

Socialist Action

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For a Class Struggle Left Wing in the Labour Movement

June 1980

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MASS ACTION SHOWS WAY

On May 14th, over a million workers responded to the TUC call. In defiance of the hate campaign unleashed by the Tory press – and orchestrated from Downing Street – demonstrations and rallies took place throughout the country.

The hundreds of thousands who demonstrated on that day clearly showed their willingness to fight a government which is trying to drag us back to the 'thirties'.

They know that the savage cuts in social services, the escalating jobless total and the anti-union campaign are going to get worse in the years ahead – if Thatcher is allowed to stay – and not better.

And they know that holding a few protests – combined with talk about the return of a Labour government in 4 years time – will not help. It will then be too late to defend the jobs and services that will have been axed by the most ruthless Tory government since the war.

What is needed is not idle rhetoric. It is not trips by TUC



leaders back and forth to Downing Street – but action. The Labour leaders mustn't be allowed

to ignore May 14 as an isolated 'protest'. They have to be forced to see it as the beginning of a mass

campaign to stop the Tory attack in its tracks.

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ALL OUT JUNE 22nd



On June 22nd, the Labour party is calling a mass march in London against the Tories' increase in defense spending and decision to site US Cruise missiles.

It is none too soon. Thatcher's boost in defense spending – at the same time as health, education and housing are being cut to the bone – is part of a general war hysteria being whipped up.

Her support for Carter's invasion of Iran, her sabre-rattling on Afghanistan, increases in army pay and talk of bringing back conscription' are all danger signs.

A mass rally on June 22nd will be a major step in showing the Tories that working people in this country have no interests in arming themselves to the teeth with 'neutron' bombs or supporting military interventions – like that of Carter – against other working people around the world.

**NO CRUISE MISSILES!
WITHDRAW FROM NATO!
CUT DEFENSE SPENDING!**



Dave McLeod (T&GWU)

Carter defended the military raid into Iran last April as a 'humanitarian' act. Its aim was supposedly

HANDS OFF IRAN!

to 'rescue' the hostages in the US Embassy and bring them back alive. The fraud in this claim has become increasingly obvious.

If Carter had really wanted to save the hostages, all he had to do was return the ex-Shah to the Iranian people for trial. The fact that he has not done this shows the safety of the hostages was furthest from his mind.

As the *Christian Science Monitor* pointed out last May; a leaked CIA report estimated that at least 60% of the hostages would have been killed had the raiding party reached the embassy in Tehran.

AIM

But if the aim of the 'raid' was

not to save the hostages - most of whom would have been killed - just what was the intention behind it? Growing evidence would suggest that Carter's intentions were far broader than originally imagined.

The *New York Times* claims that US officials have now admitted that they were ready to use -130 gunships to 'strafe any Iranian troops'. They have also acknowledged that fighter-bombers, from aircraft carriers based in the Arabian sea were put on alert for immediate action.

CIA operatives, 'infiltrated' into Iran, were also prepared for 'action' on the day alongside ex-SAVAK agents. What action? Documents found in the wreckage of the crashed US aircraft include maps pinpointing the city of Qum (residence of the Aya-

tollah Khomeini)...

It would appear, from growing evidence, that the 'raid' launched by Carter was part of a much bigger effort to deal a blow to the Iranian revolution by toppling its elected government.

HYSTERIA

The question of the 'hostages' was in this sense, merely camouflage behind which Washington could hide its act of naked aggression. It fits in with its deliberate attempts, over the months preceding the raid, to whip up an anti-Iranian hysteria.

Carter sought to blame 'oil shortages' and 'soaring prices' on the Iranian revolution. He began to encourage racist attacks on Iranian students, threatening many

with deportation. The pro-Carter media began to paint the Iranian people as 'religious fanatics' compared with the moderate Shah.

All of these moves were clearly aimed at whipping up a war mood in the West which would give Washington the freedom it needed to launch a brutal military drive against the Iranian revolution.

SPLITS?

The abortive results of the 'raid' have, it is true, created serious splits among the US ruling class. The resignation of Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, who claimed opposition to military acts, is indicative of this.

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BASNETT ATTACKS PRESS CONSPIRACY

Before May 14th, the entire British press couldn't spare enough ink and paper to bury the TUC call to action. 'Day of Shame' ran the headline in papers from the *Mail* to the *Sun*.

Any group of workers prepared to grin and bear the Tory policies was guaranteed a place on the front page. 'We Want to Work' or 'Rank-and-File Rebel Over Day of Shame' followed each other in quick succession.

Having done their best to break union resistance, they then proceeded (after May 14th) to ignore the mass turnout around the country. 'Flop of the Decade' declared the *Express*: 'Fiesta Fiasco', echoed the *Mirror* (supposedly a supporter of the Labour Party).

Was this just a coincidence? Hardly. As GMWU Gen. Sec., David Basnett pointed out recently, the similarity in tone and even slogans was part of a well-orchestrated offensive hatched in Downing Street.

Only weeks before, Basnett explains, the editors of five national dailies held 'secret' meetings with Mrs. Thatcher. "It is common knowledge in Fleet Street that these meetings took place. They agreed upon a strategy that there would be some continuity between the papers as to what was happening".

What was in fact agreed was that the Tory press should unleash a hate campaign to break, belittle and dismiss union resistance.

Who, after reading the sustained barrage of Tory propaganda, can any longer credit 'freedom of the press'? What freedom? The freedom of a few self-appointed press barons to saturate the market with their class-ridden prejudices?

What about the freedom of the millions who turned out on May 14th - but who lack the capital to run papers like the *Sun* or the *Mail* - to present their views?

Doesn't the smear campaign from Fleet Street make the need for a mass daily paper for the labour movement all the more urgent? A paper that will combat the lies & distortions put out and that - by guaranteeing an honest and open debate - will be a model of what press freedom should be all about?



JAMES PRIOR: Supposed to be 'soft' on the unions. He is now in charge of pushing through major attacks on the unions.

Throughout the steel strike, one of the major factors that stopped the Tories in their tracks was the mass pickets that were organised. Up and down the country, steelworkers - and other workers mobilised in solidarity - brought the transport

May 14th: Keep up

by TIM ROBINSON (NALGO)

Over one million workers downed tools on May 14th against the Tory government. In what was the biggest protest yet against Thatcher's attempt to drag Britain back to the thirties, over 130 rallies and demonstrations took place up and down the country from Glasgow to London.

More than half of Britain's coal-mines were shut altogether. Liverpool docks came to a standstill. About 250,000 workers in Scotland stayed away, closing down every shipyard except one. 50,000 NUPE members - bearing the brunt of the government's cuts programme - stopped work in the London area.

In what was a clear slap in the face for the *Express*, attempting to use the courts to prevent NATSOPA members from striking, all the print unions came out.

CAMPAIGN

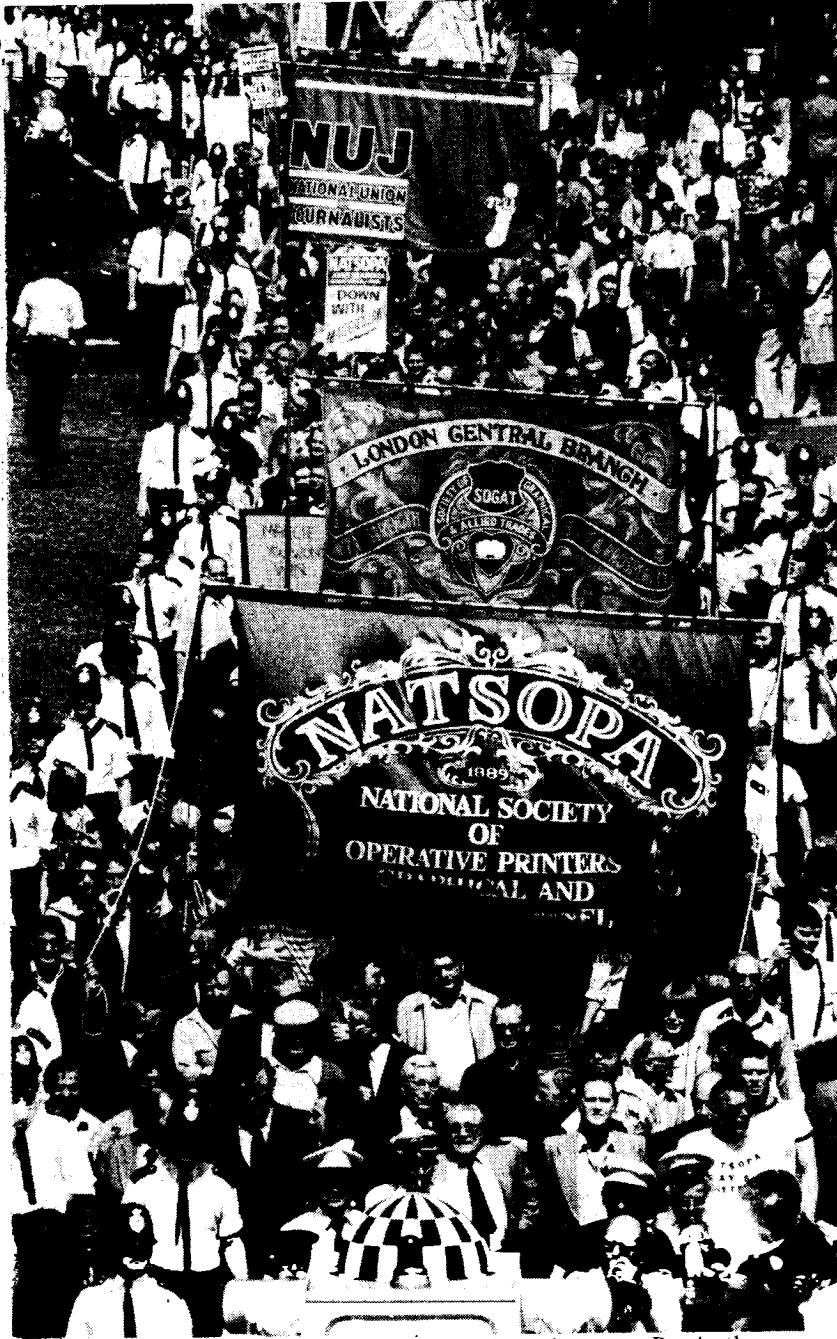
This mass protest took place in the teeth of an hysterical anti-union campaign whipped up by the Tories in the preceding weeks. Papers such as the *Sun* or *Mail* indulged in the crudest witch-hunt of union leaders and prominently featured the smallest examples of groups of workers willing to 'defy the TUC call'.

Happy enough dealing with Callaghan's verbal 'fireworks' in the House of Commons, the Tories were clearly driven to a frenzy of fear at the thought of mass action on the streets. Parliamentary opposition is one thing, millions of workers taking direct action - to defend jobs and living standards - is another.

They no doubt remembered the fate of the previous Tory government which was unceremoniously tossed out of office by the determined action of the miners.

'FLOP'

The campaign of lies from Fleet Street continued after the Day of Action. The TUC's call



was widely declared a 'flop' because - despite the mass turnout - millions of trade unionists reported to work as normal.

Papers like the *Sun* or *Express* used this to show that the majority of British workers supported the government's policies and were hostile to the TUC action. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Of course, the Tory propaganda barrage did have a marginal effect on some layers who still have not felt the effects of Thatcher's cuts

or plant closures. But in the main, far from being hostile to the TUC call, the mass protest wasn't bigger simply because the TUC action appeared irresolute and ineffective.

ACTION

The Day of Action, after all, was not called as the start of a serious campaign to mobilise the labour movement against the Tories. On the contrary, it was raised last February as an alternative to the

mass feeling for a general strike building up around the steelworkers dispute.

As the *Financial Times* put it: 'Early this year, however, when the steel strike was underway and the Wales TUC was being particularly militant, the TUC in London came to see the day of action as an alternative to a general strike; something that would allow the labour movement to let off steam without going too far'.

How right they were! Having issued the call to get themselves off the hook in February, the TUC then did everything possible to downplay it. Refusing to turn it into a one day strike - despite calls from unions such as the NUR - they declared it was purely a 'voluntary' affair. Little publicity was issued to counteract the Tory campaign. No campaign was undertaken to explain the issues involved.

LIMITATIONS

How seriously the TUC itself took the call can be measured by Len Murray's speech on the day itself. Replying to press attacks that it was a 'flop', he declared that the action was not a 'strike' against the government. It was merely a symbolic act to stimulate debate and make the Tories 'reconsider' their policies.

It was this weak-kneed leadership which determined the response of many rank and file members. Hatred of the Tories is undoubtedly deeper than ever before. But, as the steelworkers strike showed, workers know that this is a serious government and that only a serious and determined campaign can stop them.

Why bother - many of them thought - to support an action which the TUC doesn't even think serious enough to call a strike over? Port Talbot is a good example. Steelworkers there took part in a 3 month strike with the Tories (many voting against a return to work). Yet almost none of the workforce responded to the Day of Action.

(Un)Employment Bill: Prior

and production of steel to a standstill.

