

# WORKERS' ACTION

12 pages  
15p

No. 146

July 14-21, 1979

## OUR PICKETS CAN BEAT THEIR LAWS

THE RIGHT to picket is under attack. The right to operate a closed shop is under threat. The Tories' latest legal assault on the working class seeks to limit and lame militant trade union action. What is at stake is the right to win!

The Tories' proposals, outlined in their 'Working Paper for Consultations on Proposed Industrial Relations Legislation' published on Tuesday 10th, talk of outlawing picketing except by those directly involved at their place of work. The flying picket, the solidarity picket or blacking and the mass picket — all these vital weapons for winning the class war — are in effect being banned by the Tories.

Thatcher and company will make it harder to operate a closed shop by protecting a wider range of anti-union freeloaders than the 'religious objectors' presently covered by law. In their arrogance, the Tories are also taking away from trade unions their elementary right to admit and expel members: the High Court big-wigs will now have the last word.

They are also offering to pay for postal ballots. Mass meetings, preferably at the workplace, are the most democratic way of making decisions, but the Tories don't want that. They want you at home listening to Woodrow Wyatt rather than your shop steward.

All these proposals, say the Government, are open to negotiation. Prior wants

by RHODRI EVANS

to make sure he doesn't give the unions the Heath-treatment and rub them up the wrong way. He hopes that if the union leaders negotiate the small print of these anti-union laws they are also sure to police them.

While the Tories are putting the cutting edge on these weapons, they will also be implementing a series of other attacks. The first of these will come this week, when the Government halves the period of notice a boss needs to give for sackings. And instead of workers being able to qualify for claims of unfair dismissal after 26 weeks, they will have to have been

working at the same place for a year now to claim.

Taxing unemployment benefit and reducing benefits to strikers' families have been postponed, but they won't be long in coming.

All this comes on top of the Budget and Heseltine's cuts in money for council services, and on top of the Treasury forecasts of two million unemployed and a doubling of the inflation rate.

The trade union leaders must not get drawn into negotiating on the basis of these proposals. They should break off any such talks with the Tories! And they should drop any idea of an alternative like the Concordat and Moss Evans' Code of Picketing

issued to striking lorry drivers last year.

They should set out to defy the law. And make that defiance on such a scale that the Tories are forced to retreat. They should do to Thatcher what the supporters of the Pentonville Five did to Heath — but this time smash the anti-union laws completely, rather than leaving them half-alive as the Industrial Relations Act was after 1972.

The same goes for Prior's other proposals. Mass defiance must be the slogan. We must insist on our right to picket whichever way helps us win fastest. We must organise the rank and file to do that — despite and against the trade union leaders if necessary.



It's how strong we are that makes the difference

## August 12th: Labour activists mobilise for 'troops out now'

IN AUGUST 1969, British troops were sent onto the streets of Northern Ireland. They are still there. A major demonstration is being held in London on August 12th to call for 'a policy of withdrawal'. Workers' Action is supporting a call put out by SOCIALIST ORGANISER for a labour movement 'troops out now' contingent on this demonstration.

Events over the last few weeks show that the army are no 'peacekeepers', but one side of a war. Their 'enemy' is the whole of the nationalist population — including school-children.

Two SAS men have just been tried for the murder of a 16-year old Northern Ireland schoolboy, John Boyle.

When they shot him, at 12 yards' range, last July, the Army announced that John Boyle was a 'terrorist'. They were brought to trial after a pathologist's report was leaked to the press, saying that Boyle had been shot in the back.

The Army admitted that Boyle had no connection with the Republican movement. He was just hanging around near an SAS 'stake out' of an arms cache. The defence said that Boyle had picked up one of the weapons and the SAS men thought he would shoot.

The SAS men were found not guilty. But they knew the guns were not loaded. And why was Boyle shot twice in the back?

As the trial was going on, a British Army private went berserk in Belfast. He absconded from his barracks with a rifle and loosed off at six Catholic youths standing in a Belfast street. Brendan Flynn was badly injured. When the army finally persuaded the soldier to surrender, he was released into their custody on £1,000 bail almost straight away.

Such incidents are part of everyday life under army occupation in Northern Ireland. They have been going on for ten years. John Boyle and Brendan Flynn join a long list of victims.

Yet the British labour movement has scarcely even questioned what the army is doing, much less said clearly that it has no right to be in Ireland.

The August 12th demonstration is called, not by the

labour movement, but by the Young Liberals and several prominent individuals. The SOCIALIST ORGANISER appeal argues: 'Labour cannot leave the cause of Irish freedom to the Liberals', and that "The labour movement, in alliance with the Irish people, is the only force which can defeat the British ruling class's campaign of repression". It calls on labour movement bodies to support a 'Troops Out Now' contingent being organised for August 12th by the United Troops Out Movement.

Support for the appeal has already come from three members of the CPSA National Ex-



ecutive, three members of the Greater London Labour Party Regional Council executive, Trades Council secretaries, convenors from factories and hospitals, Constituency Labour Party officers, and union branch secretaries. So far these signatories are all in a personal capacity, but activists will be pressing for many labour movement bodies to sponsor the appeal when they meet over the coming month.

SOCIALIST ORGANISER has produced the appeal as a leaflet which is available at a cost of £5 per thousand from SO, 5 Stamford Hill, London N16.

NIK BARSTOW

### Workers' Action public meeting

As the Shadow Cabinet goes for confrontation with the NEC and Labour Party conference over democracy in the labour movement, ORGANISE THE LEFT TO DEFEAT CALLAGHAN'S OFFENSIVE

Speakers: Stephen Corbishley (CPSA National Executive, in personal capacity), and John O'Mahony, Sunday 22 July, 8.30pm, at the 'Metropolitan', Farringdon Rd/Clerkenwell Rd.

### FUND DRIVE

By our last issue we had raised £396.80 towards our £500 target to help finance the expansion of WA to 12 pages.

We have since received:

Cardiff..... £12  
Coventry..... £53.40  
Edinburgh..... £1

and we closed our fund on July 1st with a collection at a national meeting of WA supporters which raised £1,700.37.

This gave us a final total of £2,163.57. We have sent £200 of this money to the Defence Fund for the anti-fascists arrested in Leicester on April 21st.

We are now starting a regular £200 a month fund drive for WA. Because of the August holidays, the closing date for the first £200 will be August 28th.

### INSIDE

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The cover-up on Blair Peach; ANL conference page 2

# Where they measure your house to blow it up

'The first time, they came at four o'clock in the afternoon. They took my son Muhammad, who is 15, saying 'we are investigating him'. He was accused of being a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Eleven days later they came at 11 at night. Tanks surrounded the house... They searched the house but did not find anything. They took away my second son, Abdel Hamid.'

The third time Israeli soldiers came to the house, it was to measure it.

The sequence is a familiar one in the village of Silwad in Israeli-occupied West Bank, and indeed in every Palestinian village controlled by Israel. The next step in the sequence is that the house is calmly blown up.

'They arrested my daughter Fatma' recalls 71-year old Rima, also from Silwad 'and the next day they measured the house. Eighteen days passed and I thought they were not going to blow it up, but they did.'

Adnan was nineteen when he was arrested two years ago; he was accused of being a member of Fatah. He was beaten for twelve days until he signed a confession in Hebrew which he could not understand, admitting membership of an illegal organisation. His brother Mahmoud had been arrested for the same 'crime' nine years before. Shortly after, his house was blown up.

Last December an Israeli army bulldozer destroyed the house of Abdel-Rahman Abdel Fattah, although civil rights lawyer Felicia Langer had obtained a court order to stop the demolition. The soldiers just pretended they hadn't received notification of it in time.

The stories of arrests, torture, punitive demolition and other acts by the Israeli army are common to all the villages of the West Bank. Ian Black recently reported in the *New Statesman* on what soldiers at El-Bireh did 'to celebrate the twelfth anniversary of the 1967 June war'.

Before dawn several hundred Israeli troops surrounded a three-storey stone house in the centre of El-Bireh. By sunrise the spacious ground floor flat

was no longer fit for human habitation. The soldiers had sealed up the windows with concrete blocks, welded doors into place and ripped up the floors. The moveable possessions of the al-Khayyat family were thrown into the garden.

At present the Israelis have

shut down Bir Zeit, the Palestinian university on the West Bank, as well as several schools.

Refugee camps are also periodically subjected to curfew. The people must stay inside their cramped and squalid quarters for twenty two out of

twenty four hours. In the two hours that remain they are permitted only to receive flour distributed by UNRWA. Nothing else — including milk and fresh food — is allowed into the camp.

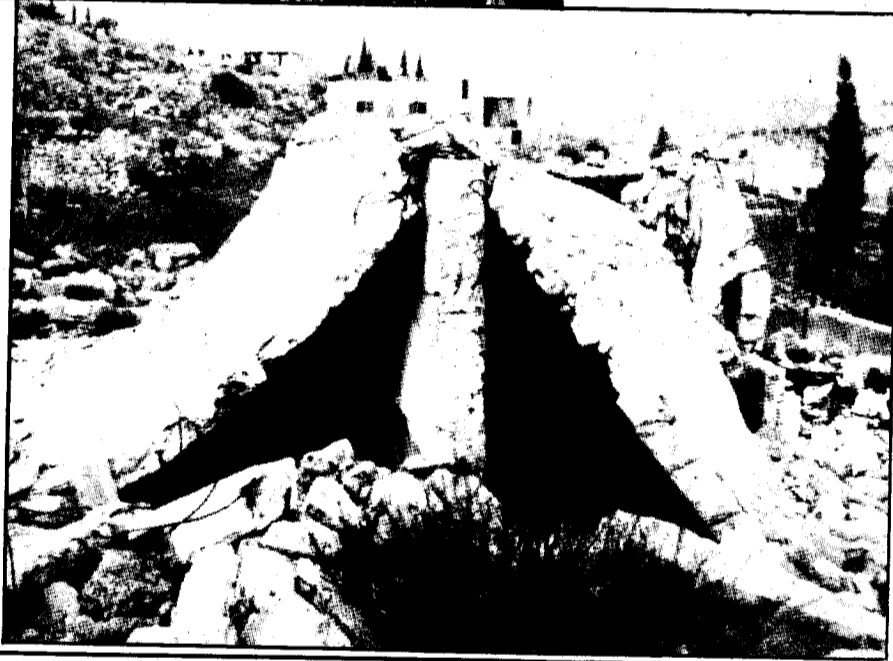
This is the reality of Israeli military occupation, the daily life that goes on while the representatives of Egypt and Israel meet at Herzliya to discuss the future of the Palestinians.

Israeli officials claim that these military measures are necessary to keep order, but they are incapable of stemming the fierce national awareness of the West Bank Palestinians and their support for the PLO.

As Rima added after telling her story: 'When they came to blow up the house they told the mayor they were teaching the village a lesson. But we did not learn anything, we are still revolutionaries.'



Amina (left) holds up a picture of her sons, arrested by the Israelis. Below: an Arab house destroyed by the Israeli army to keep order.



## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to Events, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD.

**SATURDAY 14 JULY.** Anti-Nazi League conference, at Central London Poly. Details and credentials for delegates from local ANLs: ANL, PO Box 151, London WC2.

**SUNDAY 15 JULY.** 'Who killed Blair Peach?' 7.30 at the Royal Court Theatre, Sloane Sq, SW1. Tickets £2 from the Blair Peach Memorial Fund, c/o Phoenix School, Bow Rd, London E3.

**SATURDAY 21 JULY.** Picket of Harmondsworth Detention Centre, Heathrow: "Smash all immigration controls". 2pm. Organised by the Revolutionary Communist Tendency, supported by black and anti-racist organisations.

**SATURDAY 21 JULY:** Haringey labour movement Anti-Racist and Anti-Fascist Campaign. Assemble 1.30pm Manor House (Finsbury Park), march to Duckett's Common for festival. Speakers: Ted Knight, Reg Race MP.

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## Save the socialists in Khomeiny's jails

THERE ARE now sixteen members of the Socialist Workers' Party of Iran (a sister party of the British IMG) in Ahwaz jail. Their lives are in danger.

Seven of them were arrested by Khomeiny's Islamic Committee as they tried to collect signatures for the other nine who had been arrested earlier. All are faced with ridiculous charges, but they will not be allowed to defend themselves or to see lawyers.

Facing possible death sentences with them are three leaders of an oil workers' committee and members of the metal workers' union as well as members of the Fedayeen and Mujahedeen Khalq guerrilla organisations.

These arrests are part of the mounting attack by the government and the Islamic committees against the left and workers' organisations. Prime Minister Bazargan, for instance, has attacked the Fedayeen as "having betrayed the government" and accused them of co-operating with foreign governments to stir up the national minorities.

While the left is being imprisoned, attacked and isolated ideologically, the government is trying to strengthen the conservative forces within the military and the state machine. In a television speech, Bazargan

and the police accused of offences against revolutionary militants. In future "any complaint not supported by the necessary documents will incur a sentence of up to 2 years in jail".

Send messages of protest



Iranian Arabs demonstrate to demand release of political prisoners in Khuzestan.

threatened to resign, with his cabinet, if there were any systematic purge of the armed forces or civil service. He said he wanted to work with experienced people. Mr Yazdi, the foreign minister, revealed arms deals were underway with the US.

At the same time, Khomeiny announced an amnesty for members of the military

demanding the release of the jailed militants to the Iranian embassy: 16 Prince's Gate, London SW7.

JAMES DAVIES

Release the SWP militants! Solidarity with the workers of Iran! Picket Iranair, 73 Piccadilly, 2pm Saturday July 14th.

# Defend women's right to choose

by MANDY WILLIAMS

JOHN CORRIE's Private Member's Bill, due for its second reading on Friday 13th, has a better chance than either the Benyon or the White bills of reaching the statute books to legislate enormous restrictions on women's rights to abortion under the 1967 Act — unless women and the left can defeat it by collective action.

The *Guardian* of 9th July states that the size of the Tory majority, and the length of the present parliamentary session (18 months) 'make success for Mr. Corrie virtually certain in the long run'.

The four main proposals of the Bill are:

■ The upper time limit for abortion to be reduced from 28 weeks to 20 weeks.

■ The 1967 Act's clause of 'risk' of physical or mental damage to the mother to become 'grave risk'.

■ The 'conscience' clause to be strengthened so that doctors or nurses refusing to perform abortions no longer have to provide proof of longstanding moral scruples.

■ The doctors' recommending abortion to be of at least 5 years' standing. (At present there is no such condition for this — or any other — operation.)

Further restrictions are expected to be introduced in the committee stage, especially if the Bill's supporters feel confident of getting it all through. These are likely to be:

□ That the two doctors who recommend an abortion must be unconnected. (If a woman's own doctor happens to be recently qualified, she would have to go and find two other doctors: more delay, more anxiety.)

□ That the father has a legal right to veto the abortion. (Which would mean, among other things, that he would have to be told about it.)

