government proceeded to use its support within the working class and peasantry to impose a series of austerity measures demanded by the I.M.F. In the early part of its existence it was enormously aided in this task by having the support of the COB (the Bolivian Workers' Centre) and of Juan Lechin, veteran trade union leader and opportunist. Lechin, aided by the PCB, justified support on the basis that the UDP was the 'lesser evil'. He argued that it would be replaced by a more right wing government or a military dictatorship if the workers put up any resistance to its austerity demands.

However quite quickly the traditional militancy of the Bolivian workers, led by the tin miners,

shattered the 'social truce' with the government. Since September 1982 there have been six general strikes called by the COB under the pressure of the growing economic crisis.

The Government's refusal to allow wages to keep up with inflation, which now runs at the phenomenal rate of 2300% per year, has caused enormous hardships. Shortages of food, medicine and spare parts for machinery, rocketing unemployment, a rampant black market and enormous currency speculation, have all contributed to the enormous falls in living standards. A recent UNICEF survey estimated that 80% of the population was living in poverty.

Throughout the various austerity packages imposed on the working class by the UDP, the PCB remained an active member of the government. Its position only became untenable when it suffered a crushing defeat in the COB elections in September 1984. With its own working class base in revolt, and with its own youth movement having split away, the PCB finally left the government. After two years of attacking the working class it had desperately to try and restore some left credibility before the elections. (The MIR had already left the government to try and stitch up a deal with either the MNR - H or ADN).

The COB leadership under Lechin had shown itself totally incapable of providing any strategy to defend the working class against the UDP offensive. The enormous militancy of the miners had forced the government to concede workers' majority co-management in LOMIBOL, the state tin mining company. But divorced from a struggle to extend workers' control to other sectors of the economy, from a fight to nationalise under workers control the important private tin mining and gold mining sectors, from the struggle to control dis-

tribution and other necessities and stamp out the black market in speculation, the idea of 'co-management' remains the co-management of the crisis of Bolivian capitalism. Such a struggle would have meant above all a struggle to overthrow the UDP government and replace it with a workers' and peasants' government which would not only secure such gains but proceed to arm the workers and peasants against military reaction.

Even after the September Congress of the COB, which clearly signalled the need for a break with the UDP, Lechin could declare; "any other government in the present circumstances would do exactly what this one intends to do. Now at least pressure exerted by the workers allows us some conquests such as majority co-management in LOMIBOL." (Quoted in *Latin American Weekly Reports* - 5.10.85) Lechin's alternative was the traditional one of the Bolivian workers' leaders - to push for 'worker ministers' in the government; where, no doubt, they would have played a similar role to the PCB, as agents of the bourgeoisie in getting the workers and peasants to make sacrifices.

Having exhausted the working class in a series of general strikes, which the COB directed not in order to overthrow the UDP, but to negotiate with it on withdrawing various austerity measures, the general strike in March was called after 10,000 miners arrived in the capital to put a series of demands on the government - for wage rises and a sliding scale to protect living standards from inflation. A demonstration of 50,000 on March 4th backed the demands. When they were rejected by the government, this time an indefinite general strike was called. It lasted a fortnight but was poorly supported by key sections such as the rail and oil workers. In addition it received no support from the peasant organisations. This strike ended with few government concessions and growing demands from the rank and file to recall the COB and hold its leaders to account.

### PROGRESSIVE MILITARY

The Bolivian workers clearly recognised the threat that the present situation poses. One of the demands of the workers was for the postponement of the elections for fear of a right wing victory. At the same time they called for 'Siles Out'. 'Death to the hunger government - we've had enough of Siles' was one of the major slogans of March 4th. The Bolivian working class is confronted again by its historic weakness of having no political party which represents its interests, despite its long history of heroic trade union struggle. The PCB has compromised itself for the immediate future because of its role in the UDP government. The COB leaders have offered no alternative but to join the UDP government themselves. As a result of this impasse there is a growing danger of the workers looking to the 'progressive military' to take action to block the election of the ADF or MNR-H. Such a possibility is being openly peddled by Lechin's Group the PRIN. Such a course also has a disastrous history in Bolivia. Many of the present leaders of the Bolivian working class tied their followers to the coat tails of the 'progressive' General Torres, a policy which disarmed the workers' movement in the face of Banzer's right wing army coup in 1971 (see WP no. 40 March 1983).

As in Peru the USFI Section in Bolivia, POR-Unificado, found itself in a favourable situation with the restoration of parliamentary government and legality in 1980. It had survived, by its own accounts, the period of illegality well and was one of the first left groups to reorganise itself with a regular press and organisation. It also made some gains in the important Huanuni mines and within the miners' union. However the POR-U showed itself incapable of challenging the reformist and centrist misleaders of the Bolivian workers, preferring to adapt to their politics and thus 'pressurise them to the left'.

Shortly after the UDP came to power, the POR-U, tagging along behind the COB leadership, refused to take up a position of intransigent opposition to the UDP; 'the strategic objective of the POR is to begin to prepare the masses for the continuation of their struggle under the UDP government...at present that does not involve all

out opposition to the government, but a strategy of pressurising it and exposing the capitulationist leadership' (*International Viewpoint* 1.11.82) A revolutionary position would have demanded complete opposition to the bourgeois government of Siles Suazo. Revolutionaries would have demanded the PCB break with this bourgeois alliance, and alongside the COB launch an immediate campaign for new elections to a constituent assembly. (The existing Assembly had been re-established on the basis of the rigged 1980 election and was dominated by right wing parties.) Within such a campaign communists would have fought for a workers' and peasants' government around a programme which could really defend the workers' and peasants' interests against imperialism and the bourgeoisie.

Indeed, falling behind Lechin's schemes, the POR cover over whether they favour the elections going ahead. Instead of warning the masses of the dangers of believing that the progressive sectors of the army can be won to the workers' side, they compound them by declaring; "This unity must be widened by appealing to the commanders, commissioned and non-commissioned officers and soldiers not to fire on the people but to join ranks in defence of democratic freedoms and for national sovereignty against imperialism. They must take their place in the struggle of the masses..." (our emphasis) (V 22.4.85)

### 'PREPARING THE WAY'

Again when the COB launched its campaign for 'worker ministers' in the bourgeois government, the USFI fell in with Livio Maitan, arguing that such ministers could represent the workers and peasants 'in an independent way', and that such demands had an 'anti-capitalist potential'. (IV 12th March 1984) Again the POR showed its willingness to fall in behind Lechin's demands which would have renewed the illusions of the masses in the UDP government and only undermined resistance to new attacks. Even during the most recent general strike the POR-U could not bring itself to openly call for the overthrow of the UDP government. Instead it talked of 'preparing the way for saying ... "Siles out! No Banzer, No Paz Estenssoro!"' It raised no demands for the formation of workers' and peasants' committees to build genuine organs of working class power - soviets. Instead it rummaged in the rag bag of past defeats and found a slogan from the 1971 debacle 'Advance towards the foundation of a National People's Assembly which must be transformed into a real people's parliament' (IV 22nd April 1985) The programme for such an assembly, we are informed, should be the programme of the COB, involving renouncing the foreign debt, wide spread nationalisation, a minimum wage and sliding scale and a monopoly of foreign trade. How this programme, inadequate as it is, will be implemented in the teeth of bourgeois and military opposition, we are not told. The question of arming the workers and peasants and paralysing the military through revolutionary agitation among rank and file soldiers is never raised.

### MISERABLE STRATEGY

Thus the USFI Section in Bolivia fails miserably to advance a strategy for working class power through an alliance with the impoverished peasantry. Instead they adapt to the historic weakness of the Bolivian labour movement - syndicalism and petty bourgeois nationalism. These weaknesses have helped to keep the Bolivian workers from taking up the tasks of building a mass revolutionary party. By keeping the workers' movement free of revolutionary communist politics it has been repeatedly rendered helpless when faced with a bourgeois nationalist regime - spouting anti-imperialist rhetoric but carrying out anti-working class measures. From critical support for such governments, with all the demobilisation and demoralisation this brings, it is but one short and bloody step to another right wing military dictatorship. Revolutionaries in Bolivia must do everything possible to alert the heroic miners and other sections of the working class against this outcome. Only working class power can put an end to the vicious cycle of Bolivian politics.

by Stuart King

## Sendero Luminoso

A FURTHER PROBLEM for the Peruvian ruling class has been the growth of the Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) (SL) rural guerilla movement, which has plunged the southern Andean provinces, Ayacucho in particular, into a virtual state of civil war. In response to an estimated 2,500 armed attacks by Sendero on local politicians, police and landowners in 1984, the government has deployed 6,000 army, marines and police. The weakness of Peru's parliamentary democracy has been shown by the creation of 15 Military Emergency Zones, placing over half of the country under military rule. There has been a wave of repression against the neglected Indian peasants of the Sierra (Andean highlands) - amongst whom Sendero largely operate - leading to 4,000 murders and at least 1,500 "disappeared" since Belaunde's civilian government took office in 1980.

Sendero Luminoso originated from a split in the pro-Chinese Peruvian Communist Party in 1970, led by Abimael Guzman (often referred as "Comrade Gonzales") a philosophy professor at the city's university. The main issue of the split was Gonzales' stress on the need to begin armed struggle in what he characterised as a revolutionary situation in Peru in the 1970s. It was argued by SL that the Peruvian government - then the reforming military government of Velasco - was fascist, as were the subsequent governments of Bermudez and Belaunde's conservative civilian government.

