

workers' ACTION

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LPYS CONFERENCE

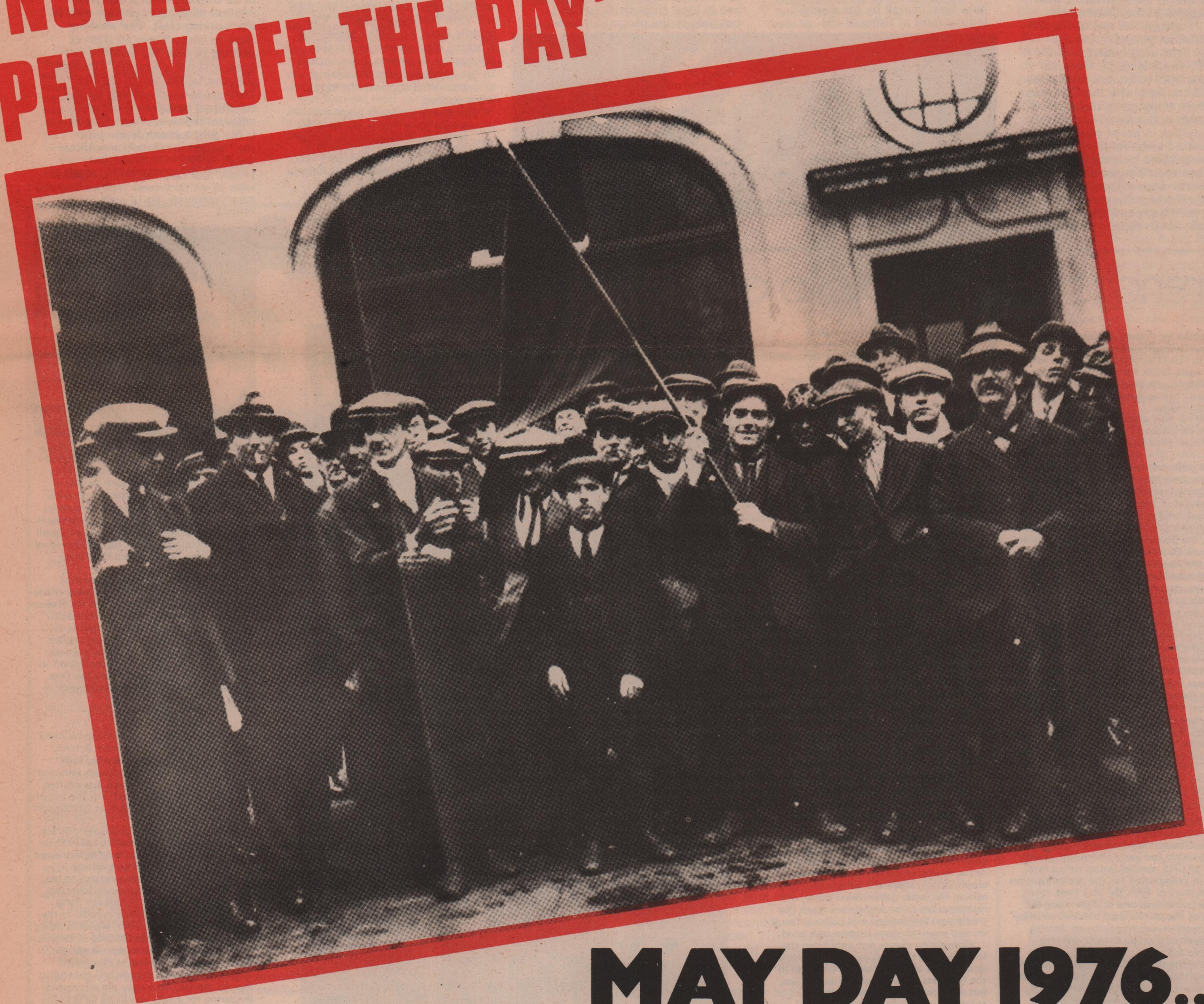
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GENERAL STRIKE

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MAY DAY 1926

'NOT A PENNY OFF THE PAY'



MAY DAY 1976...

LAST MONDAY the TUC Economic Committee gave its six-strong negotiating team a mandate to reach an "early and mutually acceptable" deal with the Government to curb pay.

Len Murray, TUC General Secretary, was confident that such a deal could be made. "No-one abroad need have any fears" he said. "We are going to get an agreement. My advice to anybody abroad is to buy pounds because the pound is going to rise in value."

But no German, Italian, French or Japanese workers are going to rush out and follow his advice. They don't buy and sell on the international money market! Murray's words were aimed at foreign speculators, financiers and money-sharks. It is these capitalists abroad and in Britain whom he tries to serve

and reassure. For workers abroad, Murray has nothing to offer except the call for import controls, which will undercut their jobs. For workers in Britain he offers a scheme to cut real wages by several pounds in the coming year.

In May 1926, fifty years ago this week, the whole British labour movement struck against a government plan to impose a wage cut on the miners. "NOT A PENNY OFF THE PAY" was the slogan of the strike.

Fifty years later this Government has already cut pounds off the living standards of the whole working class. Now it's trying to cut off even more! Today the trade union movement is stronger and better organised at the shop-floor level than it was in 1926. Yet the trade unions have joined in the attack on

our wages, jobs and conditions — all because this Government is a Labour Government and not a Tory one, as it was '26.

Why should a Labour Government get away with attacks which the Tories would not dare try on today? We must fight

We should hit back with the methods of direct action which the labour movement used in the 1920s and started to use again in 1972-74, against the Heath Government.

● NO pay curbs under capitalism! NO deal on the Healey budget!

● FOR lump sum increases to restore real wage levels; and FOR automatic cost-of-living wage increases, £1 for every 1% price rise, on a 'zero threshold'.

● NO 'time bans' on wage agreements.

THE RUN-UP to the beginning of the election campaign in Portugal has been characterised by the increasing power of the extreme right, both politically and militarily, and by the increasing industrial struggles.

The extreme right has been gaining ground by taking control of a number of administrative posts, both at local and national government levels. They have also increased political mobilisation through the CAP (Confederation of Portuguese Farmers) in contesting the agrarian reform and land occupations, and in particular the Socialist Minister of Agriculture, Lopes Cardoso.

The political mobilisation has also continued over the question of the returned settlers from Angola. The 300,000 potential votes have been hotly canvassed by the right wing parties, and even by the Socialist Party. This was done by opposing outright the recognition of the People's Republic of Angola.

Both the CDS and the PPD conducted a vehement campaign against recognition, and the Socialist Party attempted to impose strict conditions, such as guarantees safeguarding Portuguese interests in Angola.

Recognition was only finally obtained at the insistence of Foreign Minister Melo Antunes, with the support of the Communist Party. Portugal was one of the last countries to recognise Angola.

The right wing underground MDLP, which is led by General Spinoza from exile, and which has hidden contacts with the CDS, has also been stepping up their terrorist campaign of bombings against left wing parties. A priest who was a candidate for the far-left party UDP was killed by a car bomb, and the Faculty of Economics building of Oporto University where the Textile Workers Congress was being held was partly destroyed by a bomb. In the district of Braga

Right wing set to gain in Portuguese elections

alone there have been 70 bomb attempts in the last few months.

In the armed forces tensions have been increasing significantly and talk of coups abounds. The officers who had been purged following the 11th March attempted right wing coup have returned to the army and are taking increasingly important positions. Attacks are concentrated on the previously 'moderate' Melo Antunes and the Group of Nine officers (aligned with the SP) now seen as 'radicals', who have been gradually losing ground in the army. The right have been pushing forward the figure of Colonel Firmino Miguel, a close associate of General Spinoza.

Crisis

Meanwhile a new wave of strikes has hit Portugal. These have been caused by the dropping standard of living of the

working class as a result of the economic crisis and the austerity measures introduced by the 6th Provisional Government.

Major strikes in February and March have included nurses, metalworkers, building workers, transport workers, miners, electricity workers, shopworkers and chemical assistants.

The Government parties have opposed the strikes. The right wing parties have accused the Communist Party of fomenting the strikes in order to prevent the elections from being held. The Communist Party, on the other hand, has been issuing warnings against the strikes. On the 19th March, the Political Committee of the Central Committee of the PCP issued a statement criticising the "withholding of care from patients in hospitals, power cuts, cuts in essential services (transport, water, etc), the closure of banks, as well as strikes in the civil service and in local authorities [which] can only in the present circum-

stances serve the plans of reaction".

The Revolutionary Council has threatened that it will use force to put an end to industrial unrest.

The elections themselves are widely expected to produce a Government crisis, with no party or viable coalition being able to form a Government. The Socialist Party vote is expected to drop considerably with corresponding gains to the right wing parties, in particular the CDS. The Communist Party vote is expected to remain stationary or to increase slightly due to the withdrawal of the MDP.

Tension

Until the summer of 1975 no party in Portugal could afford to present itself publicly as a right wing party. The swift move to the right caused by the anti-communist campaign initiated by the Socialist Party was consolidated through the 25th November events. The middle class, no longer seeing the working class as having a viable alternative to power, have turned to the capitalists for leadership, and moved to support the right wing parties.

The Socialist Party leadership, which had been the main beneficiary of the previously undecided position of the petty bourgeoisie, attempted at first to follow the rightward drift which it had helped to initiate. This, however, began to create serious tensions within the party with its working

class elements. The party was moving onto political ground already occupied by the PPD.

The subsequent attempt to back-track slightly meant that the party lost its middle class support to the PPD and CDS. This is expected to be reflected in the election results.

The revolutionary left parties are all contesting the elections with the exception of the PRP, though the LCI has been banned from the ballot. The MES (Left Socialist Movement) attempted at first to form a front with the UDP (Popular Democratic Union), FSP (Popular Socialist Front) and PRP. This proved impossible due to the short time given for the presentation of candidates, which did not allow a common platform to be elaborated. It is expected that their vote will be small, although the UDP might have one or more deputies elected.

The Communist Party will retain its working class vote, helped by the non-emergence of any credible alternative, and might even gain some votes from the Socialist Party, whilst losing some of its white collar vote.

The elections are unlikely to solve the Portuguese crisis and may even deepen it.

The totally lopsided economy inherited from fascism, based on low wages, cannot be overhauled in a capitalist context without enormous cost to the working class. The working class, in turn, shows no signs of wishing to bear the brunt of the crisis without a struggle. The fact that capitalism has no faith in Portugal is clearly shown by the continued withdrawal of multinational firms, of which Timex is the prime example, despite the "good news" on the political front.

[From "Our Common Struggle", newsletter of the Portuguese Workers Coordinating Committee, no. 14, slightly edited].



