

Workers power

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South African militant
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Gulf war

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NO RETURN TO THE WORKHOUSE!

THATCHER HAS always hated the 'welfare state'. The very idea that society should help those who — for a variety of reasons — are out of work, or do not earn enough to live, is alien to the Tories cash register mentality.

The DHSS minister, John Moore, had been set the job of attacking what is left of the system of welfare benefits.

Moore is an ideal choice. He has emerged from the relative obscurity of Merton Council into the limelight of the Thatcher cabinet. He is by breeding and inclination a penny-pinching bigot. He wants to transform what he calls the 'myth' of welfare into the reality of workhouses.

EFFECT

Most of the proposals that resulted from the Fowler Review will come into effect in 1988. Payments to claimants to buy things like bedding and cooking equipment are to be stopped. But it is impossible to save up enough money to buy such items if you are living hand to mouth on supplementary benefit or the dole.

Instead there will be a limited social fund established which will be overseen by Means Test Boards with discretionary powers to sanction loans. Private credit companies will be invited to administer and recover the loans.

Regular repayments on loans will make life all the more unbearable. The projected figure of 40,000 premature deaths amongst the unemployed by the end of the century is sure to rise considerably.

Christian concern for the souls of the dead is not stopping the Tories from abolishing the death grant and replacing that, too, with a loan. Death is becoming a luxury the unemployed cannot afford!

At the end of October cuts in weekly benefits will be an-

nounced and two million people deprived of the right to housing benefit. This all puts the unemployed in a genuinely hopeless situation. Living on supplementary benefit — less than £30 plus rent for a single person — is grim enough as it is. Food, bills and transport costs quickly swallow that.

There's lots of talk about the 'leisured society' these days. But for the unemployed leisure is out. It has been a thing of the past for millions of unemployed workers for the last seven years. The champagne guzzling Tory yobs couldn't care less for those of us who suffer the indignity of never being able to pay for a round of drinks at the pub.

For good measure, those of us that do fall ill will have our benefits cut if we are unfortunate enough to be in hospital for longer than six weeks! Over 110,000 people will lose money as a result of this little 'economy' saving the Tories an estimated £7 million.

CALLOUS

Yet none of these callous attacks on the poorest sections of society have satisfied the Tories. Why not? Basically the Tories are aiming to hold on to their electoral base through further tax cuts. To finance this they have to take money from the welfare budget. Enter, stage right, John Moore.

He has warmed to the task of cutting the £44 billion budget of the DHSS. He has told Thatcher that he will 'enthusiastically' implement cuts in order to meet Treasury demands for immediate savings in all fields of social expenditure.

Moore wants to '...create an atmosphere where people have faith in their own ability and, with that faith take action.'

According to this jumped-up City stockbroker cum-politician, the real problem is

that 'dependence can be debilitating'. Welfare benefits have 'corrupted the human spirit'. The answer, therefore, is to get rid of them altogether.

Moore is seeking to introduce a US style of welfare programme, whereby the unemployed are forced to carry out menial and degrading tasks before receiving any benefits. Only 'safety net' payments will be made to people who can prove to the new Boards of Guardians that they are in desperate need.

ABOLISH

Moore plans to tax pensions. After a life of work, paying taxes and insurance, workers are going to be penalised once they're too old to work. He plans to abolish child benefit payments, or, if the middle class Tories who gain from this particular benefit kick up a fuss, he at least intends to tax them.

So as to administer these new poor laws, he is going to privatise the DHSS, setting up private agencies, guarded against angry and desperate claimants by private security guards.

The Tories hope the mass of workers with jobs will think these attacks are nothing to do with them. They're supposed to humbly accept the crumbs of a tax cut and thank the boss and Thatcher that they are not on the dole. But no worker can afford to allow this attack on hard won gains that we have fought for over forty years. The threat of the sack hangs over millions of workers. Those who keep their jobs will be hit when they retire, or when they are sick.

Our children, with little or no prospect of work, will be turned into a desperate army of paupers. Every one of us stands to lose if Moore is successful.

The reason we need welfare provision is because we,

as workers, are victims of the insecurity and inequality of an economy that cannot guarantee a decent life for all. It is an economy where a miner can be sacked for getting drunk outside work on a Saturday night. Their livelihood will be taken from them and they will be forced onto the dole.

Yet this same economy can afford to pay its managing directors, like the boss of Allied Lyons, £293,000 a year. It is a sick economy that creates and celebrates such injustices.

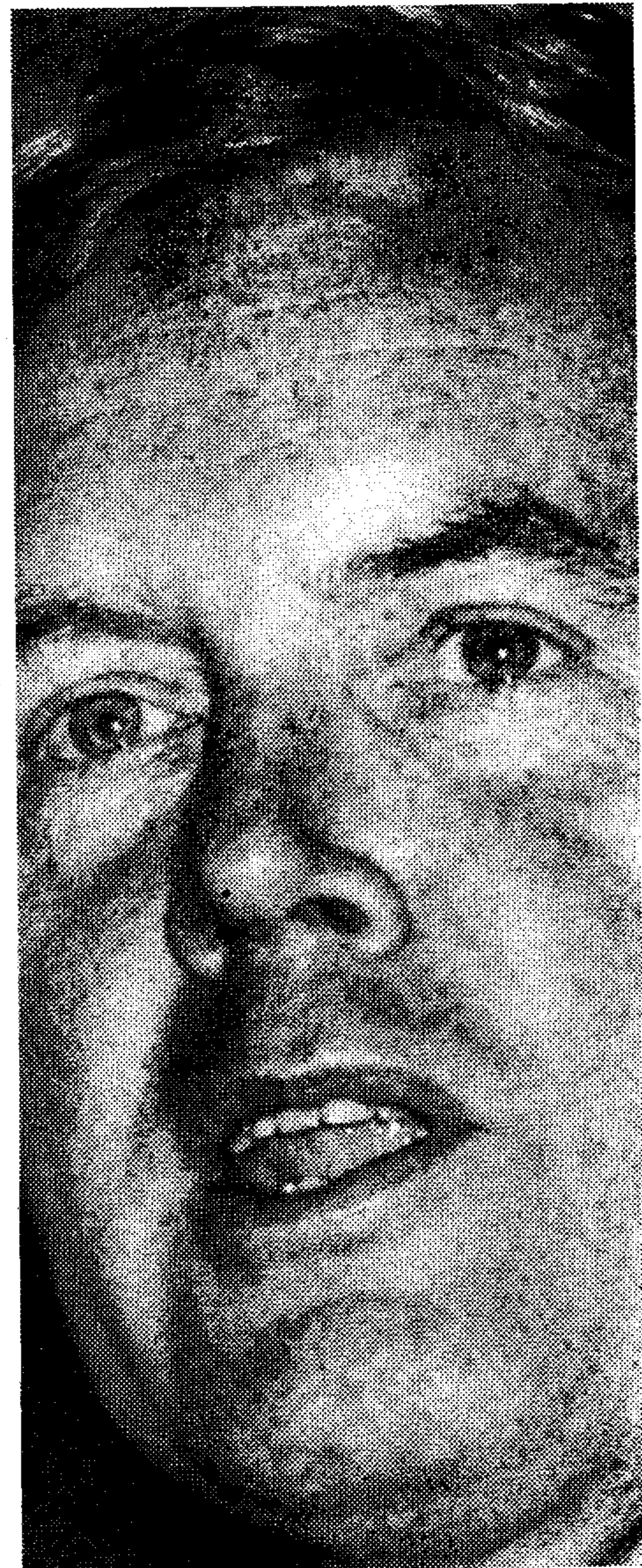
We must fight every inch of the way for the defence and massive expansion of welfare provision. Today this means organising a mass campaign, up to and including strikes, against both the Fowler Review and Moore's proposals. It means mobilising the unemployed to stand up and fight.

DEPEND

We need to say loud and clear who the real 'dependents' are. They are the capitalists. It is the Tories and the capitalists who depend on us. They depend on our labour for their profits. They depend for their very survival on us accepting their attacks and their injustices. The time has come to end that dependence altogether.

- No return to the workhouse!
- Down with the bosses' attacks!
- Down with the bosses' system!

Minister of
Health and
Social Security
John Moore.
His job — to
take us back to
the 30s . . . the
1830s.



NO TO SCOTTISH ASSEMBLY

In the June election Labour polled some 42% of the vote in Scotland, about the same as the Tories in England, and Thatcher was reduced to a rump of eleven Scottish MPs. Since then, Labour has sought to capitalise on its relative success there by launching a campaign for a Scottish Assembly.

The last time this proposal occupied centre stage was during the 'great devolution debate' in 1979. At that time, Workers Power argued that the issue had been raised, firstly, as a diversion from the attacks Labour was making throughout the UK, secondly, to retain nationalist support in the Commons and, thirdly, to steal the thunder of those nationalists who had begun to benefit from popular discontent. Indeed, nothing became the great debate so much as the manner of its resolution - a totally fraudulent referendum for or against an unnecessary new layer of government.

All that aside, however, Workers Power recognised that there were substantive questions to be answered: Were the Scots a nation? If so, did they have the right to secede from the UK? Should they? Put briefly, our answers were, respectively, Yes, Yes and No. The Scots are a nation whose independent development was cut short by the decision of their ruling class to throw in their lot with the English bourgeoisie some three hundred years ago. This move benefited both ruling classes and allowed them, together, to exploit their lower classes and, later, the peoples of the world most effectively. The Scots, as a nation, then, have not been oppressed in the manner of the Irish or the peoples of further flung colonies and semi-colonies. Nonetheless, they are a nation and, should they in their majority want to secede from the UK, their right should be respected.

However, communists are not disinterested observers if the question is seriously posed. Any campaign to convince the Scots to take up the fight for independence (and it would be a fight) would be a massive diversion of energy away from combatting the problems that Scotland shares with many regions of the UK. Communists would vigorously oppose such a reactionary campaign, which would have to call on all Scots, bourgeois or proletarian, to unite together against 'the English'.

ERADICATION OF OLDER INDUSTRY

Has anything changed since 1979? In the substance of the matter, no. In the detail, yes. The general election of 1979 brought to power a government committed to slump politics. Its policies dictated the eradication of the older industries no longer capable of profit generation and were bound to take their toll in Scotland's lowlands. The fact that this decline is now widely felt throughout the whole of Scotland, and by a majority of Scots no doubt appears to add weight to the nationalist argument but, in reality, it is no different from the same decline in many regions south of the border. The plans of the Tory government for Scotland have changed one important thing, however. They have chosen to impose on the Scots, by way of an experiment, a poll tax. Thus, two important factors coincide: Scotland, as a nation, voted Labour (for the most part); Scotland, as a nation, is being singled out for attack by the Tory British Government. Does it not follow that Scotland's elected representatives should convene themselves as a Scottish Assembly and lead the resistance, so as to finally inflict a defeat on this widely hated government?

Socialist Worker clearly thinks so. Rejecting its previous position of opposing devolution and assemblies, Alex Callinicos (11.7.87) nods towards the icon of internationalism ('We must always make it clear that devolution or independence offers no solution to the problems facing Scottish workers') but genuflects at the altar of the masses, 'If nationalist pressures cause it [the UK state - WP] to disintegrate into several weaker fragments, we shall shed no tears'. (The end is nothing, the movement is everything!) Recognising that the nationalists do not in any way appear capable of disintegrating the UK state, Callinicos explains what this actually means: 'Concretely, socialists should, in the present situation, support Labour's demand for a Scottish Assembly.'

This is wrong in method and in result. Even if there were a mass movement in favour of a Scottish Assembly communists would argue against the demand. Such an Assembly would solve nothing for the Scottish working class. To support Labour's 'demand' is even worse since it endorses a campaign which is an alternative to a mass campaign to resist Thatcher's attacks. Far from leading any effective, mass-based resistance, Labour's intention is to illustrate its ability to manipulate mass support whilst, at the same time, preventing it from, 'getting out of hand'.

It is, therefore, disingenuous of *Socialist Worker* to complain, in the week of the Demonstration for the Scottish Assembly (12.9.87) 'Now it looks as though Labour and Trade Union leaders in Scotland are taking the same politics [courting public opinion - WP] into the campaign for a Scottish Assembly.' What kind of politics were you expecting comrades?

The truth is the Scottish Assembly is as much a diversion now as it was in 1979. But, the situation has changed and Labour could legitimately claim a democratic mandate for taking a lead in a real fight to defend the Scots' rights. What is needed is a campaign to prevent the poll tax being imposed. Not a lot of hot air about 1381, not a lot of whingeing about the Tories' lack of a mandate, but a determined campaign of demonstrations, strikes and boycotts to prevent that tax being imposed. Let the organised labour movement in Scotland spearhead that struggle by electing its own delegate councils to unify its resistance. That's the sort of assembly Scottish workers need. And that is what the Labour frauds fear most. ■

NO SEGREGATION

For an integrated and secular education system

EVENTS AT Headfield School in Dewsbury show the ominous potential of Baker's new school system. Taking a leaf from Baker's book, organised racists encouraged white parents to withdraw their children from this predominantly Asian school.

Parent leader Eric Harley claims he is exercising 'parental choice' and complains that 'we are guinea pigs because we are already fighting for what Mr Baker wants'. In reality he is fronting for the organised far right. Lady Birdwood quickly visited him on behalf of the 'World Anti-Communist League'. The chief advisor to the parents is Naylor of the Freedom Association. He lives comfortably in Wiltshire and can have no interest in the provision of education in Dewsbury other than to stir the racist pot there.

All this should be a clear warning that the organised right and the fascists will be out to exploit Baker's 'parental choice' for all it's worth. Local Labour MP Anne Taylor's attempt to arrange for 'a compromise' for the parents shows that many Labour leaders are bound to buckle in the face of racist pressure.

So far local teachers have shown

their opposition by refusing to help in the temporary school the parents have set up and, in the NUT's case, by passing resolutions in their associations condemning the parents action. All anti-racist militants and socialist should support that stand, but the Dewsbury affair has raised a number of key issues which must be addressed.

MIGHTY

We are against segregation in education. It can only serve the employers' wish to divide and rule the working class, setting young proletarian and oppressed communities against each other. We are for unifying and integrating the exploited and downtrodden into a mighty force to shake this system to its foundations. That is why we refuse to recognise a 'right of parental choice', whereby racists can remove their offspring from mixed race schools and create 'whiter' schools that squeeze out black children. That means defending neighbourhood catchment area schools and battling for them all to be fully staffed and equipped to the highest

level.

In the face of white racism, a dangerous call has been raised in the black community for their own segregated schools. Mostly it has come from the reactionary elders of the Muslim community for their own religious schools. However, *Afro-Caribbean Voice* columnist Trevor Phillips has also endorsed the call for black only schools.

Just as we are against segregation in education so we are completely opposed to any religion — be it Anglican, Muslim or whatever — having the state backed power to frame our children's education. We are for a completely secular schooling system and will oppose any funds from councils or government sponsoring religious schools. That means we fight to end the Church of England's influence in the schools, we oppose catholic schools and we will resist handing the education of Asian Youth to the Mosque by all the means in our power.

- For an integrated and secular education system
- Church and Mosque out of the schools!

COLLEGES FOR THE RICH

By Liz Wood
Birmingham Poly Labour Club
(personal capacity)

THATCHER'S THIRD term in office signals the biggest assault on higher education ever seen. The Tory government has plans for the systematic restructuring of the higher education system to serve the needs of big business and profit.

