

Socialist Action

For a Class Struggle Left Wing in the Labour Movement

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Labour conference

MAJOR VICTORY FOR DEMOCRACY

By BOB SWART (Streatham CLP)

A barrage of lies and smears in the Tory press has greeted the outcome of Labour's special conference, last month. Boosting the "gang of four", the Fleet Street barons have directed all their efforts at discrediting this major victory for democracy.

They claim they are attacking "extremism". That is a lie. Their attack is directed against working people. The idea that ordinary workers in the unions and party branches — and not just a few MPs — should take part in electing the leader sends shivers up and down their spines.

They can see that, for the first time, there is a chance than an incoming Labour government might actually be forced to implement policies in the interests of the people who put them in power.

CONTEMPT

Up to now, whatever was decided at party conferences, big business always had a safeguard.

It could always rely on the fact that Labour leaders could ride rough-shod over policies democratically decided by the labour movement.

It knew that it could always rely on its chums — the David Owens and Shirley Williams of this world — to contemptuously dismiss conference decisions and carry out pro-capitalist policies. This is, after all, what happened with the last Labour government.

Although conference voted against any idea of a wage freeze — that is, against attacks on workers' living standards — the labour leaders pushed ahead. Backed up by the Tory press, they tried to impose a 5% wage

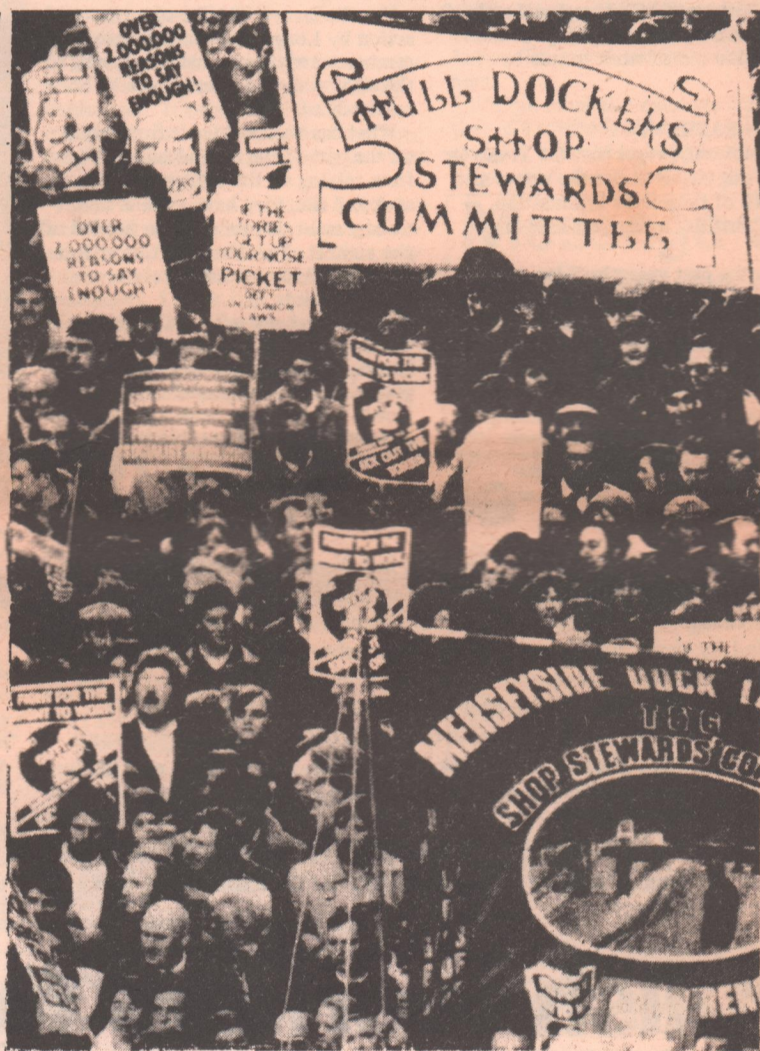
freeze in the public sector that alienated many Labour supporters and provoked the "winter of discontent".

Big business now sees this situation being threatened. The fact that a Labour leader will be elected by the rank-and-file — by the process of an electoral college in which 70% of the votes will be cast by union and party members — sets up a dangerous precedent in their eyes.

Coupled with other democratic measures, such as the mandatory re-selection of MPs, it could mean that workers will actually begin to control their party and demand that it implement policies in their interests when it is elected to power.

At a time when Tory policies are pushing ever more workers to adopt a radical stance, this situation

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BERNADETTE McALISKEY



On January 18 Bernadette McAliskey and her husband Michael were attacked at their home in Derrylaughlin, near Coalisland, County Tyrone.

They were shot several times — in the chest, arms and legs — by thugs of the ultra-right wing Loyalist organisation, the UDA.

As of present, Bernadette and her husband seem out of any immediate danger.

For fuller coverage of the assassination attempt — and Bernadette's role in the fight for Irish rights and for socialism — see page four.

Hands off El Salvador

By PETE MARAIS

Faced with the growing advance of the liberation fighters, the US government has decided to up its military aid for the hated dictatorship in El Salvador.

Over 12 million dollars in cash, military "advisors" and equipment is being rushed to prop up the regime which — over the past year alone — has murdered 12,000 workers and peasants in cold blood.

At the same time, it is busy mobilising other military dictatorships in the area to defend the El Salvadoran regime. 500 Honduran troops have crossed the borders into El Salvador and a further 3000 are in readiness under the supervision of US advisors.

AID

Last December, under mass pub-

lic pressure, the US government was forced to cut off its aid to the El Salvadoran regime. This followed the report that 4 US women had been murdered by the dictatorship's right-wing death squads.

President Duarte's regime is now under such pressure from the liberation forces, however, that the US government has decided to rapidly reverse its former position.

Ignoring public opinion, it is rushing support to its political puppet. The excuse given for this change in policy was that neighbouring Nicaragua had openly backed the liberation forces and had sent in troops. Even the *Times* has pointed out that this was a lie.

WORRIED

What clearly worries the US rulers is the mass support for the

liberation forces (FSLN) which launched the insurrectionary struggle in early January. Within days of its offensive, whole cities and areas of the country had fallen into their hands.

On January 11, Santa Ana — the second largest city in El Salvador — had become a stronghold of the guerrillas. The following day, Chalatenango fell into their hands as did a string of towns in the northeastern province of Morazan. In the capital itself, mass uprisings took place in all the working class suburbs on January 11-12.

Even sections of the junta's army have begun to desert. On January 11, for example, Lt. Col. Ricardo Navarrete of the National Guard announced over the radio

Continued on page 8.

Jobless total soars

By MIKE HOPKINS (Stoke-on-Trent CLP)

The latest jobless figures are a scandal. At 2.4 million, they are the highest in the post-war years. And even these "official" figures don't tell the full story.

They mask the fact, for example, that over 600,000 are on government training courses, that thousands of women haven't signed on and that a further 400,000 are on short-time in industries like textiles and engineering. The real figure is closer to three million.

Planned cuts in social services will push it still higher. While Thatcher boasts of being number three in the arms spending league, thousands of teachers, building workers and cleaners will be cast on the scrap-heap.

DELIBERATE

The aim of the Tory jobless strategy is only too clear. Thatcher hopes that a mass pool of unemployed will demoralise workers and keep wages down. This, it is calculated, will boost profits and allow British firms to modernise and become more competitive in world markets.

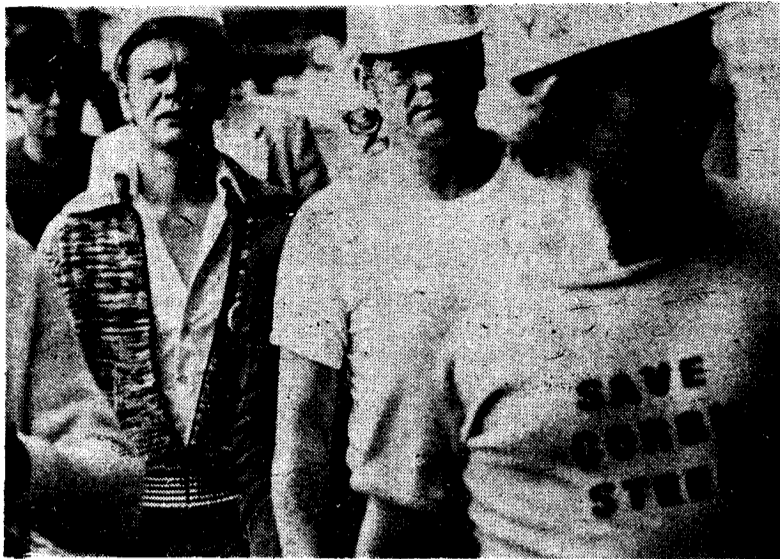
There is evidence that her strategy is having some success. British Leyland boss Michael Edwardes, for example, has been able to ram home pitiable wage increases of 5 and 6.8 percent because, as Brian Withers (T&GWU regional official) put it, he is "taking advantage of the 2.5 million out of work to rule by fear".

UNION-BASHING

It is not only wages that the Tories are out to cripple. It is also the power and strength of shop-floor organisation. Again, British Leyland is a case in point.

Over the past year, the Edwardes management has sacked convenor Derek Robinson for speaking out against their plans and suspended eight workers – last December – for fighting the latest speed-up proposals.

Leyland has been able to get away with victimising union activists by



Corby workers march against plant closure.

threatening to close the whole plant down, if strike action occurs, and putting the whole workforce on the dole.

MILITANT

While notching up a few successes, as at Leyland, however, there is little sign of demoralisation setting in. Time and again, workers have shown their willingness to fight back. From the steelworkers' strike last year to the spontaneous action by Longbridge workers last December – striking against the sacking of the eight – there has been no lack of militancy.

What has been lacking is firm action on the part of the union leaders. Far from relying on the militancy of the rank and file, they have given in before management threats and thus headed off any protest. This has been true at British Leyland, the British Steel Corporation and Fords.

