

# workers' ACTION

No.134

Feb.17-24, 1979

10p

## INSIDE

**LOW PAY BATTLE:** ■ Support committees ■ Local settlements ■ Water workers ■ Labour and the strike centre pages

**IRAN:** Khomeiny says: 'The State must be protected'. But what will the workers do? page 2

**TUC and the Concordat/ Crisis in Pakistan/ 'Observer' & Ireland** page 3

**John Maclean and Scottish nationalism** page 6

## THREAT No.1: COMPARABILITY

# NO DEAL!

THE BIGGEST threat to the present council workers' action does not come from picket-busting or being starved out by the employers. The strike is hardening, and there is plenty of evidence that there is mounting pressure to make it an all-out strike.



The threat comes from the union leaders' willing-

ness to call off the strikes in return for 9% plus an inquiry into 'comparability' with the private sector.

The issue of 'comparability' has been floating around since the strike started. At the London rally on the Day of Action, January 22nd, Fisher raised the question non-committally. GMWU leaders Basnett and Donnet never stop talking about it. And Fisher

came out definitely for 'comparability' on Wednesday 14th in response to a suggestion by Environment Secretary Peter Shore.



Why don't Fisher and Basnett tell their members what the civil service clerical grades have got out of their 'comparability' deal? Their average wages are even lower

than the council workers.

'Comparability' schemes remove workers from the fighting ranks of labour, making them completely dependent on the gains and losses of other workers. It means a pay system which is open to manipulation by the Government. It means pay disputes tend to be posed in terms of quibbles, differentials, and comparisons, instead of class terms.

And right now 'comparability' is a way to get the council workers and health workers to stop their struggle in return for promises of jam tomorrow.



The strikes, work-to-rules and other actions of the public service workers are beginning to bite. The need now is to turn the screw tighter, not

call the action off.

Every striker knows that industrial action causes inconvenience and even danger, and every public service worker knows that there is no way of striking without the public being hit to some extent.

That can't be a reason to stop. The only reason for stopping can be winning the claim.



## THREAT No.2: CONCORDAT

# We're not the problem - we're the victims

WHAT'S the problem? According to the Tories, the root of all evil is workers' militancy - pickets, wildcat strikes, and sabre-toothed shop stewards.

The government and the TUC leaders agree. Their Concordat repeats all the catch-phrases of rabid anti-unionism: workers are irresponsible, uncaring, unthinking, unreasonable, and the playthings of bullies where they are not bullies themselves.

Unemployment, it seems, is not the problem.

Low pay and feeble benefits which condemn millions to poverty are not a big problem. There is no big outcry against profiteering, gross social inequality, and the tyranny of the bosses.

Instead, it's all out against the workers. Our living standards are attacked and when we fight back our struggles are attacked as the root of all problems.

For the capitalist class this approach - apart from being good propa-

ganda to rally the Tory ranks - makes some sense. Workers' struggles really can create a crisis for them.

From our class's point of view, the presentation of militant pickets, big wage demands, and fiercely-fought strikes as the problem is crazy. The ability and will to fight are all we've got to protect us against the ravages of the system based on capitalist power and the exploitation of the working class.

# Workers must take the lead

KEITH JAMES

IN IRAN, as in Vietnam, a mighty military machine has proved incapable of defeating a revolutionary movement in full flow.

In Vietnam the unrelenting guerilla war sapped and destroyed the morale of the American army. In Iran, the people's courage in confronting the machine guns finally won over the men behind those guns.

On 11th February, the Iranian army declared it would no longer support the government headed by the Shah's appointee, Shapour Bakhtiar. And since Bakhtiar's government had no other support outside the army, it vanished from the political scene immediately.

If a big army is not enough to defend reaction, however, the defeat of the military hard-liners is not enough to seal the victory of the revolution. In the first place, the Iranian army is not totally defeated yet.

## Broken

The army is battered, fragmented, and insubordinate. But it has not been broken up. And the Muslim leaders do not want to break it up. On the contrary, they assert that the true place of the whole army, officer caste and all, is with the Muslim movement.

A few commanders — like General Rahimi, former military governor of Tehran, who has been arrested — will

be purged. The mullahs will try to keep the rest of the army intact. General Djam, a former minister of Bakhtiar, asserts that an alliance of the mullahs and the army is the best way to save Iran from communism. The people around Khomeiny probably think the same way.

On Thursday 8th — just before the confrontation that led to the fall of Bakhtiar — the army commander-in-chief General Gharaghabi and the SAVAK commander General Moghadan had a four-hour meeting with one of Khomeiny's main aides.

The final overthrow of the Iranian monarchy, from 9th to 11th February, was carried through by a people in arms. Guns, mostly from the army's stocks, are in every hand in Tehran.

The uprising started on Friday night (9th), with a clash between pro-Shah die-hards of the Imperial Guard and air force men favourable to the opposition. The people from the surrounding area joined in, supporting the air-men.

## Curfew

On Saturday morning the Imperial Guard was defeated. Barricades went up all over Tehran. The Government declared a curfew, in vain. On Saturday evening the Majlis (Parliament) was sacked. Early Sunday morning, the people of south Tehran seized an arsenal.

The mullahs called for the arms to be taken to Khomeiny's headquarters, where the people should wait for instructions. The militants in Tehran's streets had different ideas. Led, reportedly, by left-wing guerilla groups, they first besieged and conquered a big military police barracks.

Then — around 2.30pm on Sunday — they seized the radio station. Around this time, Bakhtiar was meeting with General Gharaghabi and Khomeiny's nominated prime minister, Mehdi Bazargan.

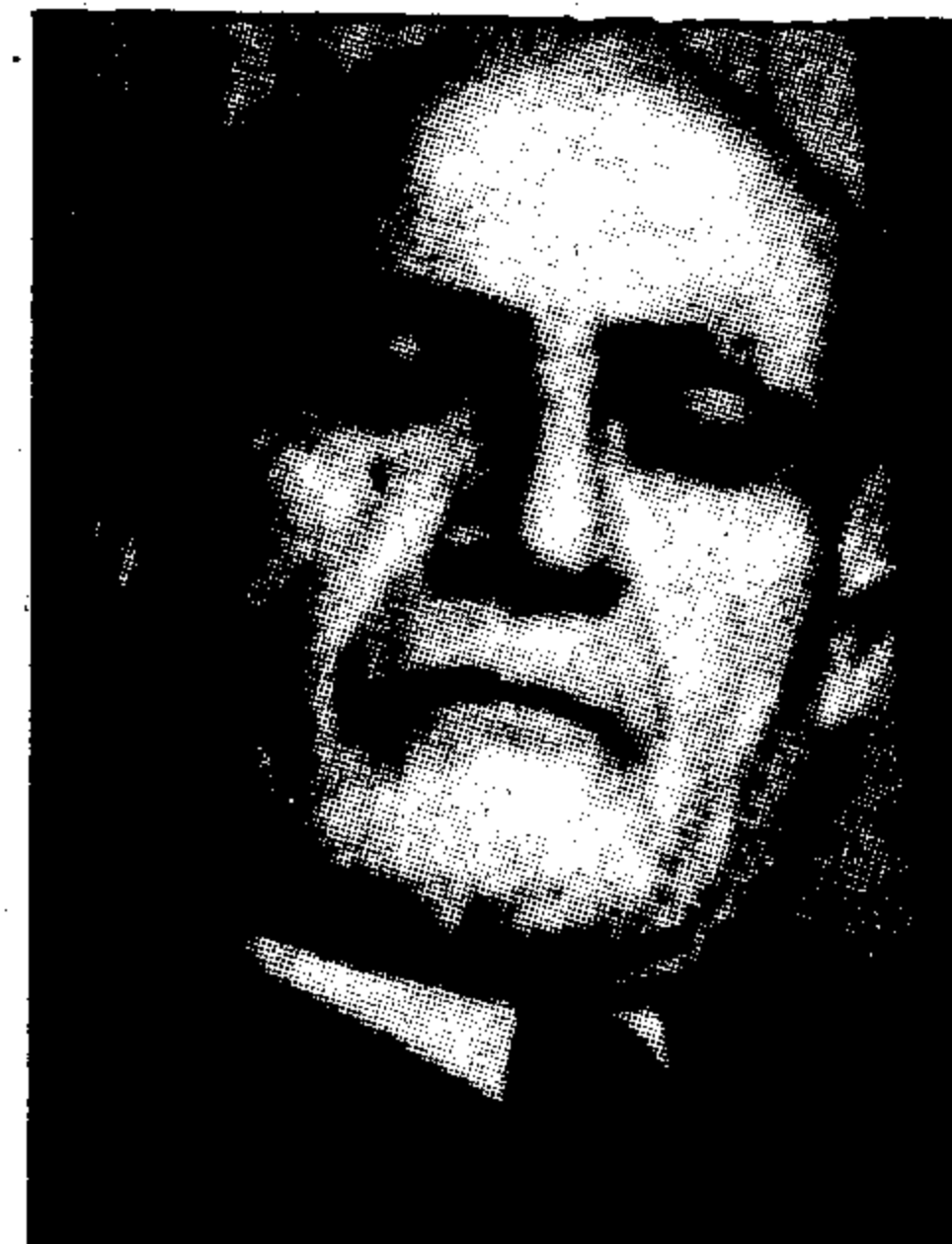
The capture of the Bagh-e-Shah barracks — where fighting was especially heavy — and of the television station followed. At 6pm the army announced it was withdrawing support from Bakhtiar.

In Isfahan, according to the Paris daily *Le Monde*, the Government and the Army had already lost power some days previously. The city was being run jointly by the mullahs and by the teachers' union.

Khomeiny's first concern, after his victory, was to halt the revolution. He called for calm, and appealed to the guerillas to give up their arms. As far as Khomeiny is concerned, the revolution is now essentially finished. It needs only the formal estab-

lishment of the institutions of the Islamic Republic. That is why he needs the army: to stop the Iranian workers, peasants, and students who want to go further.

In social terms, the government Khomeiny nominates is not very different from Bakhtiar's. Bazargan, the new prime minister, is in fact an old friend of Bakhtiar, and the two men have exactly the same political background, in the bourgeois nationalist movement of Mohammed Mossadeq in the early 1950s.