If it succeeds it will mean job losses for thousands of workers in the colleges. It will mean even more obstacles in the way of workers trying to get into higher education. And it will mean that the bosses will tighten their grip on the content and conduct of education.

The government is systematically cutting back the funding of higher education. Since 1979 it has cut its funding to universities by 20% in real terms and to polytechnics by 33%. These cutbacks will continue.

At the same time colleges are being ordered to maintain themselves by seeking out funds from big business. Already there is a Lucas and a Pepsi-Cola professor. Ford motors is sponsoring an MA course at Loughborough. The students on the course are all top-notch Ford executives.

The Tories have unveiled their plans for the polytechnics in 18 months time. Along with certain colleges which deal with higher education they are to be taken out of the control of local authorities. They are now to be under the control of the government which will tie their course content directly to the wishes of the Tories.

The government white paper entitled *Meeting the Challenge* envisages colleges competing with each other to win sponsorship from employers and scarce funds from the Tories based on the 'cost effectiveness' and desirability of their courses.

This will mean a wave of job losses as a result of privatisation. Union organisation will come under fierce attack. The bosses and the Tories will directly intervene to tighten their grip over what is studied. Courses considered 'left-wing' or subversive face the axe through being starved of private and public funds. More and more courses will be designed to directly meet the dictates of the bosses.

Hand in hand with this attack the government intend to replace the present miserable grant system with loans. They would make higher education all the more the exclusive preserve of those from privileged families, already able to afford public school fees. The NUS calculates that an average degree course costs around £16,000. In order to get such funds working class youth will be forced to scabble for sponsorship from private firms, and meet all their conditions as to what and how they study.

The NUS leadership is lost for a strategy of how to fight this massive attack on working class

students in higher education. They have organised demos in the deserted streets of the City of London on Saturday mornings. They have dressed up in silly costumes, lobbied Tory MPs and urged students to write to their parents.

The key to resisting these attacks is for students to link up with the organised working class on and off their campuses. Those workers are exploited by the same bosses who are now being encouraged to get their claws into higher education.

In the past period sections of students have played an important role in supporting the miners and the printers. Support for all workers in struggle must be extended. Students union facilities should be put at the service of workers whatever the *ultra vires* law says. In the colleges the NUS should call for the creation of rank and file elected cross-union committees of workers, students and teachers to fight for action against course cuts, job losses and loans.

The coming NUS winter conference must be flooded with resolutions committing the NUS to action. Colleges must be instructed to enter into indefinite occupation against departmental and course closures. There must be a national occupation of colleges when the Tories try to introduce loans.

Thatcher is feeling confident. We must be prepared to organise effective opposition to break her. ■

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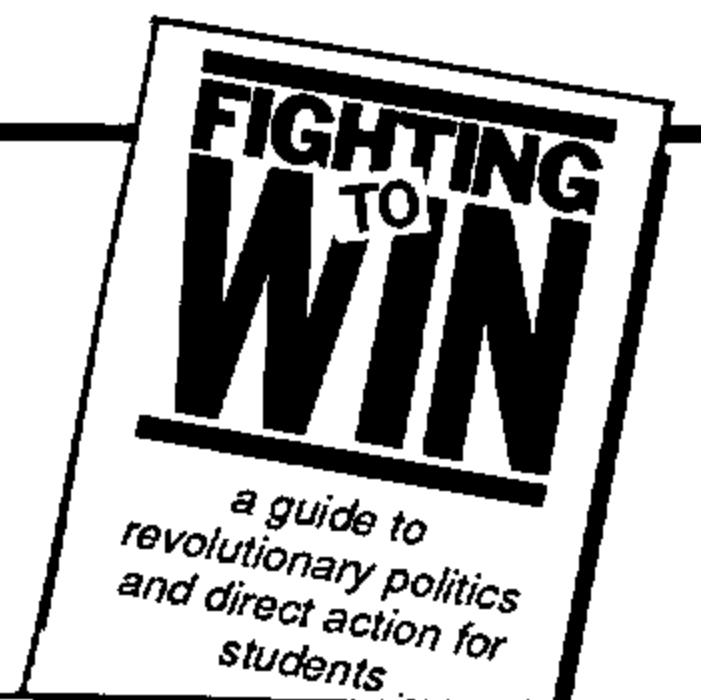
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Kenneth Baker's new Education Bill spells cuts and more cuts. *Simon Anderson reports*

SCHOOLS FOR CAPITALISM

'A HISTORIC reform representing the culmination of ten years of debate'. Thus Kenneth Baker summed up the proposals in his Education Bill. The Bill is indeed 'historic'. It is part of a multi-pronged attack on the education system, aimed at its major restructuring in the interest of the current needs of British capitalism. It is not surprising therefore, to find Thatcher overseeing every detail of the attack. She is determined to roll back the reforms of the 1960s and 1970s which are now perceived as obstructing, however feebly, the needs of her class.

Phase one of this long term hatchet job is already well under way. The imposed Baker settlement attacked teachers' conditions, placing even more enormous power in the hands of the 'managers' — the head teachers. It attempted to undermine unionisation by bolstering a 'professional' competitive spirit based on incentives. It was a necessary precondition for the smooth implementation of the Tory plans.

The next phase, enshrined in Baker's Bill, involves destroying the ability of Labour Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to obstruct the return to an openly class based education system and the introduction of a 'national curriculum', which along with other employer and MSC schemes, aims to tie the education of working class kids to the demands of modern industry.

Britain's bosses are fascinated by and intent on emulating the Japanese model — with a workforce consisting of a core of skilled workers, supplemented as and when needed, by a peripheral low wage, low skill and part-time workforce. A major section of working class youth are to be 'educated' to be part of that system. This change in the fortunes of the British education system has been brought about by the change in the fortunes of British capitalism.

Gone are the days of the 'long boom' — the years of expansion in the 1950s and 1960s. At the time it seemed to be in the bosses' interests for young people to have the opportunity to acquire a range of skills. The belief that the 'white hot technological revolution' would demand a massive increase in the numbers of highly skilled, scientific and managerial levels in industry, led to a move away from the rigid class based 'tripartite system' of grammar and secondary modern schools. It was a system that ensured that only a tiny number of the most talented pupils from a working class background 'made it' into the middle levels of industry and public service.

MASSIVE

The recessions and stagnation of the 1970s and 80s, the decline of manufacturing, the massive pool of the permanently unemployed and part-time workers, the growing deskilling of the new technology occupations, have led the employers and their spokespersons to demand a reassertion of the old role for the education system.

They see less and less need for youth to be educated in the real sense. They simply need to be trained to fit neatly into their allotted space in the capitalist system — a 'peg for a hole'. In fact, as far as the bosses are concerned, educated workers are a downright nuisance — if you are trying to drive down real wages in order to restore the



profitability of British capitalism, and on a shaky economic base at that, the last thing you want is a workforce that will fight back.

The employers don't want workers who can see beyond next week's pay cheque and who will make a fuss over health and safety etc. The bosses don't want a system that encourages pupils to become rounded and inquisitive adults — such things are dangerous! They want a production line turning out carbon-copy robots ready to use.

The changes and initiatives the Tories are using to try and realise their plan are like a set of tentacles strangling the education service in their deadly grip and leaving the union leaders bemused as if in some hypnotic trance. On the one hand, there are 'initiatives' such as the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI) and the Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education (CPVE). Both are intended to separate off a distinct layer of the new workforce to take its place in the Japanese-type model the bosses hanker after. The aim is a deskilled but flexible and docile workforce.

In the same vein, but for a different level of workers, are the City Technical Colleges. A 35 period week will have 7 periods of science, 3.5 periods each of maths, English, CDT, one language, 'understanding industry' and a humanities subject (i.e. history or geography or economics). What's left for creative arts? PE? personal development? social studies? etc. The amazing amount of 3.5 periods! (And one can guess how much will be given to PE). Surprise, surprise — the very areas where pupils can learn to express themselves and think critically are missing.

Then there is the introduction of a 'national curriculum' combined with national tests at the ages of 7, 11, 14 and 16. Of course no socialist could object to a National Curriculum if it was being introduced to sweep away the current anarchy of courses and subjects, dominated by a myriad of profit making examining bodies. A national curriculum could within a socialist education system develop a coherently planned education for children at all levels. For instance, it would allow for the real use and application of the new technology, computers, video, TV, etc, developed and planned nationally and integrated with nationally designed courses. This is something that free market

powerful youth in their fight to batter youth into the sort of workers they need to make their fat profits for them. The 'London Compact' is a good example of what lies ahead (see box).

Also not surprisingly the national curriculum is being used by the Tories to weed out what they consider to be 'subversive or potentially subversive' subjects — political education, 'peace studies', multi-cultural studies, social studies etc, are all heading for the chop, while sex education must be tied to Thatcher's notion of 'Victorian values' — anti-gay bigotry and all.

CURB

If the Tories are to get their way, they must also break the power of the Labour LEAs and the teachers' unions. They aim to curb the LEAs with 'opting out' and the devolution of financial control to governing bodies. The first, 'opting out', allows schools to opt out of LEA control, and the London LEAs to leave ILEA. Schools would receive funding directly from central government but would also be able to accept voluntary donations. This is nothing other than the selling off of 'good' schools to middle class parents — to the detriment of the remaining education service, which the vast majority of working class parents and their children will have to make do with.

The 'well off' schools, increasingly funded by parents who can afford it, will contrast dramatically with the 'sink schools' in the poorer working class areas. 'Parental choice' will guarantee that the prosperous schools will soon restrict entry and thus Thatcher will have her 'middle class' dominated grammar schools back again, giving real meaning to her election promise to free 'her' people in the inner cities.

Meanwhile, devolution of financial control to governing bodies/headteachers (as in Cambridgeshire) will lead to a worsened service: the major expense is staff. Savings can therefore be made most easily by getting teachers and other school staff to 'double up', take larger classes, etc. The rationale will be:

if you agree to do this, we save £x so we can have y computers/x textbooks, etc. The plan is that this will eventually include teachers' pay levels. Linked to the question of pupil numbers, the aim is to set one school against another. Teachers will be encouraged to collude with the school management in poaching pupils from other schools rather than fighting to defend and improve conditions through trade union action.

In the face of the most comprehensive attack on education provision for decades, what are the Labour councils and teachers' union leaders doing? The answer — predictably — is very little. Where they have been moved to action it has been to stab in the back any rank and file struggle against the Tories' plans. Newham — with its 59 out of 60 Labour councillors — is planning to deduct two-thirds of a days pay for a refusal to cover.

The spineless NUT leadership demonstrated that it would rather fight its own members than Baker when it suspended the London leadership for organising strike action. Having abandoned any struggle against Baker's imposition the NUT leaders are now preparing themselves for the struggles ahead — against the teachers of course! They propose to replace the annual conference by one every two years, with less representation, and even further weighting against the more militant metropolitan areas.

The present attack on all sectors of the education system demands a united response from all the unions within the education sector alongside working class parents who need to be organised as workers, via their trade unions, to fight the Tory plans. We need to wrest the leadership of the teachers' unions out of the hands of the present pack of vacillators and betrayers, through fighting to build rank and file organisations committed to an anti-capitalist, class struggle perspective. Part of that fight will be to build a single class struggle union in the education sector.

- **Smash Baker's Bill!**
- **For a single class struggle union in education!**

ILEA

BOSSSES IN CLASS

by Kate Ford

SCHOOLS IN the East End of London have recently seen the launch of a scheme — 'London Compact' — which is being promoted by the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) as a way to guarantee jobs for school leavers. Given the present unemployment figures this may sound very attractive but beneath its glossy image the scheme represents yet another attack on working class youth.

The idea for the scheme is imported from the USA and could quickly spread from London to other education authorities. The scheme is supposed to be a way to 'encourage' 14-16 year olds to attend school and fulfill examination courses. In reality it represents precisely the direction that the Tories aim education to go in. Kenneth Baker commenting on the scheme said:

'In many ways it could prove to be the shape of things to come in school-industry partnership'.

What sort of partnership? The part he wants the school and teachers to play is pigeon-holing school students at 14, 'training' them for a lifetime of mundane jobs and en-

suring that those who show any kind of resistance are excluded from employment even before they leave school. Baker has no concern with helping young people in East London. What he wants is to provide his Tory friends with a docile workforce with 'appropriate' skills.

CONTROL

The employers' part in Baker's new world of education will be to have far more control within the school. At present under the London Compact scheme they are demanding certain rates of attendance (95%) and punctuality (85%). But, once the foot is in the door, an involvement in the curriculum and the wider running of schools must be expected.

In return for all this the employers such as Barclays Bank and John Laing Construction are not even offering a guaranteed job! Those accepted onto the scheme will only be

put at the top of the queue for jobs!

Revolutionaries are not against providing school students with an education that is relevant to their future work, indeed education in a socialist society would be far more integrated with the world of productive work. But as long as capitalism exists 'work' cannot be a means of developing an individual's mental and physical energies. Far from it, for the vast majority it will always be exploitative and stultifying. Socialists in education will always be involved in a struggle with the employers and their national and local agents, who wish to straightjacket education. For them, all the vast majority of workers need to learn is discipline, punctuality, respect for authority, plus a basic knowledge of the 'Three Rs'.

The Labour controlled ILEA in completely backing the 'London Compact' and along with its recent reversal of its decision not to implement the Government sponsored Technical and Vocational Education Initiative, has shown itself a willing handmaiden to the Tory plans for education.

RACIST LAWS

Black people's rights face further attacks reports
Laura Williams

IN LESS than three months time the deadline for applying for British citizenship will be here. The 1981 Nationality Act, which became law in 1983, states that after December 1987 anyone applying for citizenship will have to qualify and also pay a fee of £170. This will severely curtail the rights of black people to become British citizens. Yet the Tories have made no effort to publicise this deadline or provide adequate facilities for people wanting to apply.

The act removes the automatic right of all children born of parents who are not settled in Britain to become British citizens.

It initially prevented black women from bringing their husbands or fiancées into the country. After a successful European Court ruling that defined this as discriminatory on grounds of sex, the Tories promptly extended the law to include men.

When partners are allowed in it is on a years trial and they have to prove that the 'primary purpose' of the marriage is not settlement in Britain.

They must also prove that they can support and accommodate themselves out of their own savings without 'recourse to public funds', that they can speak English and are of good character.