Sendero describes itself as a Maoist organisation, associating itself with the "Gang of Four", (Mao's supporters in the Chinese Communist Party who were ousted by Deng Xiaoping's faction in 1976). Because it sees Peru as a "semi-feudal" country it is the peasantry, not the urban working class, which is seen as the major revolutionary force. In its major programmatic document "Let us develop the guerilla war!", published in March 1982, Sendero argues for a "prolonged popular war" based on the peasantry to "surround the cities from the countryside". Furthermore, their Maoism is combined with a utopian attachment to the Inca and Indian cultures existing before the Spanish conquest. They reject as "imperialist" modern technology and money, positions which have led many to characterise them as "Pol Potists". Their organisation is both elitist and cult-like, based around Comrade Gonzales.

Based on their belief that all left wing groups were "bourgeois workers parties" which preserved the fascist governments by participating in their fake election to the new constituent assembly, they withdrew from their involvement in

students' and teachers' organisations in Ayacucho in 1980. They began armed action around the 1980 elections, denouncing them as a farce and attacking a polling station in Cuchi, in Ayacucho province. Since then they have carried out attacks on the armed forces and local politicians in Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Apurimac, combined with raids on power stations and police stations in the cities of Lima, Cuzco and Arequipa.

Although Sendero's leadership is generally made up of intellectuals, teachers and students, it has a large following amongst the poor Indian peasants of the Andean highlands. Fifteen thousand demonstrated in Ayacucho in 1982 at the death of guerilla leader Edith Lagos - killed by the police. In the same year they were strong enough to occupy Ayacucho for the night and release 300 prisoners from the city jail.

However the poor response to Sendero's call for a 72 hour general strike in the municipal elections and their failure to disrupt the recent general elections - despite demanding a boycott - indicates not only the impact of army repression, but also the failure of their own strategy. They have largely ignored the urban working class and refused united fronts with peasant and workers' organisations against repression. Even among the peasantry their policies have alienated many sections of the population. Military elitism, the imposition of village leaderships, execution of not only landowners and rich peasants but middle peasants as well, a policy of attempting to starve the cities by making peasants burn their surpluses rather than sell them, thus adding to rural poverty, have all contributed to stagnation for SL.

Sendero maintains significant support because of the chronic poverty and long term government neglect of the Quechua speaking Andean peasantry. Their demands for land have always been met with government repression, which exercise now indiscriminately drives more of the rural population to seek support from the SL.

Whatever the errors of Sendero Luminoso, it is the duty of the revolutionary left in Peru to support and defend them against the repression of the bourgeois state and its army, and denounce "lefts" like Barrantes who tacitly support government repression. Support for SL will continue as long as there is no revolutionary alternative put before the peasantry involving an agrarian revolution and the smashing of the landlord system and with the police and military apparatus which supports it. The present reformist and electorally orientated Peruvian left within the IU offers no such alternative. ■

# BLACK SECTIONS: Here to stay?

WORKERS POWER did two separate interviews with leading members of the Black Sections (BS) of the Labour Party. Hassan Ahmed is a member of Nottingham East CLP and is seeking adoption as its parliamentary candidate. Marc Wadsworth is senior vice-chair of the Black Sections National Committee and founder member of Vauxhall Black Section in London. We asked both of them to explain the emergence of Black Sections:

**Hassan:** The Brixton riots of 1981 are very directly linked to the emergence of the BS struggle. With these movements and struggles taking place, and the younger generation coming up, the harder attitude of the LP in these areas led to a general frustration with the LP machinery and its general approach and attitude to local struggles. This convinced black people that unless they had a more direct role and say in the LP then the present machinery was not going to deliver the goods.

Black people came to this country from countries under the rule of British Imperialism. For the last 200/300 years they have been recruited as cheap labour to boost Britain's own economy and labour force.

As time went on the second generation of black people have grown up and seen themselves in areas where education was worst, in poor housing, and where jobs and unemployment markets were worst. In schools, workplaces and pubs in the area where they lived, they were attacked, discriminated against and harassed.

Their parents had always loyally supported the LP and been part of it. Yet they saw that when it was in power, either locally or nationally it did very little for black people.

It was basically in 1981, after Scarman's report, that black people openly asked "why don't black people have more say if the LP claims to be a party which is fighting for the specially oppressed groups?"

**Marc adds:** About 1985 you had a meeting at London Labour Party Headquarters of black activists who were deeply concerned at the lack of black representation in the party and the total absence of a black perspective in policies. We talked about the idea of an informal caucus.

**WP asked Marc whether the experience of the last two Labour Governments, with their racist records, had not put blacks off organising in the Labour Party**

**Marc:** No. We knew we had a huge problem ahead because black people's perception of the Labour Party is that it's the lesser of two evils...

But the Labour Party is the party that claims to be a working class party. It claims to be a party that represents oppressed people. Although black people have tended to vote Labour, they have not tended to get involved in the party for a variety of factors.

This was abused by black godfathers in ghettos who would almost do a sort of block booking on votes in some areas for key MPs. In Sparkbrook, Hattersley's seat, you will see there is a dominant largish black membership but when you look at key decision-making bodies like the GMC there are very few black people on that GMC.

We sought to break this cycle of lack of representation on key policy-making bodies and the tokenistic approach of rightwingers and godfathers so that there was some real accountability.

1 in 8 of the Labour Party's votes in the last election was a black vote. Yet if you look in Parliament, there is not a single black face. Look at the regional and national officers and there is not a single black full-time official. If you look at our propaganda you would be hard-pressed to find any black perspective in it. It is not put out in the language of the black communities. In other words we're a non-issue, almost non-existent in the considerations and deliberations of the party. We've sought through black sections to change all that.

**WP asked Marc whether he believed that Kinnock felt he could not live with BS's whereas he can live with Women's Sections, because there isn't in place in the BS's a bureaucracy or section of careerists who can contain the aspirations of the oppressed group?**

**Marc:** Yes, there have been failures of the Women's Sections in the past but



you have to recognise that historically women had been kept under as a section.

I'm sure if Kinnock felt BS's could play some sort of child minding role like some sort of American South scenario then he would have found some role for us. That would have been an addition to the role played by the godfathers.

But we were not going to be that sort of passive, dormant black voting fodder.

**WP asked Hassan whether he would be content to win a similar status for the BS's that Poale Zion enjoys - an affiliated society. This would give no local representation, but one seat on the NEC.**

**Hassan:** It's too late - we have long debated the oppression of the black community. Now that it is being debated I do not think that the younger black socialists or the black community are going to accept any compromises or soft approaches to the solution of this problem. The BS is about more representation, power-sharing, a direct say of black people in the running of party affairs and I do not think we will accept less than this.

The ideas of black caucuses with a diminished role in the party's affairs will only lead to more frustration. For example, if at the GC meeting there is only participation in discussion with no right to vote. This is only going to lead to more frustration. So I do not think that anyone in the BS movement is going to accept less than full representation.

**Marc was asked whether he felt there was a danger that BS's can become a career vehicle for middle class blacks.**

**Marc:** I think we have got to ask ourselves is there a danger of the Labour Party becoming a career vehicle for middle class white men.

Black sections are no more than a mirror image of the rest of the movement and will have flaws - one of which being that careerists will slip through - but the movement is not dominated by careerists

**ON THE WEEKEND of May 17th - 18th the NEC Working Party on Black Sections agreed to put alternative proposals forward to the NEC. Both would give Black Sections a right to exist but with very restricted rights of representation. The proposals are up for discussion at June's NEC.**

A few days later, the May NEC refused to endorse Russel Profitt as Lewisham East's parliamentary candidate because he had been chosen by a selection committee which included delegates from the CLP's Black Section.

Seeing his opportunity, Kinnock declared war on the Black Sections on the next day. "I am adamantly against Black Sections...I would not give a damn if the whole Labour Party was against me on this".

**WORKERS POWER** defends unconditionally the rights of black brothers and sisters to full and equal rights at every level of the party. We support the model resolution for Conference which seeks three reserved places on the NEC.

However, we do think that there are problems of perspective within the Black Sections. This is partly revealed in the interviews. We are certain that if Black Sections are to be successful, even in their own terms, the pre-condition is mobilising large numbers of the black community in independent struggles around the issues of deportation, police harassment, housing and unemployment. In short, Black Sections must go beyond making the Party habitable for blacks and prioritise making it relevant to their

and neither will it ever be. There is more of a chance of genuine working class rank and file blacks coming through than through the present set-up where some white leaders can patronise unrepresentative right-wing blacks as a sort of gift.

We had a local example. A ward Councillor chosen by the ward went against the local policy of rate-capping. Yet all 3 black Labour Councillors supported by BS's stood firm. I would argue that this was an example of the ward choosing someone because of their colour to satisfy their liberal position.

The bottom has fallen out because they're not accountable to the people they are supposed to represent.

Those people coming into parliament at the moment who are supported by BS's are a mixed bag because some of them are a hang-over from the old period. The newer ones, produced by the BS's, show a real qualitative difference - an example of that has been seen recently on the Black Section National Committee where, compared to two years ago, the leadership has moved sharply to the left.

**On these questions Hassan argued:**

If you look at the present set-up of the BS, the National Steering Committee, the constituencies, spokespersons, officers etc, you will see the majority are committed socialists who have been involved in the Labour movement for some time.

The BS's and those involved are giving to the LP something which it has always missed, and that is the international labour struggle. These people have come from different countries - Asia, Latin America etc, where the people are fighting military dictatorships, American and British imperialism. They have their own wealth of experience of struggle which they are bringing to the LP itself. They are trying to do what socialists in Britain so often talk about and so rarely practise - to internationalise the struggles of the working class.

needs. But there is an enormous obstacle to this perspective. Kinnock merely symbolises this obstacle. The Labour Party is racist because it is reformist - and not simply or largely because it is white. The leadership of the Party accepts the racist assumptions and perspectives of the bosses just as it shares the bosses' world view in general.

But what should the Black Sections do when faced with this intransigence? How far should we expect CLP's to go in defending them? The first thing we should be clear on is that the Labour leadership has disaffiliated CLP's more than once before for not bending the knee.