Islamic Premier Bazargan

Soon after Bazargan and Khomeiny took power, President Carter announced that the US would work with the new Government. Although, certainly, the US will not have as much influence with Bazargan and Khomeiny as with Bakhtiar and the Shah, negotiations to fix up a new deal between Iran and imperialism are no doubt already under way.

## Workers

All the press reports identify the Iranian working class and especially the oil workers as the major base for a left-wing challenge to the attempt by Khomeiny to halt the revolution. Fragmentary reports tell of struggles on the strike committees between communists and Khomeiny supporters.

Among the oil workers of the south, the Khomeiny

supporters are in a minority. To reassert his authority, Khomeiny has set up a central strike coordinating committee under the leadership of one of his lieutenants.

To win their demands, the workers need to keep control of their strike committees and keep their arms in their hands. Building the organisational and political independence of the working class is the key task of the hour. The chances of workers' power in Iran depend on it.

Right now, the Iranian workers need to take the lead in giving the mass struggle for democracy the sharpest and most radical form. A constituent assembly must be elected, with full voting rights for both men and women. It must be free of any restrictions imposed by the Muslim hierarchy.

In the army, soldiers must elect their officers. Right-wing officers and secret-policemen must be purged. The soldiers should organise their own committees and form close links with the popular militias. SAVAK must be dissolved.

Full equal rights must be granted to Iranian women. Iran's military links with imperialism must be broken, and imperialist interests in Iran should be nationalised without compensation. Iran's oil should be sold only under popular control, and with the distribution of the oil revenues.

The big landowners' land should be distributed to the peasants. Adequate and easy credit should be granted to small peasants and agricultural cooperatives. The minority nationalities of Iran should be granted the right to self-determination and the right to use their own languages.

While fighting for these demands, the Iranian workers must also strengthen their independent class organisation, their struggles for workers' control, and their political awareness. For it is on them, ultimately, that the fate of the Iranian revolution will depend.

Insurgents in the streets of Tehran. Now Khomeiny says: "All weapons must be surrendered to the mosques... Don't let those weapons fall into the hands of the enemies of Islam." Islamic soldiers must be armed, but others must not be armed.

"Iran is in its most sensitive stage. Don't let your enemies infiltrate your ranks. Expose those who refuse to hand over arms. The State must be protected. The disorder must be ended."



## CUT-PRICE SOCIALISM IN IRAN

LEFT PRESS

ACCORDING to Intercontinental Press of 5th February, a Trotskyist party has been set up in Iran for the first time ever: the Socialist Workers' Party of Iran, founded on 22nd January.

The SWP of Iran is connected with the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (USFI) and more especially with the SWP of America. Its relations with other USFI supporters putting out the paper *Che Bayard Kard* are not clear.

IP publishes the first manifesto of the SWP of Iran, which calls for a 'Bill of Rights for the Workers and Toilers of Iran'. Judging from this, it is a very confused form of Trotskyism indeed that the SWP of Iran represents.

The SWPI calls for a constituent assembly in Iran. Given that the working class in Iran is still far from having the organisational and political independence and strength necessary to gain workers' power, this is a thoroughly progressive demand. It gives a clear cutting edge to the Iranian people's drive for democracy, opposing any fetters which the mullahs or the military may try to put on that democracy.

But the SWPI then tries to make this democratic programme into a cut-price socialist programme. Socialism is

slipped in as the most radical form of the struggle for democracy.

It is true that, especially in a country like Iran where tyranny has ruled almost without a break for centuries, the path to socialist revolution can be prepared only by a thoroughgoing struggle for democracy. It is also true, in count-



Iranian Trotskyist paper 'Che Bayard Kard'

ries like Iran, that full victory in the battle for democratic rights can be won only through the socialist revolution.

Socialist revolution — workers' power — is nevertheless separated from even the most radical bourgeois democracy by a qualitative difference: the question of class power. The parliamentary road to

socialism is an illusion, even if the parliament is in Iran, and even if the parliament is called a constituent assembly.

The SWPI's document is headed: 'For a Revival and extension of the heritage of the constitutional revolution'. There follows a remarkable travesty of the history of revolutionary struggles in Iran, attempting to prove that socialism is merely the next set of democratic rights which the Iranian people are due to fight for.

Iran's constitutional revolution, in 1906-11, was mainly led by merchants. For the SWPI, it becomes a revolution of the 'people', the tradition of which was 'buried' by the property-owning classes.

The revolutionary ferment of 1917-21, when the Iranian working class came onto the scene for the first time and a short-lived Soviet Republic was set up in Gilan in the north receives no mention. Perhaps it would upset the SWPI's pattern of the gradual 'extension' of democratic struggle.

The period of struggle from 1941 (when the Shah's father was kicked out by British and Russian troops) to 1953 (when Pahlavi came to power through a CIA-backed coup) is described in the most bizarre fashion.

All its phases are jumbled

together under the title 'the second revolution'. The 'Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan' (northern Iran) set up in 1945 with the protection of the Russian troops is described as a 'workers and peasants government'.

Among the 'rights' fought for in this period, the SWPI lists: 'The right to establish a government of the workers and peasants instead of a government of the property-owning classes'. The 'right' of workers to overthrow capitalism is listed as just another objective like the right of minority groups to use their own languages!

Then the SWP outlines the 'bill of rights' it proposes for the constituent assembly it demands now. The Bill of

Rights adds up to a socialist programme. Certainly socialists in a constituent assembly could propose a socialist programme to the assembly, using it as a forum for socialist ideas. But for the SWPI the resolution which they might put to a constituent assembly becomes the centre of their whole programme. Socialism is reduced to a parliamentary project.

The manifesto says nothing about the strikes, nothing about strike committees, nothing specific about the Islamic movement. Although relatively long and detailed, it addresses itself very little to the specific situation in Iran.

That is because the idea of the 'Bill of Rights' manifesto is borrowed quite mechanically



from a Bill of Rights campaign which the SWP of America launched four years ago.

Noting that 'A great deal has changed during the 185 years since the Bill of Rights was added to the (US) Constitution' and that new 'problems demand solutions that reach beyond the important victories of the past 200 years ... the Socialist Workers' Party has proposed a new Bill of Rights: a 'Bill of Rights for Working People'.

The idea of socialism as a supplement to the bourgeois-democratic constitution is wrong in the USA. As the veteran American Trotskyist leader James P. Cannon put it, referring to a similar notion in the 1930s:

"It was terribly capitulatory, a philistine programme of the crudest kind... a proposal that our whole programme should be an amendment to the Constitution; that our revolutionary programme should be whittled down to one parliamentary project."

The notion makes even less sense in Iran. The Iranian workers do need a Trotskyist party. But the SWPI will have to overhaul its ideas thoroughly before it can lay a sound base for such a party.

COLIN FOSTER

# Anything the Tories can do, we can do better - TUC

**THE LABOUR Government's grandiosely titled 'Concordat' with the TUC is not important for what it says. It is important for what it shows about the TUC's intentions.**

The feebleness of the Concordat stems from the fact that the bureaucrats just don't have much leeway.

After two rather successful rounds of wage curbs, the government failed to get the TUC to accept a third round in 1977. The Government still got the TUC to refuse support to the firemen. But Phase 3 had plenty of holes knocked in it, and pressure from the rank and file was mounting within the unions.

When it came to Phase 4, Callaghan could dissuade the union leaders from open opposition only by offering the prospect of a short run-through to an October election.



And then — no October election. The TUC leaders felt cheated; and facing a growing rank and file revolt, they found themselves forced to fight the 5% limit.

But the pay revolt has been bigger and stronger than the TUC expected. Now they want to get it back under control just as much as the Government does. That's why they're signing the Concordat, and stretching union policy to meet the Government's wishes as much as they can without completely exposing themselves and losing all authority over their members.

According to the text published in the *Observer*, the new agreement expresses concern at Britain's rate of economic growth and insists that without an improved performance (read speed-up) wage increases will be impossible.

To square this with all those union conference resolutions opposing pay curbs, it says: There is no precise arithmetical relationship between getting price rises

down to 5% and a particular level of pay settlements'. In plain language: pay rises are not the cause of inflation. Then the Concordat goes on to say that the way to get pay rises without inflation is increased productivity. There is no question, it seems, of simply eating into profits!

The Concordat can't say it wants wage controls. It does propose a yearly 'economic assessment' at Budget time where 'both sides of industry' will discuss an agreed level of wage increases. This is one of several hints at the German system of 'concerted action', under which bosses, unions and Government discuss a pay norm each year.

The first response to this suggestion came from the CBI, the employers' 'union'. 'No', they said, 'This is too much like the corporate state'. Apart from the fact that it does not want to spoil the Tories' current electoral campaign line that the unions are 'out of Labour's control', the CBI wants to preserve freedom of action for the class it represents. This, of course, is just what the TUC should do if it is to represent workers' interests, instead of tying the labour movement hand and foot to the state.

The Concordat also proposes a pay comparability system. Key groups of workers will be taken out of the struggle for decent wages and given pay awards according to how their pay relates to that of other workers.

The Concordat tries to answer the Tories' war-talk against pickets, the closed shop, and mass meetings.

According to the MORI public opinion poll in the *Daily Express*, 85% of trade unionists want a ban on secondary picketing, 76% want a limit on the number of pickets and 91% want postal ballots before strikes. It's not surprising when the press spews out lies every day. Margaret Thatcher is promising legislation on all these matters, plus the closed shop.

Does the TUC try to explain that the press hysteria about 'union bullies' is just a cover for the real bullies of the boss class? Not a word of it. The TUC has agreed to a formula which says: Labour will do all that the Tories want, without legislation. And they hope that the bosses will prefer this to a repeat of Heath-type anti-union legislation.

So the Concordat agrees that pickets should stick to picketing their own places of work and leave suppliers etc. alone (i.e. no secondary pickets), that they should wear official armbands (no mass pickets), and that closed shops should be operated flexibly. The TUC has also said that ballots should be introduced before strikes and that it should be the arbiter of all inter-union disputes.

But the key word here is 'should': nothing goes beyond a strong recommendation.