It has also been reflected at the national level. In 1979, TUC leader Len Murray called the one million unemployed figure a "disgrace". Despite the fact that it has now more than doubled, Murray has refused to initiate any cam-

paign against the Tories' industrial strategy. Protest actions, combined with calls for a Labour government in three years, have been the limit of his opposition.

CAMPAIGN

There are signs, however, that the situation is changing. Under mass pressure from union members, the Labour leaders were forced, last November to call a mass rally against the jobless total which mobilised 150,000.

They have further been forced to extend this into a series of regional demonstrations starting with one in Glasgow on February 21. The climax of the campaign will be the massive Liverpool to London march sponsored by the North-West TUC, starting on May Day.

Although the TUC leaders have refused to contemplate industrial action, this marks a major step forward. Such actions should be mobilised for everywhere and the labour leaders pressured into seeing them as an ongoing campaign to get this government out of office.

SUPPORT

Mass action around the demands passed at Labour's conference – for the 35-hour week and an extension of public services – can become the rallying cry of ever-wider layers in the labour movement.

It can give much-needed backing to workers facing redundancies and to Labour councils facing the Tory cuts. It can show them that they are not alone in the struggle and that they have the support of millions of working people up and down the country.

Most important, it can unite the labour movement in the face of the Tory offensive and lay the basis for the return of a Labour government committed to defending workers' interests.

major victory for democracy

ion is seen as doubly dangerous. As Tony Benn recently put it: "It will give encouragement that a process of democratic change can be carried through the whole of society".

THIRD PARTY?

Fearful of a challenge to their privileges, this is why the Fleet Street press is desperately boosting the "gang of four" and moving in behind their calls for a new "centre party". Talk about an alliance between the Liberals and Labour renegades, the rash of public opinion polls to show how popular a new party would be, have one aim and one aim only.

They are an attempt to confuse and divide the labour movement, to provoke new splits to ensure that Labour has little chance of election next time round.

Such pressure, it must be admitted, has already had an effect. It has not only given a new lease of life to the "isolated gang of four" who would otherwise have disappeared into the wilderness.

REACTION

It has already begun to influence a layer of the right-wing MPs who still remain in the party. Bending under the Fleet Street campaign, figures such as Michael Foot and Roy Hattersley have said they intend fighting for a reversal of the democratic decisions of conference.

They have been backed up in this

this by certain trade-union leaders – such as Duffy of the AUEW and Weighall of the NUR – who also fear the implications of democratic control.

They are clearly worried that the Blackpool decisions create a precedent which might disturb their cosy and bureaucratic control over their own unions.

FIGHT

Such pressure may have had an effect upon a number of Labour MPs and union bureaucrats opposed to the growing influence of the rank-and-file in decision making. But it has had little effect on workers up and down the country bearing the brunt of the Tory policies – on those on the dole, those fighting cuts in social services, Blacks fighting racist laws and women fighting attacks on their rights.

If the Labour Party is to consolidate its victory in the period ahead – and fight off the challenge from the "gang of four" – it has to root itself ever more firmly among these layers of working people.

It can only grow if it shows, in practice, that it is prepared to champion their interests by class-struggle methods. It is by building mass opposition to unemployment, by giving support to Labour councils fighting the cuts, by pioneering the struggle against anti-Black laws etc, that it will gain in strength, deepen its support and isolate the Tory-backed Labour renegades.

All out February 21!

The mass demonstration in Liverpool last November marked the start of the anti-jobless campaign. The next major step is the rally being called in Glasgow on February 21 – the first of a series of regional rallies.

Called by the Scottish trade unions and Labour Party, the action is taking place in an appropriate setting. Glasgow, like other areas of the North West, has been the hardest hit by the Tories' jobless strategy.

Support for the demonstration is coming from all parts of the country. Transport has already been booked. London, Birmingham and Manchester trades councils, for example, are organising trains to carry supporters there.

A mass turn-out on February 21 is vital in ensuring that the campaign against the Tory unemployment plans really builds momentum. Make sure you are there!

Intercontinental Press

If you would like to read on-the-spot reports of * the Polish Workers struggle; * the fight for socialism in Nicaragua; * the meaning of the Iran-Iraq conflict; * the fight against austerity in Western Europe, why not take out a sub now?

Regular copies can be obtained from: Socialist Action, PO Box 65, London SW 16 1NN



Polish workers fight for 40 hour week

Despite threats and intimidation by the Stalinist bosses, millions of workers in Poland are continuing in their fight for democratic rights. Starting on January 10, a series of strikes swept the country from the Baltic ports of Gdansk, Gdynia and Szczecin to Warsaw and southeastern Silesia.

The actions followed a decision by delegates of Solidarity – the independent union movement – calling for a 5-day, 40-hour workweek for its members. January 10 was the first Saturday off.

DISASTER

Both the Polish government and the Moscow press have charged that a 40-hour work week would have a disastrous effect on the economy, reducing production by 12%. Warsaw even threatened to dock the workers a day's pay if they went ahead – although Solidarity has stated it will extend the strike action if this is carried out.

Solidarity's goal, however, is not an arbitrary cut in the workweek regardless of the cost to the economy. As one Solidarity spokesperson put it: "The stand of the government and Solidarity should not be treated as a confrontation but as a first stage leading to an



Lech Walesa – Polish strike leader agreement.

"If Solidarity gets information showing the entire seriousness of the economic situation, Solidarity may change its decision. Talks will be resumed".

DEMOCRACY

One worker from the Roza Luksemburg light bulb factory touched at the heart of the present struggle: "Maybe it is necessary to work some Saturdays", she explained, "but our position is that that should be decided at the local factory level. We are the ones who best know what the factory needs".

Since the first days of the strikes in Poland last August, workers have argued that this is the best way to solve Poland's problems. The call for a full and open discussion on the country's problems – together with an end to the special privileges of police and government officials – was a key part of the Gdansk agreement signed between workers and government on August 30.

It is the absence of such workers' democracy on every level of planning that accounts for the current struggle.

SPREADING

The Stalinist bosses, however, are facing ever-growing opposition to attempts to maintain their repressive rule. Only recently 600,000 farmers – out of a total of 3½ million – came together to form Rural Solidarity and demand a say in economic decision-making.

economic decision-making.

The opposition is even spreading to the Communist Party itself. Workers at the Roza Luksemburg plant claim that approximately 1000 CP members there joined the vote in favour of taking January 10 off.

Moreover, as the Christian Science Monitor has reported, CP members have been meeting across the country and raising demands for openness of political life and for the dismissal of incompetent and corrupt party officials.

STAND

Faced with this upsurge – which has even begun to spread to the party's rank-and-file – the Stalinist bosses have adopted a "get tough" attitude. Trying to renege on the Gdansk agreement, they have more recently refused to recognise Rural Solidarity and have used the police against striking workers (as in Nowy Sacz where over 60 were arrested for protesting corruption).

Most significant of all, party leader Stanislaw Kania has taken a firm stand against the call for a 40-hour week with no loss of pay. He has denounced Solidarity's attempt to intervene in economic decision making and has called the use of

strike action "intolerable".

Clearly, the Stalinist bureaucrats have decided that – unless a stand is taken – the mass upsurge for workers' democracy will become unstoppable and their corrupt and repressive rule swept aside. Such a thought sends shivers down their backs, as it does their mentors in Moscow.

SOLIDARITY

Their bureaucratic manoeuvres however – backed up with threats of a Soviet intervention – will not curb the aspirations of the Polish workers. More and more, they are realising that the only way they can resolve the problems facing society is by establishing a socialist democracy.

Such a move means challenging ever more firmly the Stalinist leaders who need to maintain their repressive regime to defend the privileges they enjoy at the expense of working people.

It is up to socialists in the British labour movement to gain the widest solidarity with the Polish workers. A victory for them would be an inspiring example for workers everywhere who are also faced with attacks on their living standards and democratic rights.

CARL conference plans mass action

STOP THE TORY RACIST LAWS

By JEREMY SHORT (Hornsey CLP)
 Almost 300 delegates and visitors attended the national conference of the Campaign against Racist Laws (CARL), January 10. The conference was called to mobilise support against the Tories' proposed Nationality Bill.

Present were representatives from a number of Black organisations (including the Indian, Kashmiri and

Pakistani Workers Associations), the Labour Party, trade unions and regional anti-racist groups. The size of the conference — called at short notice — was an indication of the opposition building up against the Tories' racist campaign.

CLIMAX

The conference was opened by Anne Dummett (JCWI) who explained exactly what the proposals would mean for Black people both inside and outside the country. She was followed by Mike Rodney (CARL Nat. Secretary) who put the proposals into political perspective.

Rodney explained how the Tory Bill was the climax of an ongoing campaign against Black rights. It comes on top of the tightening of the already-racist 1971 Immigration Act, he said, which has led to

rushing raids, increased deportations and police harassment of the Black community.

Rodney went on to explain that this attack on Black rights was no accident. "It is quite deliberate. It is an attempt by the Tories to divide the labour movement — to make Black people the scapegoat for the anger and discontent building up against unemployment and the fall in living standards".

STRENGTH

This point was echoed by many of the delegates who took part in the debate. All the more reason, a delegate from an Indian Workers Association stressed, to take the campaign into the labour movement — into the unions and Labour Party — to win support there; "The Tories might be strong", he

said, "but an alliance between the Black community and labour movement is even stronger. United, we can ensure that this Bill is thrown into the dustbin where it belongs".

Rudi Narayan, combatting the views of a few speakers hostile to the Labour Party, backed up this point. If the Labour Party has a bad record on the issue of racist laws, the answer is not to turn one's back on it. "Get into the party", he said, "and chuck out the racist MPs".

ACTION

Despite attempts by a small group to disrupt the conference (the Revolutionary Communist Tendency), a number of concrete proposals were adopted towards building a mass opposition to the Tory Bill. Key among these was the

decision to launch a mass demonstration in London towards the end of March.