Here we disagree with Marc who suggests that we should simply let each CLP decide how far it wants to go in resisting Kinnock. We think that such is Kinnock's electoral cretinism that only a united and determined CLP policy of standing by black candidates chosen by selection committees which include Black Sections - up to and including disaffiliation - will be enough to make Kinnock and the NEC back off.

It must be made quite clear that if he doesn't concede the rights of black people in the Labour Party then he will face local rival candidates to the 'official' Party in any elections.

In other words, we do not put the election of a Kinnock-led Labour Government above the defence and extension of independent black workers' struggles. The question we ask all black comrades is, do you?

Marc was asked: Don't you feel that the national BS's campaign could put itself more in the foreground around struggles like the Newham 7, where perhaps the Labour Party is peripheral to the struggle.

**Marc:** I would hope the rest of the Party would learn from the way we have struggled that the local BS is very important for setting campaigning priorities amongst black activists in an area. The two BS's that exist in Newham have been involved in the Newham 7 campaign. Vauxhall BS has been involved in the front-line in Brixton. Southall BS has been involved in the affairs of the Asian community in Southall.

**Hassan added:** I strongly believe in autonomous black organisations and I think it is important for black people to organise independently of the Labour Party and Trade Union movement, and take up their fights, and later relate this to the Labour and Trade Union Movement. I don't think I can teach the Newham 7 a lesson. Through their example they have shown that unless black people take up issues, and organise and fight, then other people in the Labour Party won't fight for them. So we strongly support these movements outside the Labour Party. I believe black people have a very long fight on their hands, which they must carry out very consistently, both outside the Labour Party, and in the Trade Union movement so that these issues will be understood in society.

**WP asked Hassan how he responded to the Militant's argument that BS's were divisive?**

**Hassan:** It's a 'colour-blind' policy of the Militant Tendency. They do not understand that the white working class has a strong element of racism. It's similar to their argument on Ireland - they talk about Protestant and Catholic fighting together and do not understand the prejudices in the two communities. It is the same argument here. They don't understand that the white working class participates in the discrimination against the black worker, and that the black worker has a special status of being oppressed by the white working class. Unless we recognise their special status it is not possible to simply relate their struggle to the white working class and general struggle.

**Would Marc be prepared to push the defence of BS's so far as to see a CLP dis-affiliated?**

**Marc:** That's very much a local decision. It's not for the National Committee to incite a local party to strike a particular position. It is for us to encourage them to support us to as great an extent as they can.

In Norwood they've done that, and in Lewisham East and in six other parties around the country, they will be choosing one or other of the options to support us.

**Finally, we asked Marc: "You consider yourself a radical socialist, on the left of the Party. Don't you think there is a contradiction between the Labour Party's reformism and its ability to deliver socialism for blacks and whites in the Party?"**

**Marc:** I think we are both agreed on this: we have our reservations because we know the party we are in, but we know that the Labour Party is the Party to which the working class of Britain turns in substantial numbers to find a solution to their plight and because there is the possibility of a government being formed which will actually eradicate the capitalistic conditions that cause our oppression and disadvantage. There is a lot of work to be done on the party to make sure it does deliver up socialism. At the moment I am concerned that it's not on a course to do that...

If we can get some more control through accountability and democracy in the Party then we'll stand a chance. That again sounds like a structural solution but its equally important that we go out into the community and really get to grips with political education so that we push key policies like economic questions, taking over top companies and reappropriating the means of exchange and distribution. We must actually make sure the genuine mass in Britain understand exactly what we are about because we are up against a capitalist press which misrepresents us; we are up against a leadership that seems scared of its own conference decisions and goes out apologising for conference decisions. We have really got to get the message right in terms of what is actually delivered by the leadership and what its grass roots demands.



# STALINISTS FALL OUT:

## what does the Morning Star offer?

THE 39TH (SPECIAL) CONGRESS of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) saw the split in the party grow larger. There was no narrowing of differences between the 'Euro-communist' leadership, grouped around the monthly journal *Marxism Today* (with Gordon McLennan's party apparatus in tow) and the minority around the *Morning Star* and its editor Tony Chater.

The Eurocommunists secured a 2 to 1 majority on all the resolutions, amendments and expulsion appeals. This represents a significant strengthening of the Euro's position since the 1983 Congress.

The Congress had been brought forward after the January Executive Committee brought three years of closet manoeuvring to a head by expelling Chater and deputy editor David Whitfield.

It is important to realise that what unites the two sides in this conflict is at least as important as what divides them. Both sides adhere to the 1977 revised edition of the CPGB's programme, *The British Road to Socialism* (BRS). The cornerstone of this programme is the achievement of a peaceful parliamentary road to socialism through the construction of a 'Broad Democratic Alliance'. Explicitly this is an alliance between "the working class and (those) sections of the capitalist class". (BRS) "Those sections of the capitalist class" are those who are supposed to share an objective common interest with the working class against the rest of their own class. The pursuit of this class collaborationist alliance necessarily requires that the working class restrict its tactics and actions to those which will not scare off the CP's designated strategic allies within the boss class.

### DEMOBOLISING TACTIC

Both sides in the present feud share responsibility for this strategy. In 1983 all sides were united in turning the Peoples March For Jobs into a pathetic moral cross-class protest. They both used violence against those who raised mild anti-Tory slogans such as 'Maggie Out'. At the same time they both fawned and scraped before the odd SDPer or bishop who feigned an interest in the plight of the unemployed.

The CPGB maintained the same logic in the Great Strike of the NUM. Leading CP Euro supporter George Bolton and Mick McGahey constantly sought to demobilise the NUM's militant tactics. McGahey actively colluded with the ISTC at Ravenscraig in order to allow steel production to continue (and increase!) The rationale behind all this was to further the cross-class alliance in Scotland by posing as the saviour of Scotland's steel industry and its national (capitalist) industrial base.

### CHATERITE ALTERNATIVE?

During the battle of Orgreave the mass picketing threatened to upset McGahey's hopes for negotiations with 'progressive' sections of NCB management. At the time of Orgreave McGahey denounced the "posturings on the Orgreave picket line" and even counterposed to it actions such as a "people's lobby of Parliament", and a campaign to canvass support amongst the clergy.

All this time the *Morning Star* either applauded or, if they had any misgivings, hid them from the view of their readers. The Chaterites consistently used the paper to cover over the crime of the trade union officials who failed to mobilise support for the NUM.

So what then divides the two factions in the CPGB? Do the Chaterites offer any viable or healthy alternative to the present leadership? Firstly the Chaterites are at one with the majority on the need to build cross-class alliances as the strategic road to socialism. The need for an anti-monopoly alliance of workers and small business against the multi-nationals is central to their view. What they claim to dispute with *Marxism Today* is the role the working class is to play in the Broad Democratic Alliance.

### POPULAR FRONT

The Star claims the Euro's have deviated from Dimitrov's conception of the nature of the Popular Front. "The main difference between their (ie Euro - WP) 'popular front' and the one proposed by Dimitrov in 1935 resides in the central importance given by Dimitrov to the leading role of the working class movement." (MS. 4.4.85) For Chater, however, the Euro's at best place the working class "on par with the women's liberation movement, the black movement, the peace movement and other social forces." (ibid)

Against the Euro's rejection of the view that all social questions and social conflicts must be subjected to class analysis the Chaterites insist "on the primacy of class in the understanding of movements in British society, including the new forces and a corresponding commitment to, and not abandonment of, class strategy formation" (*Class Politics: An Answer to its Critics* - p.7.)



Stalinist heavy Peter Lenahan moves in on marchers chanting anti-Tory slogans

However, behind this orthodox prose and occasional correct criticism of the Euro's positions, the politics of the Chaterites are still fundamentally bankrupt.

The Chaterites remain committed to the reactionary utopia of a cross class alliance unified behind the Alternative Economic Strategy (AES). They argue that 50% of UK trade is dominated by different branches of multi-national corporations (MNC's). Investment in the UK is undertaken only in order to take advantage of the skilled and low paid workforce after the multinationals have invested in the rest of Europe. This has contributed to the gradual de-industrialisation of the UK which is in the stranglehold of 'internationally organised capital'.

This stranglehold can be broken by the adoption of the Alternative Economic Strategy: "...the AES can be campaigned for as a political strategy to confront and defeat the power of capital as it is organised financially in MNC's and systematically through control and influence on the state."

The specific policies were outlined by Chater in an article on the eve of Congress. They include wage increases to stimulate purchasing power and by this method create jobs; price controls including a six month price freeze and cuts in VAT. They include planning agreements, import controls, exchange controls and withdrawal from the EEC. Chater calls the entire package a "transitional programme for the advance to Socialism". (see MS 18.5.85)

What are the flaws of this programme, aside from the label of 'transitional programme'? Firstly it is written into this programme that its pace and reach will be determined by what is acceptable to sections of the capitalist class. Chater singles out a non-proletarian 10% of the population which includes "small traders, manufacturers and farmers, self-employed professionals and middle management". He goes on to claim that: "objectively, their interests are also opposed to those of big business. And many of them play an important part in the demo-

cratic and progressive forces that can be won by the labour movement to form a broad democratic alliance against monopoly capitalism (MS 4.4.85)

No doubt it was the 'democratic and progressive' 'middle management' at the NCB that the CP were aiming at when they poured scorn on Orgreave pickets! Maybe the broad democratic alliance includes the NCB's area directors!

In fact 'objectively' the interests of 'small manufacturers' are tied to the fortunes of big business. They are themselves exploiters of wage labour and beneficiaries of attacks on Trade Unions. Their very markets tie them in a subordinate relationship to big business. Should big business fail then small capital will go down with it. Should the workers fail to defend and improve their conditions and wages then small capitalists will profit along with the bigger capitals.

What if the intended capitalist allies won't go along with their projected situation? After all the bosses will only invest to secure profit. A militant workers' movement is a permanent threat to those profits. Chater may huff and puff about how "we will compel them to invest", but how does he intend to compel them? On this he and his cohorts are studiously silent.