Socialist Party leader Soares

French students vote to continue strike action

THE strike by French students against proposed educational reforms (first reported in WA11) continues. Undeterred by a two week break for the Easter holidays the students returned to the universities on April 5th to continue the strike with renewed vigour.

There is now scarcely a faculty in France which is not affected, and some are in their fifth week of a total shut-down.

The response, however, remains uneven. In some cases the strike involves only a non-attendance of classes, in others an occupation of the faculty by students has occurred, while in the case of the faculty at Clignancourt, following serious disturbances, the police have been in occupation for more than four weeks.

At the faculty of Assas, the fascists (GUD) have held the building since the holidays against all attempts by striking students to dislodge them.

On the weekend of April 10th and 11th, a national delegate conference of students at Amiens called for the continuation of the strike and for a national day of action on Thursday 15th April. In the event more than 100,000 students took part in demonstrations, with more than 40,000 converging on Paris for the national mobilisation.

Other demonstrations included 2,500 at Corbeil, 2,000 at Boulogne, 5,000 at Poitiers, 5,000 at Toulouse, 2,000 at Besancon, 5,000 at Lyons and 2,500 at Strasbourg.

Siege

In Paris, the march, nearly two miles long, was met by a major show of force by the Giscard Government. Throughout the morning and early afternoon, coachloads of CRS special police rolled into Paris in preparation for the demonstration due to start at 4pm. By that time, many of the boulevards and bridges along the route of the march were blocked solid by CRS coaches and empty buses, leaving the students a single sharply defined route to follow.

All along the route heavily armed CRS in their thousands, some in riot gear and others carrying rifles, stood menacingly at the ready. Traffic jams built up quickly all over the city, adding to the air of siege.

While there were many small incidents along the route, the CRS waited until after the call to disperse had been given at Sevres-Babylone before launching a major attack. As students were beginning to move off home, they were showered with tear gas and subjected to a series of wild baton charges by the CRS.

Usually reliable sources report that at least one student was killed and that the government has imposed total media

censorship on reports of the death.

This last weekend, a recalled national delegate conference at Toulouse, attended by 380 delegates (as against 230 at Amiens the previous weekend) decided to continue the strike and to call for a new day of action for Friday 23rd.

At this conference, however, major differences among the students became apparent. New forces based on the faculty strike committees have arisen which are opposed to the traditional organisations of the students - whether they be student unions like UNEF or MARC, or political organisations such as the Communist Party or the Fourth International section the LCR.

At Toulouse a picket of more than 100 people from the strike committees prevented the entry of any delegates other than from the newly established strike committees, - excluding from the meeting delegates representing UNEF and other student unions.

Quite what the politics of these new forces are is as yet hard to know. They are opposed to the domination of student politics from Paris by the political organisations, they are much stronger in the provinces than in Paris, and they seem to be advocating that the strike committees take over and run the faculties rather than continuing the present tactics of strikes and demonstrations.

In the event the UNEF proposals, which were supported by the LCR, were carried but only by the narrowest of margins.

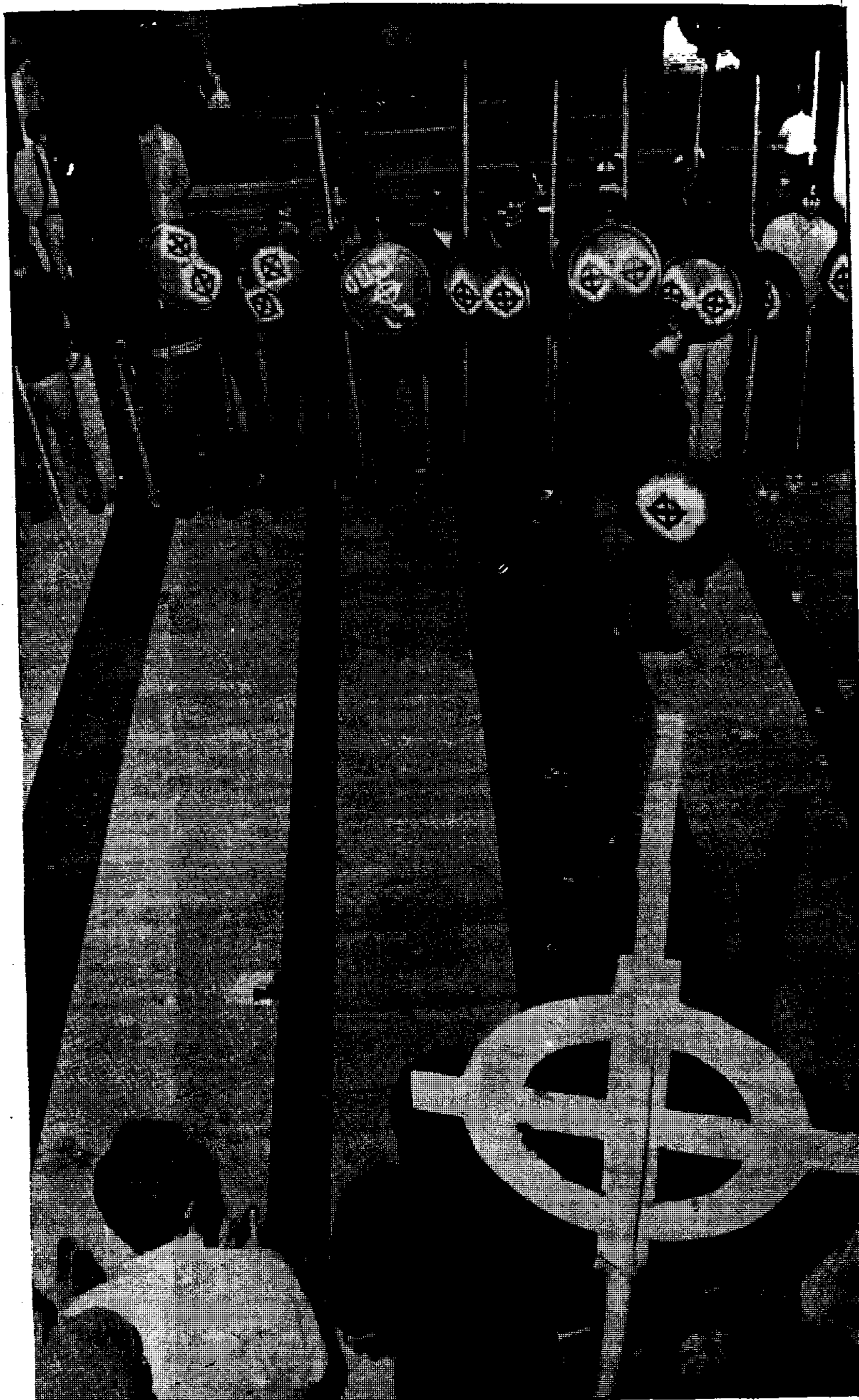
At dispute with the Government are its proposals for a 'reform' of the "deuxieme cycle". This involves the so-called "professionalisation of studies", which means the tailoring of university education to the present needs of the government and big business. Entry to the new specialised technical subjects is to be restricted to approximate levels of potential employment, there will be greater competition for fewer government posts, and resources are to be withdrawn from the traditional intellectual and cultural faculties and entry to them further restricted.

Opposition comes not only from the left, which is standing against the further domination of education by the state in the interests of technocratic capitalism, but also from students intending to enter industry, who realise that the changes involve too much specialisation, too narrow a field of study, and the acquisition of skills which may well be redundant in ten years.

In their opposition to the reforms, the students have been joined by the organisations of the secondary school students and SNESUP, the university teachers' union.

Now the University Vice-Chancellors have rejected the reforms.

There is a marked tendency in the British press to regard the Giscard govern-



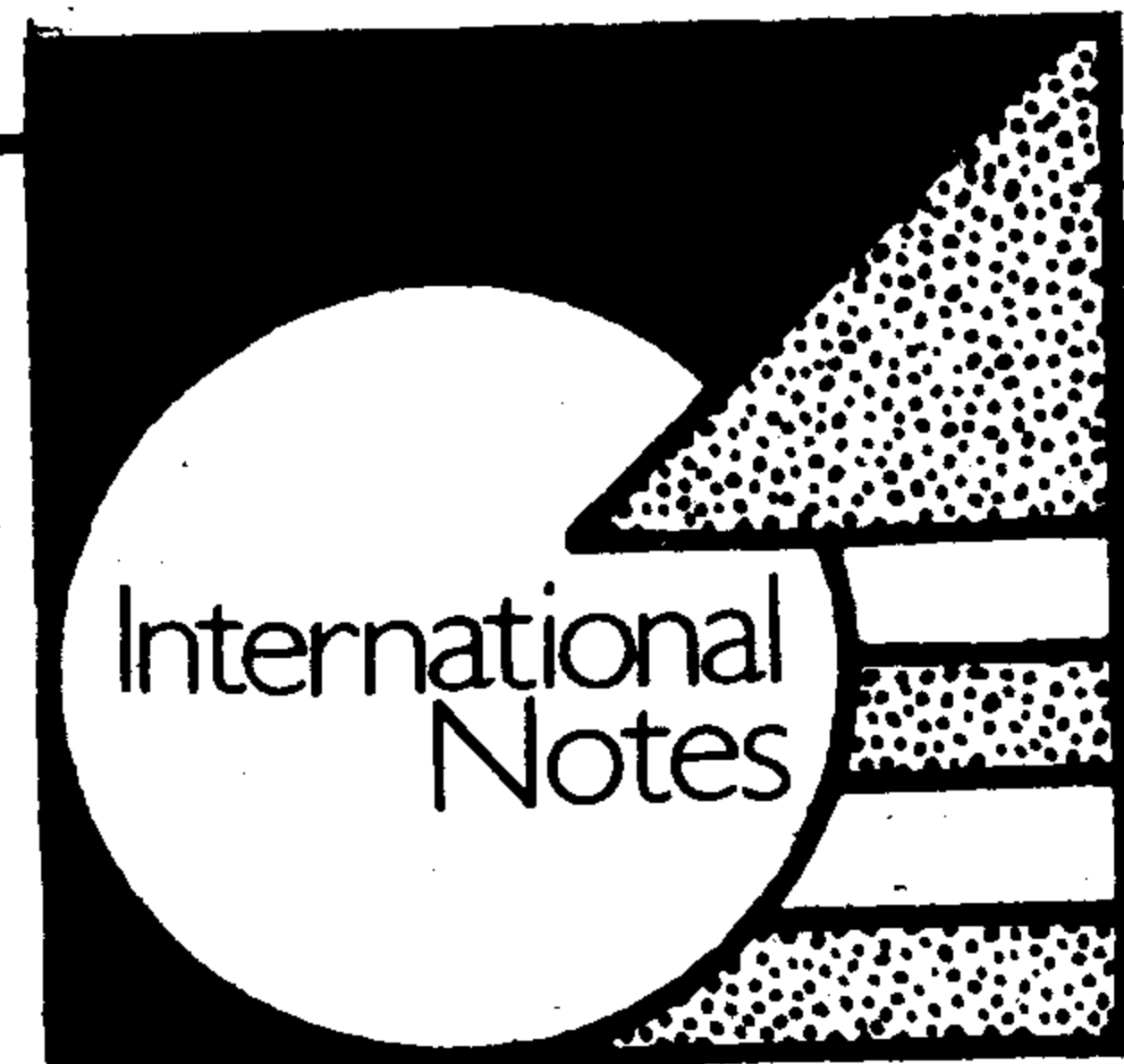
Fascists hold off French students at Assas

ment as a liberalisation of the Fifth Republic. Rather, Giscard represents an enfeeblement of the regime. And as the situation deteriorates politically, it has a grave tendency to respond to all challenges with a blind fury, in a state which has more than its fair share of the means of repression at its disposal.