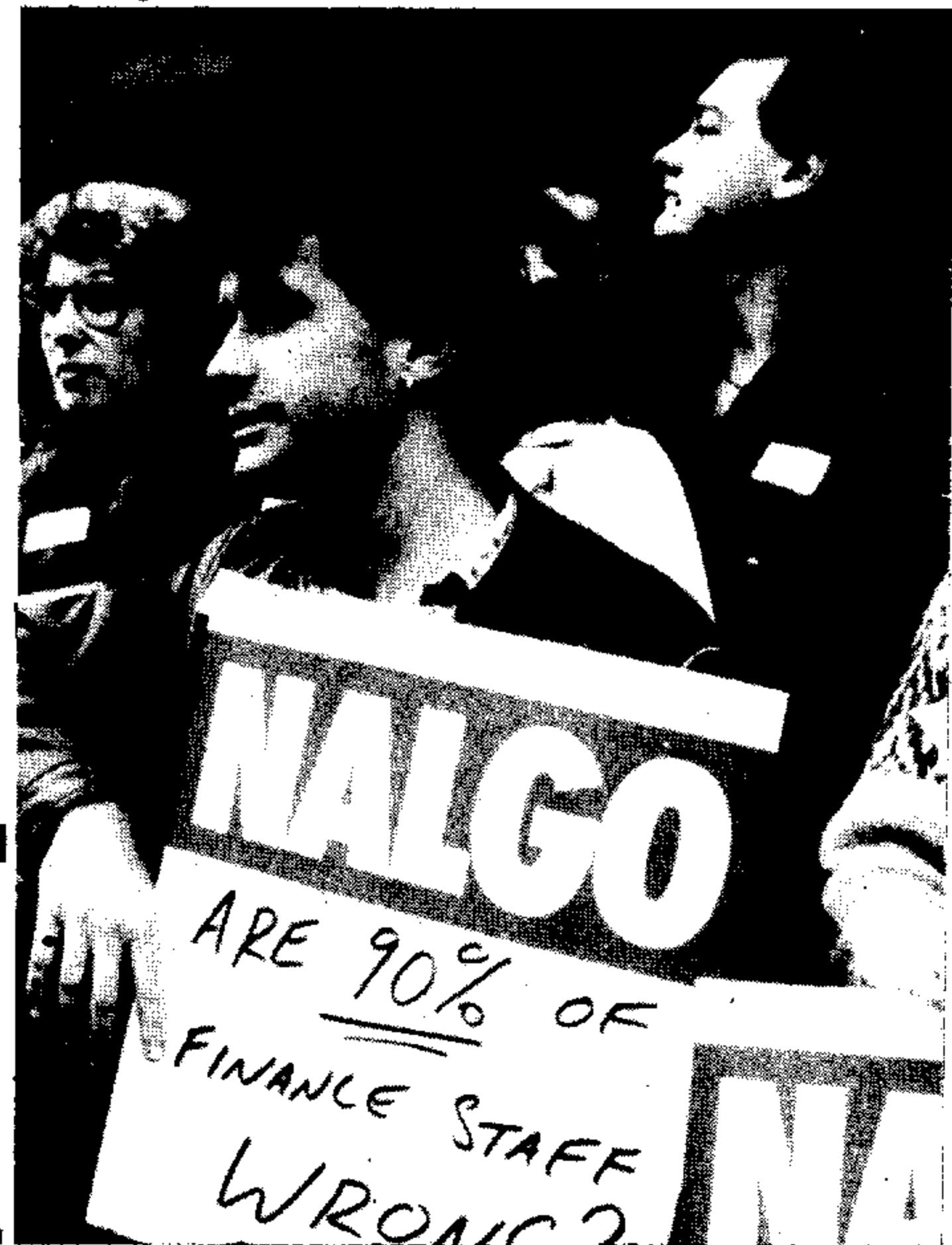
Such conditions are patronising and designed to exclude. Coupled with the higher levels of unemployment and deprivation facing black workers many will not be able to afford the high citizenship fees.

These racist regulations can only serve to increase the wilful campaign of deportation that the Tories have launched against the black communities already. The labour movement must take up this latest attack on black workers' rights. This means that each campaign around individual deportations must be broadened into a fight against all immigration controls and deportations as well as the 1981 act. This requires building a campaign to:

- Repeal the 1981 Nationality Act
- Scrap all immigration controls
- Support all those threatened with deportations

Such a campaign must build for massive industrial action as the most effective way of forcing the repeal of these racist laws. ■

FIGHT LABOUR COUNCIL CUTS



John Harris (FL)

£9 million planned cuts in Hackney. £15 million worth in Camden. £60 million in Lambeth. While 15,000 kids are homeless in Greater London alone Newham is closing down nurseries. Islington is locking out workers protesting cuts. This is what London workers are faced with from left talking Labour councils. Paul Mason outlines a strategy to beat them.

New paper for the Irish left

WORKERS POWER WELCOMES NEW 'CLASS STRUGGLE'

SEPTEMBER SAW the launch of a new paper on the Irish left. Class Struggle, the paper of the Irish Workers Group (IWG) will appear monthly. It is the first step towards bringing into existence 'a fighting paper of revolutionary socialism' which is so desperately needed in the Irish working class movement today.

Since the IWG was formed in 1975 after being expelled from the Socialist Workers Movement they have maintained and broadened their political struggle against the reformist, centrist and republican politics of the Irish left. In 1977 they launched a theoretical journal *Class Struggle* and over the next decade published twenty issues which included a series of eight in-depth features on the Connolly tradition — a major contribution to a Marxist critique of one of the great influences on the Irish working class and revolutionary nationalist movements.

Throughout that period of development the IWG succeeded in staking out the political basis for addressing the tasks facing so-

cialists in Ireland. By putting 'programme first' they have sought to avoid the pitfalls of other 'far left' groups.

International collaboration between Workers Power and the IWG has been carried out from the start. Alongside Workers Power the IWG have seen the 'building of a new Leninist and Trotskyist International in the present period' as the goal of our struggle, and were central to the formation of the Movement for a Revolutionary Communist International (MRCI).

The advent of the new *Class Struggle* is therefore not simply an important step for the IWG but for all the MRCI sections. The paper will provide us with an additional weapon in our fight to build an anti-imperialist movement against Britain's presence in Ireland.

We aim to sell it and raise funds to support it. We call on all our supporters to buy the paper and send donations to the *Class Struggle* fighting fund.

Revolutionary Greetings to the Irish Workers Group!

LONDON'S LEFT-WING Labour councils have a reputation for 'gesture politics'. But in the past few weeks they have made nothing but gestures of contempt for the jobs, homes and services of the inner-city workers who elected them.

The list opposite reveals an avalanche of cuts, redundancies, nursery closures and rent increases agreed in the 'finance strategies' of the Labour controlled boroughs.

In 1985, when Liverpool Council collapsed in the face of the Tory ratercapping offensive it was Kinnock who jeered: 'a Labour council sending out redundancy notices in a fleet of taxis.'

This time round however as the cuts bite, and jobs disappear from Lambeth to Brent, there will be no outraged speeches from the Labour leader. Because this is Kinnockism in practice.

High on the agenda of the third term of Thatcherism is the destruction of local government services, the decimation of the council workforces and the demolition of Labour's local electoral base. But before a single penny of poll tax has been collected, before Parliament has even assembled to pass the Local Government Bill the first blow has been struck: by Labour councils themselves. They have decided to pass on the cuts of the last seven years by attacking council workers' jobs and conditions in the name of 'sensible' government.

LEADER

Only days after the general election Margaret Hodge, one time leader of 'Fortress Islington' and leader of the Association of London Authorities, spelt out the new sensibleness:

'Defiance today would be hopeless...Remaining in power may mean having to make unpleasant choices, but at least we can ensure that priority is given to maintain services for those most in need'.

Once Hodge had stated the unthinkable, it took only a couple of months for the rest of Labour's London council leaders, whose radical hearts have been bleeding unstoppably for the inner city victims of Thatcher, to stick the knife in as well.

For some councils, like Camden, it took a Kinnockite coup to unseat

has implemented a job freeze, rent rises and has agreed to a £60 million cut for next year. Whatever the dangers the future has in store for black people, women, lesbians and gays, their immediate problems in Lambeth of rotting housing stock, inadequate services and bigger rates bill lie at the Labour council's door.

What has convinced the left council leaders to implement the Tory cuts? Time and again they repeat the argument: resistance is useless, look at Liverpool and Lambeth in 1985 — they defied the law and lost.

But they lost for two reasons. First, the fifteen Labour councils who promised to fight alongside them gave in within two months of their original bold declarations. Second, and most importantly, Liverpool and Lambeth mobilised council workers only as a stage army, a supporting cast to the heroes and heroines of the council chamber. In particular the Militant-led Liverpool councillors insisted on the primacy of 'supporting the council', not on workers' mass action which could mobilise an independent force to resist cuts.

Resistance to the current round of betrayals in London has followed a depressing pattern. In most councils mass lobbies of cut-making council meetings have met with the forces of private security guards and council officers. Local government conferences — the Camden Fightback, London Bridge, Lambeth and Hackney Borough Conferences — have failed to decide on immediate and direct action. Union officials have taken the lead in channeling resistance into negotiations. What they can expect was spelt out by Margaret Hodge in an interview with the *New Statesman*:

'Changes in working practices that mean people will have to be more flexible such as two people doing the job that three people did previously.'

The key to an effective fightback lies not in the beleaguered minority anti-cuts leaders. In others, such as Lambeth it was 'hard left' leaders themselves who experience sudden conversion to the new doctrine. All of Linda Bellos' posturing at the Labour Party Conference, all of her headline grabbing predictions of 'gas chambers in seven years' time', cannot hide her betrayal. Elected on a manifesto which promised no cuts and defiance of the Tory law she

of anti-cuts councillors, nor in negotiations with the council, but in a co-ordinated campaign of strike action and occupation, drawing in tenants, parents, youth, community organisations.

For this we need delegate based councils of action. A weekend conference of shop stewards and Labour ward delegates, calling for no action and mobilising only the most immediately affected workers and Labour activists is no substitute. In each borough and across London — across any city or town in which local government cuts are introduced — we need a fighting organisation that can cut across the bureaucratic boundaries, linking council workers with those whose daily lives depend on the services they provide.

Such councils of action would force 'anti-cuts' councillors to fight for an illegal deficit budget, providing the boroughs immediately with goods, jobs and services that make an immediate impact on the lives of the residents. They would demand and enforce the resignation of any councillors not prepared to implement such a budget.

PROGRESSIVE

The objections of the Labour leaders are that 'workers' must take a back seat to preserving the progressive equal opportunities policies, at all cost by keeping Labour in power.

Our answer is clear. Black people, single mothers in crumbling council housing, Irish families in bed and breakfast firetraps do not want an equal share of your cuts, we want the right to decent housing, low rents, jobs and services that meet our needs.

And making the cuts will not guarantee Labour keep the power. By attacking council workers, council tenants, the most oppressed sections of our class who live and struggle in the inner cities, Labour is repeating at local level the same attacks that the Callaghan government carried out in parliament in 1979. Successful workers' resistance to Labour's cuts is the only guarantee that these Labour councils will not suffer the same fate as Callaghan at the polls to be followed by Tory administrations on the lines of Wandsworth and Westminster. ■

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THE STOPPED CLOCK

by Dave Stocking

THE FIRST major decision made at Brighton was that this conference was going to decide nothing. The installation of the policy review put every Labour policy in suspended animation.

Whilst a string of spokespersons told the puzzled media that the conference was not deadly dull but 'workmanlike', nobody could see any work being done. Nearly every speaker on and off the rostrum praised Neil Kinnock and the review and claimed that it would vindicate his or her favourite policies. Some, usually the confident hard right, claimed it could rubbish the lefts.

The new star of the right, Jordan of the AEU, joined old war horses like Peter Shore to emphasise that the 'policies which lost Labour the election' — unilateral nuclear disarmament, re-nationalisation, repeal of the anti-union laws — would all have to go. Clearly their hope is that enough block votes can be put together to dump them all in the rubbish bin at the next party conference.

Free from the interference of the conference and the constituency activists these brazen bosses' men hope to force through a 'realistic' programme for the next election. It will be one that accepts all the main elements of the 'Thatcher revolution'. Indeed it will insure them against future attack. Only thus do they think Britain's bosses will allow Labour to govern.

REDUCE

Indeed Jordan, Hammond and company are offering to carry the Thatcher revolution into the Labour Party. They hope to reduce to vanishing point the links between the unions and the Party. Hence their implacable hostility to electoral colleges and the block vote in the selection of MPs and the party leader.

What Thatcher failed to do with her assault on the unions' political funds they are offering to achieve for her, but more stealthily. But the hard right still do not control the Labour Party. They are most powerful in the PLP, though they are not predominant even there. In the unions they have a powerful but far from decisive voice. The EETPU's open scabbing on the miners and the printers and their lack of any respect for their fellow bureaucrats has weakened their influence inside the TUC, where the TGWU, the GMB and NUPE still call the shots. In the constituencies the right still remains a small minority.

The fate of Labour's policies and structure are still decided by the centre — by Kinnock and his allies. The Kinnock entourage consists of defectors from the left and from the right who bring with them a curious blend of watered down versions of their previous politics. All that unites them, apart from personal ambition, is hatred of the left and fear of the right.

They could agree with the right to take re-selection out of the hands of the constituency activists but would not in the end nerve themselves to ditch their union supporters like Todd, Edmonds and Sawyer. The right espouse one member, one vote (OMOV) gleefully because they know that with the assistance of the rabidly reactionary local and national media they can win a postal ballot against any candidate to the left of them. The bulk of the Kinnockites still need the support of their friends in the unions (who have been given a 40% say in the electoral college) against the left certainly, but also against the right.

Uneasily, and not without their differences, the Kinnockite centre manoeuvred through its organisational measures aimed at weakening the electoral college in the belief that as a system it will self-destruct. Hammond and Jordan predicted legal difficulties and members taking the unions to court. They probably have good reason to know the bosses' intentions on this front.

Everyone except the hard left could agree to launch the final offensive on *Militant's* control of the LPYS. And the Women's Conference was put firmly into the hands of the union bureaucrats and their growing army of 'women officers'. The centre and the right clearly hope that with these measures underway the left will have enough on its plate without worrying too much about the policy review.