Unlike the Social Contract, the Concordat makes no promises. Neither side feels strong enough to do that. The most they can hope for is that people will vote Labour because they think that the TUC can disrupt, lame, dampen and sabotage industrial action more easily with Labour in power.

Such is the appeal that Callaghan hopes to be elected on!



The whole exercise is in fact directed at the bosses, and at the reflection of the bosses' press in 'public opinion'. Rather than taking up the fight against profiteering and poverty, the Labour and TUC leaders are concerned above all to show willing — to show that they will do all they can to stifle the workers' fightback.

It won't cut much ice with the bosses. And it should cut no ice at all with the workers whom the Labour and TUC leaders are meant to represent.

# Pakistan: stop the hangman

PAKISTAN'S military government will face a crisis whether or not it goes ahead with the execution of former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

Bhutto's party, the PPP, has been decimated by repression. Five or six thousand of its members are in jail. This repression may be enough to stop an immediate mass response if Bhutto is hanged. But millions of Pakistanis regard Bhutto as a man who may be corrupt and may be dishonest, but who nevertheless stood up for them against Pakistan's traditional ruling elite.

Hanging Bhutto would also earn the government external enemies.

Bhutto had good connections. President Carter, prime minister Callaghan, and UN Secretary General Waldheim have all called for a reprieve. And the Pakistan Government is in no condition to risk losing friends abroad. Foreign debt repayments take up over a quarter of the state's normal revenue. Only last November the government had to appeal for a re-scheduling of payments in order to avoid going bust.

Yet, reprieving Bhutto would be a sign of weakness. And signs of weakness are the last thing that military regimes can afford.

Bhutto came to power in 1971. The army, which had ruled the country since 1958, was demoralised and discredited after the Bangladesh war of 1970-71 and the war with India in 1965. Bhutto promised reform.

Most of the promises were not kept. But Bhutto did put through a land reform, striking at the biggest land-

owners. And he carried out substantial nationalisation.

By March 1977 Bhutto's credit was wearing out. He won the general election that month only by blatant rigging. In one constituency, for example, the pro-Bhutto candidate raided the polling station. His supporters opened fire with sten-guns to drive off the opposition. One of them beat up the polling officer while others opened the ballot boxes and spoiled votes cast for the anti-Bhutto candidate.



London Pakistanis demonstrate against the death sentence on Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.

In the months following March, discontent deepened. When the working class started to move, the army stepped in with a coup d'etat. It used Islamic ideology to rally popular support.

Bhutto was brought to trial accused of arranging the murder of a political opponent: a move to get rid of Bhutto and discredit him at the same time.

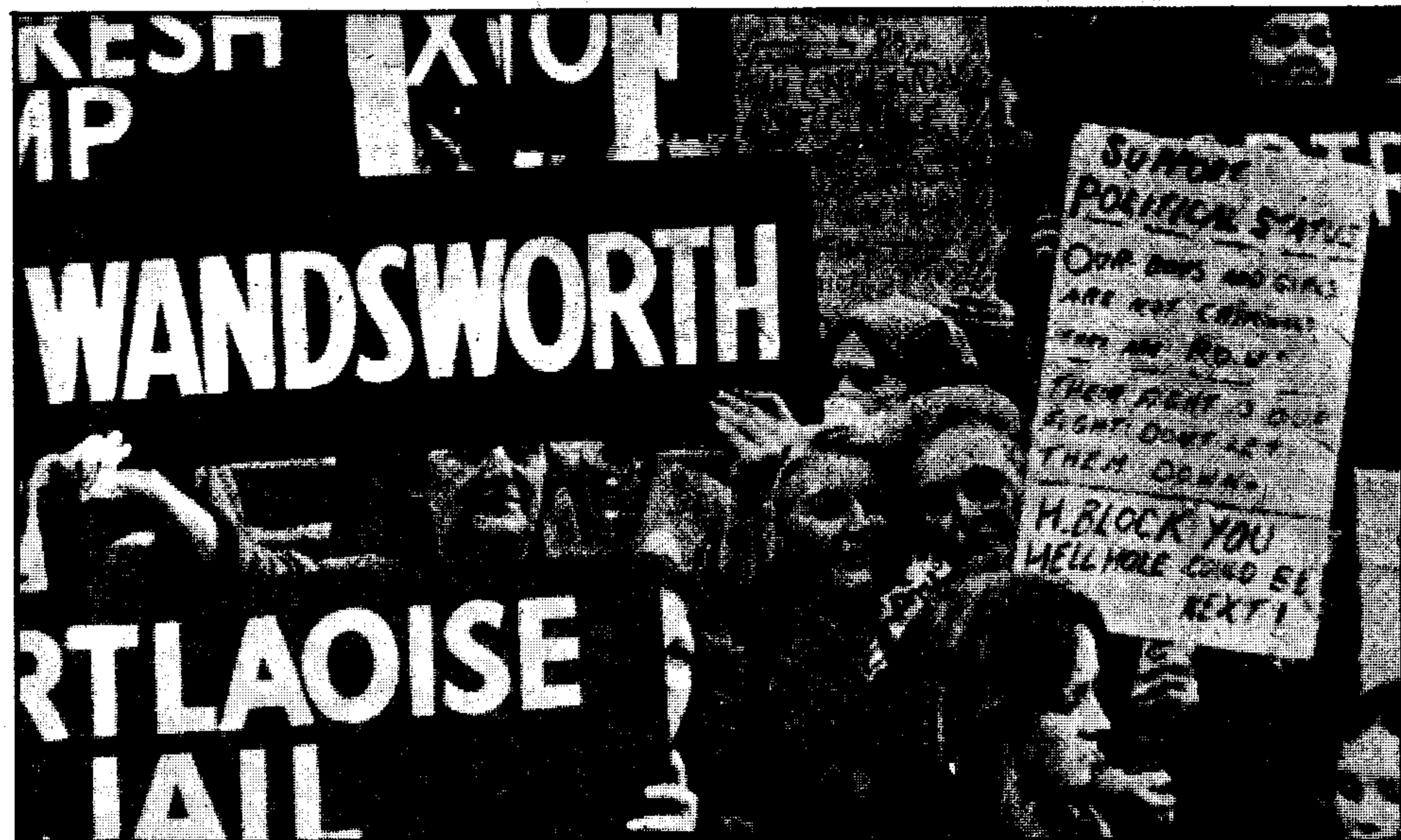
Military ruler General Zia secured a guilty verdict, but many questions remained about the case. Far from a 'new broom' dispensing justice, the trial was generally seen as an excuse to do away with a man who could be a rallying point for discontent and opposition.

The campaign to discredit Bhutto rebounded on the military regime doubly in that the regime is manifestly just as corrupt as Bhutto's was. A prominent minister recently threw a lavish party for 6,000 people when his daughter got married — in a country where people are starving on the streets.

The regime's chief civilian support, the Pakistan National Alliance, is so divided that its executive committee cannot meet: different factions refuse to recognise each other's legitimacy.

For socialists, Bhutto's execution must be opposed. Bhutto is guilty of many crimes against the Pakistani people. But socialists oppose capital punishment (except as a measure of dire necessity for a beleaguered revolution). Most certainly we oppose capital punishment when it is used as a measure of political repression by a military dictatorship.

RHODRI EVANS



## WHEN THE OBSERVER SHUTS ITS EYES

THE protest of the 'men on the blanket' in Long Kesh's H-block near Belfast and of their supporters in the north of Ireland and around the world is getting to the leader-writer of the *Observer* — quite likely to be the Republic of Ireland's ex-Minister Conor Cruise O'Brien.

The protest campaign is only one prong of a three-pronged plot, he warns, that *Observer* readers might be too blind to see. Another plot of the same dastardly campaign is the killing of Northern Ireland prison officers. 'We would ask readers of this newspaper' the editorial ends 'to remain liberal, but to think this one out'.

But how can the *Observer* reader 'think this one out' without its editor coming to grips with the arguments for and against giving political or prisoner-of-war status to the 'men on the blanket' and the women protesters in Armagh jail?

Evidently the *Observer* does not trust its 'thinking' readers with the facts or the

arguments. It doesn't even say what the protest is about — or rather it lies about it. The campaign is said to be 'against conditions in H-Block', rather than for the political status which the Labour Government abolished in March 1976.

Indeed, the piece refers to the IRA as 'a strictly disciplined para-military organisation' without managing to ask the question whether that might mean that it is a political or military organisation and that its prisoners deserve to be treated as such and not as criminals.

For two and a half years over 300 Republican prisoners have refused to wear prison clothing and for the last year they have refused to slop out their cells. In an effort to break them — so that British propaganda can pass them off as criminals — they have been denied all exercise, cell furniture, visits, reading matter, use of toilets and a number of other basic amenities that prison authorities choose to call privileges.

And for two and a half years the British press has acted as a back-up to the prison system: reinforcing the screws' brutality with the journalists' silence.

Now it speaks up ... to warn readers against feeling 'humanitarian'.

According to the *Observer*, the dreadful dungeon conditions in which the H-block prisoners are entombed are of their own making. What smugness! The fact is that so helpless are most prisoners that almost all protests — refusing to wear uniform, going on hunger strike, climbing on to the roof to call attention to their demands, damaging their cells, refusing work, enduring solitary confinement — all these are self-inflicted punishments.

That is a measure of the powerlessness of the prisoner, not of the injustice of his cause.

But even powerless to harm anyone but themselves these prisoners have the liberals of the *Observer* shaking.

# United action to beat low pay. Build support committees!

AT NUPE's spring conference there will be a move to disaffiliate the union from the Labour Party.

The move seems to have been devised by some NUPE activists as a gimmick to give an additional kick to the Labour Government. It may gain some support in the rank and file. But it is wrong.

Labour is still the mass party based on the working class and the trade unions. Our leaders are thoroughly and despicably pro-capitalist. But the rank and file of the Labour Party is an integral part of the labour movement. Through using its delegates to local General Management Committees, NUPE should be trying to rally Labour Parties to support its struggle — not talking about disaffiliation.

This disaffiliation would not be a step forward from Labour politics to more militant socialism — but a stupid gimmick, representing political irresponsibility.

Many local Labour Parties have supported the low-pay struggle. Left wing militants in the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory (SCLV) have

made it a major focus.

