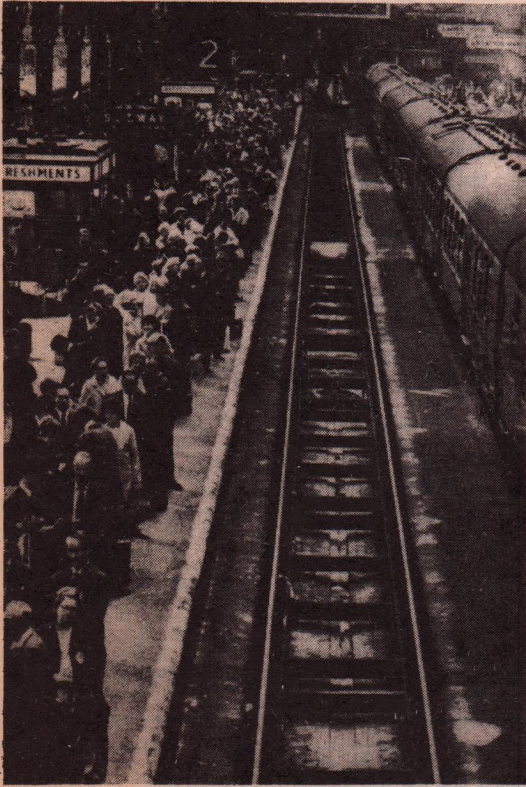


# CHARTIST

LABOUR'S REVOLUTIONARY VOICE

No.42 MAY 1976 Price 6p



RAILWAYS FOR the rich and in the mass commuter areas, enormous fare increases everywhere making it impossible for anybody to travel by rail unless they are businessmen on expense accounts. It's the beginning of the end for the railways. This is the meaning behind the Labour Government's consultative document on transport which proposes to make up £95 million of losses in fare increases.

As fare increases—almost double over last two years—drive passengers off the railways, the Ministry of the Environment vultures will be crying out for more cuts—especially in staffing—as the only way to reduce expenditure. Staff and 'over-manning' have now become the bogeyman of the railways.

The car-less people, whom the bureaucrats of the MOE seem so concerned about, don't use rail travel, they prefer buses. (Could this be anything to do with British Rail's fare pricing policy?). Hence the document proposes a small subsidy for buses, so that these people can use the transport they 'prefer'. However, experience shows that a bus service is one step before no service, as this too becomes too costly and is removed as an 'economy measure'. Thus even more people will be forced to buy cars which they cannot afford. Could the motor car industry and the oil companies have anything to do with this?

## Integration

The document also proposes "integration", in the London area—something most railwayworkers and passengers would favour. However, the "integration" intended really means cuts, leaving London's travelling public with the bare bones of a public transport system, satisfying none of the out-of-working hour needs.

Freight meets a similar fate. The £70 million subsidy must go. There is no environmental or social justification for it, claims the document. The residents of South London, who listen day and night to the trundle of massive Euro-lorries into the New Covent Garden Market, which sits so

## DEMONSTRATE FOR JOBS: 26 MAY NO BLACKMAIL!

BLACKMAIL IS THE ONLY word to describe the Labour Government's latest attempt to impose wage-cuts on the working class. Healey's budget which promised fraudulent tax concessions in return for acceptance of a 3 per cent wage limit is patently designed to browbeat workers into taking responsibility for a capitalist profitability crisis which is none of their making. In his attempt to steam-roller through this shabby deal, Healey has the support of the CBI, international finance and the speculators who are doing their utmost to create a climate in which the Labour Cabinet's plan will appear to workers as an offer the trade union leaders can't refuse.

### NEGOTIATIONS

TUC leaders Len Murray, Jack Jones, Hugh Scanlon and co have all swallowed the bait and have been deep in "negotiations" over a fresh wage-cutting "pact". The new premier, James Callaghan, has been doing his bit by tub-thumping at union conferences calling on workers to play their part in helping the "nation" through its crisis. He claims the new pay deal will "safeguard jobs". Many workers think differently.

He was snubbed by the shopworkers union (USDAW) conference and the Wales TUC, who correctly pointed to the appalling record of the Labour Government and its greatest achievement—the highest unemployment fig-

ures since the 1930s.

While Murray and co applaud the "achievements" of the Labour Government, and conveniently forget the reality most workers will note:

- 1,233,800 officially unemployed, the highest April figure since records began after the war.
- a pound in the pocket devalued to 62 pence.

- Healey's savage £4-5 billion public spending cuts, involving the virtual dismantling of the 'welfare state'.
- The budget package itself with its tax hand-outs to the rich. If anyone has doubts on this count listen to the rich-man's guide, the 'Economist', which declared in a headline "Hail Healey, the businessman's friend." The article went on to ask of the budget:

What's in it for private industry? On the bare figures, £90m of tax cuts in a full year through the change in the method of stock relief, the change in treatment of capital allowances and the increase in small company relief. On the broader facts, Mr Healey, the business-

man's friend, has emphatically paved the way for higher profits and investment.

This double-dealing by the Labour leaders must be defeated. We elected a Government to implement anti-capitalist policies, not shore the system up at our expense.

A major event in turning the tide of the Callaghan Cabinet's betrayals will be building for massive industrial action on 26 May, as called for by the Labour Movement Assembly on unemployment. Let us see our Tribune MPs and union leaders organising up and down the country to mobilise our movement on this day.

### DETERMINATION

Let us see them campaigning against the budget and for policies which build on the determination of workers to defend living standards. We need a crash programme of public works in opposition to the cuts, nationalisation of all firms creating redundancies and a reduction of the working week on full pay to share out the work amongst the jobless.

Above all we need an enormous demonstration from the rank and file that we are not going to tolerate the the Labour Government's abject collaboration with big business.

## STOP RAIL CARVE-UP

KEVIN MOORE  
(NUR)



ings close due to the withdrawal of this subsidy. Contrary to the claims of the document, much more freight could go by rail, if the necessary investment was forthcoming to build freightliner terminals and railheads.

Investment is also the key on the passenger side. British Rail, like so much of British industry has been starved of investment and relies on old equipment and hence, outdated working practices. Money is needed for re-signalling and electrification, for rail/bus interchanges for new lines to meet changing needs.

Modernisation and investment are therefore the key to the problem. The consultative document, however, sees an updated rail system from a completely different viewpoint. The document plans to demolish the rail network in order to carry out a short-term book-balancing exercise, which the Labour Government see as saving millions of pounds. These savings can then be used to back up the ailing pound and satisfy those who play on the money markets.

Where do the rail union leaders stand on this document which promises to make so many of their members unemployed. Since thousands of

heard. They have sat on the fence while management proposed their "good housekeeping" "economy measures" sending confusing dictats to branches on how to deal with the proposals. ASLEF leader, Ray Buckton, despite his militant rhetoric at the Unemployment Assembly, has spoken out essentially to order his men on the Southern Region back to work after they threatened and refused to work the new (cut) timetables.

Sidney Weighell, NUR leader, preferred to call on union members to leave it to "public pressure" claiming that "any local unofficial action cuts right across the transport campaign of the three unions." (NUR News No50).

### Assault

In this period of verbal assault on rail union members by various publications, journals and study groups, this blatant lack of leadership is criminal.

The Annual Conferences of the Railway trade unions are coming up. The policies of the Labour government must be rejected. The NUR Annual

and calling for a return to the 1974 Labour Manifesto pledges on transport.

Delegates must make the question of how we fight the proposed cuts, the central question of the AGM. Discussion must take place on all the tactical moves that could be utilised by the NUR and the other unions. Delegates should discuss the effectiveness of refusing to collect fares, withdrawing certain sections, linking up with other non-rail unions, and obtaining political support from Labour Parties and Labour representatives.

### Plan

A plan must be assembled to thwart the cuts and ensure a massive injection of state finance to expand the railways and guarantee jobs. Above all rail union leaders must be forced to organise industrial action in defence of jobs and services instead of



# THE CHARTIST

Monthly Journal of the Socialist Charter Movement.

Editor: M. Davis, 82 Loughborough Rd, London SW9. 01-733-8953

## Another wages con-trick

LIKE THE emperor in the fairy story who was told he had the most remarkable set of new clothes, Premier James Callaghan aided by Len Murray and Jack Jones of the TUC, have been thumping the land praising the value of the 'social contract', and impressing upon trade unionists the virtues of the proposed new 3% ceiling on pay increases.

The emperor's new clothes existed only in his head and he walked the streets naked. The social con-trick mark 2 would be equally amusing if the livelihoods of millions of working people were not at stake. For the social contract is as naked as the emperor. It has nothing of value to offer the working class except more wage cuts and unemployment. During their franker speeches both Callaghan and Chancellor Healey cynically admit that the next round of wage control must mean even further reductions in living standards.