As one delegate from South London CARL put it: "Last time, we managed to get 20,000 onto the streets. This time, we want to get ten times that number". As a build-up to the demonstration, it was agreed to call a number of regional rallies, to hold a public meeting in London and organise lobbies of Parliament.

The enthusiasm at the end of the conference left all delegates in no doubt that, with serious organisation in the weeks ahead, the Nationality Bill could be stopped.

All those interested in obtaining more information about CARL, please contact: CARL, Lansbury House, 41 Camberwell Grove, London SE 5.

Interview: Mike Rodney (CARL Nat. Sec.)

What do you think is behind the Tory Nationality proposals?

Well, I think you've got to put it into perspective. The Tories came to power on a racist ticket — pledging, among other things, to tighten up the 1971 Immigration Act.

This has already led to a major attack on Black rights. "Fishing raids" are taking place, twice the number of Blacks are being deported and police harassment of the Black community is on the increase. The Nationality Act represents another step in the Tories' racist campaign.

But what will the Nationality Act do?

Basically, it divides people into two categories: those whose ancestors were born here (mainly white) and those who weren't (mainly Black). This "colour bar" will not only exclude Blacks from entering Britain — turning many of them, it should be added, into stateless citizens. It will also mean that those already in the country will suffer a real attack on their rights.

Why do you think the Tories are pressing ahead with this Bill now?

It's certainly not accidental. By singling out Black people in this way, they're trying to show that they are a "problem". They doubtless hope they can thereby divert the frustration and anger building up over unemployment against a small minority.

Why then hasn't there been more of an outcry about the Act?



Filipino workers march in protest against deportations.

That's a good point. The answer, of course, lies in the record of the Labour leaders. Racist immigration acts have been passed through Parliament — over the past 20 years — with ever-sharper curbs. Instead of challenging them, the Labour leaders have meekly accepted them and — when in office — implemented them.

Take the last Labour government. Merlyn Rees not only implemented the 1971 Act. He actually introduced measures to tighten it still further. Moreover, the government was also planning to introduce a Nationality Bill roughly similar to the Tories' present one.

How can this be changed?

Well, to tell the truth, it's already beginning to change. When CARL called its first demonstration in November 1979, over 20,000 responded. This included not only the Black community but a layer in the unions and Labour Party. Over 60 MPs backed the rally and called for the repeal of the 1971 Act.

We clearly have to build on this step forward in understanding. It's only a small step — but it's a vital one. Make no bones about it, if the Tories get away with their racist offensive — and split the labour movement — it will be twice as easy for them to ram home any piece

of anti-labour legislation.

What plans does CARL have for mobilising greater labour support?

As you probably know, that was a major point of discussion at the recent CARL conference. It's clear that the Black community is up in arms about the Tory proposals and will be mobilising en masse for the March rally.

What we've got to do, in the following months, is to take the campaign into the unions and Labour Party to explain why this issue is vital for the whole labour movement. I think that process is already underway. CARL groups, up and down the country, are trying to enlist union and Labour Party support. Most important, CARL activists in the Labour Party are planning a mass one day conference shortly before the rally to mobilise support.

Will CARL be trying to get the Labour Party to pledge to fight and repeal the Tories racist laws?

Certainly. One of the central aims of the one day conference will be to demand that the Labour leaders give their support for the rally and — when they are returned to power — throw overboard not only the Nationality Act but also the racist 1971 Immigration Act.

There shouldn't be too much of a problem here because the Labour Party conference, in 1976, already passed a motion to this effect. All it would need was to carry out conference decisions.

Do you think the turn-out in March will be effective?

From the mood building up, I think it

will be the biggest anti-racist demonstration we've seen in Britain for some time. All the Black organisations are swinging behind CARL, as are anti-racist groups, Labour Party activists and union members.

I think more and more are realising that, if Thatcher's offensive is to be stopped, we need to build a united campaign which shows its power in the streets.

Message of solidarity

The following message from the League for Socialist Action was sent to a Caribbean Labour Solidarity meeting in Brixton on January 21. Nearly 100 people attended the CLS meeting, which was in opposition to the racist Nationality Bill.

Dear sisters and brothers, the League for Socialist Action — a group of revolutionary trade union and Labour Party activists — sends our most fraternal greetings to your meeting on the Nationality Proposals. We hope it will lead to redoubling people's determination to fight the racist attacks being launched by the Tories, the party of Britain's rich white rulers.

What a contrast the policy of this supposedly civilised British government is to the policies of the revolutionary governments of the Caribbean.

What a contrast to Grenada where Black working people, led by the New Jewel Movement, are building a truly just and humane society.

What a contrast to Cuba, where the revolutionary government, since it came to power, declared war on racism and abolished it.

What a contrast to Nicaragua, where the Sandinista government is doing all it can to ensure the rights of Black people and of the Indian population, and abolish racism.

But the Tories defend a system based on private profit not human needs, and certainly not on the rights of Black people.

We can take heart from the victories of Black people and other working people in the Caribbean. From them we see that if we are determined to struggle, we are unbeatable.

Through mobilising the power that Black people have, through mobilising the power of the whole labour movement, we can defeat the Nationality Proposals. The British labour movement must say "An injury to one is an injury to all" and give full support to Black rights.

Let us build the upcoming demonstration called by the Campaign Against Racist Laws into a massive show of our strength.

Let us fight together until these proposals and all other racist laws are thrown into the dustbin of history.

French CP backs racist goons



Immigrant workers in France — the most exploited and badly treated section of the workforce. Rather than defend them, Stalinists are attacking them.

By JASON HILL (Stoke-on-Trent CLP)

Over Christmas, an immigrant hostel in the Paris suburb of Vitry was the target of a vicious racist attack. Using clubs, wire-cutters and bulldozers, the attackers razed the hostel to the ground.

The attack was not launched, however, by ultra-right goons. It was led by the mayor of Vitry — Paul Mercieca — a member of the French Communist Party, and backed up by 50 CP members.

Mercieca justified the attack by saying: "The people of Vitry are fed up. Out of

every 10 inhabitants, 2 are immigrants".

DENIAL

Did the French CP leadership denounce such an attack and expel these members for whipping up racist feeling? On the contrary, CP leader George Marchais told a rally a few weeks later that "... it is inadmissible to allow immigrant workers into France when we have two million French and immigrant workers on the dole".

The fact that the French CP was

responsible for launching a goon attack on immigrant workers — and then defended it — represents a new turn of the Stalinist screw.

Make no bones about it, the argument used by the CP leaders are identical to those used by right-wing racists such as Enoch Powell to justify curbing immigration into Britain.

UNREST

In words that could almost have been taken from Powell's "rivers of blood" speech 10 years ago, Marchais explains that too many immigrants "could create tensions among the population. . ."

It is certainly true that, at times of recession, tensions can develop between immigrants and other workers. But what is the cause of these tensions? Isn't it the inability of capitalism to provide decent jobs and housing and the attempt by racists to make immigrants the scapegoat of any discontent that might arise?

And isn't it the task of socialists to fight tooth and nail against racists' attempts to whip up reactionary hysteria against the most oppressed layers of the labour movement?

HYPOCRISY

Just how has the British CP explained away their French allies' descent into the racist gutter? Quite simply — they have

defended it. Glossing over the goon attack, Harry Samson in the CP paper *Morning Star* says the French CP is merely "calling for a halt to immigration in the mutual interests of workers in France".

If the French CP is right, however, then why isn't the British CP calling for a halt to Black immigration into Britain? Instead of opposing Thatcher's racist laws, why isn't it defending them?

And instead of opposing goon attacks by the ultra-right on immigrant areas such as Southall, why doesn't it back them? Isn't that the logical consequence of defending the French CP's racist positions?

STALINISM

No amount of word-juggling can hide the fact that the campaign launched by the French Communist Party is a racist campaign in the traditions of the ultra-right.

As a leading member of the French Socialist Party exclaimed, that campaign is "unworthy of a party which proclaims workers' solidarity and internationalism". Only too true.

But the Stalinist parties abandoned workers' solidarity and internationalism decades ago. Organising goon attacks on immigrant workers is the logical outcome of their chauvinist outlook.

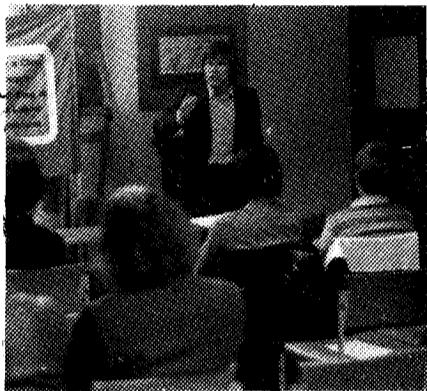
Socialist Action looks ahead

When we launched our fund drive, last year, *Socialist Action* had two aims. To bring out the paper more regularly and to deepen our coverage of the anti-Tory struggle. With Thatcher's growing attacks upon the labour movement, bringing out a regular paper arguing for class-struggle policies was seen as vital.

As a result of our growing support — both financial and political — we are now able to take a major step towards this goal. Starting with the next (March) issue, a number of staff writers will be joining the paper.

Creating a team of full-time writers will, we hope, allow us to turn *Socialist Action* into a real tool in the fight for socialism. It will allow us to give more in-depth analysis of the issues facing the labour movement, get on-the-spot reports of workers' struggles and beef up our fight for class-struggle policies.

Our new editor — replacing Andy Scott — will be Terry Viney. Terry entered politics over ten years ago in the mass campaign to get the US troops out of Vietnam. A member of Ravensbourne CLP, he has since been involved in a number of campaigns and is author of the *Socialist Action* pamphlet on "Stalinism". He joined *Socialist Action* three years ago.



Terry's views on the role of *Socialist Action* are clear: "What we need in the labour movement is an open, fighting paper which can champion the demands of all those in struggle — and give them a real perspective today in the fight for socialism.