In Haringey (North London) the SCLV last week called a meeting in support of the low paid. Andrew Hornung (a WA supporter, speaking for the SCLV) urged Labour Party activists to turn the constituency and ward organisations outwards to campaigning for the strikers. The other SCLV speaker, local councillor and NUPE official Jeremy Corbyn, joined Hornung in calling for a 'support committee' based on the Labour Parties in the borough.

The enthusiasm shown at the meeting for this project indicates what is possible. The idea is to create a body uniting all the labour and community groups — Labour Parties, union branches, tenants' groups, women's groups, parents' organisations, ethnic minority groups, shop stewards' committees — which actively support the strike. It will take collections, organise petitions, publicise the low-paid workers' case, and help their strike committee.

In Haringey, the Labour council has said it supports the workers' claim. The 'support com-

mittee' must demand of it that it says so openly. The council's Labour group — if it means what it says — should pay for a full page advertisement in the local papers explaining why the claim is justified, why they want to pay it, and what is wrong with the Government's attitude.

What has happened in Haringey, where the three Labour Parties in the borough look like endorsing the 'support committee' idea, may not be possible everywhere. Elsewhere the Trades Council might be the right basis for a support committee. If the Trades Council is too slow moving or is unwilling, trade union branches could be the starting point.

The deciding factors should be speed, flexibility, and maximum involvement. The objective is maximum unity in action of the labour movement's rank and file against the Labour Government's policies of squeezing the poor and helping the rich. That's the way to win the £60 and 35 hours and to deal with right-wing Labour policies — not disaffiliation.

**JAMES DAVIES**



## LOCAL DEALS: NOT A

SOME local authorities are offering to go above the government's 8.8% offer.

Norwich council has offered 14% and Medway (Kent) has offered 10%. Basildon in Essex has got the GMWU to exempt it from action in return for a local offer. West Norfolk and Peterborough are also talking about local offers.

These councils are not the left Labour councils which

back the workers' claim. Some, like Medway, are Tory. They are making offers because they have got money in the kitty, either because of high rates and rateable values or low social service spending.

NUPE opposes local settlements. And it is right. The local offers are well below the £60, and accepting them could only weaken the fight.

But even local offers of £60 are not the answer.

The money to meet the claim should not come from another round of domestic rate rises. That just means one section of the working class paying the wage rises of another (whose own rate rises will cancel out part of the pay rise anyway...)

Councils could pay the £60 by 'overspending' and 'doing

## DON'T TAKE THE WATER

THE 16% offer made to the water and sewage workers has been accepted by union leaders of both the main unions involved.

This is a bitter blow to the growing industrial action of the low-paid public service workers — the caretakers, dustmen, street cleaners and maintenance workers, hospital porters and ambulance crews.

The water and sewage workers are potentially the

most powerful group of those in dispute at present. The action of water workers, moreover, could be directed specifically at industry rather than at domestic users. So keeping them in the dispute is important.

From the beginning, however, the GMWU, the biggest union among water workers — and one of the least militant in the dispute — tried to separate off the water workers' issue from

the general claim for a £60 basic wage and a 35-hour week. Time and again it stressed the need to compare the water workers' wages with those of gas and electrical supply workers rather than make common cause with the other public service workers, winning what they could by strength.

The GMWU even flew the kite of a no-strike agreement if water workers' wages

## STRIKE ROUND-UP

**A letter is dynamite. What would action be?**

BURY Constituency Labour Party last week sent a resolution to the Regional Labour Party conference supporting the public service workers' £60 and 35-hour week demand.

But that conference isn't for a while yet, and the resolution could be passed on and forgotten. More immediate action proposed under AOB just after this resolution got a rougher ride — but it got through.

The proposal was to send a letter to the local paper in support of the strike.

This simple measure led to a lengthy debate, in which the letter was termed 'political dynamite' which 'would lose Frank (Frank White MP) his seat'. In the end the resolution was carried 13 to 7, and at that point the Chairman said he would have to resign rather than put his name to the letter!

In the end he relented and is staying until this month's AGM.

Bury LPYS meanwhile is planning to picket Merlyn Rees when he visits Bury to open a Multi-Racial Centre. The picket will aim to highlight Labour youth's support for the public sector workers' strike.

**SUE ARNALL**

## Step it up, says Edinburgh NUPE

THE WORK-to-rule in the Edinburgh South Hospitals branch of NUPE is still continuing. The district committee covering the branch — made up entirely of shop stewards — has called on NUPE's National Executive Committee to escalate action immediately in all hospitals. We feel that the lack of a national lead has made it difficult to step up action at a branch level.

Workers at two hospitals, Elsie Ingles and the Sick Children's, started refusing to use time clocks last week. The branch planned to spread the action.

However, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Bruce Millan, intervened directly. He told the NUPE district officers that wages would be withdrawn from the workers involved. With this threat hanging over them, shop stewards were in no position to defy the full-timers' instructions to call off the action. They have managed to get the divisional office to support a strike by porters in the two hospitals in the near future.

The work to rule is hitting laundry supplies hard after a fire in the laundry at the City Hospitals. All the laundry is now being done in the West General Hospital, where management have been trying to cut corners on safety to deal with the increased workload dealt with.

Shop stewards and branch officers in the South Hospitals branch have persuaded West General laundry workers to refuse management's call for

three shifts. With only one shift working, only the most essential laundry is being dealt with.

The management's response was to send laundry out to private, non-union contractors. This laundry is now being blacked.

Other hospitals in Scotland are joining the action. At the 13,000-bed Royal Scottish National Hospital at Larbert, 600 CoHSE members began a work to rule and overtime ban on Monday 12th. Similar action has begun at the Bell's Dyke hospital in Larbert and the Falkirk Royal Infirmary.

WORKERS AT sewage stations at Seafield Rd, Newbridge and Wallyford are still on strike. Because of the Government's refusal to pay up, 50

million gallons of untreated sewage is pouring into the Firth of Forth each day.

Despite NUPE's national recommendation to accept the 16% offer for water workers, the picket at Seafield Rd is still being maintained. The strikers there feel that the union's policy of selective strikes is leaving them too isolated and they want to see all-out action from other sources.

The picket is being respected. Lorries carrying sludge from breweries, Xerox equipment for the computers, and cable, have all turned back as soon as the drivers saw the pickets were still on. Even though managers are still going in to Seafield Rd, they are doing nothing that undermines the strike. Many recognise that they may be out

themselves when a claim from NALGO goes in.

The Labour-controlled Lothian regional council has so far avoided saying anything about the action.

THE PROMISES that action would be stepped up by the union leaders in Scotland have at last come to something, after the local authority negotiators refused to budge.

The joint committee of the four unions involved in the action in Scotland has decided to bring dustmen in Glasgow and Edinburgh out on strike. A meeting of 100 GMWU shop stewards in Glasgow backed up the call for strike action to start on Wednesday 14th. Edinburgh's dustmen will join them the next day.

**JOHN MACDONALD [NUPE]**

## LAMBETH LABOUR BACKS LOW-PAID

LAMBETH council leader Ted Knight has given his support to the strikers. Already the council is defying the Government in freezing rents, so it's not the council's fear of Whitehall that stands in the way of a local settlement. Knight commented: 'The public sector unions want a national offer and so do we. Their fight and ours is with central government'.

TGWU District Official Jim Foskett says 'We know the council is sympathetic. Our argument is not with them but with the Government'.

Action goes ahead, all the same. Lambeth dustmen

walked out last Wednesday for a week, and will strike two days a week and an overtime and weekend work.

Neighbouring Wandsworth, Tory-controlled, faces stronger action. Dustmen have been out since January 30th. The council there is investigating smashed radiators and ripped out fuel pipes to seven dust-carts, and the mysterious disappearance of 20,000 black plastic rubbish sacks...

The ambulancemen are operating an overtime ban and dealing with emergencies only — next week a national delegate conference will consider further action. Chris Sutton,

South West London Ambulance NUPE and Lambeth Trades Council Secretary, told us: 'We should press for national concerted action. Action is at present fragmented. The Government knew of our claim since last May, when delegates at our Margate conference voted for action for £60. We were prepared to do emergency on the Jan. 22nd day of action, until the members heard that the army was being brought in...'

Norwood Labour Party GMC passed a resolution supporting the £60/35-hour struggle, and the EC is meeting to plan support action.



**Pickets at a Wandsw**



Workers' Action spoke to John Ranten, secretary of the Haringey "Parents for the Caretakers" campaign, on a demonstration outside the civic centre in Wood Green on Tuesday 14th.

We need to balance the voice of parents who are against the caretakers. We're more than interested in getting children back to school. I've got two kids who have been off school for four weeks now, and they are beginning to get very bored. We think the caretakers should get a decent living wage.

The local council can't settle the dispute. The blame is at the door of the Government because of its unfair pay policy.

The last offer made by the employers would mean 30p for cleaners and dining room assistants. A caretaker is being offered an extra £2 a week.

Five per cent doesn't make sense when you're low paid. And 15% might be enough for someone on £8,000 or so, but it's not enough for people on £40 a week.

# Arithmetic at the sign of the Three Rabbits

by IAN HOLLINGWORTH

'IF TEACHERS don't go in, we have ways of breaking the picket lines, like dogs and men with walkie-talkies', said James Paling, Director of Education for the Labour-controlled borough of Newham (East London).

Schools in Newham are closed because the caretakers are on strike. In retaliation, the borough is trying to organise classes in pubs, church halls, sports centres, private homes ... anywhere. Obviously very little real learning is going on under these conditions. It's simply an effort to break the strike.

Conflict is sharpest at Langdon School. The caretaker there is in Nalco, so instead of just being locked up the school has had a picket of caretakers from other schools. The cleaners there are also now on strike.

About a third of the teachers have refused to cross the picket line. But those teachers who have crossed the pickets have been directed to other premises to do their teaching. And on Tuesday morning, 13th, teachers who respect the picket line got an instruction, on pain of suspension, to report to the 'Three Rabbits', a local rockers' haunt.

A Newham NUT meeting on the 13th heard the NUPE-T&G-G&M strike committee say that if schools open, industrial action will be escalated. The strike committee promised 100% solidarity to any teacher who was victimised or had pay deducted for refusing to cross picket lines.