### NATIONALISM

The task facing the working class is to take the productive forces into its own hands through expropriating the capitalist class. This is the prerequisite of the conscious transition to a socialist economy and society. Yet the Chaterites want the workers' movement to set its sights on a reactionary nationalist programme of import controls and planning agreements struck with the 'progressive' sections of the capitalist class.

It may seem hard to see how such a programme can be linked to the 'leading role'

Chater ascribes to the working class in the popular front. Chater tried to explain this in his *Morning Star* article. "The political expression of such a developing broad democratic alliance...can only be a series of Labour governments of a new type committed to left policies..." (4.4.85) Moreover, "The key here lies in the trade unions. Unless the unions are brought under left leadership, they will not play the role they have to in mobilising the broad democratic alliance". (ibid) Here we are getting close to the nub of his politics. When Chater talks of the leading role of the working class he really means the leading role of the trade union bureaucracy.

Chater and co will go to any lengths to keep their hands on the *Morning Star*. They intend to offer it up as the paper for the Trade Union officials. They know that sections of the Trade Union bureaucracy have toyed with the idea of producing a paper of some kind. Chater has won support for that project from T&G leaders like Evans and Dromey. The Star's management committee contains several trade union leaders such as Ken Brett (AUEW); George Willoughby (SOGAT 82) and Terry Marsland (Tobacco Workers Union).

### THE PAPER WE NEED?

The project cannot succeed if the paper is to criticise the weaknesses, let alone the treachery of the Trade Union bureaucracy. This has been made amply evident in the pages of the *Morning Star* since the defeat of the miners' strike.

In *Marxism Today* and on the Congress floor the Euro's have tried to outdo each other in their denunciations of 'Scargillism' and songs of praise to the Alliances that could have been built if only the miners' militancy had not got in the way. The Chaterites, on the other hand, will brook no criticism of the NUM or its left, and not-so-left, allies. In the *Morning Star* Frank Watters argued of the NUM leaders that "the leadership they gave comes second to none." (17.5.85) He warned that "to openly criticise trade union leaders and traditional left members of the labour movement, will drive a sectarian wedge between the CP and many of our comrades in the trade union movement." More ridiculously, Vic Allen not only praised the NUM leaders to the sky, but insisted that "the miners' strike was not, by any standard of accounting, a defeat". (16.5.85) Indeed "there are no defeats for workers in class struggle only the lessons of experience".

Of course the political experience gained by thousands of miners and their girlfriends/wives was immense. But this cannot hide the fact that the NCB is still on the offensive and that the miners have suffered a defeat at their hands. For Allen and the *Morning Star* to argue that there was no defeat only goes to show they have adopted the thinking of the union bureaucracy completely. They still have their jobs after all. They still rule the roost in the unions.

Chater and co have still not lost their grip on the PPPS and the Star. It's down to the CP leadership to try to get their hands on it. In a desperate bid to hold on to the paper the Chater group have cut the number of sectional AGM's of the PPPS. In turn the Euro's are buying up shares and booking the buses, for their supporters.

Meanwhile the labour movement desperately needs a daily newspaper to counter Fleet Street's filthy lies. It needs one that can openly reflect the range of opinion amongst the ranks of the labour movement's activists.

At stake in the present tussle over the *Morning Star* is whether that paper remains a Chaterite vehicle for mind numbing boredom and bureaucratisation or becomes a Euro-communist trendy rag for the radical middle class. **The labour movement needs neither.** ■

By Keith Hassell

### THE RED MINER

NO 1 APRIL 1985



Workers Power Bulletin for miners and their families 5p

# IDRISH: FORCE NALGO TO ACT

ON 17TH APRIL Muhammed Idrish learned that the Home Office adjudicator had upheld a decision to recommend his deportation. While he has lodged an appeal against this decision, in reality this appeal represents the end of the legal process before deportation.

In view of this critical stage in the struggle the Defence Campaign has decided to launch a new tactic. They are to call upon the Birmingham District and West Midlands Labour Party to create a by-election at District or County Council level in which Muhammed can stand as an independent candidate and that no Labour candidate stand against Muhammed in the election.

This decision marks a sharp turn in the campaign and threatens to demobilise rather than build support. The decision was far from unanimous, with Workers Power and a sizeable minority voting against the recommendation.

Initially the campaign activities for securing Muhammed's stay centred around forcing the Trade Unions, the Labour Party and the black communities to fight his case.

The first battle that Muhammed encountered was getting his union NALGO to campaign on his behalf. It took the combined pressure of equal opportunity activists, anti-racists and black workers' groups to force a hearing of the case at the NALGO conference in 1983. Here a motion pleading industrial action to stop the deportation and organise support with other unions was passed.

No doubt the NALGO leadership hoped that the matter would die away and that they would not have to prosecute a campaign of industrial action.

Why are NALGO leaders unserious about waging a real struggle to stop Muhammed's deportation? They see the issue as too political, an issue which a large chunk of NALGO members might not get right behind. They constantly stress the special case nature of Muhammed's case thereby failing to fight against immigration controls as the cause of thousands of black people being deported.

This means NALGO is not committed to automatically fighting all deportations, indeed NALGO is not even committed to fighting for all its members threatened with deportation. Another NALGO member Shahid Syed had to exert as much pressure as Muhammed did on the Executive to get his case taken up.

Yet John Daly, General Secretary of NALGO, speaking on the platform at a rally in Birmingham said, "Trade Unionists must not allow racists in this country to divide them." He also said that the legal processes of deportation "is a reflection of the racist policies of the government."

He is absolutely right but to simply repeat these slogans will not keep Muhammed here. For black workers the best guarantee of stopping deportations and preventing divisions is to organise industrial action around this case. This could form

the basis of a campaign to smash these racist laws and to ensure that everyone threatened by them is successfully defended by the whole labour movement.

Opposed to this perspective in the campaign are forces like the RCP who have advanced the argument, "that a well organised election campaign is the best opportunity yet to put the Home Office on the spot and stop the deportation." It will do neither of these two things.

Even the mass campaign behind the Parliamentary election of Bobby Sands failed to budge Thatcher. What chance has a campaign which is to save a local councillor got, without mass support and in the face of the Tories' racist laws?

It was quite right for Bobby Sands to stand. We would not rule out ever standing against Labour but such a tactic now plays right into the hands of the NALGO bureaucrats who want to deliberately deflect attention and pressure from organising industrial action.

Despite this the Defence Campaign now has its sights firmly fixed on the vacant seat of Sparkbrook on the West Midlands County Council. The Labour Party with its large majority on the council are quite unwilling to hold an election particularly after Labour's 43% rate rise. This is a disgraceful stance by Labour, not just in denying representation to a part of the electorate, but in diffusing a potential show of support against the abolition of the Metropolitan County Council.

At the very minimum a Labour candidate should come out against the abolition of the County Council, against the rate increases, against the Tories job-cutting policies and for the smashing of all immigration laws. Muhammed if he stood would have to make his position very clear on all these issues and more.

If Labour should not stand down, what should it do? It should stand up and fight! The Labour Party could provide a national focus, a blaze of publicity, for Muhammed's struggle, far more than any local electioneering stunt. Sympathetic MPs can and must call on the Shadow front bench to force a debate, early day motions should be put by campaign group MPs and business in the House can be disrupted. Further the NEC must be pressurised to support direct action, be it on the industrial front or at the Airport. Black sections could play a key role in stimulating this action.

Most importantly though, the campaign should demand that NALGO implement conference policy and mobilise industrial action. This must be effective action! Strike action must be called. NALGO must jointly pursue industrial action with those trade unionists who process the deportation order. They must refuse to handle it. If the NALGO leadership won't do this, then rank and file activists must take the lead. ■



Industrial action: Key to stop deportations.

## LETTERS

### Defence of the USSR?

Dear Comrades,

In what is apparently the concluding article of the spread on the USSR in WP 72 there is the following formulation: "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."

This is an unfortunate formulation since it can have two different meanings. Either you mean that defensism is an operative policy only after political revolution or you mean the economic gains arising from the revolution can only be permanently ensured for the workers after the political revolution.

If the formulation does have the latter meaning then there is no problem. If, however, you do mean that defensism as a policy for the Soviet and international working class is only operative after the political revolution then you are arguing for a policy of conditional defence of the USSR. This is a false position. It is similar to the conditional defensism of the Socialist Organiser which your paper in the past has correctly criticised.

Could you please make clear which policy you pursue?

Yours Fraternally,  
Jonathan Harker.

**WE REPLY:** The lay up of the article seems to have led to some ambiguity. The piece Cde Harker queries is supposed to be read as the conclusion to the material dealing with Gorbachev's plans to dismantle vital historic gains of the Soviet workers. Plans to abolish subsidies and job security are central to Gorbachev and the managerialists who have high hopes in him. What we are saying is that these gains can

only be defended and extended through working class struggle against the bureaucracy. That struggle must set as its task the seizure of political power by workers in order to democratically centralise the planned economy - i.e. political revolution. The alternative is for the Soviet workers to see their gains dismantled and undermined. To that extent political revolution is the means of permanently guaranteeing the economic gains arising from the 1917 revolution.

As for the other potential reading of the section. We place no conditions on our defence of the USSR against imperialist attack. We have made that clear many times before. Perhaps the comrade would care to read our book 'The Degenerated Revolution' and the MRCI resolution on the War Threat which can be found in *Permanent Revolution no. 2*. ■

## Apology for racists?

Dear Comrades,

I was surprised to read in your paper (issue 77) that you oppose the demand for 'No platform for Racists'. Surely this is little more than a capitulation to liberal arguments about 'free speech' and gives a carte blanche for racists to organise on the campuses and elsewhere? Would Workers Power oppose attempts to stop Enoch Powell or P.W. Botha from speaking? And what is to be the attitude of Palestinian students to this 'freedom' for Zionists to organise? Surely you realise that many Palestinians feel the presence of Zionists on campuses to be a direct threat to their safety after they return to occupied Palestine?