□ That the police should be empowered to enter and search facilities where abortions are performed, and have access to patients' files.

□ That there should be legal anonymity and immunity for anyone denouncing abortion clinic staff or patients. (An amazing clause which could give free rein to witch-hunts and persecution of clinics along the lines of the notorious *Babies for Burning* slanders.)

□ That advisory and referral agencies should not be connected with organisations which perform the operation.

This combination of restrictions would, as they are designed to, cut down the number of abortions quite drastically, leaving thousands of women (and many very young girls) to a terrible choice between a backstreet abortion or an unwanted

baby.

The National Abortion Campaign commented: 'The Bill will certainly not end late abortions — all it will do is drive them into the backstreets. If John Corrie really wants to end late abortions, he should advocate daycare for early abortions. Then if the NHS could advertise these facilities it could almost eliminate late abortions'. (Though not without a change in the law to provide for abortion on request. Many women — especially in areas of the country where the anti-abortion SPUC are well organised — get refused abortions.)

Only 1% of abortions since 1972 have been carried out at over 20 weeks, usually for women in the most desperate circumstances. The medical profession anyway plays safe and avoids performing abortions within four weeks of the limit, so the *real* deadline under Corrie's bill would be around 16 weeks — which is the very earliest time at which a number of major deformities are detectable.

For the very young, the ignorant or the fearful, all of whom could take longer to know they were pregnant and request an abortion, the time to get through all of Corrie's other hurdles would be cut down to a week or two, if that.

In opposition to the grim, wearying procedure Corrie and his backers would like women to face, NAC would like to see daycare facilities which are kept separate from other NHS departments and staffed only by sympathetic personnel — which would eliminate the need for a conscience clause altogether.

NAC is also calling on the TUC to implement the resolution passed at the 1978 conference pledging opposition to any move to amend the 1967 Act restrictively, and to call a TUC protest demonstration before the final vote (expected in the early autumn).

Already NAC groups are being set up and NAC aims to build on the regenerated interest with work in local NAC groups, street meetings and theatre, and petitions, through the summer.

NAC desperately needs money for its campaign — individuals and organisations can affiliate, and donations are welcome.

Contact NAC at 374 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8BB. 01-278-0153.

Protest against Corrie's Bill  
Friday 13th July  
Meeting 3pm Central Hall,  
Westminster. Rally 6.30pm,  
Caxton Hall  
Organised by the National  
Abortion Campaign  
01-278-0153

A RECENTLY leaked report by the Commission for Racial Equality gives an account of the events in Southall on April 23rd, when Blair Peach was killed, which shows up what a lying document the police's own account is.

The police's account, presented to Parliament by the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, is "an absolute whitewash" according to Vishnu Sharma, president of the Indian Workers' Association (Southall).

The police report, which hardly mentions Blair Peach, spends most of its time lamenting the supposed difficulties of the police. It is their injuries and the injuries of "an elderly National Front supporter (who had been) attacked by a group of young Asians" that fill the pages of this wretched document.

On the attack on the People Unite community centre in Park View Road, the police report says: "Some demonstrators went into Park View Road, adjoining High Street...The crowd in Park View Road started stoning the police from the garden of No. 6. As police tried to move this crowd they were attacked by a shower of missiles from the upstairs windows of the house. It was decided to enter and secure these premises."

"This proved to be very difficult and the police officers came under heavy attack from missiles thrown from the top floor. The stairs were barricaded and paint and other articles were thrown at the police as they negotiated the stairs."

"Eventually the occupants of the top floor were persuaded to surrender and they were arrested. Over 70 people were arrested either in or outside the house. Seven motor vehicles were damaged and twelve police officers were injured."

The CRE report doesn't deny that missiles were thrown at the police, but its account is quite different. "(Demonstrators were) vigorously pursued by mounted policemen and members of

## WHO KILLED BLAIR PEACH?



### NO COVER UP!

Anti Nazi League

### DISBAND THE SPG!

the SPG, as well as other policemen, and fiercely attacked. Clearly they defended themselves as best they could but to no avail."

After some missiles were thrown at the police, the report goes on, "a small contingent of police regrouped outside, some armed with riot shields, charged the front door of No. 6 and broke it down. They then stood aside and a number of other police officers with batons

drawn charged into the house.

"The people on the first floor were arrested. As regards the fleeing demonstrators on the second floor, these were arrested and one of these reports that although he was not offering any resistance, as he was led downstairs a police officer coming up kicked him in the groin."

"One of those so beaten, Clarence Baker, co-manager

of the reggae group Misty... was detained in intensive care for ten days suffering from sub-dural haematoma (a blood clot on the brain)."

Coming to the incidents surrounding the murder of Blair Peach, the police report only has this to say: "At approximately 8pm, it was necessary to deal with a large group of youths near Alexandra Avenue. The throwing of missiles increased and it was necessary for police to

## Eyewitnesses speak out

As the police rushed past, one of them hit him on the head with the stick. I was in my garden and I saw this quite clearly, and I saw the policeman who did it.

When they all rushed past, he was left sitting against the wall. He tried to get up; but he was shivering and looked very strange. He couldn't stand. Then the police came back and told him like this: 'Move! Come on — move!'

They were very rough with him and I was shocked because it was clear he was seriously hurt...

*Parminder Atwal, who picked up Blair Peach outside his house as he lay dying.*

The police were beating that man like anything. I saw two of them hit him. He wasn't doing anything, but they hit him as they went past. It was too much.

*Yaqoob Bhatti, another local resident.*

We were on our way home but a number of policemen forced us into a side street. Blair was with us and he was hit twice on the head with truncheons and left unconscious...

*Martin Gerald, a teacher who was with Blair Peach in Southall.*

Beechcroft Avenue and Orchard Avenue having sustained an injury to his head. An ambulance was summoned by telephone from 71 Orchard Avenue and at 8.12pm Mr Peach was conveyed to Ealing Hospital where he later died."

The CRE report carries this rather different eyewitness account by Mr Jaqoobmasih Bati: "Two van loads of police came down the road after some demonstrators."

"The police jumped out and started beating people with their shields and truncheons. They beat this man (Blair Peach) to the ground and he crawled across the road and collapsed beside a garden wall."

"After a few minutes when the crowd had dispersed, the policemen came over and forced him to move. He was sitting against the wall with his arms above his head."

There is no mention in the police report of Professor Keith Mant's findings that Blair had been hit by a 'lead weighted rubber 'cosh' or some like weapon'. There are no eyewitness reports of what happened on either the Sunday or the Monday demonstrations — not of the killing of Blair Peach or of any other incident, although plenty were available.

There is no mention of the £3,500 worth of musical equipment destroyed by police at the Peoples Unite centre; there is no mention of the way 50-100 people seeking refuge in the Holy Trinity Churchyard "were rounded up and beaten by mounted policemen", as the CRE report puts it.

In fact, the terms of reference of the police report were carefully drawn up so as to limit it to a copper's tale of woe.

Support for a public enquiry is growing. MPs, the TUC general council and many community groups are supporting the call. We must stop the police getting away with murder.

## ANL must end reliance on the State

by JAMES RYAN

THE General Election in May brought to a close the first phase in the life of the Anti Nazi League. Launched in November 1977 by agreement between the Socialist Workers Party, several Labour MPs and other prominent sponsors, it limited the horizon of its activity to spreading propaganda against the National Front in the run-up to the election.

### Chance

Next Saturday, 14th July, sees the long-awaited conference at which activists have been promised the

chance to decide policy and draw a balance-sheet of ANL activity so far.

A full accounting is sorely needed. The Declaration to be presented by the Steering Committee is predictably complacent about its record.

The job of indicting Holborrow, Hain, Roberts and company for their cynical abandonment of the Bangladeshis of Brick Lane to a National Front march on the day of Carnival Two (Sept. 24th) faces the conference delegates. And a new course must be mapped out which rejects all reliance on the state to throw back the Nazis and defend the rights of black people.

The Steering Committee

rightly calls for a campaign around the murder of Blair Peach and for the disbanding of the SPG. But was it not ANL National Secretary Paul Holborrow who hailed the use of the Public Order Act in Ilford and Winchester as 'victories' for the anti-fascist movement, and Treasurer Ernie Roberts who boasted of deals with the police to 'protect' Brick Lane?

### Crucial

If policy decisions taken at Saturday's conference — assuming open debate is allowed to take place — are to have any meaning, they must be supported by the crucial step of democratis-

ing the structure of the ANL itself, allowing activists to vote into leadership those who genuinely represent the views of the majority and to throw out those who sell out the struggle.

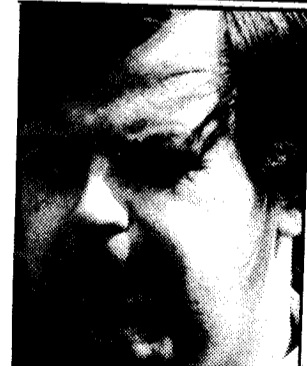
Saturday's conference may decide whether the ANL will have a useful role to play in the fight alongside the black communities against state repression, against the Tories' racist offensive and against the racist ideas endemic in the white working class itself — or whether it will continue to disintegrate as it is currently doing, leaving a legacy of disillusionment among white anti-fascists and bitter mistrust among the black communities.

## NF SUSPENDS WEBSTER

NATIONAL FRONT Activities Organiser Martin Webster has been suspended from the fascist movement — or so the National Front leadership says. Webster denies it.

This clash follows a long fight inside the NF. Webster wants an even more openly thuggish movement based on racist white workers. NF chairman John Tyndall wants a smoother, more middle class orientation.

Poor election results and the growing extent to which the Hitlerite British Movement has outflanked the NF have stoked up the conflict. The successful mobilisation to drive the fascists off the streets in Leicester on April 21st must also have had an effect.



But over-optimism about the National Front collapsing would be wrong. The NF's last split, in 1975, was followed by a long summer of racist assaults and murders in 1976.

## The Times: the fruits of just sitting and waiting

TALKS are again underway between the unions and Times Newspapers. Exactly what has been conceded on each side is difficult to make out, for the important negotiations are being kept within a tight circle of top union leaders and Times bosses.

It appears that the Times bosses have given way on their demand for immediate introduction of computer typesetting on their terms. But on the question of manning levels they have the upper hand. Many workers — over half the NATSOPA

clerical workers, for example, have got other permanent jobs. The Times bosses insist that they will not necessarily be replaced.

The Times is also insisting on 'guarantees of continuous production' (no-strike clauses) and new disputes procedures.

The issue of the 'new technology' (computer typesetting) is to be left for discussions scheduled to reach an agreement within 12 months.

The climbdown by the Times bosses is significant, for anything less than a

smashing victory is something of a defeat for them after closing their papers down for seven months. It came only a week after the NGA had announced that it reckoned the Times was finished and it was advising its members to get new jobs. The NGA national executive accepted a Times management document as a basis for negotiation on 29th June, and the Times Newspapers NGA chapels accepted it as such on 8th July.

Some 750 workers — in the NUJ, AUEW and EETPU —

have already accepted agreements. SOGAT workers are meeting this week to consider a deal agreed by their union leadership. The major union still to settle, apart from the NGA, is NATSOPA.

The Times bosses' limited climbdown — if it is genuine — has been achieved by the unions doing nothing more than sitting and waiting. The only militant action has been taken by pickets in Germany who stopped a scab edition of the Times being printed. For their major setback — the fact that manning levels

have been seriously cut just by workers going off to get other jobs — and for the fact that agreement on the terms reported in the press will probably just mean the Times bosses get what they want slower rather than quicker, the unions have none but themselves to blame.

It shows that the unions have — and indeed still have — the power to stop the Fleet Street bosses' job-slashing, speed-up, union-bashing campaign completely... if only they will mobilise it.

## Workers' Action's opposition to rate rises is 'long on rhetoric, skimpy on facts', says KEITH VENESS

Dear Comrades,

I must reply to the articles carried in Workers Action No. 145 on the highly successful SCLV Local Government Conference on 16th June. For the first time in living memory, the revolutionary left is facing up to problems posed by local government in Britain for representatives of the Labour movement and the excellent turnout and high level of debate is indicative of this turn to serious politics.

Such a conference, called by openly revolutionary groups and individuals, would have been unthinkable a few years ago.

Having paraphrased my remarks by this however, I feel that certain key lessons have still to be learned by Workers Action supporters. The reports of both comrades O'Mahony and Davies are long on rhetoric but rather skimpy on detail. No mention is made of the highly successful series of workshops at the conference, which used up nearly half the time of the agenda, and at which the practical tasks that confront socialists were hammered out.

Much worse though, and central to this polemic, was the tone and line adopted by the question of the large rate rises carried out this year. To quote from the article of Davies "...socialists have to oppose even those rate rises claiming to be interim measures". What does this mean in practice?

The actual scenario enacted in most London Boroughs this year is one where Labour authorities have worked out the level of rate rise necessary to finance simply a continuation of services. This has resulted in rises in rates from 15% to 50%.

The right wing of the Labour Party, in its frenzy to be respectable and responsible, has baulked at this and urged cuts to services to reduce the rates by usually totally insignificant amounts. Behind these right-wingers stands the CUT group, ostensibly a group of owner-occupiers and small businessmen but actually financed by groups like the Freedom Association (ex-NAFF of Grunwick fame).

The petty-bourgeois frenzy of these groups, afraid of their margins of profits and seeking to pass this crisis on to the working class, succeeded in stampeding the right wing of the Labour Party in Boroughs like Islington into cutting rates from 39% to 32%. This amounts to something like 10 pence per week for the average worker in Islington. In return, the housing programme has been slashed by £10 million (the £230,000 saved loses you £10 million in government subsidies!) and some 15 voluntary group workers will lose their jobs.

In addition, under-5s provision has to be cut and grants to tenants and ethnic groups withdrawn. Yet comrade Davies seriously asks that socialists on Islington council should have voted not to raise rates by the 39% necessary to safeguard jobs and services. Thankfully, no one on the left listened to this worthless advice, and we can safely brand the councillors who voted not to raise the rates for the class traitors that they are.

The immediate task now is to remove those people and replace them by people

# Rate rises: in the workers' interest?

committed to defending the gains of the working class, which include municipal housing and social services. How could comrade Davies argue for that if he had voted with them against the 39% increase?

More generally, and totally absent in comrade O'Mahony's analysis, what are rates other than a somewhat antiquated form of direct tax? Whilst not agreeing that the present rating system is either fair or sufficient, it is certainly better than the supposedly revolutionary alternative posed by O'Mahony, viz. Councils not collecting rates.

Who would this hurt? Central Government? Hardly — over 63% of the average Council's budget comes from there, and in the case of capital projects the figure is

may be fine for the slum landlord, the property speculator and the industrial owner, but it would do little for the average tenant or worker.

Parallel to this however, services would be paid and repairs not carried out. A good many Tories may even like this idea — but it ill behoves socialists to put this forward as a strategy.