On alternative premises, the NUT official policy is hopeless. Teachers are contractually bound to teach wherever the employers want.

The Newham NUT branch officers pointed this out. And they put a resolution that sounded like a refusal to go beyond giving out and taking in work from students facing public exams. But in fact it said teaching in alternative premises would be OK provided the premises were 'satisfactory'.

*There is a danger that the NUT committee will find anything from the Three Rabbits to the Methodist Hall perfectly suitable ... for breaking the strike.*

The meeting also passed a resolution from the left-wing Newham Teachers' Action Group, which said 'the strike will only be prolonged by any decision which will assist alternative education' and pledged to uphold any 'decision by the strike committee which opposes the provision of alternative facilities'.

The left-wing resolution attached a string of conditions to any work in alternative premises:

- Insurance cover.
- Complete closure of schools.
- Funding by the Authority for special materials.
- Restriction of facilities to 5th and 6th year secondary pupils taking public exams.
- No use of private homes.
- Union supervision of all activities.

The fact that both resolutions were passed could, however, leave the door open to manoeuvres.

Meanwhile the strike committee and the Newham Teachers Action Group have been trying to arrange a joint strike bulletin with journalists at the local *Stratford Express*, who have struck on a domestic issue.

LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY LOW PAY

## BRIDGE BUT A BARRIER

Clay Cross'. But is that the best way forward now? In some strikes — like the miners' and the drivers' — local settlements mean a break in the bosses' front.

Each settlement puts greater pressure on the employers all holding out, threatened with loss of trade to those who have paid up. That certainly doesn't apply in this strike! Individual settlements

would just mean isolation and de-escalation of action — the very opposite of what is needed.

*Socialist Challenge* calls for both Clay Cross-style settlements and an all-out strike. But we need maximum force and unity for a national settlement.

National settlements were brought in a long time ago. They had the general effect

of raising the pay of the low-paid workers in the manner — usually rural — local authorities. A return to local deals would not help the workers.

Labour councils should be called on to make a public declaration of support for the workers' claim, to be publicised as much as possible in the press, in leaflets and at public meetings. Full-page

ads in local papers, calling on people to support the strike and respect the picket lines, and condemning the Government's refusal to pay the claim, would be a lot more help to the strike than a local settlement.

And the councillors should make themselves busy in strike-support activity. That's the way to knit together local support into a strong national movement.

## WORKERS OUT OF THE FIGHT

are automatically raised with those of gas and electricity workers.

The union negotiators can hardly claim that 16% is the maximum that can be won, since there has been hardly any industrial action yet. They do say that the present offer is substantially better than the one they refused. It is not.

The chief difference between the present offer and

the previous 'unacceptable' one lies in the conditions attached to the attendance bonus. The latest offer is claimed to put 9.05% on basic rates, with another 6.9% rise coming from a self-financing productivity scheme.

The government hopes by introducing further productivity strings to cover the shortage of workers in the industry at no extra cost, and

even create redundancies.

Worse still, there is talk of making the 15.95% a benchmark for the rest of the public sector. That means the unions are definitely not taking the £60 claim seriously as a target for this year. NUPE's water industry committee has stated this already.

According to the *Financial Times*, the union accepted that its target had not been achieved 'but recommended

that the offer be accepted with a view to achieving the union's objectives in the next pay round'.

The national committee's acceptance doesn't mean that the offer will be accepted by the rank and file. Latest reports are that Manchester workers have accepted the offer, while water workers in the South-West and Liverpool have rejected it and are stepping up their industrial action.



th council depot

## All out—that's the answer!

LEICESTER'S hospitals are still in the forefront of the low pay actions in the city.

Rolling strikes in various departments of the General Hospital are continuing and a work to rule and go-slow are being operated by porters at the Royal Infirmary.

Dustmen came out for one day last week to protest at the council's use of contractors to do work they normally handle; now they are planning further action.

School caretakers attended a stormy meeting on February 4th to discuss their next action. The meeting was called by the Leicester Low Pay Campaign Strike Committee, composed mainly of full-time union officials. It was intended to get approval for their plan of a two

day protest strike throughout Leicestershire. They said 'We are looking for a green light from our members'.

But there was little enthusiasm for the proposal, as many caretakers wanted all out action. 'Everybody out — that's the answer. We phoned up the Leicester Mercury and Radio Leicester and tell them all the schools are shut from Tuesday morning and that's it' said one caretaker, while another said: 'If we don't win this we're going to get the knuckle, and the only way we'll win is if we fight. If we don't fight, that's it.'

A number answered the argument that they couldn't afford to strike: 'I can't afford a long strike, so let's get a bit of guts into the fight with an all

out strike'.

But for all the full-timers' talk about green lights, they were quick to show the red light to calls for all-out strike. Now they were saying that in a democratic union like theirs the members had representatives to make the decisions for them!

The chairman then stood up and announced 'I'm closing the meeting, Cheerio'. Uproar followed, with the officials trying to smooth things over by saying the members should use the opportunity to talk to their representatives.

As one caretaker put it in the meeting, 'We will only get the money we deserve when we get the union officers we deserve'.

CHARLIE SORRELL

## Once you're out, stay out

TIM THORPE, secretary of Nottingham Social Services NUPE, writes:

The NUPE strike committee in Nottingham is growing. Despite a letter from a regional official telling other branches not to send anyone to our meeting on Friday 9th, we have made links with three other branches in the last week.

The officials seem to have no real plan for action. They are simply making action official after the rank and file have gone ahead. It is the strike committee's policy that is being taken up: Once you're out,

stay out!

School caretakers did just this. They refused to be ordered back to work last week just as their action was beginning to bite and fuel supplies in the schools were exhausted. They decided to stay out and the union regional office was forced to make the continued action official.

40 schools are now closed in the county.

In my own branch the regional office had ordered van drivers to stop an overtime ban and then would only allow them to re-impose it if they undertook to deliver 'meals on wheels' at any time. The driv-

ers decided on Friday 9th to go ahead with the ban even if it was unofficial.

The attitude of the Assistant Divisional organiser who refused to make the action official so angered some of the drivers that they were talking about leaving the union. It was only the fact that's possible to get on with things and ignore the officials that dissuaded them.

The local Campaign for Action in NUPE is holding meetings and producing bulletins. Our last meeting on Monday 12th, with 30 people there, had a really strong mood in favour of all-out action.

## Coventry: Manchester petitioning

NURSES and hospital porters in NUPE got a lot of support outside British Leyland's Canley plant in Coventry when we went there on 7th February with a petition in favour of the £60 for 35 hours claim. Lorry drivers going in and out and the workers there stopped to sign and take our leaflets explaining why the strikes and other actions were happening.

The only opposition we got was from managers as they drove in. But because there were TV cameras there, most of them just drove past and pretending not to notice, so we didn't get the benefit of their views on greedy workers.

HOPES that Manchester's Labour councillors would back the low paid strikers looked even slimmer last week. Having already given support to the Tories' plan to bring in 'volunteers', it now emerges that the Labour Group on the City Council had voted unanimously to support the council officers in refusing to deal with NALGO social workers who were demanding local negotiating rights.

After this was revealed in a 'confidential' council group report to the City Labour Party, Labour activists have made the fact more widely known and resolutions demanding this policy be reversed have been passed in a number of ward parties.

## Liverpool: Council on lock-out

ON Monday 12th February, waterworkers in Liverpool voted to reject the latest offer of 16% being pushed by the union negotiators. However, they have returned to work pending the votes in other areas.

Dustmen in Kirkby and Huyton are on all-out strike. From Friday 10th, refuse collection stopped in Birkenhead after the 250 dustmen there were locked out after refusing to cross a NUPE picket line at one of the area's incinerators.

## Manchester Council on the run

TOWER HAMLETS council is on the run. After NUPE members shut down the Bethnal Green and Poplar Town Halls, the councillors tried moving into the local Social Services Department but Nalco members there picketed it and had them chucked out. Then they tried the Brady Youth Centre but found the phone wouldn't work.

They were last heard of hiding out somewhere in a giant dockland office development grandly called the World Trade Centre. But striking council workers are trying to track them down.

IN 1917 THE Russian revolution completely changed the outlook for socialists. Maclean was one of the few revolutionaries in Britain to have any idea about the factional struggles in the Russian socialist movement before 1917. His knowledge came from his close friendship with Peter Petroff. Petroff arrived in Leith in 1907, after escaping from the Siberian exile to which he was sentenced for his part in the 1905 Revolution. He fought alongside Maclean in the SDF, in the BSP, and in the various campaigns on Clydeside.

May Day 1917 saw eighty thousand people march through Glasgow cheering the first (February) Revolution in Russia. Maclean was in jail. In April 1916 he had been sentenced to three years' penal servitude for speaking out against the war. On May Day 1917 in Glasgow, the resolutions supporting the Russian Revolution were coupled with demands for Maclean's release. Both were one cause — the world-wide proletarian revolution — and the Glasgow workers shouted themselves hoarse.

At the end of June, Lloyd George was due to receive the freedom of the city. The working class responded with a 100,000 strong demonstration of protest, which demanded Maclean be released and that he and Kirkwood be given the freedom of the city instead of Lloyd George. The demonstration was further swelled by two hundred Russian sailors from a warship lying in the dock.

In Petrograd that June, a resolution was passed: "The Convention of All Russian Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies send their greetings to the brave fighter for the International, Comrade Maclean, and express their hopes that the new rise of international solidarity will bring him liberty".

After the October Revolution, Maclean was elected an Honorary President of the First All-Russian Congress of Soviets. Shortly afterwards he was appointed Bolshevik Consul in Glasgow.

Maclean had been released from prison in July 1917, and he devoted himself once again to the struggle — including his favourite campaign, to establish a Labour College. In April 1918 he was arrested again because of his opposition to the war. In his speech from the dock, he fearlessly defended revolutionary internationalism. "I am not here", he announced, "as the accused: I am here as the accuser of capitalism dripping with blood from head to foot".

## Shaken

His previous period in jail had seriously damaged his health. He had aged, his sinus condition had grown worse, and the hard labour had ravaged his constitution. Even Maclean appeared shaken when the new sentence was five years. Yet he managed a brave "Keep it going, boys: keep it going!" to his friends in the gallery as he was led away to the cells.