With the momentum of the student

movement increasing and coinciding with an upsurge in industrial activity - closely following on the government's substantial defeat in the Cantonal elections - the Giscard government's policy of responding to all challenges by brute force seems certain to ensure a long hot summer.

J.M.PICARD
Paris 21.4.76



IN the Indian state of West Bengal, there are more than 20,000 left wing political prisoners. And in India as a whole, it is now estimated that there are between 70,000 and 140,000 people in jail without charge or trial. After the removal by Mrs. Gandhi's Congress Party government of the elected state governments of Tamil Nadu and Gujarat, some 16,000 members of opposition parties there have been arrested.

These assessments of the extent of present day repression in India were made at the International Conference for Restoration of Democracy in India last week.

A number of bodies campaigning in Britain against what one delegate called "the atmosphere of increasing fear and terror" are organising a demonstration in London on June 27th to mark the first anniversary of the state of emergency in India.

ANOTHER piece of police hardware will be going to South Africa from Britain unless the Government steps in. Bob Hughes, MP for Aberdeen North and vice-chairman of Anti-Apartheid, has written to Callaghan to ask him to stop the export of a consignment of electronic equipment to South Africa.

In the letter, Bob Hughes says this surveillance hardware is possibly bound not finally for South Africa, but for Rhodesia.

The last issue of Workers Action reported on a surveillance system to be installed at the Silvermine headquarters of the South African 'Advokaat' long range military surveillance system. If the newly revealed equipment, which is being made by Hasler (Great Britain) in Croydon, isn't going to Rhodesia, then it will almost certainly be going to Silvermine.

Hasler wouldn't answer any questions, though the fact that they are at present tendering for £20m worth of GPO contracts might be used to lever a little information out of them.

OVER 250 Crimean Tartars have signed a petition calling for the release of Mustafa Djhemilov, who was sentenced in Omsk two weeks ago to 3 years' hard labour as a result of his campaigning for the right of the Tartars to return to the homeland from which they were forcibly deported thirty years ago.

Fight for 35 hours!

3p.c.

takes a
pounding

IF THE headlines hadn't told you, you would never have guessed it was Jack Jones who said: "The obvious means to achieve full employment is a substantial reduction in the 'normal' and 'actual' working week, without any loss in earnings... This is the effective and realistic way in which work can be shared, and full employment accomplished within a short space of time."

"This is no pipe-dream. While average total hours for men in manufacturing last year were 45.5, the average hours of overtime worked by those who did any was 9.7 — and even more for shift workers. We must tackle the problem of excessive hours."

If this were done, he said, there would be "an increased labour requirement of some 3½% — or some 700,000 full-time jobs."

But these were not the proposals that Jones put at last week's Scottish TUC. There he pushed for a series of reactionary decisions to push down wages — decisions which if they go through, will drive more workers than ever into doing overtime to keep up with rising prices.

Eliminate

Only recently Workers Action argued in an editorial that "a successful struggle on a large scale against overtime working would have the effect of making available 13,847,500 hours' work — enough for 346,200 workers working a 40-hour week. And a successful struggle for a 35-hour week would almost eliminate unemployment."

This would entail the adoption of the slogan "Cut the hours not the jobs

— for work-sharing under workers' control".

Is Jack Jones going to urge his own union, the T&GWU, to give automatic official backing to industrial action like downing tools after seven hours' work in one day or after thirty five in a week? Is he going to urge backing for industrial action to wring the 40-hour wage total out of the boss for the 35 hours worked?

We don't think so. Jones is right now straining every muscle to ensure that workers' standards and conditions get pushed back in the next year. To support such a fight on hours, which would set its sights on a major push forward for better conditions, would go against everything he has set himself to do.

Perhaps that's why he was indulging in fantasies last week about even bosses benefiting from a cut in workers' hours! The only way he can reconcile advocacy of a campaign for shorter hours with the Government's pay curbs is by pretending that it's a matter of sweet reason and smiles all round rather than a hard class fight.

This fight will mean a number of things. It will mean strengthening shop floor organisation — essential if work-sharing schemes are to be democratically decided by workers.

It will mean fighting for workers' control of hiring, too. Otherwise worksharing, if not strictly controlled by the shopfloor, can be a cover for flexibility. And it can't be left to union officials either.

But the fight must not be seen as limited to a single shop: the dimensions of a really radical worksharing scheme might be district-wide or city-wide.

In many areas throughout the country Trade Union district Committees are committed (nominally, at least) to

He won't



opposing overtime working while many workers remain unemployed. Part and parcel of any campaign against unemployment must be the fight to put that policy into practice.

It must mean official support for overtime bans and an all-out campaign, with full support at district and national level, to stop workers doing overtime while the dole queues remain.

This battle, which must include support for unemployed pickets of factories working overtime, must be tied in with the battle against wage restraint, which forces long hours on workers to get a living wage. The struggle for a compulsory and adequate minimum wage is also central to the fight against overtime working.

A nationwide, legally backed norm of 35 hours or less, without loss of pay, will not be handed to the working class as a present from enlightened employers. It will be achieved when factory after factory has fought for and won the 35-hour week.

So an anti-unemployment campaign must make its priority the support for industrial action against the present level of working hours, without loss of pay.

In industries where wage scales are totally dependent on overtime working and shift working, employees should set a about right away to work out guaranteed week demands which would permit, without loss of pay, a reduction in hours to a maximum of 35.

ALL OUT FOR MAY 26th

Editorial

THE TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP, Murray, Jones and Scanlon, have made it absolutely clear that they will accept a deal to hold workers' wages down again next year. The wage-cutters depend on them to sell that deal to the labour movement.

Before the TUC recall has even been organised, Murray is scraping to the world bankers. "There are still details to be worked out"... "The TUC has certainly not rejected the idea of an agreement with the government. On the contrary, the General Council have specifically decided that we want such an agreement and we are working to get it". They have agreed to push forward talks to settle our wages without even the pretence of consultation and discussion within the Trade Union movement.

But, despite the victory for Jones at last week's Scottish TUC conference, a core of resistance is building up to a further year of pay curbs. At Perth, delegations from the Scots NUM, NALGO, NUPE, UCATT, the Boilermakers, ASLEF, and from the TASS and foundry sections of the AUEW, came out firmly against any incomes policy whatsoever. At all the forthcoming Trade Union conferences resolutions are lined up opposing any wage restraint.

The problem now, with a day of action planned for May 26th, with the recall TUC scheduled for June 16th, and with the Trade Union leadership falling over itself to settle with Healey, is how to strengthen and structure the forces of opposition to Healey's wage-cutting budget.

Direct action

The Labour Assembly, which has issued the call for the Day of Action, has a programme we cannot possibly agree with. 'Import controls' are positively reactionary, and their other main call, 'reflation of the economy', is diversionary and utopian. We argue that the key to the fight against redundancies lies in DIRECT ACTION by workers themselves for the following policies:

* Cut the hours, not the jobs. For a sliding scale of hours under workers' control, if the employers cannot will not provide enough work, with no loss of pay. We must also call for a national campaign in the trade union movement against overtime working and for a 35-hour week with guaranteed full pay.

* Open the books and the meetings of the state, the employers and the corporations to the inspection of worker-delegated representatives. Against phony participation schemes, we must aim independent shop floor trade union organisation.

* Occupations — holding the bosses' property to ransom for our jobs — as our answer to threatened redundancy. Occupation in order to force nationalisation with no compensation, recognising workers' control won by occupation.

* No covering for unfilled vacancies. Full trade union commitment to resist all pressures to force black workers, youth and women out first. For a woman's equal right to work.

* Full trade union rights for the unemployed. Trade union registration of all vacancies and of unemployed workers.

Nevertheless it is absolutely vital that May 26th is a massive display of protest at the Labour Government's policies. In every area, Trades Councils, unemployment committees, and shop stewards' committees must press ahead with organising for full support on that day. Meetings must be organised in every area to put the case for action against the

Government's policies and to set in motion leafleting and factory gate meetings to explain the urgency of the appeal.

Building for May 26th can give a real edge to the work to build in every area united front labour movement committees to fight unemployment. They must organise stoppages on the day, they must organise delegations and contingents on the lobbies and the demonstrations.

But more must be done than just supporting this one day of action. Committees building for that day, composed of Trades Council, Trade Union branch, shop stewards' committee, LP and LPYS representatives, as well as delegates of youth, women's, and black organisations, must not set their sights solely on organising for one day. The May 26th Day of Action must be tied in with full support for all workers struggling for jobs, for supporting such workers by whatever means possible — financial support, blacking and actual physical assistance on the picket lines. It is more important than ever that the 'Day of Action' is made real by stepping up such support wherever it is needed.

A successful Day of Action on May 26th must show the depths of anger and resistance that exist in the working class movement, against the policies of the Labour Government. But it must also show clearly that the Trade Union leaders cannot speak in the name of organised workers as they sell wages, conditions, and jobs to keep that Labour Government in power with its anti-working class policies. May 26th must be the springboard, not only for the development of local campaigns against redundancy, but also for a national campaign to reject Healey's budget, and to reject wage cuts, social service cuts, and unemployment.

Resolutions from branches and shop stewards' committees must demand that the recall TUC due for June 16th is a full emergency delegate Congress — not simply a quiet conferring between executives, which would be far more unrepresentative and therefore liable to accept the package of Murray, Jones and Scanlon.

Healey's budget

They should also demand the Congress vote to reject Healey's budget — and they should declare that the rank and file will continue to fight for adequate wage increases even if the TUC does accept pay limitations.

