

Workers' ACTION

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Vote Labour but keep up the fight

JAMES CALLAGHAN is keeping a firm grip on the contents of Labour's manifesto, making sure it contains as little as possible in the way of promises which could embarrass him later. As far as the debate between Labour and Tory leaders goes, the election campaign will just be a quarrel about who is the best conservative.



Under that quarrel there are more serious issues. If the Tories are elected, they will step up attacks on the working class, taking advantage in every sphere of the reactionary work of the Labour Government.

The Labour and trade union leaders will organise some fightback — but always too

little and too late. The battle for socialist policies will have to be kept up if the Tories are to be resisted effectively.

If Labour wins, then Callaghan promises 'more of the same'. But the labour movement's patience with 'more of the same' is rapidly running out. If we can continue the fight to call the Labour leaders to account and to demand a break with the bankers and the bosses, then the Labour leaders will have to concede, or face growing militant opposition. The ground will be cleared for a fight for a new leadership in the labour movement.

The fight needs to be waged on three fronts: with the labour movement, against the Tories; with the rank and file of the labour movement, against Callaghan; and within the rank and file of the labour movement, for socialist policies.

Support the SCLV

THE SOCIALIST Campaign for a Labour Victory was set up last year, uniting militants round a platform including support for pay struggles, a shorter working week, sweeping nationalisations, troops out of Ireland, women's rights, and an end to immigration controls. Its slogans are: Vote Labour, condemn the Government's record, prepare the rightback.

For the election campaign, the SCLV is producing:

★ Posters: 'Vote Labour/Boot out Callaghan's Tory policies'. Five for 20p, 30 for £1; add 20% for p&p.

★ Leaflets on six issues — profits and jobs, wages and unions, racism, Ireland, women's rights, housing. £5

per thousand. A broadsheet including the text of all six leaflets is also available: just send a 9p stamp.

★ Expanded versions of the leaflets in the form of penny pamphlets. They are designed as back-up material for canvassers, and need not be included in election expenses as they are for sale. £4 for 500, £7.50 for 1000.

★ A special issue of the SCLV paper *Socialist Organizer* will be published on April 14th in the form of an eight page election broadsheet. 10p a copy; bundles of 10 for 75p post free; 100 for £5.

Send all orders to SCLV, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16. Cheques to 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory'.

Civil Service: ALL OUT TO WIN!

THE NATIONAL one day stoppage by civil service workers on April 2nd was a major blow to this Labour Government, yet at the same time it did not satisfy the militancy of the rank and file over their pay claim.

Until the last minute the press were harping on about the open split in the civil service trade unions which had been organised by minister Roy Hattersley and loyal TUC hack Bill McClore of the IPCS (a top-grade civil servants' union).

The split was round a manoeuvre to get five of the smaller unions to agree to a deal of 9% now, with half the remainder in August and the other half in March 1980. But the manoeuvre is rebounding on the Government.

After the April 2nd mass walk-out, DHSS offices in North and East London started a two-day unofficial strike. The Livingstone (Scotland) Department of Employment computer centre is coming out for five days unofficially despite joint pleadings from Len Lever, president of the main civil service workers' union CPSA, and Ian Bancroft, head of the Civil Service.

This computer centre controls regular payments to claimants and unemployed in Scotland and Northern England. Action is also being taken on the Newcastle Department of Health and Social Security contributory benefits computer.

Mass meetings in London and Newcastle (despite attempts to bureaucratically stifle debate by quickly closing these meetings) saw strong rank and file calls for all out action to win the dispute quickly. Reports from many of the selective strike centres, contradicting official union propaganda, indicate strong support for this action.

Leading full-time officials of the CPSA and the SCPS (the other main union involved) will be making every effort to regain control. This will mean fixing a deal as soon as possible with the Government (maybe improving the timing of the staged payments), posing 'left' by promising to walk out of the Whitley Council negotiating system, and, most importantly, working as hard as they can to crush and isolate the unofficial action.

By Tuesday 3rd, with unemployment benefit offices in the North of England and Scotland shut by strike action, CPSA and SCPS full-time officials launched an open attack in the Scottish press on the unofficial action.

The CPSA right wing, led by vice-president Kate Losinska and backed by general secretary Ken Thomas, tried to get last Friday's offer put to a membership ballot, with a National Executive recommendation to reject. The project was to rely on press propaganda, Labour loyalty, and many members' feeling of not being involved in the action to see the offer accepted.

The National Executive, meeting on April Fool's Day, defeated this by 18 votes to four, and then voted 17-4 to tell the members that they had rejected the offer. No-one dared to actually vote for the offer.

The right wing will obviously organise again. The National Executive refused to call for all-out action. That is, however, what is now needed if we are to win the claim in full, defeat the Government, and protect the members threatened with mass suspensions for refusing to scab on the unofficial strike at Livingstone.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY
(CPSA, British Library)

LEICESTER, APRIL 21st:
The NF Nazis are planning a big national demonstration as the centrepiece of their election campaign. Details are not known yet: but starting organising for the counter-demonstration NOW!
STOP THE NATIONAL FRONT!

The disaster they said couldn't happen

by PETE FIRMIN

IN THE current issue of the American magazine *Newsweek*, printed just before the disaster at the Three Mile Island nuclear plant in Pennsylvania, a columnist quotes the Edison Electric Institute: "The risks of calamities remain hypothetical... Even if the fuel could melt through the bottom of the reactor, the massive concrete-and-steel reinforced containment building, and the foundation, it would be about 50 feet underground... The net public-safety outcome: zero deaths, zero injuries."

By the time the magazines reached the newsagents, US authorities were having to face the possibility of evacuating half a million people because of one of those 'hypothetical' 'zero-risk' calamities.

The world's worst civilian nuclear accident, last Wednesday morning, was the result of technical failures and errors which led to the fracturing of up to a quarter of the fuel rods and the release of radiation into the atmosphere.

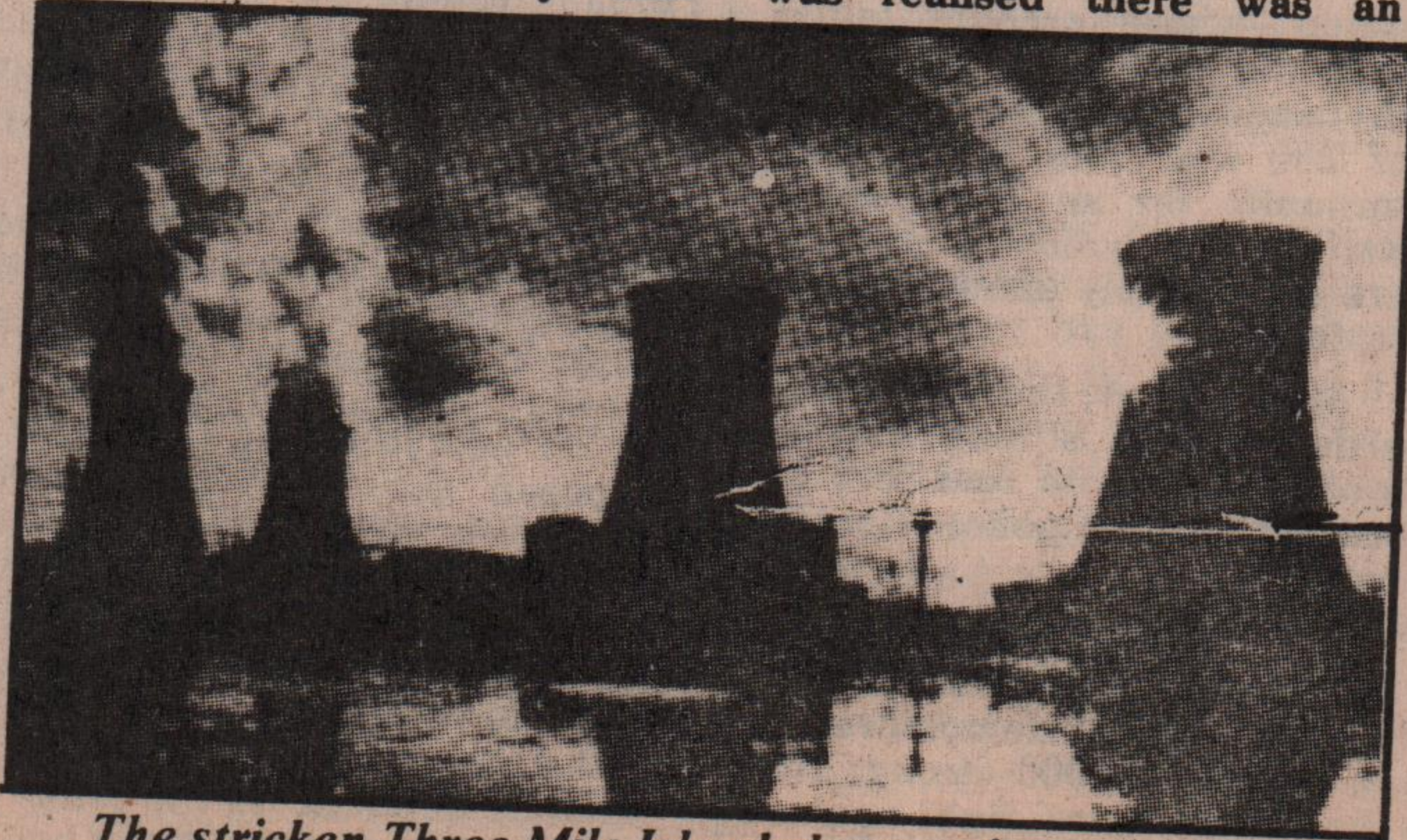
It is said that at least two pumping stations failed simultaneously, an emergency valve was stuck open allowing radioactive fluids to pour out of the reactor, and an operator switched off the emergency core cooling system causing the fuel to overheat and fracture. 12,000 gallons of contaminated water were pumped out of the protected environment of the reactor housing into an auxiliary building, from which the radioactive gases escaped into the atmosphere.

Even if nothing further goes wrong, it will still be some days before we can be sure that the ultimate disaster of a core 'meltdown' will be avoided. In a 'meltdown', the core of the nuclear reactor melts and burns its way through the bottom of the concrete and steel reactor container, so that there is no protection against the spread of massive amounts of radioactivity. It would make the whole area for 50 or 60 miles round the station a death trap.