He was freed in December 1918, and thousands of workers struck to welcome him home. "For the best part of an hour", one observer reported, "trams which were leaving the city had to travel ... at the rate of John Maclean's triumphant, red-flag procession". Soon he was at work again — and again he was proving that he was an internationalist to the core. He campaigned for the release of Debs, Mooney and

Billings from jail in the USA and for the release of Sinn Feiners and anti-war fighters from Scottish jails.

Most of all, he was convinced that the best support for the world revolution was to defeat capitalism in Britain.

"The question for us in Britain", he wrote in January 1919, "is how we must act in playing our part in this world conflict. Some are suggesting a general strike to enforce a withdrawal of British troops from Russia and, I suppose, from Germany as well. That, to some of us on the Clyde, is too idealistic... We will have no success in urging a strike on this issue.

"We must... save Russia by developing a revolution in Britain no later than this year... How can we get the mass on the move? ... The demobilisation has already created a menacing unemployment problem... The only possible solution is a drastic reduction of hours per week... Here we have the economic issue that can unify the workers in the war against capitalism".

The miners were already demanding a 30 hour week, and planning to strike from mid-February. The Clydeside engineering workers, at a conference on 18th January, decided to go for a reduction in hours from 47 to 40. On the 27th they came out. Maclean had argued unsuccessfully that the Clydeside strike should be postponed to link up with the miners.

## Troops

On Friday 31st the Glasgow police clashed bloodily with a strikers' demonstration. Using this as an excuse, the Government fired the city with troops. The strike petered out. Then the miners settled for a compromise.

Maclean commented: "the strike... was a failure, due more to the lack of working-class ripeness than to batons, tanks and machine-guns... [we must] forge ahead with our propaganda and our workshop organisation".

Party organisation, as Maclean well knew, was also essential. In October 1919 he wrote: "the BSP [British Socialist Party] can play a supremely important part". Privately, however, Maclean was deeply unhappy with the moves to organise a Communist Party around the BSP majority and the smaller revolutionary groups. In early 1920 he quit the BSP.

The reason is obscure. According to Maclean's close comrade Harry McShane, "the BSP... had offered to pay him a salary to concentrate entirely on the 'hands off Russia' campaign. They were asking him to drop all the educational and agitational work he had done for years. John refused to do that; he and the executive of the BSP fell out, and finally he left".

This split was the beginning of the path that was to take Maclean into forming his own Scottish Workers' Republican Party, in 1923. In early 1920, however, there was no hint of Maclean wanting a separate Scottish party. He got together with four comrades — the Tramp Trust Unlimited, as he called the group — to put out a paper called *The Vanguard* and to campaign against unemployment and for Irish independence. In the first *Vanguard* he declared his aim was to follow the example of Russia in a revolution in "this country", i.e. "Britain". A separate Scottish revolution was not yet his perspective.

The Tramp Trust Unlim-

JOHN MACLEAN was Britain's Karl Liebknecht. Like Liebknecht in Germany he spoke out against World War One and the treachery of the Social Democrats who supported the imperialist bloodbath.

Last week, Part 1 of this article by GORDON BREWER and JAMES DAVIES described Maclean's anti-war agitation and his work in Glasgow before the war as a member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF), later the British Socialist Party (BSP).

Part 2 takes up the story with the Russian Revolution of 1917. Maclean probably understood the essential ideas of Bolshevism better than anyone else in Britain. Yet he never joined the Communist Party. In 1923, shortly before his death, he set up a separate Scottish Workers' Republican Party. This mistaken course has made him a hero for would-be left-wing Scottish Nationalists. In his fundamental ideas, however, Maclean was always a revolutionary communist and internationalist.

# Agitate, Educate, Organise: the life of John Maclean



ited did tremendous work. In three months, its five members published, paid for, and distributed almost half a million leaflets, and sold about 60,000 papers and pamphlets. They paid for the printing, as well as for their own upkeep, solely out of their literature sales and collections at their meetings.

In August 1920 the Communist Party of Great Britain was founded. A number of revolutionaries objected to it because (in line with the advice of the Communist International) the CP favoured affiliation to the Labour Party, running candidates in elections, and voting Labour where there were no CP candidates.

Maclean had no sympathy for the syndicalists and 'anti-parliamentarians'. He had always argued that it was a mistake for the SDF (forerunner of the BSP) to disaffiliate from the Labour Party, and had backed the BSP's affiliation in 1916. In the 1919 general election he had stood as the official Labour candidate for the Gorbals district of Glasgow. His attitude was: "We Marxists are in favour of the Labour Party because it is working class; but we oppose the conduct of the MPs because it is reactionary and tends to lead the masses to Liberal petty patchwork rather than to the class struggle ending in the revolution..."

## London gang

But Maclean was bitter about what he called "the corruption of the London communists". "I have no objection to the programme of the London gang", he wrote, "but to their honesty..." He was profoundly distrustful of the leaders of the new CP. Many of them, he knew, had kept quiet or had been open reactionaries during the war, while he was suffering jail and hard labour. One leader, Malone, he thought to be a Government agent. He saw Rothstein, with his funds from Russia, as like Hyndman, who had used his personal wealth to dominate the pre-war SDF.

When Willie Gallacher, previously a crude syndicalist, returned from Russia and started laying down the law on Leninism, Maclean was contemptuous.

It may be that Maclean's shattered health and his difficult circumstances (his wife had left him in mid-1919, refusing to return unless he gave up revolutionary activity) made him over-react to the real faults of some of the CP's leaders. In any case, his decision to stay outside the CP was not justified politically. It led to a tragic division of forces, harmful both to the CP and to Maclean.

Since the British CP seemed hopeless to him Maclean decided to do what he could in Scotland. Since early 1919 he had been in contact with Ruairidh Erskine, an aristocrat who had become a pro-Bolshevik radical Scottish nationalist and organised a 'National Committee' including several labour leaders: Bob Smillie, James Maxton, and others. In August 1920 Maclean came out with an article: "All hail, the Scottish Communist Republic!" He called for a separate Scottish Communist Party.

## Storm centre

Maclean repeated some vague ideas borrowed from Erskine about "Celtic communism". But his basic notion was that the Scottish workers could take the lead, breaking up the British Empire and denying the London government the chance to use Scottish troops against Ireland or in the war between Britain and the USA that Maclean — like many other Marxists, including Trotsky — saw as a serious threat in the 1920s. "We can make Glasgow a Petrograd, a revolutionary storm-centre second to none. A Scottish breakaway at this juncture would bring the empire crashing to the ground and free the waiting workers of the world".

The example of Ireland's brave struggle seems to have

influenced Maclean decisively: "The Irish Sinn Feiners, who make no profession of socialism or communism, and who are at best non-socialists, are doing more to help Russia than all we professed Marxian Bolsheviks in Britain".

Undoubtedly, Maclean retained his basic internationalism. He was consciously trying to do in Scotland what his comrade James Connolly had attempted in Ireland in 1916. But his perspective was unreal.

The 1919 strike had failed through being confined to Glasgow. A separate Scottish revolution was never possible, but in 1919 it might have seemed possible. By 1921 it was obviously unreal. Maclean was forced back on this unreal perspective by his decision to write off the Communist Party.

Distrust of the CP was central. This was shown when, in December 1920, Maclean started to work with (according to one account, actually joined) the Socialist Labour Party, a group based on the ideas of the American Marxist Daniel De Leon. The SLP refused to join the CP for sectarian reasons, though most of the well-known SLP leaders had joined the CP individually. The SLP was a mostly Scottish-based party — but it no more supported Scottish separation than the CP did!

## Tireless

In May 1921 Maclean was jailed again, for sedition. Two months after being released in August, he was jailed once more on similar charges.

When he left the prison in October 1922, Maclean had broken with the SLP. In February 1923 he founded the Scottish Workers' Republican Party. He continued tireless activity: running in by-elections, organising the unemployed, teaching Marxist economics classes. But he was wearing himself out. In November 1923 he collapsed at an open-air meeting and died a few days later of double pneumonia. He was only 44 years old.

Despite the tragic mistakes of his last three years, John Maclean was the greatest Marxist leader the British working class has so far produced. Among his greatest efforts was his campaign — especially in 1920 and 1921 — to win British workers to support Ireland's fight for freedom.

In his famous pamphlet, "Ireland's tragedy, Scotland's disgrace" (June 1920) he wrote:

"To any right-thinking person Britain's retention of Ireland is the world's most startling instance of a 'dictatorship by terrorists', as Britain rules Ireland against Irish wishes with policemen armed with bombs and a huge army equipped with over 40 tanks and as many aeroplanes, machine guns galore, and all the other beautiful manifestations of Christian brotherhood, love and charity..."

He didn't just write. He spoke in support of Ireland all over Scotland, facing up to the Orangemen and to the police, at a time when no-one else would do it.

But Maclean himself considered his effort to educate workers in Marxist economics as his greatest work. In a sense he was right — for that was the solid basis for all his activity, whether opposing the war, speaking out for Ireland, or organising the unemployed. And that Marxist foundation is a legacy which no oil-and-sentiment nationalist can steal from John Maclean.

## The last straw

35 EETPU members are on unofficial strike at the Watson Norrie construction site at Reddoch Road, Grangemouth.

The strike is over the management's attempts to disrupt union organisation on the site and discipline workers for being actively involved in the union.

The bosses have been provoking a strike since the start of the year, when they simply withdrew the standard site agreement allowing shop stewards' meetings on site. In January they issued verbal warnings to all the men at a meeting called to sort out a dispute on demarcation. The bosses had told craftsmen to do work normally done by labourers. When seven of them refused, they were given a warning.

The management backed down on the demarcation issue at the start of February, but insisted that the warnings still applied. They then started a new tussle over demarcation. An EETPU member who left the site to see his shop steward after a member of management had started doing his job was given a written warning.

This was the final straw. The workers walked out last Friday, determined to stop the bosses' efforts to do away with effective trade unionism on the site.

JOHN MACDONALD

## Socialist Organiser

Paper of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory

THIRD ISSUE  
OUT NOW!