"All out for May 26th", and a campaign for a decisive and representative "No" to Healey from the recalled TUC, must be the central thrust of all Trade Union and labour movement organisations in the next weeks. Unless we act and organise now, Murray and Healey will win the next round.

In this campaign, we must strengthen and link together, in the unions, in the cuts and unemployment committees, in the Labour Party, bodies of militants who are prepared to fight the policies of the Labour Government and that Trade Union 'leadership' which is fighting so hard to sell those policies.

WORKERS ACTION will argue its own specific policies, its own way forward in the fight for jobs, for wages, and against cuts, while at the same time pressing for the broadest possible working class unity in action around immediate fighting objectives.

That's why we take support for May 26th as being so vital, that's why we call for motions now to ensure a fighting and representative recall TUC.

JUST HOW LITTLE the 3% limit is, was graphically explained by Bernard Dix, Assistant General Secretary of NUPE, in a letter to the 'Observer' of April 25th.

Total earnings of all employees, he said, would rise by almost all the 3% Healey says he will allow, simply by the consolidation of last year's £6. £6 increases have been allowed only as straight supplements on top of present earnings. If that £6 is consolidated into basic rates, it will generate further increases in overtime and bonus rates.

"If the next pay limit", wrote Dix, "is accepted as 3%, and this is used to consolidate the present £6, the effect could be an approximate average increase in earnings of £2. But this would be concentrated on those who work overtime or shifts or who have payment by results schemes linked to their basic rates; many workers would get nothing. The consequent explosion would make Leyland look like a damp squib".

The £6 limit was sold on the line that a period of sacrifice was necessary to beat inflation and thus restore Britain to a competitive condition. Since July last year the £6 limit has in fact resulted in an 8% drop in living standards. But now the miniscule 3% limit is put forward as the way to beat inflation.

That 3% is balanced against a supposed 5% rate of inflation by the end of the year. But all the evidence is that inflation will be much higher, whatever the rate of wage increases.

Pound

The sharp fall of the pound's exchange rate will push up prices of imported goods. And the 'Financial Times' on 21st April reported on huge price rises for basic commodities, price rises which will soon work their way through to the shops. Coffee, cocoa, and copper are at record levels, and the Financial Times Commodity Index has not been higher since August 1974.

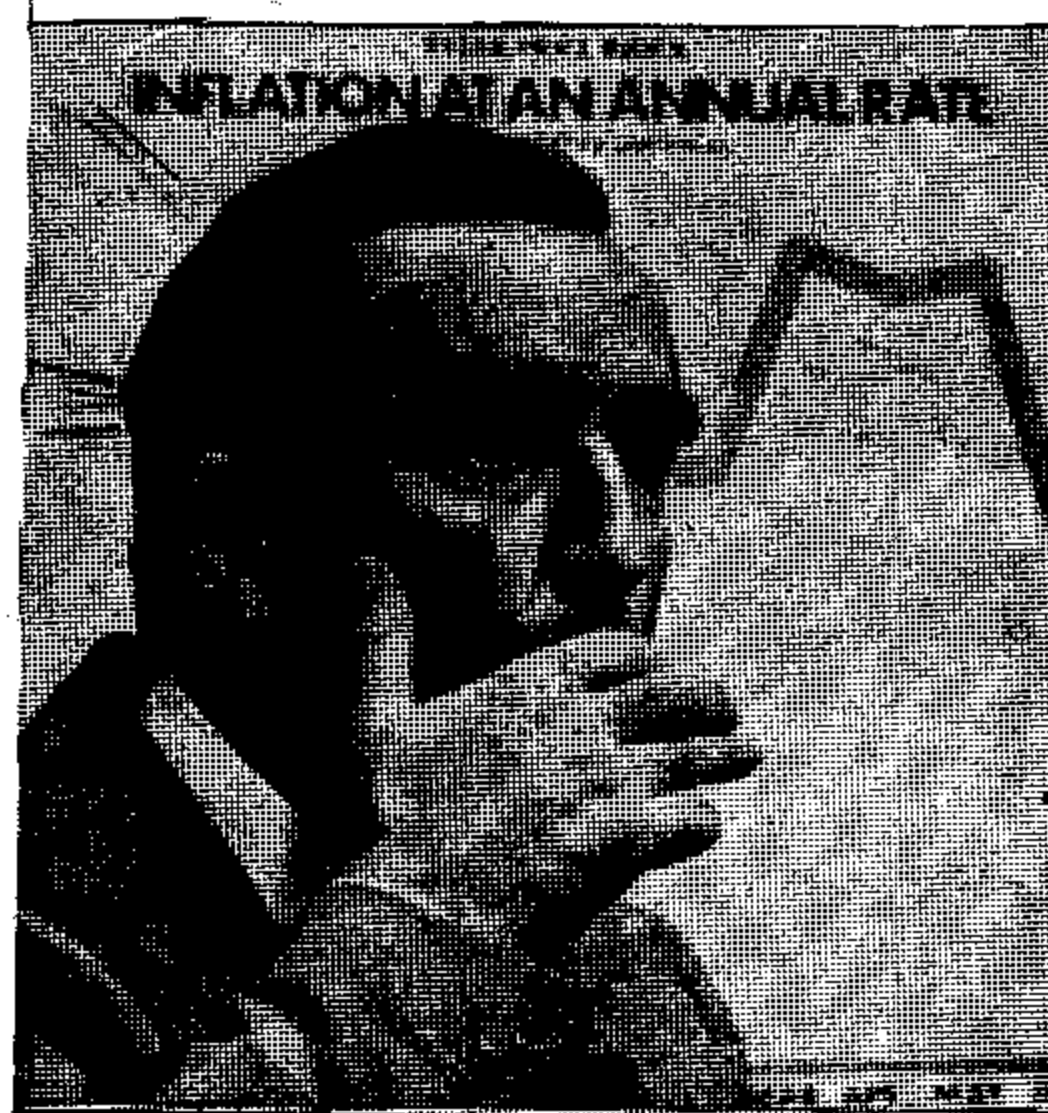
Even on the most optimistic assumptions about price rises, Healey's proposals mean sharp cuts in living standards. Labour Weekly on 23rd April published a table for a married man with two children on average earnings.

With a 3% pay limit operating, and the full tax relief promised by Healey, he would get a 5.6% rise in net pay. With a 8% rise in prices over 12 months, that would mean a 2.2% drop in living standards.

A 5% pay limit with half the tax relief would mean 6.4% increase in net pay — or, with 9% price rises a 2.4% drop in living standards.

And a 7½% pay increase with no tax relief would, Labour Weekly estimates, result in a 2.4% decline in living standards.

There is no way forward for the working class in juggling with Healey's schemes. Labour Weekly's figures make absolutely clear the need to fight for automatic cost of living wage increases, £1 for every 1% price rise, at the expense of profits.



Healey

THE FIRST Labour Party Young Socialists Conference since the launching of WORKERS ACTION saw this paper's supporters emerge as the biggest revolutionary tendency within the Labour Party's youth movement.

That movement, dominated by the supporters of the paper "Militant", is a mere shadow of what a youth movement organised under the banner of socialism could be. And its annual Easter Conference reflected yet again the distance between the living struggles of working class youth and the pious resolution passing of most LPYS branches.

If that gap existed because the political movement, the LPYS, was too revolutionary for young people, it might be forgivable. But the gap arises because the whole atmosphere of the LPYS lacks the sense of rebellion, the raw material of revolutionary feeling, that broad layers of youth show in a chaotic, unorganised way.

While the Militant tendency retained its domination of the Conference and of the LPYS movement, its grip was significantly weakened compared to previous years.

Agenda

For instance, 68 of the 168 resolutions on the final agenda presented views opposed to those of 'Militant' — a few of them right-wing in inspiration, but most of them either from "Clause 4" grouping which supports Tribune or from the revolutionary left.

Using their dominance of the standing orders committee and other committees, the Militant tendency managed bureaucratically to remove a number of these motions from the order paper. The opening debate

on the Economy passed the usual resolution for an "Enabling Act" — a parliamentary conjuring trick which will allow "Labour" to enact a socialist crisis programme" of nationalising the 250 monopolies. But the challenge to that conception and its idea of a "Parliamentary road to socialism" was shuffled off the agenda.

An Emergency Motion supported by nine LPYS branches calling for support for the May 26th demonstration against Government policy and calling on MPs who claim to be on the side of the working class to vote against Healey's Budget was likewise suppressed. The same fate met a motion supporting the Palestinians' struggle.

Snide

And where behind the scenes bureaucraticism was not sufficient, the chairman relied on demagoguery and ideological backwardness to get his way.

The sharpest example of this — showing at the same time the dismal backwardness of the Militant — came on the second day. Rejecting a point of order from Marie Montaut (Norwood LPYS), LPYS chairman Andy Bevan patronisingly called her "daring". When she objected, he got a good response from the Militant gallery to his snide rejoinder: "I must have been out of my mind".

The tenor of the Militant resolutions was entirely predictable: a Militant medicine-show with the same cure for every ailment. Avoiding any concrete analysis, every problem was forced into the rigid mould of anglo-idiotic reformism.

Basically this takes the form of counterposing to the actions of

LABOUR PARTY YOUNG SOCIALISTS' CONFERENCE

A NEW CHALLENGE FROM THE LEFT

any living movement struggling over partial or sectional demands something called "the struggle for the socialist programme".

In the debate on the Middle East it means refusing support for the national struggle against Zionism and imperialism being spearheaded by the Palestinian people, and instead calling on workers and peasants to unite for "socialism". In the debate on Ireland it meant Militant supporters repeating the lies and ignorance of the gutter-press against the Republican movement and advocating instead, "socialism". In the debate on women's liberation, these reformists opposed support for the National Abortion Campaign, because "abortion won't solve women's problems, only socialism will".

Passive

If this were merely an expression of abstract passive socialist propaganda to suit the political taxidermist rather than the activist it would be bad. But what we have exhibited here is worse, for this "socialism" which does not embrace and transcend the national

struggle — it rejects it. It does not take up any of the real struggles of the oppressed, but rather, gives them a sour schoolmasterly report: "Not good enough, must do better next time".

It was outside the Conference hall, at the "fringe" meeting called by Workers Action, that this was most clearly demonstrated. Andrew Hornung, speaking in support of Workers Action, asked the Militant supporters present whether they would call on their MPs to vote against the Budget. Bob Edwards replied for the Militant that they would not. Instead they would fight "for a socialist programme".

But if Militant's "socialist programme" is a "socialist programme" which does not include national liberation, which does not include women's liberation, and which does not even include opposition to rankly anti-working class measures put forward on behalf of the capitalist class, it is also a "socialist programme" which is peaceful to the core.