Parading the country trying to sell an even stiffer version of the £6 limit, the Callaghan team are pulling the oldest trick in the book. As Hugh D'Arcy, chairperson of the Scottish TUC remarked, "pitch the first offer so low that some mugs think they have won a watch if it is doubled."

True to form, Jones, Scanlon and co have accepted the ludicrous 3% laid down in Healey's vicious Budget as a basis for negotiation. No amount of talk about 35 hour weeks,

investigating the speculators or helping the low-paid and pensioners can disguise this blatant attempt to solve capitalism's profitability crisis on the backs of the working class.

Under the £6 pay limit introduced last August the increase in average gross earning has been 21.2% in the 12 months to this March. Over the same period prices have risen by over 22%. After tax and other deductions have been made, wage cuts of between 6 to 8% have been imposed.

This latest exercise in abandoning Labour's Manifesto commitments: in the interests of big business is being carried out under the banner of the 'great battle against inflation'. But one simple point has been deliberately obscured by our Labour leaders. That is: wages do not cause inflation!

The roots of inflation lie in the nature of the capitalist system in its present epoch of decline. Because capitalism cannot prevent profit rates

from falling it attempts to plug the gaps and maintain them by printing more money, borrowing and state spending not backed by any real increase in the value of production.

True, world inflation has fallen over the last six months. But this has been at the expense of millions of jobs and the relative increase in world trade which has brought raw material prices down somewhat. The global recession has allowed capital to restructure and rationalise itself onto a marginally more profitable basis. For capitalism this is only a temporary recovery, which can only be the harbinger of yet new and more severe crises in a year or two's time.

For the working class, the crisis presents itself on a capitalist basis as a choice between death by the axe of unemployment or the saw of inflation.

We elected a Labour Government to eliminate the roots of inflation, to 'restore full employment' and shift 'wealth and power in favour of

working people'. Callaghan and co have done no more to implement these pledges, which would mean tackling the real bastions of economic power—the City, international banking and big business, than a Tory Government would have.

It is those who control industry and finance who raise prices, devalue the pound in our pockets and close factories down. It is not the working class.

The 'Chartist' stands foursquare in favour of the unity of the Labour and trade union movement. But we say this unity cannot be built on the basis of abandoning socialist policies and attempts to patch up a diseased capitalist system. This is a false unity which will lead to demoralisation in our movement, the defeat of the Labour Government and the return of a right-wing Tory regime.

The decisions of the Wales TUC and the shopworkers' union conferences against wage restraint, must be used as the basis for building a massive movement against the collaboration of the Labour Government with big business. Its primary demands must be that the Government guarantees a clause in every wage agreement to fully protect wages against inflation and fights to take full state power against the blackmail of industrialists and City financiers.

## Candidate unmasked in Vauxhall

LABOUR PARTY  
NEWS ROUND-UP



AT THE APRIL General Management Committee Meeting of Vauxhall Labour Party, the call was made into the validity of the seven GMWU delegates to the GMC. The call came from Jock McPherson-Quinn, a long-standing AUEW and Vauxhall Labour Party member, who alleged that some of the GMWU's delegates were not properly accredited at the time of the party's AGM. He proposed that these delegates be suspended. He also challenged the Labour Club's right to send a delegate.

The most serious allegation, however, concerned Charlie Williams, a managing director of Baring's Bank — which contributed to Tory Party funds. In under a year in Vauxhall he has:

- become Trade Union Officer
- created a solid right-wing bloc of 7 GMWU delegates on the GMC, and
- has gained the favour of the right-wing local leaders — who wanted a MAN who could bring in Union funds and have the 'right' politics. An ideal replacement for present MP, George Strauss, when he retires at the next election.

It was alleged that 'Charlie' had illegally issued a GMWU membership card to Pat Webster, a new member in Vauxhall

### ILLEGALLY ISSUED

Unluckily for Charlie Williams, Pat Webster, a Kensington councillor, wrote to Labour Party General Secretary, Ron Hayward. The letter was read to the buzzing GMC. In it, Ms. Webster said she had been approached by Mr. Williams, who asked if she would like to be a GMWU delegate to the Vauxhall GMC. She had replied that she was already a member of the NUM clerical section and was therefore ineligible.

However, some days later she received a GMWU card from Mr. Williams, £10 membership dues were

number. She claimed that she had not filled in a GMWU application form or paid £10. She also claimed that she suspected that Charlie Williams was not resident in Vauxhall, and yet was the Party's Trade Union Officer.

At the meeting Charlie Williams denied the allegations, however, later he admitted to the 'Guardian' that he had paid the £10 and had sent the card to Pat Webster.

Vauxhall's right-dominated Executive Committee advised the GMC to begin the Parliamentary Selection procedure, which would mean a freezing on the GMC delegates. The wards opposed this, wanting some time because of doubts about the GMC. The motion from the EC was defeated in the light of the allegations.

Regional Organiser, Bill Jones, who attended the April meeting, told the GMC that it wasn't the Labour Party's 'job' to question affiliated bodies about their ways of recruiting and choosing their delegates. He advised the GMC that the matter should be dealt with by the Vauxhall EC, which is now being done.

Despite Williams' decision to withdraw after the GMC revelations, many members of Vauxhall Labour Party feel that the NEC should investigate. One member commented, "If they investigate in Newham North-East, they can investigate in Vauxhall!" Ward and trade union branches in Vauxhall will be pressing for a full inquiry and a new AGM, so they don't end up with another George Strauss for the next 40 years.

## SQUATTERS — 'INELIGIBLE' FOR MEMBERSHIP?

IN HACKNEY SOUTH CLP, the April

## Health Cuts—Opposition Organises in Greenwich

BY GLYN BEAGLEY (ASTMS)

NOT TO BE outdone by any other Area Health Authority, Greenwich and Bexley have contributed their little piece to the drive to reduce the National Health Service to nothing more than a skeleton. Already £1½m is to be cut from the area health budget next year.

In a consultative document published recently, the AHA have suggested the complete closure of four hospitals, including a 70 bed maternity hospital—the British Mothers and Babies Hospital.

The total number of beds to be closed is 1013, or 24% of the present total. Yet the projected population drop for 1981 is only 6%. Even those hospitals which manage to avoid complete closure, may well find their function changed. This is the case of St. Nicholas, at Plumstead, at present a general hospital catering for the growing estate at Thamesmead, and surrounding areas of Woolwich and Plumstead. This hospital is now scheduled for run-down into a psychogeriatric. But there has been no indication that any necessary extra money will be

made available to invest in the specialist equipment necessary to adequately cater for this older type of patient.

All these proposed cuts occur at a time when 3,500 are on the 1974 waiting lists alone, with general surgery cases at 1726 patients, being the single highest individual section of the waiting list. Three years is not an uncommon period of time to wait for an operation in this area.

Against this background the need for workers inside and outside the NHS to organise a fight-back against these cuts becomes even more urgent. The Joint Shop Stewards Committee for the Greenwich and Bexley AHA have begun the difficult process of informing and organising the local labour movement to defend our health service.

As a first step, a public meeting with the Big Red Ladder Theatre Show has been organised for Tuesday May 4th at the Borough Hall, Greenwich SE10, starting at 8.00pm.

This is going to be followed up by a lobby of the AHA management.

be refused membership. Why? Because John is a squatter. Given the appalling housing situation in the London area squatting has become a necessity for many homeless people. Membership applications should be welcomed from all prepared to fight for improved housing provision—a vital aspect of LP policy.

The refusal provoked justified anger from other GMC delegates, who rightly pointed out that nothing in the LP constitution prevents squatters from joining.

But it appears Hackney South is not the only Party challenging squatters. In Vauxhall, LP Regional organiser, Bill Jones was reported as saying that the rules were quite clear: "applicants must either be on the electoral roll or clearly resident within the constituency. Transients (sic) ought not to be accepted."

John Keys, that squatters were NOT eligible, on residence grounds, is being checked.

The implications of these moves should be made clear.

● Thousands of LP members are squatters. Their membership is now clearly under threat if the Herbert Morrison bureaucrats rulings go unchallenged.

● Squatters are as 'resident' in any constituency as anyone else. If applicants have lived in one place for one month or 50 years they are 100% entitled to LP membership. If not, millions of private tenants who frequently move, and indeed anyone who has a penchant for moving house every so often, could be ineligible for LP membership, as a 'transient'.

The NEC should uphold all appeals and state categorically that whether



THE ANNUAL Conference of the Civil and Public Services Association (CPSA) meets this month at a time when the antics of its right-wing President, Kate Losinska, in the law courts have sparked off considerable gloating in the capitalist press about "extremist infiltration" and "threats to national security" from within the Civil Service.