Single copies 15p plus 7p postage, bundles of 10 for £1 post free, from SCLV, Box 127, Rising Free, 182 Upper St, London N1.

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, Box 1960, Rising Free, 182 Upper St, London N1, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Friday 16 February. Nottingham Campaign for Action in NUPE meeting. 7.30pm at 118 Mansfield Rd.

Monday 19 February. "Fighting Low Pay". SCLV public meeting. Speakers: Bob Marriot (NUPE Convenor, Coventry and Warwickshire hospital), Charlie Sorell (NUPE, Leicester Royal Infirmary). 7.30pm, Swanswell pub, opposite the old fire station, Coventry.

Wednesday 7 March. Edinburgh SCLV public meeting: "End low pay, end wage controls". 7.30pm, Edinburgh Trades Council, Picardy Place.

Saturday 10 March. Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions conference, at Friends House, Euston Rd, London. Credentials for TU delegates £1 from J.Hiles, 137 Wanstead Park Rd, Ilford, Essex.

Saturday 10 March. Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory fund-raising social, at Caxton House, 129 St Johns Way, N19 (Archway tube). 8pm to midnight, with 'Embryo' plus disco. Tickets £1.

Published by Workers' Action, Box 1960, Rising Free, 182 Upper St, London N1, and printed by Anvil Press [TU]. Registered as a newspaper at the GPO.

## LPYS CONFERENCE 1: LONDON

### The issues: Ireland, racism, elections

AT THE London regional LPYS conference, on 10/11 February, Ireland, racism, and the general election were the issues provoking most debate.

On Ireland, Militant supporters amended a resolution from Peckham calling for political status for Republican prisoners, to put in Militant's pie-in-the-sky call for an anti-sectarian labour movement defence force. They slandered the Provisional IRA as individual terrorists, maniacs and sectarian killers.

John Cosby, a Workers' Action supporter from Brent East, put a different view. He pointed out that the 'class unity' in the Six Counties which enraptures Militant could blow apart at any time while it ignores the national question. Protestant workers remain tied to Orangeism and imperialism by the privileges guaranteed them by the sectarian Orange state. He argued that it is the duty of all British socialists to support the anti-imperialist forces, Republican or socialist, whether or not we agree with their tactics.

Tony Saunio's reply was that we should join the IRA if we think it's so good!

Neil Cobbett, a Workers' Action supporter from Tottenham, pointed out that in a sea of almost total deprivation, the minor privileges in housing and employment which exist for Protestant workers, coup-

ed with their feeling of innate superiority over their Catholic fellow-workers, keep them tied to their own bosses against the demands of the nationalist minority. What Militant call 'sectarianism' — that is, Republicanism — is not in fact declining, as the recent explosion back onto the streets of thousands and thousands of people in direct support of the IRA prisoners shows very well.

Summing up, Chris Hill sidestepped these arguments and just said that because all workers live in appalling conditions in the Six Counties, the Protestant workers have nothing to hang onto. The answer: denounce the oppressors and the oppressed equally, and wait for class unity.

In the debate on racism, the ANL got slammed, but the majority gave no proposals for linking up with youth in the ANL to fight for the policies necessary to crush racism and fascism. Instead they congratulated themselves on how the LPYS had "led the fight" against racism and fascism. Reflecting the general attitude in an unfortunate phrase, one speaker denounced the ANL as "a load of petty bourgeois philanderers".

Angie Sharif (Brent East YS) argued for support for black self-defence. When she asked Bill Sheppard (summing up on the debate) why he had called for rejection of the Brent East amendment without stating any reason, he accused her

and her comrades of always finding triply-oppressed minorities who need support. "Last year you came here with a resolution supporting separate organisation for black trade unionists... next year I suppose it'll be black South African lesbians". In Militant's addled view of the world, thick-skinned indifference to special oppression counts as a sign of proletarian steadfastness.

In the debate on the general election, the speakers from Militant simply vied with each other for the position of ace Tory-basher, ignoring Callaghan's record.

In response to a resolution from Tottenham calling for support for the SCLV, one comrade replied that the LPYS had always run a socialist campaign for a Labour victory in elections... under the slogan Labour to Power with a Socialist Programme. The SCLV was therefore just a diversion.

Summing up for the Regional Committee, John Bulaitis snidely remarked that the committee rejected support for the SCLV "not because it is a small or insignificant campaign, but because we don't agree with its policies or perspectives". Where and why the Militant disagree, he did not say. For him: "Our job is to stir up an army of youth to make sure the Tories don't get in" — and that's the end of it.

## LPYS CONFERENCE 2: SCOTLAND

### YS DEMOCRACY CAMPAIGN GATHERS NEW SUPPORT

THIS YEAR'S Scottish Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) conference showed the 'Militant' majority had failed to grow during the past year, while 'Clause 4' had grown by half since the 1978 conference.

The Clause 4 presence, plus opposition from the Workers' Action delegates, severely curtailed the ability of the YS majority to run the conference as a glorified Militant rally.

The first signs of trouble came during the election speeches for the delegate from Scotland for the National Committee. Alice Pfister of Workers' Action demanded to know why the YS national conference did not have the right to elect the National Committee. After hurried consultation with Andy Bevan, Jim Newans, the NC delegate, could only mutter some vague comment about the YS not yet being big enough to elect its National Committee at National Conference.

There was a lively debate around the perspective documents presented to conference. The majority document was merely a statement of Militant's programme; the Clause 4 document was a rambling affair that read more like an academic discussion paper than a document to guide the Labour Party youth section.

The Workers' Action delegates pointed out that the majority document, while purporting to be a revolutionary programme, contained not one word of criticism of the Labour and trade union leaders. Militant were in fact ignoring the struggles of the past year under cover of repeating the same old Marxist phrases. But the right wing of the Labour Party know the secret of Militant's Marxist Programme — that as long as Militant has its way, there will be no fighting opposition from the ranks of the LPYS.

In fact Militant appear to have swung to the right, rather than the left, under the impact of the current struggle. The usual catch-all slogan of fighting for a bold socialist programme took a back seat during the conference to calls to increase the respect and authority of the YS in the labour movement.

On Ireland, the increasingly right wing logic of Militant's reformism came to the fore again. The majority's motion was confused, even in its own terms. It did not even call for special category status for Republican prisoners.

The speech moving the motion, from Paisley YS, was even worse. It boiled down to saying that, as the British Army had not succeeded in smashing 'the sectarianism of the IRA and UDA', we should call for the trade unions to do it. Even Clause 4, who are utterly confused on the issue, could make some valid points against Militant.

How, they asked, could you so blandly rely on trade union unity in Northern Ireland, when the Northern Ireland unions are riddled with sectarianism? But there was disgust all round when a Clause 4 delegate called for UN troops to be sent in.

Gordon Brewer, from Edinburgh Central YS, argued that Marxists make a difference between the violence of the oppressed and the violence of the oppressors. It is only from within a position of solidarity with the Republican movement against the British army that British socialists can earn the right to criticise. For Militant to call for the establishment of socialism without supporting the fight against the sectarian state is in practice to line up with the British media's hysterical attacks on the IRA.

In fact, when Militant, in their motion, failed to support of the H-Block cam-

paign, they proved themselves not even to be good democrats, never mind revolutionary socialists.

The biggest problems for Militant came on the question of democracy in the YS. Clause 4 and Workers' Action supported an emergency resolution in support of the Campaign for YS Democracy. The Campaign, as well as demanding the election of the National Committee by national conference, calls for an end to the ridiculous system of regional committee and national committee summing-up speeches and voting recommendations, and the undemocratic system of taking about five resolutions at once so that Militant do not have to reply to any of them. Militant only narrowly defeated the emergency resolution, by 26 votes to 25.

This partly reflects the fact that many Militant delegates did not turn up on the second day of conference, it also shows the support there is for the CYSD. Some Militant supporters voted for the campaign.

The final chapter of the conference gave a striking example of the undemocracy the CYSD attacks. Voting had to take place on a series of emergency resolutions. Bruce Wallace, in the chair, began to give regional committee recommendations on how to vote. It was pointed out that the regional committee had not met since the resolutions were submitted... so Wallace decided to give personal recommendations.

A comrade protested that this was ludicrous breach of the rights of the chair. Wallace took a vote on whether or not he should give his own recommendations. Having won, Militant then smoothly won on all the resolutions. After this episode, the conference ended with many Militant supporters looking at their leadership with clear signs of derision.

## Liverpool: a gain for the left

IN THE Liverpool Edge Hill constituency, the only Labour seat facing a by-election in the near future, supporters of the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory won an important success at the last Constituency meeting on 9th February.

A resolution proposed by Campaign supporters in the Picton ward, calling for the candidate's election address to be discussed and voted on at the Constituency Party's General Management Committee (GMC), was passed by a large majority.

It seems a small thing. But generally the writing of election addresses is left to the candidate and his agent alone.

In Edge Hill, no-one actually got up and defended this autocratic arrangement, but they did try to slip the old set-up in through the backdoor.

An amendment was carried in the ward adding the fatal words, 'wherever possible', to the resolution. At the GMC, however, the left successfully overturned the amendment, forcing its supporters to

show their true colours and vote against the party deciding on its own election material.

This latest step forward in Edge Hill CLP follows on from the campaign to remove the former MP, Arthur Irvine. Irvine died recently, but before that, pressure in the party had forced him to agree to stand down at the next election. He had not been seen at meetings in the constituency for many years.

Though the constituency voted narrowly in December not to sponsor the SCLV, the latest development has heartened supporters with the prospect that Labour may be able to advocate real socialist answers to the problems faced by workers in Edge Hill. In an area under threat of more large-scale redundancies at the Plessey factory, and which has also seen the firebombing of a Hindu community centre by racists last November, the policies of the SCLV against unemployment and against racialism can have a real resonance.

KEVIN FEINTUCK

## Letter: W.Ham sacking

Comrades, Last week Workers' Action reported the sacking of John Regan, chairman of the West Ham branch of the National Association of Teachers in Further & Higher Education, from his job at West Ham College.

But missed the most important fact: that the Principal who has been pushing for Regan's dismissal is himself a prominent union member.