It is the ability of workers at the grass roots to take this type of initiative that the Employment Bill - or, more aptly named, Unemployment Bill - now being ramrodded through Parliament is designed to crush.

For the Tories, being able to destroy the ability of rank and file trade unionists to defend their living standards and jobs is central to pushing home the offensive they have undertaken. The Bill aims to do this in a number of ways.

RIGHT TO PICKET

A central thrust of the Bill is an attempt to curb 'secondary picketing' which was used so successfully during the miners' strike in 1974. Under Prior's Bill, workers will only be able to picket outside their place of work - picketing of suppliers or other depots being made illegal.

In order to give the Bill bite, Prior proposes that 'illegal' pickets be taken to court and sued for damages by companies who can prove business has been affected.

SOLIDARITY ACTION

It is not just secondary picketing, however, that the Tories want to eliminate. Under the Bill, they equally hit out at 'solidarity' action such as that by the miners for the steelworkers this year or the mass support given by trade unionists on the Grunwick picket line a few years ago.

CLOSED SHOP

Another major plank in the Tory armoury is to launch an attack upon the closed shop. The 'get out' clause for religious objectors is going to be drastically widened to include objections on the grounds of 'conscience' or other 'deeply held personal convictions'.

MATERNITY LEAVE

The Bill not only attempts to attack union rights but will doubly affect oppressed strata such as women workers. At present, all women are guaranteed maternity leave and the automatic right to re-employment afterwards.

The new provisions mean that they will have to give much longer written notice if they want their jobs back and, even then, they will not be guaranteed them.

SECRET BALLOTS

Other provisions in the Bill include extending balloting provisions for the creation of closed shops and for strike action. All in the name of democracy, of course. The real aim of this is not to further but to erode the democracy of mass meetings by 'isolating' union members and thus opening the up to the propaganda of the mass media and the bosses.

PRECEDENT

Of course many of the proposals in the Prior Bill are not new. They can be traced back through Heath's ill-fated *Industrial Relations Act* to Wilson's *In Place of Strife* which was thrown out, after mass action, in the late sixties.

One thing, however, is new about Prior's Bill which shows that the Tories have learned from the "misfortunes" of previous governments. The main thrust of this Bill is towards curbing rank-and-file militancy. This explains the emphasis on the picketing provisions.

This also explains why the TUC have not taken such direct action against the Bill as they did with its predecessors.

CONCORDAT

The main thrust of the TUC, after all, has been to try to persuade the Tories to allow them to keep pickets in line with the provisions

the fight!

Why? Because, as their experience showed, it would take more than a half-hearted protest — which the TUC couldn't bother even to turn into an official stoppage — to halt the Tory offensive.

STRUGGLE

What was surprising about May 14th was not the amount who didn't participate but the amount of grass root support that did. The thousands of union and Labour Party members who downed tools on the day did so not only despite the Tory hate campaign but also despite the TUC's cowardly back-down.

The demands that echoed on the rallies up and down the country — 'Tories Out', 'General Strike'

have to launch a serious fight within the unions and Labour Party to make the labour leaders live up to their responsibility.

ACTION

One day protest actions — combined with rhetoric about the return of a Labour government in 4 years — will not defend jobs, living standards and the welfare state. And the millions who did not turn out on May 14th know it. Only a serious campaign, a fighting campaign, can do that.

In this sense, at no stage must the labour leaders be let off the hook. They must be forced to see May 14th not as a 'one-off' act but as the beginning of an on-going campaign to defend worker's rights.

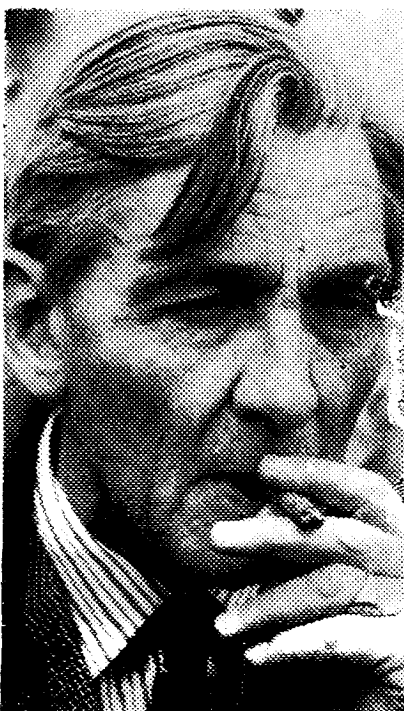
They have to be forced into organising mass opposition against the cuts; to lead the fight against unemployment (expected to rocket to 2½ million next year) and to organise mass solidarity with any group of workers victimised by Prior's anti-union Bill.

DEMOCRACY

It is only by increasing the pressure to make the labour leaders act, that a really united defence can be mobilised against Thatcher's attacks. It is also the surest way of guaranteeing that, when a Labour government is returned, it will be committed to a programme in the interests of working people.

As part and parcel of this fight, the question of democracy will come ever more to the fore. It has already been raised at the last Labour Party Conference and is beginning to find its echoes in the unions too.

It is only by fighting to extend democratic control over the labour leaders that we can ensure that they will carry out policies in their members' interests and that they can be removed if they won't.



— show that they know only decisive industrial action can stop the Tory offensive against jobs and democratic rights.

In this sense, these workers bear a heavy responsibility. If the labour movement is to present a united front against the Tory assault — and not be divided as happened on May 14th — they will

tightens curbs

they themselves established under the last Labour government in the 'Concordat'. Even May 14th was used, as Murray himself almost admitted, as 'pressure' on the government to open up a dialogue with them on this question.

It will take more than this, however, to dissuade the Tories from their purpose. They have no intentions of entrusting the TUC with 'controlling' its own members after the 'winter of discontent' last year when — in defiance of the TUC — thousands of workers struck in protest against the government's pay ceiling. They no longer trust them.

In order to push home their offensive, the Tories intend to use all the power and backing at their command — the police, the courts, the press — to intimidate workers from defending their jobs and living standards in the big battles that are going to open up.

FIGHTBACK

Confronted with a determined Tory government intent on taking the unions back to the times of Taff Vale, it will need more than words to defend our democratic rights. It will take more than trips back and forth to Downing Street. We have to make it absolutely clear to our leaders that, as far as we are concerned, none of our hard-fought rights are negotiable.

Rather than discussing with Thatcher, what the TUC should now be doing is building on the turn out on May 14th to prepare mass resistance to the Prior proposals. The Tories should be left in no doubt at all that any attempt to use these provisions against trade unionists will meet a mass resistance.

**HANDS OFF THE UNIONS!
MASS RESISTANCE AGAINST TORY CURBS!
MAKE LABOUR PLEDGE TO REPEAL THE ACT!**

National Round-Up

Scotland—which has felt the Tory axe harder than most areas— led the fight-back against the Thatcher government. 250,000 workers struck on May 14th and thousands took to the streets in protest demonstrations.

In Glasgow, an estimated 15,000— including busworkers, railway workers and a strong NALGO contingent— marched through the town. The underground was closed, train services decimated and many of the local factories and shipyards closed— including Talbot Linwood, the Govan and Greenock shipyard.

In Edinburgh, a 7,000-strong demonstration marched in a strong anti-Tory protest. The buses, railways and SOGAT printworkers were all out. Smaller demonstrations took place in Aberdeen (1,500), Greenock (1,600), Cumbernauld, Ayr and Dumfries. In the city of Dundee, an estimated 20,000 workers— covering all manufacturing and service industries and transport— stopped work.

In the industrial strongholds of the North-west, big rallies also occurred. Manchester witnessed a march of 7,000 with big contingents of busworkers and postworkers. In Liverpool, 5,000 marched through the city centre where the docks and Camell Laird shipyard were out.

In Sheffield, 5,000— mainly made up of engineers and miners— took to the streets. Small demonstrations took place in Bradford (2,000), Blackpool, (2,000) and Leeds where all the buses were out, many factories closed and some schools took half-day strike action.

In Britain's biggest industrial complex in the Midlands, the response from the factories was patchy but significant protests were held. In Birmingham, over 5,000 demonstrated with particular support from the construction sites which closed down.

Similar demonstrations took place in nearby Coventry (5,000), where the buses were out and Rolls-Royce Parkside closed down, Leicester (3,000) and Stoke where the demonstration of 3,000 was the most militant action seen in the town since the protest against Ted Heath's Industrial Relations Act in 1971.

Bristol, with over 7,000 workers on the streets, probably held the biggest demonstration in England. All the major factories were affected to some extent or another, although the buses were still running.

In Wales, mass action by 27,000 miners brought all the pits in the South to a standstill. While demonstrations occurred in most major towns, they were smaller than elsewhere. Llan-

dudno saw a lively march of 2,000 organised by the Wales TUC and in Cardiff 1,000 took to the streets.

In the North and South-east, trade unionists took to the streets to demonstrate their opposition to the Thatcher government. Brighton saw a lively rally of over 2,000 and Conservative-controlled Bournemouth was confronted with the demonstration of over 1,000 through the city centre.

In London, sizeable demonstrations took place in almost all areas. 2,000— mainly public-sector workers— turned out in Haringey. In Islington, 1,500 joined a rally organised by the local anti-Cuts Campaign. 2,000 took to the streets in Hayes and 1,000 in Ealing— despite the local Tory council's protest— to meet at a mass rally in Southall Park.

8,000 workers took to the streets in Hackney and a further 2,000 in Lambeth. The biggest action in London was undoubtedly the massive march organised by print-workers in defiance of the Express management's court action to stop them.

For the TUC, the 'Day of Action' may be over. But for these hundreds of thousands of workers up and down the country, it is only the beginning of a long-term struggle to stop the Tory attacks in their tracks.

Labour Conference - words but no action

The Labour Party's special conference on May 31st was an unusual step. Called by the left-dominated NEC, it was clearly a response to growing pressure within the labour movement which — as on May 14th — has been involved in mass actions to defend its living standards and democratic rights against the Tories.

As such, the conference offered a real chance for delegates to exchange experience and thrash out a bold, fighting policy which could rally millions behind them in anti-Tory action.

GAGGED

But did the conference do this? Hardly. Although the very calling of a special conference was a rebuff for Callaghan — who wants anti-Tory opposition to be contained to parliamentary pussy-footing — the Labour NEC virtually placed a gag on delegates who turned up.

Submitting a statement declaring its opposition to the Thatcher

government, the NEC declared that delegates would not be allowed to submit amendments to it nor alternative resolutions. This gag on democracy meant that what could have been a real debate on the way forward — resulting in action — became nothing more than a rally.

Leader after leader took the rostrum to denounce Tory economic strategy. The cuts were attacked, Prior's anti-union curbs exposed, unemployment figures derided.

ACTION

But, apart from the ritual opposition to Tory party policy, what lead was actually given in combating these attacks? None whatsoever. The main thrust was to counterpose the programme of a future Labour government — in four years time — to the anarchy the Tories are now creating.

A great deal of emphasis, from MPs such as Skinner to Benn, was placed upon the New Economic Strategy proposed. The increases in social expenditure promised, the extension of public ownership etc, are all fine.

The only problem, however, is that they have very little to do with the real problems facing the labour movement today. How can the actions of a future Labour government help working people today, confronted as they are with massive inroads into the welfare state, an unemployment situation threatening to reach two and a half million next year, soaring inflation and a broad-side against the democratic rights of the unions?



PROTEST

But the Labour leaders didn't have it all their own way. Reality intruded into the conference when a number of delegates, who got to the rostrum, denounced the undemocratic way in which the conference had been organised.

Many of these also pointed out the inadequacy of talking about what Labour would do in four years time and the need to think about what Labour is going to do now in the teeth of a major anti-working class offensive and how to carry forward the momentum of May 14th.

It is Labour activists such as these who, in the period ahead, will have to continue the fight to turn the Labour Party outwards, to make sure that it can provide a real leadership in the labour movement against the policies Thatcher is pursuing.

George Hold (Peckham YS)



Kinnoch

Bristol, Miami the same struggle



'Worst race riots since Watts' ran the headlines in many US papers following the explosion that shook Miami last month. The burning and looting that took place in the next few days was described in nervous detail.

The ostensible cause of the riot was the release - by an all-white jury - of four policemen accused of killing a young Black. But, as many Blacks later pointed out, this was just the spark in a powder keg of anger and frustration built up over many years of racial injustice.

FRUSTRATION

Explosions of the kind that shook Miami are not limited, however, to the USA. Only a month or so earlier, a similar upheaval took place not 3,000 miles away but in St Pauls, Bristol, where thousands of young Blacks exploded into action after a violent police raid on a local cafe.

After three hours of street fighting, the police were forced to withdraw. Once gone, the Black youth (supported by many young whites) gave vent to their anger by looting shops and setting fire to Lloyd's bank.

As a young Black social worker, who had lived in St. Pauls for many years, explained: "It has gone so far that these kids could not take it any more, and were just letting off their frustration".

BIAS

What frustration? Frustration

against a society which - as recession grows - has nothing to offer them but ghetto housing, dole queues and dead-end jobs at miserable wages.