All armed struggle, whether in Ireland, in the Middle East, or even in South Africa, was given the derisive and flippant label of "terrorism". But the machine of capitalist

terror against the working class, the state, did not come in for such rabid attack. On the contrary, the theoretical system of Militant embodies the essential feature of reformism, the idea that socialism can be achieved without the bourgeois state being smashed.

The Conference heard a fraternal delegate from the Chilean Young Socialists give an even-handed account of the lessons of the Chile coup. There had perhaps been excessive reformist illusions but he also attacked "those who thought that the socialist revolution could be accomplished in a single act".

Power

That last criticism — significantly — was greeted with a big round of applause. Despite Militant's claims that its pet formula of 'nationalising the 250 monopolies' is merely a popular paraphrase for the revolutionary act of overthrowing capitalist power, the applause showed that the majority of Militant's supporters understand its ideas as a gradualist road to socialism.

And we heard Militant speakers arguing that Portugal under the 6th Provisional Government is a work-



workers' ACTION

supporters' groups are being formed in the following places:

Birmingham, Bolton, Brighton, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Chelmsford, Chester, Coventry, Crawley, Durham, Edinburgh, Leicester, Liverpool, London, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newcastle, Newtown, Northampton, Nottingham, Oxford, Reading, Rochdale, Sheffield, Stafford, Stoke

Write for details of meetings & activities to:
WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27

Scottish unions up behind Lab

IN A SERIES of votes in which the left was defeated two to one, the Scottish Trades Union Congress at Perth threw its weight behind the Government's attacks on the working class.

Only the weekend before, STUC Secretary James Milne was addressing a demonstration called by the Lothian Federation of Trades Councils on the importance of free collective bargaining and opposition to wage controls — the cornerstone of STUC policy. Yet by halfway through the Conference those principles had not only been rejected, but a majority of delegates were applauding right wing GMWU official Charles Donnett's statement that "the fact is that free collective bargaining is and always has been a myth for millions of workers in this country" and accepting 'the need for' some kind of incomes policy.

With these victories tucked under their belts the TUC leaders can now go to Healey and commit the trade union movement to wage cuts and a sharp downturn in the working class standard of living.

And they can do it with the pass

sold and signed by some of the traditionally most militant trade unionists in the country.

Nor will the TUC leaders lose any time in doing just that. The international bankers, the finance houses and the currency speculators have told Murray to get a move on. And no doubt he will.

Certainly Murray, Jones and Co. will not feel the slightest bit inhibited by the few critical poses struck by the STUC, such as their opposition, by a substantial majority, to the figure of 3% as an upper limit for wage deals, describing it as "inadequate and unacceptable". The Morning Star makes great play of this, greeting it as a blow at Dennis Healey.

But in fact it is nothing more than the rejection of the first bargaining figure put forward by the government. Healey and the other Labour Ministers have made it clear that the 3% is negotiable. The House of Commons Expenditure Committee has recently revealed that the Government's calculations for next year have been made on the basis of a 5% not a 3% increase in wages.

The STUC has accepted the logic

of Healey. Now the TUC can go ahead and do a deal with Healey.

The overwhelming vote against social services expenditure cuts did not unfortunately commit the STUC to any specific action at all. Neither did it call for any specific action to be taken by other bodies opposing cuts. As such it enters the endless list of pious resolutions passed in the trade union movement deploring cuts.

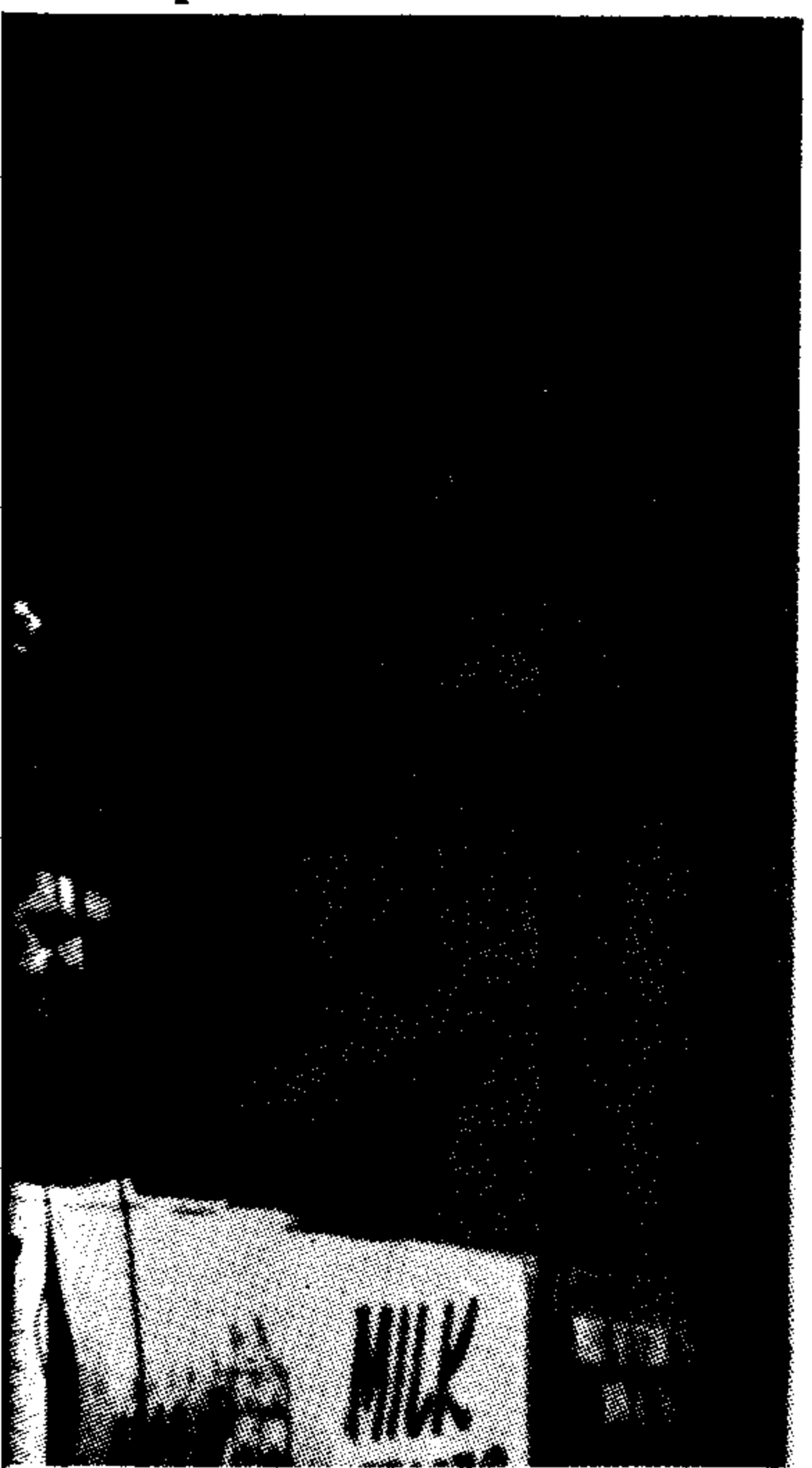
Doubt

Unlike when the £6 limit was agreed to, this time neither Jones, nor Donnett nor the AUEW Scottish Region's Gavin Laird bothered with the statistical fiddles, trying to prove that this or that section would be better off. This time everybody was going to be worse off, and no-one doubted that.

Added to the spectacle of the working class offered up as human sacrifice on the altar of the Labour Government was the sight of heresy-hunting in response to any

CONFERENCE

...state. In other words: nationalisation equals socialism with or without the struggle for power of the working class. One of the very few right-wing resolutions on the agenda called for the expulsion from the Labour Party of the alleged "Revolutionary Socialist League". Workers Action replied to this with a leaflet asserting the right of all socialist tendencies to organise in the Labour Party. The leaflet pointed out that the hunting articles in the capitalist press had been unable to uncover any evidence of the RSL's existence since 1965. Any evidence that former leaders of the RSL, like Ted Grant, now leaders of the Militant tendency is besides the point, since the inadequate but more or less revolutionary politics of the RSL are quite different from Militant's reformism. As the situation inside the LPYS opens up, the opportunities for revolutionary ideas are increasing. Whether they are taken in time will be decided, not by anything that happened at conference, but by the work that goes on now to build a positive, outward-looking LPYS free from the dead hand of Militant's passive propaganda.



line

our

...or protest. Jack Jones even attacked the left's criticisms as really "an attack on the Labour Government" and the Labour Government a clear attack on the millions of workers who have democratically accepted the £6 limit. This is like saying that if you saw a man a lifebelt, that's an invitation to those who have drowned! Mick McGahey, who led the left at the conference, replied that "the unions are entitled to be critical about policies with which they disagree and to seek to improve policy without defeating the government." This may be better than Jones' but it, too, accepts that criticism has to be within the framework of "defeating the government". Meanwhile the international workers, the industrialists and every other species of bloodsucker in the world of finance waits to see if the unions can police the rank and file effectively. Until there's proof that they can, the pound continues its fall. Their anxiety is proof of nothing more than the fact that the power is with the rank and file. Its exercise is decisive.

THE FIGHT to force withdrawal of British troops from the Six Counties figured prominently at the 15th Annual Conference of the Labour Party Young Socialists, mainly through the work of supporters of **WORKERS ACTION**. The conference debated resolutions promoted by Workers Action and by the Socialist Charter; 150 people heard the case against British policy in "Northern Ireland" at the Workers Action meeting; and 50 people attended a meeting called by the Troops Out Movement.

The dominant "Militant" tendency has nothing concrete to say about "Northern Ireland". They believe socialism there would be a good idea, and so would unity of Catholic and Protestant workers. So say we all!

But to the **REALITY** of a bitterly divided working class, and of the anti-Catholic racism of the majority of the Protestant working class, within the Six County statelet, their solution is "a militia based on the trade unions to combat sectarianism". Translated into different terms, this might be not unreasonably rendered "for a militia based on the Ku Klux Klan to defend US Blacks".

The blind and dimwitted thinkers who churn out 'Militant' have in seven years failed to grasp that the Trade Unions themselves are riddled with sectarianism. Stanley Orme, Under-Secretary for Northern Ireland, who was at the conference, was said to have burst out laughing when he heard of this Noddy in Toyland quack "solution". But for many years this crass idiocy has dominated the LPYS virtually unchallenged.



Speaking for the 'troops out' resolutions, Kevin McKeon, Kevin Mayes, Mick O'Sullivan and Mike Davis challenged Militant and the Tribune tendency, who support the British army as the best peacekeepers.