"That's what our aim must be and, I'm sure, it will meet with a growing response".

Joining Terry will be a number of other comrades in different areas of the class-struggle. George Hold (Peckham CLP) will be paying particular attention to the fight-back developing on the shop floor against Thatcher's attack on jobs, living standards and union rights.

Liz Easton (Wood Green CLP) will concentrate coverage of women's rights in the paper. A long-time member of the women's movement, she played an active role in building NAC and the fight against the Corrie Bill.

Jane Ansell (Finchley CLP) has been active in the fight-back against the cuts for some time. She will be concentrating on the attacks launched by the Tories on the social services and the fight-back that is now underway.

Finally, because *Socialist Action* has always prided itself on its internationalism, coverage of Ireland and other international struggles will remain prominent. Tim Robinson (Lambeth CLP) will be joining the team of staff writers with particular responsibility for this area.

Setting up a team of professional staff writers is a major step forward for *Socialist Action*. We hope that, in the months ahead, the paper will become an even more useful tool for all those fighting the Tories and will be key in pioneering a real class-struggle left-wing in the unions and Labour Party.

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 to be 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 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 and labour movement.
- * For the right of all oppressed nations to determine their own future — Get the troops out of Ireland now!
- * End the war drive! For unilateral nuclear disarmament.
- * For a safe environment. End nuclear reactors and base an energy policy 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, P.O. Box 65, London SW16 1NN.

Labour and de



Mass applause greets outcome of Labour Party conference.

By CAROL REES (Peckham CLP)

A split now looks inevitable. At a secret meeting held after the special Labour Party conference, the "gang of three" plus Roy Jenkins — issued the embryo of a new party manifesto. As Shirley Williams confirmed, only a "miracle" could now stop them walking out.

Within a few days, they had managed to gather around them another nine MPs who have a running battle with their Constituency Labour Parties over the question of party democracy. Some of these — like Neville Sanderson — have shown their concern for democracy by running witch-hunts against anyone on the left who doesn't share their views.

TORY PRESS

The step towards splitting from the party has, of course, been heartily greeted by the Tory press who have turned their pages over to the new Ramsay MacDonalds as an election platform. They have used their red-baiting attacks as a stick to beat the Labour Party.

Speculation is rife on a deal with the Liberals whose leader — David Steel — has already approached the dissidents. The press is full of talk about the "demise" of Labour and a radical re-alignment in British politics.

Such talk is nothing more than hot air — or, rather, wishful thinking by the Tory press who are frightened stiff by the developments in the Labour Party. The "gang of three" don't represent the embryo of a new party. They represent the

splitting away of a miniscule group into the wilderness.

CONTEMPT

The three — plus their Tory backers — have tried to portray the shift towards democracy and class-struggle policies in the Labour Party as a "conspiracy". It is due, they claim, to the infiltration of "Marxist currents" out to destroy the traditions of the movement.

Such red-baiting tactics show a contempt for the thousands of union and party members who built Labour and have defended it, over the years, through thick and thin. The shift in the party is not due to comic-book "infiltrators" but to the fact that the rank-and-file are sick and tired, year after year, at seeing democratic decisions by party conference overturned by a few unrepresentative MPs.

They are sick and tired of a few MPs selling the movement short. As Tony Benn put it: "The real problem is that 90 percent of the public know as well as we what has been wrong with the party: that we say one thing in opposition and do something else in government".

FIGHTING

It is this mood which has become doubly reinforced under the Thatcher offensive. As the Tories' attacks on jobs, wages and social services escalate, millions of workers are looking to their party for a lead. They want that party to champion their interests and — when returned to power — to implement class-struggle policies. The mass turn-out

in November against unemployment is a sign of the fighting spirit building up.

The attempt to democratise the party — to make Labour leaders accountable — is a step in this direction. The labour movement wants a leadership that will abide by conference decisions and not, when returned to power, contemptuously ignore them.

No-one wants a repeat of the last Callaghan government, whose pro-Tory policies — implemented against conference — alienated millions of Labour voters and allowed the Tories to get back into office.

FEAR

It is this attempt to turn Labour into a fighting party — a party representing working people — which frightens the Williamses of this world and their Tory backers. Both Williams and Owen have pointed out that a Labour government cannot be bound by conference since its role is to rule in the "national interest".

But just what is this national interest Labour MPs are supposed to protect as against the interests of working people? Just what is this idol Labour MPs are supposed to bend their knee towards instead of representing those who put them into power?

In a society dominated by the banks and monopolies, the "national interest" is clearly what serves to bolster their interests and increase their profits. The national interest is, in this sense, a fraud, a cover-up for promoting the aims of

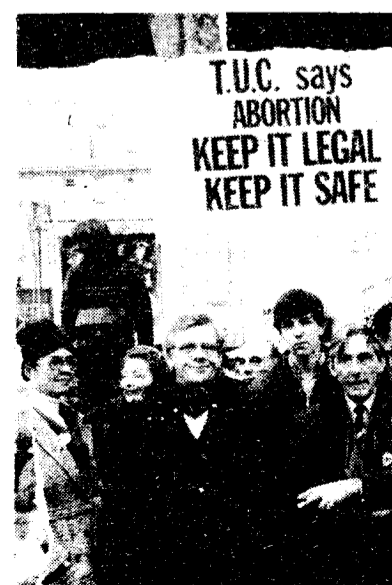
Labour Conference

By LIZ EASTON (Hackney CLP)

Timothy Sainsbury has finally decided not to sponsor an anti-abortion Bill in the next parliamentary session. What clearly made him change his mind was the growing labour movement support for women's rights which was shown on the mass TUC-backed lobby against the Corrie Bill last year.

While Sainsbury has been forced to back down, however, the rights women enjoy under the 1967 Act have, over the years, become seriously eroded. Inroads into these rights — combined with cut-backs in abortion facilities — have meant that there has been a noticeable decrease in abortions on the NHS.

It is for this reason that the National Abortion Campaign (NAC)



decided, at its last conference, to begin a campaign in the labour movement for positive legislation on abortion rights. The aim of such a campaign will include "de-criminalising" abortion and ensuring adequate facilities are provided.

CONFERENCE

A major step towards this campaign will be the labour movement conference called by NAC on March 14. The aim of the conference is to begin now to win support for making abortion rights a plank in the Labour Party's manifesto.

The fact that the 1977 Labour Party conference voted in favour of a women's right to choose — and that the TUC mobilised massively to stop the Corrie Bill going through — shows that there is growing un-

democracy

the big corporations.

When Callaghan introduced a wage freeze in 1979 — against the wishes of the party and unions — whose interest was that in? Was it in the interests of working people or the giant monopolies who wanted union rights curtailed and their wages curtailed?

DEMOCRACY

When the “gang of three” — and other right-wing MPs — argue for the “freedom” of the Parliamentary Labour Party, they are arguing for its freedom to collaborate with the IMF, Tory-inspired civil servants and big bankers to attack working people.

That is why they have let out a shrill voice of protest over recent developments in the party and have even been driven to threaten a split on the issue. They know that the labour movement, representing millions of workers, is in direct conflict with big business. If they were bound by conference decisions, after all, they wouldn't be free to create millions on the dole, slash the social services and support the arms race.



The “gang of four” — walking away from the Labour Party

In defence of their right to pursue these policies, they actually have the nerve to invoke democracy. It is, you see, “undemocratic” for 300-odd MPs to implement the wishes of the millions who put them into power. It is so much more democratic for them — collaborating with unelected civil servants and bankers — to ride roughshod over the millions who put them into office in the first place.

EXTREME?

As they make their move to split, the “gang of eleven” (as it now is) have argued that Labour's “extrem-

ist” stance will alienate wide sections of the “middle ground”. Such an argument is slightly ridiculous.

After five years of the Callaghan government, during which time he implemented policies to their liking, the Labour share of the vote was the lowest in the post-war period. How on earth can socialist policies lose voters when Callaghan's pro-capitalist ones drove away and demoralised so many Labour supporters.

It is not Labour's “extremist stance” that lost the last election. It is the fact that Labour leaders, representing no-one, reneged on the positions of conference and implemented policies not in the interests of workers but of big business.

WILDERNESS

At present, the “gang of eleven” is basking in the limelight of the Tory press. They are being wined and dined by all those forces who are attacking working people and who are frightened by the shift left in the Labour Party.

But the limelight will not last for long. As the Tories move further

right to implement their anti-working class offensive, more and more workers will be drawn towards the Labour Party as a fighting party to defend their interests.

The Williamses and Owens of this world might collect around their stale and tired banner a few ex-Labourites such as Dick Taverner. They might do a deal with the Liberals. They might even draw out a few more Labour MPs frightened at Labour becoming a party representing working people. But, in the longer term, they are doomed to be nothing more than a footnote in history.

Scargill on democracy



“Our party does not belong to a select bunch of MPs. It was created out of the womb of the trade union movement and belongs to all of its members.

The only disagreement that now exists in the party is in the minds of right-wing MPs and their supporters who were and are opposed to extending the franchise for the election of leader and deputy leader of the party; who were and are opposed to the introduction of mandatory re-selection; and who have consistently opposed decisions democratically decided upon by party conference.

It is they who are responsible for the splits and divisions within the party. And it is they who can produce the unity referred to, providing that they will stop their sniping and accept the views of ordinary members rather than treat them with contempt.

Rank and file members of the Labour Party are sick and tired of the elitism displayed by MPs who for some inexplicable reason feel themselves superior to ordinary party members.

These same MPs were quite content to be selected at an initial conference of the party, but are almost paranoid about facing a re-selection conference and having to answer for their stewardship during their period of office.

If an MP has acted throughout that period in accordance with the constitution and rules of the party, and carried out the wishes of the constituency, he or she has nothing to fear.