Like income tax and levies, rates are a redistributive system that are a small gain for the working class. They are infinitely preferable to VAT, purchase tax and the general "pay-as-you-go" methods of the Tories.

We exposed Thatcher's tax cuts as a fraud and we should expose the hypocrisy of rate cuts as a similar fraud. For Workers Action

direct labour to cut out the racket of private contracting. A fight for more government money, backed if necessary by industrial action. Local negotiations and pay settlements for trades unionists. No cuts, no sackings, no redundancies. Expansion of services and creation of more socially useful jobs. The ending of all perks, junkets, and civic opulence.

These are the sort of policies to confront the Tories with. The wrath of Whitehall will descend soon enough, even for comrade O'Mahony, on any Labour Council attempting to implement these sort of policies. Conversely, they will unite the trades unions, Labour parties and tenants groups for an all-out struggle.

To add one's voice to the middle-class whines about

## It is Veness's view of a choice between rate rises and cuts that is unrealistic, replies COLIN FOSTER

KEITH VENESS'S reference to Islington's cut in the rate rise from 39% to 32% is a red herring.

The debate is not about 10p a week one way or another on domestic rates. It is about rate rises which were around 50% this year (£1.60 or so on average), and will be up to 100% next year if councils try to offset the Tory cuts by rate rises.

Keith Veness's perspective of expanded direct labour departments, council workers' pay rises, and expanded social services, all apparently paid for on the rates, is utopian. Hackney Council, for example, would have needed a 233% rate rise, even before the latest Tory cuts, to carry out its manifesto promises.

Keith Veness seems to assume that keeping the rates down means cutting expenditure, and conversely that rate rises can stop the cuts. He is wrong both times. Our argument is for a struggle to get more central government money and to break the interest-charges stranglehold on council services — to get more resources for public services at the expense of the capitalist class.

That struggle is the only realistic answer. The alternative is not rate rises of 10p a week or so, but big rate rises and cuts!

We did not argue for 'councils not collecting rates'. But rates are not the 'gain for the working class' that Keith Veness makes them out to be.

Rate payments divide up as follows:

Domestic.....	39%
Commercial/industrial	49%
Others.....	11%

For domestic ratepayers, rates are about 2½% of disposable income on average (3 to 4% in London). For industry, rates come to 2 or 3% of the value of output (CBI estimates) or between 1% and 5% of costs (official estimates). Industrial and commercial ratepayers get allowances for their rates against corporation tax and income tax, saving them about a quarter of what they pay in rates. Thus rates are often a heavier burden on income for domestic ratepayers than for businesses.

On top of that, big businesses can pass on their rates in increased prices.

The people hit hardest by rates are small shopkeepers, who pay higher rates in proportion to total costs than big businesses do, yet often cannot make it up by raising prices. Socialists are not the champions of small shopkeepers. But it is stupid and dangerous to try to make these small shopkeepers pay the costs of the capitalist crisis. We will only have ourselves to blame when right-wing groups gain influence.

As among domestic ratepayers, rates tend to be a regressive form of tax, since the value of their housing (on which rates are based) is generally a bigger proportion of income for the worse-off than for the better-off. The official Layfield Committee in 1976 reckoned that the supplementary benefit and rate rebate systems had ironed out that regressiveness. But other estimates, including the Labour Party submission to the Layfield Committee, disputed this. As with other means-tested benefits, rate rebates are often not claimed.

For these reasons the Labour Party, in 'Labour's Programme 1976, proposed that rates be at least partially replaced by a local income tax.

The worst feature of the rates system is the fact that the poorest boroughs, with greatest social need, are also the ones with the lowest rateable values. A penny rate in the City of Westminster yields £2,880,000, in Kensington and Chelsea £660,000, and in Hackney £340,000. This inequality is supposed to be compensated for in the calculation of central government grants, but it never is fully. So the poor are taxed to provide services for the poor.

The notion that rates are a redistributive system, a 'gain for the working class', also falls down when we look at how the income from rates is spent. About 20% of councils' revenue — or 33% or more for London boroughs — goes in debt charges. Another sizeable drain on the rates is the police force (London boroughs pay a set quota towards the upkeep of Sir David McNeer and the Metropolitan Police).

(In the same way, to see income tax as a gain for the working class, as Keith Veness does, is completely to forget the class nature of the state.)

A Labour council which really does set out to be part of the workers' struggle against capitalism may have no alternative in some situations but to raise rates. We would not deny that is preferable to cutting services or raising rents. But councils which don't fight, don't mobilise — and that is the reality we face — are at best playing 'soft cop' to the 'hard cop'.

The 'hard cop' says: social spending will be cut, like it or not. The 'soft cop' disarms resistance by telling local workers that the council is doing the best possible in the circumstances, that rate rises really benefit the working class, and that workers should be grateful to the council for the decaying social services that remain.

In this situation, what is the duty of militant socialists? To echo the councils' cries that they have no choice? Or to challenge the choices Labour councils get themselves into by always playing it by the rules, and begin to rally forces for a fight to get more resources at the expense of the banks, the finance houses, arms spending, and the bosses?

Most workers, if faced with a direct cut by a Tory government of £1.50 or so off their weekly wage, would react angrily. But Keith Veness tells them not to react — if that £1.50 cut is a rate increase imposed by a Labour council passing on the Tory measures, a Tory cut at second hand.

Keith Veness's argument, despite its insistence on 'the facts', is completely unrealistic, because it undermines the fightback which is now the only way of defending jobs and services.



1921: Poplar councillors, fighting against gross inequalities of the rating system, march to the High Court

nearer 98%. The Government would simply pay its part of the RSG direct and let the local authority rot.

The business sector? To ask this even is absurd. A moratorium on rates collection is every capitalist's dream. On average, over 60% of rates paid come from industry and in Boroughs like Camden it is nearer 75%. Lambeth raises 10% of all its rates from one building — the Shell-Mex building!

The working people of a Borough therefore pay 40% of 37%, or roughly 15%, of the Council's bills — and this includes landlords who would be only too happy to collect rates from their tenants and then not pass them on. A refusal to collect rates

supporters to talk emotively of the "pauperisation of the working class" by large rate rises is scandalous. The issue to confront central government on is not rate increases. What it is I will come onto now:

The arguments on council rents are the opposite. The whole burden for rent rises falls on tenants — and much of this money is simply wasted on debt charges. There is nothing redistributive about higher rents and big business pays nothing towards housing its workers.

Total opposition to all rent rises is vital, regardless of any Government plans in this direction. Total opposition to any sales of municipal housing. Expansion of

the rates and Council expenditure is to cross the class-line. Workers Action supporters in unions like the CPSA rightly have little time for reactionaries who talk of cutting the number of civil servants. This is simply Tory gobbledeygook for sacking people.

Even if under socialism we would happily dispense with much of the bureaucracy of both central and local government, we are not crazy enough to argue this under a profit-motive system where tax-cuts and rate-cuts simply line the pockets of the rich. Until WA absorbs this simple fact, I fear it has little to contribute to the massive fight we face in local government in the next few years.

## Nicaragua's dictator admits defeat as US steps in

by NIK BARSTOW

"I'M LIKE a tired donkey fighting a tiger. Even if I win militarily I have no future."

Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza announced in an interview with the Washington Post on July 7th that he was ready to quit. The announcement had been expected for some time.

Already some leading members of the Somoza family, including his son Anastasio II and half-brother José, have left the country. Members of the Congress are being held at gunpoint in the Intercontinental Hotel in Managua to stop them joining the rush.

The straw that finally broke the donkey's back, however, wasn't the disarray among government supporters or the continuing civil war, but US demands for Somoza to step down. Somoza himself has said that the actual date of his departure is for the USA to decide!

The British bosses' paper *The Economist* summed up the USA's reasoning: 'The Americans' strongest motive in getting General Somoza out is the fear that the longer the war goes on, the more radical the opposition will become'.

The USA has made a number of attempts in the last few weeks to reach a solution which will protect their interests when Somoza goes. Their first efforts were to persuade the Sandinista guerrilla army to join a 'broad spectrum coalition junta' including Somoza's Liberal Party. After that was rejected, the next move was to try to persuade the Sandinistas to broaden still further the membership of their proposed Provisional Government, which already includes a number of prominent bourgeois figures, to include less 'radical' elements. This approach was also turned down.

US Ambassador Pezullo then returned to Nicaragua on July 5th and made a final offer to Somoza: 'Resign, or we'll support a coup against you from inside the National Guard'. Two days later Somoza said he would go.

The USA has been trying to get closer links with Sandinista leaders — and talks have taken place in Costa Rica. The

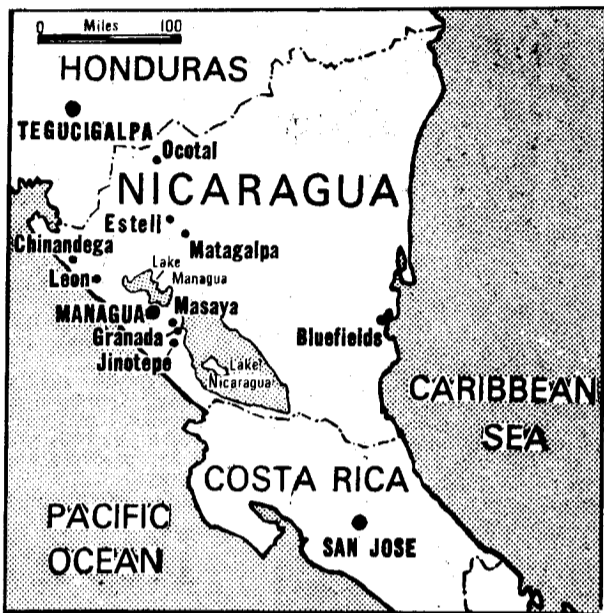
Sandinistas are expected to make concessions to US demands.

Somoza's imminent departure does not mean that the war is over. He has refused to declare a ceasefire unless a government 'not dominated by Marxists' is formed. His National Guard has recently embarked on its first major action to re-take a town held by the Sandinistas, Masaya.

The opposition to the Somoza regime comes from all sections of society. But the National Guard has been well armed and well enough paid to hold the military situation at a stalemate since the Sandinist-

The National Guard garrison in Leon, Nicaragua's second city, has been forced to flee, however, after being encircled for two weeks. The city is now controlled by a joint command of the Sandinistas and the Communist Party-dominated 'United Peoples Movement' (MPU), which has centralised all the city's food supplies, is running three major foodstuff factories, and has imposed effective rationing. Most of the northern half of Nicaragua — where Leon is situated — is under the Sandinistas' control.

In the south of the country, the National Guard has prevented a 1000-strong Sandinist-



Sandinista guerrillas hold Leon and most of the north, but the National Guard still control Managua and are trying to recapture Masaya.

as launched their 'final offensive' in June. Military supplies are still reaching the National Guard via Portugal.

The Sandinistas were forced to abandon their positions in the slums to the east of the capital, Managua, at the start of July after heavy bombardments by National Guard planes. A column of 600 Sandinista soldiers withdrew to nearby Masaya and took control. Masaya is now besieged by the National Guard, who have cut off its water supply and bombed it with incendiaries and napalm.

ista column backed by armoured cars from reaching the small town of Rivas, where the Sandinistas had planned to install a provisional government. By 4th July the guerrillas claimed to have captured two positions in Rivas, and on the 6th there were reports of an uprising in the town itself.

As the National Guard continue their attacks with mortars, incendiaries and napalm on Sandinista-held towns, the USA is hopeful that the Sandinistas will come to terms more favourable to American imperialism.

## SOUTH AFRICA: REVOLUTION ON THE AGENDA?

by BOB FINE

IF, AS LENIN argued, disarrays, splits and paralysis within the ruling class are one condition of a pre-revolutionary situation then in this respect at least South Africa is approaching the verge, for the first time since the mass resistance of the late 1950s.

The immediate symptoms are to be found in the series of defeats Botha and his ruling National Party are suffering at the hands of the far right.

In the recent elections in Randfontein, in the seat that used to be held by disgraced former Information Minister Connie Mulder, considerable gains were made by the Herstigte Nasionale Partij (HNP), the right wing opposition, which maintains that blacks are biologically inferior, and is out to deny them whatever limited rights they possess under apartheid.

The HNP will have none of the National Party's mystique of "separate but equal development". Another ultra-right wing opposition to the Government is also growing: the Action Front, a group closely associated with Mulder.

Botha has been forced to include a leading figure of the right wing of the National Party, Dr Andreas Treurnicht, in his cabinet.

Then, Laurence Muller, Botha's candidate for state president (to replace Vorster, who fell in the aftermath of Muldergate) was defeated by right winger Viljoen.

In another defeat, the government's 'press-gag bill' had to be withdrawn by Botha in the face of opposition from the right. They were determined to avenge the fall of their heroes, Vorster,

Mulder, and van der Bergh (head of the secret police BOSS) with the blood of Botha and his 'moderate' Minister of Finance, Owen Horewood.

Another twist to the Muldergate scandal came out at the end of June: one of the investors in the Department of Information's front paper, the *Citizen*, was a CIA agent, and there are other links between the CIA and Muldergate.

Beyond the infighting of the competing gangs, the South African ruling class is incapable of finding a way out of the crisis that has been growing since 1975.

The Wiehahn Commission on Labour attempted to find a way out for South African capital faced with an increasingly organised black working class. It proposed to recognise black trade unions for the first time and to overcome the shortage of skilled labour by making some inroads into the job colour bar.

The strategy of black union recognition — hedged around with strings, exceptions, state interference and all sorts of disciplinary penalties — could have produced some confusions in the recently re-formed black unions. Some four to five months ago the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU) was set up, to include the main black unions outside mining, various coloured unions outside TUCSA joining in. It has become the main black union centre, outstripping SACTU. But it has yet to work out a clear strategy, and an adroit government tactic of encouraging collaborationist black trade unionism might have served the ruling class well in containing FOSATU.

But before the ink was dry

on the Wiehahn document the political obstacles to attempts to incorporate black unions became evident. 'Treachery' was on the lips of every right winger including of course the white 'Confederation of Labour'.

Wiehahn's recommendations have been pruned to nothing. Registration of unions is now to exclude migrant and township workers (the vast majority of black workers); and job reservation for whites has, if anything, been tightened.

The restricted democracy within white society makes it very difficult for the government to move towards an incorporation of black unions. Such a strategy is now bound to fail. Any black trade union registering under the existing conditions is fairly sure to lose any mass support. The recent experience of the black Engineering and Allied Workers' Union, in which the members established an alternative organisation when their officials became extremely bureaucratic, shows the high level of mobilisation among black workers.

Similarly the strategy of simply intensifying repression, advocated by the right, shows little recognition of the fighting mood of black workers and of the international repercussions. In another concession to the right, however, the government has shelved the main recommendations of the Riekert report on liberalising the pass laws, under which an average of 1000 blacks are prosecuted every day for being in 'white' areas.

It is becoming clearer that as the crisis in South Africa deepens in the face of the black workers' growing organisation, the ruling class is just not capable of finding its feet.