Springing from a 'red-bashing' article, under Ms Losinska's name, in the 'Readers Digest', fierce arguments have been raging inside the National Executive Committee of the union and through the courts as to whether the President could be censured for the article by the NEC and CPSA conference. It would be helpful, of course, if the issues could be thrashed out at the conference but, following decisions by two High Court judges, Ms Losinska has successfully prevented any discussion of motions censuring her on the conference agenda.

No doubt, delegates, prevented from voting on these motions, will make their views known by throwing her out in the Presidential elections at the conference. Unfortunately, this will probably let in another right-winger to the Presidency, Len Lever. Lever, opposed last year as a right-winger by the Broad Left in CPSA, this year has their backing. (Due, no doubt, to a miraculous conversion during 1975!) The only left alternative in the battle for the post is found in Mike McGrath, an I. S. member and supporter of 'Redder Tape' (the Rank and File organisation in the Civil Service unions). 'Chartist' supporters will be urging delegates to back McGrath in the election.

## Central issues

Unfortunately, the controversy over the court actions threatens to eclipse the debates on the real issues facing CPSA members at the conference. Indeed, a number of motions on the agenda provide delegates with the basis for a fighting alternative to the compromise policies of the Broad Left majority on the NEC.

If any one issue is central, it is the system of worker 'participation' which operates in the Civil Service and much of the public sector, the Whitley system.

In recent years, there has developed extensive criticism of 'Whitleyism', particularly of its tendency to remove decision-making and control from the hands of the union membership towards the leadership and its implicit alliance of genuine, mass unions with management unions and 'staff associations' within the 'Staff side'.

The epitome of this system of collaboration is the Pay Research system, under which the pay of civil service workers is compared with pay trends in other sectors and brought into line (in arrears), without any specific reference to increases in the cost of living. 'Negotiations' over the findings of surveys carried out by the Pay Research Unit (PRU) outside the Civil Service are conducted by full-time officials on the National 'Staff Side' and a fait accompli compromise settlement presented to the members for 'approval'.

## Rising scale of pay

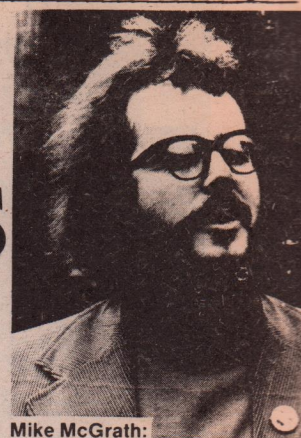
The suspension of the PRU exercise for 1975/76 by the Government, as part of the restrictions of its pay policy, provides CPSA conference with the opportunity to break with Pay Research once and for all.

'Chartist' supporters in the Civil Service unions have been arguing for some time for a system of pay negotiations which incorporates the indexation of pay rises against a Trade

# President's antics could eclipse real issues facing CPSA



IAN  
WATSON  
CPSA



Mike McGrath

to protect wages against inflation. These demands now seem to have struck a chord amongst the CPSA membership as the number of branch motions echoing these demands and calling for an end to 'Pay Research' massively outnumber motions endorsing the policy of the NEC and calling on the Government to lift its suspension of the PRU.

Unfortunately, a number of motions fail to draw the obvious connections between the Pay Research and Whitley systems and, although calls for 'free collective bargaining' and talk of Whitleyism 'outliving its usefulness' (sic) are rife, the motions are rather short on concrete alternative proposals, short of militant posturing.

The Executive have presented their own 'review' of the Whitley system and, predictably, have come up with the conclusion that all its inherent 'problems' can be resolved without destroying its basic framework. 'Chartist' supporters will be arguing that the Broad Left leadership on the executive see the demolition of Whitleyism, in favour of a more democratic system of negotiations, as a serious threat to their own, almost impregnable, privileged position within the union and are thus incapable of providing a lead on the issue.

## Sell-out on jobs?

Following their sell-out on any continuing opposition to the £6 limit after being defeated at the TUC last year, the NEC are now preparing the members for a sell-out over the massive cuts in staffing, outlined in the Government's proposals for cuts in public spending. Instead of principled opposition to ANY redundancies—compulsory or voluntary—with work-sharing with no loss of pay, and the mobilisation of union members against the cuts, delegates have been presented with proposals from the Executive for a 'sliding scale of redundancies' (in the form of a 'Model Redundancy Agreement'), opposition to merely 'arbitrary' cuts in staff, calls for a 'public debate on the implicat-

ions of the cuts' and an acceptance of Westminster's final authority to impose cuts in services.

Regrettably, the main composite motion on Redundancies before the conference generally endorses the NEC line, although many of the motions contained within it oppose ALL redundancies. It will be the job of delegates to clarify this confused situation and commit the union to a clear uncompromising opposition to the loss of ANY jobs.

## Merger- NO!

One of the most interesting debates of the conference promises to be over the proposals put forward by the Executives of the CPSA and the Society of Civil Servants for a decision in principle for a merger between the two unions. This would produce a mammoth 300,000 strong union which would dominate the Civil Service Trade Union structure.

'Chartist' declares its 100% support for unity in the trade union movement, including the Civil Service, on a fighting programme. In the case of Civil Service workers, this programme would have to include total opposition to the Whitley system and Pay Research and would have to be on the basis of a genuinely democratic union organisation. Paradoxically, the two

executives propose, as their main reasons for the merger, the strengthening of the new union's power inside the Whitley system and the strengthening of the system itself. They emphasise the agreement of the two unions in calling for the restoration of the Pay Research system. Above all, says the consultative document before the delegates, the administrative superstructure of the unions would be greatly more efficient and, by economies of scale, the merged union could buy a far larger single headquarters building. Unity on this bureaucratic basis would not be in the interests of either union and 'Chartist' calls for opposition to the NEC's proposals.

Of course, what they omit to explain is that the power of the proposed 'super-executive' would far exceed those of the CPSA and SCS at present and that democratic control by the members would recede still farther into the distance.

Finally, the document fails to explain away the problems which would confront local officials of the new union as they negotiate with management representatives who are also members of their own union.

## Labour Party- YES!

'Chartist' supporters at the conference will be urging delegates to support the very important motion calling for the union to affiliate to the Labour Party. This would represent a vital step forward in the integration of the CPSA into the wider labour movement and provide an invaluable addition to the unions sphere of influence.

Whatever transpires at the conference, CPSA members will be facing one of the biggest challenges in their history, during 1976. With serious threats of mass redundancies and the prospect of a crippling further stage in Healey's pay policy later this year, it is vital that this year's conference provides the basis for a fighting programme around which the membership can organise a fight back against the cuts in services and living standards.



LEN LEVER

## Support grows for anti-cuts conference

LABOUR AGAINST THE HOUSING CUTS was brought into existence by Labour Party members to fight for the housing policies of Annual Conference, and to organise support for the demand that the government restore the housing cuts that have been made.

Housing recommendation promoted by LAHC became the policy of the 1975 Labour Party Conference, and from that date the organisation has published regular campaigning bulletins itemising the government's cuts month by month.

The developing pattern of public spending cuts put into operation, and those projected by Denis Healey, made it clear that housing could no longer be seen in isolation.

Housing, education, health, social services and public transport are all under attack. The living standards of every working class

BY TED KNIGHT

LAHC supported the demand of constituency parties throughout the country that a special Labour Party Conference be called to decide on the socialist policies needed to end the economic crisis, and to halt the Government's retreat from the manifesto.

The NEC rejected that call but LAHC, believing that the need for such a conference grows daily, have invited delegates from CLPs and YS branches to a meeting in London on May 8th.

The Conference, meeting under the slogan "Against the Cuts", will discuss the policies needed now and plan a campaign to win support for such a programme within the Labour movement.

CLPs, particularly in the London

post is bringing names of delegates who will be attending. Contact with YS branches has not been successful, and in the final week we hope to see a major move from this section.

Many trade union activists have pledged their support for the conference and several trades councils have indicated that they will be represented. Eric Heffer will be speaking, and other MPs have promised attendance.

Visitors' tickets £1.00 each can be obtained in advance from the Secretary, (Ted Knight, 7 Wiseman Court, Woodland Road, London SE19), and will be available on the door of the conference.

Conference "Against the Cuts", Saturday 8th May, Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, NW1. Platform speaker Eric Heffer, MP. 10.30am to 4.30pm.

Make sure your branch is repres-





On May 4, services were practically at a standstill. Above is an armoured car acting as a convoy to Food Lorries. Special measures were taken with regard to food supplies. A label "Food Only" can just be discerned on the front of leading lorry. This was respected by the strikers, who strongly criticised the Government's demonstration of military force.

FRANK LEE CONCLUDES OUR THREE-PART SERIES COMMEMORATING THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE GENERAL STRIKE.

RED FRIDAY, July 31st 1925, represented the opening skirmish of a much deeper and more generalised struggle which was to erupt less than a year later. The events leading up to Red Friday have already been covered in our previous articles. However, it is important to understand that the government's capitulation to the miner's demands and their subsequent subsidy to the coal industry, represented only a tactical withdrawal, not a decisive defeat.