Thatcher's policies may hit all working people - but they hit Blacks twice as hard. The growing jobless queues for youth are a scandal - but in places like St. Pauls or Brixton, they are twice the national average.

Cuts in housing are criminal but they fall doubly hard on Black urban ghettos like Southall or Lewisham. Cuts in education affect the prospects of all children, but they fall twice as hard on Blacks consigned to already over-size classes in run-down inner-city schools.

DISCRIMINATION

Moreover, this discrimination against Blacks is reinforced by the racist climate being whipped up by the Tories. Thatcher was elected to power on a clear racist ticket which included giving the police greater powers - under the 1971 Immigration Act - to harass and intimidate the Black community.

These powers - combined with the infamous SUS laws - have led to a systematic persecution of Black people. As the same social worker went on: "A lot of young kids in the neighbourhood are being continually molested by the police when they go out walking. They are taken to the police station, told to say things they know nothing

about and then charged".

Police harassment of this kind has built up an explosive atmosphere which - as in Miami or St Pauls - can be detonated at any moment.

NERVOUS

Of course, the Fleet Street press has tried to portray the incidents at Bristol as a 'black versus white' conflict. In reality, nothing could be further from the truth.

The Black youth who took to the streets in Bristol were not directing their anger against the white members of the community (many of whom joined them in the battle with the police). When the police left, there was not a single incidence of anti-white violence.

They were directing it against a system which condemns them - because of the colour of their skin - to ghetto housing, dead-end jobs and the dole queues. They were directing it against the representatives of this system - the police - who are there to enforce its racist bias.

ENQUIRY

This is what has made the government so nervous. They are only too aware of the anti-capitalist implications of this struggle - and of the fact that it could spread to other areas in the months ahead where identical problems exist.

This is why they have set up a public enquiry to look into the causes of the upsurge. They no doubt hope that leading Race Relations experts - such as Alec Lyons - will be able to defuse the situation.

But no enquiry can remove the causes of the Bristol explosion any more than they can that in Miami. Those causes lie in a system which is built on poverty and racial injustice.

SOLIDARITY

The only way to resolve the problems facing Black people - as those facing all working people - is by struggling to remove that system which creates poverty & racism. That means developing a united fight against the Tories' cuts and unemployment plans.

But it also means supporting Black people in their self-defence against police attacks and winning the labour movement to fight seriously against the racist laws which condone police violence.

Phil Edwardes

S.L. CARL PLANS ACTION

On May 20th, many anti-racists and activists in South London met together to build up the South London CARL group. Present were representatives of numerous YS branches, Labour Party wards and socialist groups.

They were not alone. Following the call at the CARL conference last March for local groups to be set up, a number have already begun to emerge. In Leamington, for example, the ANL, Trades Council and other organisations have merged, and in Stoke the local anti-racist committee (NORSCARF) has decided to prioritise work around the Tories' Immigration Act.

Such moves represent a growing awareness that the struggle against racism today must be centred around the Immigration Act which is used to justify the oppression black people suffer in all aspects of their lives.

CAMPAIGN

Not only that. As Bob Swart, opening the S. London CARL meeting stressed, unless the labour movement can be won to fighting these laws, "...it will be divided and weakened in the fight ahead against the cuts, the growing jobless total and That-

cher's general attack on democratic rights.

In the lively discussion that followed, it was agreed to maintain CARL as a broad, united front organisation open to all willing to support the campaign's general aim.

While stressing the need to take up the general question of immigration, however, it was also suggested by members present that the group should concentrate on particular cases of victimisation in the South London area.

OUTWARD

In order to draw in local support for the campaign, it was agreed to send speakers to as many local union and Labour Party branches as possible, seek affiliations from them and produce a mass leaflet for distribution.

It was also agreed that the closest possible relations would be kept with black organisations in the area and co-operation be sought in joint activity.

If you are interested in attending S. London CARL meetings - or helping it to grow - please contact Bob Swart, c/o Lansbury House, Camberwell Grove, London SE 11.

by RICHARD MOORE

CARL: Wh

by Mike Rodney
(CARL National Steering Ctte)



At the founding conference of CARL - the Campaign Against Racist Laws - last year, a major debate opened up. Should the campaign concentrate its fire on opposing the 1971 Immigration Act, or, on the contrary, all immigration controls?

It was strongly argued by some - whose position was rejected - that all immigration controls are, by their very nature, racist and that a failure to adopt this position was a political error. Many left tendencies - such as Workers Action - argued in this way.

If such a stance had been taken, there is no doubt that the mass CARL demonstration last year - which brought out over 15,000 - would never have seen the light of day.

CURBS

As one Act has followed another, entry into Britain has become increasingly dependent on a colour bar. Black people are not only kept out because of the colour of their skin but those who do manage to slip past the immigration barriers are subject to curbs which - in reality - turn them into second-class citizens.

They can be arrested without a warrant, deported without right of appeal and - under the climate of legalised racism these Acts create - subjected to the most vicious forms of police harassment. The police attack on Southall - and 'attack is not too strong a word - is a case in point.

RACISM

The aim of these immigration laws is not just, however, to curb the number of black people entering Britain. On the contrary, it has become - in the hands of the Tories and their right-wing Labour allies - a real tool to whip up racial feeling, to divide and divide the Labour movement.

This can be seen most clearly in the recent Tory proposals to tighten the curbs still further. It was widely recognised that these curbs would do hardly anything to stop the trickle of black people entering the country since the 1971 Immigration Act was virtually water-tight in this respect.

The real aim of these proposals - backed up by Thatcher's pre-election speech about the country being 'swamped by an alien culture' - was to whip up racist feeling. As the jobless total soars, the Tories hope to pin the anger and resentment on black immigrants as a convenient scape-goat.

FIGHT-BACK

It is in this context that socialists have to work out the best way of combatting this racist thrust that has been growing up over the years and which, at a time of mounting recession, can reach dangerous proportions.

It goes without saying that all socialists support 'no immigration controls': ie the right of all people to enter and leave this country freely. But does this demand serve - at this precise time - to combat the racist attack being mounted by the Thatcher government (with the connivance of Labour's right wing)?

On the contrary, far from challenging this racist attack head-on, it becomes an obstacle to uniting the labour movement against it.

ECONOMICS

At the present time, there are thousands in the labour move-

Malcolm X

His Writings:

By Any Means Necessary

The Autobiography of Malcolm X
Malcolm X Talks to Young People
Two Speeches by Malcolm X



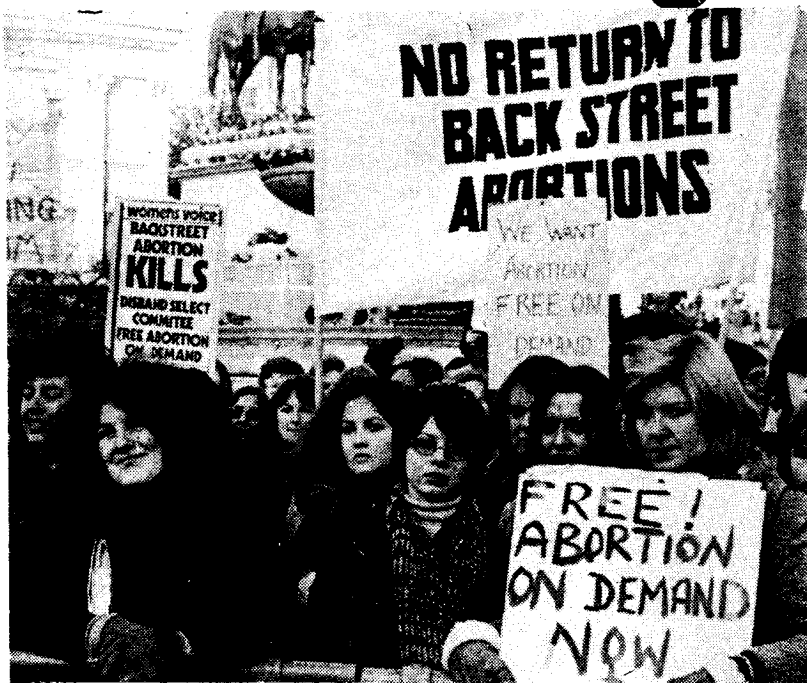
Malcolm X evolved, during his brief life, into the most prominent Black Freedom Fighter in the USA. Gunned down in 1965, Malcolm had begun to show thousands of Blacks the need to define their own history, to demand their rights and to stand up and fight for them.

In his evolution as a Black Freedom Fighter, Malcolm became convinced that this struggle would have to be related to a broader struggle by all the oppressed against capitalism. His writings are those of one of the most prominent revolutionaries of our times.

Copies of the above are available from Socialist Action, c/o 55, Auckland Rd, London, SE 12

A Woman's Right To Choose

Jane Davidson



The NAC Conference — held in Leeds last month — should have been a cause for celebration. Mainly through its efforts, a mass campaign had been launched which had succeeded in throwing

John Corrie's anti-abortion Bill into the dustbin, where it belonged.

The major discussion — after such a victory — should clearly have been how to carry forward the struggle by campaigning for a woman's right to choose.

AUTONOMY
Unfortunately, the major debate at conference — which drew over 250 activists — was whether or not NAC should become an all-women's campaign. Several women, hostile to the labour movement, argued that abortion was a woman's issue and, as such, the campaign should be limited to them.

Such an argument, if accepted, would have condemned NAC to impotence in the years ahead. The very fact that NAC had been able to defeat the Corrie Bill was precisely due to its ability — as a broad-based campaign — to draw in the widest possible support.

As many women argued, the mass 60,000 strong demonstration — sponsored by the TUC last October — wasn't a 'threat' to women. It was a crucial factor in the defeat of the Corrie Bill. Does anyone seriously think that, without TUC support such mass action could have been mounted? And does anyone seriously think that, without that action, Corrie would have been stopped?

CLASS ISSUE
Moreover, as many other women also argued, making NAC an 'all-women's' campaign didn't understand that abortion is not only a woman's issue but one of concern to the entire labour movement.

The Tories' support for the Corrie Bill was not accidental. It was an attempt to drive women out of the workforce and back into the home. It was aimed at making women the scapegoat for their unemployment offensive by playing on sexist divisions in the labour movement.

Winning TUC support for the fight-back against abortion re-

strictions was and is central not only in defending women's rights but in uniting working people as a whole against Tory attacks.

POSITIVE LEGISLATION
In the event, the 'autonomy' resolution was heavily defeated although, it was decided, local NAC groups would be free to choose whether or not to allow men to affiliate and attend meetings, and delegates from affiliated organisations alone be women.

Although the debate on autonomy ran throughout the two days of the conference, NAC did manage to work out a positive perspective for the period ahead. It was generally agreed that, now that the Corrie Bill had been defeated, the central thrust of the campaign should be fighting for positive legislation (around a woman's right to choose) and committing an incoming Labour government to abide by this demand.

As part of this perspective, it was agreed to hold a forum on positive legislation in the autumn and a labour movement conference in the spring of next year to rally support.

STRUGGLE

Clearly, such a perspective will mean a long struggle. Despite the support given by many Labour MPs to the NAC campaign, few committed themselves to making abortion rights a centre part of the platform of an incoming Labour government.

This will only happen by continuing to build NAC as an ongoing campaign, taking it into the unions and Labour Party branches and fighting to ensure that MPs abide

NATIONAL WOMEN'S FESTIVAL

- * Leo Abse wants to increase fathers' rights and there's talk of making divorce more difficult for women with children;
- * James Prior wants to make it harder for women to return to work after having a baby and to hit their union rights;
- * Willie Whitelaw won't allow women to bring their foreign-born husbands into the country;
- * John Corrie failed to restrict women's abortion rights, but abortion facilities are being cut and new restrictions are on the way;
- * Michael Heseltine's Housing Bill will make it harder for women on their own to find a place to live.
- * Patrick Jenkin's cuts in the social services will hit women's jobs hardest.

In October, as part of the fight-back against this attempt to return women to second-class status, a National Women's Festival is being called for. Sponsored by a wide range of organisations — from NAC to the Fightback for Women's Rights — it is seeking to organise a (women's only) demonstration and a mass festival open to everyone.

All those willing to sponsor and take part in the activities should contact: Festival Planning Group, 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1.

by the growing feeling in the labour movement that the time has come when the fight-back must be organised in mass bodies.

ich Way?

ment opposed to racist laws and ready to challenge the explicitly racist curbs in the 71 Act. The fact that the 1976 Labour Party conference called for its repeal — and over 60 Labour MPs supported the CARL demonstration last year — is proof of this.

These forces, while opposed to racist immigration laws, do not yet support a 'free entry' position mainly on economic grounds. They would argue that, in a period of growing recession, it would be utopian to abandon all immigration controls. (Thus Benn, while supporting the CARL demonstration, is a firm advocate of import controls.)

These arguments are, of course, radically wrong and have to be challenged. But should we refuse to collaborate with these forces in the fight against racism simply because they do not share the same economic views as socialists on how to resolve the present economic crisis?