# Air lift the boat people now!

by CHEUNG SIU MING

SINCE the fall of Saigon in 1975, there has been a steady flow of refugees from Vietnam. At first it was mainly the very rich and those directly connected with the previous regime. The really massive flow started last year.

In March 1978, the Vietnamese authorities finally clamped down on the 30,000 private businesses in Saigon's twin city, Cholon. In July '78, refugees started arriving in north east Malaysia at the rate of 3-4,000 a month. When the treaty of friendship was signed with the Soviet Union in November 1978, the figures jumped that month to 20,000.

After a brief lull, the flow increased again rapidly after China's invasion of Vietnam in February 1979. Hong Kong started to get refugees from North Vietnam in large numbers.

Apart from Malaysia,

refugees have gone to the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand. Thailand has the additional problem of Cambodian refugees. Singapore, Taiwan and Japan had all taken a hard line of refusing admittance well before the present flow started.

By June, there were 31,000 refugees in Indonesia (20,000 had arrived in the previous six weeks); 76,000 in Malaysia (29,000 arriving in May alone); probably twice that number in Thailand. China claims to have accepted 250,000 so far, and 10,000 more each month.

It is estimated that there are still 7-800,000 ethnic Chinese in Vietnam and more in Laos and Cambodia.

A new factor in the past three months is an increased proportion of Vietnamese in what has so far been a predominantly ethnic Chinese exodus.

Hong Kong has also been affected by illegal emigration from China over the past two years. The previous wave from China was 100,000 in six weeks in 1962, when the colony's population was 3.1 million. The popu-

lation now is 6 million, and in May '79 alone an estimated 48,000 arrived from China of whom 14,000 were caught and sent back.

For an area no larger than the Isle of Wight, the Vietnamese refugees have been a huge extra burden: 6,000 in 1978, 26,000 by May '79, 45,000 by June and 57,000 by July.

Just 982 have been accepted into the UK.

Vietnam seems to be actively encouraging the exodus. Local officials negotiate contracts with boat organisers, levying a tax for each passenger. Local cadres take a slice by adding more passengers at the last minute and pocketing the tax. Vietnam's policy seems logical: 'undesirable misfits' and reactionaries are got rid of; valuable gold is obtained; and the problem is pushed onto other countries.

The desperately poor countries of south east Asia are now strained to the limit. The response of the rich West has been racist. Refugees have been screened, and only those with money, professional skills

and knowledge of western languages have been allowed to trickle in. The UN refugee agency is fast running out of funds.

The United States, whose war machine spent billions in devastating North and South Vietnam, must bear the major responsibility. Having finally been driven out of Vietnam, they have systematically blocked aid to it from other countries. The little aid there was has dried up now.

The regime in Vietnam has had an extremely difficult task in reconstructing the war-shattered economy and re-establishing agriculture. It has been hit by bad weather and the Chinese invasion.

Its bureaucratic practices have failed to galvanise workers and peasants into reconstruction and to re-educate the middle class which lived off the plentiful crumbs from the tables of the US army in Vietnam. It now seeks to get rid of those who cannot stand the harshness of life or who fear racial pogroms in the event of another Chinese-Vietnam



Waiting in a Hong Kong warehouse, one of the 57,000 refugees to arrive in June. The British government has let 982 into Britain and said 'enough'.

war, by allowing them to drown themselves in non-seaworthy junks (one in four of the refugees die at sea) and collecting gold for it.

The terrible responsibility of the Vietnamese bureaucracy cannot protect the USA, and the powers which supported its war of devastation, from blame: it was that

devastation which created the conditions for the bureaucracy to become harsher.

Socialists must demand: ■ Immediately open the doors of the rich western powers to the 'boat people'. Organise an air lift to save their lives.

■ Massive reparations to Vietnam.

# Labour Party Conference

## Callaghan prepares for battle: Left must organise

**JOHN O'MAHONY looks at the clashes coming up in the Labour Party.**

THIS YEAR'S Labour Party conference will be a major event for the working class movement, and probably the most important Labour Party conference for more than a decade.

Former Prime Minister James Callaghan has said that if proposals to be discussed by the conference for election of the Leader of the Labour Party by the whole Party (and not, as now, by the Parliamentary Labour Party) are carried, it will split the Labour Party in two.

Battle has been joined between the right wing leadership round Callaghan and the Tribune-Bennite majority of the National Executive Committee (NEC), because the NEC decided to waive the three year rule and put before this year's conference the decision on how the Labour Party Leader should be elected. The conference will also re-discuss mandatory re-selection of MPs. (Last year the

re-selection proposal was lost in a confused and badly chaired (by Joan Lester) session, during which the AUEW vote was, by a procedural 'mistake', cast against it).

The Callaghanites have begun lobbying trade union leaders to get them to use their block vote to purge some of the left and thus to change the composition of the NEC. It is now clear that Callaghan's intention is to crown a lifetime's work for the right wing and for class collaboration by smashing the formal ascendancy of the Tribune and Bennite left wing on the NEC.

The paradox of a 'left' NEC and a viciously right wing Labour government existed throughout the life of the 1974-9 Government because the left was docile, passive, and eager to avoid a fight with the Government. Despite efforts by the press in 1975 and 1976 (for example, the notorious 'Observer' attempt

to witch-hunt the 'Militant' tendency, and the witch-hunt by the 'Sunday Express' against the 'Workers Fight' tendency, both in late 1975) to force the hand of the Labour and trade union leaders, nothing happened.

Now the fall of the Labour Government has made the Bennites more combative and freed the right wing for an attempt to put 'its' house in order.

Last Sunday's 'Observer' quotes Callaghan describing the situation in the Labour Party as 'the most serious crisis for a generation'. He is reported as having won full backing from the Shadow Cabinet for a showdown with the left. One-time leftist Michael Foot is said to be among his supporters.

In office Callaghan, entrenched behind the right wing — indeed, in political terms, Liberal — majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party, could ignore Labour Party conference and NEC decisions by relating directly to the bourgeois state, using its powers and agencies to pursue different and antagonistic policies.

The proposals to make both Party Leader and MPs directly answerable to the Party and trade union rank and file, and put them under its control, are rightly seen as a threat to such a procedure by any future Labour Government.

The proposed changes would make it difficult, if not impossible, for a Labour Government to be a stable bourgeois government capable of ignoring the will of the labour movement indefinitely without tearing the party apart. The proposals are therefore a major challenge to the sort of class collaborationism that has been the politics of the Labour Party throughout its history.

In the general crisis British society faces now, such a change would threaten to deprive the bosses of one of their major political tools for governing Britain, a heavily bureaucratized Labour Party capable of remaining stable when its leaders in Government defy its decision. In 1974, when a tremendous level of industrial class struggle forced the Tory government to an election and out of office, the value to the ruling class of right wing control of the political wing of the labour movement was shown more clearly than for a generation.

The ruling class agents inside the Labour Party will fight tooth and nail to preserve the Labour Party in a condition to play the same sort of role for the ruling class in the future. The signs of serious trade union opposition to the Tory government probably convince them that defeating the Bennite challenge at this year's conference is of fundamental importance for the future of class collaboration in the coming period of struggles against the Tory government.

They are quite right! That's why the left must organise now, to beat back Callaghan's offensive, to insist that the official left leaders like Benn and Heffer do not retreat, to back up the immediate struggles that can be launched against the Tory government, and to go on to fight to win accountability to working-class interests in the Labour Party.

# Will the unions fight the Tories?

**Colin Foster reviews 1979's trade union conferences.**

THE TRANSPORT and General Workers' Union executive put through a resolution at the union's biennial conference, this week, calling for 'maximum resistance' to the Tories.

And on July 3rd the National Union of Mineworkers voted to go for £140 for faceworkers by November, and industrial action if the claim is not met.

The Budget cuts and the Tories' drive for anti-union laws have angered and alarmed the union leaders. But the official calls to action are

still heavily dominated by fear of rank and file militancy developing further than the leaders want. Indeed, one of the union leaders' main objections to the Tory policies is that those policies will create (in the words of TUC chairman Tom Jackson) 'militancy which could be avoided'.

So NUM president Joe Gormley coupled support for the £140 claim with a speech which the *Daily Telegraph* approved, calling on minders not to take on the Tories and not to 'rock the boat' now that the oil crisis was putting the coal industry in a favourable position. Right-wingers in the NUM leadership will use the fact that the claim is so large to argue that it is only a vague target, not seriously binding them.

In the TGWU, the union

leaders are not saying what 'maximum resistance' means ... except that 'it is not minimum resistance'!

The same mixture of loud words and cautious actions is found elsewhere in the trade union movement. Indeed, some union leaders reserve their sharpest attacks for more militant unions that might make the clash with the Tories harsher and the working class fightback more stormy.

At the National Union of Railwaymen's conference (at the end of June) general secretary Sid Weighell said that railworkers would be going in for as big a rise as the miners. But he got the conference to reject a £65 target, with the fake-militant excuse that the Executive should be free to go for as much as it could get.

Weighell, alone among the trade union leaders so far, said he would refuse to talk to the Tories on social and economic policy. (Since he is not on the TUC economic committee, this refusal does not mean much.) The main motive — or at least the thing that Weighell complained about most — was that Energy minister David Howell had snubbed him.

At the same time as he denounced the Tories, Weighell also echoed the sort of attack the Tory press made on the public service workers who struck earlier this year.

The National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) has been the main target of the attacks from Weighell and from Charlie Donnet of the GMWU and Frank Chapple of the EETPU. (Bill Sirs of the steel union also attacked the lorry drivers.)

At the NUPE conference at the end of May, many delegates were angry at their union leaders' refusal to call all-out action during the winter pay campaign; at the way they allowed different sections to be split up; and at the poor final settlement.

But Weighell and the others were angry at the NUPE leaders for the oppos-

T&GWU conf

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But even w lowness of the ant talk is take this year's uni have generally shift to the left continuing rev class struggl 1977.

The GMWU mand for a



Clay Cross councillors at Transport House, trying to get support for their stand against the last Tory government. Labour conference voted to back them. Then the Government ignored Conference decisions, and the National Executive Committee went along with it.



Sattley Gates, 1972: the trade union leaders fear the revival of this militancy, but at the same time they find themselves forced to work up some militancy in order to have any bargaining power with the Tories.



'Kill the Bill' demonstrations



...nce votes for 'maximum trade union resistance' to the Tories.

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wage, in defiance of its Executive. In the Union of Post Office Workers, the Executive was censured for its conduct of this year's pay campaign.

The Bakers' Union voted to ban fascists from union

narrowly defeated a resolution opposing wage curbs. A left-winger, Wyn Bevan, has been elected to the South Wales seat on the Executive (and Chapple has reacted by calling an inquiry into the election).

by merging the AUEW Engineering Section and the EETPU are stalled.

With this mood in the unions, battles are inevitable. The question is: will we win?

Over the years of the Labour government, the trade union leaders tried to get crossing picket lines accepted as normal. They want to continue that. Their main reply to the Tories' anti-union law schemes is that it would be better if the Government left it to the trade union bureaucrats to curm the picket lines themselves. They turn snarling on any union which shows any boldness in struggle.

Thus, at the same time as the trade union leaders are making windy speeches about a united fight against the Tories, it's left to the militant left — 1100 delegates assembled at the *Defend the Unions* conference in Manchester on June 23rd — to assert the most basic laws of class solidarity and unity: continue solidarity and sympathy pickets, continue blacking, don't cross picket lines.

Where the Socialist Workers' Party (the main political force behind the *Defend the Unions* conference) goes wrong is in acting as if everything else will follow once we assert those basic laws of solidarity, unity and militancy. Socialists need to give the rank and file the political armament to deal with the windbagery of the union leaders and to forge unity.

Two things are vital for that political armament: a programme for restructuring the labour movement around democracy and accountability, and a programme of basic class demands, starting with across the board rises, automatic cost of living clauses, and cutting hours, not jobs, with no loss of pay.

## A Programme for the Struggle

- ★ Automatic cost-of-living protection for wages.
- ★ Cut hours, not jobs — under workers' control and with no loss of pay. Nationalise firms sacking workers without compensation and under workers' control.
- ★ Expand social services. Make the bosses pay. Millions for hospitals, not a penny for 'defence'. Nationalise the banks and financial institutions without compensation.
- ★ Unity of black and white workers in struggle against capitalism. Purge racism from the labour movement. Win labour movement support for black self-defence. End all immigration controls. No platform for fascists.
- ★ Free abortion and contraception on demand. Women's equal right to work, full equality for women.
- ★ Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. Troops out now! Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Political status for Irish Republican prisoners.
- ★ Solidarity with black liberation struggles in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Trade unionists should refuse to transport or work on any aid to Smith and Muzorewa.

★ Organise to defy the Tories' anti-union laws and defend the picket lines. The capitalist police are an enemy for the working class. Support all demands to weaken them as the bosses' striking force. Disband the SPG!

★ Regular election and right of recall over full-time trade union officials, who should be paid the average for the trade.

★ Voting in workplace meetings, in work time, for all union elections. Mass meetings — with the right to speak for all points of view — to have full control over every stage of negotiations during disputes, and to take the decisions on calling and ending strikes. No postal ballots.

★ Automatic re-selection procedure for Labour MPs. Election of the Party leader by Conference. Fight for Conference decisions to be binding on the Party leadership, and the NEC to decide the Manifesto.

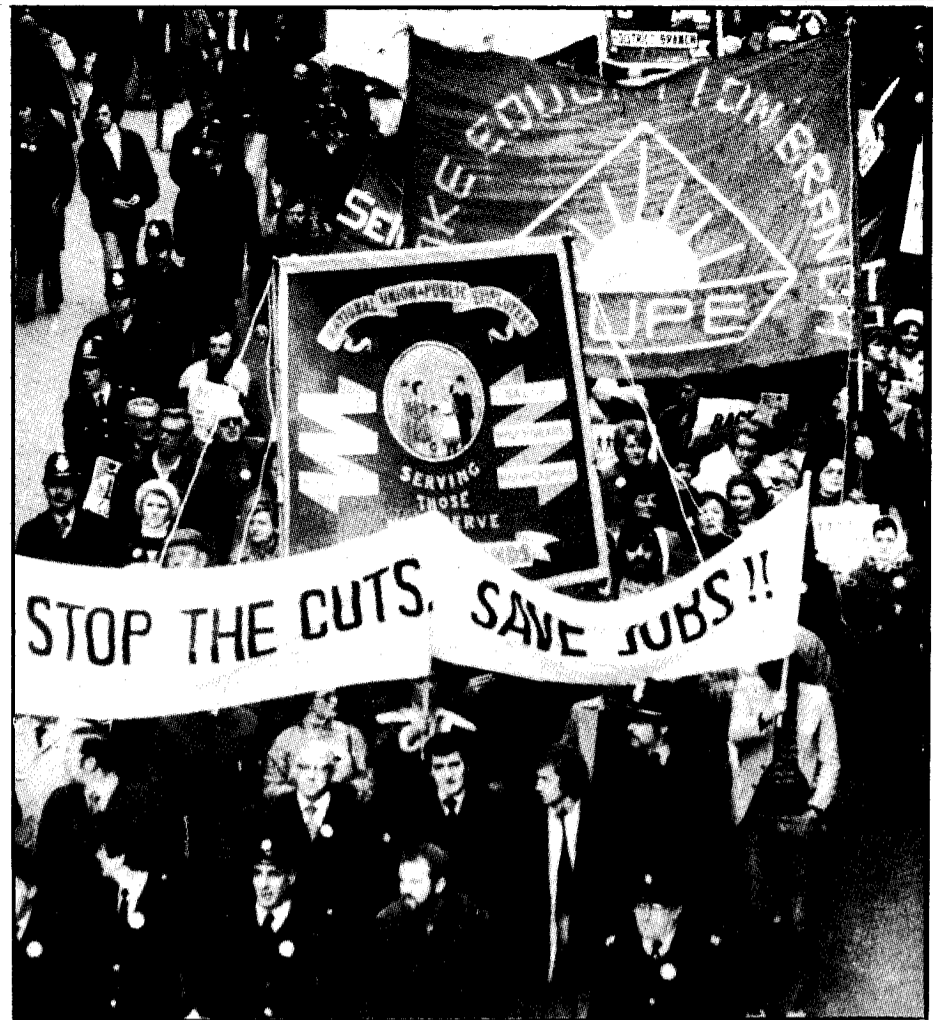
office and, if they are openly active, from union membership.