The chief concern of the US government and the nuclear power station's operating company has not been to take safety measures, but to pretend that everything is all right and to avoid any public reaction which could hinder nuclear power development. It was revealed on Saturday that

there had been a slight chemical explosion at the plant eight hours after the first radiation leak was detected. This fact was not passed on to the Federal authorities until more than 48 hours after the accident.

Three hours elapsed after the original failure before it was realised there was an



The stricken Three Mile Island plant: unforeseen dangers

emergency, and operators at the plant did not realise that the fuel rods had fractured until high level of radiation were detected in the dome above the reaction.

Worse, statements from the authorities have been contradictory on such matters as whether the escape of radioactive xenon gas was 'controlled' or not, and whether the fission [nuclear reaction] within the core had stopped completely.

As usual, the truth about nuclear power risks is obscured, not only by lack of concern but by deliberate suppression. In 1974 there was the case of Karen Silkwood, a union activist at a plutonium plant. Silkwood died in a mysterious car crash while on her way to see a union official and a newspaper reporter about safety violations at the plant. It has come out since that documents Silkwood was taking to the meeting were stolen from the crashed car by her employers — with the cooperation of the police, who were already help-

ing the employers to tap Silkwood's flat.

People in the area have been told there is nothing to worry about, but cattle are being kept in cowsheds and fed only with ready-made foods, and pregnant women and children under five had been evacuated. Latest reports say that Strontium-90, one of the most lethal radioactive substances, is now being released into the atmosphere.

The accident came at a time when the nuclear industry in the USA was seeking a relaxation of safety regulations in order to speed up the building of further plants. In Britain safety regulations are less strict than in America, and the Three Mile Island plant is a pressurised water reactor, the type favoured by the British nuclear industry.

Now, BEFORE we have a similar disaster, is the time to insist on a trade union inquiry into the safety of the industry in Britain, and the full release of information on the running of the plants in this country.

AIREY NEAVE escaped from Colditz during World War 2. He was also a politician responsible for trying to keep Northern Ireland as a Colditz for its Nationalist population, with a number of special Colditzes like Castle-reagh and H-Block at Long Kesh.

If Neave had killed a German commander at Colditz, that would be scored to his credit in the obituaries, like his activity in securing vengeance on German war commanders at the Nuremberg trials. For the Irish people fighting for freedom, the killing of Neave (last Friday, March 30th) was like the killing of a Colditz commander.

For fifty years after partition, Northern Ireland was run as a heavily-policed 'Protestant state for a Protestant people'. When the Catholic population came out on the streets for the most elementary civil rights, they were battered and bludgeoned by the sectarian police of the sectarian state.

Since then, massive British armed force has been poured into Northern Ireland to stifle the nationalist revolt. Police-state laws allowing the police to pick

Airey Neave: From Colditz to Castlereagh



Airey Neave: tyranny's warrior.

up anyone they want; torture in interrogation centres; no-jury special courts where a 92% conviction rate is obtained on the basis of confessions extracted in the interrogation centres; merciless brutality against prison-

ers demanding political status — that is the reality of the British military occupation.

Neave backed this system of repression, and was ready to administer it if the Tories won the election. He was also responsible for the Tories' policy of trying to renew their links with the reactionary Orange bigots of the Unionist parties. He was tyranny's warrior.

There has been almost no reaction in Britain to the repression in Ireland. A few demonstrations, a few voices raised on the left of the labour movement — apart from that, Airey Neave and Roy Mason got general approval for their fight to suppress the Irish rebels.

From the viewpoint of the Irish struggle, the death sentence carried out on Airey Neave was a blow against this monstrous imperialist complacency — an act of rough justice.

To be sure, Marxists active in the Irish struggle would focus their efforts on organising and mobilising the Irish workers, not on striking down individual leaders of British tyranny. But as between the prisoners of the Northern Ireland Colditz, fighting for liberation, and Airey Neave, the would-be supremo for British imperialist ruling-class repression, our sympathies are with the Irish.

The wretched, cowardly *Morning Star* condemned the



The British ruling class's Irish war rebounds on them

killing, reaching for its strongest words: 'brutal', 'barbaric', 'madness'. For them, it is all right for the British Army to be in Ireland ... but 'barbaric' for Irish nationalist fighters to strike down members of the British ruling class in Britain.

The *Morning Star* said the killing would "strengthen the hand of every right wing reactionary". But the right wing reactionaries already are strong! The hopes of the Irish people do not depend on observing 'good

behaviour' so that the British ruling class will be more lenient, but on hitting the British ruling class so hard that it has to give up its grip on Ireland. The *Morning Star* ranges itself on the wrong side in that struggle.

To add our weight on the right side in the struggle, we must step up our campaign for political status for Irish prisoners, for troops out now, for support to the struggle for Irish self-determination, and for a united and independent Ireland.

US MUSCLES IN ON THE YEMEN

THE UNITED STATES HAS stepped up its backing for the North Yemeni regime in its war with the Peoples Democratic Republic of (South) Yemen.

Several US warships have been sent to the area, including the aircraft carrier "Constellation". Three of these ships have called in at Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, just across the straits from Aden, (the capital of the PDRY).

US President Carter has announced plans to send an additional 300 million dollars worth of arms, including 12 fighter aircraft. A jumbo jet containing sophisticated spying equipment is flying in Saudi Arabian airspace near the PDRY border and supplying North Yemen with information on troop and air movements in the South.

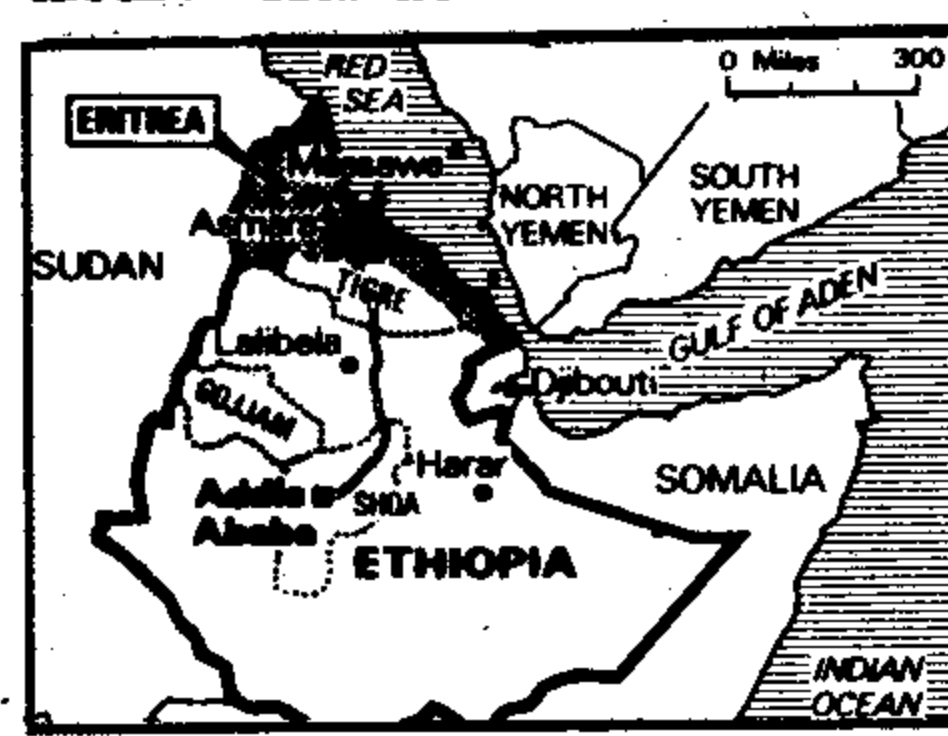
For five months there has been a state of war between North and South Yemen's governments. On February 24, the sporadic fighting flared up into a full-scale military conflict. While the specific origins of the conflict are obscure, its international implications are clear.

The PDRY is linked to the Soviet Union and has been a staging post for Soviet activity in the Horn of Africa. North Yemen is backed by Saudi Arabia and the US.

We must oppose the US intervention, which gives the lie to Carter's prattle about 'Peace in the Middle East'.

Excuses about Russian, Cuban or East German advisors in the area are ridiculous. The US and other western governments have several times as many 'advisors' in the area themselves. Indeed until recently the area was crawling with pro-imperialist Iranian troops who had taken up the role the British used to play.

The message to the US is clear: "Hands off Yemen!"



Damaged cars were left in the Paris streets for days afterwards — just to help plug the line that union militancy means violence and destruction.

CLAMPDOWN IN FRANCE

AFTER THE big French steelworkers' march in Paris on March 23rd, President Giscard d'Estaing has clamped down on demonstrations.

On March 29th he announced that he had "asked the Minister of the Interior to give local administrators the necessary instructions to refuse in future to authorise demonstrations in town centres, whenever there are not absolute guarantees of security".

Under French law, demonstrations do not in fact need authorisation. But they can be banned under a 1935 law similar to the British Public Order Act. [Like the Public Order Act, that 1935 law was brought in on the pretext of dealing with the fascists, and has since been used mainly against the left].

The excuse for this clampdown was given by an outbreak of violence at the end of the steelworkers' march. At least 100 demonstrators needed hospital treatment, 160 policemen were injured, 54 shops and banks suffered broken windows, and several cars were smashed up.

According to all accounts, the violence was started not by steelworkers but by 'autonom-

ists'. The CGT union federation, which organised the steelworkers' march, claims that the police authorities were part-responsible for the violence.

The 'autonomists', a semi-political group who believe they can advance the revolt of the outcasts of society by spectacular violence, have been seen before — smashing up shops, and, sometimes, attacking left wing demonstrations. This time — according to the main policemen's union, whose account tallies with the CGT's — "despite a thousand policemen, a 'mob' of 200 was able to act with impunity for an hour and a half". The police commanders deliberately allowed chaos to develop.

At one point, the CGT stewards grabbed a man hurling stones — only to find that he was carrying a police identity card!

The controversy about the violence has now overshadowed the original demonstration — nearly 100,000 strong. But the steelworkers' fight against the Government's threat to cut 20,000 jobs continues. And Giscard's attempted clampdown won't stop it.

Iraqi regime launches terror

IN JANUARY 1978, 24 Kurds were tried by an Iraqi military court. The first seven were executed some weeks ago, and now the other 17 are dead.

This is the latest reported atrocity in the ferocious wave of terror sweeping Iraq. The terror is directed mainly at two groups: the Kurds in the North and the Communist Party — although until last month the CP was in the governing coalition, the Progressive National Front.

Over 10,000 people have been arrested in recent months, and many have been tortured. Dozens of people have been executed. Over 150,000 Kurds were evicted from their homes in late 1978 in a drive to 'Arabise' Iraqi Kurdistan.