OFF THE HOOK

The 'no immigration controls' argument, however, not only diverts the question away from racism but lets the Labour leaders off the hook. Jim Callaghan and others — who operated the Tories' 1971 Act with vigour — would reject this argument on economic grounds which would be acceptable to most of the Labour movement.

Calling on the Labour leaders to repeal all racist immigration laws, on the contrary, puts them firmly to the test. Do they or do they not believe that black people should be allowed into this country on the same basis as white people?

Such a stance not only challenges Thatcher's racist thrust head-on, but also puts the Labour leaders to a firm test by calling on them to break their 'unofficial' alliance with the Tories and lead a real anti-racist struggle.

SECTARIAN

To ask the question is to answer it. Those forces who stand rigidly on the 'no immigration control position (like Workers Action) should ask themselves: Are they prepared to allow black people to go on being victimised until the Labour movement has been won to a simon-pure understanding of socialist economic strategy?

Such a position would hardly differ from those who consider the fight for women's rights as 'unimportant'. They would argue that women — or black people — should passively wait until the labour movement has been won to a correct understanding of socialism and then — and only then — can a united fight be forged.

What such forces do not grasp is that the labour movement will never be won to a clear socialist perspective until it identifies with and supports the struggles of the doubly-oppressed against the discrimination and harassment meted out to them.

PROCESS

There can be little doubt that the setting up of CARL — and the mass demonstration it launched last year — was a major step in this direction. By focussing its demand around repeal of the 1971 Act, it opposed full-square the Tory onslaught and opened up a serious debate inside the labour movement.

This step has now to be built upon. Up and down the country, the call for the repeal of the 1971 Act has to be raised in union and Labour Party branches. Local CARL groups, which are being set up, should be supported and forces mobilised for national actions.

Such a process can begin the task of winning the labour movement to a clear anti-racist stance which will be key in the years ahead. The call for 'no immigration controls' will only set back this positive development and lead to the left posturing in splendid sectarian isolation.

We Want To Work!

Carol Rees (Peckham CLP)

Thatcher might be the first woman Prime Minister but her policies, as regards women's rights, are a disaster. This is no-where more true than in the massive attack she has launched on the welfare state.

It is not just women's jobs that are at stake here. As old-age peoples' homes close, just who will be expected to stay home and care for elderly relatives? Women. As hospital lists get longer, just who is it that will be expected to look after the sick and disabled? Women.

And, most important of all, as local councils close down the already limited nursery provisions for the under 5s, who will be forced to stay at home to care for the young? Women.

SET BACK

The net result of these cuts will be a severe set-back for women's rights. It will mean thousands, forced out of a job, becoming once again financially dependent on their husbands. For thousands more single-parent families, it will mean living on a pittance doled out by the state.

This is particularly true in relation to nursery closures. The cut-back in the already inadequate nursery schemes — from Nottingham to Wandsworth — will compel many working mothers around the country either to find untrained baby-minders (at a cost they cannot afford) or to leave their jobs to care for them.

RIGHTS

This situation is inevitable in a society where the responsibility for children still falls almost exclusively on the shoulders of the woman.



The only way women can escape this dilemma is by the state taking over the responsibilities of child-care, thus releasing them to participate freely in society alongside men.

Far from cutting back on nurseries, what is needed, if women are to have a chance of fulfilling themselves, is to extend them. Such a move would not only be of interest to women but also children who need the stimulation of contact and play with other children in the under-5 age range. There needs to be a comprehensive system of state care which includes nursery classes, mother and toddler groups and child-minder drop-in centres under one roof.

CONFERENCE

It is to oppose the present cut-

backs — and fight for an extension of nursery facilities — that on July 5th the London Nursery Campaign is calling for a national conference in London.

While breaking down into a number of workshops, taking up various issues of child-care (such as communities needs and centres, organising local action, pay and conditions of child-care workers etc), a plenary session will be held to give the campaign a national perspective. Hopefully, it will draw together the various nursery campaigns around the country and work out a central objective.

MOBILISE

There can be no doubt that if Thatcher is to be stopped from pushing women back into the home, concerted action of this kind is needed. It was the mass struggle launched by NAC against the Corrie Bill which eventually led to it being defeated.

Building a Nursery Campaign could, by drawing thousands of women into activity, become part of a general fight-back against the cuts. It could raise the issue in the unions and Labour Party and call on Labour controlled councils to oppose all cuts.

Such a campaign, taken into and fought for in the labour movement, could become a vital ingredient in protecting women's — and children's — rights.

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
Sat. July 5th, 10-30 — 5.00

Queen Mary College, S.U., Bancroft Rd, (off Mile End Rd.), London E 3.

Fee £1.50 (or 75p unwaged). Creche/low cost food/pooled fare

Socialist Action supporters meet

On May 12th, the first national conference of *Socialist Action* supporters took place in London. Attended by comrades from Labour Party and Young Socialist branches from all over the country, it was a major opportunity to discuss the major problems facing the labour movement and the need for a coherent strategy in fighting back.

The first session concentrated on the major attacks being launched on working people since the advent of power of the Tory government. In a lively discussion, many comrades spoke from their direct involvement in anti-Tory struggles, from building the anti-cuts movements, aiding the anti-Corrie or child-care campaigns to fighting to make the labour movement take up the struggle against racism initiated by CARL.

The discussion revealed unanimous agreement that the only way the Labour Party could become meaningful in the period ahead was to turn outwards and begin to pioneer the struggles underway against the Tories. It was only in the course of getting involved in real struggles that a broad, class-struggle left-wing could begin to develop in the unions and the Party itself against the right-wing policies of the Callaghan leadership.

Building such a left-wing, it was also stressed, could not be done by setting up isolated currents like the SCLV – good though their policies were on a number of issues – but by trying to gain the *maximum unity in action* on given concrete issues (such as the anti-cuts fight). It was by united action on given issues that a lead could be given to thousands in direct anti-Tory struggle and that many, seeing the relevance of the Labour Party, would begin to join it.

Socialist Action – it was agreed – should generally reflect this orientation. While offering many good analytical articles, it was felt that it should come out more regularly and have a number of more punchy, concrete articles reflecting issues which Labour Party members and trade unionists are involved in. It was also suggested that it should open up, more than at present, its columns for debate.

What We Stand For

Socialist Action sees as its central aim building, within the labour movement, a class-struggle left-wing fighting for socialist policies against those which lost Labour the last election and disillusioned thousands of Labour supporters.

Such a left-wing should support not only policies in the interests of working people but also their allies among the youth, Blacks, women and oppressed national minorities. It is only by showing that Labour champions the rights of all the oppressed and exploited that a really united offensive can be organised against the Tories (and their right-wing allies in the labour movement).

Socialist Action believes that a fighting left wing should be built around the following demands:

- * Hands off the unions! No curbs on the right to strike or picket!
- * For the 35-hour week! End unemployment by work-sharing (with no loss of pay) and introduce a mass public works programme for those already on the dole.
- * Oppose all wage curbs. For wage increases tied to the cost of living to offset inflation.
- * Open the books of all companies claiming inability to pay a decent living wage or threatening redundancies. Nationalise those that put profit before people.
- * Tax the rich not the poor. No cuts in the social services – for social spending to be tied to increases in the cost of living.
- * For women's rights. For the right of all women to abortion on demand, free nurseries, equal pay and opportunity. Support NAC.
- * Fight racism. Repeal all racist immigration laws. Defend the right of Black people to organise as they see fit in the community & labour movement.
- * For the right of all oppressed nations to determine their own future – Get the troops out of Ireland now!
- * For a safe environment. End nuclear reactors and base an energy strategy on coal. Explore alternative energy resources.

Socialist Action supporters, while fighting for the above demands, seek the widest possible unity of all forces in the labour movement around concrete issues. They also seek to encourage the widest democracy in the labour movement to allow all currents to argue for their point of view and for decisions to be mandatory on Labour leaders.

If you would like to find out more about Socialist Action – or contribute to it – write to: Socialist Action, c/o 58 Auckland Road, London SE19.

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Harrisburg, Cherbourg... When Will It Happen

Last month, another chapter was added to the story of 'near misses' in the nuclear power industry. This time, it was the turn of the people of Cherbourg in Northern France to narrowly escape a 'melt down'.

An electrical fault, caused by a small fire, knocked out the plant's cooling system for about 12 hours. The plant was rapidly closed and, due to radiation leaks, engineers announced that it would be weeks - if not months - before it could be opened again.

If the fault hadn't been detected in time - and a melt-down had occurred - over 4,000 people would have been stricken by radiation sickness. An increase in cancer would have led to yet another 45,000 deaths over the next ten years.

WARNING

During the danger period, when

25 000 MARCH IN WASHINGTON

More than 25,000 joined the Washington march, last month, for a Non-Nuclear World. Coming only a day after Carter's military provocation in Iran, the demonstration also registered a protest by many of those present against this act of war.

The procession led off with a contingent of hundreds from the Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, area - site of the Three Mile Island disaster that began more than a year ago. "We almost lost Pennsylvania" declared one banner.

Jane Lee, a Harrisburg dairy farmer, explained in the rally at the end: "No-one died at Three Mile Island, they tell us. No-one died: but hear this... We had 13 hyperthyroid cases, eight crib deaths and nine still-births and we're still counting".

IRAN

Not far behind the Harrisburg marchers came a group of coal miners from Pennsylvania's United Mine Workers chanting "Nuclear power, hell no - why not union coal?" They were joined by more than 40 protesters from the United Steelworkers.

Other contingents represented anti-nuclear coalitions across the country. Significant was the support of the Citizens Party, a newly-formed organisation of middle class reformers, whose representative at the end pointed out the link between the nuclear question and Iran.

"I want to remind you", pointed out Barry Commoner, "that when Mr Carter went to Iran three years ago and proclaimed the Shah the 'greatest friend of democracy', he sold him eight nuclear power plants. And I want to remind you that the first act of the new regime that overthrew the Shah was to stop those nuclear plants".

Commoner went on to denounce the hypocrisy of the Carter regime and point out that the American and Iranian people had one major thing in common: "We are all for peace: we are all against nuclear power".



no controls were operating, what did the authorities do? Did they evacuate the workers in the plant? Did they warn the local population of the dangers and try to evacuate them rapidly from the area?

Like hell they did. They set up a strict wall of secrecy. They clearly decided that risking the lives of thousands was more important than giving political ammunition to the mass anti-nuclear movement in France which has been fighting tooth-and-nail to reverse the government's plans to build another 40 reactors.

The 30,000 strong protest against the plans to build a new plant at Plogoff, in Brittany, only a few weeks earlier, obviously persuaded them that discretion was the better part of valour.

GREEN LIGHT

Have the near-accidents at Harrisburg or Cherbourg persuaded the Thatcher government to rethink its nuclear programme for Britain? Not on your life. Only last month, they announced the go-ahead of a 10-year expansion of these nuclear death-traps at a cost of over 1 billion pounds a year.

These plans have been given the green light despite the claim by the CEBG (Central Electricity Generating Board) that it will be hard-pressed to meet its government-imposed cash limits this year.

Moreover, the financing of these potential time-bombs is being sought through massive cuts in health, education and housing. While Thatcher can find the money to build Harrisburg-type reactors all over the country, hospitals and schools are closing down through

lack of funds.

REASON

The obvious question is - why is the government so intent on rushing into a nuclear programme whose threat to health and safety has become increasingly obvious over the years?

The answer is not too hard to find. Behind Thatcher stands a powerful industrial lobby intent on the massive profits to be had out of a nuclear programme. Arnold Weinstock's GEC, for example, already has a 30% share in the recently-formed National Nuclear Corporation.

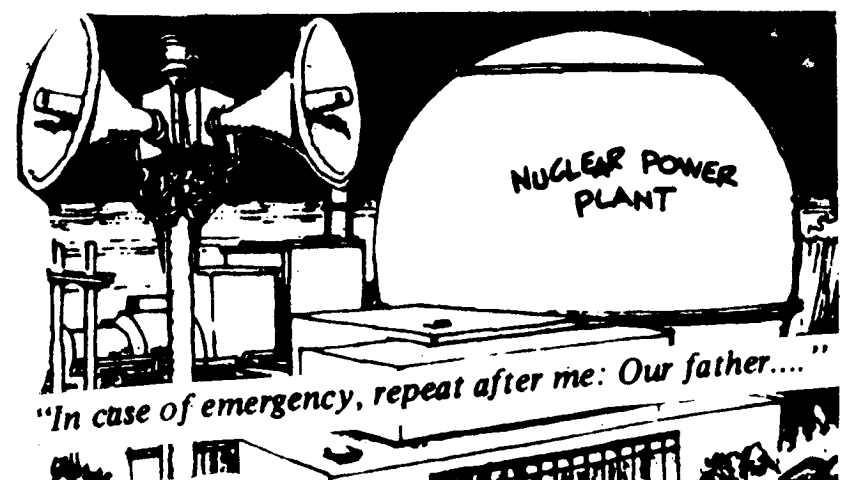
As instability in the Middle East - and massive increases in OPEC prices - make oil an increasingly 'unstable' energy source, investments are more and more being poured into the nuclear industry. What do health and safety matter when profit is at stake?