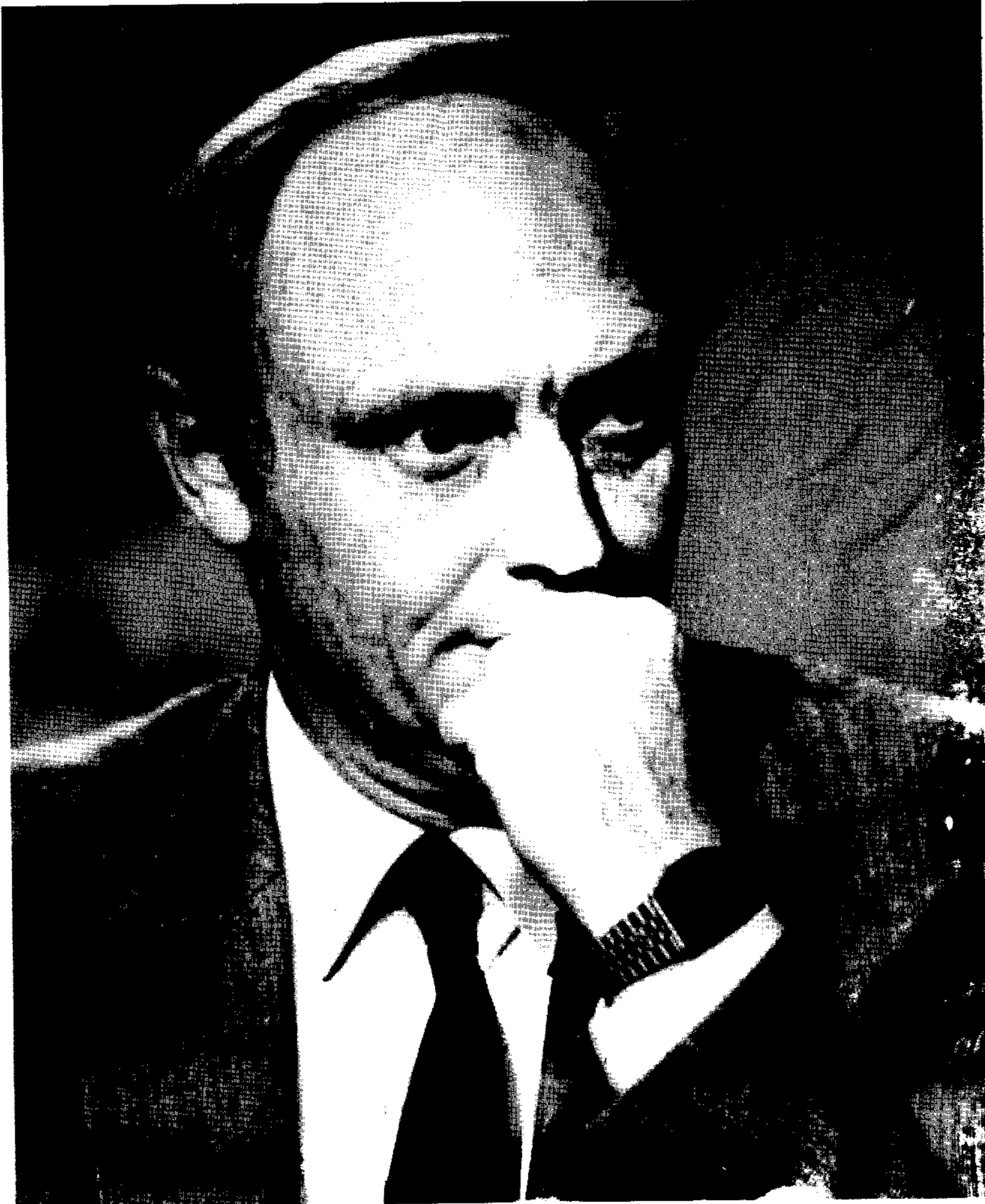
As for the left, they yet again played the role of the dog that did not bark. Neither Tony Benn nor Dennis Skinner could be induced to utter a word of criticism directed by name at Neil Kinnock. The best they could manage was to abstain from the sycophantic fawning that characterised the 'soft-left's' attitude to the centre and the right. But when a false idol is being worshipped, to remain silent is to consent.

SUPREME

Their excuse is the desire to avoid personalities. But Neil Kinnock is step by step being elevated into the role of supreme arbiter. A definite cult of leadership, no doubt encouraged by Kinnock's Euro-Stalinist trained advisers, has become a key feature of Labour Conferences.

No policy can be commended unless it can be at least claimed to represent Neil's wishes nor any behaviour condemned unless it is couched in terms of undermining Neil. He presents himself as the living embodiment of the will to win at whatever the cost. But the question is what cost — and who will pay?

Rank and file miners could answer both questions. The cost is sabotaging the struggles that workers, be they miners, printers or council workers, are obliged to wage against the Tory offensive. Those who will pay it are the millions of working class people whose



vote is (falsely) regarded as in the bag, whilst Kinnock and company go hunting the Yuppies.

It is however ironic that Kinnock, despite the leadership cult around him, or rather because of it, says less and less that has any clear meaning. This year's 'leader's speech', beneath all the overblown chapel pulpit rhetoric, did not give a hint as to what Labour will be doing for the next five years. Coded messages about a turn to the individual needs of the salaried and skilled workers could be read out of it. A burning need to reconsider everything was expressed but there was not a whiff of an idea about how to fight Thatcher or what to counterpose to her 'revolution'.

Bryan Gould floated his idea of workers' shares with more than a hint that these ideas had received Neil's blessing. But without explicit endorsement he drew brickbats from both Scargill and Hammond. The left saw it as a shoddy scuttling of nationalisation policies and the right feared it could become unwanted meddling with how their masters' ran their businesses and disposed of their profits.

Kinnock could not intervene, just as he remained silent on the OMOV/electoral college debate. This commitment to playing the role of great leader above it all accounts for the way that Ken Livingstone was able to extricate a continued commitment to a 'non-nuclear defence policy'. Kinnock could not yet condemn Livingstone for standing by official policy and thus he appeared to endorse it as a principle, i.e. as above review.

But Livingstone's unprincipled manoeuvre, gained at the expense of joining the 'I agree with Neil' brigade, has not yet won any binding commitment from Kinnock. Certainly it will be difficult for the Kinnock faction to develop a policy

that extricates them from the charge of 'one sided disarmament' that Thatcher and the media throw at them whilst at the same time distinguishing it from her 'peace through strength' position.

But it is clear that he is trying hard. Talk about relating to the 'changed reality' of 1991 indicates what the pretext will be. Trident submarines will be in service. If they are to be 'put into the negotiations' they obviously cannot be scrapped. Livingstone's manoeuvre will not stop Kinnock for five minutes.

SENSATIONS

Livingstone's unexpectedly easy elevation to the NEC made him and fellow new boy, Bryan Gould, the sensations of this very dispirited conference. Having broken from the hard left with the proclaimed purpose of 'influencing Neil' and preaching the gospel of the Rainbow coalition to the Kinnockite Centre, Ken Livingstone is now calling for realignment between the left of the LCC and the Campaign Group. He has taken advantage of the temporary lull in the witch-hunt to preach reconciliation between those who supported expulsions and those who opposed them.

A fringe meeting where Livingstone and Blunkett shared a platform saw little signs of success for Ken. Blunkett responded to his olive branch with a tart 'we will not follow your democratic centralism'.

The overall impact of the conference was one of confusion and stagnation. Not one speaker had a clear convincing explanation as to why Labour lost the election or how to win the next one. The union leaders grumbled and agonised about their failure to get a majority of their members to vote Labour and

the criminal waste of their funds spent on these election defeats.

The right-wing MPs told any interviewer willing to listen about how unilateralism won the Tories the election, but offered no suggestions for party policy beyond accepting Thatcher's every measure as an accomplished fact. They rambled incoherently about how their socialist values were equal to equality and democracy.

Kinnock and company could not come up with anything beyond saying that the review started with a 'relatively blank sheet of paper' and that conference has 'stopped the clock'. Tony Benn opined that 'socialism had never been stronger' — or more silent if the Campaign group was anything to go by.

What does all this amount to? It amounts to British reformism in all its shades being totally disorientated by Thatcher's victory. All sections of the Party failed to even begin sizing up Thatcher's attacks and rallying the unions, local authorities, constituency parties and parliamentarians to oppose them.

Instead of calling for a united resistance, the Tories and their attacks were almost forgotten. Labour's clock may have stopped, but Thatcher's in No.10 has not. Labour's policies may be a 'relatively blank sheet of paper'. Her battle plans are not. British reformism staggers along the road to destruction, clutching ever more despairingly to its parliamentary fetish. In the name of electoral victory delayed and delayed yet again it demands that workers limit or abandon their struggles. Increasingly sharply the task is posed to every serious working class militant break with the bankrupt strategy of parliamentary and municipal reformism and fight for a new strategy and a new fighting party to implement it. ■

SOUTH AFRICA SINCE THE M

The defeat of the miners' strike has had a profound effect on the entire South African trade union movement. *Sue Thomas* looks at the significance of that defeat and at the struggles that lie ahead.

THE DEFEAT of the miners' strike has thrown into stark relief the problems and choices facing the South African black trade union movement. The three week long strike was indeed an enormous achievement. But there can be no disguising the fact that the NUM went back to work with only minor concessions on benefits conceded.

I knew the industry was tough but I did not realise how tough said General Secretary Ramaphosa after recommending the return to work. This was a reference to the fact the 'liberal' employers Anglo American stuck by a hard line and made clear that they would step aside and allow state intervention in the strike if it continued. The strike was ended despite a vote the previous week to continue and despite previous indications of COSATU solidarity action.

PROOF

While the union movement in South Africa is by no means on its knees (witness the success of the long running Postal Workers' strike) the miners' strike was living proof of the limits of 'legal' trade

unionism when revolutionary tasks face the South African working class.

Those who built the new independent unions in the 1970s and 80s reasoned that the movement should take advantage of the limited legality that could be wrested from the state in order to build the movement on a strong foundation. Achieving legality is an important gain for any union movement, allowing it to win important advances and recruit widely. Preserving those gains in legal recognition and procedural agreements is just as important.

But if the need to preserve those gains turns into a strategy, where the preservation of legal organisation becomes more important than the success of the struggle itself, it becomes a recipe for conservatism and, in the end, headlong retreat. For one thing, the state and the bosses do not play the game. Recognition and procedural agreements, legal rights and protection last just as long as the bosses want them to and/or the unions' strength can enforce them.

The recovery of the Black trade union movement from the blows inflicted upon it after the imposition of the State of Emergency testifies to the militancy of the black work-

ing class. The strikes of 1987 culminating in the NUM strike marked an important recovery after the defeat of 1986. The successes of the workers' movement could have been built upon and developed to reverse the successes of Botha's imposed State of Emergency. This is what made the mass NUM strike so potentially significant. Instead this movement has been squandered and sold out by the tactics of the NUM and COSATU leadership. Both have resorted to an economic backing off from political struggle. The NUM leadership's tactics minimised the strength of the miners in the name of preserving order and legality (sending the miners home from the mine compounds).

REGULAR

The sudden calling off of the strike without serious consultation and without the decision being put into the hands of the rank and file showed that the NUM leadership at its top levels is dominated by reformist and economic leaders who are seeking to constitute themselves into a regular trade union officialdom — negotiating and collaborating with their employers — especially the 'progressive' ones (Anglo, etc).

This poses the threat of the curtailment of existing rank and file democracy and the development of a distinct bureaucratic caste. COSATU's top leadership also failed to take action alongside the NUM when the mine owners proved intransigent.

Even after the defeat of the NUM

strike, a general retreat is by no means inevitable. Pressure on living standards combined with confidence in the unions means that many disputes contain the potential for generalisation.

In the context where the leadership of the unions are becoming more decidedly reformist and potentially bureaucratized it is even more necessary to have a clear alternative set of tactics and strategy to win over the rank and file. The tactics of mass solidarity action, the fight for a general strike, for workers defence squads etc. was the perspective which needed to be fought for within the NUM struggle against the retreat of its leaders.

The comrade from the CAL (see interview below) draws different conclusions. He argues against the general strike tactic while the workers are unarmed and face a massively armed apartheid state. Yet it is precisely the general strike alone which holds the possibility of crippling this state machine, drawing together — as it does — the whole multi-millioned might of the black working class. And it was the miners' strike — the culmination of a period of spirited resistance to the 1986 State of Emergency — which provided the best opportunity of rallying the broadest layers for a general strike.

What does the CAL comrade counterpose to this strategy? A 'long march' which appears to consist of building up the base organisations of the class and awaiting the 'spontaneous' revolt of the masses against their suffering. By this method we are led to believe the masses will be 'stealed' through

blood shedding which will politicise them.

In fact this strategy differs little from the policy put forward by the ANC except in its estimation of the current relation of class forces and of the potential for the immediate struggle for state power. The ANC strategy has combined a right wing objective — bringing the South African bourgeoisie to the negotiating table and achieving a compromise with 'progressive' and international monopoly capitalism — with tactics which are adventurist, throwing the largely unarmed youth against the full might of the SADF. But just to attack the ANC/SACP for adventurism can lead to its opposite — either playing into the hands of rightist conservative elements or ending up with a passive reliance on spontaneity. What is needed is an alternative strategy to the ANC involving really bringing the working class to the centre of the struggle against apartheid — the general strike was (and is) central to such a strategy.

RISK

Others defending the decision of the NUM leadership to recommend a return to work argue that spreading the strike and allowing the SADF to intervene would have put at risk both the NUM and the whole Federation. *'The NUM went back to save COSATU'* argued South African Domestic Workers' Union leader Margaret Nhlapo on her recent visit to Britain. The opinion of most South African militants is that the state most certainly intends to crush the unions

Workers Power: Could you tell us your opinion about the ending of the NUM strike and its achievements or otherwise? Some people have been arguing that it was a major defeat and others that on the contrary it was a victory in the sense that the strikers were out three weeks.

Cape Action League: To take this step was obviously a very big decision, in a situation where there is a State of Emergency, where the state leans closer and closer to a military dictatorship with all the characteristics of fascism.

It seems that the strike was successful in the sense that the call was decided on democratically by the mineworkers, was headed by practically the entire mineworkers force and was conducted democratically for most of the dispute. There were plans for mineworkers to hold out for a week at a time in the hostels with supplies brought in from supporters and there was a possibility of solidarity action from the entire liberation force. I think that those who believe and support the struggle in SA against racial capitalism saw this as a very important development.

During the course of the strike as expected miners were killed, shop stewards were detained, and it seems that solidarity from other unions did not emerge as we would have wanted. In the last talks towards the end of the three weeks the leadership of the NUM seemed to indicate that they had deadlock in the talks and that they were going to stick by the mandate of the miners until sufficient gains or their initial demands were met. What puzzled us looking at it from outside the NUM was that a decision was made to stop the strike and return to work without any decision, discussion and direction from the mineworkers themselves. That tends to indicate that the latter part of the strike didn't take a normal democratic course. There are three possible explanations.

Firstly, the leadership took this decision itself because of the problems the strike faced. With the detentions of stewards and deaths it seemed best for them to retreat.

Secondly, it could be that elements of the leadership — for some reason or another — came to an agreement with capital — Anglo American — and that could have related to

the development of negotiation and accommodation politics inside the union movement.

Thirdly, the lack of solidarity action — itself related to current developments in the movement leading to disunity — made it impossible to continue.

For all of us in the country when the strike ended in the way that it did there was a degree of disappointment. But I think for people to evaluate the strike in a critical manner one would have to look at the entire picture and be critical of the negative aspects, like the undemocratic practice, at the end leading to a decision which was perhaps against the miners' interests, while still praising the positive aspects.

Could you tell us more about NACTU [National Council of Trade Unions] because we don't hear much about it in Britain?

Well NACTU was born out of those unions who unfortunately couldn't gain agreement in the unity talks before the formation of COSATU. All of us had hoped that, despite the differences, all these unions could be in one federation. But given the fact that the differences prevented that, we were still hoping that there could be united action between the two federations and the fact that the remaining unions have united in another federation is a progressive step.

NACTU is a union that has its major sector in the South African Chemical Workers Union (SACWU), one of the largest unions in the country. The Electricians Union has also joined and is engaged in merger talks itself. There are strong unions in transport, construction and in the public sector. NACTU no doubt is growing very fast. A few weeks ago it had a Local being launched in Tempisa. In the Cape it had a massive NACTU orientation day where over 222 delegates from NACTU unions and three non-affiliated unions indicated its development in concrete terms.

Comparatively one would say that it hasn't had the same kind of tradition that COSATU has. But so far the principles of workers' control, accountability and democratic practice have been the pillar of NACTU. In order to maintain unity it has decided against imposing the programme of any one political organisation on the union movement. It has

decided rather to unite workers around certain accepted principles, and to participate in the mass struggles in the community of a progressive nature in order to avoid falling into the trap of being restricted to the point of production, to basically economic struggles, but instead to participate in the political struggle as well.

So all in all our assessment is that NACTU is a new and exciting force alongside the historic development of COSATU and its commitment to trade union unity has been proved in practice. To give you an example, when the COSATU building was bombed it was NACTU that immediately extended the hand of support by allowing the NUM and CCAWUSA to take a floor in its building although it would be at cost to its own organisation, to show in practice its commitment to working together and building trade union unity. NACTU unions also played an important part in building practical support for the famous OK Bazaars victory of the catering workers (CCAUSA). We all realise that if NACTU and COSATU don't accept each other as fellow travellers on the same road there is a tremendous possibility that the capitalist class would be able to exploit these differences.