The coalition between the dominant Ba'ath party and the Iraqi CP reflected Iraq's continued dependence on the USSR. But the unity was not a pledge of equals: the CP had to join not to organise with in the police or the armed forces. Anybody organising cells in the armed forces, other than the Ba'ath, would face the death penalty.

Whether the CP did organise cells or not is difficult to say. In any case the first executions of Communist Party

members for subverting the armed forces took place in May 1978.

From that time on, Iraq was rife with rumours about a Soviet plot. The overthrow of the pro-western government in Afghanistan by a pro-Soviet group intensified those rumours.

As the wave of repression mounted, the CP remained loyal to the government, taking its servility to suicidal lengths. Moscow responded to the repression with only the mildest criticisms: "The National Progressive Front is one of the most important revolutionary acquisitions of the Iraqi people", said Pravda. It then expressed mild dissatisfaction with the course of government policy.

The CP is also charged by the Ba'ath with having reactionary policies on the Palestinian question and on the question of Ethiopia and Eritrea. True, the Iraqi CP, in line with Soviet foreign policy, supports Ethiopia against the Eritrean and West Somali struggles for self-determination. And it supports UN Resolution 242, which calls on Israel to return to its pre-1967 borders and recognises its right to the land stolen from the Palestinians before 1967.

But all this was known when the Front was formed! And wrong politics do not justify bloody repression.

The unofficial British agents for the Iraqi torturers, the so-called Workers' Revolutionary Party, see the Iraqi regime as a great bulwark against imperialism and against a sell-out of the Palestinians. They are also great supporters of Khomeiny in Iran.

In fact the Iraqi regime [like the Syrians, with whom they are arranging a merger] is trying desperately to increase its contacts with the west, and to find an arms supplier other than the USSR. If selling out the Palestinians is the price for this new arrangement, the Iraqi regime will be happy to pay the price, like Syria in Lebanon. When the Shah demanded that Iraq expel Khomeiny, the Ba'athists complied.

Whatever the record of the Iraqi CP, solidarity with their members against the Ba'athist repression is an elementary socialist duty. And solidarity with the Kurds of Iraq in their struggle against repression should be combined with solidarity for the general struggle of the Kurdish people for self-determination.

JAMES DAVIES

IRAN: THE KURDS SAY 'NO'

BEFORE THE votes of Iran's referendum on 30th March had even been counted, Ayatollah Khomeiny announced that an 'Islamic Republic' had been unanimously approved.

The methods of the referendum were little more democratic than Khomeiny's announcement. The question was 'Islamic Republic or monarchy?', leaving no opportunity for people to say that they opposed the Shah but also wanted a Republic different from Khomeiny's. There was no secret ballot, and little in the way of precautions against multiple voting.

But the certain victory of the 'Islamic Republic' in the referendum will not mean that Khomeiny and Bazargan are secure in power. The influential Fedayeen movement boy-

cotted the referendum, and the left-Muslim Mujahedeen also criticised the way it was organised.

In Iranian Kurdistan (in the north west), up to 90% of the population refused to

vote. The Kurds are demanding an autonomous Kurdistan within a democratic Iran. Hostility to the Tehran regime is also strong among the Turkoman people of north-east Iran.

DELEGATION TO IRAN

200 PEOPLE attended the founding conference of the Campaign for Solidarity with Iran last weekend (March 31st). The Campaign will continue the work of the old Committee Against Repression in Iran, basing itself on four demands:

- Imperialist hands off Iran
- Solidarity with the struggle of the workers and oppressed masses of Iran

- Solidarity with the struggle of Iranian women for their liberation
- Solidarity with the oppressed nationalities of Iran for their right to self-determination.

The campaign is to organise a labour movement delegation to Iran, and a speaking tour in Britain by an Iranian workers' strike leader may also be arranged.

How Labour lost Edge Hill



Edge Hill's new Liberal MP, David Alton.

IN THE Edge Hill by-election a Labour majority of over 6,000 was turned into a Liberal majority of over 8,000. Labour's share of the vote dropped from 52% to 23%.

The Liberals had no real solutions. But with the regular leafletting, pavement politics and gimmicks, they have been able to look like an alternative. And there were no socialist answers, despite a fight within Edge Hill Constituency Labour Party (CLP).

In 1977 the CLP ditched the now dead Arthur Irvine, who had been MP since 1947. Then at this year's Annual General Meeting it was decided that the election address was to be democratically drawn up by the CLP, rather than just by the candidate and agent.

This decision was overruled when the Regional Party machine, with the connivance

of candidate Bob Wareing, moved in to run the campaign. The organisation of the campaign was amateurish... and the political direction was one of total support for the Government's record, plus anti-EEC nationalist claptrap and plugs for Wareing as a 'local man'.

The left in the district Labour Party, in particular the Militant, did their best to bolster Wareing's claims to be a genuinely socialist candidate. Although Wareing said nothing on low pay, the 35 hour week, or nationalisation of firms declaring redundancies, his address did call for 'extension of public ownership and a planned economy'.

But if Wareing's platform was socialism, then the working class in Edge Hill have clearly decided that Callaghan and Wareing can keep it. Real socialists can only agree with them.

Unfortunately many of the people who could have argued for socialist policies were channelled off into the dead-end 'Socialist Unity' campaign. Whereas concerted efforts in the CLP could have brought real results, the Socialist Unity campaign came and went with 127 votes and no real prospect of ongoing activity in the area.

The first round in Edge Hill has been lost. If the second round is to be more successful, then it will have to be fought by winning democracy in the Labour Party and pushing through policies which will mark out the Labour candidate from the Tory politics of the Labour Government.

KEVIN FEINTUCK

Police get their revenge for Grunwick



This man (left) is a police agent provocateur. He was photographed leaving the Grunwick picket line on 17 June, 1977. A minute or so before he left and two other plain clothes men were rescued from a crowd that had grown suspicious of their activities, a bottle had been thrown at the scab bus, triggering off a wave of fighting and arrests. Six days later, a policeman was badly hurt by a flying bottle (far left). The press blamed the pickets, and now a worker from a local factory has been sentenced to two years' prison.

TWENTY TWO months ago a policeman was injured by a milk bottle thrown from a crowd outside the Grunwick factory. Last week, Richard Maull, a worker at Smith's Industries in Cricklewood, was sentenced to two years in jail for the offence.

Maull calls the trial "a gross miscarriage of justice". And so it seems. It took the jury six hours to reach a majority verdict.

The central dispute in the trial was over identification: police witnesses claimed they saw a "toffee coloured" man throw a milk bottle, while defence witnesses insist that the bottle thrower was a white man.

Other witnesses say that two bottles were thrown — one by a white man, which hit the policeman, and one by a 'coloured' man which did not. Maull does not deny throwing a bottle, but insists that the

policeman's injuries were not caused by him.

All this happened on June 23rd, 1977, when the picketing outside Grunwick was at its height. In the year and a half long strike, several hundred pickets were arrested — for the heinous crime of trying to stop scabs entering a factory. There were hundreds of injuries that didn't make the front page — injuries of pickets by police ruthlessly bludgeoning the crowd.

At the time of Maull's arrest, it was widely rumoured that the person described by defence witnesses as the thrower of the bottle that injured the policeman was in fact a plain clothes policeman acting as a provocateur.

Richard Maull is appealing against his conviction, and asking for bail while he is waiting for the appeal to come up.

PETE FIRMIN

FOR THE last fifteen years the British ruling class has been wrestling with the problem of trade union militancy.

Over decades the top trade union leaders have been trained and organised as docile collaborators with the bourgeois state. But in Britain, where the trade union movement has never been pulverised by war and fascism, the top leaders' control over the rank and file is often weaker than in other countries.

After World War Two, shop stewards' organisation grew by leaps and bounds. In engineering, for example, the number of stewards more than doubled between 1947 and 1966. As long as the boom continued, peaceful co-existence was often possible between unofficial shop floor militancy and right wing union leadership.

In the 1960s the economic leeway ran out, and both Labour and Tory governments have since then tried to curb the unions.

Their methods have been different, but the difference exists only within limits: Tory party leaders, Labour party leaders, and trade union leaders are all firmly tied to the state machine and the policy framework laid down by the top civil servants. Behind these top civil servants stand their friends and cousins, the country's real rulers: the top bosses and bankers.

Direct

But the Tory party is the direct representative of those bosses and bankers, whereas the Labour party, as well as being a bourgeois party of government, is also a party based on the trade unions. By attacking the trade unions it cuts its own throat.

In government, the Labour party habitually does cut its own throat. But there are strong enough reflexes to stop the blade biting too deep and cutting the jugular.

In *Place of Strife* (1969) showed that. The Labour

government was forced to backtrack on anti-union laws.

The reflex was not automatic. The rank and file had to lead the resistance. But the contrast was sharp with the Tory government that followed, which pushed through the Industrial Relations Act with no internal problems at all.

In fact the Labour government's indirect approach to curbing working class militancy, through the Social Contract, has worked better for the bourgeoisie than the Tory government's direct approach with the Industrial Relations Act.

Neither, however, has succeeded in doing what the bourgeoisie wants and needs.

The 1974-9 Labour government has used the long-established integration of the trade unions with the existing system to wring out sacrifices in the name of coping with the crisis and stemming inflation.

This tactic has a law of diminishing returns. Eventually the most moderate trade unionist will realise that the 'temporary' sacrifices have gone on too long and brought no benefits. That is what has happened over the last two years, and especially since last year's

Ford strike.

For longer-term security, the bourgeoisie needs a thorough re-moulding of the trade union structure. That is why they keep saying we should have a pay bargaining system like West Germany's. (Ironically, at the very same time West Germany's 'social peace' is beginning to crack up; the best bureaucratic structure cannot subdue the class struggle indefinitely.)

Stewards

The Labour government has made some moves towards re-moulding, introducing a whole new range of industrial arbitration mechanisms and trying to bureaucratise the convenor/senior steward level of the trade union movement. At the same time, however, the number of shop stewards and the number of unionised workers has expanded considerably.

The bosses need a different and more drastic re-organisation of industrial bargaining.

Re-election of Labour would be a headache for the bosses. The tension between the Labour leaders' loyalty

to the system and their dependence on their working class base would reach a high pitch. It would be a period of major political struggles, possibly with serious realignments.

The bosses and the bankers want a Tory government now. The Tories' brief is to tame the unions. Their strategy for doing that is uncertain. Their promises of anti-picket laws, restrictions on benefits for strikers' families and compulsory secret ballots are vote-catching (though dangerous vote-catching, at that) rather than pillars for a strategy.