REACTION

Unfortunately, far from challenging this gamble with death, both the previous Labour government and the TUC have given it their stamp of approval. It was, after all, Energy Secretary Tony Benn who pioneered the nuclear energy programme and his TUC allies who backed him up.

Apart from demanding that 'safety precautions should be looked at more closely', the TUC has publically announced that it sees nuclear power as a major factor in promoting economic growth and providing extra jobs.

Such an attitude has a callous, almost ostrich-like disregard for the safety of union members. The



Len Wagstaff (Vauxhall CLP)

Open Here?



self who threatened the Windscale workers, on strike in 1978, with court action?

CAMPAIGN

Despite the short-sighted attitude of the TUC, however, there are signs that opposition is growing in the labour movement to the leaders' short-sighted views. The Yorkshire area of the NUM - led by Arthur Scargill - has come out against the nuclear strategy and offered an alternative based on coal. Similar resolutions have been pioneered in other unions such as NALGO and ASTMS (which posed last year a sharp criticism of the TUC Energy Report).

Such opposition has to be coordinated and carried into the labour movement against those who proclaim that there is no alternative to nuclear power. Nuclear power, it must be stressed, is a threat to life, jobs and democratic rights.

There is easily enough coal to provide the basis for energy needs for hundreds of years ahead, during which time research could be developed into alternative sources such as solar power.

MASS ACTION

It is not enough, however, merely to pass resolutions through union and Labour Party branches against Thatcher's attempt to turn Britain into a nuclear time-bomb. What is needed is a mass campaign on the streets.

Last year, Arthur Scargill helped sponsor a mass conference of anti-nuclear activists in London as a beginning of such a campaign. Trade union and Labour Party branches should be urged to affiliate to the campaign - or its local groups - and to take an active part in building mass action on the streets.

Nuclear power is not just the concern of environmentalists. It is the concern of all working people and it is working people who should take the lead in demanding:

**NO NUCLEAR POWER!
FOR A SAFE ENERGY
STRATEGY BASED ON COAL**

technology for 'safe' nuclear power stations does not yet exist - as the numerous near-accidents to date have proved. As long as they continue to function, there will be continual threats of radiation leaks... nuclear waste... and, worst of all, 'meltdowns'.

JOBS

Not only do nuclear reactors threaten lives but they also - contrary to TUC logic - are a direct menace to jobs. One job in the Nuclear Energy industry costs at least £600,000 in investment, as compared to as little as £150,000 for a similar job in coal or electricity.

Not content with seeing thousands of jobs go to the wall, the TUC also seems to be prepared to sacrifice hard-fought for union rights as well (which is one of the reasons Thatcher is promoting nuclear plants so fervently). Workers employed in power stations can be denied all rights under the Health and Safety Acts.

Moreover, they can be denied the right of free speech - under the Official Secrets Act - and, most important of all, they can be denied the elementary right to strike. Wasn't it Tony Benn him-

WHAT WORKERS SHOULD KNOW ABOUT NUCLEAR POWER

This new pamphlet - written by prominent socialist activist Fred Halstead - presents clearly and simply the central facts about the dangers to health, safety & life caused by nuclear radiation.

The main topics covered are:
* the cause of radiation;
* the specific dangers of each kind of radiation;
* the specific dangers at each stage of its production - from mining to the disposal of waste fuel;
* how nuclear power plants work;

The energy industry is spending millions to make it seem that nuclear power is shrouded in complexities only 'experts' can understand. It is a nuclear smokescreen.

Halstead's pamphlet can cut through that smokescreen.



Available from: Socialist Action, c/o 58, Auckland Rd, London, SE 19.

WELSH ANTI-NUCLEAR CAMPAIGN



Last April, over 200 activists gathered at a rally in Cardiff to launch the Welsh Anti-Nuclear Alliance. Present were representatives from anti-nuclear groups, the Ecology Party, Plaid Cymru and the labour movement.

Discussion centred on government plans to site nuclear plants in North Wales. These plans would not - it was argued - bring jobs to unemployment black spots but actually replace workers in labour intensive industries.

Ernie Roberts (Vice President of Plaid Cymru) actually quoted government documents to show how nuclear plants were to be used as a weapon to erode the militancy of strong unions such as the miners or electricity workers.

Other speakers concentrated on the dangers of nuclear power. Jonathon Porrit

(Chairperson of the Ecology Party) stressed that there was 'no such thing as the peaceful use of the atom', and Alan Rogers, Euro-MP for South Wales, backed him up by asking: "If nuclear power stations are so clean, why build them away from large urban centres - why not build them in Battersee, Whitehall or the gardens of Buckingham Palace?"

Rogers went on to call for a mass campaign of civil disobedience - similar to those that have arisen on the continent - as the only way to stop the governments programme in its tracks.

The meeting eventually passed a motion opposing nuclear power stations in Wales - and the siting of 'nuclear waste' - and set up a delegate conference for June to decide upon the structure of an ongoing campaign.

by Alan Wilkes

Anti-Cuba Campaign

As part of its smear campaign against the Cuban revolution, Washington has gone out of its way to 'dramatise' the plight of the several thousand Cubans at the Peruvian Embassy in Havana.

They have been portrayed in the Western press as victims of political persecution by a 'totalitarian' regime, clamouring to escape Cuba for the 'free world'. "Our heart goes out to the almost 10,000 freedom-loving Cubans", declared Carter late last April.

But what are the facts? Is Washington genuinely concerned with these would-be emigres or, on the contrary, are they being used merely as a pawn to discredit the Cuban revolution?

LIMITS

It is true that there are people in Cuba who do want to get out and who can't. The responsibility for this cannot be placed, however, at the door of the Cuban leaders who - from the beginning of the revolution - have freely allowed those who want to leave to do so.

The Cuban government has told the people at the Peruvian Embassy that they are free to go to whatever country will take them. They have provided them with food, water, toilets and medical supplies. It has offered them safe-conduct passes so they can travel back and forth to the Embassy without hindrance.

The reason why these people can't get out of Cuba is because - quite simply - capitalist governments are not willing to take them!

QUOTAS

Writing in the *New York Times* last month, Jo Thomas pointed out that: "The USA and Spain are the only countries accepting immigrants from Cuba, which has granted far more exit permits than there are opportunities to leave".

The 'lack of opportunities' to leave is a polite way of saying that the USA and Spain severely limit the number of visas they will allow. To date, for example, the Carter government has only been willing to allow 3,500 Cubans into the United States.

This means that thousands of Cubans who want to leave have no way out unless they hijack boats - often taking the crews hostage - and force their way past the US Immigration authorities. These dangerous

and criminal actions are then praised by Washington as 'heroic escapes' from the jaws of communism!

AIM

The reason why, of course, Washington imposes these quotas is clear. They are not really concerned with helping the 'freedom-loving' Cubans but with manipulating the issue of Cuban immigration as a propaganda tool to discredit the Cuban leaders.

This has become particularly important at a time of rising revolutionary ferment throughout the area - from Nicaragua to El Salvador - when working people are looking more and more at the example of the Cuban revolution.

By holding down entry quotas - thus forcing desperate acts on the part of Cuban dissidents - they can portray Cuba as some sort of 'island prison' denying its citizens access to the 'free world'.

EXAMPLE

The way Washington has used the incidents at the Peruvian Embassy is the clearest example of this. Cuba, Peru and other Latin American governments have an accord under which their respective embassies may grant asylum and safe conduct to those they consider 'political refugees'.

In recent months, the Peruvian and other governments - no doubt inspired by Washington - have made it known that those who entered their embassies by force would, by virtue of that fact, be accepted as political refugees.

As an *Agence-France* press report recently stated, as regards the Colombian government: "(it) will only accept those would-be refugees who crash their way into its compound".

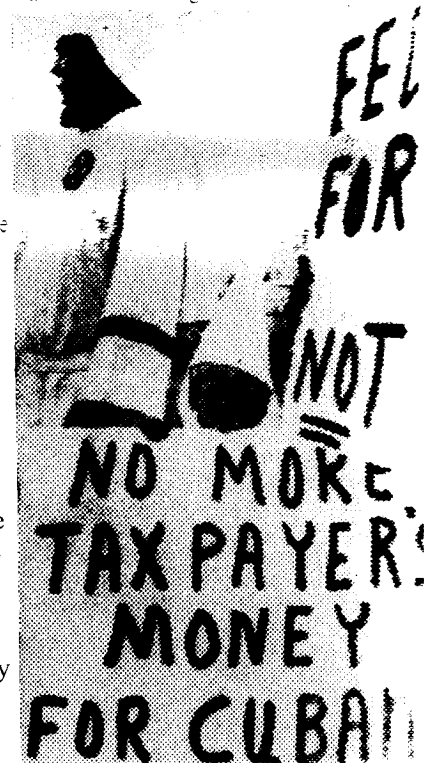
VIOLENCE

Clearly, such a move was designed to incite violence among Cuban dissidents and paint the Cuban leaders as a repressive force. They were not disappointed. On April 1st, six Cubans stole a bus and crashed it through the gates of the Peruvian Embassy, killing a guard in the process.

The Cuban government's refusal to continue guarding the Embassy as a result - and their call on anyone wishing to leave Cuba to report to

the Embassy compound - drew thousands more there.

Despite the fact that the Cuban government was clearly willing to help all those wishing to leave the island, the Western press turned the event round to create the opposite effect. The descending of thousands on the Peruvian Embassy was painted as an attempt by 'freedom-loving' Cubans to escape from the jaws of a totalitarian regime.



RESPONSE

The fact that about 10,000 anti-socialist forces have descended on the Peruvian and other embassies in Havana has had little effect on the mass of Cuban workers.

In response to the lies and distortions whipped up in the Western press, they have mobilised in their millions to defend the Cuban government and the revolution. They realise that the real problem is not one of a repressive government holding people in Cuba against their will but one of capitalist governments keeping people out.

They are only too willing for those who do not support the aims of the revolution to leave. Because, contrary to the smear campaign whipped up by Washington and its allies, they know only too well that, as Castro explained earlier, "The struggle for socialism is voluntary; that was and is our view".

Pete Marais

Hands Off ILEA!



Sally Burrows (NUT)

The Tory government is launching a vicious attack on education. Last July, both Westminster and Wandsworth councils requested that control of local education be placed in their hands. Under this impetus, the government set up the Baker Report which recommended that ILEA be broken up.

Labour-controlled ILEA was accused of being 'unaccountable' (would they say the same about the police), having consistently bad exam results and of overspending. This frame-up of Britain's most progressive educational authority was obviously motivated by Tory aims to ram through a policy of 'go it alone'.

Breaking up ILEA, the Tories

no doubt thought, would throw education back into the local boroughs and force the poorer ones - like Lambeth or Newham - to make savage cuts in teacher employment and educational provisions.

As Haringey councillor Steven Corbyn pointed out, it would mean "...a severe curtailment of educational opportunities and an enormous job loss for teacher and manual workers".

THREAT

The Baker Report, however, was so clearly biased that it even embarrassed sections within the Tory party. The figures it quoted were so obviously distorted that

they were rapidly shot down.

While making a tactical retreat, however, the Tories have not given up their hopes of demolishing ILEA. Only, recently, they set up a study group of ministers, headed by Lady Young (Education Minister) to present a second report, ready for September or October this year. Its aim is clearly to produce more 'credible' reasons for disbanding the authority, or least 're-structuring' it.

REACTION

The Tory attack is meeting, however, a growing response within London's labour movement. The London Labour Party recently called on CLPs to oppose the break-up and many of the latter - such as Streatham - are holding public meetings to whip up support on this issue.

The South East Region of the TUC has become involved and is helping to co-ordinate a campaign by local unions and Labour Party branches against the Tory plans. In Wandsworth - where the Tory council is pushing hard to get out of ILEA - a strong and active parents' organisation has already swung into action, holding meetings and demonstration.

Clearly, what is necessary in the coming months is to co-ordinate a massive campaign against the Tories to save ILEA. This means getting resolutions through local unions and Labour parties, holding public meetings and calling for demonstrations which can involve everyone who will be affected by the Tory plans: teachers, parents and school students.

Contact: "Defend ILEA" c/o 13-15 Stockwell Rd, SW9.

WANDSWORTH PARENTS FIGHT BACK

When Wandsworth council asked to withdraw from ILEA last year, without consulting parents, teachers or governing bodies, the response was swift. Beginning in September, parents held protest meetings in school after school in the borough.

By January, the Secretary of State had received 116 'representations' (of which only 3 supported the Wandsworth 'go it alone' policy). Wandsworth council, for obvious reasons, has refused to comment on how many letters it has received from parents denouncing their 'break-up' decision.

When the Baker Committee began to make its report-back in February this year, however, it became clear to Wandsworth parents that the council's move was merely the first step in a well co-ordinated Tory attack on ILEA.

FACTS?

During March, therefore, we continued our campaign by petitioning across the borough and the collection of signatures is still going on. 45,000 copies of a leaflet were distributed and street meetings regularly held.