Even in Frank Chapple's right wing empire, the EETPU, the platform was defeated on a resolution condemning its closures and amalgamations of branches, and the conference only

In the Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions, dominated by the now right wing AUEW, there is enough stirring to push the Executive into at least a token campaign on this year's engineering claim. The moves to create a huge new right wing union



...monstration, 1971: will the TUC organise mass de-  
against the new Tory anti-union laws?



# HARINGEY CUTS FIGHT SLOWS DOWN

SHOUT 'Bring down the Tories' and you can get away with murder. That seems to be the sum of tactical wisdom guiding the majority of Haringey Labour councillors, if the delegate meeting of Labour movement organisations on Saturday July 7th is anything to go by.

The meeting had been called by the Labour Party's Local Government Committee (LGC) when it met a few days before. Their resolution urged 'the Haringey Labour Group not to be intimidated by the irresponsible cuts in public expenditure presaged by the Tory budget...'

But the Labour Group, meeting the day after the LGC, decided to go right ahead and be intimidated by the Thatcher government, and carry out cuts. Consequently, any fight 'to defend living standards against Tory attacks' would also have to take on the Labour council that would be carrying out those attacks at the local level by operating within the limits set down by Thatcher.

That was enough to stampede many of the LGC members. So when the 90-odd delegates assembled, instead of hearing the officers of the LGC call for a fight, they were treated to a speech defending the Labour Group's decision not to fight and to impose cuts. All fury and no fight, councillors Meehan and McBrearty defended the council's record.

The crucial divide in the meeting was between those who saw the 'fight' against the Tories as an alternative to action now and thought a

Labour council ought to be defended, not attacked; and those, like Workers' Action supporters, who called for a fight against cuts in jobs and services whoever was carrying them out.

A number of delegates who would normally count themselves as Tory supporters, and those, like Workers' Action supporters, who called for a fight against cuts in jobs and services whoever was carrying them out.

Shadow environment secretary Roy Hattersley, addressing the conference, specially warned the councillors to avoid 'another Clay Cross'. If Labour councils organised local tenants and workers and defied the Tories, as Clay Cross council defied them over the Housing Finance Act, that would enable 'our enemies to focus attention on the behaviour of one or two councillors [??] and thus divert interest [??] from cuts in services endured by millions of families'.

Labour councils, Hattersley said, should publicise the effects of the Tory cuts, and they should also use their local autonomy to 'decide whether cuts or rate increases, or other sorts of financial arrangements, are the right answer for your own area.'

selfes with the left managed to obscure this essential division by prattling about unity and arguing about which month was best for a confrontation with the Tories. The matter was stated most clearly and honestly by councillor Bernie

Grant, a Socialist Organiser supporter, who declared quite rightly that unity with Meehan and McBrearty on their terms meant being party to attacking working class living standards.

At the end of the meeting Steve Hull, for the LGC, proposed that a committee be set up to fight the Tory cuts and that the core of the committee should be made up of members of the union side of the borough's Joint Consultative Committee, together with representatives from Labour Parties and other unions.

Andrew Hornung, one of the NATFHE delegates at the meeting, opposed this form of committee — which would have over fifty members — as being unwieldy and insisted that its purpose could not be limited to 'the Tory cuts', as that would let the Labour councillors off the hook.

The LGC proposal on the size of the committee, however, was approved, though the chair agreed that its purpose would be defined by its members and not limited in advance to opposing only 'the Tory cuts'.

The committee is due to meet — in September!

In itself the meeting was a defeat for the development of a serious struggle against the cuts, but the left in Haringey should do all it can to be part of the proposed committee, to insist that it functions properly and that it does not let the councillors off lightly for their trimming the local budget to avoid any fight against the Thatcher government.

MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN

## What the cuts could mean

CONCRETE proposals for achieving cuts in local government expenditure have been submitted to the Government by the Tory-controlled Association of County Councils.

The Association's chairwoman commented that the Government is 'most interested', and that the ACC is sure that at least some of its plans will be implemented.

In the education services, the ACC suggests that education for under-sixes and those over fifteen, and free nurseries, should no longer be obligatory provision for local councils, along with school transport and school milk, both free at present. They suggest cutting subsidies to school meals and reducing nutrition-

al standards, or possibly eliminating them altogether by a shorter one-session school day. Greater discretionary powers in allotting student grants and in setting charges for further and adult education are also requested.

For the old in old people's homes, the ACC intends abolishing spending money, and allowing even greater delays in enforcing fire safety standards.

There is a number of other measures which would affect public safety: the lowering of building standards in new schools, reduction of fire inspection, and the repeal of the Health and Safety Act, the Employment Protection Act, and of legislation on consumer protection, medic-

ines, and environmental protection.

The Association of Metropolitan Authorities (with a Tory majority of one) was reported to be unhappy about the document. The ACC says that it does not want to see all of these services cut, only the right for county councils to select from them in order to meet Tory Government demands to cut spending.

As is to be expected of Tory proposals, the poor will be worst hit by any of these cuts: those who cannot pay for adequate education and better services must be content with what little is left. This document is a grim warning of what local government spending cuts may entail.

Review of 'Daniel De Leon: The Odyssey of an American Marxist', by Glen Seretan. Harvard University Press, 1979.

DESPITE THE fact that Daniel De Leon was one of the greatest Marxists America has produced and many of his followers in this country formed the nucleus of the early Communist movement, there is a dearth of material available on him. Before the publication of Seretan's book, only one political biography existed — *The Life and Times of Daniel De Leon* by Carl Reeve, a book which is not only difficult to get hold of but is inadequate in many respects.

Seretan's book is however worse than Reeve's. While containing a number of quite valuable insights and observations it utterly fails to assess De Leon's life and work.

Daniel De Leon was born on the small island of Curaçao, off the coast of Venezuela, in 1852. His middle class Jewish parents sent him from this Dutch colony at an early age to Europe to be educated. In 1872 he went to the USA and settled in New York, where he spent most of the rest of his life.

De Leon studied law and, after a brief period practising it, became a lecturer at the prestigious Columbia University. It was here that he began his shift to the left.

In later years De Leon attributed his conversion to socialism in 1886 to his disgust at the reaction of his academic colleagues to a strike by streetcar operators in New York. Until then he had been a Democrat, but now he shifted to the United Labour Party of Henry George, a radical populist who advocated a single tax on land as a panacea for society's ills. (Engels, writing a new preface for the American edition of *The Condition of the Working Class in Britain*, subjected George to a withering criticism. It is not known whether De Leon read this at the time.)

## by John Cunningham

He began to study the works of socialism around 1886/7 and in 1888 he joined the great radical early American trade union, the Knights of Labour.

The Knights was then the largest organisation of workers in the USA, though it was not exclusively working class. It allowed virtually anyone who supported its aims and methods to join and included shopkeepers, doctors, small businessmen and traders. It had a semi-Masonic structure around the one-man dictatorship of Terence V. Powderly, and an inclination to dabble in schemes for cooperatives and the setting up of model self-sufficient colonies.

But it also organised all-out strikes and boycotts, and was the first labour organisation to organise blacks and women. It was subjected to severe repression from all sides. There were legal frame-ups by the state, attacks by gunmen hired by the bosses, and assaults by union-busting private detective agencies, the Pinkertons.

Though some of the features of the Knights of Labour marked it as in the tradition of the post French Revolutionary European revolutionary and democratic secret societies, it was at the same time the first attempt to organise the workers of the USA on a class struggle basis. After its destruction and repression only the Wobblies continued its tradition, which was submerging and supplanted by the narrow craftist, white supremacist business unionism of Samuel Gompers' American Federation of Labour, until the rise of the CIO in the 1930s.



Samuel Gompers, De Leon's deadliest enemy in the workers' movement — in the unions led by Gompers, the rules were: no blacks, no women, no unskilled workers, no politics

Not surprisingly De Leon's conservative colleagues took a dim view of one of their staff joining such an organisation, and although De Leon was highly regarded as an academic and an intellectual he was eased out of Columbia. It was a move he never wasted much time in fretting over. As he wrote to one of the university's staff, '... the times are too stirring and pregnant to expect much good from the slow process of pedagogy'.

In October 1890 he joined the Socialist Labour Party. From that time until his death in 1914 he was to be as closely associated with it as Lenin was with the Bolsheviks.

A man of tremendous intellectual abilities, De Leon took over the editorship of the Party's English language weekly *The Weekly People* in 1892. The SLP was a party dominated by German immigrants and it had little contact with native Americans — a fact repeatedly emphasised and criticised by Engels in his correspondence with collaborators in the USA.

De Leon set about 'Americanising' the movement, mainly through the *Weekly People* but also by vigorous interventions in elections, public meetings and strikes.

The Party's problems were compounded by a heavy legacy of Lassalleism, which survived longer in the USA than it did in Europe. The Lassallean element wanted a complete concentration on electoral activities. Others wanted nothing to do with the ballot box and felt the party should devote all its energies to strikes and wage and hours agitation. De Leon succeeded in fusing the two elements into a unified strategy — though he never entirely shook off the Lassallean legacy.

The American Federation of Labour (US equivalent of the TUC) at this time had barely half a million members. All its unions were craft based. They did not organise the unskilled, women, blacks, or certain immigrant groups such as the Chinese. There were cases on the West Coast of AFL members attacking and killing Chinese immigrants whom they saw as a threat to their living standards.

Samuel Gompers, leader of the AFL, prided himself on his 'non-involvement' in politics — though he hated the socialists. If they had their way the 'lily white job trust' of the AFL would be broken up.

Thus the AFL was at this time not a very fruitful ground for socialists. Essentially it was not even concerned to organise the US working class. Progress was slow, and Gompers fought the socialists all the way.

De Leon looked elsewhere to supplement the work in the AFL. The Knights of Labour was in deep decline by this time, severely hit by repression, but it still contained many good militants, and De Leon probably thought it a better prospect than 'boring from within' the AFL.

The SLP won control of an important region in New York called District Assembly 49, and used this base to launch an offensive in the Knights. The offensive failed, and the SLP left the Knights little more than a year later, taking many of the socialist militants with them. Denuded of its most energetic elements, the Knights of Labour found its own way to oblivion.

Around the same time the conflict in the AFL between Gompers and De Leon (who hated each other) was exacerbated. The final break came when Gompers defeated a socialist-inspired resolution which called for the state ownership of the means of production and distribution, at the AFL national convention in 1894. That he did it by dirty

# Daniel De Leon and American Marxism

underhand trickery made the defeat all the worse to swallow.

Drawing the conclusion that the Knights and the AFL were both dead ducks — he was right about the former, wrong about the latter — De Leon set about building the 'New Unionism'. Although he borrowed the name from Britain, the New Unionism had little to do with organising along the lines of Ben Tillet, Burns or Tom Mann — who organised the unskilled into the TUC.

De Leon's New Unionism organised a complete new rival outside the AFL — the Socialist Trades and Labour Alliance (STLA). But it did not succeed in organising the non-craft workers; meanwhile the AFL was growing slowly and the fight inside to tip the balance against craftism and elitism by recruiting the unskilled was still necessary. (Though as a matter of historical fact, the work of organising the 'unskilled', which was eventually accomplished in the 1930s, proved impossible without a break by unions such as the UMWA with the AFL and the establishment of the CIO.)

Trade unionism outside the AFL was not ruled out. Only a few years before, Eugene Debs had organised the American Railwaymen's Union (ARU) which completely overshadowed the craft railway brotherhoods, though the ARU was later defeated in a major strike and Debs jailed. The ARU was totally independent of the AFL, as were a number of other unions, including the Brewers — one of the earliest and best organised unions in the USA. In later years the Garment Workers' Union was to be independent for many years before finally joining the AFL.

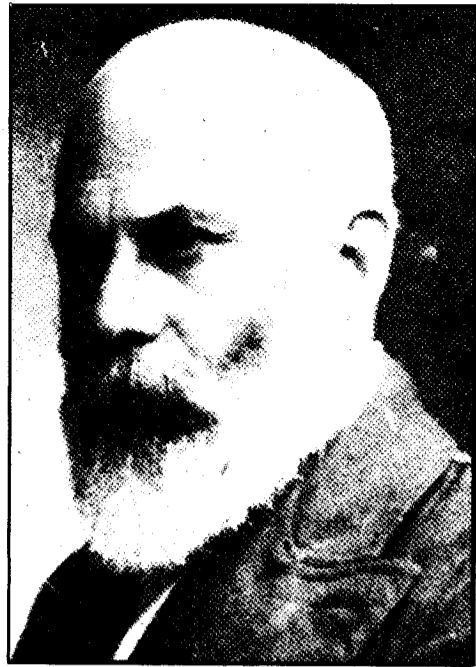
Being outside the AFL did not mean that all was despair and darkness. But the STLA was set up as a 'revolutionary union', closely tied to the SLP. De Leon, looking to Germany, saw a powerful trade union movement closely allied to the SPD, then the fountain-head of world socialism, and thought to build the same in the USA.

De Leon was right to underline the connection between politics and trade unionism, in opposition to the 'pure and simple' unionism of Gompers, but he went a step too far. The German unions were never so closely tied to the SPD as to exclude non-socialist workers. But the STLA was so closely connected to the small SLP that many workers were reluctant to join it. Non-revolutionary workers probably saw the AFL as being more to their needs than the STLA.

The STLA never had more than 15000 members. Its lack of growth led to an internal dispute inside the SLP and eventually a split. A group around Morris Hillquit left the party, eventually uniting with Debs and forming the Socialist Party (SP).