They dare not try another Industrial Relations Act. They will choose their own time, their own place, and their own issue for a showdown with the unions, rather than tie their hands in advance.

But they have one great advantage: the Labour government has paved the way for them. In *Place of Strife* paved the way for the Industrial Relations Act. Wilson and Callaghan's cuts and strike-breaking can pave the way for cuts and strike-breaking by Thatcher.

This is true not only on the question of trade union rights but in many other areas: social service cuts,

state racism, concessions to Orange bigotry in northern Ireland, increased police powers.

Some militant workers say they will abstain, or even vote Tory, in order to get some revenge for the Labour Government's despicable record — or in order to push the trade unions into a fight. This is a cop-out.

A big fight against Tory attacks will not by any means be automatic. And the bureaucrats become more, not less, secure if militants say 'to hell with it all'.

Useless

Throwing votes in with the Thatcherites is a useless way of protesting at Labour's record. Organising within the labour movement to challenge the reformist leaders is an effective way of protesting. That is what *Workers' Action* is doing within the *Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory*.

Much of the revolutionary left partly reflects the cop-out attitude to the elections.

The Socialist Workers' Party was going to stand candidates. Then they decided they were not strong enough for their candidates

to make a good showing. Now they argue for a Labour vote on the basis that 'there may be only an inch of difference between Labour and the Tories, but it is in that inch that we live'.

Going for the 'lesser evil' — a passive, semi-reformist attitude — is the essence of their policy. All they have to add is the general call 'Build the SWP'.

It's rather like the Labour slogan: 'The Tories look after the rich, Labour looks after the rest'. The SWP looks after the industrial direct action... Labour looks after the rest.

Stunt

Socialist Unity (a coalition led by the International Marxist Group) will be standing a few candidates, but not enough to present a serious alternative to Labour or be more than a stunt. Moreover, they will be standing on a vague mish-mash of a manifesto, and in the name of an organisation (Socialist Unity) which has practically no existence except as an electoral front.

Their slogan 'For a Labour Government, but build a socialist alternative' will be no better than the SWP's 'Vote Labour and build the SWP'. In some ways it is worse: at least the SWP calls for building a party, whereas Socialist Unity just calls for building an electoral coalition.

In contrast, the Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory will be presenting a political alternative to the Labour leaders' policies in dozens of constituencies, and linking that with the ongoing struggle to build a socialist opposition within the Labour Party. We say: vote Labour in order to keep the Labour leaders on the spot and enable the labour movement to call them to account; demand anti-capitalist policies; continue the fight, whoever wins the election.

And we organise to make those slogans a reality.

EDITORIAL

The election and the unions

Why do Marxists join the Labour Party and work for a Labour vote?
COLIN FOSTER reviews the arguments.

Why Marxist

THE fundamental problem of revolutionary socialist tactics was put clearly by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto: "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present they also represent and take care of the future of that movement."

Throughout the entire history of Marxian socialism in Britain, the 'movement of the present' has been reformist trade unionism and trade unionist politics.

The British working class was the first working class in the world. In the first half of the 19th century it created many revolutionary and semi-revolutionary movements. But those movements were defeated without ever developing definitely socialist politics.

After 1848, as British imperialism boomed, the British working class movement was confined to trade unionism on a bourgeois basis, bargaining within the system. There was not even the most feeble socialist organisation until the 1880s.

Beginnings

When Britain's domination of the world market began to collapse, from the 1890s onwards, new socialist or semi-socialist movements arose: the Independent Labour Party (1893) and the Labour Party.

But the already-entrenched reformist trade union leaders were able to dominate these organisations from the earliest days. They were able to make sure that the Labour Party's politics amounted to nothing more than an extension of the practice of bargaining within the system from a trade and industrial level to the general political level via Parliament. As the Communist Party wrote in 1922:

"A Labour Party which was ruled and organised primarily by officials of independent and often warring unions inevitably became entirely divorced from the socialist or revolutionary idea. Its leaders, in their overwhelming majority, were financially and otherwise no longer members of the working class, but of the middle class. They were often Liberals, and might be conservatives, in all else but defence of their own unions, finances and privileges. (This was particularly noticeable, again, in the Parliamentary group.)"

"Thus, even before the war, the Labour Party had become quite distinctly a class organisation of the proletariat which was dominated by that section of the middle class whose profession it was to organise trade unions."

For the 'official' Marxist organisation, the Social Democratic Federation (later called British Socialist Party) these facts were enough to justify shunning the Labour Party. But Engels, up to his death in 1895, argued for a different approach.

A dual tactic was needed: involvement in the mass

struggles of the newly-organised working class, plus work as a Marxist nucleus within the established labour organisations.

The best Marxists within the SDF/BSP had the same idea. John Maclean argued that the SDF should affiliate to the Labour Party. '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...'

In 1916, after the BSP had thrown out its sectarian and chauvinist leadership, it did affiliate to the Labour Party.

The First World War had a double effect on the labour movement. Trade unions were drawn into organising speed-up in the factories for the sake of the war effort. Labour Party leaders were

various commissions, on the editorial staffs of 'respectable', legal newspapers, or on management boards of 'more respectable and 'bourgeois, law-abiding' trade unions" (as Lenin described it).

The "bourgeois workers' parties", though based on the interests of a small 'labour aristocracy', still used socialist language, and kept the support of many workers. The new communist parties, following the Bolsheviks, set out in the 1920s to rally the most oppressed and most revolutionary work-

may be more quickly weaned from their last illusions on this score..."

The British communists took up this policy (though with much reluctance and some ineptness).

"It was as a section of the organised working class movement that the CP sought to take its place in the Labour Party, which claims to be the political expression of that movement. It asked no favours, nor did it expect any; and it never disguised the purpose it had in view."

"The CP wanted to constitute a revolutionary left wing in the LP, claiming the same

Even though affiliation was refused, this argument got a sympathetic hearing in many local Labour Parties. In Battersea, for example, the Labour Party sponsored a communist as their MP. And he was not an ordinary MP, according to Harry Wicks' recollection in his book *The General Strike*:

"In the twenties, to the consternation of the liberal-minded Labour leadership of Henderson and MacDonald, Battersea North elected as their member of parliament the Indian Saklatvala. Not only was he an Indian but a Com-

gate meetings and introduced the monthly report back from Westminster. There were great meetings. Long before the doors of the town hall opened, queues formed just like they used to at Stamford Bridge.

"The platform was always crowded. Sak, as he was affectionately known, was flanked by the entire executive of the Trades and Labour Council and numerous representatives of Indian and colonial organisations. He was short in stature, broad shouldered with flashing eyes and (was) a magnificent orator."

"Those monthly report back meetings on the doings in parliament stirred hundreds into activity. The Battersea labour movement pulsated with life and was united. Marxist classes held by the old Plebs League flourished. Trade union branches were crowded."

'Saklatvala's speeches in Parliament were printed up and distributed in Battersea as special broadsheets.

The Communist International worked out the slogan 'Vote for Labour, but prepare to struggle against it', and explained it in a joint C.I.-CP manifesto issued in 1924:

"Comrades, the Communist Party has never concealed the fact that it does not believe in the real betterment of the position of the working class, or the possibility of even a gradual realisation of socialism, until and unless the working masses deprive the capitalists of all political rights and power, and establish a government resting on the support of and controlled entirely by workers' organisations. The Communist Party has never concealed its great distrust of the leaders of the Labour Party as well as of the entire Second International to which they belong."

"But the Communist Party can distinguish between workers who honestly believe in the promises of the Labour Party, and the leaders who are ready to break these promises as soon as they have served their purpose of deluding the workers..."

"Therefore we appeal to the workers who support the Labour Party and welcome the Labour Government and we say to them:

The British Communist Party will support the Labour Government in all its efforts to improve the position of the working class and to lessen the peril of armament and war.

But at the same time, we tell you quite openly: the Labour

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Therefore organise join for the old Labour Party joint comm force the Lal to fight for: ance for un at trade unio 2. Nationali and railway control over 3. Full free India and E of the polic Credit for Scrapping (Treaty of Ve Workers no governm best intentic better you break your yourselves pressure to geoisie and ise your gr call upon j ranks of th to establish labour and thus may th ment not be appointmen ure, but may in the strug working cl ation."

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World War I: the Labour Party and socialist Socialist Parties sent ministers into the warmongers' governments.

brought into the Government. The bourgeoisie became accustomed to having its labour lieutenants as partners in the running of the state.

As the Labour leaders became more closely tied to the state, socialist ideas spread among the rank and file. Revolutionary ideas gripped thousands of workers. The Liberals lost their major share of the working class vote to Labour.

To retain their control, Labour's leaders reorganised the party. The old, loose federal structure was partly replaced by individual membership, allowing greater central control (and easier access for middle class careerists).

World War 1

Before the First World War, working class politics in Britain had appeared as an exception among the major capitalist countries. When the big Socialist Parties all supported their own bourgeois governments during the war, it became clear that the "bourgeois workers' party" was a feature of every country which was rich with imperialist super-profits and able to buy off working class leaders with 'lucrative and easy berths in the Ministries or on war industries committees, in Parliament and on

ers and then to win over the workers who still supported the reformists. They used the united front policy to draw the reformists into class struggle, workers in which the reformist struggle would learn and the reformist leaders would be exposed.

Because the British Labour Party (even after its 1918 reorganisation) was still much looser and broader than the continental Socialist Parties, the Communist International concluded that revolutionaries in Britain should go further than just a united front:

"At the same time the Second Congress of the Third International should express itself in favour of Communist groups, or groups and organisations sympathising with Communism in England, affiliating to the Labour Party notwithstanding the fact that the latter is affiliated to the Second International. For as long as this party permits the organisations affiliated to it to enjoy their present freedom of propaganda, agitation and organisational activity for the dictatorship of the proletariat and the Soviet form of government, as long as that party preserves its character as a federation of all the trade union organisations of the working class, the Communists should without fail take all measures and agree to certain compromises in order to have the opportunity of influencing the broadest masses of the workers, of exposing the opportunist leaders from a platform that is higher and more visible to the masses and of accelerating the transition of political power from the direct representatives of the bourgeoisie to the 'labour lieutenants of the capitalist class' in order that the masses

freedom to pursue its communist work of propaganda and education inside the mass political organisation of the workers, nationally and locally, as the right wing leaders claim and exercise for theirs and the ILP for its own. It wanted to be inside the LP in order to meet its enemies face to face and to expose in front of the rank and file of the labour movement the political trickery of the 'Labour lieutenants of the capitalist class'."

communist and was sponsored by the united Battersea labour movement.