The support gained from

these activities was enormous. This is not exactly surprising since the attack launched on ILEA by local Tory councillors - and their supporters on the Baker committee - were a tissue of lies from the beginning to the end.

They were merely an excuse for trying to break up the comprehensive system and ram home a series of cuts which is easier on a borough by borough basis

CRITICISM?

The criticisms levelled against ILEA by the Baker Report are easily answered.

* Lack of democratic accountability? But isn't it a fact that the 35 GLC councillors are the only directly-elected members of an Education Committee anywhere in England?

* Lack of financial accountability? But isn't it equally a fact that if ILEA is to be indicted, so can local county councils and the police as well?

* High costs? It is true that ILEA does spend more per pupil than the national average. But isn't it a fact that it is responsible for a greater number of Higher Education Institutions and 88 special schools for the handicapped?

by Sally Bowdrey (WASP & Streatham CLP)

And isn't it also a fact that it has a legal obligation to pay teachers London Weighting?

* Low achievement? Poor exam results was a central trust of the report. But, as for exams, isn't it a fact that the figures used in the Report are generally acknowledged as 'selective' and that exam results in ILEA are no worse than anywhere else in the country?

OFFENSIVE

The Times Educational Supplement - hardly a radical journal - was forced to sum up the Baker Report as a 'hasty and unbelievably superficial document'. Wandsworth parents obviously share this view as can be seen by their determined effort to resist any Tory attempts to break up ILEA.

Although the Baker Report seems to have been shelved more recently, the fact that another committee has been set up under Lady Young to continue investigation into ILEA clearly means that the Tory conspiracy is not yet over.

If it is to be stopped, this will mean extending the 'Save ILEA' campaign we launched in Wandsworth into other boroughs and showing the Tory government that parents have no intention of seeing the clock turned back on the education of their children.

For a Mass Fighting YS

Last April, over 2000 Young Socialists - representing 260 branches - turned up to the annual Labour Party Young Socialists Conference, in Llandudno.

The Conference was faced with a real challenge. How could it relate to the thousands of young people drawn into political activity over the past years on issues as wide as abortion rights to unemployment?

How could it draw these layers into the YS, turning it into a mass socialist youth organisation with roots among college and school students, the unemployed and young workers?

SIDELINES

The fact is - it didn't even try. Of course, there was a lot of rhetoric. Delegate after delegate got up to denounce the Tories in ringing terms and speak of the major 'battles to come...'

But when it came to practical proposals - particularly relating to young people - there was a deafening silence. No lead whatsoever was given to the thousands who turned up on how to build their local branches by relating to the concerns of youth.

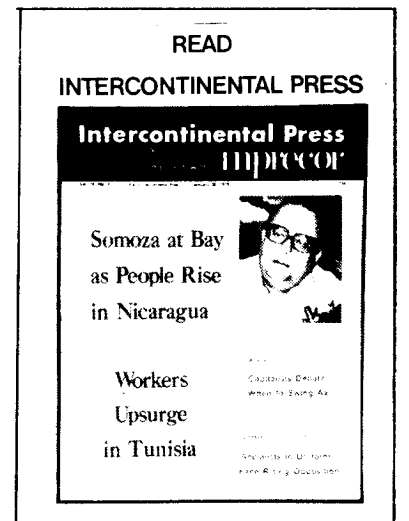


For older YS members of course, there is nothing new in this. It merely reflects the sad state of the YS - dominated by the Militant tendency - which prefers preaching socialism abstractly from the sidelines to getting involved in real issues and struggles.

EXAMPLES

This could be seen most clearly in the 'debates' that took place on the questions of women's and Blacks oppression. The Militant dominated majority had absolutely nothing to say about the mass anti-Corrie or CARL demonstrations - which drew thousands of young people into action - for the simple reason that they had opposed them!

They opposed them - and the independant organisation of women



or Blacks inside the labour movement - because they see such moves as 'splitting' the working class. Such an attitude not only cuts the YS off from thousands involved in anti-Tory struggle but can lead to dangerous attitudes.

When Anne Twentyman, from Moss Side YS, moved a motion supporting women's self-organisation, she was jeered at and wolf-whistled by Militant supporters. Such sexist attitudes fit in with their 'Plunder Women' poster (which shows Margaret Thatcher as an obese bikini-clad Wonder Women).

'DEBATE'

It is clear that, for Militant, the YS does not exist as a campaigning organisation seeking to get involved in the real struggles youth are concerned with. It represents, for them, merely a passive organisation in which they can preach from the side-lines.

In order to make sure that reality does not penetrate the YS, they have now reached the extent of almost eliminating debate. Conference meetings have virtually been transformed into Militant rallies from which 'real' issues - from the growing anti-nuclear movement to the struggle in N.Ireland - are carefully excluded.

The fact that 50 out of the 260 branches supported a resolution calling for greater democracy in the YS is an indication of how frustrating and demoralising Militant's strangle hold is.

BREAK-THROUGH

It is clear that if the YS is ever to get out of the ghetto into which Militant has dragged it then a fighting policy is needed. As a *Socialist Action* leaflet distributed at the Llandudno Conference put it: "It's no use talking about leading a campaign against the Tories by itself. What we need to do is draw up a series of campaigns that can draw thousands of young people concretely into anti-Tory action".

On June 18th, *Socialist Action* supporters are holding a public meeting in South London to discuss exactly how the YS can begin to move boldly out and overcome its stagnation. Speakers will include prominent YS members George Hold and Graham Weight. All YS members - and adults - are welcome.

Graham Weight (Peckham YS)

SOCIALIST ACTION PUBLIC FORUM

Which Way for the YS?

Speakers: George Hold (Peckham YS)

Graham Weight (Peckham YS)

AFGHANISTAN : The truth !

Five months ago, thousands of Soviet soldiers moved across Russia's southern border into Afghanistan. Afghanistan was thrust to the center of world politics.

Carter claimed that the Soviet intervention threatened world peace. The capitalist media poured out stories about mass murders by Soviet troops - accepting the most outlandish assertions of the ultra-rightist guerrillas. Afghanistan was labeled "Russia's Vietnam".

The Afghan events and the responses of the U.S. government pose many questions for working people. What is happening in Afghanistan? Why are Soviet troops there? What is Soviet foreign policy? Is the Soviet Union or U.S. big business the cause of the war danger?

The Truth About Afghanistan by Doug Jenness (Pathfinder Press, S.95) is a pamphlet that answers these and other questions.

REVOLUTION

In April 1978, he explains, a revolution began in Afghanistan. A dictatorship backed by landlords, capitalists, and the neighbouring shah of Iran, was toppled. The new government began to institute desperately needed reforms.

Hundreds of thousands of peasants got land. Women and national minorities were granted more rights. Trade unions were legalized. A literacy drive was launched. Health care and sanitation began to be extended to the countryside.

The landlords, usurers, and dope peddlers who had profited from the old order organized armed bands

to try to reverse these gains. Washington, which feared the impact of such changes on other countries in the region, helped finance and train the counterrevolutionaries.

In the closing months of 1979, it appeared that the rightists were making some headway. With greatly increased outside help, they hoped to soon threaten the government's survival.

That's when the Soviet troops came in. Why?

COLLABORATION ?

"It (the Soviet government) feared the victory of the counterrevolution and the establishment of a hostile US backed beachhead along the thousand-mile border between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan," explains Jenness.

The Soviet Union's aid to Afghanistan stems ultimately from the fact that it is a workers state. But it is governed by a privileged bureaucratic caste that extracts privileges from the progressive planned economy established as a consequence of the Russian revolution.

The basic goal of the Soviet rulers is to make deals with Washington and the other imperialist powers. They fear revolutions in other countries as a threat to the prospect of peaceful collaboration with imperialism.

But such collaboration is impossible in the long run because US big business relentlessly pushes for more markets for goods and investments - for more profits. This drive toward world domina-



tion means that Washington must seek to undermine and destroy the Soviet workers state.

UNION

Jenness compares the Kremlin's response to that of a union bureaucrat forced to oppose a union-busting drive:

"When the Kremlin sent Soviet troops into Afghanistan, it did not do so out of revolutionary motives, but as a defensive measure. It saw the US - and Pakistani-backed guerrillas as a threat to the Soviet workers state, which is their base of power and privileges. But like the case of union bureaucrat taking action to defend the union, the Soviet action coincided with the interests of the Afghan workers and peasants in putting down the counterrevolution."

Jenness points out the fallacy of the portrayal of Afghanistan as Russia's Vietnam: "The fact is that the Soviet troops intervened in Afghanistan on the side of the forces fighting for the interests of the workers and peasants, who are

the big majority, and against the reactionary ruling classes, who represent the interests of a minority. In Vietnam, on the other hand, Washington intervened on the side of landlords, capitalists, and other privileged rich, while the bulk of the population supported the fighters of the National Liberation Front".

THREAT

The real threat of war stems from big business and its government in Washington: "Today, the big clashes are ... struggles by the toiling masses to take control of their lands and resources away from the masters. ...

"In response to these struggles," Jenness explains, "The US government has intervened time and again in colonial and semicolonial countries to protect the investments of the American ruling rich. The US. ruling class has used every means at its disposal - from military intervention to economic pressure to blockades, CIA plots, and arms sales".

"A victory for the counter-

Seller of the Month

Last month's 'Seller of the Month' award goes to Graham Weight (Peckham YS) who distributed over 100 copies of *Socialist Action*. Graham's trick?

'I'm a brilliant salesperson! No, seriously, one of the things *Socialist Action* supporters in Peckham have learned is always to keep a few copies of the paper with you.

It's not just a question of selling on a demonstration. You're always meeting new people - in your union or on your estate - who are beginning to get interested in socialist ideas. You'd be surprised how many you can sell that way'.

volution in Afghanistan", he concludes, "would embolden the imperialists to try to defeat the struggle of the masses in Nicaragua, Grenada, Kampuchea, Iran, and other countries in the midst of revolutions....

TRUTH

"The Soviet Union, on the other hand", writes Jenness, "has played a different role in relation to the colonial countries. It does not have an economic system which demands foreign investments. It has no big corporations - like Exxon - with profits to protect. The colonial revolution does not threaten it in the same way as it does in the US. In some cases, the Soviet Union has even extended aid to the revolutionary struggles. Soviet foreign policy has had a defensive character - it has not been the cause of war. The threat of war, including nuclear war, has largely come from the United States".

To counter the spread of revolutions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, the US rulers are increasing military spending, trying to reinstitute the draft, and imposing austerity on American working people. The lies and distortions about Afghanistan are sucker bait aimed at persuading us to go along.

The Truth About Afghanistan answers the lies with the facts. It is well worth reading. Osborne Hart

The Truth About AFGHANISTAN

Doug Jenness

from Pathfinder

- How did the Afghan revolution develop?
- What have been its achievements?
- Who are the "Muslim rebels"?
- How has the U.S. government intervened?
- What is the role of the Soviet Union?
- What about the right of self-determination?
- Are we moving toward war?

Education for Socialists: MARXISM AND FEMINISM

What is the relation between marxism and feminism? What role have marxists played - and can they play - in the fight for women's liberation?

These questions have been at the root of a major debate in the women's movement over the past decade. Many women, rightly rejecting the 'down-playing' of women's rights in the labour movement and the 'left', have come to question whether marxism has anything to offer at all.

Beyond the Fragments - written by Hilary Wainwright and Sheila Rowbottom - is a case in point. The authors adopt the sterile position of 'counterposing' the women's movement to the marxist tradition which - they assert - has historically undervalued the struggle for women's liberation.

BREAK-THROUGH

Nothing could be further from the truth. *Revolutionary Dynamics of Women's Liberation* - a pamphlet written by Socialist Action supporter Sabina Roberts - helps refute such myths. "Marxism", she

explains, "far from ignoring the oppression of women, has always viewed it as central in the fight against a social system based on injustice and oppression".

The first part of the pamphlet explains the significance of Engels' analysis of women's oppression. Limited it might be, she argues, but it was an historic break-through in that it:

- * showed that women's oppression was not natural - or rooted in any inherent inferiority - but grew out of the rise of class society;
- * explained how the oppression of women has been continued through her role in the family unit;
- * showed that the fight for women's liberation can only come about as part of a wider, socialist, revolution.

TRADITION

Sabina Roberts argues that marxism has not only provided the women's movement with its most important theoretical tools but - equally important - a tradition for fighting for women's rights from the First

International to the present.

As evidence, she cites the mass, independent women's movement created in the pre-World War 1 years by activists in the German Social-Democratic Party.

She goes on to describe the big impetus to women's rights given by the Second International calling, throughout Europe, for demonstrations in favour of universal female suffrage. It was these demonstrations, she adds, which created the tradition of International Women's Day.

SOVIET UNION

Most important of all, she shows the major step forward in women's rights achieved by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917: the introduction of equal pay, the right to child-care, abortion, divorce, and socialised laundries and canteens;

This part of the pamphlet should prove particularly interesting to those feminists who - often through lack of information - see in the marxist tradition something alien to the aspirations of the pres-

ent women's movement.