On the other hand, if MPs blatantly ignore or disregard decisions of their General Management Committees on major issues, then they must expect reaction and possible rejection if and when a re-selection takes place.

These prima donnas in Parliament apparently want the privilege of sponsorship by a trade union and/or the party and at the same time the luxury of independence.

A person who wants to act independently in Parliament should stand as an independent candidate and not use the Labour Party merely as a vehicle for propelling themselves into an exclusive club in the centre of Westminster.

Bernadette McAliskey

By SABINA ROBERTS (Streatham CLP)

On January 18, Bernadette (Devlin) McAliskey and her husband Michael were seriously wounded in an attack on their home in Derry-laughlin, near Coalisland, County Tyrone. Three masked men burst their way in and shot Bernadette five times — in her chest, arms and legs.



Rushed to hospital by an army patrol — which “happened” to be in the area — her condition appears to be “stable” and there is no immediate threat to her life. It looks as if the assassins' attempt has failed.

HIT-SQUAD

It is now fairly clear that the assassins were members of the right-wing Loyalist hit-squad, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). As court convictions show, the UDA has, over the years, been involved in a number of murders and attempted murders of members of the nationalist minority fighting for its rights.

Most recently, it has turned its attention to leading members of the campaign in support of the hunger-strikers. As the statement by the H-Block/Armagh Committee makes clear, prominent activists Miriam Daly and Noel Little have both been assassinated over the past year.

COMPLICITY

But it is not just the ultra-right UDA which bears responsibility for these crimes. Complicit in the murders and attempted murders are the British army — and its mentors in Downing Street — who have turned a blind eye to the terrorist methods of the UDA.

While launching a mass repression against the nationalist minority, they have refused to take any action against the UDA. On the contrary, they have done their best to cover up for the UDA by describing it as “essentially political”.

SYMBOL

The attempted murder of Bernadette McAliskey is a chill reminder of the dangers facing any Irish person who dares to take up the struggle for their country's freedom.

More than anyone else, Bernadette symbolises this struggle. She entered the fight for Irish freedom 13 years ago, at the time of the mass civil rights marches. She became a prominent spokesperson of the nationalist minority struggling for its rights against the repressive weight of both the loyalists and their British backers.

As a result of her role in this fight, she was elected to Parliament in 1971. There she became the deadliest enemy of the Tories, exposing their repressive methods at every turn and using Westminster as a tribune to speak out on behalf of the Irish freedom struggle.

H-BLOCK

In the years that followed — although she later lost her seat in Westminster — Bernadette took part in almost all the struggles and campaigns against British occupation of her country.

Moreover, she carried the fight for Irish freedom outside the borders of Ireland to an international audience. She became, for millions, the living symbol of the fight for Irish independence.

This was nowhere more true than in the campaign on behalf of the hunger strikers. She became the chief spokesperson for the prisoners whose sole crime was daring to stand up to the British rule and fight for their country's freedom.

She toured the world, winning support for them and exposing the brutality of the Tories who had tried to physically and morally break their spirit. She played a key role in mobilising mass actions that forced the Tories finally to back down and make concessions to the prisoners.

HATRED

It is undoubtedly this role that won her the hatred of the Loyalist thugs and their British supporters. And it was because of this hatred that she was singled out by the Loyalist terrorists for special treatment as a target.

But they failed. They did not succeed in killing her. *Socialist Action* — alongside all those supporting her heroic fight over the years — wishes her and Michael a speedy recovery. Her determination, courage and commitment to socialism are more needed today than ever.

H-BLOCK statement

Below is an abridged version of the National H Block/Armagh statement on the attempted assassination of Bernadette McAliskey.

The National H Block/Armagh Committee is shocked to learn of the attempted assassination of Bernadette McAliskey and her husband Michael. We express our abhorrence at this latest shooting which is clearly part of a concerted campaign of murder against H Block activists and leaders.

To date, several leading members of the campaign have been murdered, including two members of the National H Block/Armagh Committee, Miriam Daley and Noel Little... Little or no attempt has been made by the British authorities to apprehend the killers...

Bernadette is the latest victim of the assassins obviously because she is seen to embody the determination and success of the campaign. She is Public Relations Officer of the National H-Block/Armagh Committee and, as such, has travelled all over Ireland and Europe holding press conferences and speaking at public meetings.

While expressing our sorrow at this attempt to kill Bernadette and her husband, we are equally determined, as she and Michael are, to press this campaign to a successful conclusion. Our sympathy goes out to her family, neighbours and friends.

on Abortion Rights

der standing that women's rights are of concern to all working people.

Already, the conference has drawn the support of industrial unions, such as the sheet metal workers, and numerous Labour Party branches up and down the country.

CONSCIENCE

Equally important, the conference will be discussing moves to end the “free vote” on abortion by MPs. Over the years, Labour MPs have blandly ignored conference decisions and have felt free to vote according to their “conscience”. This has been one of the major factors allowing women's rights, under the 1967 Act, to be eroded.

The Labour Abortion Rights

Committee (LARC) will be arguing that it is not enough just to include abortion rights on the party manifesto but that it is also vital to

ensure that MPs are mandated to implement the manifesto.

For details of the conference contact: NAC, 374 Grays Inn Rd, London WC1.

Fund drive - on the way!

January's fund-drive brought in £1,300 towards our target figure of £10,000 by Easter. That brings the total up to £3,360 and leaves us with about £6,500 to collect in the remaining three months.

Particular thanks are extended to those readers who dug so generously into their pockets last month — particularly DS (North London) who contributed £300. It is clear, however, that — with only three months to go — we will have to make an all-out effort if we are to reach the target figure on time.

Unlike the big business press *Socialist Action* has tried not to pass on to readers our growing production costs. We still sell at 15 pence even though — through inflation — the cost of the paper, printing etc. is sky-rocketing. The only way we can keep our price stable, and come out more regularly, is by building up the fund drive.

It is for this reason that we urge our readers and supporters to keep the contributions coming in. A regular donation — however small — would be even better. (Please make all cheques/postal orders payable to Socialist Action, P.O. Box 65, London SW16 1NN).

Will Labour's AES work?

Speaking at the mass rally in Liverpool last month, Eric Heffer called on the next Labour government to begin "rebuilding British industry on socialist lines". Heffer's militant speech reflects the anger of millions of working people faced with mounting dole queues and social service cuts.

But, while militant in words, what policies does Heffer — and other Labour leaders — have to tackle the current crisis? What programme have they got to ensure, when re-elected, they can deal with the rise in jobless and attacks on workers' living standards?

The answer is, of course, the Alternative Economic Strategy backed by the TUC and Labour NEC. The AES is being flaunted as a real answer to Britain's ills. But is it? Below, Terry Viney (Ravensbourne CLP) puts it under the microscope.

The AES is not new. Although presented as a "radical alternative", it was concocted in the early 70s and served as the basis of the 1974 Wilson government. Now, as then, its central weakness is simply that it views the problems facing the British economy in isolation.

But what we are faced with today is not a crisis unique to Britain but a world crisis of over-production. As after any period of "boom", the world market has become saturated and this has sparked off fierce competition between rival firms.

In this increasingly cut-throat world, the weaker firms go to the wall and mass unemployment is the result. Undoubtedly Britain — with its old and unproductive industry — feels such competition most sharply.

But the crisis we face is not a British one but a world one in which the jobless queues are growing in all countries — from the United States to West Germany. The OECD Report forecasts 21 million unemployed in the capitalist West by 1984.

STRATEGY

Failing to grasp this point, the main thrust of the AES is therefore to come up with proposals to help ailing British capital against its foreign rivals. Far from seeing capitalism as the problem, it seeks to strengthen British industry in the cut-throat market.

Workers are encouraged to see the solution to their problems not in fighting against a system that — world-wide — throws millions on the scrap-heap. They are encouraged to identify with it and to

get it working again.

This comes out clearly in the three basic proposals that the AES makes: reflation of the economy, setting up import controls and creating a prices and incomes policy. All these proposals will hit — and not help — working people.

DEMAND

A major factor behind "reflating the economy" is to create greater demand. Increased demand will, it is hoped, provide a market for British goods and cut back unemployment.

In order to ensure that British firms benefit from such demand however — and not foreign competitors — the AES places great stress on "selective import controls". Foreign goods will be barred entry to bolster up uncompetitive firms.

Such a view not only seeks to maintain British jobs at the expense of workers in other countries — hardly an internationalist viewpoint. It is also counterproductive.

TRADE WAR

In a period of recession, when the world market is shrinking, any attempt to keep out cheap imports can only lead to retaliatory measures abroad. Already in the USA for example, there is mass pressure building up in the auto unions to keep out foreign cars.

Once any government began to introduce import controls to protect its own industry, other governments would be forced to follow suit. British goods would be excluded from their markets.

The result would be a repeat of the thirties. A trade war would develop in which millions of workers' jobs — in



Workers occupying Gardners (Manchester) show way to fight job loss.

Britain and other capitalist countries — would rapidly be lost.

BAILING OUT

The second plank in the AES to protect ailing British firms is to project massive amounts of state funds into them. This was the position of the previous Callaghan government which set up the National Enterprise Board.

Since the AES does not call for taking over these firms — but merely propping them up at tax-payers' expense — it is difficult to see how this will contribute to "rebuilding... industry on socialist lines". It is even more difficult to see how this will protect jobs.

Pouring money into firms to "rationalise" them will, on the contrary, lead to a massive job loss. Isn't this the experience of the last Labour government? When over £50 million was sunk into Chrysler in 1976, didn't the company use it to streamline production at the expense of 10,000 workers' jobs?

WAGES

The third major plank of the AES to bail out British industry is to introduce a flexible prices and incomes policy. Pegging wages, it is argued, would be a rational way of planning investment for the fut-

ure.

In reality, of course, all wage controls do is tie workers to the cost-strings of private enterprise. Workers are expected to make sacrifices so that bosses can create bigger profits for re-investment.