"The link that Saklatvala established with his worker constituents was not that of the proverbial surgery 'can I help you?' 'have you any problems?' At that time the entire working class had a problem: that of survival against the employers' lockouts, widespread unemployment and the downward slide of the sliding scale of wages agreements."

"Saklatvala spoke at factory



Lenin and the Communist International urged British revolutionaries to affiliate to the Labour Party

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two principles, they are only a technical division of labour. Together they are the fundamental support of the domination of the English bourgeoisie. The latter cannot be overthrown without overthrowing the Labourite bureaucracy. And that cannot be attained by counterposing the trade union as such to the state as such, but only by the active opposition of the Communist Party to the Labourite bureaucracy in all fields of social life: in the trade unions, in strikes, in the electoral campaign, in parliament, and in power."

And within the Labour Party, too, he would have added, if the CP had had the possibility of affiliating.

In 1935 he gave tactical advice to a leader of the Independent Labour Party. The ILP had moved leftwards to a semi-revolutionary position, and some Trotskyists were active inside it.

Trotsky favoured the ILP standing some candidates in safe Labour seats. But he argued that the ILP should consider re-entering the Labour Party, and that 'the only important united front for the ILP is with the Labour Party, the trade unions, the cooperatives'.

As part of that united front policy, the ILP should offer critical support to Labour in elections.

The ILP should make it clear that it supported Labour despite, not because of, Labour's policies. For that reason, the ILP's distinction between the pacifist Labourites like Stafford Cripps and George Lansbury (who opposed League of Nations sanctions against Italy) and the chauvinist

omic crises only to reproduce them on a larger scale. So the League can eliminate small episodic conflicts only to generalise them into world war.

"Thus, both economic and military crises will only return with an added explosive force so long as capitalism remains. And we know that social democracy cannot abolish capitalism.

"No, in war as in peace the ILP must say to the workers: 'The Labour Party will deceive you and betray you, but you do not believe us. Very well, we will go through your experiences with you but in no case do we identify ourselves with the Labour Party programme.'

"Morrison, Clynes etc represent certain prejudices of the workers. When the ILP seeks to boycott Clynes it helps not only Baldwin but Clynes himself. If successful in its tactic, the ILP prevents the election of Clynes, of the Labour government, and so prevents their exposure before the masses. The workers will say: 'If only we had Clynes and Morrison in power, things would have been better.'

"It is true of course that the mental content of Clynes and Baldwin is much the same except, perhaps, that Baldwin is a little more 'progressive' and more courageous. But the class content of the support for Clynes is very different.

"It is argued that the Labour Party already stands exposed by its past deeds in power and its present reactionary platform. For us — yes! But not for the masses, the eight millions who voted Labour. It is a great danger for revolutionists to attach too much importance to conference decisions. We use such evidence in our propaganda — but it cannot be presented beyond the power of our own press. One cannot shout louder than the

we marched with them. We would be elected to the Soviets and the Soviets would not betray.

"As a general principle, a revolutionary party has the right to boycott parliament only when it has the capacity to overthrow it, that is, when it can replace parliamentary action by general strike and insurrection, by direct struggle for power. In Britain the masses have yet no confidence in the ILP. The ILP is therefore too weak to break the parliamentary machine and must continue to use it. As for a partial boycott, such as the ILP sought to operate, it was unreal. At this stage of British politics it would be interpreted by the working class as a certain contempt for them; this is particularly true in Britain where parliamentary traditions are still so strong.



"Moreover, the London Division's policy of giving critical support only to anti-sanctionists would imply a fundamental distinction between the social-patriots like Morrison and Ponsonby or — with your permission — even Cripps. Actually their differences are merely propagandistic. Cripps is actually only a second class supporter of the bourgeoisie. He has said, in effect: 'Pay no attention to my ideas, our differences are only small'. This is the attitude of a dilettante, not a revolutionist. A thousand times better an open enemy like Morrison. Lansbury himself is a sincere but extravag-

Even among the Tories there are differences on sanctions and war policies. The distinction between Amery and Lansbury is simply that Amery is more of a realist. Both are anti-sanctionists; but for the working class, Lansbury with his illusions and sincerity is more dangerous."

Even though the CP seemed to be to the left of Labour, Trotsky argued for supporting Labour candidates against the CP, which was by then completely corrupted by Stalinism.

"... the ILP should have more sharply differentiated itself from the CP at the elections than it did. It should have critically supported the Labour Party against Pollitt and Gallacher [of the CP]. It should have been declared openly that the CP has all the deficiencies of the Labour Party without any of its advantages. It should have, above all, shown in practise what true critical support means. By accompanying support with the sharpest and widest criticism, by patiently explaining that such support is only for the purpose of exposing the treachery of the Labour Party leadership, the ILP would have completely exposed, also, the spurious 'critical' support of the Stalinists themselves, a support which was actually wholehearted and uncritical, and based on an agreement in principle with the Labour Party leadership."

Trotsky argued similarly in relation to Belgium, where the Belgian Labour Party (POB) had an almost similar dominance in the workers' movement.

The Social Democratic leaders of the POB had put forward a 'Labour Plan',



Trotsky: 'support... for the purpose of exposing the treachery of the Labour Party leadership'.

something like the Labour left's current Alternative Economic Strategy. Trotsky called it "a plan to deceive the toilers... a new instrument of bourgeois-democratic conservatism... a programme of state capitalism". But he insisted that Marxists must fight to hold the Labour leaders to every promise they made of improvements for the workers.

"In the material sent to me, there is expressed the opinion that the working masses are absolutely indifferent to the Labour plan and are in general in a state of depression and that under such conditions the slogan 'power to the Social Democrats' can only create illusions and produce disappointment later on. ... None of us can have any doubts that

the plan of de Man and the agitation of the Social Democracy connected with it will sow illusions and provoke disappointment. But the Social Democracy, with its influence on the proletariat and its plan, its Christmas congress and its agitation, are objective facts: we can neither remove them, nor skip over them. Our task is twofold: first, to explain to the advanced workers the political meaning of the 'plan', that is, decipher the manoeuvres of the Social Democracy at all stages; secondly, to show in practise to possibly wider circles of workers that insofar as the bourgeoisie tries to put obstacles to the realisation of the plan we fight hand in hand with the workers to help them make this experiment. We share the difficulties of the struggle but not the illusions. Our criticism of the illusions must, however, not increase the passivity of the workers and give it a pseudo-theoretical justification but, on the contrary, push the workers forward. Under these conditions, the inevitable disappointment with the 'Labour Plan' will not spell the deepening of passivity but, on the contrary, the going-over of the workers to the revolutionary road."

Labour's plan

The Belgian Trotskyist leader Vereecken proposed instead that the Marxists should press for a POB-CP government pledged to a full socialist programme. Trotsky poured scorn on this idea:

"The revolutionary task consists in demanding that the POB (Belgian Labour Party) take power in order to put its own plan into effect. Vereecken replies to this: No! It is necessary to demand a workers' government and not simply a socialist government. We must not forget the Stalinist workers, and besides, the plan is no good — it threatens us with inflation. I, Vereecken, I will propose a better plan. Is this serious? No, it is ridiculous. Vereecken sets himself outside of reality. He constructs in his imagination a united front that does not exist in Belgium. For this imaginary united front he proposes an imaginary programme, that is, Vandervelde and Jaquemet [POB and CP leaders] ought to fight together for the perfect plan dreamed up by Vereecken. In this way matters will be splendidly arranged."

In the 1940s, however, 'Labour to power with a socialist programme' became a

continued on page 6



From right: Cripps and Lansbury, Thomas and Morrison — no fundamental difference.

right Labourites like Herbert Morrison (who backed sanctions) could only create illusions.

"Was the ILP correct in refusing critical support to Labour Party candidates who advocated military sanctions?"

"In peace time the workers will, if they trust in social democracy, die of hunger; in war, for the same reason, they will die from bullets. Revolutionists never give critical support to reformism on the assumption that reformism, in power, could satisfy the fundamental needs of the workers. It is possible, of course, that a Labour government could introduce a few mild temporary reforms. It is also possible that the League (Of Nations) could postpone a military conflict about secondary issues — just as a cartel can eliminate secondary econ-

strength of his own throat.

"Let us suppose that the ILP had been successful in a boycott tactic, had won a million workers to follow it, and that it was the absence of this million votes which lost the election for the Labour party. What would happen when the war came? The masses would in their disillusionment turn to the Labour Party, not to us. If Soviets were formed during the war the soldiers would elect Labour Party people to them, not us. Workers would still say that we handicapped Labour. But if we gave critical support and by that means helped the Labour Party to power, at the same time telling the workers that the Labour Party would function as a capitalist government and would direct a capitalist war — then, when war came, workers would see that we predicted rightly, at the same time that-

ant and irresponsible old man; he should be in a museum, not Parliament. The other pacifists are more duplicit — more shifty: like Norman Angell, who demands more sanctions now, they will easily turn into social-patriots as war develops. Then they could say to the workers: 'You know us. We were anti-sanctionists. Even the ILP supported our struggle. Therefore you can have confidence in us when we say that this war is a just war.' No, the ILP should have applied the same policy of critical support to the whole of the Labour Party, only varying our arguments to meet the slightly varied propaganda of pacifist and social-patriot. Otherwise illusions are provoked that pacifism has more power to resist than has social-patriotism.

"That is not true; their differences are not fundamental.



6 Why Marxists vote Labour



continued from p. 5

standard slogan of the British Trotskyists.

After 1945 it looked as if Labour had moved left. The National Health Service was brought in, industries were nationalised. Yet similar state capitalist measures were carried out in many other countries.

On a more fundamental level, Labour had moved to the right — in the sense that the ties between the leaders of the labour movement and the bourgeois state were tighter than ever. Labour ministers were loyal executors of anti-strike laws during the war and of the USA's global counter-revolutionary strategy after the war.

In 1931-2, there was just one Government committee on which the TUC was represented. In 1938-9 there were 12; in 1948-9, there were 60. By 1953-4, despite the fact that there was then a Tory government, TUC representatives sat on 81 Government committees.

But the left shift was real at rank and file level. Before 1945, Liberals and Tories still took a large slice of working class votes. Since 1945, an unshakeable two-thirds of the working class has steadily voted Labour.