Are there any political barriers to trade union unity now? Is it still a question of non racialism versus the ideas of black consciousness which appeared to be the case two to three years ago?

Most of the unions that make up NACTU are committed to building a black working class leadership. The debate is not about colour per se — white workers could join if they wanted to — but about the need for those who have been politically, socially and economically deprived to develop the leadership of black working class and not give official positions to the white intelligentsia.

Also within NACTU's analysis is the idea that the white working class in South Africa has become the ally of the capitalist class. In fact most of the white workers belong to HNP, the Conservative party and the right wing. If you look at COSATU strikes like the mineworkers and rail strikes, the white workers continued working.

But perhaps the major issue in unity discussions ought to be the content of the strug-

Interview with a militant from the Cape Action League

gle against capitalism and the building of socialism rather than the question of how the leadership is created.

The democracy within the South African independent unions has been very impressive to us here in Britain. Are those democratic structures such as the shop and shaft stewards systems and the COSATU Locals still in place?

There's no doubt that the trade union movement has been hit by the extreme repressive conditions. Workers leaders like Moses Mayekiso being detained, the death of trade unionists like those in Natal in MAWU indicate that there is definitely a systematic attack by the state and that has also had an affect on structures.

Do you think there's a trade union bureaucracy developing?

It's somehow possible when you have small unions to have a very democratic development but large trade union movements almost always seem to go in the direction of a bureaucracy being created as in Germany and Britain.

Socialists and trade unionists must be constantly aware of that development, but I think that it might be premature to say that either of these two large federations have now become completely bureaucratic.

However, perhaps characteristics of how certain programmes have been developed are lending themselves in that direction even if its not a conscious thing.

You've suggested that there is a wrong or even dangerous political tendency in the leadership of some of the COSATU unions or COSATU itself. Could you explain?

What worries us most is the way that political programme and politics is being cast upon workers. We have no problem with workers developing in debate and democratic discourse — gaining political understanding and developing their political consciousness. But we don't believe it must be

NUMBERS STRIKE

when it is possible and necessary.

CAL obviously see this as a fairly immediate perspective. But is this the case? Powerful sections of the South African ruling class clearly recognise the difficulties and dangers of trying to crush the black workers' movement. Monopoly capitalists like Anglo-American would prefer the crystallisation of a reformist and conciliationist trade union leadership. The black working class will not go away, better by far — many bosses argue — that its grievances are channelled through a house trained union leadership.

The behaviour of the NUM and COSATU leadership give the bosses some grounds for believing this is not a fantastic project. Intimidation and victimisation will continue but the crushing or outlawing of trade unions is not the most likely perspective in the months ahead.

In the absence of a revolutionary Trotskyist party the danger is that the NUM defeat will serve to deepen a class collaborationist approach to trade unionism.

The defeat suffered by the NUM only serves to underline the fact that the June 1986 State of Emergency — unevenly and only after bitter resistance — brought to an end the revolutionary situation that had matured by the spring of 1986. But the NUM defeat does not mean headlong retreat is inevitable and that revolutionary tactics must be abandoned. South Africa continues to be in a prolonged revolutionary period, in which the objective of overthrowing apartheid remains on the immediate agenda. If as many reports indicate, the township structures are being rebuilt, the

unions are still intact, the political debate is still alive, then the task is how to prevent a retreat at the same time as fighting class collaborationist tendencies in the leadership.

SPLIT

As well as the defence and extension of union democracy, and rank and file organisations, the base of the unions will have to take a lead (as far as is possible in present conditions) in rebuilding the township organisations. The split between townships and workplace will have to be fought consciously in the way that union activists like Mayekiso were trying to do with the Alexandra Action Committee. The trend to 'accommodationism' needs to be resisted even if this means stepping beyond the bounds of 'legal' unionism by making real COSATU's commitments to solidarity strike action in support of sectors in struggle.

In the debate over the unions' political programme, those arguing for a workers' charter have been pushed on the defensive. In some cases they accepted the adoption of the Freedom Charter, in the interests of trade union unity. Important as unity is, it is not in the end in workers' interests to have the unity of the popular front.

In the struggle against class collaboration and for a socialist perspective, it is necessary to weld together those willing to build working class leadership of the South African revolution, and thus take essential steps to the building of a revolutionary socialist party. ■



done from the top, it must be done from the bottom. This cannot happen with the attempt to get unions and the Federation, with a very large membership, to adopt a Charter in a very short time.

It also seems that to maintain a single political line the leadership is forced to behave in a more and more undemocratic and bureaucratic manner towards different groupings who perhaps, as in the case of CCAWUSA, support other programmes such as the Azanian Manifesto.

This lack of democracy divides and weakens the movement and leaves a legacy of bitterness, which itself may contribute to the difficulties in delivering solidarity action when it is needed.

Open debate is essential at a time when debate is emerging around whether the unions should actually organise for socialism — or whether workers' interests must be subordinated by political programmes. The fact that that debate has now been almost sidestepped or relegated to less importance, is a major setback for those who believe in a socialist solution.

Essentially the question is whether the struggle will be conducted in the interests of workers on an anti-capitalist basis for socialism or whether the struggle will be waged on a popular front anti-apartheid ticket which obviously could not lead in a socialist direction.

To clarify a bit more. You implied that there might be a connection between the desire to keep the NUM strike within certain bounds — I think the employers call it 'normal industrial relations' — do you think there's a connection between the fact that some of the trade union leaders appeared to want to do just that and the political programme of the popular front. It seems to us that that is the case.

To characterise those things in the classical understanding of those concepts is a bit difficult in South Africa. Essentially what we should look at is whether there is free debate, the right to criticise, the right for the different groups within the movement to have their political programmes. This indicates the kind of direction we would favour in alliances.

In the CAL we are convinced that the

revolutionary alliance would not be of the classical model but that in the South African situation it must be between the black working class and a section of the black middle class. Here we are talking about nurses and many other sections who have proved in practice that because they are politically deprived because of colour oppression they assume a progressive and revolutionary role.

Therefore, in that sense we would find certain alliances permissible in the South African sense but we feel that alliances with the liberal bourgeoisie or the farsighted layer of the capitalist class is a very dangerous development which could subvert the socialist revolution.

Do you think that the union movement could have done more in terms of strikes, general strikes or whatever, to free the trade union leaders who were detained?

Well certainly it was successful in some cases. In the wake of the June 1986 Emergency, a number of strikes took place to free detained leaders and some of these were successful.

With the direction of things at the moment there is no doubt there are going to be much more intensive attacks on the trade union movement. This is why we feel it is essential that united action and a broad united front of unions be developed to sustain these attacks.

On the question of the grand strike as a weapon to bring about fundamental change we have very serious criticisms of that kind of thing in the third world. We believe that there's no way that unarmed workers are going to be able to bring down what is almost a military dictatorship by a withdrawal of labour power. We must also note the example of the railway strike where white workers assisted in trying to break the strike and many rail workers were shot and killed and arrested.

But on the other side what this has done is begin a process of steeling workers in struggle and this we see as a development which perhaps could create the conditions for a highly politicised movement.

But if the state really is out to crush the trade union movement in the next period what can the trade union move-

ment do? Must it always avoid confrontation with the state?

Yes that's really a difficult question: it's not a clear cut situation. It seems to me that depending on the strength of structures, on the degree of unity, on the state of the political movement, on international solidarity, the trade union movement would have options to protect itself in that situation.

We certainly don't believe that the trade union movement now must become passive or must go into reformist directions. Also we must look at the strategic economic importance of some of the sectors such as the railways and the mines. In some instances the union dared to take on the state and while the losses have been great they have achieved much.

I think that some of these things are not going to be decided on by intellectuals. There is a degree of spontaneous uprising that can take place. Bear in mind that black workers outside of the point of production are living in conditions of extreme oppression and suffering. There are 3-4 million unemployed at the moment. There is a massive problem on the housing front. There is a massive problem on the health front. All these conditions together are going to be determining the kind of action that workers are going to take, so whether you and I decide that activities should go this way and that is really immaterial, there are objective conditions and fertile soils in certain sectors.

We feel that it is essential to coordinate national mass action in these battles. We must attempt not to isolate action, we must attempt to bring all the tendencies in the liberation movement together so that we have the maximum strength to defend the interests of workers and the trade unions.

Do you think that there was a revolutionary period or situation which is now over? Do you think that the ruling class has got a breathing space, or do you think that things haven't fundamentally changed in the last twelve months?

The way in which the black working class and revolutionary forces have sustained the struggle over such a period of time has been unprecedented anywhere in the world. Certainly that has steeled people in struggle. But there's no doubt — and we have always said

this — that we have not entered an insurrectionary phase, we could have entered a pre-revolutionary phase. We feel that the position that the government was on its knees at one point, was about to crumble, was an incorrect reading of the situation. There's no doubt that we have to prepare for a long march, we have to prepare to intensify the struggle on as many levels as possible so that the trade unions are not the major thrust which can get smashed.

One should not lightly criticise the FOS-ATU tradition of giving priority to building structures rather than giving priority to the political field openly. But also we must realise that workers will learn from struggle and that in the Third World this means learning through blood.

Also, when you talk of revolution or seizure of power, such a situation doesn't seem to us to exist while the military is so strong whilst the workers are unable to defend themselves.

Once again I would stress that it is indeed a very dangerous development to create a mass line where the workers place their faith in agreements between the leadership of the liberation movement and the capitalists and imperialists. We believe the intention of Botha is to smash the major movements like the trade unions and the leadership of all the sections of the liberation movement and to give legitimacy to collaborators to gain and restore the confidence of imperialism. The liberal section of imperialism which has been attempting through various means to create an accommodation of blacks in the government where there would be some sharing of power rather than seizure of power is engaged in a futile exercise. Even if some of the leading elements in the ruling parties were to move in that direction, they are captive of a constituency which is racist, they are captive of a situation where the military itself wouldn't allow such a situation.

We feel that those people who are placing their faith in the support of the liberal section of imperialism are making a fundamental mistake. The moment that the regime is able to show its strength, show they can maintain their control, that same liberal imperialism would be prepared to accommodate even the Botha position and leave the essentially white capitalist regime in power. ■

FIJI

Keith Hassell looks at the legacy of British imperialism in the Pacific.

BRITISH DEMOCRACY EXPOSED

OVERHEARD IN Fiji: what's the difference between a military dictator and a Governor-General? One wears a uniform and the other a suit. The present clash between Buckingham Palace and Colonel Sitiveni Rabuka over which should be the 'sole legitimate source of executive authority' in the island serves to highlight the empty character of the parliamentary democracy that Britain bequeathed the Fijians when it granted them independence in 1970.

Britain's expressed concern over the latest coup is the usual vile hypocrisy. In April this year the duly elected Labour Party/National Federation coalition ended 17 years of conservative Alliance Party rule only to have its term of office abruptly terminated by Rabuka's soldiers on 14 May. The Queen refused to even see deposed Prime Minister Timoci Bavadra still less consider intervening to restore a democratically elected government.

TRUSTED

The reason? The pro-imperialist Alliance Party was a trusted and favoured instrument of British, US and Australian business interests. As long as Rabuka recognised the authority of the British Crown then all three powers would gladly turn a blind eye while new governmental arrangements were made giving more power to the native Fijians (Melanesians) at the expense of the Indian Fijians. The Governor-General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, obligingly dissolved the Labour/NF government on the morrow of the May coup. He sanctioned the act of the Great Council

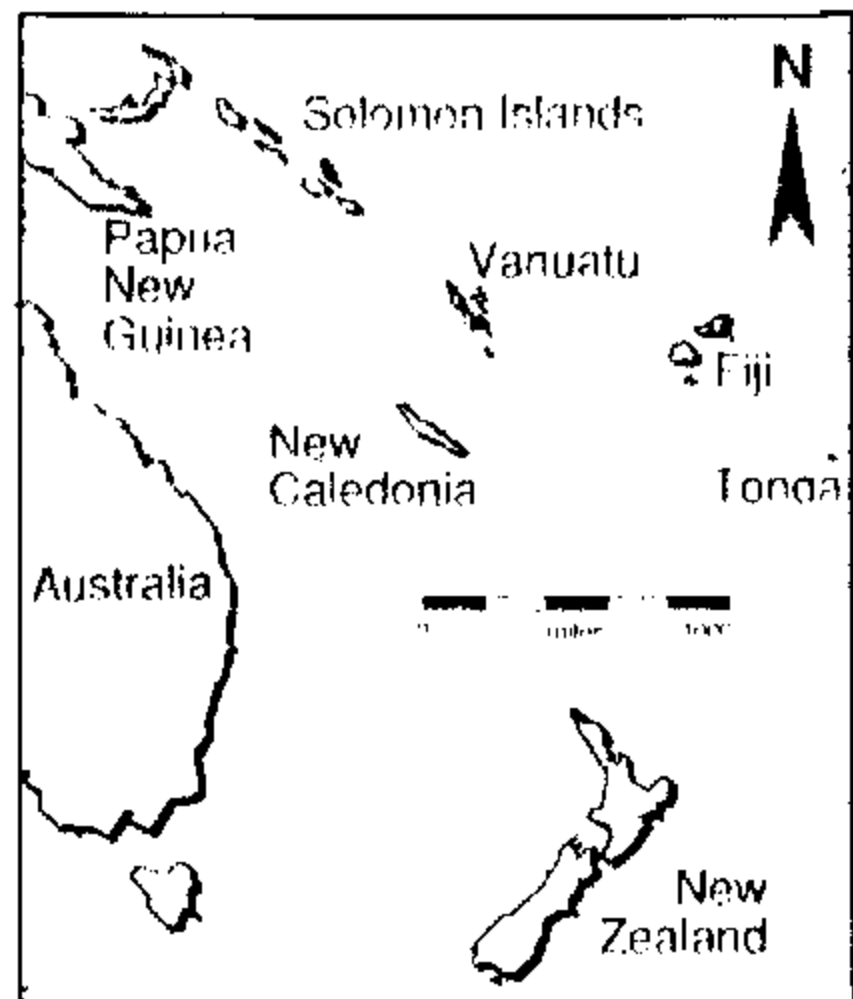
of Chiefs (the landed hereditary Melanesian rulers) in setting up an 'advisory council' with Rabuka at its head.

On 22 September it seemed that all the parties agreed to a new pact which would entrench the political power of the Melanesians. It appeared that strikes by Melanesians and Indian workers and economic sabotage by the Indian business community after the May coup effectively pared down the more overtly supremacist ambitions of Rabuka and the racist Taukei Front which stands behind him.

Yet this pressure — witness the pogroms and arson directed against the Indians — eventually resulted in Rabuka's second coup. He now favours tearing up the 1970 constitution and drawing up a new one which, among other things, would give the native Fijians 40 out of 52 seats in any new parliament.