It seems to me that Richard Gerrard's point about the need to preserve the 'qualitative distinction that divides racism from Fascism' is an abstract and pedantic generalisation. It is certainly of little use when faced with

real live racists organising in our midst.

Yours in Comradship,

David Cohen.  
Wolverhampton.



Tyndall: No platform for fascists!

**WE REPLY:** Dave Cohen is wrong to insist that our distinction between racism and fascism is 'abstract and pedantic'. If he thinks that's the case then he would not be able to distinguish between backward racist trade unionists and organised fascists.

He is right, however, to suggest that our tactics for fighting racism need more clarification. In our view the slogan 'No platform for Racists' is unclear and unspecific as to the tactics that flow from it. In the face of racist comments in the workplace or trade union branch, for example, we are not in favour of immediate physical organisation to smash and immobilise the individual workers concerned. We would, in fact, initially argue with and confront the racist remarks rather than denying them a platform.

On the other hand, active and organised racists in the unions should be expelled, denied the right to office, facilities etc. The dividing line between such racists and fascists is so narrow as to make 'no platform' the necessary tactic. Similarly we are in favour of labour movement mobilisation to prevent Powell or Botha using public platforms to spread their racist poison, and thus assemble and organise their racist, proto-fascist followers. The same

# Defend Leicester Anti-fascist



On the 20th April 1985 the British National Party (BNP) held an election meeting at Avenue Junior School in Leicester.

The police allowed about three hundred anti-fascist protesters into the meeting to confront sixty BNPs. For almost an hour the BNPs speakers - including Tyndall and local Fuhrer Peacock - were drowned out by a chorus of socialist songs and chants.

When BNP stewards attempted to eject the protesters a large scale fight broke out. The BNP having little local support, had bussed in more than sixty heavies, including off-duty members of the armed forces. They were out-numbered, but help eventually came in the form of Leicestershire Constabulary.

Nine anti-fascists were arrested, as opposed to only two fascists. The police flooded the meeting when it resumed they adopted a policy of forcing ejecting hecklers. Even so, by the end the BNP's pathetic rendering of "God Save the Queen" was drowned out by the "Internationale."

The protest severely dented the fascists' attempt to re-organise in Leicester. (A chair by the account was broadcast live on Radio Leicester.) At the end the BNP polled only thirty votes.

A defence campaign has been set up to defend the nine anti-fascists. One has already been fined £200. Charges facing the others range from Threatening Behaviour to Actual Bodily Harm to a police officer.

We urge you to contribute generously to the Defence Fund: c/o 25 Hipwell Crescent, Leicester.

would apply to overt racist electoral campaigns run by Tory candidates. We would urge the labour movement and black organisations to stand shoulder to shoulder to prevent the spread of racist campaign material and the holding of racist meetings.

We similarly recognise the need for Palestinians and their supporters to actively organise to prevent Jewish societies becoming organised agents of Zionist repression. To the extent that this is the case then we are for the destruction of those agents of repression.

We fully accept that there is no brick wall between racism and fascism. That is reflected in the tactics we advocate. But we think the slogan 'No platform for racists' obscures rather than clarifies the specific tactics revolutionaries must apply in combatting racist poison. ■



Irving: Free speech for racists?

# STOP THE RETREAT IN THE NUM

THE COAL BOARD is pressing ahead with its plans to slash jobs in the mining industry. Taking advantage of the NUM's defeat, it has summoned NUM officials area by area to receive their local hit list. Those who thought the NUM could live to fight closures on a local basis must be made to eat their words. The NCB is upping the tempo of closures to beyond that announced in March 1984, and is taking on each isolated area with relish.

Three thousand jobs are to go in the Barnsley area. Militant Doncaster is to lose 2,500 - twice as many as the media's pundits were predicting. The North East stands to lose 3,000 with 1,433 to be lost through the planned closure of Bates Colliery.

All this is being backed up with a new get tough managerial style. The NCB don't need to pussy foot with NACODS any longer now that they've sold themselves and the NUM for a worthless colliery review procedure. Hence Merrick Stanton's instructions to alter shift rosters and discipline NACODS men who refuse to comply.

Throughout the country NCB officials are picking on the militants and wielding the whip on the workforce. At Brodsworth Colliery 60 men were sent home on the day shift after being supposedly too late to go down the pit. In fact they were five minutes early.

Neither have the NCB been prepared to yield on the sacked men wherever the area managements have dug their heels in. There have been no concessions, even of a cosmetic nature, in Scotland or Kent. MacGregor was as bullish as ever when he met the House of Commons enquiry into the sackings.

There have been plenty of signs of militant responses to managerial attacks. At Brodsworth 400 walked out to back the 60 who had been sent home. At Bentley the rank and file stopped work when management tried to send one man home for not doing his job. South Kirby miners struck for one week when the NCB tried to sack four men. They successfully picketed out Houghton Main, Ferry Moor Riddings, Dodsworth, Royston Drift and Shafton workshops.

However there have been signs of demoralisation amongst the rank and file in the wake of defeat. The scale of applications for voluntary redundancy is helping the NCB clear out the industry at their own pace. The key problem is whether the rot of demoralisation and retreat can be checked by the best militants.



The NEC has no plans or appetite for a renewed national response to the NCB's offensive. Arthur Scargill still considers such an approach may prove necessary in the future. He told miners at Blyth who were protesting against the closure of Bates that, "At the end of the day it may be necessary to take up the cudgels again to fight this Tory government." But there is no evidence that the leadership is fighting for any action in response to management's attack.

Jack Taylor washed his hands of the South Kirby strike. After the Doncaster hit list had been announced he could only blather that, "They (the NCB - WP) have been honest and open today, and there has been no departure from the review procedure. I wish we did not have any job losses, but that is one of the consequences of not succeeding in the dispute."

With such a fatalistic and demoralised leadership in place the NCB has nothing to fear. Of course, the NCB can go through the review procedure if it is done in concert with an NUM leadership that has accepted defeat.

With over 700 men sacked, over 60 in jail and

management on the rampage it is vital that the NUM leaders are not allowed to climb down. Neither must they be left to forget the sacked men after their visit to Parliament and pleas on their behalf.

The Tory-dominated Commons will never back the miners. Neither will the Labour leadership upset what it considers is its electoral credibility by openly siding with every sacked man, guaranteeing them all full support and declaring itself for the immediate unconditional release of all the jailed men. Only the organised strength of the miners and the organised working class can force the NCB and courts to climb down.

Over the last months the national rank and file miners' movement has established a committee, a bulletin and held national meetings. This is an extremely healthy development which could become a vital rallying point for all the best forces who want to turn the tide in the NUM.

At present the movement has set itself the priority of fighting on behalf of the sacked men. In particular, they have set their sights on maintaining the support that the miners received in the

Great Strike and directing it behind the victimised miners. This work is important. Every workplace, trade union branch and Labour Party ward should have a speaker to explain the case of the sacked men.

Branches and workplaces should be committed to campaigning for their reinstatement, forcing the TUC and Labour leaders to back them, and maintaining all necessary financial and material aid. So too must the fight for the jailed miners be taken to the ranks of organised labour.

However there are problems with this perspective which we've raised before. The NCB will not concede the reinstatement of these men to a union that has not resisted the sackings at South Kirby or the Phurnacite plant in South Wales. It is under no pressure to back down in the face of an area and national leadership who won't fight their post-strike closure plans.

That is why the rank and file movement cannot afford to simply focus its energies on the sacked men and towards the best miners supporters in the Labour movement. Firstly, it can become an excuse for officials doing nothing for the sacked men. Secondly, it detracts from the necessary struggle to create a base amongst working militants and to create a national network fighting for a truly national, democratic class struggle NUM.

That means the movement cannot turn a blind eye to building its influence in coalfields where it has little or no presence - Scotland, South Wales and the North East. It must take up the cudgels against the backsliding officials who sold the miners short. It cannot ignore the rule change controversy where the rank and file movement must take a line independent of the scabby right, the Welsh soft left and the bureaucratic left around Scargill and Heathfield.

The next months are crucial in deciding whether a challenge to retreat and demoralisation can be waged in the ranks of the NUM. That is why the building and direction of the National Rank and File Movement is so crucial. ■

If you want a speaker from the National Rank and File Miners Movement for your branch, workplace or miners support committee, or if you want their bulletin, contact:  
A Robe 0302-844446 or  
T Clegg 0302-845655

## For or against the rule changes?

THE PROPOSED NUM rule changes pose a sharp test for NUM militants. On the one hand there are aspects of the changes which involve steps towards centralising the union as a national body. To the extent that they do so, specific changes should, of course, be supported.

However many of the proposed changes are not designed with that intention in mind. They will cushion the officials, make them less accountable and dampen rank and file initiative. All such proposed changes should be opposed.

Lynk and Prendergast have swung the Notts area against the changes. They see them as a threat to their autonomy within the union's traditional highly federal structure. So too do Emlyn Williams and Kim Howells who are jealous to protect the precious autonomy of South Wales.

It would be wrong to give one inch to their arguments. The Great Strike showed just how vital it is to have one union with one national leadership and rule book. Federalism has always weakened the NUM, and the MFGB before it. It would be right therefore to support new rule 26 clause C which gives the NEC "the power to call industrial action by any group of members whether in one part or more than one area, and such action shall be deemed to be declared official". Similarly there can be no objection to new rule 18 in insisting that "each area and each constituent association shall adopt and comply with the model rules and any amendments thereto".