The ruling class could see that a decisive showdown with the working class was becoming inevitable, so, through their political wing—the Tories—they planned that this showdown should take place in the most favourable conditions.

## ROOTS OF CONFLICT

The roots of the conflict can be traced back beyond Red Friday. They were contained in the coal-owners demands for a lowering of pay, and a lengthening of the working day. These demands met with stiff resistance from the miners: "Not a penny off the pay, not a second on the day" was the famous rejoinder from miners' leader A. J. Cook. Thus, it was not the miners but the coal owners who were making the demands. The miners were merely attempting to defend what they already had and was rightfully theirs.

Subsequently, the coal owners threatened a lock-out if the miners didn't concede to their demands. The lock-out was averted by a government subsidy to the industry which was to last until May 1st, 1926. This was Red Friday.

During the period between Red Friday and May Day 1926, an 'impartial' committee of enquiry on the coal industry was set up: the Samuel Commission. This Royal Commission, a supposedly disinterested, arbitrary board, in fact consisted of four gentlemen whose main preoccupations were in the fields of cotton, banking, economics, and in Samuel's case, the construction of belief systems (Samuel was something of a Sunday afternoon metaphysician).

## WAGE-CUT

Among the recommendations of this august body were predictably, not nationalisation of the mines, but state ownership of the royalties accruing from them. Also, a regrettable, but temporary reduction of wages would be inevitable. Predictably the coal owners and government accepted the recommendations of the Report. The miners however rejected it. It was this rejection which precipitated the General Strike which began at midnight on 3rd May.

The response to the strike was to

tations—or fears. Fears, because undoubtedly there were some members of the General Council—and not only NUR chief J. H. Thomas, who thought that the best thing for everybody concerned would be that the order to strike should meet with only a half-hearted response, so that immediate peace negotiations would be inevitable.

No matter, members of ASLEF and NUR were out almost to a man—many drivers of trains left them near their homes on Tuesday morning, without troubling to run them into the depots. The workers reaction to the strike call was immediate and overwhelming. There can be no doubt that its completeness disturbed the Baldwin Government, as well as the TUC.

From district to district reports came into TUC headquarters at Eccleston Square London, sending the same message in various words. The men were out, the strike was solid. The trouble was that the workers went into battle, only partially—only transport workers and miners were actually on strike—and unreadily. The TUC had in fact made no preparations for a protracted, decisive struggle. Worse still, the workers' leadership (the General Council) was a divided, vacillating, and in more than one case, a downright treacherous one. This leadership was to be the Achilles heel of the strike. The one vulnerable point which led to its eventual defeat.

## MILITARY INTERVENTION

The Government on the other hand had (since Red Friday) made extensive preparations. The bourgeoisie when defending its class interests will fight with a thoroughgoing vigour. All workers should take note of this. Strike-breaking and scab formations, many of which comprised of undergraduates out for a 'lark', had been organised on a national basis by the Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies (set up by Winston Churchill).

Though the activities of these strike-breakers was in most cases negligible, they did have a significant effect in one area, road transport. A national transport system (of sorts) was maintained.

The Government wanted nothing less than outright and unconditional surrender from the TUC. Even that was apparently not enough for the hard-line faction in the Cabinet grouped around Winston Churchill and Joynson-Hicks, who were baying for open military intervention. This sort of militant class combativity was to be expected from the ruling class. An even greater determination was necessary from the leadership of the working class if victory was to be grasped.

However, what the working class got was Thomas, Bevin and co on the

# 1926 GENERAL STRIKE 50 YEARS ON— COULD HAPPEN AGAIN?

Ramsay MacDonald and co in the Labour Party. Thomas was in fact a virtual government fifth column in the General Council who worked unceasingly (successfully as it turned out) to destroy the strike from within. J. H. Thomas was perhaps an extreme example—he represented almost a caricature of a corrupt right-winger. It must be understood though that Thomas enjoyed the tacit support of other General Council members. He was, in fact, only carrying through a course of action which corresponded with the defeatist, capitulationist logic of the General Council.

## LABOUR LEADERS

The attitude of the Labour Party, or rather its leaders was little better, and equally as pusillanimous. Snowden thought the strike "hopeless from the start". J. R. Clynes reckoned it would be a "national disaster". And best of all was Beatrice Webb who feared that if the strike succeeded "... it would mean that a militant minority were starving the majority into submission to their will, and that would be the end of democracy, industrial as well as political." Such were the views of the then leadership of the Labour Party!

Such views should not surprise us. We should know by now what to expect from the 'moderates' in the Labour movement. What should concern us is the part played by the official lefts on the GC—Purcell, Swales and Hicks—and the support given to this supposedly left grouping on the GC by the Communist Party (CP) through the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee.

The policy of the Communist Third International—to which the CPGB was subordinate—had, during the period 1925-27, undergone a sharp right-turn away from the Zinovievist leftism of the preceding period. This

particular phase has been aptly described as 'rightist opportunism'. The essence of this policy was liquidationism—the abandonment of the political and programmatic independence of the party for temporary alliances. The policy flowed inexorably from the expediencies of 'Socialism in One Country'. In practice it involved bloc alliances between national CP's and 'left' forces (centrists and reformists). This led in Britain to the formation of the Anglo-Russian Trade Union Committee.

This Anglo-Russian Committee was a joint body of the British and Soviet TUC General Councils' formed in 1925 to promote world trade union unity in general, and closer relations between British and Soviet trade unions, 'for the common cause of Labour'.

## ANGLO-RUSSIAN CTTEE

On the British side of this Committee were Purcell, Swales and Hicks. These men rapidly acquired a reputation as left-wingers based almost entirely on their attitude to the USSR. Purcell was in fact a 'left' strictly in the international sphere, and his friendly relations with the Russian communists did not modify his coolness to the home-bred variety. But the importance attributed to the Anglo-Russian committee by the Soviet leaders and the confidence they showed in Purcell and his colleagues inevitably had its effect on the view taken of these men by British communists and militant workers generally. The real potential forces for leftward movement in the working class, namely, the National Minority Movement and the National Left-Wing Movement (both of which were mass movements) were sacrificed for this essentially rotten bloc tailism and bureaucratic/organisational manoeuvring embodied in the Anglo-Russian Committee.

## BRITISH WORKER

### OFFICIAL STRIKE NEWS BULLETIN

Published by The General Council of the Trades Union Congress

No. 1. WEDNESDAY EVENING, MAY 5, 1926. PRICE ONE PENNY

IN LONDON AND THE SOUTH

Special Loyalty of Transport Workers

EVERY WORKER OUT

"London's dark workers are all out," said an official of the Transport and General Workers' Union.

"So far as they are concerned, it is a 100 per cent. strike. There is no trouble and everything is going smoothly."

POLICE HELP REQUIRED

At Notting Hill the police are keeping Mr. Thomas's lorry from moving. The lorry is loaded with coal and is being used to transport coal to the city.

The General Council suggests that in all districts where large numbers of workers are idle sports should be organised and entertainment arranged.

This will both boost morale and help to keep the workers from being misled by the Government.

WORKERS' QUIET MARCH

The conduct of the strike, too, constitutes a credit to the whole movement. Despite the pressure of armed police and the military, the workers have preserved a quiet determination and dignity, which the General Council urges them to maintain, even in the face of the temptation and provocation which the Government is placing in their path.

The T.U.C.'s specially-produced newspaper called for exemplary conduct from the

### WONDERFUL RESPONSE TO THE CALL

General Council's Message: Stand Firm and Keep Order

The workers' response has exceeded all expectations. The first day of the great General Strike is over. They have maintained their determination and only to the whole world. They have resolved that the attempt of the Government to starve three million men, women and children, into submission shall not succeed.

All the essential industries and all the transport services have been brought to a standstill. The only exception is that the distribution of milk and food has been permitted to continue. The Trades Union General Council is not making use of the purple.

It is anxious that the ordinary members of the public should not be misled by the Government's propaganda which is intended to portray the strikers as lawless and disorderly.

Never have the workers responded with greater enthusiasm to the call of their leaders. They are firmly holding the General Council's message, to keep to the principle of the strike, and to maintain the second line of defence to maintain it until the withdrawal of their labour may be secured.

WORKERS' QUIET MARCH

The conduct of the strike, too, constitutes a credit to the whole movement. Despite the pressure of armed police and the military, the workers have preserved a quiet determination and dignity, which the General Council urges them to maintain, even in the face of the temptation and provocation which the Government is placing in their path.

The T.U.C.'s specially-produced newspaper called for exemplary conduct from the

### SOUTH WALES IS SOLID!

Not a Wheel Turning in Allied Industries

Throughout South Wales the response is complete, and every-where the men are loyally observing the orders of the T.U.C. to refrain from any conduct likely to lead to disturbance.