They confuse - marxism with its opposite, Stalinism, that turned the clock back on women's rights as it did on those of all other oppressed layers. The marxist tradition was carried on by Trotsky who saw regaining women's rights as a central task of defending the gains of the revolution.

COUNTERPOSED

That tradition - the author stresses - continues today. Socialist Action supporters have advocated the building of a mass independent women's movement fighting for its rights.

They have been active in the fight for abortion rights, for child-care and equal pay. As the author points out: "As women, we will refuse to put aside, or downplay, our fight for anyone and we are rightly suspicious of anyone who tells us to do so".

But, she says, being a feminist does not mean one cannot be a marxist also, as *Beyond*

Evelyn Reed WOMAN'S EVOLUTION

from matriarchal clan to patriarchal family



the Fragments supporters believe. On the contrary, it allows one to be more effective as a feminist since one has a clear perspective of how to fight for women's rights.

by Sylvia Brookes (ASTMS)

STEEL: THE LESSONS

TERRY VINEY
(Croyden CLP)



Steelworkers from Caldicot picketing in Bristol

The longest national strike since the war ended last month. The final deal - a 16% increase coupled with productivity strings and job loss - was a clear sell-out of rank-and-file steelworkers by the union leaders.

There was nothing unexpected about this. Sirs and other ISTC leaders had, throughout the 3 months' stoppage, sought to find a compromise with management at every turn. They delayed the entry of the private steelworkers (producing over 26% of total output) and opposed the flying pickets set up chiefly by the South Yorkshire Strike Committee. Finally, over-riding militant protests to continue the strike, Sirs accepted the 16% increase to be paid for by 12,000 of his members' jobs.

TEST CASE

Despite the union leaders' sell-out, however, in no way could the outcome of the strike be seen as a Tory victory. On the contrary, the government was quite unable to break rank-and-file resistance and was forced to settle on terms hardly conducive to its long-term aims.

Despite Joseph's threats, the original 2% offer was gradually raised to just over 16%.

Most important of all, the steelworkers' strike has clearly raised the temperature of the class struggle. Rank-and-file workers were not, at the end of the day, demoralised but hardened in their anti-Tory hatred and this spirit has communicated itself to wide layers of the labour movement.

TEST CASE

There can be little doubt that this is exactly what the Tories wanted to avoid. Originally, the steelworkers were chosen for a confrontation because Joseph was convinced that they would offer little opposition to their rationalisation plans - massive redundancies, 'productivity' proposals and low wages.

After all, the union had shown their weak-kneed attitude in the past, agreeing to plant closures and erosion of working conditions that had already led to drastic cuts in the workforce. Where better - the Tories calculated - than in steel to implement their

strategy of making workers pay for the crisis?

Fearful of taking on the 'core' unions such as British Oxygen workers or the miners - who had already brought down a previous Tory government - they no doubt hoped to use the defeat in steel to demoralise stronger sectors of the labour movement in the next wage round.

CAMPAIGN

To this end, a campaign of hatred was whipped up against the steelworkers. Threats of ever-more redundancies were designed to split the workforce and draw 'weaker' layers back to work. Pickets were denounced in the press as 'union bully-boys' and the police were given the green light to intimidate the militants and cart them off to the courts.

Despite the full barrage of the Tory offensive, however, the strike remained 100% solid. No sector of British Steel workers crumbled even though those from plants such as Corby or Shotton - which were facing almost immediate shutdown - seemed to have little to gain from strike action.

Moreover, the massive flying picket operation that was mounted within days of the strike being called grew more intensive. Towards the end of the strike - despite Sirs' opposition - docks, railways, steel stockholders and private industry were seriously beginning to feel the pinch.

SOLIDARITY

Most important of all, as the strike began to develop, it drew behind it the support of a wide layer of the trade union movement who clearly saw it as a trial of strength with the Tory government.

Railway workers refused to transport steel and dockers to handle it. Thousands of miners - South Wales and South Yorkshire - formed mass pickets at the private steel corporations (as at Sheerness and Hadfields).

What was even more significant, solidarity actions - such as that called by the South Wales TUC - brought out hundreds of thousands of workers in a one-day general strike. Fearful of the impact of steel plant closures on the region, the one day strike showed

the tendency implicit in the battle to broaden out into a general confrontation with the Tories. The threatened national dock strike a month later confirms this trend.

It also falls on the shoulders of the TUC who could have won the strike any time they wished to. Far from backing the call by the South Wales TUC for an indefinite stoppage in support of the ISTC, the TUC intervened deliberately to undermine it.

SURPRISE

There can be no doubt that the Tories were taken completely by surprise by the determination of the steelworkers and the growing momentum among wide layers to turn it into a general confrontation with the government. The situation looked set for a repeat of the 1974 miners' strike which led to the removal of the Heath government.

What saved the Tories was the intervention of the trade-union leaders. At every stage of the struggle, they sought to undermine its effects and prevent it spreading to other layers. Responsibility falls not only on the shoulders of the ISTC leaders who opposed flying pickets or who - for over a month - refused to call out the private steelworkers.

RADICAL

While the intervention by the union leaders may have got the government off the hook, it certainly hasn't helped them in their long-term aims. The Tories did not manage - as they had hoped - to use the defeat of the steelworkers as a 'precedent' for other workers.

While weaker groups of workers - seeing the Tories' firmness - will no doubt be cautious in the coming period, stronger sections such as the miners will hardly have been intimidated. Moreover, the union leaders themselves have come in for a severe criticism by the rank-and-file whose experience in the strike has revealed the limitations of the bureaucrats' perspective. When Sirs announced the deal, the ISTC centre was surrounded by militants denouncing the sell-out and demanding a continuation of the strike.

CLASS STRUGGLE

It was these workers who, throughout the strike, had taken the lead in organising rank-and-file resistance and winning over broad layers in solidarity. It was they who had set up the unofficial strike committees - such as that in South Yorkshire - which had organised rallies and demonstrations. They who had fought to organise the flying pickets.

More important still, it was they who had fought to turn the strike from one merely around wages into one against redundancies as well. It was they who had mounted the call 'No Redundancies! For 20% index-linked!', which began to catch on among the rank-and-file.

In the coming period, it is these militants who need to organise nationally and begin to fight for a clear class-struggle alternative to the vacillations and sell-outs of the ISTC leaders. For, if there was one lesson to learn from the steel strike, it was that living standards and jobs will not be defended against Tory attacks by the present mis-leaders.

Only a serious alternative to them, rooted in the rank-and-file will be able to offer policies - and a fighting spirit to impose these policies - which can defeat the ruling class assault.

NO VICTIMISATIONS!

Last February, Dereck Robinson was sacked from British Leyland for daring to oppose management's decisions. It was a clear case of victimisation of an active trade unionist for political reasons.

Robinson's case, it would seem, is not unique. His treatment has set a precedent for managements elsewhere to 'get rid of' active trade unionists. Latest in line are Brixton DOE members of the CPSA who are currently being singled out and victimised.



Phil Cordell

SACKED

Phil Cordell was the first affected. Cordell, secretary of the South London CPSA branch for DOE workers, was sacked on April 30. The reasons given?

* that on April 11, he attended a lobby of the CPSA National Executive, following a mandate from his local union. No other union members from other DOE offices have been disciplined.

* that on May 1, he signed an ANL advert in the South London Press (in line with union policy which sponsors the ANL both locally and nationally). Other civil servants signed the advert but only Brixton members were disciplined with warning letters.

* that he attended the TUC lobby of Parliament against the Corrie anti-abortion Bill. Again, many CPSA members in other areas did so although only members in Brixton were disciplined.

RESPONSE

When news of Cordell's sacking broke, the outrage was such that there was a one-day walk-out at the Brixton DOE. Since then, the CPSA has authorised a two-day official strike (with pay) and pressure is mounting for further action.

Cordell, however, is only the first to receive this treatment. The fact that two other branch officers are likely to be dismissed, for breaches in discipline, shows that a concerted attack is underway on the democratic rights of union members and their organisation.

It is clear that examples like that of Phil Cordell will multiply if the Prior anti-union Bill goes through later this year. This is why support must be built up locally for Cordell's reinstatement and nationally to stop that Bill becoming law.

Phil Edwardes

LAMBETH LABOUR LEFT ORGANISE



Lambeth Labour leader Ted Knight.

Last year, when the Tories announced their swingeing cuts in the rate support grant, the reaction of Lambeth Labour Party was sharp. Pointing out that the Council was elected to improve and not cut services, they forced Council leader Ted Knight into launching a mass campaign against the government.

It was clear, however, that the Council only launched the action under pressure. As the time approached for them to draw up their 1980-81 budget, they began to get cold feet. Worried that they might become isolated and a number one target for Heseltine, they issued a document arguing that rate increases were the only way to offset cuts.

In the event, a massive 49.9% rate increase was accepted together with rent increases of £1.50 a week for council tenants and a cut in 'uncommitted growth items'. All semblance of a campaign was dropped.

FIGHT-BACK

The Council's retreat, however, has not been accepted without opposition. Last month, at a public meeting in Lambeth, many local supporters of a no cuts/no rate increases position met together to work out a fight-back against the Council's stance.

However the Council poses it, Lambeth Labour Left agreed, these increases will only pass onto Labour supporters the burden of the present crisis and undermine their own support.

Moreover, it was argued, if Lambeth is already prepared to back down, what will it do in future years when the Tory cuts become more stringent? Will it be forced to escalate rents and rates still further - at the same time as imposing cuts?

STAND

Far better, it was agreed, for Lambeth to make a stand now while it still had the support of local residents than in a few years time when its politics of retreat have alienated and demoralised thousands.

At the same time as projecting a fighting alternative, however, the meeting recognised that it was vital not to begin the struggle in isolation. That is why it was decided that one of its central thrusts should be organising an all-London meeting in June to bring together all the forces standing on a no cuts/no rate increase position.

CAMPAIGN

Such a campaign can only be built, however, by concentrating not on persuading local councillors of the 'error' of their ways but by turning outwards and building support in the public sector unions and tenants associations for fighting policies.

It is by involving wide layers in a clear no cuts/no rate increases campaign - in the local areas and on an all-London basis - that the forces can be mobilised to give Labour Councils the backing needed to defy the Tory government and its savage cuts.

The next meeting of Lambeth Labour Left is in the Lambeth Town Hall at 8.00pm on Friday June 27th.

Bob Swart (Streatham CLP)

fund drive

SOCIALIST ACTION, unlike the bourgeois press, has no vast funds to promote it. It relies purely on sales and on what readers and sympathisers can donate to it.

If you would like to make a donation—however small, it all helps—please send cheques or postal orders to:

SA Fund Drive, c/o 58 Auckland Road, London SE19.

Criminals or Victims?

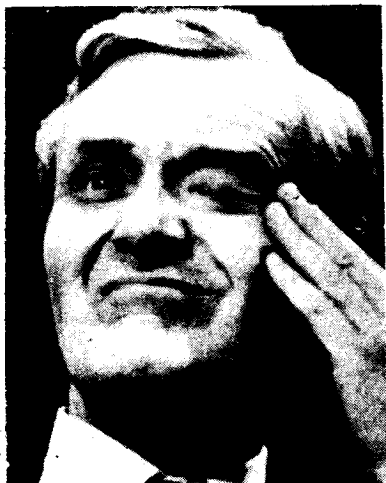


Karl Davis

Little is known about the Arabs who seized the Iranian Embassy in London last month. They claimed to be using the incident to oppose the Iran government's oppression of the Arab region of Khuzestan.

Allowing for the fact that this was true, their action could in no way have helped the Arab people win support for their justified struggle. On the contrary, it merely played into the hands of the Thatcher government who has used the incident to whip up nationalist hysteria.

Benn calls for DEMOCRACY



At a lunch-time rally held on May 31, day of the special Labour Party conference, Tony Benn called for extending still further the democratic reforms in the party.

While supporting the changes already aired at last year's conference, Benn added two additional points. The main one was to call on the Parliamentary Labour Party to be more accountable by having it pledge to abide by party policy decided at conference.

This major new step - to be welcomed by all Labour activists fed up to the teeth with seeing Labour governments walking roughshod over conference decisions - was elaborated on Benn beforehand in a broadsheet 'Mobilise for Labour Democracy'.

In it, Benn suggests that every Labour candidate should be obliged to sign a form promising support for the manifesto and that the PLP be called on to give annual reports of cuts actions to conference.

The grouping backing the broadsheet - the Rank and File Mobilising Committee intends holding a series of meetings to rally support for this key demand up and down the country. We should all make sure they get it.

PROUD

"It made us all proud to be British" said Thatcher following the raid of crack SAS thugs on the Embassy on May 6th. "I think we had best consider how we can turn this superb operation to the best advantage of the American hostages".

This 'superb operation' - which resulted in the death of 5 Arabs and injuries to two of the hostages - was carefully planned. The government had, of course, declared that they wanted to settle the matter 'peacefully'. Facts show that this was a fraud.

PUBLICITY

The London police chief John A. Dellow, in charge of the negotiations with the Arabs, told a news conference on May 6th that the occupiers had dropped their original demands.