Such proposals would place limits on the potential autonomy of Lynk and company. They would make it more difficult for them to ballot themselves out of a national strike. To this extent the scabby Nottingham Miner paper was right when it argued "The proposed new rules would have blocked last year's Notts strike ballot".

Nevertheless the truth is that these changes would not mark the end of the NUM's federalism. The areas will retain their autonomous control of their pension funds, their funds and rule books. Under new Rule 17 the 21 constituent associations of the NUM are registered under the anti-trade union laws as trade unions in themselves. This will serve the area officials all too well if they decide to reject national calls for action. Just because Lynk or Williams claim their autonomy is under threat it does not mean it is so.

The leadership will still be constituted on an area by area basis as in the past. This has led to

absurdities like the current representation of North Wales and Cumberland and relative under-representation of the larger and stronger areas. The composition of the new NEC likewise will be the product of horse-trading between the area leaderships and stitch ups within the Broad Left. The rule changes fall far short of creating the national and accountable leadership the miners need. The union needs a national leadership, elected by and recallable by the national conference. It does not need a more or less representative assembly of regional barons.

The proposed changes should serve to further protect the officials from accountability to the rank and file. It is wrong that Arthur Scargill should be made President for life. All officials should be recallable and up for regular election. We should also oppose that change which calls for a two thirds majority of the relevant members in a ballot vote before officials can be removed. You don't see Lynk and co contesting this one! Although it is presented as a means of preventing a repetition of the Richardson affair, it will serve to featherbed all officials - whether they be 'left' or 'right'. All officials should be elected by a simple

majority, subject to regular re-election and re-call by a simple majority of those they represent.

It is correct that the NEC and the conference should be given the power to call national strikes. But the rule changes recommend more than this. In the name of changing the rules in line with the anti-union laws - itself a sign of the retreat the NEC are beating in the face of the Tories - the rules would now ensure that no strike was official unless sanctioned by the NEC. This is presented as a means of defending the union's funds under the anti-union laws. In fact it will protect the official funds for just as long as they give no official backing to a dispute. But under the new anti-union laws it means the pickets, who have kick started every major dispute in the industry, will now be left to get hammered by the bosses as 'financially liable'. The rules should be changed to guarantee NEC official backing for every action decided upon by the men at the relevant pit, area or panel level. The NEC must not be allowed to climb back on the fence and pick and choose which battles it will support. Rule 5d would read 'The NEC shall determine the categories and qualifications of persons who shall be eligible for consideration as

associate members'. Lynk does not like this one either! In our view associate membership should not be a medal handed out by the NEC to chosen individuals in gratitude for services rendered.

Peter Heathfield makes it clear that the leadership sees associate membership as a harmless reward that they want to give to Women Against Pit Closures. As he says; "The new associate and honorary members will have no rights in the union. They will not be able to speak or vote or attend branch meetings. They will not be able to affect Union policy in any way whatsoever. Their membership will be an honour to them and a way of saying 'thank you' from us." (The Miner May 1985 - its emphasis).

The wives organisations should have automatic right to associate status as groups. That is a necessary means of maintaining the fighting unity that was forged in the strike and developing the women's groups further. The rule change should be amended to make it clear that associate membership will give the women's groups the right to observer status at every level in the union.

New rule 18 h says that areas refusing to obey the new rules 'may be excluded from the union'. Fine words. In our view all scab officials should have been booted out the moment they stuck their knives into the NUM's back. Their members would then have been given the choice of either going with the scab officials or standing and fighting with the national union. Failure to do so allowed the waverers to keep scabbing. And it will give Lynk and his well placed advisers over a year to build their scab outfit inside the NUM. Now they have drummed up two thirds of the Notts miners to prepare to split if the rule changes go through.

It's still not too late to take the bull by the horns. The scab officials in all the scab areas should be expelled now. It's just not good enough to suspend Lynk from his job. The union should be reconstituted around those who stood and struck with the NUM. NUM members who scabbed should be given the choice between a company union and a union that will fight. Loyal NUM members must be given every backing to win that recruitment campaign. It should be the union loyal militants - and them alone - who should have the right to decide who can and who cannot carry a union card. ■

by N. Watkins



# SYRIA BACKS PALESTINIAN POGROM

THE BLOOD-LETTING of the Palestinian people continues. In a period of a little over a week the Palestinian refugee ghettos of Sabra, Chattila and Bourj al-Barajneh witnessed another massacre. This time over 350 were killed and some 1,600 maimed.

In many ways the scene was a re-run of the 1982 Israeli/Maronite massacre in Sabra and Chattila. There were careful preparations to isolate the refugees, and to make the camps a no-go area for journalists and the Red Cross. Reports even suggest cold-blooded murder of the wounded in hospital.

This time the blood-letting was not the work

of Israel or its Christian Lebanese agents. This unpardonable carnage was the work of the Shi'ite militia, Amal, aided and abetted by the Shi'ite Lebanese Army Sixth Brigade. Standing behind them both, however, is Syria.

Once more, the regional aspirations of Syria's petit-bourgeois Arab nationalist regime under President Assad have demanded brutal repression of the Palestinians. Ever since 1976, when Assad intervened directly to prop-up the Maronite state against Muslim resistance, Syria has been a ruthless rival of any Arab forces that appear to be growing strong enough to be independent of

Syria.

Syria's strategic aim is twofold. Firstly, to convince US imperialism that its armed might and its life-line to the Kremlin make it a political force to be reckoned with. It aims to prove that Israel has no possibility of inflicting a military or political defeat on Syria. In return for imperialism recognising its control over Lebanon, Syria is prepared to control the PLO and other Muslim forces opposed to Israel.

Secondly, Syria entertains the hope that she may be rewarded for this role by the return of the Golan Heights from Israel. It is not too much to believe that the planned move against the Palestinians was the subject of much discussion - even agreement - during the spring round of shuttle diplomacy between Israel and Syria by US Middle East envoys.

Since the evacuation of the PLO from Beirut in 1982, the Palestinian fighters have slowly regrouped some forces back into the camps. They have brought small artillery with them. The Shi'ites have only lately been able to turn their attention to Beirut. For the last two years they have been pre-occupied with the fight to push Israel out of Southern Lebanon.

In mobilising Amal for his aims, Assad has been careful to nurture the suspicions, and even hostility, that many Shi'ites in the South felt towards the PLO.

Before the 1982 Israeli invasion there was considerable friction between the two communities. The Shi'ite leadership blamed the presence of the Palestinians for the Israeli invasion.

For the last three years a united front has been forced upon all anti-Israeli Arab forces in order to prevent the consolidation of a strong pro-Israel Maronite Christian state. With the defeat of Israel and its project, the reactionary character of petit-bourgeois Arab politics is coming to the surface again.

Nabir Berri's Amal is not simply a dupe of

Syria. Far from it. Berri represents the small propertied urban Shi'ite bourgeoisie and the much smaller Shi'ite landowners of the South. They correctly realise that their prosperity depends upon a stable bourgeois state and the existence of a mass of exploited and oppressed Muslim poor.

A thorough revolutionary democratic programme for Lebanon would be to risk rousing the aspirations of the poor and exploited. For this reason Berri blocs with Syria to prop up the pathetic and powerless Gemayal as President.

The crushing and controlling of the Palestinians in Lebanon is essential for Berri and Assad. It is a means of maintaining stability as the basis of confessional power-sharing and an understanding with Israel.

The immediate consequence of the latest barbarism for the PLO is less clear. Previous defeats have left it divided and at odds with itself. To some extent, the latest siege of the camps has served to bring the dissident forces together in a united front against Amal.

Israel, US, Egypt and Jordan all hope that these latest reverses will once more lower the political ambitions of Arafat. They aim to force the PLO to accept that the best they can hope for as a 'solution' is a confederate state consisting of Jordan with a strip of the West Bank, under the control of King Hussein.

The swift turn around in the role of Amal from being heroes of the anti-Israeli resistance to becoming butchers of the Palestinians reveals the utter bankruptcy of Arab nationalism. This is the case, despite episodic progressive actions it is forced to undertake to ensure its survival.

Neither Berri, Assad, King Hussein nor Arafat himself 'safeguard' the interests of the Palestinians. When the guns fall silent and the smoke clears in Chattila, Sabra and Bourj al-Barajneh let us hope that a few more have the strength and courage to realise this. ■



## Let the Tamils in!

FOR THE BEST part of this year President Jayawardene's army has been carrying out a punishing round of attacks on Tamil towns and villages of the Northern and Eastern provinces of Sri Lanka.

Since the coming to power of Jayawardene's Sinhalese chauvinist government in 1977 the army has repeatedly been used to crush the legitimate resistance to political and social discrimination of the Tamil minority. The 1983 pogroms in Colombo were the most vicious. Many Tamils were driven north to find refuge in the Tamil towns like Mannan and Jaffna.

From that time the Sri Lankan army has increasingly carried out raids, mass arrests and indiscriminate killings. To add to their long-standing policy of whipping up the hatred of the Sinhalese masses against the Tamils, Jayawardene has recently stirred up trouble between the Tamils and the Muslims in the Eastern Province.

Thatcher's press in Britain is not interested in this. Her recent trip was designed to reassure Jayawardene of her continued backing. On the other hand, they were only too happy to dwell on the Tamil guerrillas' raid on the city of Anuradhapura which ended with the massacre of 146 people, mainly Sinhalese.

While we do not for one moment believe that the Tamils' struggle for an independent state (Eelam) will be brought nearer by such tactics, we insist that such reprisals are inevitable so long as the Sinhalese state continues to oppress the Tamils.

The violence against the Tamils - unlike that of Anuradhapura - is a systematic, organised policy of the state. It is for that reason that thousands of Tamils are fleeing Sri Lanka.

Many are seeking refuge in Britain. This country has a special responsibility to welcome them. Sri Lanka was for years a British colony, ruled with an iron fist on behalf of British tea barons. The present civil war is a consequence of decades of divide and rule policy.