By 1905 De Leon had drawn the conclusion that he had been wrong, and took the remnants of the STLA into the newly formed Industrial Workers of the World (IWW, or Wobblies). The IWW could have formed the basis for an on-going fight against Gompers. Although basically syndicalist it did not initially reject political action (De Leon was a prominent figure at the opening conference in Chicago).

But by 1908 anarchists had kicked De Leon out of the



Daniel De Leon: among the first to analyse precisely the corrupting and conservative role of the labour aristocracy and labour bureaucracy, he coined the term 'labour lieutenants of capital'.

IWW, and once more he was in political isolation. If the direct-action militancy of the IWW had been fused with the Marxist understanding of the SLP, then the history of US socialism would have been very different; but the IWW retreated to pure industrial militancy, finally crumbling when faced with the political challenge of World War One, and the SLP became an isolated sect.

The rest of De Leon's life was spent in trying to overcome the isolation of the SLP. He attempted to reunite the SLP and the SP but failed, his old enemy Hillquit making sure of that. After his death in 1914, the SLP became a dead sect. (It fell apart only recently.)

De Leon's writings on industrial unionism, however, were influential in many parts of the world. Lenin regarded De Leon as having developed a rough draft of the Soviet idea which was the biggest contribution made to Marxism since Marx. Antonio Gramsci praised De Leon's work, and the

Ordino Nuovo tendency in Italian communism was influenced by it. People like James Connolly, like the the early US communist theorist Louis C. Fraina, and J.T. Murphy of the Shop Stewards Movement, were all influenced by De Leon.

In a pamphlet *Reform or Revolution* De Leon outlined a rough draft of the Leninist conception of the vanguard party, at a time when Lenin himself was only just applying himself to the question. Another important work was the series of articles *Flashlights from Amsterdam*, where De Leon's pen pictures of prominent Second Internationalists like Vandervelde, Bebel and particularly Kautsky are extremely advanced and perceptive. Probably only Rosa Luxemburg saw the incipient dangers in the politics of Kautsky as early as De Leon.

In yet another pamphlet, which Lenin thought important enough to ask the State Publishing Department to reprint in Russian, *Two Pages from Roman History*, De Leon analyses the development and role of the labour bureaucracy. He was one of the first to do so.

De Leon's sharp perceptions were, however, generally linked with a doctrinaire aridity. For example, his debate with James Connolly on wages, marriage and the church shows that he held a Lassallean 'iron law of wages' position at that time. He probably never understood Marxist economics, and considered Volumes 2 and 3 of *Capital* 'a waste of time'. (Though on the questions of marriage and the church, his viewpoint was that of a historical materialist as against the left-Catholicism of Connolly.)

So what does Seretan add to our knowledge of De Leon? Sadly, very little. While the book has some interesting information, its entire theme is trite and useless.

Seretan is not a Marxist and has attempted, partly as a result of this, to locate De Leon's life not in his attempt to build a party, his groping toward the goal that Lenin was able to achieve only later; nor in De Leon's attempt (and arguably one of his most important achievements) to take socialism out of the German emigré cafes and beerhouses and translate it into American terms, to win the ordinary worker to socialism. No, to Seretan the driving force (and a subconscious one at that) was the fact that De Leon was Jewish.

For Seretan, De Leon was an estranged Jew living in a gentele society. Having turned his back on Jewish society De Leon then spent the rest of his life trying to establish a new identity, find a 'community' into which he could settle — the community he chose (or was it thrust upon him?) was the socialist community. His subsequent tactical reorientations and moves (AFL, Knights, STLA, IWW) are not seen as the normal workings of a revolutionary Marxist trying to come to grips with the world at a time when many things were new and when the movement itself was inexperienced (particularly in the USA), but as a further attempt (again, one assumes unconsciously) to locate himself in the world.

Continued on page 11



# From Kautsky to Eurocommunism:

## INTRODUCTION

WE CONTINUE the Kautsky-Luxemburg debate on the mass strike with the first three parts of Karl Kautsky's second reply to Luxemburg, 'A New Strategy'.

Kautsky begins with an attempt at personal self-justification and an effort to pick holes in Luxemburg's positions. He also reasserts his schematic division of mass strikes into 'strikes of compulsion', 'protest strikes', and 'political' and 'economic strikes'.

Kautsky claims that Luxemburg has abandoned her agitation for an immediate mass strike. He notes that three months have passed since the discussion began. He fails, however, to mention the way in which the situation had changed so as to make a mass strike no longer on the immediate agenda.

The article 'A New Strategy' was published on the 17th and 24th of June, 1910. On 27th May the government had withdrawn its bill to make only minimal alterations to the unequal Prussian suffrage system. This represented a limited victory for the working class, but left the basis of the electoral system untouched. The SPD had missed its opportunity to develop a mass strike movement in March or April which could have led to far greater victories.



Kautsky instead looks at the use of the mass strike as an 'all or nothing' question: either it should be used immediately, or pushed into the indefinite future; either the masses are ready, or it would be doomed to complete failure; either it would lead to the decisive showdown with capitalism, or the working class would be smashed. Kautsky attacks Luxemburg for being tactically flexible and seeking to use opportunities as they present themselves. This flows from his conception of the conditions for socialism and working-class consciousness developing in parallel to the economy. One day the working class will be ready. Until then, active agitation for a mass strike is adventurist.

On the other hand, Kautsky has no objection to a gen-

by Bruce Robinson

eral discussion about the nature of a mass strike. In the archetypal fashion of those who proclaim revolutionary intentions but line up with reformism in practice, he is willing to discuss mass strikes in general or in the future, as long as it does no more than bringing "the masses to consider the idea" and as long as it has no immediate practical consequences for the policy of the SPD. For Kautsky, the main issue is building up the social democratic organisations by general propaganda and by contesting elections, rather than relating to all forms of working-class struggle in a way that maximises their potential for the self-mobilisation and self-education of the workers.

In the third section of the article, Kautsky restates his strict classification of different types of strikes. He slightly shifts position on the relation between economic and political action, and finds imaginary contradictions in Luxemburg's article because she refuses to accept his restrictive and schematic framework for classifying mass strikes. At the end, Kautsky claims that there is a contradiction between Luxemburg's stress on the spontaneity of mass actions and her argument for the need for the party to call forth such actions and guide them. Later in the article, Kautsky partly withdraws from this argument, but here he argues that there is an incoherence in Luxemburg's position.

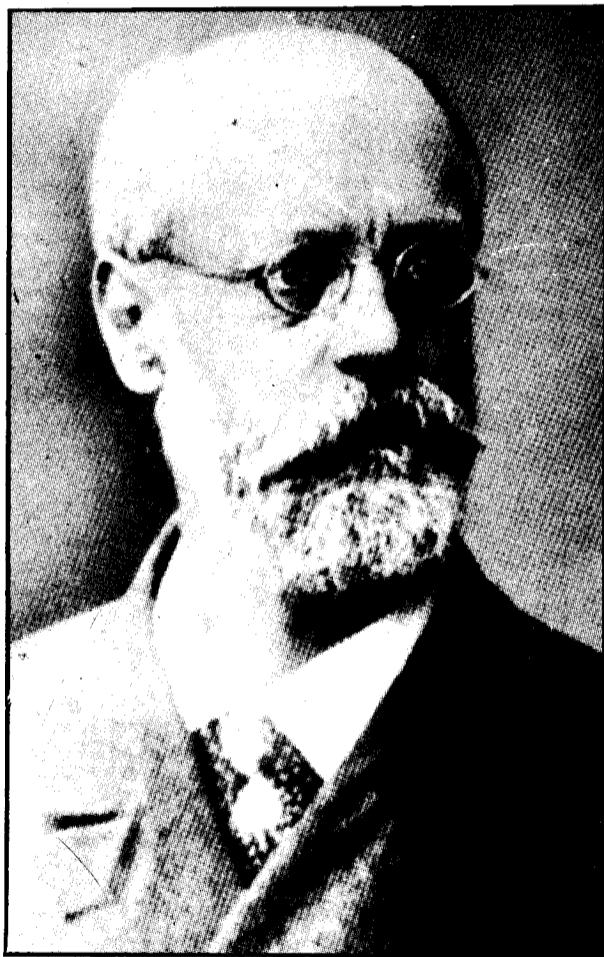
In reality, the problem lies with Kautsky's arid conception of the relation of party and class, in which all advanced socialist consciousness must flow through the party and its organisations.



His main argument against Rosa Luxemburg's appeal to the experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905 is that the form the mass strike took there corresponded to a backward society where social democratic organisations could not be built legally without overthrowing the government. The spontaneous struggle of the working class — in which Luxemburg correctly sees the potential for socialism — is for Kautsky a backward form which should eventually be incorporated into the SPD.

The 'contradiction' he points to in Luxemburg's position can only exist for someone for whom the development of a revolutionary party lies along quite a different course from the development of a spontaneous struggle by the working class. But a party built around such conceptions could never channel the spontaneous upsurge to overthrow the capitalist system.

## Waiting for the time to fight



Karl Kautsky

## Karl Kautsky: A NEW STRATEGY

### 1. A Success

IN HER REPLY comrade Luxemburg has surprised me in one thing above all: her modesty, which far exceeds the average of what one is accustomed to find in a normal person.

Just consider: at the beginning of March comrade Luxemburg wrote an article in which she explained that the method of using street demonstrations is outdated.

"The initial campaign of street demonstrations in the last few weeks has already, as a result of its inner logic, created a mood in the masses, and at the same time objectively created a situation on the field of battle which goes beyond these demonstrations, which sooner or later makes further steps and sharper methods of struggle unavoidably necessary".

We would have to consider what our "next method of struggle" would be. It could be nothing other than the mass strike, "certainly not the final word in the political campaign now under way. But just as certainly its first word in the present stage".

We were confronted, according to comrade Luxemburg,



Rosa Luxemburg

with the dilemma: either forwards at any price or the mass action under way would collapse without any success. So it is the political duty of the party:

"to resolutely provide the slogan which alone can further advance the struggle which it has begun"

This was what appeared on 14th March in the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung'. The same article, only somewhat expanded, was earlier — even before 6th March — offered to 'Die Neue Zeit'. I may refer to this here because comrade Luxemburg now uses the rejection of this article as a reproach directed at me. More about this below. For now it is enough to note that comrade Luxemburg today still subscribes to everything which she argued then. It was said that

"The position of the party at the present moment is expressed by the simple dilemma: Either the mass action is soon pushed forwards beyond mere meetings and street demonstrations — and the mass strike is the only means arising from the situation here — or the whole action comes to a complete halt and will unavoidably after a while dissolve into nothing. In fact, a party with the prestige and responsibility of German social democracy has no choice any more. After it itself has brought the masses out, it cannot possibly signal the retreat. It is no longer enough now to purse one's lips, it is necessary to whistle. The party thus finds itself in the position to apply for the first time its resolution on the mass strike passed five years ago in Jena".

All these arguments could only have one meaning: that of unleashing a powerful movement which overwhelmed all opposition in order to summon up a colossal mass strike as soon as possible.

Since then almost three months have passed by. There is however less talk at the present moment of summoning up a mass strike as the next step of our movement than at the time when comrade Luxemburg wrote her article. Before the article, the beginnings of protest strikes had taken place in Frankfurt and Kiel. No such attempts occurred after the publication of comrade Luxemburg's article.

Comrade Luxemburg nonetheless now explains in her reply that she is "completely satisfied" with what her article achieved.

When she set out she cried: We are lost if the mass strike is not put into practice at once.

A quarter of a year later, she triumphantly assures us that she has completely achieved what she wanted, because the mass strike is — talked about.

I think it would be impossible to be more modest.

Certainly this enormous modesty is only made possible by a striking forgetfulness. She now absolutely no longer knows what she intended with her article in March. It now seems to her as if she spoke about the mass strike merely in order to... speak, and as if her great victory consists in the fact that she succeeded in doing this. By doing so, she succeeded:

"in breaking through the ban on discussion about the mass strike in our theoretical organ, 'Die Neue Zeit'".

In reality, of course, it never occurred to me to want to 'ban' discussion of the mass strike. What I declared to be unproductive in March was the discussion about whether the moment for the mass strike had come. The discussion about that has been made as dead as a doornail, not by my 'ban' but by the actual situation. Comrade Luxemburg herself today does not give the slightest indication of taking it up again. Indeed, the reception of her article must in itself have shown her that she chose the moment for her discussion badly.

After the publication of her article in the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung', she had set out to speak in numerous meetings about the mass strike. But matters went quite differently than in her article. She now refers to the lively applause which she found in those meetings. I can reveal





that I would have joined in that applause whole-heartedly. Her speech in Frankfurt has now been published as a pamphlet with the title, 'The Prussian Struggle for the Right to Vote and its Lessons'. An excellent pamphlet which I gladly recommend, in which however there is not a word about all those things which separate us. Nothing about the slogan that the mass strike has to be our next step, that the form of street demonstrations is outdated and that the moment has come to put into effect that Jena resolution about the mass strike. In it we find only a reference to the fact that

"even in Prussia and in Germany, the moment must arrive when reaction will lie in the dust before the power of the proletarian mass strike... The blindness of these duped proletarians will not last for ever... If the power of the Centre Party is finished, if the proletariat in Germany is united and ready to struggle, then there is no power which can resist in the long run".

Who would not greet such words with enthusiastic applause? Who would believe, however, that the editors of 'Die Neue Zeit' had ever opposed *this* sort of propaganda for the mass strike?

The type of propaganda which I declared to be unproductive and which I opposed has been attempted by comrade Luxemburg only in *one* article, and then not continued with. She has voluntarily given it up in favour of a manner of discussing the mass strike which I myself advised her to adopt. At the close of my article 'What Now?' I certainly opposed developing an agitation "which aims to arouse the working masses to expect that in the next few weeks we shall use sharper and sharper methods, attempting to break the opposition of the government by mass strikes... Should comrade Luxemburg mean by her suggestion carrying out an agitation of this kind, then we could not follow her.

"It would be different if she only intended to bring the masses to consider the *idea* of the mass strike and to make them acquainted with it. She would certainly have chosen a very unfortunate and easily misunderstood form for this, but that need not prevent us from agreeing with her in *this* sense".

For, I further emphasised, the given political situation is so tense that the conditions for a political mass strike, which at the moment do not yet exist, could come into existence at any moment.

What comrade Luxemburg is now doing is basically nothing other than giving up the position which she at first occupied and going over to the position which I suggested. Without a struggle she gives up her original position, for there is not another word about all the conditions for a successful mass strike having been present in the last few months. She cannot say anything else about it because since then the facts have shown too clearly that she had overestimated the favourability of the situation. She no longer demands immediate action leading to the mass strike, but only discusses it theoretically.