At a time when inflation is surging ahead and — with massive loans to state industry as well — this will be the equivalent of asking workers to take a wage cut. The result will only be — as Callaghan found out to his cost in the "winter of discontent" — a wages explosion.

DANGERS

As can be seen, for all its radical rhetoric, the AES is not new. It is not radically different from the policies pursued by British Labour governments over the past years. It will not solve the problems facing working people.

First, by viewing Britain's problems in isolation, it does not seek to challenge capitalism but to "bolster" it in competition with its foreign rivals. What does it matter if thousands of workers in other countries are thrown on the dole as long as jobs are protected here?

Secondly, it ties workers' interests to the well-being of the present system. The idea of industrial democracy — i.e. work-

er representatives on boards of directors — is introduced to help this process along. Rather than calling for workers to take over the economy, it suggests that they should identify with the problems of their given firms.

REALITY

Finally — and most important — the AES offers no way forward for workers fighting today against the Tory government attacks. What can it say to workers in the car industry fighting for jobs? That they should unite with Michael Edwards to keep out foreign cars?

What does it say to workers fighting Thatcher's wage freeze in the public sector of 6%? That they should be willing to accept a wages policy (even though inflation is raging at 15%)?

What is needed — if jobs and living standards are to be protected — is a fighting programme based on the needs of working people and not on the needs of ailing private enterprise. Socialists should start from the premise that working people did not create the present crisis — and shouldn't be made to pay for it.

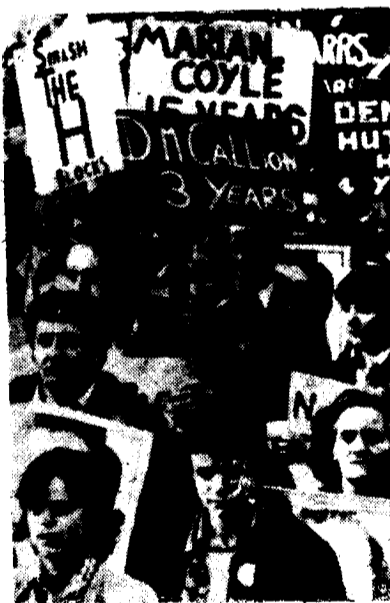
UNITY

If jobs are threatened, the demand should be made for work-sharing with no loss of pay: For the 35-Hour week! If management refuses to concede the demand, workers should call for access to the secret accounts: Open the books! If it is proved that the firm cannot guarantee full employment, it should be nationalised under workers control.

For those workers already on the dole, Labour councils should campaign for an increase — not decrease — in social expenditure to soak up the dole queues.

With inflation raging at 15%, workers should refuse any form of incomes policy. They should campaign around the demand for inbuilt cost-of-living clauses to safeguard their wage packets.

If the labour movement rallied around these demands — fighting demands — then the Tories could be rapidly defeated. They would, moreover, create a fighting programme for an incoming Labour government and ensure it operated in the interests of workers and not bosses.



Mass demonstrations — such as this one in Dublin — shook Ireland in protest against the inhuman treatment of H-Block prisoners.

H Block — the fight goes on

By GRAHAM WEIGHT (Croydon CLP)

The struggle by the H-Block prisoners to gain political prisoner status is far from over. Last December, it seemed that the Tories — under pressure from the mass movement building up — had conceded all of their demands.

It is now clear, however, that they are reneging on the deal. Having defused the mass movement, they are now seeking to backtrack on the concessions they were forced to make.

ISSUE

The fundamental issue of the H-Block protest was the prisoners' refusal to wear convict uniforms. They rejected their treatment as "common criminals" and demanded political prisoner status.

Because of their protest, they were forced to live naked in their cells and were subjected to inhuman treatment and harassment. The prisoners' decision to launch a hunger strike was a desperate attempt to protest this treatment

dished out to men whose only crime was fighting to rid their country of foreign oppression.

They demanded the right to wear their own clothes, to refrain from work, to freely associate with other political prisoners, to organise their own educational activities and to get full remission on their sentences.

BACK-DOWN

Although the Tories pretended they had not given an inch, Humphrey Atkins' statement on Dec. 17 clearly conceded most of these demands. According to Bernadette McAliskey, clean cells were to be prepared for the prisoners and they were to be given their own clothing.

The reason for this about-face was not hard to fathom. The Tories were frightened by the mass movement developing against the prisoners' inhuman treatment. In the weeks preceding the end of the fast, mass demonstrations

shook the country from Belfast to Dublin where, on Dec. 6, 40,000 marched on the British Embassy.

The Tories realised that — if any prisoner died — it could unleash a mass explosion. It could bring masses onto the streets and fuel the fight for a united Ireland free from British rule. The concessions (though denied) were an attempt to defuse this situation.

RENEGING

Having defused the mass movement, however, the Tories are now clearly reneging on the deal they made with the prisoners. Relatives of some prisoners bringing civilian clothes to the jail have been turned away.

Moreover, prisoners have been told that they will have to wear prison uniform and obey prison regulations before they are removed to clean cells and allowed to wear their own clothes.

Such treachery has — as a statement

by the H-Block/Armagh Cttee recently said — created growing "tensions and frustration... in the prisons". It means that all the men on the "blanket" are still in protest and there is talk of even launching another hunger strike.

MASS ACTION

If the Tories think they can get away with reneging on the deal, however, they had better think again. Early in January, Bernadette McAliskey announced at a rally in Belfast that, if the Tories refused to keep their word, the protest would have to return to the streets.

This is exactly what is beginning to happen. The National H-Block/Armagh Cttee has called for a widening of the campaign. It is up to us in the British labour movement to give maximum support in that struggle. A first step will be building the Labour Committee on Ireland rally, February 21, which is highlighting the plight of H-Block prisoners.

Labour activists discuss Ireland

By GARY ERLISKER

About 50 people attended a one-day school on Ireland and the Labour Party, organised by Battersea CLP on January 17. The turn-out showed the growing interest in Ireland developing among party ranks.

The first session heard MP Jock Stannard and *Socialist Challenge* staff writer Geoff Bell. While Bell dealt with the history of the Irish struggle since partition, Stannard concentrated on Labour's abysmal record on Ireland.

He pointed out the leadership's bloc with the Tories in opposing the right of the Irish to determine their own future and ended by saying it was no accident that the N. Ireland secretary most popular among unionist bigots was Labour's Roy Mason.

The afternoon session saw workshops around such areas as unionism, republic-

anism and the media and Ireland. Participants agreed that the media treatment of Ireland was completely one-sided and designed to prop up British rule.

The work-shop on republicanism, however, saw differences arise. Some people — such as those from the *Militant* current — seemed to be more concerned with the "rights" of the Unionists than the struggle of the Irish people as a whole for justice and freedom.

As others explained, the national struggle is central to the whole class-struggle in Ireland. Supporting the "rights" of the Unionists means supporting a privileged layer in N. Ireland and their backers in the British ruling class.

TROOPS OUT

Another disagreement that arose was over the question of British withdrawal

from Ireland. Supporters from *Socialist Challenge* moved a resolution which included calling on the Labour Party NEC to campaign for military and political withdrawal.

COMMITTED

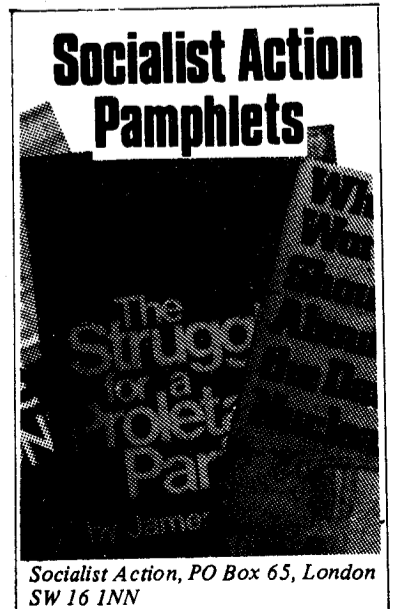
When some supporters of the Irish struggle assumed this meant immediate withdrawal, the *Socialist Challenge* comrade who moved it said this was not the case: immediate withdrawal was purposely left out as a "broad campaign" was needed.

An amendment to insert the word "immediate" was moved by *Socialist Action* on the grounds that troops out now was the only position consistent with supporting Irish self-determination and a mass campaign could and should be built on this basis. Such a stance did

not preclude working with forces, or taking part in actions, which did not agree fully with this principled position.

As well as *Socialist Action* and *Workers Action*, a number of independent Labour supporters of the Irish struggle backed the amendment. *Socialist Challenge*, however, and local Labour members less committed to self-determination, opposed the amendment and it was lost 17 — 18. Because of the backsliding on the part of *Socialist Challenge*, a valuable opportunity was lost to win support for the position of troops out now.

The meeting ended on a more positive note, however, with a telegram of solidarity being sent to Bernadette and Michael McAliskey, and Labour activists coming away were enthused and committed to organising support for the Irish struggle.



EDUCATION FOR SOCIALISTS

Roots of racism

"What is racism and how did it arise?" writes Phil Collins. "Has it always existed or is it a more recent development?" Phil's questions are useful because - even among socialists - confusion can often be found on what racism is.

Racism rests on the carefully-built assumption that Black people are "naturally" inferior and that this inferiority has always existed. Such a view, however, is relatively modern and only came into being with the birth of capitalist society.

The indignity and humiliation which Blacks are subjected to today - in the ghettos of London or New York - did not exist in pre-capitalist times.

PRECEDENT

George Brietman, leading American socialist, stresses this in his pamphlet "Anti-Negro Prejudice". While showing that pre-capitalist societies were based on many forms of oppression - cultural class and religious - he points out it was never based on the idea of a people being considered inferior because of the colour of their skin.

He gives numerous examples of race relations in early slave-owning societies to prove his case. He quotes Oliver Cox on the early Egyptians who "looked down on the Negroes to the south of them. They enslaved them and spoke scornfully of them, but", Cox adds, "they were just as scornful of the Asiatic sand-dwellers or Troglodytes who were lighter than the Egyptians".