Cold War

The abstract, pie-in-the-sky slogan of 'Labour to power with a socialist programme' reflected a failure of the Trotskyists to come to grips with this. Despite a stream of advice to the contrary from their comrades internationally, the British Trotskyists continued to act on the assumption that a revolutionary party would grow directly from industrial militancy, with the Labour Party somehow just melting away.

They failed to understand that Labour's piecemeal Parliamentary reformism was the natural counterpart of industrial militancy as long as it remained on the level of piecemeal trade union reformism. The work of supporting and developing



1972: coal supplies stopped at Saltley, dockers freed from Pentonville jail — but then the militancy was stifled in the drab conservatism of the Social Contract.



most Marxists were active in the Labour Party. But their vagueness of perspective meant that when there was a new radicalisation in the late '60s many flipped over from rather passive and opportunist attitudes to glib hopes of rapidly outflanking Labour. The Labour Party was quickly declared to be dead or dying.

Contract

It was something like a repeat of the early 1920s. The Marxists understood the 'A' of the revolutionary alphabet — to be with the best militants in their struggles. Many were unclear about the B and the C and the D ... organising and educating those militants so as to be able to revolutionise the labour movement. This time there was no Lenin, no Communist International, to make those questions clear.

And then, in the great struggles of the early 1970s, the revolutionaries (rightly) repeated the reformists' call to *Kick the Tories Out* — but mostly they had *nothing to*

add politically, except the elementary call for rank and file militancy and the general perspective of socialist revolution.

Some of us took up the slogan 'General strike to smash the Act' (the Industrial Relations Act), with its implicit perspective of escalating revolutionary action, and at the same time agitated for specific transitional slogans to focus the labour movement's demands on a prospective Labour government. But from most of the revolutionary left there was nothing but an empty attempt to give the slogan *'Kick the Tories Out'* a more drastic form: 'General strike to Kick the Tories Out'.

Thus — with minimum effective resistance from the revolutionary left — the militancy of Saltley Gates, the freeing of the Pentonville Five, the flying pickets, the sit-ins, and the miners' strikes, were harnessed by the Labour leaders and transformed into the drab conservatism of the Social Contract. Not without kick-backs and struggles, of course; but the revolutionaries' support for those struggles against the Social Contract was hardly a political answer in itself.

The cycle of struggle from 1970 to 1979 has reaffirmed one thing for sure: that the

fight to put Labour in power, to give workers' demands on the Labour leaders the sharpest possible form, and to make the Labour leaders' promises into nooses around their necks, is a vital aspect of revolutionary socialist activity. Without that, our political stock-in-trade is reduced to piecemeal militancy plus the 'maximum programme' of revolution.

The need for that fight will remain until we have broken the hold of piecemeal reformism — in its interlinked trade union and Parliamentary forms — within the organised British working class. Until then, the trade union struggle and the Labour Party will act as intercommunicating reservoirs for reformism, with the trade union leaders diverting the fresh stream of industrial militancy into the absorbent sponge of Labour electoralism.

If the Labour Party is the mass party based on the trade unions, socialists should have at least as many rights within it as the pro-capitalist, bureaucratic right wing. We fight for those rights.

We are not wreckers: our politics depend on convincing the majority, not on organisational skulduggery. But we are not blind loyalists either: for us, the interests and the direct struggles of the working class come first, however much discomfort they may cause to trade union and Labour Party bureaucrats. We aim to link the militancy of those struggles (the raw material of socialism) with a political fight inside the labour movement.

Shake-up

When that link is made on a large scale, it will shake up the labour movement drastically. The 'labour lieutenants of capital' will bitterly oppose that shake-up, using deception, expulsions, and splits. But their resources are not endless.

Together with the 'movement of the present', we campaign for a Labour victory in the elections. To 'take care of the future of the movement', we build a socialist opposition which can challenge the Labour leaders and call them to account.

CHEUNG SIU MING

Norwood gets a class struggle manifesto

ON March 29th, the day the election was announced, Norwood Labour Party GMC discussed its election manifesto. In contrast to most Labour Parties, a democratic procedure was followed: the members weren't just 'consulted', they had the final say on what went out in their name.

A draft address had been drawn up by a committee of party members together with the MP, John Fraser, and circulated to all GMC members, who were able to submit written amendments. The GMC then voted an amended address which was binding on the election agent.

Norwood in South London is one of Labour's marginals and has a strong left wing. While John Fraser has a record as a good constituency MP — living in the area, running a regular surgery and attending every local party meeting — he is also a

junior minister (for prices), and a defender of the government's record.

The active left wing party has built an efficient canvassing system second to none, and together with Fraser's personal standing this has kept Norwood a Labour seat.

In most Labour parties this division between party and MP would have resulted in the candidate writing a pro-government manifesto with a few sops to the left. Norwood's system of deciding the manifesto produced a very different result.

The party's left wing policies dominate the manifesto and are not limited to general good advice to the Labour leadership; they outline the action that the local party supports.

A section on health, for instance, calls for a reversal of cuts in the NHS and goes on 'we also pledge our

support for the workers in the NHS, be they porters or nurses, in their fight for a living wage'. The manifesto introduction states: 'We will accept no more wage restraint. We will support workers fighting for higher wages'.

The party's answer to unemployment and low pay is set out clearly: 'We say the government should introduce a £60 minimum wage for a 35 hour week, with inflation-proofing. Cut the hours, not the jobs!'

On racism the manifesto says: 'We will stand with black people in their fight against racism whether it be from the press, the law (eg Sus), the fascist NF, the bosses or the Tories. In particular we will campaign in parliament for the scrapping of the inhuman, racist Immigration Acts... We demand... an immediate end to police harassment of our youth'.

A strong section on housing ends 'What is needed is a massive increase in house building both for sale and council letting. This can only be done by public ownership of the banks and finance houses and the building industry'.

The manifesto also includes issues that other Labour parties might see as unimportant, or might prefer to ignore. A section on women says 'Women's rights are not side issues, they are real life for half our people'. It demands equal pay and job opportunities, free abortion and contraception on demand, more support for battered and raped women and free nursery and creche facilities.

On Ireland the manifesto calls for 'a winding up of the centuries of Britain's unhappy involvement in Ireland ... troops should be withdrawn. We will support self-determination for the Irish

people as a whole'.

The democratic procedure that allowed Norwood LP to put its policies forward in the manifesto also allowed the deletion of some items which John Fraser wanted to include. As they defended the government's record, they would have made the final manifesto into complete gibberish if they were left in.

A statement that 'The Labour Government had two choices in 1974, either ordinary people had to pay to restore profits, investments and jobs or the decline would continue unchecked' was originally included in a section that goes on to say 'We believe capitalism is an unplanned wasteful method of investment by very rich people hell-bent on making profit. It causes slumps, unemployment and inflation. We reject it'.

An amendment by a *Workers' Action* supporter helped cut out the defence of the

Nazi triumph at Brick Lane

SUNDAY 25TH MARCH marked the lowest point reached by the anti-racist movement in East London to date. A Day of Action called by the Hackney and Tower Hamlets Defence Committee attracted no more than 150 people at a generous estimate; not a single Bangladeshi from the area joined the march. On the other hand, the event attracted local fascists like bees to a honeypot: at least 60 of them were in attendance. Only their own surprise at the way things had turned out seemed to inhibit the National Front and British Movement members from annihilating sections of the anti-racist march. No objection would have been raised by the police, who shepherded us into a side street off Brick Lane and shut us in there, leaving the NF free to strut past Bangladeshi homes unchallenged.

Collapse

The same mistakes must not be made again. The Defence Committee, once genuinely representing Brick Lane's Asian population as well as local anti-racist groups, now has no base at all. This situation results from a number of interconnected developments: the collapse of the ANL's credibility as a result of many months of phoney activity, culminating in the betrayal of 25 September 1978 (when they took their supporters to Brixton, leaving Brick Lane open to a big NF rally); the inactivity of the local anti-racist committee; and a process of political regression in the Bangladeshi community, ending in their submission to police control in the Brick Lane area.

Control

This last development — the crucial factor — must be laid at the door of the socialist organisations active in the area, all of whom have proved unable or unwilling to challenge the hold of Labour loyalism over the working-class movement in East London. As a result, Mikardo-Shore police patronage has managed to pacify and control the developing explosive youth radicalisation which we saw at its peak last summer.

Not stunts, but patient, hard and sometimes dangerous work in the local working class must lay the basis for a counter-attack against increasing fascist domination of the area.

IF THE Conservatives win the general election they can be expected to introduce new immigration policies, which spill over into what amounts to induced repatriation.

Since the 1971 Immigration Act, it has been almost impossible for black people to come to Britain unless they are dependants, husbands, or fiancés of people already living here. The Tories' racist vote-catching plans would restrict the entry of parents, grandparents, and children over 18 to those who can 'prove urgent compassionate grounds'. Immigrants who came to Britain after January 1973 (when the 1971 Immigration Act came into force) would not even have the right to bring their wives and young children to join them.

Husbands and fiancés of women living in Britain would also lose their right to entry: the 'abode of a husband in a marriage should normally be viewed as the natural place of residence of a family', notwithstanding the Sex Discrimination Act.

For black people already in Britain, the Tories propose tighter 'checks' by the Department of Health and Social Security and the police and an inquiry into a 'system of internal control' — in other words, South Africa-style pass laws under which anyone not sporting a perfect white skin risks arrest if stopped when not carrying the required papers.