She gives up her position without a fight, but not without tremendous broadsides. She does not blast away with smokeless gunpowder, on the contrary the creation of great masses of smoke is the main thing. This is to mask the change in position, so that it does not become noticeable, just as the great cry of victory which she raises concludes a retreat.

That is certainly neither a strategy of attrition nor a strategy of overthrow, but a particular kind of strategy for which there is still no name in the science of war. One could perhaps call it the *strategy of bluff*.

## 2. The Sins of the Editor of Die Neue Zeit

THE STARTING POINT of the discussion has thus disappeared from it completely. Even quicker than Halley's Comet, the mass strike which was announced as being indispensable at that moment has disappeared. To my sorrow. I wish I had prophesied wrongly and the victorious action had already begun.

If comrade Luxemburg now tries to push the discussion onto completely different tracks, then I must protest against this, insofar as she wishes to give the impression that the present discussion is the one which I 'banned'. I would never have hindered discussions such as those which comrade Luxemburg is now presenting. A discussion of this kind appears to me to be all the more in place because it has turned out that amongst the supporters of the idea of the mass strike, very different conceptions of it are to be found. Clarification of this can certainly do no damage.

I shall attempt to achieve such a clarification. However, before I enter into these objective differences, I must still break off the points of some personal darts with which comrade Luxemburg attempts to cover her retreat.

Comrade Luxemburg complains about the poor treatment she was given by the editors of 'Die Neue Zeit', who initially accepted her article about the mass strike (later published in abbreviated form in the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung'), who even had the print set up for it, but who finally rejected it.

That I did this is correct. For a time I vacillated about the article, whether I should publish it or not, but not for a moment did I leave comrade Luxemburg in any doubt about the fact that I considered its publication to be a mistake. From the outset I explained to her that if she published it, she would force me into a polemic against her.

But why was it necessary to oppose comrade Luxemburg's article? Might one not peacefully wait and see whether it succeeded in unleashing that mass action which it proposed as the next step?

No, one could not.

At the time when comrade Luxemburg wrote her article, the arousal of the masses was certainly not adequate by far for the sort of energetic action which alone can lead a mass strike to a victorious conclusion, but it was high enough for

comrade Luxemburg's suggestion certainly to be able to stimulate isolated attempts and experiments in the direction of a mass strike; attempts which because of the state of affairs were bound to fail and which would thereby have damaged the prestige of the party among the masses to a quite considerable extent. Anyone who understood that was obliged to oppose a more sober conception to the views of comrade Luxemburg.

For myself, however, there was also a personal motive. I was one of the first to propagate the idea of the mass strike in Germany and help it to break through. I felt myself all the more obliged to oppose an application of the idea which in my opinion was misplaced and bound to compromise it and its supporters. Comrade Luxemburg is of the opinion that the agitation among the masses was so strong that it would have swept aside all their leaders who dared to oppose the mass strike. I have supposedly saved the trade union leaders from this unpleasant situation. But if that agitation was strong enough to sweep aside all the trade union leaders, how is it that it comes to a halt before me, an individual theoretician?

In reality the question is being posed in completely the wrong way. I have not saved the trade union leaders from suffering a defeat at the hands of comrade Luxemburg, but I have made an effort to save the idea of the mass strike from the defeat which the trade union leaders would have brought upon it had comrade Luxemburg's concept of the mass strike become widespread as the only one possible.

When she spoke, I had to contradict her — and that was the only practical success which she could achieve with her article. She could achieve nothing save that we Marxists got in each other's hair — if I may thus express it with poetic licence. I wanted to see that avoided and for that reason also I attempted to hinder the appearance of her article.

Comrade Luxemburg finds it strange that I accepted her article, even had the print set up for it, and yet finally rejected it. I must reveal that there is even more to it: I had also prepared a reply to her article. The thought of publishing this reply, of publicly opposing comrade Luxemburg to the delight of the numerous enemies we have in common, was however so abhorrent to me that I attempted to remove the grounds for the publication of my polemic and to induce comrade Luxemburg to forego publication of her article.

She now experiences the triumph of having forced me to open a polemic against her, and she explains that she is "completely satisfied" with this result, the only one her article has achieved. Whether she has cause for this must be decided by our readers.

I must correct just one more of her remarks about my editorial functioning. Comrade Luxemburg writes about:

"a sharp emphasis on our republican position. This slogan is unfortunately also not presented to the public in either 'Vorwärts' or 'Die Neue Zeit', though in this respect too a section of our provincial press (from the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung' to the 'Breslauer Volkswacht') does what is necessary on this issue as well".



The International Socialist Congress at Amsterdam, 1904. In front: Sen Katayama from Japan and George Plekhanov from Russia. Russia and Japan were at war, and there was great applause when Plekhanov and Katayama, together on the Congress platform, affirmed the international solidarity of the workers despite their governments' wars. Rosa Luxemburg is in the centre; to her left, the Austrian party leader Victor Adler.

Comrade Luxemburg is very wrong here. I myself have always stressed the republican character of our party, including just one year ago in my book 'The Road to Power'. And I am supposed to want to ban this emphasis in 'Die Neue Zeit'? It does not even occur to me.

What moves comrade Luxemburg to make her complaint is the following:

In her article about the mass strike which she first wanted to publish in 'Die Neue Zeit' there was contained a passage about the republic of which the *form* seemed to me to be inexpedient. That we must be careful in this area, for all sorts of reasons, is clear. Comrade Luxemburg then published her article in the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung', which "does what is necessary" with regard to emphasis on the republican standpoint. But you will seek in vain in that article for the passage about the republic about which I made the objection which comrade Luxemburg now publicly complains about.

I have also not found that she has published this passage anywhere else. In her speeches, for example in Frankfurt, she stresses the republican idea in the harmless form of reproaching the liberals for not having established the German Republic in 1848. I have published articles in 'Die Neue Zeit' before now expressing the republican idea more strongly.

The cowardly concealment of principles with which comrade Luxemburg reproaches us is thus reduced to the fact that we objected to a passage in her article which she herself has withdrawn from publication since then.

Such a strategy is no heroic feat, Octavia!

## 3. Various Types of Strike

SO MUCH FOR the personal side of the matter. If we now proceed to the question of the mass strike itself, we must above all attempt to establish what comrade Luxemburg thinks about it. This is not easy.

In the 'Dortmunder Arbeiterzeitung', comrade Luxemburg had explained that the manifestations of the "mass will" must always "escalate, become sharper, take on new and more effective forms... the same experience is confirmed by the examples of similar struggles in Belgium, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, which in every case showed the unavoidable escalation and development of the mass action and achieved a political effect only thanks to this escalation". And, further on, Austria was named among the states which have to thank the mass strike for their great successes, alongside of Belgium, Italy, Sweden and Russia.

I asked how Austria got into this list. In Austria there was no mass strike, and it is precisely Austria which proves that the rapid and constant escalation of the manifestations of the will of the masses is not a necessary law of proletarian mass action under all circumstances.

"The Austrian comrades never went beyond street demonstrations in their struggle for the right to vote, and yet their elan did not disappear, their action did not collapse".

In reply to this, it is stated in my friend's reply:

"From 1898 to 1905, complaints about the collapse of the mass action and about the stagnation of the suffrage struggle do in fact form a constant and predominant element of all the Party Congresses".

Comrade Luxemburg thus first refers to Austria as an example of how mass action has been outstandingly successful because it was constantly escalated and took on sharper forms. Now we hear on the other hand that the mass action in Austria failed miserably because it was not constantly escalated and did not take on sharper forms.

The one is the opposite of the other. Remarkably, both are false.

It is correct that after 1898 the movement for the right to vote was inactive for a time. That did not, however, stem from a collapse, but from a victory. The first suffrage movement had brought it about that in immediate terms at least the concession of the fifth Curia of universal suffrage was made to the Austrian proletariat. The first elections in line with the new electoral system took place in 1897. It is quite natural that the attention of the masses was now concentrated first and foremost on the electoral struggles and the struggles in Parliament, and that it was impossible to win them again immediately for an energetic mass action for the granting of complete equal suffrage. That is a phenomenon which occurs after every sizeable victory, but is not usually described as a 'collapse'. This 'collapse' has nothing in the least to do with refraining from the mass strike.

Only after the masses had lost their illusions in the new voting rights of the fifth Curia, and their inadequacy was shown in the most blatant way, was it possible to stir the masses once again to energetic action in favour of a new voting reform.

But this is only in passing. More important is the following.

Comrade Luxemburg had explained that the next step in the Prussian movement for the franchise must be the mass strike. So I asked how she conceived of this strike, whether as a mere demonstration strike, or as a strike of compulsion. She had further argued that if a political mass strike and a major economic strike, for example a miners' strike, come together, then that is advantageous for both sides, which is something I questioned.

What answer do I now receive to these questions? None at all. She simply explains:

"Such strict definitions and classifications of the different types and sub-types of the mass strike may be all very well on paper, and may even be adequate for the usual everyday activity in parliament. However, once a time of great political unrest and mass actions begins, these distinctions become muddled in real life. To a very great extent this was, for example, the case in Russia, where protest strikes and combat strikes followed one another, and where the perpetual interaction between political and economic action was precisely the defining characteristic of the



Russian revolutionary struggle and was what gave it its strength".

I had certainly referred to Western Europe, but, says comrade Luxemburg, there were also many economic struggles in the period of the Belgian franchise struggle, which began in 1886 and continued for many years.

Indeed, she argues further that we in Germany, at the time of the suffrage struggle, were going through a great struggle in the building trade. According to my 'scheme' that should be damaging for the suffrage movement; however, it advanced it. It is, according to comrade Luxemburg, a highly "pedantic, narrow-minded concept of the suffrage movement" which I was putting forward.

This is what comrade Luxemburg writes. But when have I ever denied that economic and political action support each other, when have I said that at the time of a franchise struggle economic struggles are to be avoided as harmful? Precisely in my reply to comrade Luxemburg I stressed that the suffrage struggle draws its greatest strength from economic contradictions and struggles, and with particular reference to the expected lock-out of building workers I explained:

"Thus we also expect this year's trade union struggles to give rise to an increasing bitterness and a strengthening of the fight for the right to vote".

So comrade Luxemburg is knocking at an open door. It is not a matter of whether economic struggles cannot occur and exert an influence during the years of a suffrage struggle, but of what kind that particular, immediate mass strike will be that comrade Luxemburg expects. That is the

point at issue here. Does she want to maintain that somewhere in Western Europe one and the same strike attempted to achieve particular economic demands of individual sections of workers on individual capitalists at the same time as political demands of the whole proletariat on the government and parliament?

On the other hand, the recognition that protest strikes and strikes of compulsion sometimes follow one another is quite undeniably correct, but it does not provide those who are now to put forward the 'slogan' of the immediate mass strike with much clarity about the type this slogan refers to.

Comrade Luxemburg has certainly discovered yet another good reason to avoid answering this question: Bernstein himself distinguishes between strikes of compulsion and protest strikes — therefore a good Marxist may not enter into such distinctions. Now I believe that for the evaluation of ideas no certificate of origin is necessary, and sometimes even a blind man can find a treasure trove. That is quite apart from the fact that Bernstein adopts a tactic in the question of the suffrage struggle which contradicts that put forward by me even more than that of comrade Luxemburg does.

Precisely in our present discussion, however, we would have particularly amusing situations if we were to reproach each other for our involuntary allies. For on the question of the mass strike, the most different tendencies criss-cross one another. If she attacks my Bernstein, then I attack her Zepfer, who is publishing a series of articles in the 'Democrat' in favour of the Luxemburg concept of the mass strike.

And if she rejects Bernstein, then she will have nothing with which to object to friend Pannekoek. Does she then agree with his articles against me in the 'Bremer Bürger-

zeitung'? But what does Pannekoek say there? In his second article he writes:

"Nothing is more important than that the forms which a mass strike movement will adopt in Germany in the further course of its development should be to some extent clearly recognised".

Very correct, but in blunt contradiction to comrade Luxemburg, who condemns the very differentiation of forms as a 'lifeless scheme', as a 'pedantic, narrow-minded' distinction.

In his third article Pannekoek wrote against me:

"From the outset we must exclude the idea that it is a matter of a great strike of compulsion for the achievement of state power. It is merely a practical question of a protest strike... Kautsky silently passes over the direct practical question which is involved. The question is: would it be necessary, useful, or harmful to strengthen and escalate the street demonstration movement by protest strikes? He does not treat this question at all but, taking up comrade Luxemburg's statement that such an action, once underway, must constantly escalate, he immediately goes over to the issue of great strike movements of compulsion which must aim at a decisive struggle, an 'overthrow' of the government. Therefore let it be noted once again that it is not a question of this, but of the profit or damage which the use of simple protest strikes would bring our movement, and we discover nothing about this in Kautsky's writings".

No, dear Pannekoek, you discover nothing about this in comrade Luxemburg's writings. I expressly demanded of her that she should tell us exactly whether the mass strike which she was thinking of was to be a protest strike or not. Only if we knew that could the discussion provide a definite result. It was comrade Luxemburg who avoided answering the question, with the explanation that only a person of limited intellectual capacities or a follower of Bernstein could make such a differentiation. For a real Marxist everything was mixed up with everything else: political and economic strike, protest strike and strike of compulsion.

Pannekoek's explanation, however, makes it very questionable whether he correctly represents the view of comrade Luxemburg.

Much of what she says about the mass strike pays no attention to the question of the protest strike.

In general the picture which she sketches of the mass strike is not very clear and rather contradictory. She speaks of mass strikes in mining, American sympathy strikes, and also of the Belgian mass strike and of protest strikes. Just as Faust, after drinking the witches' brew, sees Helen in every woman, so our comrade sees in every kind of strike a pattern for the coming mass strike. On the other hand, she explains that a mass strike cannot be ordered into existence from on high, it must be born of the arousal of the masses "who themselves determine their actions". It pulls everything along with it in its wake and sweeps aside even the workers' leaders if they attempt to stand in its way. The impulse to the mass action cannot be supplied by the leaderships of the proletarian organisations but only by the masses themselves:

"The decision for an immediate action of the masses can only proceed from the masses themselves".

According to comrade Luxemburg, this same mass action must however depend completely on the fact that the party supplies the masses with "the slogan which alone can further advance the struggle which it has begun".

If at the "given moment" the slogan is not presented, then disappointment takes control of the masses and "the action collapses".

On the one hand, the mass strike can therefore not be created, it arises of its own accord. On the other hand, it is created by a slogan of the party. At first the masses are the origin and the bearers of the whole action. But then again, the masses can do nothing at all if the slogan is not proclaimed to them.

Translated from the German by Stan Croke.  
Next week: continuation of 'A New Strategy'.



New York's East Side at the turn of the century. De Leon's Socialist Labour Party had a big following there — but Seretan argues this was because of De Leon's 'Mosaic mantle', not because of the social conditions.