That it was a cultural discrimination in Egypt can be seen, Cox says, by the fact that many of the Negroes who were captured in battle were allowed to enter Egyptian society and become Pharaohs themselves.

The same picture is true of all societies - from the Greek to the Roman - to the feudal era. There were divisions and antagonisms of class, culture and religion but none along race or colour lines. As late as the 15th Century, when the West African slave trade to Portugal began, the excuse for the enslavement of Blacks was not that they were "black" but that they were not Christian.

ROOTS

Racism - the idea that Blacks were innately inferior - only began to develop at a later stage. Its roots can be traced to the pillage and rape of Africa and India in the 17th Century by the newly-emerging trading nations of Britain and Holland.

These new trading nations found in the under-developed world huge profits not only in raw materials but the human beings they shipped as slaves - in their millions - to work on the cotton plantations of the West Indies. It was out of the vast profits gathered in the slave trade that the new capitalist class was able to finance the industrialisation of the 19th Century.

The process was simple. Manufactured goods were taken to Africa and traded for slaves to be shipped to the United States. The ships returned to Britain loaded with the sugar and cotton produced there for the manufacturing industry. This triangular trade reaped millions in profits for

manufacturers, plantation owners and shippers alike.

RIGHTS

This barbaric trade created, however, a problem for the new trading class. Their rise to power had taken place under the banner of the "rights of man" in which no human being was the property of another. It was difficult to reconcile this idea with the pillage of Africa in which Blacks were shipped like cattle to work as slaves.

The growth of racism has its roots in the attempt by capitalists to defend this barbaric system. Slavery and the rape of Africa were justified on the grounds that Blacks were "subhuman" and "naturally inferior".

It was on the basis of such an ideology - backed up with pseudo-scientific trapp-



ings and Biblical quotes - that countries like Britain were able to justify the pillage of the Third World and build the "British Empire".

PRIVILEGE

The anti-Black virus spread by the manufacturers and the shippers did not permeate into the labour movement easily. During the American Civil War, for example, Lancashire cotton workers organised massive protests against slavery in the Southern States. The Chartists led mass actions against slavery.

Over time, however, the myth of Black inferiority - created to justify profiteering - began to seep into all areas of society. Even though workers had no interests in colonial oppression, many began to identify with the "British Empire" and oppose the independence struggles of colonial workers and peasants.

This backward attitude on the part of the more privileged layers in the labour movement was noted by Engels in a letter of 1882 when he wrote that "the workers merrily devour alongside them (the capitalists - Ed.) the fruits of the British colonial monopoly".

POST-WAR

This ideology, however, has become particularly dangerous today because of the influx of Blacks into Britain since the war. Blacks were encouraged to emigrate to Britain to fill the labour shortage that developed (particularly in service industries like health, catering and transport).

The racism of British capitalism - created over 300 years ago - is no longer directed at the colonies but at millions of Blacks who have settled over here. In recent years, successive immigration acts have not only tried to exclude Blacks on the basis of colour but have turned those already over here into second-class citizens.

Under these laws, they can be denied basic rights: i.e. they can be arrested without a warrant and deported without right of appeal. This gives the police the "green light" to harass the Black community (as seen recently in the fishing raids). Moreover, the racism created by such acts permeates all aspects of society. Blacks are pushed into the most menial jobs, are forced to live in the worst slum housing and to be educated in the worst schools.

DANGER

The present Tory government, of course, is deliberately playing on anti-Black prejudice in its tightening up of the immigration laws and attempts to introduce a new nationality bill. The aim of this is to encourage the belief that the cause of the problems we face - high unemployment, falling living standards - is not caused by capitalism but by Black people.

The Tories are whipping up the prejudice of centuries to try and divert attention from themselves onto a scapegoat identified by colour. The danger is that - because the labour leaders have done nothing to oppose such attitudes - sections of the labour movement can be drawn behind a reactionary ideology.

Far from challenging the clamp-down on immigration, for example, past Labour governments have openly implemented racist laws. Merlyn Rees actually tightened the 1971 Immigration Act and proposed a White Paper on Nationality which the Tories have used as a model for their own.

UNITY

Such weak-kneed attitudes have to be challenged. If they are not, the Tories will be able to split the labour movement - which will make it easier for them to ram home their anti-labour policies. An example of what can happen was seen at Imperial Typewriters in 1973 when white workers scabbed on their striking Black brothers and - by so doing - allowed management to ram through working conditions which set back all workers.

A central task in stopping the Tories is to build mass opposition to their present racist immigration proposals. It is only if the labour movement can be won to defending the rights of all the oppressed that a united front can be posed to the Tory government and their anti-working class policies stopped.

US socialists sue FBI



Marion Bustin - coal miner threatened with deportation

calls on the government to stop spying, infiltrating and harassing the SWP.

The suit comes at a bad time for the US rulers. They need to strengthen their secret police to help silence the growing opposition among US workers to their policies of inflation, union busting and unemployment.

They need to overcome the widespread distrust among working people for the FBI and CIA, to convince them they are necessary in the "national security".

The trial - scheduled for March 16 - will blow this wide open. It will publicly expose the anti-worker role of these government spy agencies.

Already, the suit has forced the government to release thousands of files which show the SWP accusations of spying, burglary and frame-ups are true.

The files reveal how the FBI plotted against the Black movement, tried to drive union militants from their jobs, sought to discredit the women's movement and undermine mass opposition to the Vietnam war.

In 1976, following some of these exposures, the Attorney General ordered the FBI to halt its investigations into the SWP. However, on November 20 last year, the FBI was forced to admit it had continued to maintain files on the SWP despite claims to have halted spying on the party.

This was just one of the lies the SWP suit exposed. A concrete example was the case of SWP member Marion Bustin, a coal miner from West Virginia. It was discovered that for 6 years the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (INS) have been trying to find grounds to deport her because of her political views.

The case of Marion Bustin and Hector Marroquin, another member the US government is seeking to deport, will be at the centre of their case.

As Andrew Pulley (SWP Presidential candidate in the 1980 elections) explained in a recent statement: "The American people have a right to hold political opinions and express them freely. By denying this right to us, the government is trampling on the rights of all Americans".

By ANN WESTCOTT (Salford CLP)

On March 16, the FBI, CIA and other government spy agencies will be put in the dock. They are facing a lawsuit from the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) which claims that, since 1938, they have conspired to disrupt its political activity.

The lawsuit - filed back in 1973 - demands 40 million dollars in damages for the disruption caused to date. It also

Defend Longbridge 8



Michael Edwardes - leading the Tories anti-union offensive.

By TIM ROBINSON (Lambeth CLP)

Late last month, the "independent" enquiry into the sacking of 8 Longbridge workers returned its findings. It recommended that only 2 out of the 8 workers be re-instated.

These recommendations, if accepted by Longbridge workers, would be a major set-back to shop-floor organisation in the whole of British Leyland.

MISCONDUCT

The workers were originally sacked, last December, for alleged "gross industrial misconduct". Hauled before the bosses' kangaroo court, they were promptly dismissed.

Their "misconduct" involved standing up to the Leyland bosses who, for years now, have been seeking to ram home speed-up and job loss. The men took part in a protest action when management, shortly before, sought to introduce speed-up in the Trentham seat-build shop.

RECORD

Clearly, for the Leyland management, the victimisation of the 8 was a further attempt to break the back of shop-floor organisation. Michael Edwardes' record speaks for itself:

* Two years ago, Edwardes rammed home his "plans" for the company which involved a massive job loss. Sacking convenor Derek Robinson for criticising his views, he threatened to shut down the company unless the unions agreed.

* In April, last year, Edwardes imposed a 5% pay norm - at a time when inflation was raging at 17% - threatening, once more, to shut down the company unless the unions gave in.

* Only last November, despite the anger and frustration of Leyland workers who voted 2 to 1 for strike action, Edwardes rammed home a 6.8% pay rise on the union leaders. Mass sackings would result if the deal was not accepted, he threatened.

No wonder Edwardes is the Tories' blue-eyed boy. He is clearly setting the pace for the whole Tory drive to beat down and cripple the trade unions.

WEAK-KNEED

The reason why Edwardes has got away with his arrogant threats is obviously due to the weak-kneed attitude of union leaders. Frightened by threats to close down the company, they have meekly accepted everything the management has served up over the years.

This can be seen in their attitude to the current dispute. The union leaders refused to call Edwardes' bluff by threatening wide-spread strike action if he didn't reinstate the men. On the contrary, they recommended that the 1500 who had already struck return to work and called for an independent enquiry.

Seeing no alternative, the strikers returned to work and an "independent" enquiry was set up whose recommendations have only recently been announced.

DEFENCE

Unfortunately, these recommendations - which clearly back the management's action - have been meekly accepted by the trade union leaders. If the Edwardes' management is allowed to get away with these victimisations, however, then no-one at Leyland will be safe.

As Tony Benn says, it will not only give Edwardes the green light to apply similar methods in other Leyland plants. It will give the green light to all managers to get tough with the unions.

This is why it is vital to begin the fight-back now. Already a defence campaign is being set up, sponsored by Selly Oak Labour Party.* Such a campaign has to begin now to convince workers that only strike action will defend union rights against Edwardes' dictatorial methods.

* Messages of support and donations should be sent to: Selly Oak Labour Party, Albert Bore (Secretary), 10, Greenend Rd, Birmingham 13.

— reviews —

Socialism on Trial, James P. Cannon (Pathfinder Press)

Radicalising young workers beginning to take an interest in socialist ideas often ask if there's a particular book they can read that sets out - clearly and simply - what socialism stands for.

Socialism on Trial has served that purpose for decades. It is particularly useful because it is based around a series of questions and answers.

What is the fundamental role of socialists? How can workers take power into their own hands? What attitude should socialists take towards violence? What happened in the Russian Revolution? These are just some of the issues it takes up.