"I think", he pointed out, "that after making a certain amount of publicity for their cause, they just wanted to leave safely". But the British authorities had 'given no consideration at all to this'.

EXAMPLE

Why not? Because the government saw a perfect example in the occupation to drum up anti-Iranian hysteria and 'back' Carter's military raid in Iran a month or so earlier to

'rescue' the hostages. They proceeded to surround the Embassy with police and SAS commandos, just waiting for a pretext to move in.

That pretext came on May 5th when according to the police, a dead hostage was placed outside the door. At 7.30 that evening, the crack commandos crashed in, leading to the deaths and injuries that took place.

TERRORISM

"This operation, an outstanding success, will show the world that Britain will not tolerate terrorism", crowed Whitelaw the following night. Coming from an ex-Minister in charge of N. Ireland, who for years had unleashed terror against the Irish people, that was a bit much.

For Whitelaw and his ilk, people have to play by the rules. These rules are that oppressed people must meekly submit petitions to seek support for their grievance while they, alone, are allowed to employ force.

The occupation of the Iranian Embassy was misguided. It did nothing to help the cause of the Arab people. But, compared with a government whose aim is to support repression around the world the occupiers were innocent (if misguided) victims.

Potteries hit hard times

Phil Dent (GMWU)

Over the past 10-20 years, the pottery industry has seen a steady advance in production techniques. This has resulted in a gradual decrease in the numbers employed in this traditionally labour-intensive industry.

Since the advent of the Tories, however, the slow reduction has begun to turn more into a gallop. High interest rates, overseas competition and the increasing cost of raw materials has led to large numbers being laid off. Many of these have worked in the industry all their lives and are too old to train for new jobs - even if, in places like Stoke, they were available.

WAGES

Meanwhile, those workers left in the industry are finding it ever more difficult to keep pace with inflation. Take home pay in the potteries is about

£45 a week and many workers, if they are to achieve a living wage, are forced to work atrocious hours.

Clocking on at 6.00 in the morning and clocking off at 10.00 the same night, while not usual is certainly not unheard of.

RADICAL

The effects of lay-offs, poor wages and long hours, however, is beginning to have its effect. Growing layers of union members are beginning to question their leader's lack of resolve and demand much more result policies.

Lay-offs are likely to be a particularly vital question in the coming years. While pottery workers are not against new technology, there is a growing feeling that it should be used not to throw people on the scrap-heap but to shorten the working week and develop better living standards for all.

POST BAG

Dear Comrade,

Just over a month ago, the Friends of the Earth and other anti-nuclear groups called a mass demonstration in London which mobilised over 15,000 against the suicidal plans of the Thatcher government.

The socialist left, apart from a few paper-sellers, were virtually absent from the demonstration which was led by the Liberals. David Steele was the only prominent politician to give support to the aims of the march and pledge to take them up in the Liberal Party programme.

It seems to me that the question of nuclear power is going to become an increasingly important one in Britain (as on the continent where it has developed into a mass movement). Isn't it too important an issue to leave in the hands of Liberals?

Isn't it time that the socialist left began to recognise the threat posed by nuclear power not only to human safety - and that is monstrous enough! - but to democratic rights and trade union conditions? I would like to see *Socialist Action*, which I know has always supported the anti-nuclear movement, giving much more regular coverage to it and helping to stress the importance of it within the Labour Party.

Dave Purser (North London)

We would agree with Cde Purser criticism of the left on this question. A major article in this month's *Socialist Action* will, we hope, begin to redress the situation. -Ed.

I read your paper at this year's LPYS conference and was impressed by the fact that you were the only tendency to make concrete proposals for turning the YS outwards into a real campaigning organisation.

I think many of the points you make deserve full encouragement by those YS members who want to get actively involved in issues instead of sitting passing resolutions in branch meetings.

Certainly, it would be a step forward to see local YS banners on campaigns such as those of TOM, NAC or the recently-set up Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL).

Mick Watson (Preston)

Dear Comrade,

Please find enclosed £2 for a year's sub to *Socialist Action*. I particularly liked the article 'Socialists and the Labour Party' in the last issue. As an ex-SWP member, it summed up my feelings exactly.

Dave Cummins (Margate)

Almost alone of all the 'left press', your tendency has supported the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. While you (rightly) criticise the motives behind Moscow's intervention, you end up by saying: "... despite Moscow's bureaucratic methods and conservative motives, the dispatch of troops was an important aid to the revolutionary process there".

Just how can you justify this? The entry of Soviet troops was a clear violation of the right of the Afghan people to self-determination.

Isn't this why opposition to the troops is growing, as witnessed in the strike that hit Tehran only a few weeks back? How can an intervention, resented by the mass of the Afghan people, be an 'important aid to the revolutionary process there'?

Moreover, the entry of Soviet troops has been used by the Western governments to smear socialism (once again!) and portray it as an aggressive system opposed to democratic rights. This campaign - however hypocritical it might be - does have an impact on working people. While we expose the hypocrisy behind Carter or Thatcher's campaigns, we also have to show how Moscow's action has given the West the excuse to whip it up and detract attention from its own manoeuvres.

I might add that quoting Trotsky on the situation in 1938 does not give the answers to the problems we face in 1980.

Phil Edwardes (S. London)

Dear Comrade,

I recently attended a debate on Ireland between Militant and the Troops Out Movement at Peckham YS. What struck me most clearly was that - despite Militant's so-called socialism - they refuse concretely to support the right of the Irish people to self-determination.

When it came to doing something - like building a mass movement - to get the troops out of Ireland - Militant found every excuse they could not to get involved in the campaign.

Such sectarian attitudes will not help the Irish people and will not help to build the YS either. I think a lot of YS members who attended the meeting saw that very clearly.

Graham Weight (Peckham)

What is *Socialist Action's* attitude towards cannabis? Many young people today 'smoke pot' and it is often used by the police to victimise and harass them. Do you think Socialists should support the 'Legalise Cannabis' campaign?

D.L. (Bradford)

An important point. We will be taking up this issue in next month's *Socialist Action*. Ed.

In last month's *Socialist Action*, you carried an article on Lambeth Council's decision to increase the rates by 49%. The main thrust of the article was to criticise Ted Knight (leader of Lambeth Council) for backing down rather than 'confronting' the Tories.

I'm not sure what *Socialist Action* was suggesting the council do. Lambeth (alone among most councils) ran a determined campaign against the cuts which led to a mass demonstration last October. It was faced this year, however, with a clear choice: either put up the rates or be removed from office.

Should the council have meekly been removed? Should they have allowed the commissioners to come in and butcher the services it has taken so long to build up? Rate increases may not be popular, but at least they allow us to offset most of the Tory cuts and give the council a breathing space with which to carry on the fight.

Phil Davenport (Hackney)

for a PUBLIC ENQUIRY

A.D. Scott



10,000 people marched through Southall to commemorate Blair Peach a few days after his death

At least one thing emerged from the Blair Peach inquest in West London last month. That was that Peach was killed by the police. The jury's verdict of 'death by misadventure' places the responsibility fair and square at the door of the SPG thugs.

It was hardly avoidable considering that 11 witnesses at the inquest testified to having seen Blair struck to the ground by SPG members.

RIDERS

Moreover, one of the 'riders' added by the jury - that in future SPG members should be under firmer control by their officers - clearly suggests that, on that fateful day in Southall, these members were 'out of control'.

As Paul Holborrow, ANL National Secretary put it: "We regard the verdict as establishing beyond any reasonable doubt that the police killed Blair Peach. We think that the riders indicate that the SPG is an uncontrollable private army and has a licence to kill".

JUSTIFIED?

While holding the police responsible for Blair's death, however, the jury's verdict ('death by misadventure') held that the violence used by the police was 'justified' or 'reasonable'.

Such a verdict is hardly surprising considering the 'guidance' given by the coroner, Dr John Burton, throughout the trial. At one stage, Burton emotionally declared that the 'police murder theory' was unacceptable. In his summing up, a clear attempt was made to bulldoze the jury into bringing in a verdict which let the SPG thugs off the hook.

Similar bias could be detected in the fact that the Cass Report - included detailed evidence from relevant witnesses - was withheld during the inquest from the jury and the counsel representing the ANL and Peach's family.

INQUIRY

The ANL and Blair's family, however, are not leaving the matter there. They intend using the evi-

dence that came out at the inquest to campaign for a public inquiry into Blair's death - a call that has already received a substantial amount of backing.

This call should be supported throughout the labour movement. Peach was killed last year for daring to oppose racism. Many others were victims of police violence as the Southall community was subjected to what amounted to a vicious attack.

If Peach's killers are allowed to get away with it, the green light will have been given for them to employ similar tactics against anyone opposing social injustice - from strike pickets to demonstrators. We all have a reason for avenging Blair Peach.

PROTESTS

Hearing the verdict in the Blair Peach inquest, Labour MPs have added their voice to those denouncing judges and coroners for manipulation juries to return verdicts they want.

Martin Flannery, MP Sheffield, Hillsborough, declared: "Deep within the Special Patrol Group there are a group of thugs who can get away with anything because no-one will find them guilty".

Relating the verdict on Blair Peach to those on Liddle Towers and Jimmy Kelly - both of whom died while in police custody - Flannery continued: "I saw the brutality of the SPG on the Grunwick picket lines and, believe me, it was brutal and terrible. Short of a battle, I have never seen anything like it in my life".

Flannery and other MPs such as Michael Meacher have called for a public enquiry into the death of anti-racist Blair Peach to clear the air. Ad Flannery summed it up: "The overwhelming weight of justice in our country is heavily weighted against demonstrators and trade unionists".

Support grows for Tameside

A.D. Scott

Two months ago, Tameside Trades Council was disaffiliated by the TUC for calling a conference on Ireland. Speakers invited included a representative of the Irish Republican Socialist Party (IRSP) which the TUC clearly found 'objectionable'.

Following an appeal, more than 20 other trades councils have now come out against the TUC attempt to place a gag over Tameside's mouth. These include Newcastle, Sheffield, Leeds, Bradford, York, Preson and Southampton.

Instead of reconsidering the position - in the light of growing opposition - the TUC has now decided to escalate 'disciplinary' action. Only recently, it has threatened to disaffiliate Southampton and Plymouth Trades

Councils for their support to Tameside.

Intimidatory action of this kind is not likely to work, however. Tameside has no intention of cancelling its conference. On the contrary, it has decided to press ahead with it and it will now take place on June 7th at Manchester Poly Students Union.

All Labour movement bodies are urged to support the conference not only to protest the TUC attempt to prevent free speech. Equally important, it is vital that the issue of Ireland - which has been smouldering for the past 10 years - should come up for a serious debate within the labour movement. The conference organised by Tameside could be a first step in that direction.

IRAN continued from page 1

Vance, and those who think like him, are fearful that Carter is pressing ahead too quickly with his warlike aims. They are worried that this will not only fuel the anti-war feeling among American workers - thousands of whom have already demonstrated against the introduction of the 'draft'.

Equally important, they are concerned that such actions might deepen anti-imperialist feeling in the Third World and create increasing shifts towards dependence on Moscow. These concerns are also shared by Japan and European governments who have adopted a luke-warm attitude to Carter's moves.

AGGRESSION

Despite these rifts, however, and despite his inability to whip up a war frenzy, Carter has continued his belligerent moves. Not only has he defended the raid but he has also gone on record as saying that another action of this type is not ruled out.

The dangers of another act of aggression can be seen from the fact that US naval strength in the Indian Ocean has recently been increased to record strength. This includes 34,000 troops and 400 aircraft, some of which have already been used for intercepting Iranian planes.

The repercussions such an act would bring in its wake do not have to be underlined. In any confrontation with the USSR, which could develop, newspaper reports have already suggested the Pentagon favours immediate resort to tactical nuclear weapons.

COMPLICITY

In this war-drive, of course, Carter

has already received the blessing of the Thatcher government (which has also sponsored a massive increase in arms expenditure). Lord Carrington knew of the raid before it took place and has since been the main support of the US in enforcing an economic blockade on Iran.

The Labour leaders, it is true, expressed concern at Carter's action. Peter Shore, spokesperson on foreign affairs, called on governments worldwide to "make plain to the USA that warlike measures will not work".

While expressing concern, however, the Labour leaders have not denounced the hysterical campaign being whipped up by Thatcher and Carter against the Iranian people nor have they opposed the economic sanctions being imposed on Iran.

JUNE 22ND

If Thatcher's war-drive in Britain is to be combatted, it is clear that the labour movement must launch a mass opposition to interference of any kind in Iranian affairs.

On June 22nd, the Labour Party NEC is calling for a national demonstration in Hyde Park against the Tories' increase in defence spending and the basing of Cruise missiles in Britain. This demonstration should be supported and promoted throughout the labour movement.

Some of the demands that should feature centrally on the demonstration are those opposing Carter's war moves and the complicity of the British government.

HANDS OFF IRAN !

STOP CARTER'S WAR DRIVE !

END ECONOMIC SANCTIONS !



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