## Daniel De Leon and American Marxism

Continued from page 8

De Leon hardly ever mentioned his Jewish background and indeed sometimes denied it (once going to the length of claiming aristocratic Spanish ancestry). This was probably a defence mechanism against the anti-semitism which pervaded much of the American labour movement. He likewise remained silent about his early career as a lawyer. But Seretan asserts that Judaism and his Jewishness were dominant factors in his life.

The main evidence for all this is that De Leon was a great admirer of the French novelist Eugene Sue (as indeed was Eugene Debs). Sue wrote a series of novels called *The Mysteries of the People, or a proletarian family across the ages*, which De Leon meticulously translated and serialised in the *Weekly* and later the *Daily People*. One of Sue's novels (not one of the *Mysteries* series) was called *The Wandering Jew*. Seretan claims, with little evidence (De Leon, as far as I am aware, makes no reference to it in any of his writings) that *The Wandering Jew* was an important, if not the most vital, factor in shaping De Leon's outlook on the world.

Seretan quotes a letter from De Leon's aging son Solon, written in 1972, as the proof of this claim. All other 'evidence' is basically inference and speculation.

This appalling pseudo-psychological subjectivism can best be illustrated by quoting Seretan himself. Concluding his book, Seretan says (p.217): 'The Jewish heritage was a ubiquitous undercurrent in De Leon's rhetoric, his propaganda work, his concept of the revolutionary party, and in the role he chose to fill in the socialist movement. For example, this basically pacific radical frequently resorted as an agitator to military analogies and metaphors of mortal combat to convey the desperate nature of the class struggle; there is in this rhetoric the brooding apparition of the gore of the Old Testament, the spectacular conflicts engaged in by the chosen people on its way to the promised land... the De Leonite party, the would-be nucleus of Marxism's chosen people, was definitely Mosaic, both in spirit and practice... the impulse to re-enact personally the saga of the Jewish people was strong enough to frame the falsehoods he spun

about his past to conceal his Jewish background: the person of high station turning his back on his own kind to lead a subject class to its salvation closely parallels the story of Moses — too closely, in fact, to be dismissed plausibly as mere coincidence. That De Leon draped in Mosaic mantle found his largest and most loyal following among Jewish workers should surprise no one."

Taking up the last point, which is really the only concrete one, it is certainly true that De Leon, or rather, the SLP, had a large following among the East Side Jews. But this was due not so much to the supposed Moses-like posture of De Leon as to the work of individuals like Abraham Cahan, editor of the Yiddish organ of the SLP; and to the background and social conditions of recently arrived East European Jews.

The German Jews, on the contrary, were among the mainstays of the AFL and Gompers — De Leon's deadliest enemies.

Seretan's method of dealing with De Leon is akin to that school of social science which attempts to explain the rise of Hitler and the subsequent world war not by an analysis of the social and political conditions of Weimar Germany but by saying that Hitler strove to power to compensate for his supposed sexual inadequacy. Or that Napoleon took the road to Moscow because of an inferiority complex about being undersized.

And if we follow up the logic of the argument and extend it to Marx, Luxemburg, Radek and Trotsky, the whole of Marxism can be reduced to this absurdity.

Daniel De Leon's writings are not easily available in Britain. They are, however, still published in the USA, by New York Labor News, 914 Industrial Avenue, Palo Alto, California, CA 94303, USA. Orders can be sent via Workers' Action, PO Box 135, London N1 0DD. (Add 30p to each order towards postage).

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# Post Office: Our best chance since 1971

ALL OF a sudden both the media and the Tory Government have discovered that the Post Office has a "manpower" problem. And the reason for this? Not the low pay and ludicrous hours of most of the workers, but apparently industrial action and the refusal of UPW members to accept a productivity deal.

This is a lie. As early as 1974 the Post Office was asking for volunteers for offices with chronic staff shortages, to live in barrack-like conditions and work over 80 hours a week. There is always a shortage of staff because as fast as people join they leave, unable to make ends meet on the basic wage and unable to stand the disruptive effect on their lives that the shift patterns have.

The pile-ups of mail like the recent one happen all the time throughout the country, and only massive amounts of overtime stop it getting even worse.

So why all the fuss now? On the one hand management wants to break the limited control the UPW has over work practices. They tried to do this with their productivity deal but it was rejected by a

massive majority of the membership. Now they want to come back for a second bite at the cherry.

The Tories, on the other hand, would like to hive off the profitable parts of the Post Office to their chums. They'd give city centre services to private enterprise and leave the rest in public hands. But if this were to happen then the Post Office as it exists today would simply cease to be, with working class people as the main sufferers.

It was thus in the interests of both the management and the Tories to manufacture a big crisis out of a not unusual event — they could use it to put pressure on the workforce. The fact that we threw out the lousy pay deal offered to us came as much as a shock to them as it did to our own leadership. The vote was taken in a completely democratic way but the democracy that the Tories are very fond of talking about obviously means something else.

UPW members must reject all attempts to blackmail us into backing down on the question of productivity deals. And if there are any attempts by firms to set up private letter services then these must be

blacked with pickets stopping deliveries of all supplies to them. But there's no way we can rely on our present leaders and especially General Secretary Tom Jackson. After all, he was the one who tried to get us to accept the management's proposals in the first place.

Now more than ever we need a strong rank and file movement in the UPW that will fight to replace the present right wing leadership, and for decent wage rates and working conditions. In the past, attempts have been made to set up such organisations but they have always failed. This has been due mainly to the weakness of the left in the union and the relative passivity of the membership. Recently, however, there has been a complete change of mood and conditions have probably not been as favourable since the strike in 1971. If we can't do it now then we'll never do it.

Workers Action supporters in the UPW will be approaching other militants with a view to launching a new initiative. Meanwhile, if any UPW readers are interested in helping us, get in touch via the paper's contact address.

Workers Action  
UPW members

# WORKERS' ACTION

**Leyland workers say: 'No to grade 3'**

THE BRITISH Leyland bosses' drive for a new pay structure has hit snags. Responding to rank and file feeling, the union side of the Leyland Cars Joint Negotiating Committee [LCJNC] has rejected the bosses' plans for five pay grades, and has demanded the five grades be 'levelled up' into four.

The five grades system — with production workers in grade 3 — would increase differentials. The bosses have linked it to the parity money, earned under the last annual agreement but not to be paid out until the grading is accepted. If it were not for that link, the new grading would mean actual cuts in pay for many production workers.

The meeting of the LCJNC on Tuesday 3rd July was picketed by 60 shop stewards, mainly from Cowley, Drews Lane and Swindon plants, saying 'No to Grade 3'. At Cowley there is a work to rule and overtime ban, and forklift drivers in the Body Plant have held a 24-hour strike.

The officials of the TGWU, the main production workers' union, also have another reason for turning against the five-grade system: BL has paid out the full parity money without strings to its white collar workers, thus making the TGWU officials who have been negotiating for months over the strings on the parity payments to production workers look silly.

And in several cases job descriptions agreed at plant level have been rejected by the bosses at national level because of the regrading.

Some skilled workers, however, are pushing for the five-grade scheme to be accepted. Craft union leaders at Cowley, including toolroom militant Roy Fraser, have put out a leaflet which accuses the production workers of sabotaging the chances of pay improvements in BL. Here the skilled workers' sectional militancy, which showed its positive side when upsetting the appletart for the bosses in 1977 and 1978, is running against working class unity.

We must support the demand for the five grades to be 'levelled up' into four. At the same time, a campaign must start for serious all-round improvements in this year's annual pay review, due in November.

The Cowley assembly stewards have proposed a claim of £120 for production workers and a cost of living clause; Rover stewards want £20 on the basic for all, a cost of living clause, and a 35 hour week. Most important, both are pressing for a national stewards' conference to decide on a united claim for BL Cars and to take matters out of the hands of the bureaucrats.

JIM DENHAM

## Chrysler out for 20pc

TWO THOUSAND workers at Chrysler's Ryton plant in Coventry, who have been out on indefinite strike since Friday 29th June, were joined last Tuesday (10th July) by 3,000 workers at Chrysler's Stoke (Coventry) plant.

The production workers are striking in protest at the company's 5% pay offer (with a productivity deal to bring it up to 13%). Instead, the strikers are demanding the full district production rate (i.e. parity with other engineering workers in the Coventry area). This means a 20% pay rise.

The company claims that because it has lost £130 million in the last five years and is expecting a £30 million loss this winter, the offer it has made is the only one it can afford. Chrysler is also threatening that if the strike carries on, workers will be sacked. But strike or no strike the Stoke plant has already been bedevilled by lay-offs this year and the continuation of production there is already in question.

The Ryton workers (mainly on the Alpine assembly lines) walked out on 29th June. On 3rd July the Stoke workers gave the company one week's official strike notice. They are going for the same claim as the Ryton workers, though they have left open the possibility of going for a productivity deal.

In addition, workers at Chrysler's Baginton packaging depot in Coventry have also struck. Components for the £100 million a year export contract to Iran are packaged at Baginton.

The Ryton strike has been official since it began, and

Ryton and Stoke stewards and convenors are refusing to settle for anything less than the full 20% claim. On Friday 6th July ACAS were called in by the company for talks with the unions, but after 10 hours the talks ended in deadlock. 24-hour pickets have been mounted on all gates at Ryton.

Staff workers at the Ryton plant have continued working throughout the strike, from their homes, from hotel rooms rented by Chrysler, and from the Stoke plant — though when the strikers approached ASTMS, the main white-collar union at Ryton, they were told that ASTMS members would respect the picket lines. In general the pickets have been effective, with only essential maintenance workers being allowed in.

On Saturday 7th July Chrysler obtained a High Court injunction on the pickets for trespassing. What upsets them is that the pickets have locked the gates and are inside the boundaries of the plant. On one gate they are actually using the gatehouse to run the pickets from.

According to the Financial Times, this legal action 'is not viewed by union leaders as provocative'. The pickets have so far ignored the writ but Chrysler could quite easily call in the police to have them removed.

The entry of the Stoke workers into the strike will greatly strengthen it. The Stoke plant supplies components to Chrysler's truck plant at Dunstable and to the Linwood plant in Scotland, for assembly of the Avenger and Sunbeam.



Engineering workers lobby pay talks on July 10th. The talks were stalemated, with the bosses advancing their offer only from £68 to £70, and national one-day strikes are set for August 6th, 13th and 20th. An overtime ban is to start on July 30th.

## Beginnings of a fight in engineering

THE BEGINNINGS of a national fight are visible once again in the engineering industry. 270 convenors and stewards, meeting in Sheffield on Saturday 7th, decided to set up a national rank and file movement.

Every year since 1972 has passed with no struggle at all on the national engineering claim. (And even in 1972 the struggle was almost entirely confined to Manchester).

This year the unions are demanding £80 minimum time rate, and one hour off the working week as the first step to a 35 hour week. The bosses have offered £68 and nothing on hours. With order books short and the Tories in power, they are in an aggressive mood.

The unions have announced official plans for an overtime ban and a series of one day strikes. Little steam has been built up yet; most

well organised factories have the £80 already through local agreements. To get a real fight going, demands like an across-the-board increase for all, automatic protection of wages against inflation, and the 35 hour week now, would be more adequate.

The Sheffield meeting, mostly attended by stewards from Sheffield and Manchester, felt it could go no further at present than organising the most energetic support for the official campaign. The meeting, dominated by the Communist Party, was more militant on future perspectives: "Our demand should be, 'No deal with the Tories but action to get them out'".

It remains to be seen how much the new rank and file movement will be limited by the CP to just supporting left-wing out-bureaucrats against right-wing in-bureaucrats.

# MINERS UNITE TO SAVE JOBS

MINERS at the Deep Duffryn colliery, South Wales, have won the fight to keep the pit open. Although no official announcement has been made, the NCB is 'reconsidering' its decision to close the colliery this August and is virtually certain to put off the closure for a year. The Board's hope for a quiet funeral for Deep Duffryn has been shattered.

The turnaround came after the NUM conference in Jersey, where Scottish, Yorkshire and Kent miners declared their willingness to join the South Wales area in a strike against the closure. This is the first time in the history of the NUM that a united stand has been made over the closure of one single colliery. The miners have recognised that if Deep Duffryn goes, then so will 10 other short-listed pits in South Wales, and who knows how many more elsewhere.

The major battle has been won, but the decisive contest will come in a year's time. The

NCB has agreed to spend one million pounds opening a new face 'for a trial period' but they have refused to spend five million pounds on driving through to new reserves which are inaccessible from any other colliery. They claim that Deep Duffryn has made a loss of seven million pounds in the last 5 years, and any major investment will be throwing good money after bad.

We should not be taken in by the profitability argument. One million pounds investment now will not make up for the deliberate run-down of old pits like Deep Duffryn. The only reason the Board is spending the one million is because they stopped production in April and allowed the face to collapse.

On the one hand, Ezra, the NCB chairman, is continually calling for increased production — on the other, he is prepared to abandon substantial reserves of coal through want of a few millions' invest-

ment. More importantly, closure will tear the heart out of yet another valley community.

The 480 men at the pit have been offered early retirement or a guaranteed job at a pit within a 10 mile radius, but this could add one to two hours travelling time to the working day. The pit is the only local source of employment, and if it's closed the miners will have to join the daily exodus to pits and factories outside the area.

The one year reprieve forced out of the Board must be used to broaden the campaign against closure beyond the two lodges already involved. If it is to be really effective the fight must be taken out into the community and into the South Wales Labour movement, linking up with the campaign against cuts in the health service and local government.

GEOFF WILLIAMS

## Sanderson strikers are still fighting

NEARLY two years ago Phil Gilliatt, TGWU shop steward at Sandersons Fork Lift Trucks near Skegness, was sacked for organising the union. The other union members came out to support him, and they were sacked too.

The workers are still on strike, demanding reinstatement and recognition of the union. And they are appealing for financial support.

Last December it looked as if the strikers had won. The bosses signed an agreement including reinstatement and recognition, and the union lifted the pickets and the blacking.

But 12 days later the factory owner, Roy Sanderson, informed the union that the deal was off. A 'secret ballot', he said, had been held among the scab workforce, which rejected the deal. The end result of the affair was simply that Sandersons had had 12 days to get materials through the picket line.

The strikers are sticking out, and won't be tricked again. Donations should be sent to Sandersons Strike Fund,



Phil Gilliatt

c/o Appeals Office, 24 High Street, Burgh le Marsh, Skegness, Lincs. Cheques payable to Sandersons Strike Fund

## Renolds sit-in wins

A WORKERS' occupation at Renolds Chains, South Manchester, has ended with a 'satisfactory outcome', convenor Bill Withington told Workers' Action.

At a meeting on Monday 8th, Renolds bosses offered across the board rises of £9 to £10, and further talks on the bonus scheme.

The occupation started in response to an attempted lock-out on June 14th. In pursuit of their pay claim, the workers had been working to rule and banning overtime and bonus working. They had received only arrogant and dismissive replies from the bosses to their claim.

The occupation was fully supported by all the hourly paid workers, from the TGWU, AUEW, GMWU and EETPU.

MICK WOODS