The British labour movement must force the Tories to repay its debt by allowing Tamil refugees the right of automatic entry and residence. Leon Brittan has given the order that the Tamils should be put on the next plane back to Colombo.

It is desperately urgent that the trade union and Labour Party branches pass resolutions and send letters to the Home Office demanding a change in government policy toward the refugees. ■

## LETTER FROM THE SIX COUNTIES

THE LOCAL ELECTIONS in Northern Ireland have delivered another severe blow to the crumbling plans of the British and Irish bourgeoisie for settling their problems in the North of Ireland.

Once again Sinn Fein have polled better than the pundits in the bourgeois media predicted. They gained seats in 17 of the 26 councils. In two of those - Fermanagh and Belfast - they are the majority nationalist party as against the Thatcher-Fitzgerald backed SDLP. Sinn Fein won 59 seats with the SDLP taking 101. That total would doubtless have been higher had not the effects of the anti-impersonation bill disenfranchised hundreds of working class youths unable to produce the required 'new' medical card sprung on the electorate less than a month before polling day.

### ELECTORAL SUCCESS

Sinn Fein's support comes primarily from the poorer and younger sections of working class catholic communities. It is one more nail in the coffin of those bourgeois commentators who claimed that previous Sinn Fein electoral successes were merely one off responses to the epic heroism and sacrifices of the murdered H-block victims. This most recent success indicates that Sinn Fein's 'turn' to the ballot box and to 'servicing' the needs of catholic working class communities has, predictably, been carried out with more honesty and seriousness than that of the other parties contending for nationalist support. The SDLP and the Irish Independence Party (IIP) are both highly practised in the art of cynical and corrupt careerist politics. These results show that Sinn Fein can still threaten the majority of the SDLP among the six counties' nationalists. This further serves to narrow the options of British imperialism ever more in the direction of loyalist demands for the physical destruction of the IRA, Sinn Fein and its support in the nationalist communities.

However Sinn Fein's victories also increase the political problems confronting the Republican movement itself. It turned to the ballot box after its pure armed struggle had failed to make any significant headway. The tactic enabled Sinn Fein to consolidate the support it had won in the H-Block campaign. But it also created divisions within the movement's ranks with IRA military activists opposing resources being taken away from the physical struggle. The recent successes can only further increase the conflict between the two lines of march.

Sinn Fein has inevitably become embroiled in the bear pit of local nationalist versus inter-community politics. The pressure of catholic bourgeois nationalist 'public opinion' will force Sinn Fein to line up with the SDLP, and the

remnants of the IIP, on the 'keep the unionists out' principle.

That this is inevitable is further ensured by the kind of campaign Sinn Fein offers to the working class of the six counties. They correctly attack the cynicism, corruption and venality of the SDLP and IIP. But their only alternative is a pledge of personal integrity, self-sacrifice and hard work. They promise to service the local immediate needs of the catholic community in a superior fashion to that of their rivals. But they have nothing to offer now in order to create an organised fight back against British military repression, mounting unemployment, poverty and low wages.

They offered no programme for an all out fight on the key questions of repression, super-grasses, strip searches etc. Such a fight back would have to be based on working class action. It would be a fight against capitalism. Sinn Fein's socialism, on the other hand, amounted to no more than rosy promises of a United Ireland sometime in the unspecified future. That will be brought about by the IRA's armed struggle. In the meantime an army of local government representatives and an efficient party machine will attempt to win more crumbs from an already impoverished table.

### OPPORTUNISM

The whole perspective is logically bound to lead to a squalid and opportunist fight for patronage and brokerage among the nationalist parties. It will be a supreme test for Adams, Morrison and co. These architects of the 'left turn' will find it difficult to maintain the unity of the republican movement without major internal battles or even a split.

Ultimately the crunch must come. Neither the physical nor the ballot box strategy can make serious headway against British imperialism with its Orange mass base still prepared to line up behind the RUC and British army. Irish revolutionary socialists have the task of propagandising for the necessary programme of class struggle and the building of a mass armed working class led movement in an Irish Workers state.

On this basis the Irish Workers Group called for a critical vote for Sinn Fein in the elections. It called on workers to put Sinn Fein to the test by demanding that they mobilise real class struggles in the here and now. One week before the election, a Derry factory employing 80 women, closed without even one days notice to its workers. Sinn Fein was so engrossed in scoring an electoral victory over the SDLP that it ignored the closure. So too, of course, did the SDLP. Already the pressure of opportunism is taking its toll. ■





# Class war prisoners not murderers!

THE LIFE SENTENCES handed to Dean Hancock and Russel Shankland are one more example of the class justice that the courts have administered to the miners on behalf of the bosses and the Tories.

By no legal precedent could they be convicted of murder. There was no evidence of a desire to kill either Williams or Wilkie. Manslaughter would normally be the verdict. But Thatcher handed down the verdict the day after Wilkie's death.

The courts and the press say they are murderers. They are not. They are class war prisoners. They were captured fighting for our class. They have been imprisoned by our class enemy.

Russell and Dean took action to stop scab taxi driver Wilkie getting arch-scab Williams into Merthyr Vale colliery. It was so important for the NCB and the police to get this scab in, that they had occupied the pit village of Aberfan and made picketing impossible. Russell and Dean acted to stop them breaking the strike.

They could never have expected 'justice' from the courts. Thatcher and the media had already pronounced their verdict on the two young miners. It was wrong to take their lawyers' advice and hope the judge would soften if offered criticisms of the strike and its leaders. Hancock and Shankland had nothing to be ashamed of.

Their sentence is meant as a warning to all workers who take decisive action to defend their jobs and communities. It was as representatives of the militant miners that Russell and Dean were sentenced that day.

The response of their workmates at Taff Merthyr and Oakdale was an immediate walk out. Miners and their supporters have taken to the streets in Rhymney and Cardiff on the two young men's behalf. These actions can become the springboard for a campaign to release the class war prisoners. The NUM must be forced to stand by these lads and fight for their release. The South Wales area says that they will "provide every thing needed in this campaign." But they did not mobilise and organise for the Cardiff demonstration. Campaigning for the release of Dean and Russell threatens their cosy alliance in the Welsh Congress. They, and the Labour Party, place their trust in the courts being 'fair' to their class enemy.

Miners and their supporters must go out to every Labour movement body to put the case for these two young miners. They must argue for industrial action and demonstrations that place the release of these two young class war prisoners at the centre of the demands of the workers' movement. ■



Emlyn Williams holds forth

# BEWARE THE WALES CONGRESS

DESPITE BEING THE most solid area during the 84/5 miners' strike South Wales eventually led the return back to work. One of the most active forces in this Great Betrayal was the 'Wales Congress in Support of Mining Communities', an unholy alliance of the Communist Party, the SWNUM bureaucracy, Plaid Cymru, the Church etc, whose role in demobilising support for the strike has already been described (WP 69).

Unfortunately, the end of the miners' strike has not seen the end of the Wales Congress. The driving force behind the Wales Congress, the CP is now manoeuvring to dissolve the remaining support committees in Wales into the Congress in order to form a permanent Popular Front.

The bankruptcy of this project became all too clear at a meeting held in Cardiff (22.5.85) where the Stalinist controlled Cardiff Miners' Support Co-ordinating Committee commanded local activists to set themselves up as a local branch of the Congress and then cynically manipulated the meeting to ensure that there was no serious discussion, of either the programme or organization of the Congress.

Instead, the meeting was treated to mere rhetoric. Wayne David (Wales Congress Steering Committee) boasted how the South Wales NUM "Recognized the work done by Congress and would like the work of Congress to continue."

What this means precisely was hammered home by Emlyn Jenkins from the SWNUM executive. On the question of the imprisoned miners Shankland and Hancock, all Jenkins could offer was to return a Labour government and appeal to the (then) Home Secretary for amnesty - that is our only hope".

In other words, the Congress refuses to take up militant action to free the jailed miners or any other demand because it would scare off its middle class wing - Plaid and the Church. In fact, the Congress has only mutedly condemned the "severity of the charges and subsequent convictions" (Western Mail 23.5.85) given to Shankland and Hancock.

The Wales Congress is nothing but a Communist Party jamboree designed to keep afloat the rotting hulk of Stalinism. Not that this deters the 'Trotskyists' of Socialist Action who, in their desire to cosy up to the SWNUM bureaucracy and the Congress, voted at the Cardiff meeting to dissolve into the Congress - although "minor" details like programme were to be left to a later date.

The Congress is not an exclusively Welsh phenomenon. The CP is trying to set up similar bodies in London, Liverpool and other major cities. But the result of such class collaboration will be the same everywhere. ■

# COUNCIL UNIONS MUST HALT RETREAT

AND THEN THERE WERE FIVE. That is how many Labour Councils - all in London - remain on the battlefield. But the body count will rise by at least one before the end of May. Hackney, the jewel in the crown of the hard left resistance, is the latest to fall after a right-wing rebellion produced a successful vote on a legal rate proposed at its last meeting.

In Islington the Labour leadership has suddenly found more money. Extra funding from the GLC because Islington is a 'stress area' plus more 'creative accounting' will allow the council to bridge the gap between the £107 million spending plan and the £85 million income limit set by the Tories.

Islington have brought forward the date of their next council meeting from mid-June to May 31st. That's the giveaway. This is the deadline set by the District Auditor for making a legal rate. After this he has threatened to start surcharge proceedings against defiant councillors. The main 'stress area' in Islington, it seems, is within the ruling Labour group.



Hilda Kean

Lambeth has now picked up the hard left banner dropped by Hackney. Ted Knight still insists upon the impossibility of bridging the financial gap and therefore upon continuing defiance. However, at the last Council meeting on May 17th a legal rate was prevented only by the mayor's casting vote. Lambeth will follow Hackney and Islington.