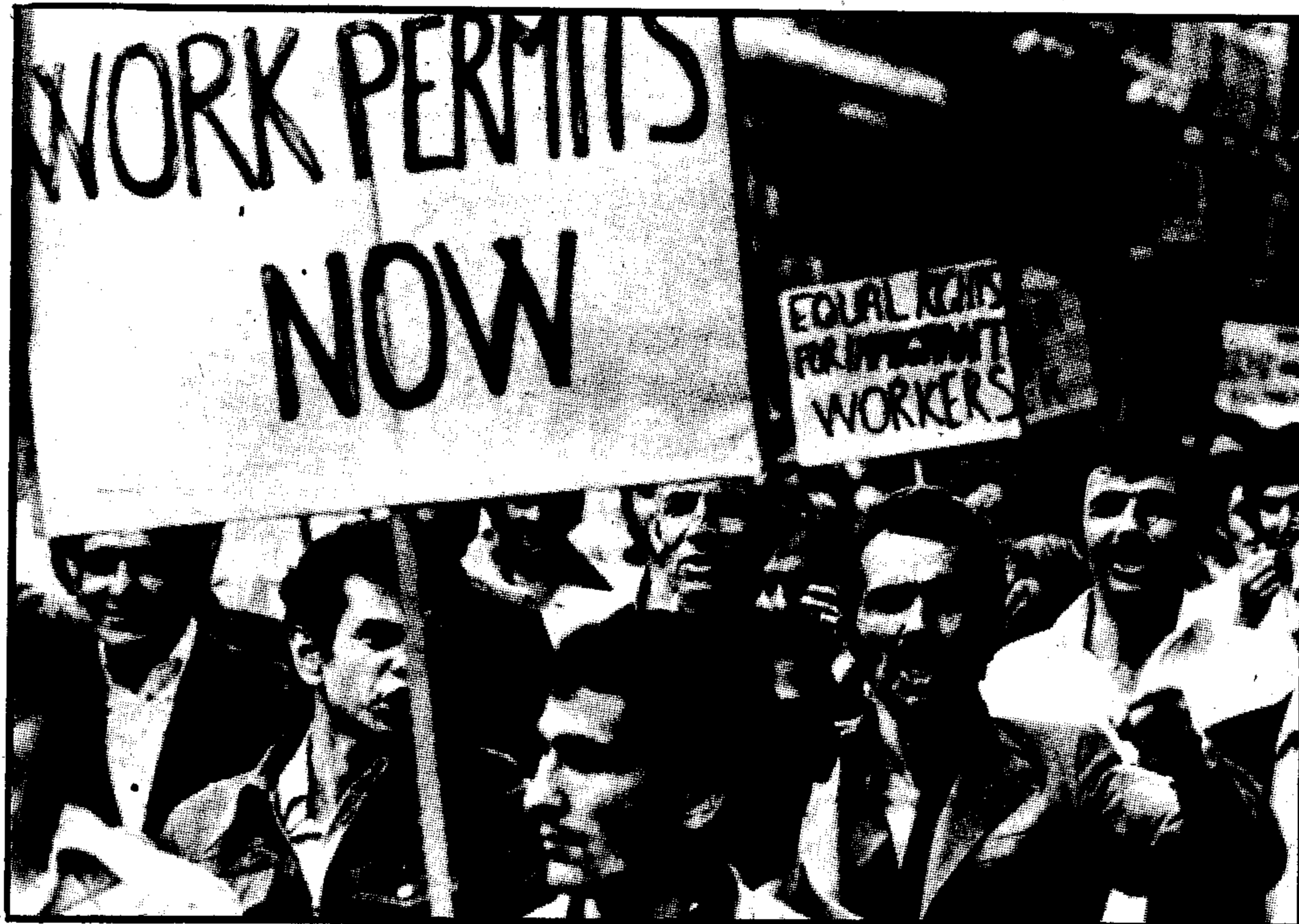
Patrials

The Tories also propose a new Nationality Law. At present some British citizens ('patrials') have more rights than others ('non-patrials'): The new law would tidy up the situation by redefining citizenship.

The message to black people is clear: if you want to live in peace, or to re-unite your family ... go home! And the Tories propose 'arrangements ... to help those who are really anxious to leave this country'.

The Tory plans are a cynical attempt to exploit and whip up racist prejudice by presenting black people as the cause of all social problems. But the fact that these moves are political possibilities owes much to the

If the Tories win WILL BLACKS LOSE THE VOTE?



Demonstration against the work permit system: What civil rights for immigrants?

Labour Governments of 1974 to 1979.

In April 1977 the Government published a Green Paper on reform of British nationality law. The categories of citizenship — British Citizen (BC) and British Overseas Citizen (BOC) — outlined in the Green Paper are modelled not on the Labour proposals of 1972, but on Conservative police of 1975, thus giving a boost to the Tories and their proposals, and reducing any future Labour opposition to Tory nationality law to technical details.

The new nationality law would define a new British citizenship in line with the racially restrictive definitions of right of entry laid down in the present immigration laws.

What is also disturbing is what the Green Paper does not say. For instance, most black people now living in Britain but not born here

The Tories' plans to step up state racism are examined by SAM RICHARDSON

came from the Commonwealth before 1973; as British subjects as well as citizens of their country of origin, they have the civil rights associated with citizenship, except in relation to the EEC. Yet nowhere does the Green Paper discuss what will happen to their rights when the definition of citizenship is changed.

Neither does the Green Paper mention the little-known fact that black people who have Commonwealth citizenship (over half the black population of Britain) are denied the right of free movement in the EEC. The reason for this is a special

definition of a UK national drawn up for EEC purposes.

Now, one of the major reasons for a new Nationality Law is to tidy up UK law in readiness for the common EEC passport — originally scheduled for 1980. The silence of the Labour Government on the question of Commonwealth citizens' rights and the special definition of a UK national cannot be an oversight.

At best it could mean inaction. At worst it could mean that we are being kept ignorant of government plans to use the highly restrictive definition for EEC purposes as a basis of British citizenship.

This could involve removing civil rights (or what the Green Paper calls 'civic privileges'), such as voting rights, from some black Commonwealth citizens settled here for years.

Not possible, even under a Thatcher government? Then

why the silence from a Labour Government?

On immigration and repatriation, too, the Tories take their cue (and many detailed proposals) from the all party report of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. This committee included right, centre and left wing Labour MPs. Its unanimous report helped make the Conservative proposals respectable.

Internal controls, quotas, permit restrictions, a register of dependants, restriction on entry of dependants and fiancés, intensified 'police action' on illegal immigration — effectively these suggestions of the Select Committee turn immigration law into a variety of pressures to leave.

The official Government response to the Report was feeble. While rejecting 'internal immigration controls', the Labour Government accepted in principle the complementary proposals for employment checks and DHSS checks. Moreover, we now know that the Government has been discussing with the TUC ways of introducing employment checks in line with the EEC directives on illegal immigration.

Swoops

Not only has the TUC's catering committee found such checks acceptable, it has agreed to the need for more resources to harass the black communities — that is, more special police units to make dawn swoops and street searches for 'suspected illegal immigrants'; more immigration officials to interrogate and examine immigrants as they come in.

When the Tories try to bring in a new racist Nationality Act, with even wider and more intense surveillance and harassment of black people and more restrictive controls on immigration, we can't seriously rely on the Parliamentary Labour Party to oppose them. If Labour continues in office, we can still expect a package of racist repression similar in many respects.

It will be up to the rank and file of the labour movement to organise the fight against racism, and for an end to all immigration controls.

POLICE PROTECT RACE BAR CLUB

SEVEN PEOPLE were arrested last week after police waded into a picket of 'Pollyanna's' club in Birmingham.

For some months the club [owned by local businessman Eddie Fewtrell] has been defying a Race Relations non-discrimination order to drop its colour bar.

The 150 strong picket, organised by the Birmingham Action Committee against Racism in Clubs, arrived about 10pm and peacefully attempted to turn back customers for the next hour. By 11pm the club was still virtually

empty. Then several vanloads of police from the nearby Steelhouse Lane station arrived and attacked the picket. For the next half hour, the protesters attempted to hold their ground, but by then the object of the exercise had been achieved anyway. Pollyanna's remained virtually deserted.

The Action Committee now plans to win the support of the Trades Council, union branches and CLPs for those arrested last week and for a regular Saturday night picket. JIM DENHAM

YS conference put off, but democracy campaign continues

DELEGATES from nine Labour Party Young Socialists (LPYS) branches and observers from five others met on March 31st to plan the future activity of the Campaign for YS Democracy (CYSD) recently launched by LPYS branches in Edinburgh and Southampton. Although this year's LPYS conference has been postponed to after the election, the meeting decided to hold a CYSD conference in June to which LPYS branches are invited to send delegates.

The conference is intended to rally support for the CYSD's aim of removing the bureaucratic rules which were imposed on the YS by Transport House in the witchhunting

atmosphere of the early 1960s and are still operated by the ruling Militant tendency. It should also widen out the debate, in a way that never happens at the national YS conference, on how to build a mass youth movement.

The conference certainly won't be an exercise in 'Militant-bashing'. The LPYS National Committee are being invited to send a representative to the conference to put their point of view in support of the present LPYS rules, rules which mean that the National Committee is not elected at National Conference and over one third of the Conference time is devoted to Nat-

ional Committee speeches and recommendations.

The CYSD conference will also have workshops on 'trade unions and young workers' and 'the fight for Labour Party democracy'.

The planning meeting discussed a witchhunting resolution which had appeared at the Scottish Regional Conference of the Labour Party, calling for an 'independent inquiry into the LPYS'. The meeting was unanimous in its rejection of any witch-hunt of the YS majority, and decided to publish a statement opposing any interference in the LPYS from either outside bodies or the adult Labour Party.

However, a move by Workers' Action supporter Gordon Brewer to exclude the originators of the motion — Hillhead YS — from the CYSD (which they have applied to join) was rejected by Clause 4 supporters. After some discussion the meeting agreed the CYSD would specifically mention Hillhead YS when commenting on the resolution, and would write to Hillhead asking them for an explanation. NEIL COBBETT

★ Details of the CYSD conference and copies of the CYSD bulletin can be obtained from G. Brewer, secretary Edinburgh Central LPYS, 15 Barclay Place, Edinburgh.

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

Post Office: a feeble claim and a worse offer

AT LAST December's Special Conference the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) decided its pay claim, and a modest claim at that. It consisted of an 8% increase in basic rates, 8% increase in allowances, full consolidation of previous supplements, three hours off the working week, an increase in annual leave, reduction in incremental scales, and an escalator clause to protect the basic rate.

The UPW leadership then went off to negotiate with management, and we heard nothing more about it until a couple of weeks ago, despite the fact that the claim was supposed to be implemented on January 1st. Then, via the press as usual, we heard what the management's reply was.

What they are offering us is 8% on the basic, 8% on allowances, a reduction in incremental scales (worth 1%), and consolidation of less than half of the supplements (worth 3%). The press are putting this about as a 12% increase, but this is rubbish.

UPW members who are on the maximum scale and who don't work either overtime or hours which qualify for premium payments will only get the basic 8%. Consolidation,

which affect hourly rates but not the basic, will mean nothing to large numbers of office and counter staff, to most day telephonists, and to postmen in small offices where there is no afternoon or overtime working.

In return for this generous offer the Post Office are demanding acceptance of a productivity deal which includes the introduction of part time working into all areas of work, traffic measurements [i.e. work study], and the ending of the practice of holding vacancies so as to provide overtime.