In consequence the men have responded to the call of the T.U.C. and not a wheel is turning in any industry allied to the T.U.C.

Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.

Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.

Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.

Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.

Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.

Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.

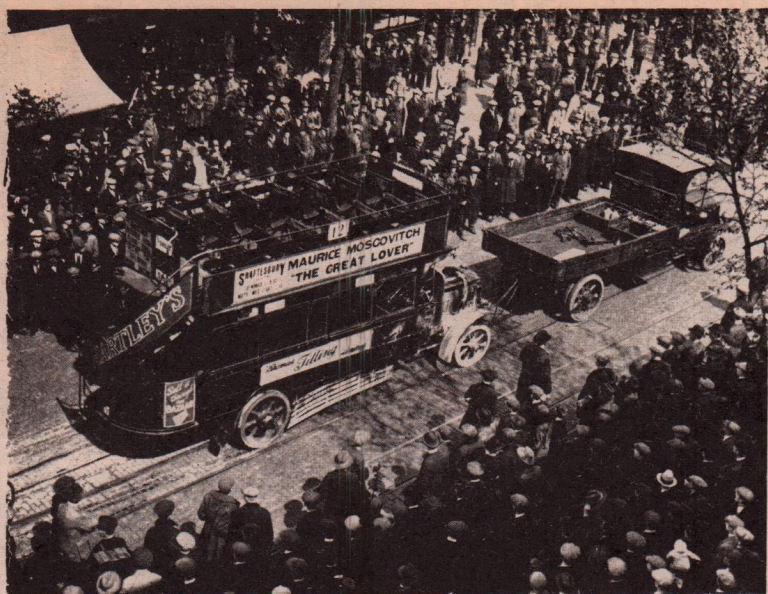
Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.

Complete solidarity of industries in the entire valley. Strikers completely prevail among the rank and file of the affiliated unions, and not a single wheel is turning in the allied industries.



J. H. THOMAS



KE  
IT

Steam lorry and trailer with load of City workers at the Bank (Picture Post)

The CP, had under pressure from the increasingly Stalinized Comintern, abandoned its revolutionary position and assumed the role of a critical, but essentially loyal component of a bloc with the official left-wing of the TUC. Instead of working on a tactical, united front basis with this left-wing, in which context the party sought to advance its influence among the rank-and-file, the CP became involved in an opportunist relationship with this same left-wing which allowed the leadership of the General Strike to remain in the hands of the TUC right-wing and which lost the opportunity to seize this leadership which potentially existed.

## ROLE OF LEFTS

It can be seen, in hindsight, that the official TUC left, namely Purcell, Swales and Hicks, in fact tail-ended the right and centre of the GC in much the same way as the CP leaders tail-ended them. In his book, "The General Strike", Julian Symons points this out: "But the left-wing trade union leaders played what seems in retrospect a strikingly timid part. They were outnumbered, but they occupied important positions. One of them, Purcell, was the chairman of the Strike organisation committee; George Hicks, John Bromley, Ben Tillet and A. B. Swales were leading figures on various committees. After the strike was over some of them spoke brave words to the effect that it had been a class struggle, yet during the nine days there is no suggestion that opinion on the GC was seriously divided at any time. These men must surely have been opposed to many of the things done or left undone; but they were too much overawed by the strikes' implications, or too nearly overwhelmed by the personalities of Bevin and Thomas to speak their minds effectively."

## SURRENDER

As the strike wore on it became increasingly clear to the GC that one of two courses had to be taken. One, call out the second line forces: engineers, postal workers etc, and extend the strike to insurrectionist dimensions, or, two, negotiate a settlement; which since the government wasn't interested in compromise would virtually amount to an unconditional surrender. It was of course the surrender, dressed as a 'settlement', that the General Council opted for.

After this surrender the very existence of organised trade unionism, was for a time, in the balance. Employers brazenly stated that they would only take back workers at reduced wages etc. This would have been a death blow to the organised working class. At this point only mass rank-and-file action in staying out after the GC cave-in at least

compelled employers to take back workers on the same conditions as those existing prior to the strike.

Only the workers instinctive solidarity shown at this point—more workers had come out on strike after it was officially terminated than during the nine days—prevented a defeat from being turned into a rout. The miners did stay out for some months longer but eventually crumbled through hunger and lack of support. They were forced to accept lowered wage-rates and longer hours.

## STATE POWER

The General Strike was the last peak in a wave of industrial struggles which had developed in the post-war period. The conditions for it had matured in the period following the election of the first Labour Government. The betrayal highlighted the need for a clear-sighted revolutionary leadership in the working class which was prepared to dispense with vacillation and grasp the task of the hour: a struggle for state power. That the strike itself represented a political power struggle (not simply a defensive battle for wages and conditions) between the working class and the bourgeoisie should not be in any doubt. What was made abundantly clear, was that in this sort of situation 'orthodox' trade unionism was totally inadequate.

## COUNCILS OF ACTION

In countless areas workers had adapted their Trades Councils and local Labour Parties or thrown up new councils of action to develop and extend the strike. The enthusiasm and class solidarity of the strikers was immense. In sharp contrast to this determination stood the cringing role of the trade union and Labour leaders. The lessons could have been drawn about the treacherous nature of the General Council, but through Stalin's instruction the Anglo-Russian Committee was maintained long after the strike, giving the bureaucrats all the cover and leftist gloss they required to mask the betrayal.

Today, as our leaders squander the gains of the tremendous anti-Tory struggles of the early 1970s, a re-examination of the General Strike provides a timely reminder of the dangers of class-collaboration. Now, as then, the Murray, Jones and Scanlon equivalents of the old General Council, are once again trying to patch-up a new wage-cutting scheme weakening the resolve of the working class and preparing the way for even greater defeats under a future Tory government. The best way of celebrating this great landmark in working class history will be the turning of the tide of the Labour Government's present betrayals which can only pave the way for another 1926 debacle.

## Asbestos Giants

# INDUSTRIAL KILLERS

BERNARD

HARRISON

(SOWERBYCLP) Hebden Branch, writes Part 1 of a 2 Part Series.

ACRE MILL, Hebden Bridge factory of Cape Asbestos closed in 1970. By 1985 at least 100 people will have died as a result of Cape's thirty-year operation in this town.

People of the area, dismayed by the individual tragedies have seen the toll mount to disaster proportions years after the Cape bosses left with the loot. A gradual recognition of the horror has turned to bitter anger as more and more evidence has pointed to the callous understanding the management must have had about what they were doing.

Much has been written following the release of the Ombudsman's report. From the national press we have had many pious editorials and there have been buckets of crocodile tears from the media in general. None of them, of course, has been prepared to delve very deeply into the part played by the state through its various departments.



SUFFERING: Mr Thomas Buick, aged 56, whose case led to the Ombudsman's inquiry. Mr Buick received £24,000 damages two years ago.

The present government have accepted the criticism of their department, no doubt sighing with relief at the mildness of such criticism and feeling that the affair is too far into the past for much blame to attach itself to them. They have demonstrated their concern by announcing token efforts such as warning labels on asbestos products (where have we seen that triangle before?). They have promised an enquiry to be set up by none other than the Department of Employment—rather like the way in which the police are always able to look into complaints against themselves!

AN ENQUIRY OF THAT NATURE WILL NOT SATISFY THE PEOPLE OF HEBDEN BRIDGE!

The Ombudsman's report has served to draw attention to the case. It is not enough in itself and its shallowness is easily recognised by those who have seen the situation close at hand. However, the attention must be maintained. It must not be laid to rest before the blame can be squarely placed and the connivance between big business and factory inspectorate unmasked. No sham inquiry must be allowed to obscure the facts with a thick coat of whitewash before the lessons can be learned and put to good use—having been bought at the cost of hundreds of lives!

Local MP Max Madden has called for a full public enquiry. Only such an inquiry will suffice. All the evidence must be dragged out of the reluctant bosses. The real reasons as

ulations must be obtained from the factory inspectorate. The murder-for-profit attitude of bosses must be laid bare for all to see. The way in which successive governments condoned such behaviour in order to maintain the profit levels and competitiveness of such firms must be openly exhibited.

The men who control firms like Cape Asbestos are the latter-day counterparts of the monsters who sent five-year old boys up chimneys and women and children down mines. We in Hebden Bridge know this. We want working people everywhere to understand it.

## Hebden Royd

## Asbestosis Action Group

On May 2nd, 1975, following a crowded public meeting called by Hebden Royd Labour Party the Asbestosis Action Group was set up. The Group comprises mainly the people who are suffering from the disease, Labour Party members, John Pickering, a solicitor with a Manchester firm which specialises in industrial claims, and a few other interested parties such as the local Liberal county councillor. The Liberals soon lapsed into inactivity and the work was left to those personally involved and those who saw the importance of the political aspect of the struggle. This group has been campaigning hard for almost a year now, working closely with Max Madden in the fight for a public enquiry, pressuring the council on local issues and trying to form links with other areas where there is an asbestos problem.