West Ham principal Eric Williams is a member of the union's National Executive Committee, its National Committee and its Outer London Regional Executive. Williams is also a member of the negotiating team on the Burnham panel which negotiates members' pay and he is the Outer London region's Secretary.

Needless to say, Williams has not seen fit to try to justify his action before the members at West Ham branch. In fact he isn't even a member of that branch.

In an attempt to show support for Williams, a meeting of the Outer London Regional Executive was called to discuss a motion of confidence in him. Not surprisingly, John Regan was not invited. But he did send — by recorded

delivery — a letter to the committee.

Of course, the letter didn't arrive... though fortunately Regan had sent additional copies to certain committee members. When the vote on 'confidence' was taken, it was 6-5 against Williams, without the chairperson's vote. So she voted, making it 6-6; and as it was still only a draw, voted again using her casting vote. And that's how Williams' moral victory was won...

Some Natfhe branches have endorsed the West Ham branch's position of complete support for Regan, and they have written to Newham Education Committee asking it to reverse the college governors' decision and re-instate Regan.

Eric Williams has always posed as the Left's friend, and certainly there are many to the right of him on the NEC. In particular he has claimed to be the one who is really pushing for the merger of the two lowest grades — the so-called L1-L2 merger. The truth of his position is now clear to see, as it was Regan's campaigning in the college for just this merger that most irked the bureaucratic Williams.

Fraternally  
JAMES DAVIES

## workers' ACTION supporters' groups

exist in most major towns. For more information, or to subscribe to Workers' Action, complete this form and send to the address below:

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

I want more information

I want to subscribe for 25 issues/50 issues.

Subscription rates: Britain and Ireland, 25 issues £4, 50 issues £7.50. Rest of the world: Surface mail, 25 issues £4.50, 50 issues £8.50; Air mail, 25 issues £6, 50 issues £11. Cheques etc payable to 'Workers Action'.

SEND TO WA, Box 1960, 182 Upper St, London N1.

# Don't give in to blackmail

AS SOON as the Longbridge workers struck, both BL bosses and Labour ministers rushed to try to blackmail them back to work.

Michael Edwardes thinks his £50,000 salary from BL, plus money he still has coming in from his former firm Chloride, is so inadequate that he has said he will emigrate soon if he does not get more. But when the unions proposed a strike for parity, he threatened to scrap the whole parity scheme. If there was a long strike, he said, he would scrap the investment plan and start closing down BL plants one by one.

Industry Minister Eric Varley backed up Edwardes. Government money would be withdrawn from BL if there was a national strike.

These threats will come out

every time BL workers start a fight. They can be fought, and they must be fought.

The battle plan which Workers' Action put forward at the time of the Speke closure is still relevant:

'Those who want to fight the jobs carve-up must realise this: there is no capitalist 'solution' for Leyland.

'Only a strategy which puts jobs before considerations of 'viability' will stop Edwardes.

'First, we must pull out of participation at every level. Instead we need to demand access to the company's books and correspondence between Leyland, the NEB and Varley.

'We should insist upon a 35 hour week with no loss of pay immediately.

'When the cut-backs begin we have to reply by sharing the work and fighting for full pay

as well.

'Any plant closed must be occupied, every sectional struggle on manning must be generalised throughout the plant, and the plant struggles must be coordinated by a democratic, recallable combine stewards' organisation.'

The struggle is difficult. But no fight will soon mean ... no jobs. At the start of 1978 Edwardes said 12,000 jobs must be cut that year. He has said he wants 14,000 to go in 1979. There is no guarantee that will be the end of it.

Along with those job cuts goes speed-up and worse conditions. Longbridge convenor Derek Robinson was right for once when he said last summer — 'If the Edwardes plan is not changed, we shall be eaten alive'. And the only way the Edwardes plan will be changed is through a fight.

# Leyland: how the bosses set it up

'IF WE take this lying down, the bosses will know that they can walk all over us'. That is how workers at British Leyland's giant Longbridge plant feel.

At the beginning of February, BL bosses announced that the parity payments due under the current annual agreement would simply not be paid.

BL workers had been expecting rises of up to £10 a week, backdated to November. But the bosses said the parity money was conditional on increased productivity, and productivity had not increased enough.

Only after refusing the parity money — indeed, after a strike had started against their refusal — did the BL bosses spell out the minimum production figures they were demanding as a condition for the parity payments.

coming from a group of 20,000 workers with the power to stop a major part of BL production.

Picket lines at Longbridge have been well attended, night and day. Several hundred workers turned out for a mass picket which stopped work on new plant being built for the LC8 model. UCATT stewards on the site have agreed not to cross the picket lines, despite the fact that police forced open a corridor for them to get in through the pickets.

The police were also there in force — several busloads — to back up an attempted 'back to work' move on Monday 12th. The local press gave a lot of publicity to the 'back to work' rally, but it was a complete flop: only 30 workers turned up.

Even Ron Hill, leader of the last anti-strike campaign at Longbridge, is backing this one.

Depots all over Birmingham have been picketed. (This is essential to win the strike, because BL has large stocks of finished cars in hand.) Longbridge militants, mainly Socialist Workers' Party members and Workers' Action supporters, have leafleted the Drews Lane, Common Lane and SUs plants, appealing for them to join the fight.

The main threat to Longbridge's chances of victory is the leadership. The strike committee (made up of the Works Committee plus representatives from the unit committees) has done nothing about organising delegations or leaflets to other plants, let alone flying pickets. And on Tuesday 13th they persuaded the stewards to vote 150-120 to recommend a return to work.

A mass meeting on Wednesday 14th will decide.

Without question the anti-strike votes in 27 BL plants were a serious blow. Rover (Solihull), Jaguar and Triumph Canley (Coventry) are relatively well-paid plants, which stood to gain very little from parity. That must have been a big factor in the anti-strike vote.

Solidarity against the bosses' shameless trickery was, however, something that well-organised trade-unionists should have taken as a matter of course. Disgust with the union leader-

ship was probably a factor. Here were the same people who had foisted a wretched deal, full of loopholes, on the workforce, coming back and asking the workers to take action against the bosses taking advantage of the loopholes.

At the Cowley factory in Oxford, the right-wing leadership in the Body Plant played a dirty trick. They opposed a strike on the pseudo-radical grounds that they were against the whole 'corporate bargaining' agreement of which the parity clause was part. Instead, they said, there should be a 'campaign' against the agreement and for plant bargaining.

The more militant Assembly Plant also voted against a strike, despite the fact they stood to gain a lot from parity payments (and that particular plant had in fact met the BL bosses' production targets).

The right wing had clearly organised heavily to stop a strike, and the mass meeting to decide on the issue was rowdy. The meeting was abandoned without a decision, and a ballot was called which went against the strike.



The plant leadership, influenced by the Workers' Socialist League, pushed a policy which in our view was ultra-left: a strike, not for parity, but to throw out the whole annual agreement and revive the plant claim for £100 for line workers. Whether this ultra-left line contributed to the anti-strike decision, we don't know.

The dispute over parity money was almost certainly provoked by the BL bosses. The required production targets had not been clearly stated, and certainly it had not been clearly stated that loss of production due to factors like the lorry drivers' strike might block the parity money.

If Longbridge goes back early, the message to the bosses will be simply: they can provoke a fight, and win it hands down.

There will be plenty more fights to come. If the bosses win this one, it must be a spur to us to get organising so that they don't win again.

# Workers' ACTION



The anger was there but the confidence wasn't — on Wednesday 14th the vote was two-to-one to return to work.

## Leyland: MORE CARS WITH FEWER WORKERS

From WORKERS' ACTION LONGBRIDGE BULLETIN, 6th February:

The 'reasons' the bosses have given for their latest swindle don't bear a moment's examination.

They say productivity has been too low to finance the parity payments. BUT...

BL have never spelled out how much productivity they

would want before paying out. Most people thought that the de-manning programme would be sufficient to pay for parity.

BL's sales have been at the unusually high level of 26% for several months. Yesterday, Austin-Morris sales chief Trevor Taylor told the Evening Mail: 'Sales in January were 26% up on the same month last year.'

Last year BL produced 19 1/2% more cars than in 1977,

with 15,000 less workers. There are 79,000 unsold cars stockpiled round the country — so productivity is scarcely the problem!

7,500 jobs have gone under in the latest redundancy scheme, meeting the company's demanning target 10 months ahead of schedule.

In other words, we're producing more cars, with lower manning than ever before — and still BL won't pay up.

# NUM leaders opt for a quiet life

After the Miners' Executive had rejected the National Coal Board's 6% offer, Joe Gormley remained confident that a deal acceptable to his members could be worked out 'within several weeks'.

## Weeks

The several weeks that Gormley is banking on are those it will take to clear the public service workers' dispute out of the way. The right wing of the NUM leadership are hoping that this will provide for the type of 'negotiating atmosphere' they prefer — no pressure from militant action. It will also remove any chance of action by the miners, coming together with the public service workers' strike, helping out the industrially weaker low-pay struggle.

Any deal agreed under such conditions will bear little relation to the calls for £110 a week for faceworkers

and a 4-day week that were heard at the last NUM conference.

The delay means, too, that the worst of the winter weather will be past when the crunch point comes. This is a serious strategic weakness in any coal dispute. Coal stocks at the pit-head are unusually high.

The main excuse that the right wing leaders will use for accepting far less than the membership wanted to fight for will be that there is 'no money in the kitty'. According to Coal Board boss Derek Ezra the NCB is very unlikely to break-even this year and is stuck with a £2-billion long term investment programme that it has to keep to.

Then the Gormley & Co. will come up with 'don't rock the boat for Labour in election year'. That might have gone down better a few months ago, before Fords and the lorry drivers rocked it good and hard. Now,

miners are more likely to retort that the horse has bolted and it's no use locking up stable at this stage.

Militants in the pits will also have noted the drivers' successful methods. Similar tactics by miners could win a short and decisive strike, however much coal is sitting at the pit-heads.

## Regions

Militants can gear up for action by fighting for overtime bans now, and for momentum to be built up for a national campaign by the more militant regions such as Yorkshire, South Wales and Kent putting out national leaflets and running speaking tours around the country.

If that action can be built up, a very different 'negotiating atmosphere' will be created: one that will get the miners what they want, not what Gormley wants.

PAUL COOPER