ENSLAVEMENT

The newly found indignation of Britain is because of the refusal to



recognise Britain's authority, exercised in the past to ensure the continued enslavement of all Fijian workers to Australia and New Zealand. Imperialism fears continued economic disruption by the strong Indian business community, a renewed bout of strikes and possibly even a maverick foreign policy in a South Pacific which is increasingly politically volatile. The New Zealand Prime Minister pointed up what's at stake when he confessed that

'the countries of the region have to face one reality, and that is that Fiji is pivotal. It is a centre for communications, it is a centre for regional administration, for research...' (Guardian 1/10/87)

The conflict between the communities in Fiji is a result of British imperialism's rule. The Indian population dates from the decision to bring in bonded labour to work the sugar plantations. When Britain fashioned the post-independence constitution it ensured that the native Fijians would own 98% of the land as a bulwark against the growing commercial wealth of the Indian community.

PRODUCT

The Indian community is now the bigger of the two (49% compared to 46%) but the success of the Labour Party in ousting the Alliance is far from simply being a product of this population growth. It is a product of class differentiation within the whole of Fijian society. The rise of the working class in the last decades (it now constitutes 40% of the 714,000 population) was paralleled by unionisation of the workforce (some 55%). These unions span the two communities. The failure of the



Rabuka (centre) and British trained henchmen

unions to withstand the austerity attacks of the Alliance government in the 1980s spawned the Labour Party in 1985. It was Rabuka's post-coup ban on the unions which ensured that resistance to the coup came from native Fijians as well as Indian workers. Some 10%, overwhelmingly urban, Melanesians voted for the Labour Party.

SENTIMENTS

It is essential in the months ahead that Fijian workers preserve and build upon this unity. If separatist sentiments were to grow among the Indian workers as a result of the coup it would seriously weaken the resistance. Nor should the workers be side-tracked into a defence of the Crown and the 1970 constitution.

This has been the response of the Labour Party. Resistance in the sugar mills, gold mines and factories must have as its aim the convocation of a sovereign Constituent Assembly. The Labour Party of Bavadra must be forced to break with any thought of communal power-sharing pacts which will drive a wedge into the working class. Bavadra must be made to fight against the growing unemployment and lay-offs and for state benefits.

Meanwhile, acts of working class solidarity are urgently needed to weaken Rabuka's grip. The Australian dockers must renew their boycott of all Fijian trade. British trade unionists and socialists must demand that Britain end its rule by Privy Council and Governor-General.

PHILIPPINES

As unrest flares in the Philippines once more, the Manila regime shows the strain. Din Wong reports

AQUINO UNDER FIRE FROM RIGHT

THE ATTEMPTED coup that erupted in Manila on 28 August came at the end of a week in which mass trade union action had already shaken the Aquino government.

The announcement of a government-imposed 18% rise in the price of petroleum products was met by the call for a one day nationwide transport strike on 26 August. It came from the normally 'moderate' Trade Union Congress of the Philippines and the more militant Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU) 1 May trade union federation.

The call for a nationwide strike was prompted by fears of the knock-on effect of increased transport costs on staple goods. On the eve of the general strike Aquino's government announced a reduction in the price rise to 9%. With the combined membership of nearly five million solidly behind them the two union federations pressed ahead with the strike demanding a return to pre-August prices. The entire country was paralysed on 26 August.

Aquino's government continues to teeter from crisis to crisis, in spite of

a slight economic recovery and an overwhelming election victory for her party in June this year. The economy, freed from Marcos and his cronies' stranglehold, enjoyed increased investments and higher sugar and copra prices. In the first quarter of 1987 GDP grew by 5.8%, the best performance since the recession of 1983. However, amidst allegations of nepotism and corruption, which involved Aquino's brother and uncle and members of the Presidential Commission for Good Government, right wing opposition increased from the Reform the Armed Forces Movement (RAM) which staged the coup. They condemned her supposed weakness and indecisiveness in dealing with the 'lefts' in her cabinet and the New Peoples Army. After the attempted coup, in an effort to appease the right, Aquino sacked her second cabinet in ten months and gave a pay rise to the military.

Aquino faces other thorny issues. The framework of the Land Reform programme is before the new Congress. It has to determine the limit of how much land landowners may continue to hold and the

priorities to be followed in re-planting. It must decide whether to include the politically sensitive sugar and coconut plantations.

GENEROUS

The land reform programme offers little to landless peasants and agricultural workers. Land redistributed will have to be paid for by the peasants — in 30 annual instalments at an interest rate of 6% a year. The programme, however, is much more generous to the landowners. A P 50 billion fund has been set up to compensate landowners for land acquired, the amount to be based on the owners' declaration of current fair market value! Compensation will be paid over ten years maturing at 10% each year. None of this is surprising given that many of the legislators are landowners themselves. Even so, the bourgeoisie is not pleased with the programme. Already landowners in the sugar and coconut industry have threatened to ignore it. A few sugar landowners have formed private armies in re-

cent weeks to resist any takeover of their farms.

The renewal of the leases for US military bases at Subic Bay and Clark Field is less problematic for Aquino. Though she has not committed herself publicly one way or another, anti-US air base talk has been confined to a small number of the 'nationalist' senators. The USA has let it be understood that it is willing to include a no-nuclear weapons storage clause, and to give nominal operational control of the bases to the Filipino government. The argument is not now whether to renew the agreement but how much to make the US pay. Apart from direct government to government payment in terms of aid and grants, a private Rand Corp study in 1982 said that nearly 4% of the Philippines' GNP come directly from US spending on the bases. The number of Filipinos depending on the bases for a living runs a close second to the number on the government's own payroll.

The US threat to withhold military aid if Aquino was ousted makes it even more unlikely that Aquino will oppose the renewal of the lease. The

Philippines is of such strategic importance to the US presence in South East Asia that the Reagan is at present willing to prop up Aquino in order to stave off the left. However the fact that significant forces on the right see no further use for Aquino guarantees continued instability for her regime. And it means imperialism may well look to other options to maintain its grip over this vital territory. ■

PERMANENT REVOLUTION
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The seventh anniversary of the Gulf War between Iran and Iraq has been marked by imperialism's direct military intervention in the region. On 21 September US helicopter gunships blasted the *Iran Ajr* without warning, killing four of its crew and capturing the rest.

The 'Great Satan's' show of firepower in the Gulf inferno marks a new stage in the conflict: imperialism has, over the last few months, assembled a massive war fleet in the area. Over 70 ships from the navies of the USA, Britain, France, Italy, Belgium and Holland, all with their gun turrets and missiles pointed at Iran, constitute the biggest naval task force since the second imperialist World War. What is at stake for them in the Iran-Iraq war? To answer this it is necessary to understand the complex evolution of that war since September 1980.

In February 1979 an insurrection in Iran toppled the Shah. However, the working class and the oppressed were cruelly robbed of the spoils of victory. In the absence of a Trotskyist party, capable of winning the working class to the perspective of permanent revolution and workers' power, Khomeini secured complete leadership of the mass movement and transformed the revolution into its opposite — blood drenched counter-revolution.

Nevertheless, the Khomeini regime — especially in the early days of the revolution — was not imperialism's puppet. Based as it was on the older merchant capitalists of Iran, the Bazaar, the Islamic Republic's national interests were not consistently harmonious with those of imperialism. This was no mere inconvenience for the USA, Britain, et al. It was an unqualified disaster. Economically, it meant the destabilisation of an area that produces 90% of the west's lifeblood — oil. Politically it robbed imperialism of its second most powerful military ally in the Middle East, one that policed the Gulf in the south and the borders of the USSR in the north. At the time imperialism was incapable of countering this blow to its stability. Its one military intervention — the attempt to rescue the US embassy staff in Tehran — ended in a humiliating fiasco.

It was in this context that Saddam Hussein's Iraq invaded Iran. It was a blatant attempt to do imperialism a service by delivering a death blow to the still simmering revolution and re-establishing stability in the area.

Iraq's invasion was unambiguously welcomed in the west. The US bosses' mouthpiece, the *Wall Street Journal*, stated:

'With revolutionary Iran creating so much tension in the Middle East, Washington would clearly welcome any role that the Iraqis might play in stabilising the Persian Gulf.'

Saddam Hussein was, quite consciously, seeking to replace the Shah, as imperialism's policeman in the Gulf. His trajectory since 1978 had been away from his former ally, the USSR, and towards the west. Oil, Iraq's key export, had a market in the west, not in the USSR. A cynical Hussein commented:

'We do not drink oil, we sell it, and we know that our major markets are in the west and in Japan.'

What was at stake, therefore, in September 1980, was the defence of Iran from attack by a pro-imperialist Iraq. The gains of the Iranian revolution — now obliterated by Khomeini — such as the 40 hour week, the allocation of profits to workers, limited elements of workers' control, were worth defending against a regime openly committed to their destruction. The re-establishment of stability on imperialism's terms was worth preventing. For these reasons revolutionaries — while not giving Khomeini any political support at all — were obliged to defend Iran militarily. Yet, two years into this war revolutionaries were equally obliged to end their military united front. The defence of the Iranian revolution was no longer at stake by July 1982. More, the war had become thoroughly reactionary on both sides. Why?

At the outset of the war Iran's military apparatus was in tatters. The Iraqi army was able to occupy 700 square miles of Iranian territory with relative ease. But then they were halted not by the Iranian army but by a 'levee en masse', a mobilisation of the Iranian people. Reluctantly, the mullahs were obliged to allow armed workers to go to the front. Not only was the Iraqi invasion checked but, as the months wore on, the Iranians advanced. At this point new factors began to emerge. Realising the danger the general mobilisation posed to their rule the mullahs began their

Seven years into the Iran-Iraq war US imperialism has changed its tack once again. At first it hoped for an Iraqi victory to crush the gains of the Iranian revolution. Then it waited for both sides to bleed each other to death. Now it is set on isolating and crushing Iran. Mark Hoskisson looks at the course of the seven year slaughter up to the present imperialist intervention in the Gulf.



IMPERIALISM TRIES TO TAME IRAN

plans for an internal counter-revolutionary onslaught on those still benefiting from the gains of the revolution. Initially this took the form of a split in June 1981 within the regime between the 'liberal' bourgeois president Bani-Sadr and the Khomeinists. However, the Khomeinists used this split to strike at the real threat to their regime — the working class.

Through the following year the mullahs consolidated a bloody grip on Iran, physically liquidating tens of thousands of their opponents. During the same period victories at the front began to change the character of the war. In May and June 1982 the Iranian forces recaptured the last major outpost of Iraq in Iran, Khorramshahr. By late June the defensible war aim of Iran — the expulsion of Iraq — had been fulfilled. Iraq announced a ceasefire and withdrew all its troops from Iran. Yet, instead of ending the war Khomeini, realising the reactionary potential in keeping the Iranian masses' eyes transfixed on an external enemy, opted to continue the war.

In this context, Workers Power ceased to call for the defence of Iran. We argued — and continue to do so to this day — for the withdrawal of Iranian troops from Iraq, for an end to the reactionary war and for the Iranian workers to recognise that their main enemy was at home, as had always been the case for the Iraqi workers.

The mullah's rhetoric was not matched by military prowess. The human wave assaults they ordered led to thousands dead, in return for a snail's pace advance into Iraq. Cynically exploiting the Shi'ite celebration of martyrdom, the Ayatollah maintained a fragile popular base for his regime by keeping the war going. Saddam turned the tables on Khomeini and appealed to Arab chauvinism to rally the Iraqi population to a dogged defence against the Persians. Iran's oil wealth and Iraq's subsidies from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia provided the cash needed to keep the carnage going. The war had turned into a horrifying re-run of the first imperialist world slaughter. Almost half a million people have died, more than that have been maimed for life.

Iraq's attempt to break the deadlock has led to the new situation. Saddam knows he cannot win the war. His aim, therefore, is to enlist imperialism's help to bring Iran to the negotiating table. His strategy is currently enjoying a degree of success. In July the United Nations Security Council, passed resolution 598, which called for an immediate ceasefire, a withdrawal of armies to pre-war borders and the establishment of an impartial body to allocate blame (and therefore reparations) for the start of the war. Indeed Iran went so far as

to tell the UN's Security General, Perez de Cuellar, that it would observe an informal ceasefire provided Algeria and Sweden were represented on a UN adjudicating body. How did Iraq achieve this concession from Iran and what are the real chances for an end to the war?

Iraq has always enjoyed one advantage in the war — air superiority. Courtesy of France it has a fleet of between 80 and 100 Super Etendard jets — the Exocet machines. Since 1984 it has used this air power to conduct a tanker war. All ships in the Gulf carrying Iranian oil have been regarded as legitimate targets. This, hoped Hussein, would have two results. First, it would hurt Iran economically since all of its oil is transported through the Gulf's shipping lanes. Iraq on the other hand exports its oil via a pipeline through Turkey, a target Iran dare not hit. More important for Hussein was the second result, namely, goading Iran to hit back by attacking ships carrying Kuwaiti and Saudi oil to the imperialist west. By turning the shipping lanes of the Gulf into a graveyard for the tankers Iraq hope to tempt US imperialism to play a more active role in taming Iran.

US imperialism however — smarting from the bloody nose it had received in Lebanon — has been more anxious to try and do a deal with the Iranians in a bid to find some potential 'moderate' friends. Containment of the war became the USA's central objective. Hence, while it supplied Iraq with intelligence that enabled it to bomb Iranian targets, it supplied Iran with weapons and spare parts (2,000 TOW anti-tank missiles, for example). Provided enough oil continued to flow through the Gulf, Britain and France were content with this policy of containment. It would lead, in Henry Kissinger's words, to both countries losing the war. Exhausted regimes would then become pushovers for a renewed drive by imperialism to establish stability in the Gulf.

The policy of containment last two years. It exploded in Reagan's face when the Irangate scandal blew. The anti-Iranian rhetoric was shown to be hot-air. The Presidency became rapidly discredited. Ironically Reagan's embarrassment led to success in Saddam's bid to bring imperialism into confrontation with Iran.

To rescue the Presidency — that is to ensure that the essentials of Reaganite policy are continued after he goes — an 'adjustment', as the State Department called it, was required in the Gulf. In February of this year Reagan embarked on the course that led to last month's armed clash. He denounced Iran in a major policy speech that month. In March he declared:

'... we remain strongly committed to supporting the self-defence of our friends in the region.'

And, fearful of Soviet influence after Kuwait invited Gorbachev's assistance with oil transport, Reagan authorised the reflagging of eleven Kuwaiti tankers to place them under US protection and started sending the fleet to protect them.

That Iraq was the main villain of the piece in the Iraq tanker war mattered little. Thus, when Iraq exoceted the USS Stark, killing yet more US servicemen, the President sent more ships in to attack Iran. When Iraq broke the informal ceasefire that had existed in the tanker war for over a month, on 29 August, Iranian mines were declared to be the major source of tension. US imperialism was now in the Gulf — bringing much of Europe in its trail — in order to force Iran to accept peace on its terms. Containment was replaced by unabashed aggression against Iran.

For its part the USSR, fearful of the instability associated with the Islamic Republic and mindful of the influence of Islam in its own southern Republics, was content to go along with the imperialist attempts to tame Iran.

Imperialism's chances of saving Saddam's head by bringing Iran to the negotiating table are far from certain. The Gulf remains a powder keg. During the lull in the tanker war Iran was able to earn a fortune in oil revenue. Exports in August were earning Iran 20 million dollars more than the previous year. Moreover Iran knows that, while it cannot compete with the imperialist armada in a sea battle, it can forestall a land attack by imperialism by re-unifying its war-weary population against the Great Satan. The cost of a land attack would be far too high for the USA, Britain or France to contemplate. Iran has already mobilised 50,000 strong 'seekers of martyrdom in the Persian Gulf'. And the Iranian President, Khomeini, said after receiving the bodies of those killed in the US attack on the *Iran Ajr*:

'Our nation takes delivery of bodies of its young martyrs, and martyrdom is an honour for us. But what will you have to say tomorrow when you hand over the corpses of young Americans to their families.'