Kevin McKeon (Carlton LPYS) accused the majority of being British chauvinists, who refused to oppose British domination of the 6 Counties. He denounced the arrogance of demanding that the IRA should first apply for a certificate of merit from British sectarian socialists, before those so-called socialists would support them.

The Irish people had a right to freedom from ALL British interference — unconditionally. The IRA had a right to the support of all serious socialists in Britain against the terrorists which the British Government had licensed and let loose on the Catholics, the British Army.

The idea of a Trade Union Defence Force was a reactionary utopia, showing that the Militant were abysmally ignorant of Northern Ireland conditions. Militant made support for the demand for troop withdrawal dependent on the prior existence of such a force. This meant that they would in practice support the presence of the British army until doomsday!

IRELAND STILL

THE ACID TEST

Comrade McKeon flung in the face of the self-proclaimed "Trotskyists" of Militant what Trotsky wrote in the Manifesto issued by the Second Congress of the Communist International: "The British Socialist who fails to support by all possible means the uprisings in Ireland, Egypt and India against the London plutocracy — such a socialist deserves to be branded with infamy, if not with a bullet".

Kevin Mayes (Northampton North LPYS) argued that unless British socialists supported the right of the Irish people and such

AUEW. In short, they played to complacent English labour movement chauvinism, and predictably the conference majority voted against our motions. But the issue was more at the centre of the LPYS conference than ever before. Many young workers will have gone away thinking about it; some of them will learn.

The 150 people attending the Workers Action readers' meeting heard Neil Bell from Derry give a detailed analysis of the situation in Ireland and the tasks of British socialists. He asked the audience,

ed that only a Workers Action supporter from a YS branch sponsoring a Troops Out resolution could speak for us. Though not used to accepting dictats from anyone about how to conduct our own affairs, we still agreed.

We then learned that the official TOM speaker was to be Paddy Prendiville.

Mr Prendiville is — as the meeting showed — venomously hostile to Workers Action. Recently, together with Mr G Lawless, also prominent in TOM, he was responsible for cowardly bullying against a female supporter of WA, and for a hysterically slanderous leaflet circulated inside TOM and directed against WA supporters, as well as against the International-Communist League.

Still, concerned with the politics of the issue, we continued to give our support to the meeting.

The meeting, poorly advertised, attracted few non-committed people. The WA speaker made the case for solidarity with the Republican movement, for immediate troops withdrawal, and against the right of the 6 County state to exist. Prendiville delivered a flimsy demagogic speech, totally inappropriate to answer the miseducation rampant at the conference. He couldn't refrain, throughout this, from thinly veiled innuendos against WA, the major troops-out force supporting the meeting and at the conference.

After a WA speaker from the floor attempted to criticise and fill in the gaps in his analysis, Prendiville was given the 'right to reply'. He delivered a long harangue against WA, including the slanderous idiocy that WA "mirrored" the imperialist Militant tendency, and had done nothing to raise the Irish question in the working class. (The logic, apparently: all critics of TOM are identical!)

Speaking from the floor, Rich Palsler, of Red Weekly, felt obliged to ask Prendiville to withdraw this moronic slander against WA, as did WA supporters. Prendiville refused, and the Chairman (a Chartist supporter) refused to call him to order. After that, WA supporters gave him a rough time, letting him get away with nothing. The meeting ended rowdily.

Despite TOM, it was a relatively good conference for the politics of troop withdrawal from Ireland. In attempting to work with, and not cut across TOM, WA had advertised its own meeting as just "How to fight the government", not mentioning Ireland. Even that did not allay the inveterate factionalism of the little clique who run TOM.

We draw two conclusions: the attendance at the TOM meeting, and the behaviour of the representative of a supposed 'broad movement', gratuitously slandering the major force supporting the united-front meeting, show that TOM is not effective even in its own limited terms. It really is high time to build a genuine united-front movement to fight for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland — a movement based on and controlled by delegates from affiliated labour movement bodies. The monopoly on such work now claimed by the sectlet leading TOM is self-evidently harmful to the cause it claims to champion.

WORKERS ACTION DAY SCHOOL
Building a fighting LPYS
 Discussion on which road to socialism, on Ireland, on the Working Women's Charter and on unemployment. Starting 11.30am at Sidney Stringer School, COVENTRY (near bus station). All LPYS members welcome.

SAT MAY 8

armed bodies as had their support to fight to drive out the British Army they were scabbing on the real fight for socialism — in Britain as well as in Ireland.

Mick O'Sullivan (Hornsey LPYS) exploded some of the Militant myths about the Northern Ireland labour movement. In the mobilisation of the Catholic working class in Derry after the burning of Long Kesh, for example, the Irish Militant supporters had played no part. Why? They simply avoided the question of British Army repression, the Border, internment, etc, for fear of coming into conflict with the Protestant base in the Trade Unions.

Militant speakers, having first covered themselves with the pious avowal that "capitalism was to blame" for all the troubles in Ireland (like everything else in the world); concentrated on Daily Express-type denunciation of the IRA as "sectarian madmen" and indignant denials that any sectarianism could exist in the Northern Ireland sections of unions like the

most of whom rejected the idea that the state in Britain was neutral and believed it to be an instrument of class repression, WHY so many in Britain accepted the self-same argument when it was applied to Northern Ireland?

Did so many British socialists believe that the British state in Ireland was benevolent and neutral because they thought the Irish were an inferior species, needing the guiding and restraining hand of a master race? It was up to British socialists to prove that they didn't think so.

The TOM meeting proved a flop and a fiasco, which very nearly ended in uproar. We are forced to give details here, to counter rumour-mongers, for Workers Action supporters were at the centre of the conflict at the meeting.

Workers Action was asked to sponsor a TOM meeting, together with the Chartist tendency and a few supporters of Red Weekly in the LPYS. Believing that TOM, which claims much support from MPs and others in the labour movement (though the claim is looking increasingly empty) was probably the best organisation to call a meeting on Ireland, we agreed. The organisers insist-



20,000 people went on an illegal march through Dublin organised by the Provisionals to commemorate the Easter Rising against British rule in 1916. The 'Militant' tendency in the LPYS dismisses this movement as 'terrorists' and refuses to call for the withdrawal of British troops from Ireland. No doubt, had 'Militant' been around in 1916, the Rising would also have been condemned in similar terms by them.

1926 GENERAL STRIKE IN BRITAIN

THE General Strike of 1926 made an indelible imprint on the minds of millions of workers, an imprint that has become part of the collective memory of the British working class. There are few organised trade unionists who do not have some idea of the issues involved and the 'lessons' it taught.

These lessons range from the leaders of the trade union movement who shudder at the memory and exclaim "Never Again", to tens of thousands of participants who have remembered well the nine days when the working class demonstrated that the whole functioning of society depended on their labour.

The General Strike was, however, no isolated event. The class which rules Britain, and its lackeys in the labour movement, like to present it as such — as an inexplicable, uncharacteristic brainstorm which afflicted a normally docile trade union movement.

Certainly, the strike brought scenes which in their scale were unparalleled. It was a mass strike in the fullest sense — the whole working class was affected. Sections that were only semi-organised or unorganised were drawn in — if not officially in terms of the General Council's "waves" of strikers, at least into the mass demonstrations, meetings, pickets, into a vast collective effort of the working class as a class.

John Strachey recalled the impression made on the Labour candidates, returning to their constituencies, by the May Day meetings in Birmingham on the Saturday before the strike began.

"When they reached the headquarters of their divisional Labour Parties they found unexpected crowds gathering around the banners of local parties and trade unions.

As they marched with their comrades through the streets of the city, unprecedented masses of people lined the route and followed them to the park where the May Day demonstration was being held. They did not realise that, almost literally, these great crowds were not to disperse until fourteen days later when they were dismissed at another demonstration.

"The whole city swayed with the quiet vibrations of these impressive masses."

Every town and city saw demonstrations and meetings on a scale not seen since the days of the Chartists. One perennial lie of the trade union



A.J. Cook — a militant miners' strike leader.

bureaucrat was nailed almost before the strike began: 'the members won't respond — we are as advanced as it is possible to be'. This lie was to be further exposed when, at the end of the nine days, TUC calls for a return to work were ignored, and for three more days the numbers on strike continued to increase.

Yet the strike was not a flash in the pan. It was the culmination of a whole period of working class struggle stretching back to the five years before the first world war.

The roots of this period lie in the deep-seated economic changes that British capitalism was undergoing in this period. The growth of large scale production, the formation of ever larger monopolies and cartels, and of employers' associations, forced trade unionists to create ever larger formations, amalgamations of existing unions, industrial unions like the NUR, and federations like the Transport Workers Federation.

It was a period which saw increasingly naked linking of the bosses and the state, and the intervention of the latter in industrial disputes. The use of troops in the miners' strikes of 1911 and 1912, the coercion, arrest and deportation of strikers in Glasgow in 1915, the deployment of warships in the Mersey in 1919 — all this showed a ruling class willing to resort to any means to control the working class.

The weakened position of British capitalism as against its more modern rivals such as Germany and the United States forced the ruling class into an offensive to reduce wages and break up the fighting potential of the trade unions.

The years 1918 to 1920 saw the development in struggle of a fighting shop stewards movement capable of challenging the union bureaucrats as well as the government and the bosses.

The sudden and catastrophic depression of 1920/21 wiped out much of this rank and file organisation, and these militants turned to the creation of an unemployed workers' movement. Those of them who rallied to the newly formed British Communist Party set about the creation of militant caucuses in the trade unions, a process which culminated in the foundation of the



Strikers in the East End of London

National Minority Movement in August 1924.

The initiative of militants in unions like the Miners Federation of Great Britain and the NUR had led to the formation of alliances like the ill-fated Triple Alliance of these unions plus the Transport Workers' Federation. Bureaucratic bungling and outright treachery led to its collapse in the notorious debacle of Black Friday 1921.

Militants

Militants saw the fragmentation and sectional jealousies of the various unions, and the antiquated structures of the TUC, as important elements of this failure. Under their pressure, the General Council of the TUC was set up, replacing the ramshackle Parliamentary Committee of the Congress.

But centralised structures were not enough. Indeed, in the hands of venal bureaucrats like J.H. Thomas they could be a powerful weapon against the rank and file.

In a series of articles over the next few weeks, WORKERS

ACTION will be dealing with these events and the people involved in them: the Minority Movement, the policies of the British Communist Party and of the Communist International; the role of the TUC leaders, both the right and the 'left' within the General Council; and, most important, the workers' organisations generated by the strike. And we will look at the role of the Trades Councils and the Councils of Action, at the political implications and nature of a general strike, and at the results and effects of the betrayal of the strike on a generation of working class militants.