Workers Power has been critical of the Councillors' campaign against rate-capping from the start. The gradual collapse has not primarily been due to the fear of surcharge of a minority. Both they and the majority have long had the perspective of merely bringing the Tories to the negotiating table through pressure.

In this they have completely underestimated the determination of the Tories. Instead of the immediately threatened councils conducting a sectional dispute with the Government, it was always crucial that the fight be generalised from the start to a national fight mobilising the power of the unions through strike action.

The collapse of the councils now only serves to focus all attention on the unions. The unions' campaign is headed by London Bridge and the National Local Government Committees (NLGCC). These are delegate-based bodies representing shop steward committees. However, all the signs are that the unions are also in retreat.

What have been its weaknesses? First, and most crucially, they have never resolved the question of what type of action will be necessary to respond to the various 'trigger events' (i.e. redundancies, surcharge of councillors etc). Low profile selective action has occurred here and there with little effect. But the paper policy of London

Bridge - 'all out strike action, sit-ins and occupations' - has remained precisely that paper policy.

Secondly, and connected to this, London Bridge has not taken the formal policies and fought for them in the workplaces. This is the harsh truth. A delegate shop-stewards organisation was, and remains, a great step forward for the council unions. But in itself it is no panacea.

There is a serious dislocation between it and workplaces because they are delegated from shop-steward committees. Many stewards on London Bridge are forever 'divining' what they think their members will accept as a way of shooting down the more radical proposals. Every time a 'trigger event' has occurred, the 'trigger event' is redefined to put it further into the future.

At its last meeting on May 23rd the only perspective that emerged from London Bridge was to try and get the remaining Labour Councillors to hold firm and get the renegades to resign. Plans for glossy literature were agreed upon to give the group a 'higher profile'! All this is designed to keep London Bridge from falling down. If it's still in place next year then, it says, the 'real fight' will begin as they are forced to resist the consequences of the council's climbdown.

The real fight is here and now. What are the tasks? To begin, we must insist that if surcharging occurs then the policy of all-out strike action is activated and prepared for now with the rank and file.

If the Councillors announce their intention to carry out such a defiant budget strategy, we must demand of them that it is carried out effectively. This would mean opening all the books of the Council to their workers so that the true state of the Council's finances are known. It would involve stepping up, not cutting Council spending, so that the real needs of workers in the communities were met if only for a short time. Crucially it would mean a willingness to make the bosses - not the workers - suffer as the money ran out, by refusing to repay debts and interest to the finance houses.

It will be initially a defensive campaign in which we must refuse cover where posts remain unfilled. In addition, a ban on non-contractual overtime and agency staff (the prelude to further privatisation) must be enforced.

Yet we must wake up to the fact that if this defensive campaign is successful then the council directorates will be forced to launch a frontal attack on their workforces. Squeezed between their 'financial limits' and union resistance by a thousand 'small cuts', they will begin to issue the redundancy notices. London-wide all-out indefinite strike action must result.

Just as urgently we need a drastic overhaul of the union campaign organisation. At the moment the present structure of London Bridge and the NLGCC makes the regional/national organisations cumbersome when swift action is necessary. To overcome this problem, where it is not already the case, regular meetings in the localities should be open to all stewards to decide policies and elect representatives. This would help to overcome a second major weakness - remoteness from the rank and file of the unions involved.

There is a desperate need for closer rank and file involvement, via regular reports back of meetings at branch and shop level, and regular workplace discussion about tactics and strategy. This is where lively and accessible bulletins are indispensable.

With a clear programme and rank and file involvement, the unions can still pull the coals out of the fire. ■



# workers power

## STAND WITH THE NEWHAM SEVEN



AS WORKERS POWER goes to print the trial of the seven Asian youths (known as the Newham 7) continues into its second week. The fact that one of the defendants (Parvez Khan) has been beaten up during a lunch break, and that four people have been arrested while picketing the Old Bailey (one a fourteen year old boy for possessing a water pistol) should be enough to show people the contempt which the so called 'forces of law and order' have for black youth who attempt to defend their communities.

However, these actions are just the tip of the iceberg. Black youth in Newham have taken to the streets in large numbers twice in the last month to show solidarity with the Newham 7 and the Price family. Both times the march has been attacked viciously by the police, leading to a total of nearly 50 arrests.

On previous occasions the police have attempted to show their 'community' policing face, but as Unmesh Desai, spokesperson for the Newham 7 Defence Campaign, said in a recent interview with *Workers Power* "A lot of people on the left go round talking about community policing but it was always a myth...Before they (i.e. the police - WP) used to go to great lengths to hide that, but after the miners' strike they don't give a damn, their confidence is so sky-high."

### DIVISIONS OVERCOME

One of the positive sides of police brutality and the increase in state repression is that for the first time in many years the traditional divisions between the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities, and within the Asian community itself have been broken down. Unmesh believes that one of the main achievements of the campaign so far has been "The involvement of new forces of youth who can relate the Newham 7 to the miners' strike."

Although this is a step forward the fact remains that the political and organisational basis of the campaign is still far from that needed to defend itself from police provocation. The police, on the

other hand, have learnt much over the past 4 years. *Workers Power* asked Unmesh what he thought should be done on this issue; "Organisationally we need to tighten up - the state is now showing its brutality in a very open manner. We will have to be much more disciplined. Stewarding will be taken in a much more militaristic manner - not in terms of being on the streets armed - we are not on the same level of consciousness as the nationalist community in the 6 Counties but we must be able to repel any police attack."

### LESSONS

The campaign has attempted to link up with trade unions and other organisations but has concentrated a great deal of its time attempting to build up the community base. Many of the leaders of the community groups may be reactionary but the majority of the membership can relate to the current situation much more clearly than before, as the level of racist

attacks and police harassment continues to increase.

What is needed now is a concerted effort to make certain that the lessons of the past four months are learnt. A permanent organisation of black youth should be set up in order to defend their communities. White anti-racists must back them to the hilt and argue in their unions, LP wards etc for support. Unmesh stressed very strongly that "the community is very important...it then needs to go out to trade unions and political organisations to bring them in on the terms of the defence campaign not on the terms of the trade unions (our emphasis)"

This is not to say that it is not the duty of white anti-racists to give support to all campaigns against racism and police harassment that the black community set

up. Nevertheless the success of such campaigns in the long term will depend on the politics on which they are based.

Previous campaigns have been on single issues in different locations but in the work of the Bradford 12 and Newham 8 and now Newham 7 campaigns a network of groups has grown up throughout the country. We asked Unmesh whether he thought a permanent anti-racist and anti-fascist organisation should be built and on what basis; "that goes without saying. It has been obvious that since the Anti-Nazi League...after the fascist threat had gone away, and all credit to the ANL for that... there was a need to turn it into an anti-racist organisation...to take up things like immigration controls. As far as anti-fascism goes there should be unity in action of all who want to kick the fascists off the streets, but when you talk of

anti-racism I think it should be much more principled and not built on a popular front basis."

*Workers Power* will do its best to work with and develop such organisations in any way possible until we have stamped out racism and smashed the stinking system that it feeds on.

**NEWHAM 7 INNOCENT!  
SELF DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE!  
STOP POLICE HARASSMENT!**

Mass picket of Old Bailey every Monday at 9-30 am.

## BOYCOTT ALL EXAMS! EXTEND THE ACTION!

AT THE LAST meeting of the Burnham panel the NUT side turned down an increased offer of 5% as totally unacceptable. Given that Keith Joseph has made it abundantly clear in the last week that the Government will fund nothing above the 4% already offered the stage now seems set for a war of attrition.

Clearly the fact that the union has backed away from all out strike action, and has ordered teachers not to affect exams under any circumstances must have greatly heartened the government and demoralised many militants.

Coupled with this has been the union's strategy of forming 'no strike deals' with friendly Councils, i.e. those who say they support our claim. Given the fact that all Councils could say they support our claim, but as the Government won't find the extra money, all this has done is to take out the most militant and organised sections of the workforce.

### TARGET ALL LEA'S

Since the last meeting of Burnham the NUT-Executive have decided to re-introduce strike action in areas where 'sweet-heart deals' were struck. As yet, however, they have confined their targets to marginal Tory constituencies. All the local authorities need to be targetted again, particularly the inner-city areas.

Most crucially, the remaining half-terms must see a complete reversal of the policy towards hitting exams. A blanket natio-

nal refusal to invigilate and mark will be seen as an immense show of determination. At the moment, with NAS/UWT members refusing to invigilate after school-hours, a greater burden is being imposed on NUT members as a result of existing policy.

In addition, it is clear that we will need to be taking action in the next academic year. In order to ensure this comes off

we need to explain the necessity of a regular levy and call on the Executive to organise extended strike action in all areas, aiming at an all-out national strike in the Autumn term.

In areas where this cannot be won at the moment, we must seek to step up the no-cover action to a blanket refusal to cover at all. The new term is also a good time to link up the battle

over pay with the fight against the cuts and redeployment.

Schools should refuse to teach new timetables, which contain lower staffing numbers or a higher pupil-teacher ratio, than this year. No examination work should be entered into, in fact anything other than basic teaching should be boycotted.

Some will argue that instead of this we should accept Joseph's offer of more money next year in return for selling out our conditions of service. While the Executive have quite rightly thrown this out at the moment, they have said that they are not against some of Joseph's suggestions 'in principle'; such as extra money for 'good' teachers.

### TRANSFORM THE NUT

Militants should counterpose to this pathetic pandering to professionalism a clear commitment to turning the NUT into a fighting class struggle trade union that will prosecute it's members interests in each and every way necessary.

The drive for a united left in the NUT should provide the basis for all the militants to link up into action groups with the intention of securing the best possible outcome to the present campaign and ensuring that the Executive do not sell-out. It could become the spring-board for an offensive against cuts and transfers and help to rebuild a fighting rank and file movement within the NUT. ■



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