A sobering reminder of the current constraints Reagan's gun-boat diplomacy faces.

In the present situation revolutionaries need to intervene with clear policies that can weaken both imperialism and the reactionary dictatorship in Baghdad and Teheran. Imperialism's present quest for peace through negotiation is aimed at weakening Iran but not at strengthening Iraq. Saddam has failed in his attempt to win the role of policeman. The US and Britain favour an alliance of the Gulf states, under the political domination of the Saudis and backed up by the US navy as a counter weight to Iran and as a means of keeping the vital oil flow going. Through peace they hope that sections of the Iranian ruling class can be brought towards peaceful co-existence in the Gulf and the blocking of any further Soviet influence in the area.

Thus, at the moment the two conflicts — Iran versus Iraq and imperialism versus Iran — have not yet become one and the same. Of course the potential for imperialism to strike a military deal with Iraq exists. Frustration with Iran could push the US in this direction. If such a development does occur then, as in 1980, Iraq's war — probably taking the form of a renewed offensive equipped and logistically supported by the US and Saudi Arabia — would become a proxy war by imperialism, in which the defence of Iran would, once again, be placed on the agenda.

At present, however, in the war between Iran and Iraq we demand the withdrawal of Iranian troops from Iraq and an immediate end to the war. To achieve this the masses of both countries need to be rallied to a revolutionary struggle against their rulers. However, in the continuing conflict between Iran and the imperialist navies we stand unequivocally for the defence of Iran. Success for the US, Britain or France would be success for imperialism's strategy of asserting its power over all semi-colonial regions that dare to challenge it. It must not be allowed to happen.

Imperialism must be cleared out of the Gulf lock, stock and barrel. Its calls for arms embargo against Iran — astonishingly echoed by the USFI in its pacifist statement on the war, with only the rider that it should apply to Iraq as well — must be opposed. They are attempts to disarm Iran in its conflict with the imperialist powers. Imperialist arms embargoes will not bring peace to the Gulf masses. Proletarian revolution and the defeat of imperialism will. ■

THE AEU 'hard right' failed to get their September National Committee to endorse the Engineering Employers Federation (EEF) and the Confed Unions' (CSEU) proposals on flexible working. But they are still on course to do a deal on flexible working in return for a shorter working week.

Jordan insists that only an 'enabling agreement' can extract concessions from employers who are already imposing flexible working in their factories. The AEU leadership does not want to fight those employers. They share a common interest with them. The '37.5 hour week and related matters' document states this clearly:

Both the Federation and the CSEU fully recognise the need for change in promoting efficiency of production and they commit themselves to it.

The September National Committee resolved to re-open negotiations in search of fewer strings. But it did not oppose the bosses' demands for greater flexibility. Jordan was left free to negotiate on 'contentious clauses', in particular a clause concerning white collar workers doing skilled workers jobs on new technology machines.

SENTENCE

So vague were the National Committee's proposals that Jordan and the EC have been left free to come away from further negotiations with only a sentence or two changed.

The EEF may well not be prepared to play that game. So strong is their thirst for higher profits and so weak is the AEU leadership that they may well seek to impose the deal in the plants. In order to compete with the likes of Nissan they want to put an end to all demarcation procedures and introduce complete flexibility and mobility. Flexible hours and a flexible working week would dramatically alter the maximum and minimum number of hours worked each week.

In exchange the bosses are offering a reduction in hours from 39 to 37.5 in two 45 minute stages. The first would last from this November until May 1989, the second would come into operation in the following

twelve months. There would be no further claim for a reduction in hours before November 1991.

This cut in hours is due to be self financing. Production levels will have to be maintained at least at the old 39 hour week levels. The 'offer' costs the bosses nothing.

At the September National Committee the Broad Left unsuccessfully moved that the negotiations be halted. Their opposition to Jordan is timid in the extreme. A planned ballot over the final renegotiations will further expose their spinelessness. Engineering workers will be asked if they are prepared to take industrial action for the 35 hour week. Rather than taking up the gauntlet that the Right has thrown down the left argued against consulting the membership. They argued that the NC was the union's policy making body and that there was no groundswell for action over the 35 hour week with no strings. They are not prepared to go out to the membership and campaign for it!

ENABLING

Any renegotiated package between the EEF and CSEU is sure to be a sell out of hard won working practises. Rank and file militants must act quickly because time is running out. Motions from branches, shop steward and District committees must continue to flood the EC demanding a halt to further talks. The members must be armed with facts about what a Jordan-style enabling agreement will mean so that they can be convinced of the need to oppose it.

We must build for the lobby of the CSEU on 5 November. The Broad Left must be forced to actively campaign for a 35 hour week and for all-out industrial action to achieve it. Stewards' committees in federated factories must organise 'fightback conferences' open to delegates from workplaces affected by the deal.

They should hammer out a strategy for resisting any sell out and fighting for a 35 hour week with no loss of pay. A fighting alliance needs to be cemented with engineers in the non-federated factories. Only in this way can we weld together a fighting unity to resist Jordan and the bosses' plans on flexibility and pay. ■

Bill Jordan's latest dealings with the bosses mean further attacks on engineers' working conditions. An AEU militant examines the negotiations on the 35 hour week and what it might cost the workers and the bosses.

JORDAN THE BOSSES' FLEXIBLE FRIEND



AFL-CIO

LANE KIRKLAND, head of the US Trade Union Federation AFL-CIO, was feted at this year's TUC congress. Industrial editors and new realists alike waxed lyrical over the need for the TUC to take the path of Kirkland's AFL-CIO.

Norman Willis may think this is the way to take the TUC and halt its slide in membership. But organised workers must resist him all the way. The record of the AFL-CIO in the last years shows why.

The AFL-CIO has gone into the business of luring individuals into union membership on the basis of low interest rate credit cards and supplementary group health and legal insurance. From business unionism to marketing financial services — this was the supposed path to survival and renewal for the sullied trade union tops of the United States. Willis is keen to follow suit.

The past four decades of the AFL-CIO decline should, however, give even Norman Willis pause before

embracing these supposed innovations which would create a high-tech version of the 19th century benevolent society. In contrast to the British experience, the dwindling of the ranks of union members in the United States pre-dates the sharp downturn of the 1979-82 recession.

PEAK

The proportion of US workers organised in unions has been at best static or actually falling ever since reaching its peak in the late 1950s. Fewer than one in five waged and salaried employees in the USA belong to a union. The latest study shows that 17.4 million belong to unions or employee associations in a labour force four times larger than the UK's. Of this number only 13.3 million are in unions affiliated to the AFL-CIO, with the country's two largest bodies of organised labour, the Teamsters with 1.6 million members and the National

EXPRESS CARD TO NOWHERE

Falling membership figures have forced United State's union leaders into offering credit-card trade unionism to those still paying subs. The British TUC is running headlong down the same road to try to stem the flow of members away from the unions. *G R McCall* looks at the dangers facing the TUC and the effects of this policy on union membership.

Education Association comprised of 1.4 million teachers not affiliated.

The sharp plummet in membership over the past decade is a direct result of the unions inability to defend jobs in manufacture against the attacks of the steel and car bosses.

The United Steel Workers lost more than 40% of its total membership between 1980 and 84 as 650,000 unionised jobs were swept away from the steel plants. US steel corporations now employ fewer workers than the country's MacDonald's hamburger empire.

Similarly, the United Auto Workers has lost up to 300,000 members in recent years due to redundancies. This gave the union's top brass a pretext for a series of give-back contracts with General Motors, Ford and Chrysler — where UAW president Douglas Fraser 'earned' a place on the company board.

US workers have to face an American capitalist class which has little or no use for the policing role of the trade union bureaucracy and has shifted investment to southern states in order to take advantage of a battery of local anti-union laws. Over the past fifteen years US bosses have also spent upwards of £60 million each year on union-busting consultancy firms — more subtle and up to date and more effective than the hated Pinkertons of old.

GRITTY

In the 1980s workers in the US have displayed a gritty determination in such bitter disputes as the P9 Hormel fight, the battle by Arizona's copper miners against Phelps-Dodge and in numerous clashes with airline bosses out to smash the

industry's unions. This recent record of defensive struggle should inspire any trade union militant in this country. The AFL-CIO leaders have sabotaged and betrayed those struggles. The UFCW refused to support the Hormel workers and drove many strikers out of the union. Yet for all their treachery and their express cards the AFL-CIO leaders continue to preside over a shrinking membership.

It is a sign of the bankruptcy of the TUC chiefs that they can want to follow the example of a union bureaucracy that has lost a huge section of its membership. The future of organised labour in the USA and in Britain lies in collective struggle, not in seducing individuals with union-subsidised credit cards. Only by resisting the employers and defending hard won jobs and conditions can organised labour prove its worth to millions of workers. ■

❖REVIEWS❖

THIS PLAY is a must. Written and performed by sacked workers from BTR-Sarmcol in South Africa, it describes the bitter two and a half year strike with all the pain and joy that has flowed from it.

Switching between English and Zulu the cast outline their story in a blaze of song and dance that will leave you breathless. Mixing traditional Zulu rhythms with a sparse industrial style, the play opens with the unbelievable 'Gumboot Dance' — a half-hour display of athleticism which is as much a testimony to the physical strength of the performers as to their humour and dancing skill. You'll be exhausted by the end of it, but it soon becomes clear the cast have only been warming up. The play itself begins and describes the background to the strike.

The events of April 1985 which sparked the current action are delivered with a series of vicious caricatures of BTR management — from the pompous Sampson, 'big boss' and overseer of Sarmcol, to Owen Green, the chairman of the multinational BTR itself.

In an equally vicious but less light-

hearted way, the strikers recall the role of the scabs at Sarmcol, the protection they have received from the police, and the horrific murder of the strike leadership (including Simon Ngubane, the play's author).

The play ends in defiant mood. We are told that the Long March of the strikers will continue until it reaches Pretoria itself. The final aim of the workers is clearly stated: a Socialist Republic of South Africa and workers' control of industry.

The cast are clear how we can help their struggle: donate to their strike fund, buy the T-shirts produced by their co-operative and get your union branch to join the campaign in their support.

See this play. The courage, determination and sheer ebullience of the strikers is an inspiration to us all. ■

by Richard Gerrard

For further information on the play, the T-shirts and the campaign, contact: **SAWCO**, c/o 12 Manor Road Extension, Leicester LE22 4FF Telephone: (0533) 712041

THE LONG MARCH



cast of The Long March

Tour Dates

October

- 8 Hull Trades Club
- 9 York*
- 10 Barnsley*
- 12 Glasgow Jordan Hill College
- 13/14/15 Edinburgh Traverse Theatre
- 16 (pm) Stirling Trade Union Hall (late pm) Glasgow Tran Theatre
- 17 Glasgow Maryhill Community Centre Halls
- 19 Durham University, Cademon Hall,
- 20 Newcastle Arts Centre
- 21 Newcastle Buddle Theatre
- 22 Liverpool*
- 23 Preston Ribdale Club
- 26 Ipswich Town Hall
- 27 Colchester University of Essex
- 28/9 Cambridge Fisher Hall
- 30 Peterborough AEU Hall
- 31 Norwich University

November

- 1 London Brixton Town Hall
- *exact details to be confirmed.

FIGHTING CUTS



by Chris Brind

Secretary, London LCLGR (in a personal capacity)

THE LABOUR Campaign for Lesbian and Gay Rights (LCLGR) adopted a clear position of opposing local government cut-backs at its last national co-ordinating committee. It agreed to send delegates to the London Bridge/Camden Fightback conference against the cuts. It was 100% right to do so.

Cuts in local services will hit lesbians and gays hard. We will be affected by the cuts in the same way as the working class as a whole — fewer jobs, services and houses. But we will also stand to lose specific gains, such as lesbian and gay centres, officers and equal opportunities if the cuts go through. For LCLGR not to oppose the cuts would mean it would be a mere propaganda body for lesbian and gay rights. It would be a campaign based on pious intentions rather than fighting action.

At the co-ordinating committee one person voted against this policy,

a member of the Labour Co-ordinating Committee. He argued that in certain circumstances cuts may be necessary. The meeting rejected this view. Since that meeting, and in the run-up to the general members meeting in Birmingham on 17/18 October, prominent members of the LCLGR have got cold feet and are backtracking on the campaign's agreed policies.

GUILTY

In an article in the LCLGR newsletter *Socialist Action* supporter, Peter Purton, has attacked *Workers Power* for our role in defending the anti-cuts position. He argues that we are guilty of trying

to turn a united front campaign into a political party if we seek to commit LCLGR to an anti-cuts position. He states:

'I also vigorously oppose labour councils making cuts (and will fight them too). But *never ever* would I suggest that comrades who believe that these councils have no choice, have no place in LCLGR.'

In reply we wish to make it absolutely clear that we believe LCLGR should be a real united front. Regardless of broader disagreements we believe it is possible, and necessary, to unite all those in the labour movement prepared to support les-

bian and gay rights in an active campaign. But there's the rub. For us, being active means fighting against attacks on lesbians and gay men. Cuts are just such an attack.

If somebody believes they have 'no choice' but to vote for the closure of a lesbian and gay centre then LCLGR is duty bound to oppose them. They will be the ones who, through their actions, disqualify themselves from participation in LCLGR. They will be the ones who will destroy Purton's 'basis for LCLGR's existence and success'. They will be the ones undermining the enormous amount of work LCLGR has carried out over the past four years in winning local authorities to lesbian and gay rights —

in Camden, Haringey, Ealing, Lambeth, Nottingham, Glasgow and elsewhere.

At the forthcoming members meeting we will be arguing for the LCLGR to adopt a charter of lesbian and gay rights and an orientation away from the Legislation Campaign (now hijacked by the liberals of CHE) and towards the labour movement. We won't be tabling our party programme as the basis for LCLGR. The problem is that the reformists who do want to implement cuts will be demanding that we allow them to have their programme effectively endorsed — a programme of anti-working class and, in practical terms, anti-lesbian and gay measures. We will strive to prevent them from achieving their ends and we call on the comrades of *Socialist Action* and *Socialist Outlook* (who appear to agree with Purton's line) many of whom have done good work to build LCLGR, to support us and not throw the results of that work away. ■

Class war prisoners

FREE ELEUTERIO GUTIERREZ

Two years after his arrest, miner militant, Eleuterio Gutierrez is still in jail in Bolivia awaiting sentence. Information has recently arrived from Bolivia that the court is likely to impose a long prison sentence for supposed theft from COMIBOL, the Bolivian national mining company. In a recent statement on the case, the Permanent Assembly for Human Rights in Bolivia has declared:

'The Permanent Assembly believes that the charge has been trumped up in order to blame someone for the theft of the instruments.'

It is urgent that we step up the pressure on the Bolivian government to prevent the victimisation of this miner comrade. All trade union and labour movement bodies, especially those who have taken up the case before, should immediately send letter or telegrams of protest to:

Palacio de Justicia,
2do Juzgado de Partido en
io Penal
Calle La Plata Esq
Ayacucho
Oruro
Bolivia.