The group has put a great deal of pressure on the local councils in order to force them to accept the responsibility of adequately covering asbestos which has been dumped on tips all over the district. This exposed dust can be a danger in dry weather when it is blown by the wind. At least four people in the area who had no connection at all with Acre Mill have been diagnosed as having asbestosis and medical opinion considers that they must have contracted it through inhaling dust out of the atmosphere. Even so, the local Tory council would not accept their responsibility for the provision of a clean and safe environment and it was only after a great deal of local pressure that the West Yorks County Council agreed to cover a footpath crossing a tip with exposed patches of asbestos.

There is still a danger of dust being blown from other parts of the tip onto a nearby school and houses. However, the Calderdale council will still not admit the danger and claim that covering the whole tip (which they say would cost £20,000) would be too expensive. After all that has happened in the past, money is still more important than lives to our Tory councillors. Their £20,000 is still not safe, though. Thanks to the activities of the Action Group, the parents of children at the nearby school are now taking up the demand for the tip to be made safe. The struggle has now been extended and



# SPAIN: REFORMISTS TRY TO RAILROAD MASS MOVEMENT

by Martin Cook

AT THE TIME of writing, events in Spain seem to be in a temporary lull following the colossal upsurge of the early months of this year. We can be sure this is only a temporary lull, however. The post-Franco, ex-fascist dictatorship under King Juan Carlos is increasingly paralysed by its fear of the mass movement. The workers, probably the most militant in Europe, have shown that they have fully recovered from the suffocating decades of Francoist repression. Their spontaneous militancy puts the timidity of their official 'leaders' to shame.

For many years, the regime has been wobbling between the hard-liners and the liberal 'Opus Dei' (Catholic) factions. Franco knew that over-fierce repression or rapid democratisation risked provoking a revolutionary upheaval. At the moment the 'Bunker' the fascist hard-core, is still entrenched in positions of power in the state apparatus. Cut off from reality like Louis XVI or Tsar Nicholas, they fondly believe that things would be fine if only the Government used brutal violence to keep the people in check. They ignore the fact that the whole social basis of their rule has gone. The Falange Movement, the Cortes (Parliament) and the state-run unions (syndicatos) are now a poor joke.

## Popular Front

The majority of the ruling class has obviously concluded that its only salvation must lie in pulling off some sort of deal with the liberals and the leaders of the workers' parties. This perspective is certainly encouraged by the reformists who run the Communist Party (PCE) and the Socialist Party (PSOE). So far from basing themselves on the new militancy of the working class, each set up a 'Popular Front' type coalition with every liberal it could round up. These included right-wing Social Democrats who had split from the PSOE, 'Socialist' Carlists (a minority faction of the MONARCHISTS!) and long-time fascists like Gil Robles who now choose to declare their 'anti-capitalist' dedication. It is ironic that the Socialists and Com-

munist should choose to ally with garbage like this, when the workers IN STRUGGLE have already won over large sections of the middle class to their side.

The theory to justify all the class-collaboration is that socialism is utopian, the most Spain can hope for is 'Democracy'. The Government has duly tried to introduce proposal for legalising parties (but not the PCE and the 'extremists') and eventual elections. The aim would be a guided democracy in a strong state along the lines of De Gaulle's Fifth Republic. Premier Arias and Home Minister, Fraga, blame the slowness of reform on the need to placate the 'Bunker'. The problem is, however, that the workers have already seized IN PRACTICE many of the democratic rights their leaders have been slowly negotiating! (For example, demonstrations and regular mass meetings in football stadiums, which the police usually dare not intervene against). Thus the dictatorship is falling apart at the seams.

## respectability

The two Popular Fronts have now merged into one, the 'Democratic Co-ordination'. This is a victory for the Communist Party, preventing its isolation from other opposition groups. It also increases the danger that the authorities will be able to use the PCE as a brake on the mass movement. Already, they have been denouncing and blocking strikes in many areas, the better to prove their respectability to the capitalist class (without much success it should be said!). The Spanish CP is one of the most right-wing in Europe, an honour for which it has heavy competition. The PCE has attempted to divert the workers' struggle into the syndicates federation, the CNS — at the expense of liquidating the Workers Commissions (CC. OO.) — the grass-roots committees of workers unity. On paper, the Socialists stand far to the left in their boycott of the CNS and their ringing 'Marxist' declarations of socialist transformation.

Just how seriously we can take all this, however, remains to be seen.



BARCELONA FEBRUARY 1976:  
30,000 march in the largest demonstration since the Civil War

The PSOE certainly has much greater traditions of struggle than the Portuguese SP of Soares, which was able to flick from revolutionary phrase-mongering to right-wing demagoguery in a few months. It is as well to note that neither party can be seen as in control of the situation — if they compromise too far they can be 'outflanked'. There are plenty of semi-Maoist and other revolutionary groups to do this, though many of these also subscribe to the theory of a 'Democratic stage' in the coming revolution.

The Madrid Metro workers strike in January sparked off a nation-wide strike wave, resulting in more days lost that month than the previous two years put together. The NATIONAL nature of the movement was a crucial advance on previous struggles, which had peaked as REGIONAL general strikes in Vigo, El Ferrol, Pamplona etc. The heroic fight around Vitoria in March began from a struggle for the re-instatement of victimised militants. After the police shot dead four workers leaving a meeting in a church, a general strike of half a million or more (the largest since 1937) paralyzed the Basque Country. (It is no accident that the PCE is weaker there than anywhere else in Spain. It is inevitable that these struggles will be repeated and intensified, learning the lessons of the past and avenging the many martyrs. The end of the dictatorship may not be far off.

The situation is very complex, and the political answers cannot just be

reeled off pat. Certain things are clear however. Socialists in Spain should be stressing the demand for self-determination for the national minorities (the Basques in Euzkadi, Catalunya, Galicia) which are as downtrodden by Madrid as ever. (The neglect of this was a defect of the Left in the 1936-39 Civil War). Secondly, the unity of the workers' movement — such as through the extension and centralisation of the Workers' Commissions — is a key question. This is related to the need for a unified but democratic trade union federation and for the PCE and the PSOE to fight for a Workers' Government based on and directly responsible to the organisations of the working class.

The call for a revolutionary Constituent Assembly as an immediate issue should not be allied to any illusions in the possibility of bourgeois democracy. Spain already has a million unemployed. Its rulers would face bankruptcy from the workers' demands if any prolonged period of democratic rule ensued. The capitalists are really only interested in securing a breathing space before a transition to a new period of dictatorship becomes necessary. The Common Market, beset with its own troubles, will hardly be in a position to help out much.

The tasks in Britain are simple. We should fight in the Labour Movement for a broad-based non-sectarian campaign of solidarity with all those in struggle against the dictatorship.

# PORTUGAL: ELECTIONS SOLVE NOTHING

Geoff Bender

of the revolution and to seek political solutions to their problems. It was precisely on this theme, the defence of past gains while halting any further advance, that Mario Soares led the election campaign of the Socialist Party.

Once again, the SP, acting as an umbrella for all the confused, demoralised and backward workers, the middle class, the peasantry and the small town dwellers of the north came top of the poll with 35% of the votes - 3% down on last year - and 106 seats in the new Legislative Assembly.

Soares has claimed that he will not enter into any alliances when the new Government takes office after the Presidential elections next month. If he is to be believed, as he seldom is, then the SP will form a minority government which can be outvoted by an alliance of the deputies of the right-wing CDS and PPD. Such a govern-

To form a coalition with the PPD, who received 24% of the votes and 71 seats would rapidly alienate the SP's growing left-wing and ensure an upsurge of industrial struggle against the new government. On the other hand any alliance with the CP, would not only drive away the SP's right-wing support but, more importantly, from Soares' standpoint, lead to the cancellation of sorely-needed US and EEC loans and investment for Portugal's stricken economy.

The CP's 15% vote - a small increase on last year, mainly accounted for by the decision of the fellow-travellers of the MDP not to stand candidates, is a reflection of the widespread distrust of the CP that still exists. Distrust that is a damning indictment of the way in which two years of manoeuvring have squandered the political and human capital accumulated through nearly 50 years of

government's refusal to honour a wages agreement.

Most disturbing, however, is the resurgence of the right. The Social and Democratic Centre (CDS) - haven for former fascists and Spinoists — doubled its vote getting one more seat in the new Assembly than the CP. Together with the PPD they have more seats than the SP and thus theoretically could form a government in the event of the SP being unable to.