We have much to learn from the nine days in May 1926, both positively and negatively. To us in a time of major capitalist crisis, who have witnessed the struggles of 1972-74 and who face similar and more serious battles in the coming years, such analysis is vital.

As the old saying goes — those who do not learn the lessons of history are condemned to repeat it.

DAVE STOCKING

WHEN the British General Strike began on May 4th 1926, workers in Southern China were already in the eleventh month of a General Strike against the British in Hong Kong and Canton. This strike, still the longest in working class history, shows many of the features of the revolutionary concept of the general strike.

It started as a protest stoppage against the shooting of a worker in Shanghai by British police. Although unions had only been in existence in Hong Kong for four or five years, they had already learnt a great deal.

The seamen's strike of 1922 had shown the need for solidarity action on a vast scale. Pickets were sent to Shanghai, nearly a thousand miles away, to stop the recruitment of scabs. The strikers themselves had evaded the British authorities by going to Canton on the Chinese mainland. Contact with Hong Kong was maintained through special committees and pickets.

All these lessons were remembered in 1925.

The original stoppage, involving seamen, printers, telegraphers and many employees in foreign firms, was called by the left wing All China General Union. Two other, moderate, unions refused to join the strike at first.

Blockade

But when the strikers paraded through Canton on June 23rd 1925, the British marines stationed on Shameen Island in the centre of the city opened fire, killing 50 of the strikers. This unprovoked and murderous attack brought out the rest of the Chinese workers in Hong Kong itself, and all those in Canton who worked for foreign firms. Now, instead of a protest, the strike became a blockade against the British colony.

The forty thousand strikers elected a strike committee of 13 men to organise the whole operation. To ensure that this small body didn't lose touch with the needs of the strike or the feelings of the strikers, a Congress of Strikers' Delegates was formed. This consisted of 800 and met three times a week.

It was this body which decided the strategy to be followed throughout the strike, issued regulations concerning the imposition of the blockade, and sent delegates not only to the rest of China, but as far away as Calcutta and Siam.

The strike committee had forces to

make sure its decisions were obeyed. Five regiments of armed pickets were formed, each of 540 men. 12 gunboats manned by striking seamen patrolled the coast of Southern China to prevent any British goods from being landed.

In the Spring of 1926 the Committee, known in China as "Government No. 2", controlled some 600 miles of the Chinese coast from Swatow to Peihai. All British goods captured were auctioned to help the strike fund.

Any firm, Chinese or foreign, caught dealing with the British was fined by order of the Committee. If the fines were not paid, then imprisonment in gaols commandeered by the workers was the punishment.

In order to maintain the morale and organisation of the strikers, committees were set up to deal with education (most of the workers were illiterate), housing, food, finance, propaganda and recreation.

Such was the power of the Strike Committee that "Government No. 1" had to provide financial support for it.

At this time there was no united national government covering the whole of China. But the Canton Government of the Kuo Min Tang (Nationalist Party) were steadily increasing the area under their control in the south. In order to stay in power, they had to be on good terms with the working class and the unions. They were helped in this by the policy of the Communist Party, which was to operate entirely within the framework of the Nationalist Party.

This policy (the so-called "bloc within") was the result of the Communist International's belief that the first essential in China was to establish a National Government controlled by the Chinese bourgeoisie. Such a government, it was argued, could stop the continual expansion of Imperialist control of China, and thus allow the 'natural' development of the economy and the introduction of democratic rights for the working class and peasants. On this basis the Left would then be able to increase its strength up to the point where there could be a second revolution to introduce socialism.

This policy counterposed the bourgeois-led struggle for national unity to the immediate interests of the Chinese working class, which was schematically separated from that struggle by an inflexible stages theory. And it was this that eventually led to the ending of the strike in October 1926.

In July of that year the Canton govern-

...AND IN CHINA



A street execution by reactionaries in the 1920s.

ment had decided to launch "the Northern Expedition" to finally establish its control over the rest of China. When the Armies marched north under Chiang Kai-shek in the summer of 1926, the Communists (who were recognised as the leaders of the Strike Committee) agreed that to continue or extend the activity and power of the strike would waste resources which could otherwise go to the support of the Army.

Thus after two months of negotiations the strike was called off, and the workers returned — for the most part still united and organised.

The Communist Party turned its attent-

ion to gaining support for the Northern Expedition. Along the intended route of the Army, workers and peasants rose to liberate towns held by the feudal warlords, and gathered supplies for the Army.

Chiang Kai-shek accepted the support, and waited for the time when he could make sure that the workers would never again have the power they had held in Canton.

On April 12th 1927 Chiang entered Shanghai, which was by now controlled by the workers. What had been seen by the Stalinised Communist International as the first step toward an eventual Socialist revolution was at last seen in its true

colours: within hours, hundreds of workers lay dead in the streets, all unions were declared illegal and their officers were arrested.

The slaughter continued in the other towns controlled by Chiang. Thousands upon thousands died at the hands of the man who Stalin had made an honorary member of the Executive of the Communist International.

The Chinese labour movement, which only months before this had carried out the longest general strike in history, never recovered.

STEVE McSWEENEY

NUT Conference — No fight... except against militant teachers

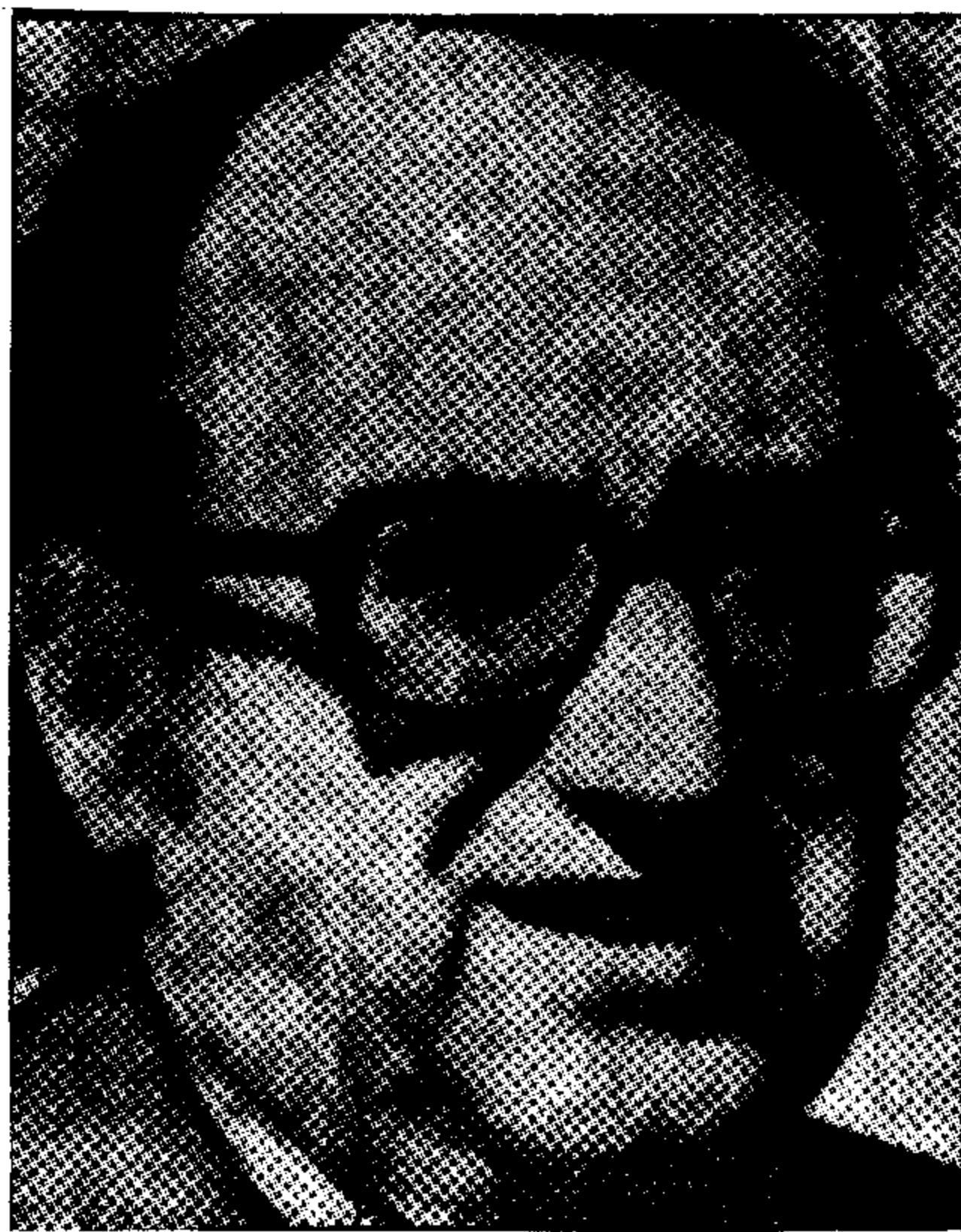
Although Rank and File, the militant left-wing grouping in the National Union of Teachers, retained its two seats on the 38-strong Executive, this year's NUT Conference in Scarborough was a blow to the battle against cuts and unemployment in education.

Militants have been fighting for policies of NO COVERING for absent or non-appointed staff. But the Executive pushed through conference its memorandum on unemployment, requiring teachers to go through a six-month long investigation before it would consider allowing them to take 'no cover' action. (This at the same time as the right wing NAS/UWT is instructing its members in twice as many areas as the NUT have, to refuse to teach primary classes above 35 or secondary classes over 30, and to refuse to cover for absent colleagues).

The General Secretary of the NUT also defended compulsory early retirement of teachers — and, to top it up, the Conference endorsed the disciplinary procedure proposed by the Executive, which enables them, on 'prima facie' evidence of disobedience against the NUT leadership, to suspend any teacher from the union for a period of 21 days prior to a secret hearing

where the teacher has no right of legal representation.

With women (a very large proportion of the NUT's membership) sharply hit by the cuts, the Working Women's Charter was nonetheless again rejected on the grounds that the clauses on contraception and abortion might "offend a significant section of the membership".