Of course socialists oppose overtime. But this has got to go hand in hand with a fight for decent basic wages and a post office worker's wage is hardly that. Acceptance of this deal would drive many down to the poverty level.

The real aim of the Post Office's productivity deal is to drive a coach and horses through the union's ability to control work practices. At the moment it is virtually impossible for management to bring in new working arrangements without union agreement. With this deal they hope to change all that. In the end this is bound to mean cuts in

staffing levels.

And they have even had the cheek to put a sting in the tail of the deal. If it doesn't result in enough savings to pay for consolidation, then they can take it back off us in next year's pay deal.

To start with, the Exec. turned down the offer. They wanted slightly more consolidation and they objected to the claw-back clause — because it would delay negotiations for a new productivity deal next year! But even this weak-kneed opposition collapsed with the calling of the General Election, and now they're recommending acceptance.

So it's now up to the rank and file. Militants in the UPW must start an immediate campaign to mobilise the membership to vote against the deal at the meetings that will be called. If the feeling of the staff at my office is anything to go by, this shouldn't be difficult.

Having rejected the offer, we must force the Exec to initiate immediate action for the full claim. London and Liverpool, with their unofficial action, have shown that the will to fight is there.

PETE KEENLYSIDE
Manchester Amalgamated UPW.

Workers' ACTION

Buses: the on-off strike for 60p

PROVINCIAL BUS crews got a call for strike action on Tuesday (27th March). The strike was to be on Friday 30th. At 1pm last Thursday our branch secretary received a phone call... "It's off, we've had a better offer". We still have no idea what that offer might be.

The man responsible for this fiasco was Larry Smith, the T&GWU's National Trade Group Secretary. The strike call was not in support of the bus workers' £65 claim (£81 for one-man operators). It looks as if the 6% offer from the municipal bus companies had already been accepted. The dispute was to get bigger increases in a bonus for one-man operation.

The 'OMO' bonus, paid to all crews at rates which vary according to the percentage

of one-man buses in a company's fleet, is to increase over three stages in the next two years as a result of negotiations carried on separately from the wage negotiations. The employers are trying to claim that the bonus increases were fixed after the 6% offer on basic wages had been agreed, and as such were not subject to a further 6% increase. The union disagrees.

Most bus workers were not very enthusiastic about a strike called with three days' notice over an issue that would probably mean only 60p a week... but plans were being made and the action looked like being effective.

Larry Smith, however, had succeeded in confusing the situation even before he called the strike off. Each branch

was meant to approach the local management and get their response to the issue. If they said they would consider paying an extra 6% on the bonus, then there was to be no strike.

This would have split effective action. In Wales and the South West, for example, Plymouth, Cardiff and Merthyr would have struck and Bristol and Newport wouldn't.

Now Smith has left rank and file busworkers without the slightest clue as to what is going on in the negotiations. In Cardiff this has led to the circulation of a petition demanding his removal as trade group secretary and the right to elect our officials rather than have them appointed.

PAUL BYERS

SCANDAL IN NATSOPA

Strange story of the Swiss bank accounts

LORD BRIGINSHAW, former General Secretary of the print union NATSOPA, was once a member of the Communist Party and a well-known figure in the anti-fascist movement in the 1930s.

Recently raised to the House of Lords, his last claim to fame is a probable civil action against him concerning the misuse of union funds.

Last week NATSOPA reconvened its Governing Council to discuss a report by accountants hired to look into a series of transactions made by officials of the union which were not authorised by the union executive. The council decided to take Briginshaw to court.

The accountants' report lists some strange affairs, including the movement of union funds into Swiss bank accounts, the sale of union property, the creation of

private companies with union money, and shady property transactions — none of them ratified by the Executive Committee.

The union money in the Swiss bank accounts (so the accountants were told by Lord Briginshaw and the union's financial secretary) was to pay for a convalescent home in Switzerland. The union already has a convalescent home in Rottingdean, Brighton.

The money was entered between 1968 and 1972. In 1974 the funds were withdrawn and brought back to England, allegedly in suitcases and paper bags. Amongst other things, this broke the UK currency control regulations.

Of course, none of this was mentioned in the union minutes, either.

The union auditors, Lawrence & Rogers & Co, who

were supposed to be keeping an eye on things, were themselves making use of the union's pension fund. Mr Rogers in November 1974, obtained a mortgage of £24,000 from the NATSOPA staff superannuation fund at 11% interest. Union officials and staff also made frequent use of the fund to obtain mortgages on property to be resold at a later date.

The reason for some of these shady transactions, according to Briginshaw, was that they were building up a fund for a 'shadow union' to combat the threat of union funds being seized under the Industrial Relations Act.

But the Union President and the Presidential Committee which was set up to oversee the 'shadow union' fund knew nothing; and some of the dubious deals took place after the Act had been repealed.

All this has only come to

light thanks to the efforts of the Observer NATSOPA machine room chapel, which investigated the union's books in May 1978 and then fought a court case to get the right to bring in accountants. It is obvious that the union's leaders have been keen to keep the whole business under cover, and particularly not to implicate the present officials, including General Secretary Owen O'Brien.

The corrupt practices in NATSOPA are a reflection of the way the union is run generally. Its history is one of expelling left-wingers, making sell-out deals, breaking strikers, and stifling rank and file involvement through a host of petty rules. O'Brien has introduced a new union rule forbidding members to talk to the press without permission from the executive.

The officials at headquarters are not called the mafia for nothing, and the present publicity concerning the union funds has done a great deal to increase the cynicism of the ordinary membership.

Some members refused to pay their levy for the Times workers until they could be sure it would end up in the right pockets. Unfortunately, because of the stranglehold of the right-wing leadership and the difficulties of putting forward a left alternative, the most likely result of the corruption case is that people will see less reason to fight the bosses' attacks because of their lack of faith in the present union leadership.

The fight against corruption must be linked to the fight for democracy within the union and against the sell-outs of the officials.

CLARE RUSSELL

BL tries another swindle

BRITISH LEYLAND's recent decision to pay increased shift allowances to all plants and the first stage of parity to some is no act of generosity.

For a start, the shift allowances — under the terms of the National Engineering Agreement — should have been paid from last November. British Leyland is only backdating them to February.

The new parity proposals mean that 'stage 1' payments (bringing most production workers up to £81.50) can be paid to all plants when targets throughout the group have been met for four consecutive weeks. An individual plant can obtain the payment when it has achieved its target for eight weeks running. Cardiff, Cowley, Llanelli, Abingdon, and Common Lane (Birmingham) are eligible for 'stage 1' payments: clearly this is a divide-and-rule tactic to buy off certain 'good' plants and lessen the chance of any combine-wide action over pay this year.

More sinister, though, is the way BL is attempting to use the parity payments to pave the way for a 'new' incentive scheme. The plan is to use parity targets to boost production levels throughout the group and then use that increased production (combined with further reductions in the workforce) to establish the base-line for plant-based incentive schemes.

The scheme being put forward is identical in every respect to the one BL workers threw out in a company-wide ballot last March. The main reason for that rejection was that the scheme gives the company complete control over manning levels and track speeds, destroying the last vestiges of 'mutuality', the system under which these work conditions must be mutually agreed by management and shop stewards.

The only difference is that under the new scheme the maximum possible bonus is raised from £8 to £15 a week. But the company's internal memos reveal they are only anticipating "50% achievement of bonus".

BL workers are desperate for more money, but after the company's double-dealing over parity, the shop-floor is extremely hostile to any suggestion of incentive schemes. The danger is that the convenors and senior stewards in most plants will not reject the scheme out of hand, but attempt to negotiate concessions on the details.

We must say: to hell with productivity dealing; no to speed-up and job loss; defend mutuality. We need a national claim this year for a basic wage of at least £100.

The issue of whether BL contracts to assemble Japanese cars — which is causing

a big stir in the press, though not (at Longbridge, anyway) on the shop floor — is absolutely irrelevant to this battle. Any attempt to divert BL workers into a defence of 'all-British car manufacture' must be firmly resisted.

JIM DENHAM

Socialist Organiser

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BAGNALLS BASINGSTOKE Bosses sack a militant

BOILERMAKERS' union members in Lansing Bagnalls, Basingstoke, voted last week in a secret ballot, by 71 to 34, not to strike in support of a member who had been unfairly dismissed.

This was not really surprising when you consider the fact that the sacking took place three weeks previously. But anyone who doubted that the sacking was political should have been convinced by now: a few days after the vote, a notice went up in the factory threatening instant dismissal for anyone caught giving out the Workers' Action factory bulletin. The worker sacked four weeks ago is a known supporter of Workers' Action.

The three weeks between the sacking and the vote were an object lesson on how officialdom sidetracks any hint of a fightback. On March 1st, at 3.45pm, Martin Timmins, who is branch secretary of the Boilermakers, was called to the Personnel Director's office with his stewards. He was told that his timekeeping had not improved since his final warning a month ago, and sacked with six weeks' pay in lieu of notice.

The stewards argued that Timmins had lost no time since his final warning, to which

management replied by inventing a new rule: the three minutes' grace in the mornings count as late.

By the time that meeting finished everybody had finished work. Martin Timmins was off the premises and one day was lost.

A shop meeting was held the next morning (Friday) and the membership were informed. The district official had been contacted and he would be putting the appeal on Monday. The membership decided to defer any action until the outcome of the appeal was known. Three more days lost.

On Monday the official got in touch with the stewards and told them he would not be available for a meeting with management until the 20th. After some argument, the official set up a meeting for the following Thursday (8th), but four more days were lost.

That meeting came and went with the official not even knowing what he was arguing about, and having to ask management what the next stage was. Management were only too pleased to tell him that another meeting could be set up with the Employers' Federation present.

That meeting duly took place on the 21st and the sack-

ing was predictably confirmed. The ballot took place the following day.

The long drawn out official procedure has led to shop meetings being postponed again and again, until finally the issue appeared cold and dead.

The main points to come out of this case are:

■ If the company want to get rid of someone, they don't need a reason. In this case, they had no argument and were in direct contravention of their own conditions of employment. This was a blatant political sacking of a trade union activist who was causing problems for both the bosses and the bureaucratic leadership of the Joint Shop Stewards' Committee.

■ The vast majority of trade union officials can be depended upon to sidetrack any membership action with the promise of negotiations which are in reality only timewasters.

■ There is no substitute for organised rank and file activity. In this case speedy action by the membership would almost certainly have settled the issue within days.

These lessons will have to be learnt quickly at Bagnalls if the right to carry on trade union and political activity is to be defended.