The depth of the economic crisis facing Portuguese industry, can only be solved by massive foreign loans. As West European and US capital increasingly turns its attention to bailing out the Juan Carlos regime in neighbouring Spain they will want guarantees that the new Portuguese government intends to keep a firm hand on its working class. Now more than ever before, the defence and extension of the gains of the

PORTUGAL'S SECOND ELECTIONS since Caetano's downfall, two years ago have produced results remarkably similar to those of last year's elections to the Constituent Assembly. Yet, the situation against which they took place had drastically altered. Last year's election took place on the rising tide of the working-class movement after the crushing defeat of Spino's attempted coup. Today, as unemployment pushes up to the 1/2 million mark — 15% of the workforce, prices rise at 20-25% a year despite government controls, and the National Republican Guard have shot and killed striking workers, the election results are a measure of the extent of the ebb of that tide. The defeats suffered by the working class since this time last year, paradoxically, have the effect of binding workers closer to those organisations whose leaders, by their betrayals and vacillations, bear prime responsibility for those defeats.



## BOOK REVIEW:



By Don Flynn

THE LAST SIX years of conflict in the North of Ireland have seen a development which could not have been easily predicted a decade earlier. The remarkable phenomenon of Ulster politics, the Unionism of the Protestant population, has lost its monolithic character and revealed a thousand and one tensions and contradictions within its ranks over this period. In 1960, the Ulster Unionist Party claimed the allegiance of nearly every Protestant man, woman and child, irrespective of class and station in life. But in 1976 we are presented with a bewildering galaxy of "Unionist" or Loyalist parties, the Democratic Unionist Party, the Vanguard Party, the official Unionist Party, the Unionist Party of Northern Ireland, and a dozen more besides.

Similarly with the Protestant paramilitaries. In 1960, every stout Orange blade anxious to carry arms for the cause of "maintaining the Union" would be found in the ranks, or seeking to join the ranks of the Royal Ulster Constabulary "B-Special" auxiliaries. But nowadays, the B-Specials are gone and in their place stand the Ulster Defence Association, the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Ulster Freedom Fighters, the Red Hand Commandos, the Ulster Citizens' Army, Tara, Protestant Action and so on. The most important problems about the nature of the

## 'The Protestants of Ulster' by G. Bell



ULSTER'S ORANGEMEN ON THE MARCH

## ULSTER FRAGMENTS

Protestant working class of North-East Ulster are posed for the socialist movement when we consider these questions: what made Ulster Unionism the cause of the Protestant working class? What maintained it during the last fifty-odd years; and what is causing it to be broken up?

These are all pointed and direct questions. It is a shame that Geoffrey Bell's new book, "The Protestants of Ulster" (Pluto Press price £2) does not concern itself with either putting or answering pointed and direct questions. Rather Bell's book deals with the phenomenon of the Unionism of the Protestant working class of Ulster only at the most

general and amorphous level. Using newspaper articles, fragments of folksy-style songs in the Loyalist tradition, and quotes from the speeches of some of the leaders of Unionism over the past half-century, Bell scarcely breaks new ground in explaining the development of the all-important contradictions and tensions within the Unionist camp which recently have proved of such significance.

Towards the end of the book it becomes obvious that Bell is incapable of explaining the tensions which have exploded into the present, shattered and fragmented array of Loyalist splinters, largely because of a failure

to understand the very different reasons why Protestant workers and Protestant bosses both came to support Unionism. The Protestant capitalist has traditionally laid central stress on the "maintenance of the Union" - that is the link with Britain and consequent access to British markets - as being the central plank of his political credo. But the Protestant worker has depended for his marginal privileges in the northern Irish community on all the paraphernalia and trappings of the Orange "Ascendancy", which is maintained directly at the expense of Catholic workers.

These differences, between the importance of the Union and the importance of the Ascendancy, are crucial for understanding why the Orange establishment and the Loyalist petty bourgeoisie and working class went separate ways in response to the Westminster pressure for reforming the police state in the North of Ireland. It is true to say that they have stayed their separate ways ever since.

Ultimately, it is the pressures, conflicts, and tensions developing within British imperialism which have had the most drastic consequences for the unity of Ulster's Unionists. Bell's book does little to help clarify this point, or to place our understanding of Ulster Unionism on a sound materialist basis. The task of producing a clear understanding of the nature and character of the Protestants of Ulster unfortunately still remains.

## Defend overseas students!

OVERSEAS STUDENTS following a course in English as a foreign language (EFL) at Hackney College, Stoke Newington Centre, have learnt that the Inner London Education Authority has decided to close this course as from the end of this session (July 1976). Why?

It seems that the official reason is the ILEA's reorganisation ('rationalisation') of EFL teaching and its concentration in a few chosen ILEA colleges, of which Hackney is not one.

First we want to question this idea of reorganisation, as it seems that provision of EFL courses is necessary in every locality in London - not just in a few scattered centres - if it is to meet the needs of the city's multi-racial community as well as of visiting students.

Second, we strongly suspect that this reorganisation is a smokescreen behind which cuts in student and teacher numbers are going to be made.

### ILEA'S CUTS

The ILEA colleges which will continue having EFL courses next year are not going to be expanded to cater for those students who will be displaced by the rationalisation.

The recent revelation that ILEA plans to cut the number of overseas students by 60% over the next 5 years makes this clear.

As well as 60 student places, vacancies for three teachers will be lost permanently with the closure of this course.

The provision of EFL courses is surely a necessity in every borough of London, and particularly in an area like Hackney. Many residents, including a number with British nationality, do not have English as a first language. English classes are much

free or at a minimal cost, on a far bigger scale than at present. We believe that ILEA should enable Hackney College to contribute to this provision by expanding and developing the present EFL course and not closing it.

Overseas students come to study here because English is necessary for them in order to continue their studies and gain adequate work qualifications. They finance themselves entirely while they are here, and pay three times the college fees paid by resident students.

After completing their course in English, many of them wish to go on studying here, mainly to gain skills and qualifications which are much needed and often difficult to obtain there.

### FAILURE

They do not take college places away from resident British students. As a result of the whole history of the failure of Britain's education system to meet the needs of its young people, there are not enough resident students to fill many of the existing further and higher education courses. Many courses at present actually depend on having a certain number of overseas students to keep them open, or 'viable'. If these courses have to be closed because of cuts in overseas student numbers, there will be as a result a permanent LOSS of course provision for resident British students. Any suggestion that resident students would benefit from a reduction in overseas student numbers is entirely wrong.

Cuts in courses, higher fees for foreign students and low grants for resident students are all linked parts of an overall policy of reduction of government spending on education.

as it is easy to attack immigrant workers, by blaming them directly or indirectly for causing economic and social problems.

But they did not cause the crisis of Britain's economy and their removal will not help solve it. Nor will the government's policy of cutting back on social expenditure. This policy may be in the interests of financiers and industrialists concerned with falling profit margins, but their problems are not ours, nor are they those of

the great majority of people - immigrants and British born-alike - whose work is the real basis of this country's prosperity. What is worth defending, if not people's right to decent education and social facilities?

The loss of one course in one college is the thin edge of the wedge. We ask the ILEA to reverse its decision, and we ask for your support.

(Adapted from 'An Open Letter from Overseas Students at Hackney College') For more information contact The Student Union Representative, Hackney College, Dove Rd. Annexe, Islington, London N1.

## Callaghan defies NEC over dictator's visit

by Mark Douglas

THE DICTATOR OF BRAZIL, President Geisel is due to arrive in London on May 4th for a four-day state visit... on the invitation of the Labour Government.

In recent weeks, two campaigns have been mounted for opposite reasons. The first has been organised by the Brazilian Ambassador in London, Snr. Roberto Campos to convince mass opinion that General Geisel is really a nice, democratic leader of a large country with some economic problems. He has the support of the 'Times', the Labour Government and the City fat-cats who are keen on big trade with teeming Brazil (pop. 110m).

The second campaign has been launched by left Labour MPs, the NEC of the Labour Party and the Liberation Brazil Committee. They have been arguing, successfully in recent weeks, that General Geisel is a military dictator presiding over appalling poverty, privation and police state oppression of millions of Brazilians.

Geisel has covered up for the infamous Death Squads of off-duty police and army fanatics who have claimed the lives of thousands of "opposition-

ists, socialists and Labour leaders" in the last 10 years. Torture of political prisoners has been prevalent for years under the military regime which took power in 1964. All democratic rights have been 'suspended' by Presidential decrees.

Real power is wielded by the murderous DOPS (Dept. of Political and Social Order) and the SNI (National Information Service). Both agencies have been central in building the police-state in Chile under Pinochet.

The welcome by the Callaghan clique of this 'democrat' shows once again that the Labour Government is prepared to defy the wishes of the LP and its highest body, the NEC. All socialists and workers are urged by the recent call of the NEC to come onto the streets on WEDNESDAY MAY 5th at the Guildhall, in the City, for a mass picket at 6.30pm outside the Lord Mayors Banquet.