WITH FRIENDS LIKE THESE

by Stuart King

IF THERE was a single issue where one would have thought it was possible to have a united campaign throughout the British left it ought to be the defence of Moses Mayekiso. The arrest and detention of the General Secretary of the second biggest South African trade union, NUMSA, on a treason charge carrying the death penalty should have been the focus for the most vigorous united front campaigning within the trade union movement. It is horrendous testimony to the real sectarianism of the British left that this is not possible.

It perhaps should come as no surprise that first in the field to sabotage a campaign of support was the Stalinist dominated South African Congress of Trade Unions (SACTU) which has circulated trade unions denouncing the 'Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign'. SACTU still claims a monopoly on speaking for South African trade unionists abroad, despite the existence of COSATU and the fact that SACTU itself has no affiliates in South Africa.

It is at least constant in its opposition to a campaign around Mayekiso. The leader of NUMSA is well known for his espousal of the

need for socialist change in South Africa, for the need for a workers' programme in distinction to the popular frontist *Freedom Charter*. This is the reason he is on trial for his life in South Africa. The 'indictment' against him says he holds the view

'that the working class, including the unemployed, the youth and other members of the community, should be mobilised, organised and united against the capitalist system and the state'.

While SACTU, and the South African Communist Party, cannot openly abandon campaigning for an opponent of their own political perspective, they have concentrated instead on throwing up a smoke-screen about the 'divisiveness' of campaigning for 'individual trade unionists'. In fact a massive campaign around Moses Mayekiso in the trade unions could be used as a focus to expose the nature of the apartheid regime and further the campaign to free other trade union detainees and all political prisoners.

It is more surprising to find the Socialist Workers Party backpeddling on action in support of

Mayekiso. Early in the summer there was much talk of using the Friends of Mayekiso Campaign's success in winning passive sponsorship to initiate real action. A demonstration at least was promised. By the end of the summer no demonstration was forthcoming and little action promised apart from collecting more sponsors and an advert in the *Guardian*. When a member of groups including City Anti-Apartheid called for pickets and a national demonstration in October, the SWP was quick to distance itself. It wrote to the organisers declaring that it could not support such an initiative because it would 'weaken' support for the national AAM march two weeks later. This is a march which needs to be supported but it is not raising the Mayekiso question, being in general a march against apartheid and for sanctions. For good measure the SWP sent a copy of this letter to the AAM to show what good boys and girls they were!

This grovelling before the likes of SACTU and the AAM leadership did the SWP leadership little good. At the following AAM national committee they were the centre of attacks for their 'splitting' and 'wrecking' activities via the Friends of Moses Mayekiso Campaign.

FREE MOSES MAYEKISO

March to South Africa House
Saturday 10 October 1987
Meet 12 Noon
Clerkenwell Green
LONDON EC2
Farringdon tube

Workers power

ABORTION RIGHTS ORGANISE TO STOP ALTON

IN THE week that David Alton, MP resigned as Liberal Party whip to pursue his private members Bill, which seeks to impose new legal limits on women's already limited abortion rights, Trevor Virgo was jailed for life for destroying his ex-girlfriend's unborn baby. He only got 16 years for the vicious attack on Julie Wolton who was stripped naked in the snow, then kicked and punched until she had a miscarriage.

The media concentrated totally on the destruction of the foetus and all but ignored Wolton's appalling injuries. Even *The Times* headed the story 'Life for killer of Unborn Baby'.

The implications could be very serious. Both the idea that an unborn baby can be 'murdered' and that its fate is more important than the health of the women carrying it sets a dangerous precedent. They will undoubtedly be used by Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and Life in support of Alton's attempt to reduce the upper time limit for abortion from 28 to 18 weeks.

Last year over 5,000 women had abortions when they were 18 or more weeks pregnant. 2,700 of these were after 20 weeks. These women were either those who had only just found out that the foetus had a serious abnormality, young women who denied to themselves and others that they could be pregnant, or older women who thought their missed periods were due to the menopause. Many were due to the gross inefficiency in the health service — 20% had consulted their doctors before they were 12 weeks pregnant and had to wait up to two months for the operation.

QUACKS

If Alton is successful, most of these women would have unwanted children now. Some would be maimed or worse, having sought abortions from illegal backstreet quacks, and some would have severely handicapped children to look after with little support from the social services. This Liberal MP, backed by his fellow Catholics in SPUC and Life, wants in practice to reduce the limit to 14 weeks as women would find it hard to get a doctor prepared to risk prosecution by performing a termination after that date.

The debates on the bill have already begun, well before its first reading on 27 October. The central issue of who decides what will happen to a woman's body, the state and medical profession or the woman herself, have been and will continue to be hidden behind a screen of pseudo-medical moralism about 'viability' and 'disability'.

The serious threat of this Bill to

women's limited abortion rights will probably come in the form of amendments: few other than the staunch bigots of the anti-abortion lobby would support lowering the time limit this low. Medical men generally recognise the reality of the need for later abortion in some cases. But they and their backers are likely to amend the Bill to a limit of 22 or 24 weeks. This would stand a much better chance of getting through, backed as it would be by the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, and reportedly by Thatcher herself. The proponents of this position say that since some foetuses delivered at 23 or 24 weeks can survive, then it is immoral to abort a foetus at this stage. Emotive arguments about aborted foetuses gasping for breath will be raised. Pictures will be shown of the 18 or 24 week foetus showing how much like a baby it is. But the distinction remains. It is not a baby. It is a part of the mother's body, totally dependent on her. Of course a 20 week foetus has the potential of becoming a human baby, but then so does every fertilised embryo in a woman's womb. A high proportion of these will never become babies because of spontaneous abortions or failure of implantation. Potential to become something does not equal the thing itself.

The real issue in this debate is who controls a woman's body. Who decides whether she will have a baby or not. Who decides whether she will have a healthy child or a child with a serious congenital abnormality.

Those who support Alton are not at all interested in the well-being of women or in the rights of disabled people. Although they are attempting to win a lower limit for abortions, their aim is to make all abortions illegal. Many SPUC and Life supporters also follow the Pope's teachings and oppose any contraception, any treatment for infertility — they basically wish to leave women with no choice. If you don't want to get pregnant but do — hard luck, if you do want to get pregnant and cannot — hard luck.

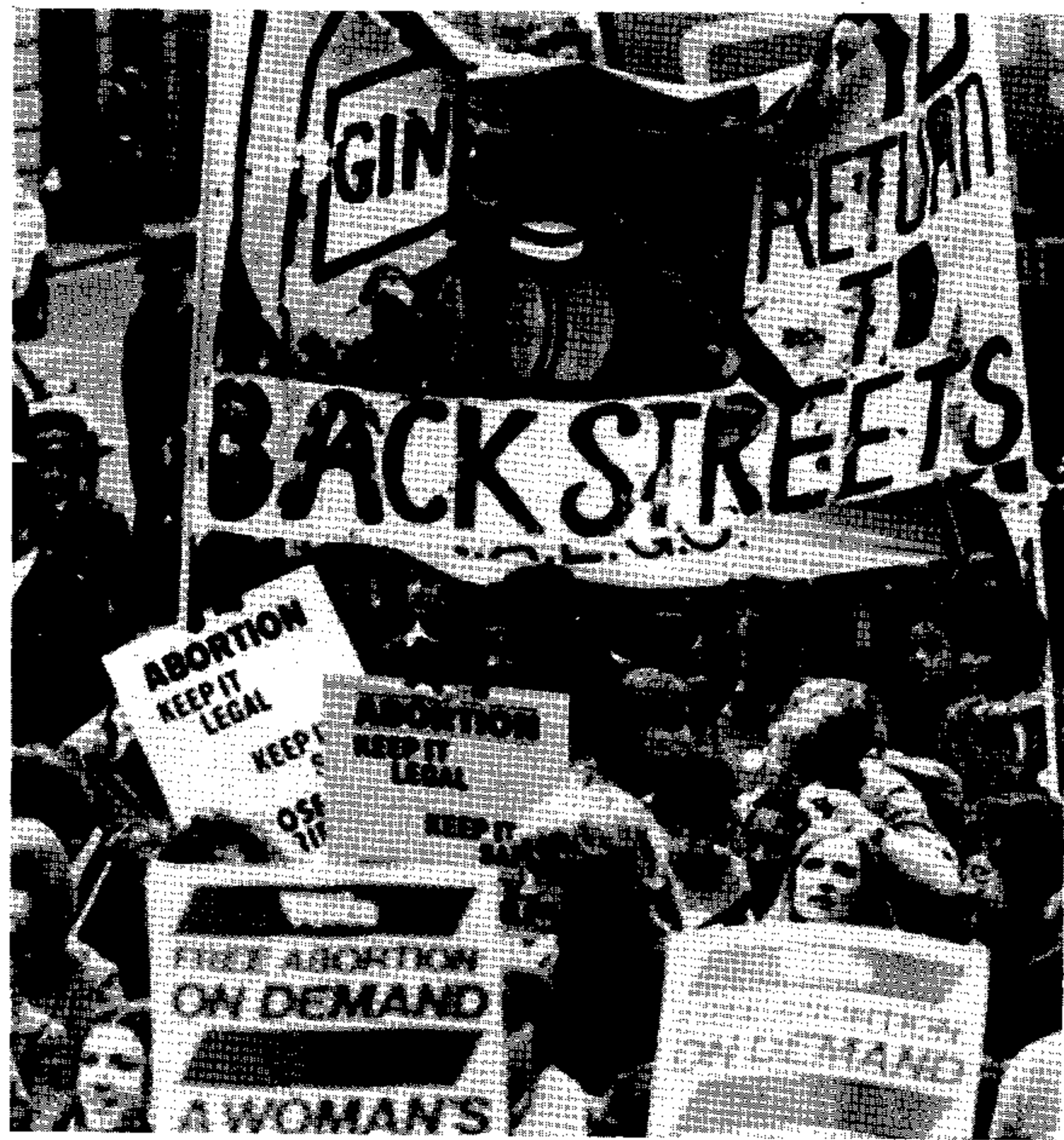
BILL

Late abortions are not something anyone would choose — they are more dangerous to the woman and very stressful. But have the supporters of this bill ever tried to improve facilities for quick, safe early abortions in order that it is easier for women to avoid late abortions? No. They are not interested in the health or rights of women, just in furthering their reactionary religious ideology, imposing its teachings on others by use of the law.

In fighting against the Alton Bill

the question of better facilities and real women's choice must be raised. The 1967 Act did not give women the right to choose whether or not to have a baby. It gave two doctors the right to make that choice for her, in certain limited conditions, up to 28 weeks. This has never been adequate, since unhelpful doctors can always make it difficult for a woman to get the two signatures required. More of a problem for many women is that it generally costs £150 or more even for an early abortion. In the first three months of 1987, only 39% of all terminations were done on the NHS. The other 26,000 women had to seek out private doctors or charitable agencies and pay for their right to choose. And the anti-abortionists are even attempting to close off that road — Nicholas Winterton MP, who has also drawn a place in the private members ballot, has indicated he may put a Bill preventing GPs from referring patients to private abortion clinics.

Young women in particular are being made to suffer with all these attacks. The 1986 Education Act will



defending abortion rights last time round

mean inadequate sex education in schools. Even more young women will be unaware of the best contraceptive methods for them, leading to higher numbers of unwanted pregnancies. The number of abortions of under 20-year-olds has risen from 6.8 per 1000 in 1969 to 20 per 1000 in 1984. One half of all abortions are to women under the age of 25. Alton's Bill, combined with poor sex education and closure of many family planning clinics will lead to many more teenagers with unwanted babies.

The labour movement must be mobilised to fight Alton's Bill, any other anti-abortion manoeuvres in the courts or parliament, and to campaign for free abortion on demand for every woman. This is not a 'moral' issue, it is a class issue. Women with money have always been able to get abortions from private doctors. Working class women will not stop having abortions. They will turn to backstreet abortionsists. The struggle for facilities in the NHS for free early pregnancy testing, for

better contraceptive advice and for early abortions with full counselling must be taken up by the trade unions and the Labour Party.

During the Campaign against the Corrie Bill in 1979 many unions adopted positions for a woman's right to choose. The Labour Party also has this policy. These leaders should be forced to fight on the issue. The disgusting spectacle of Labour MPs parading into the anti-abortion lobby must be stopped. End the free vote on abortion!

Local and national groups are being set up already to build the campaign. These should be looking to the trade unions and workplaces for support. Reliance on medical or the professional allies will not be enough. In addition to organising lobbies and demonstrations against Alton, the fight must begin to extend facilities.

- Free Abortion on Demand
- Fight Alton's Bill
- For a Woman's Right to Choose
- Day-care Facilities for Abortions

MAKE THE BAN BITE

The dispute over the disciplinary code in the coalfields is in severe danger of turning into a damp squib. The dominant right-wing coalition on the NUM executive is doing everything it can to prevent a serious fight against British Coal's code.

The overtime ban itself is highly limited. Two weeks into the dispute it had resulted in a mere 3% drop in production. This is unlikely to worry BC boss Haslam much. The ban, which began on 21 September, actually meant a lessening of the action already underway in Yorkshire. Their ban had been on all overtime working, not merely on coal production.

In late September the executive flatly refused attempts by Yorkshire and Durham to step up the action. The Euro-Stalinists of Scotland and South Wales, in alliance with their right-wing friends like Leicester's scab Jack Jones, ensured a 12-9 vote against any escalation of the action at an executive meeting. A proposal from Scargill for a special NUM conference was ruled out of order at the same meeting.

The whole thrust of the executive's strategy has been to mount gentle pressure to force BC to accept arbitration over the code. It has not been to smash that code. When smashing the code was posed by the Frickley strike in the summer the action was sabotaged. Despite this, those on the executive in favour of tougher action, like Scargill and Heathfield, have not organised directly amongst rank and file miners against the right. At a Yorkshire rally Heathfield appealed to militants to unify with the right. He pleaded 'Let us not concentrate on divisions within the NUM.'

Arthur Scargill too, has reconciled himself to abiding by the dictates of the right-wing executive. Instead of



outlining a course of action aimed at escalating the dispute he would only declare, after the last fruitless talks with BC, that 'It is going to be a long struggle'. Dragging it out will not hurt BC.

The key to winning the argument for stepping up the action to a total overtime ban and work-to-rule (within the terms of the Mines and Quarries Act) lies in linking the fight against the code with resistance to all of BC's attacks. Haslam is out to push through more closures and redundancies. Renishaw Park in North Derbyshire is facing the chop. Militants there are organising a fightback. Haslam has boosted redundancy payments with a £5,000 lump sum until March 1988 to tempt men to sacrifice jobs. And he has warned:

'If however, the NUM's industrial action became prolonged or intensified, it will inevitably bring more colliery closures and more manpower reductions.'

BC's aim is to impose the code, carry through more closures, clear the way to flexible working and, on the basis of these achievements, prepare the industry for privatisation. Nothing less is at stake. This is why the issues must be linked and fought now.

Rank and file militants must organise now to fight for a full and total overtime ban. If they are successful they will face sackings under the code. If this occurs then a rolling strike must be launched immediately and spread across every area. In the summer 77.5% voted for action. Since then Yorkshire — the backbone of the industry with 34,000 miners — and Durham have voted for tougher action. It is in these areas that the organisation to force the leaders to act and to link rank and file militants across the coalfields can and must begin now.■