The method used to explain the ideas was no accident. *Socialism on Trial* was literally that. It is a court testimony - that of J.P. Cannon, a founder and long-time member of the socialist movement in the United States.

Cannon and 17 other leaders of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and Minneapolis truck drivers' union were on trial for their socialist views during World War Two. They were accused of "sedition" for refusing to give up their ideas and cease fighting for the rights of working people.

Despite a defence campaign, supported by unions representing 2 million workers, the socialists were rail-roaded to gaol.

In having to give Cannon the chance to expound his views from the dock, however, the US ruling class undoubtedly came out the loser. Capitalism, Cannon explains, in its early stages took humanity forward. But now it can only offer unemployment, curbs on demo-



James P. Cannon.

cratic rights and ultimately war. It has become the major obstacle to human progress.

In contrast to the capitalist minority, who rule by deceit and force, Cannon points out that socialists are the best fighters for democratic rights, for the unions and for all oppressed people.

He goes on to explain how socialism has nothing to do with the bureaucratic caricature that exists in the USSR. The Russian Revolution, for the first time in history, placed power in the hands of working people. But the revolution - isolated in a backward country and attacked by capitalism internationally - eventually was overcome by Stalinism.

Since Cannon was explaining his ideas to a mass audience who were not socialists, the book is easily readable. As an introduction to, and stirring defence of, the basic ideas of Marxism, it is a powerful weapon in the hands of working people who want to fight for a better world.

Council Workers Fight Cuts



October 1979: mass demonstration against the cuts.

By JANE ANSELL (Finchley CLP)

February 2 saw the opening of Lambeth council workers "week of action" against the Tories. Lambeth workers' week-long strike — including meetings and demonstrations — was called against Tory minister Hesaltine's latest round of cuts.

Hesaltine's proposals are an attempt to slash social services by withholding government grants and re-juggling the rate system. If implemented, not only will services be slashed but thousands of workers will be thrown onto the growing dole queues.

Lambeth council workers' action is part of an upswell in opposition to the Tory cuts reflected in the Local Government in Crisis conference on January 17. Over 430 delegates met to discuss how to combat the Tory offensive and build action against it.

Delegates at the conference reaffirmed opposition to any form of cuts. As one of them put it: "Labour councils weren't elected to do the Tories' dirty work. Cutting services — and throwing workers on the dole — is an attack on working people all Labour councils should resist".

RATES

Conference also decided that raising rates to offset cuts was no solution either. Rate increases, it was argued, are only a back-door attack on working people.

In order to offset the cuts — and the penalties Hesaltine might impose on "over-spending" councils — the rate increases would have to be massive. As one delegate put it, working people — at a time of rampant inflation — are not likely to tolerate such an attack on their living standards.

The truth of this can be seen in Lambeth where the council has decided to "up" the rates by 20 pence in the pound. It has already provoked a growing "No rate increases" movement exploited by the Tories.

The only alternative, delegates argued, was to stand up and fight the Tory offensive. Labour councils — with the backing of the public sector unions — should refuse

to implement Hesaltine's proposals and build a mass campaign with which workers can identify.

Such a stand would receive the wide-spread backing from the labour movement in the case of attempted Tory victimisation. As Ray Davis, a South Wales Councilor put it, such a stand "... would receive the support of the whole labour movement and provide a focus for the fight against the Tories."

BACK-DOWN

Unfortunately, few — if any — Labour councils have been willing to stand firm. Even those that attended the Local Government in Crisis conference — such as Lambeth — have gone along with the Tories by selling council houses, making cuts and pushing up the rates.

Their stance, however, is rapidly losing the sympathy of working people. The decision by Lambeth workers to stage a weeks' strike against the Tories — and the support they have won elsewhere — shows the willingness for a fight is building up.

The action by Lambeth workers cannot be left at just a one-off protest. It must be used to launch a campaign throughout the labour movement against the Tories attempts to axe the welfare state. A chief plank of such a campaign must be to fight — in the Labour Parties — for Labour councillors to stop doing the Tories' dirty work, and replacing them if they wont.

El Salvador

that he had joined the FSLN in Morazan province. Similar defections have been noted in Santa Ana, Sensuntequepe and San Miguel.

FSLN pointed out last month, without that support the Duarte dictatorship could be overthrown in a matter of weeks.



El Salvador: Liberation forces on training exercise.

They reveal what a narrow base of support the dictatorship enjoys.

HANDS OFF!

The only reason the US rulers have not openly intervened in El Salvador — or neighbouring Nicaragua — is because they fear that they might unleash a furious protest throughout Latin America and in the United States itself.

While they are not yet prepared to openly intervene, however, the sending of arms and equipment to the puppet regime — and the call on neighbouring dictatorships to rally round — represents a serious threat to the struggle there for democracy and socialism.

That is why it is vital for socialists in the labour movement to give their support to the El Salvadoran people by demanding:

US HANDS OFF EL SALVADOR!

NICARAGUA

The scene clearly looks set for a repeat performance of what happened in Nicaragua. In 1978, the workers and peasants of Nicaragua — led by the Sandinistas — swept the bloody Somoza regime from power and set up a workers and peasants government.

The US rulers clearly fear that the example of Nicaragua could spread to other areas of the Caribbean — to El Salvador or Grenada where the New Jewel Movement is also challenging US imperialism.

Fearing that their grip over the Caribbean could slip, they have decided to make a stand in El Salvador. As a representative of the

NICARAGUANS PLEDGE SOLIDARITY

By STEVE RANDELL (Lambeth CLP)

The revolutionary offensive in El Salvador has sparked an outpouring of solidarity in neighbouring Nicaragua.

Not only is the struggle against the Somoza dictatorship vividly remembered, but as internationalists the Nicaraguan people look upon the revolution in El Salvador as their own.

CONFIDENT

Solidarity with El Salvador was one of the themes of a January 10 rally in Managua commemorating the third anniversary of the assassination of Pedro Joaquin Chamorro. Commander Luis Carrion of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) warned of the danger of imperialist intervention.

"We are absolutely confident that the people of El Salvador will win even if there is an intervention.

But we also know that the danger of intervention poses a grave threat, not only for the heroic people of El Salvador but also for our own people, who will see any military aggression against El Salvador as a military aggression against Nicaragua as well.

The imperialists can cut off our credit, our export quotas, and many other things, but they will never take away our sovereignty, our freedom, the dignity of our people or our revolutionary principles".

SUPPLIES

Speaking only a few hours before the

call for insurrection in El Salvador, Carrion promised that the Nicaraguan people would share their already meagre supplies of food and fuel with the Salvadorans.

"We don't have any big surplus to give them, or material resources. Everything we give them we will have to deny ourselves; we will share our poverty with the people of El Salvador".

As soon as the insurrection began the Nicaraguan Committee for Solidarity with the Peoples (CNSP) announced a national campaign of fund-raising and material aid for El Salvador. This was matched by similar announcements from the Association of Nicaraguan Women (AMN), the Rural Workers Association (ATC), the Sandinista Workers Federation (CST), the Sandinista Defence Committees (CDS), and various local unions.

BLOOD

The mass organisations in the city of Matagalpa and in Carazo Province each pledged to raise 10,000 cordobas. Workers at PROCON, a nationalised construction materials company, pledged 5,000 cordobas.

The CST announced a campaign to increase production and lower consumption in order to be able to send basic food stuffs to El Salvador or if necessary. The labour federation was also collecting clothing and medicine.

Workers at Augusto Cesar Sandino International Airport announced that they were ready to donate blood.

Seafarers strike bites

By GEORGE HOLD (Peckham CLP)

Despite attempts by the employers to play it down, the seafarers' industrial action is clearly biting home. Ferries have been hit by 24 and 48 hour lightening strikes and, at present, over 40 ships lie idle in various ports around the world.

The British bosses are clearly worried that, if strike action grows, much-needed imports and exports will be brought to a halt. The government estimates that there are only 100 days supply of fuel in the country.

MODEST

The strikes began when the employers rejected the National Union of Seamen's claim for a 16% wage rise (coupled with

increased overtime payments.) Such a claim was more than modest when it is realised that British seafarers receive only £238 a month compared with £472 for their Danish counterparts.

It is also more than modest when it is known that, over the past 25 years, the workforce has been axed by a staggering 155,000. Bosses' profits have soared as a reduced workforce has been expected to carry out ever more duties.

The bosses' firm stand has clearly been dictated by the needs of the Tory government. As Tommy Hanley (full-time official, Cardiff) points out: "The government is behind this. They want shipowners to follow others like Michael Edwardes to force us to our knees".

DETERMINATION

The determination of the rank-and-file to win the claim, however, was shown on January 3 in Liverpool — the opening shot in the wave of guerrilla strikes. Workers, sacked for carrying out a 24-hour stoppage, occupied the P&O Ferry "Ulster Queen" and forced the management to back down.

Since that time, other lightening strikes have taken place in ferry and deep-sea ports around the world. On January 12, in response to the NUS Executive's call, over 166 ships were put out of action.

The strikes have been so effective that they have even pushed some employers to "break ranks" and try to conclude separate agreements. Townsend-Torenson, for example, has already offered to settle if their workforce will call off the action and return to work.

UNITY

Unfortunately, while the rank-and-file have shown their militancy, the NUS Executive has been less bold. Instead of calling an all-out strike — that could rapidly bring the employers to their knees — they have limited the action and combined it with appeals for arbitration.

Such an attitude merely spins the issue out. The rank-and-file have shown they want to fight. Moreover, solidarity by other workers has been growing. Dockers have pledged to boycott scab ships and seafarers' unions in other countries are turning back ships diverted to foreign ports.

If the NUS Executive was to call an all-out stoppage, the strength of the membership and solidarity of other workers could rapidly bring victory. This is the attitude of many NUS branches — such as Cardiff — and is the call that needs to be taken up nationwide.

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