● For more information of activities during the visit (May 4-8th) contact: Liberation-Brazil Committee, 313, Caledonian Rd., N.1. (Tel: 607 0465).



# Which way now?

by IRENE MACDONALD  
(Delegate NUJ Book Branch)

WHAT CAME out of the Working Women's Charter Conference of April 10th/11th held in Coventry was an extended and updated Charter, amended to take account of new legislation and the worsening position of women under the anti-working class policies of the Government.

As it stood until the Conference, the Charter, drawn up in 1974, was a list of ten basic demands and the campaign developed round it devoted a large part of its energies to getting the Charter adopted by Trade unions and Labour movement groups.

### LIP - SERVICE

In January 1976, the total of those supporting the Charter was: National Trade Unions, 12; Trade Union branches, 75; Trades Councils, 39; other Groups, 86. But one of the questions asked at the Conference was what, if anything, had been done in achieving the Charter's demands. The Trade Unions in particular were attacked for paying only lip-service to the Charter, though this was hotly contested by the CPSA executive delegate, who said the union had established two nurseries—and this in a union made up largely of women!

With the movement for abortion through the National Abortion Campaign (NAC), women have shown that they can organise and fight for their demands. Similarly, on a local level, the activity of women in the nurseries campaigns gives a lead to what can be achieved. Many women have, however, felt stranded behind the theories of the Working Women's Charter. Its demands have too often been accepted by

male-dominated groups and unions as 'right and proper' and left at that.

The new forms of legislation—the Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Pay Act and Employment Protection Act—have been welcomed by reformists as the be all and end all. In fact, as was voiced at the Conference, they can serve to alienate women from each other since each case has to be argued individually and a decision in favour does not automatically extend to other women in the same workplace or employment. The Tribunal system, as under the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act, more often implements compensation rather than actual improvement in conditions.

It was decided that the Charter as amended by the Conference should be sent to all affiliated groups for discussion and, if necessary, further amendment. It was argued that only in this way could the continuing support of the Unions nationally be guaranteed. The other point was that the Conference was not fully representative and that delegates had not been mandated. As readily appeared, a vast majority of supporting organisations had not even discussed the provisions to be included in a revised Charter.

Among the agreed amendments to the Charter are the following major additions, obviously taken out of the context of their full, respective clauses:

- For the right of women to work.
- For the national minimum wage and all benefits and wages to be fully protected against inflation by automatic increases based on a working class cost of living index.
- Positive discrimination in training for jobs where few women are presently employed.
- Protective legislation to be extended where appropriate to cover men.
- Free state-financed, community controlled child care facilities with flexible hours to suit all parents.
- The right for either parent to take a year's child care leave after birth.
- For free and safe abortion, contraception, vasectomy and sterilisation on demand on the NHS.
- Child benefits to be increased to £5 per child.

In addition to the newly organised demands now numbering eleven, there are short policy demands running alongside which outline slightly more fully ways of achieving the aims. A separate policy document goes more deeply into the nature of the fight for women's rights. In this the effects of cuts in social spending is recognised and unemployment discussed. It lays down a much-needed programme for action, though the basis is still on the propaganda and organisational

aspects of the Charter campaign. But where demands such as the defence of part-time and casual women workers' jobs are included, this shows that the campaign can be used effectively on the practical level. The amendment from the Socialist Charter illustrates the type of constructive action required as it calls for the prioritisation of the fight for provision of free local Authority nursery facilities and NHS out-patient abortion clinics as part of a crash programme of public works.

While work has got to be undertaken amongst women in employment, it is essential that the provision of child-care facilities and the right to abortion be prime objectives as the way for realising the other demands of the Charter. By accepting this motion, the WWC campaign has committed itself to fighting first and foremost on the issue of nurseries and abortion. It is vital that this course of action is in fact implemented.

### FAILURES

But the absence of other positive ways of achieving the Charter's demands and the lack of actual evidence and discussion on women's position were failures of the Conference. What does lie ahead is the necessity to succeed in enforcing the demands of the Charter and that can only be done by practical and consistent hard work. It means taking up the fight in the Trade Unions and especially the Labour Party. Let us not forget it is Labour councillors who are implementing the cuts, who say if nurseries can be built or not, and it is a Labour Government that is attempting, with the continuing existence of the Select Committee, to impose reactionary anti-abortion legislation.

## Y.S. CONFERENCE IGNORES KEY ISSUES

BY GRAHAM DURHAM  
(LEEDS S.E.)

THE 15th CONFERENCE of the Labour Party Young Socialists held at Blackpool over Easter weekend was dominated, as usual by the supporters of the 'Militant'. Resolutions on numerous topics called for the nationalisation of 220-250 monopolies in order to end the iniquities of capitalism. Tragically, however, the vital question facing Conference—how to organise a fight-back against the Callaghan leadership's policies—was too often avoided.

### NO PLANS

Those delegates who argued for the LPYS to use its base in Labour Parties and Trades Councils to organise representative local committees against unemployment and cuts were castigated by the platform for trying to divert the YS. No plans were divulged as to how the LPYS was to organise support for the May 26th 'Day of Action' and an emergency motion on the issue supported by over 20 branches was continuously obstructed. No reply came from the NC on the criticism of the appalling low level of activity on the unemployment campaign—or on the sectarian direction it took by calling the LPYS national demonstration three days after the 25,000 strong N. West TUC demonstration of November 26. Where, demanded one delegate, had the anti-racism campaign gone? Why was no activity taken on the Working Women's Charter Campaign or the National Abortion Campaign?

It was the women's debate—allotted 30 minutes by the Militant-dominated Standing Orders committee—which revealed the real nature of the oft-repeated argument that "only under socialism" could the solution to



Graham Durham speaking women's problems be found. One NC supporter argued that free abortion could only come under socialism so why fight for it now! More subtly, the NC reply explained the refusal to back the WWC and NAC as a question of priorities. Presumably, the NC is too busy arguing for socialism to bother with the campaigns which are actually mobilising working-class women in a struggle for democratic rights.

The Irish debate started promisingly when an NC supporter stated that he stood for unconditional withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. For many delegates, this meant a recognition that it is British imperialism with its creation and brutal maintenance of the six-county northern statelet that is responsible for the continued divisions in the working class and the existence of sectarian violence. As such, it was the duty of the YS, as the speakers from Hackney North and Vauxhall

pointed out, to work within the Troops Out Movement for the withdrawal of British troops immediately and the recognition of the right of the Irish people to self-determination.

For NC supporters, however, this was not at all what 'unconditional withdrawal' meant. Delegates followed each other sowing severe illusions in the possibility of the Loyalist-dominated trade unions creating a workers' defence force to replace the troops. As an opposition delegate pointed out, this demand could only mean "the UDA patrolling the Bogside". NC supporters heaped abuse on the anti-imperialist forces in Ireland, blaming them for the sectarian divisions. The question of "earning the right" to criticise the IRA by a campaign against imperialism in this country was dodged throughout the debate. The defeat for the Hackney North motion calling for support for the TOM showed quite clearly the 'Militant' leadership place conditions on the withdrawal of troops.

### INTERNATIONAL

On international questions, the Portugal debate opened with NC member Rob Sewell describing the seizure of Republica as "opening the doors to counter-revolution". Delegates supporting resolutions exposing the real organisers of reaction—the Socialist Party leadership—made short shrift of the NC's illusions in the SP at 1975 LP Conference. Ironically, as these delegates pointed out, the Conference had heard so much

about workers democracy it was a farce that the NC could not recognise real workers' democracy in action during the Portuguese revolution.

On Spain, the 'Militant' crowed about the Spanish YS Defence Campaign. But many delegates showed the sectarian nature of this campaign, failing to relate to the major Spanish workers organisations—the Communist Party and workers commissions.

The only public meeting on Ireland, organised by YS supporters of the Troops Out Movement, drew over 60 delegates and visitors for a lively discussion. An encouraging sign at the Conference was the united activity of delegates, especially supporters of 'Chartist', 'Workers Action', and 'Red Weekly', who saw the role of the YS as a campaigning organisation attempting to generalise the fight against the Labour Government's policies. A successful meeting of over 100 delegates and visitors resolved to leave the Conference determined to build LPYS branches—which have declined over recent years—into fighting organisations campaigning in the LP and unions and supporting all struggles and initiatives against the cuts and unemployment.

BRITISH LABOUR AND THE  
IRISH REVOLUTION

The politics of  
the 'Militant'  
on Ireland

by  
Don Flynn



CHARTIST INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION 10p

## Out now!

Published by CHARTIST PUBLICATIONS, 82 Loughborough Rd., London SW9  
Printed by ANYWAY LITHO Ltd., 252 Brixton Rd., London SW9 (tu all depts.)