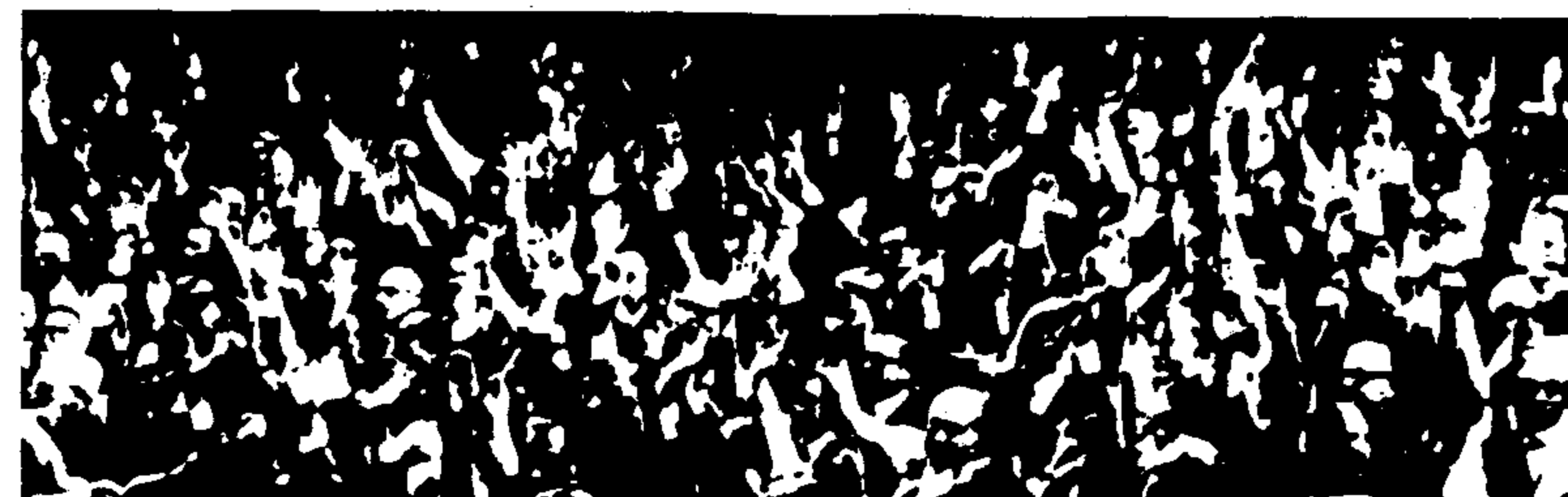
Fred Jarvis

On salaries, too, the Conference accepted that teachers and the education service should help pay the cost of capitalism's crisis. The figure for next year's salary claim was left open... because the Executive felt they could not predict what Government policy would be. Moreover, the Executive recommended, successfully, that the union strike fund be frozen at its present level (of just over £10 per union member!).

Stress Schools

Conference was split down the middle over the question of special payments to teachers in stress schools (Social Priority Schools). In a morning session Conference voted for their abolition and a diversion of funds into books and equipment. Delegates argued that the payments were divisive, and no solution at all to the problems of disadvantaged schools.

The fact that Conference reversed its decision in the afternoon was a result of some neat footwork by the NUT Executive. Having had the amendment passed in the morning, the Executive quickly argued against the amended motion in the afternoon. Because there were still a



THE UNIONS



lot of delegates outside the conference hall, who most likely thought the debate had already been won, the amended motion was defeated.

Later at conference, Fred Mulley, Education Minister, outlined another false solution to educational disadvantage, when he said that those Local Education Authorities (only a few, but most notably Inner London) who were practising 'banding' (i.e. allocating a certain number of high ability primary school children to certain deprived secondary schools to achieve a 'balanced intake') could continue doing so until he thought fit to stop them. This kind of disguised 11-plus is no answer to the problem of disadvantaged schools, and it can be used by grammar schools going comprehensive to maintain their privilege. The only solution is massive positive discrimination, which fundamentally means smaller classes, and more teachers recruited from the growing army of unemployed.

That army of unemployed will continue to grow — unless Rank & File, at present in disarray, can reorient its forces, work out a clear strategy, and begin to organise a concerted fight-back.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH
[North London NUT]

Women's hospital 'under siege'



DOWN THE ROAD from three main line railway stations and surrounded by multi-million pound spanking new buildings stands the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson hospital for women.

In its present neglected condition it looks more like an old warehouse. And the fact that the Area Health Authority actually WANTS it to deteriorate further is as good a signal as any that where health cuts are concerned, women are coming up first for the chop.

The Area Health Authority wants to close down Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. But they don't have an alternative, except to scatter its work among a number of different wards at Whittington Hospital, which has some of the longest waiting lists and is already threatened with cut-backs in its building programme. They say this transfer is short term, and that in the long term the whole of the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson will be reassembled as a complete unit on a different site. But as yet, they don't have a site, let alone the money to put up a hospital on it.

Meanwhile (and how long 'meanwhile' is, is anyone's guess) women will have to join two-year waiting lists; abortion facilities will probably be cut out altogether in the transfer; staff will be sacked or at the very best will lose the residential accommodation they have at EGA.

Already, the EGA is under siege. After the closure decision, a fault was found in the lift shaft, now only the ground floor can function, which prevents the hospital doing any surgery, or as many abortions as before. So already, women in the area are having to suffer because, basically, women are not regarded as medical priority.

The Campaign to save the EGA, which mounted a picket last week on the Area Health Authority at Camden Town Hall, points out that "the Area Health Authority is going

to very great trouble and expense to save spending money on immediate repair of the lift in the EGA. It doesn't seem to have occurred to them yet that a perfect site exists between Euston and St Pancras stations which provides a short, long, medium or whatever-term solution, and where the EGA would be retained as a unit. The site is occupied at the moment by the EGA... Could property speculation on the present site be behind their avoiding this logical alternative?"

Over to the east in Hackney, two other hospitals are in such a run-down condition that many more new-born babies die in the area than elsewhere in the country. At Plaistow hospital, the special care unit is no bigger than an average sitting room, and some babies have to be taken to other hospitals because the facilities are so bad. Yet the hospital administrator responded to the publication of these facts by blaming the very women who are being denied adequate facilities: "It very much depends on what happens in the mother's tummy, rather than what happens in a hospital", he exclaimed patronisingly.

Now, while any five year old will tell you that babies come from "mother's tummy", any woman knows that in this age of medical science, only the hospital and the decrepit NHS can be held responsible for many of these deaths — not the women who are forced to bear the brunt of the NHS cuts.

The women's movement has long pointed out that there's a tendency in the medical profession (which is heavily dominated by men) to blame women for their own illnesses. At a time when women's jobs and social facilities are being slashed as a "luxury", when the nursery facilities programme is being virtually abolished, we can expect these attitudes to our health to become increasingly prominent and to lead to more cuts and closures.

NEW REPORT GIVES AMMUNITION TO THE BUDGET-SLASHERS

A REPORT PUBLISHED this week (and greeted with glee by large sections of the press) appears to strike a blow against 'progressive' teaching methods.

In normal usage, and in the Press, people speak as if there were two, and only two, methods of education, each clearly defined: 'progressive' and 'traditional'. In those terms, the research recently published by Dr Bennett of Lancaster University is supposed to show 'traditional' is better than 'progressive'.

In reality this is a ridiculous oversimplification. The term 'progressive' education is used to cover a wide range of different innovations in education, both in method and in content: and, conversely, 'traditional' education can mean anything up to and including children chanting their times tables and getting thrashed if they make a mistake.

Dr Bennett apparently rated selected teachers on a scale from those teaching most informally, rated 1, to those teaching most formally, rated 12. He found that children taught by teachers rated as 'formal' generally did better on achievement tests than those taught by teachers rated as more 'informal'.

Without studying the exact criteria used by Dr Bennett to rate teachers as 'formal' or 'informal' (for example, could 'more informal' in some cases just mean teachers with less grip on what they were doing?) and other details not reported in the press, it is impossible to assess the exact implications of this research.

Informal

Certainly, however, it leaves many questions unanswered about 'progressive' or informal methods.

Such methods, generally speaking, put the emphasis on developing a child's potential on the basis of his or her individual abilities or needs, rather than treating a class as a homogenous unit where each child does the same as the next all the time. Children are encouraged to learn things for themselves rather than taking everything on trust from teachers or textbooks.

'Progressive' teaching, to be effective, demands more time from the teacher than the 'traditional' approach, and more resources. Where the old methods mean you can teach a whole class with little more than a blackboard and a

piece of chalk, if each child or small group of children is pursuing individual learning tasks, then they will need individual resources to work with.

The extra time is vitally necessary to impart structure to such an approach, for without structure individualised learning is much more likely to fray at the edges than if the class is treated as one unit. It is significant, perhaps, that the one informal class that did well in all subjects in Dr Bennett's survey was one where the curriculum was "clearly organised and well-structured".

Without smaller classes, plenty of space, and resources, it is impossible to judge these methods. It is also a fact that the teachers who are using these methods are by and large younger and less experienced.

Spin-off effects of 'progressive' approaches, the social interplay between children in a work situation, and helping each other, these important effects are not considered by the researchers. Where these effects form part of the educational aims of a 'progressive' school, it is unfair that they are not taken into account, and that success, in the report's terms, is restricted to academic success.

(In other words, if some of the 'formal' teaching completely stunted children's personalities, and desired to learn, but still made them write and do sums competently, then that would be — in the terms of the survey — unqualified success!)

The researchers measured the children's ability to do certain tasks before and after one year's teaching by the different methods. If they did so in a formal testing situation, then of course children whose teaching was geared to tests and exams would come out better.

Finally, the report covered 37 classes in Lancashire and Cumbria. The results might have been different in an area more interested in 'progressive' teaching.

This report should be taken seriously, as part of a large body of research on the question. We must oppose its use as ammunition for the obscurantists who blame all of society's ills on what they see as undisciplined modern teaching methods, and advocate a return to the authoritarian days of chalk, talk, and strap. Unfortunately, too, it comes at a time when the budget-slashers are looking for any excuse for education on the cheap.

IRENA HOLT.



They use less space like this...

2,000 ON ANTI-CUTS DEMO

NEARLY 2000 marched in London last weekend on the National Coordinating Committee against the Cuts in the NHS demonstration.

Included were NALGO, the Hull dockers' shop stewards' committee, the North London district of the NUR, and many NUPE branches.

The demonstration did not fully represent the breadth of the opposition to the cuts across the country. The need remains urgent to focus and crystallise that opposition, organising it into labour movement anti-cuts committees with a clear fighting programme.

WIDIRKERS IN ACTION

WHEN THE National Front announced their plans to march through Bradford they argued that it was simply part of the build-up to the local elections to be held soon. At most this is a half-truth. No doubt they hoped to boost their chances of success by a demonstration of support, but that was by no means the limit to their intentions. Marches designed to impress people of the size of a movement do not go through back streets, but town centres.

The main reason behind the Fascists' march on Saturday 24th was quite straightforward intimidation of the local immigrant community in Manningham. It is those who are impressed by such bully boy tactics whom the Front want to attract to their ranks. This is especially true after the recent split between the Front and the National Party.

It is because this was the basic thinking behind the National Front's march on Saturday that Workers Action supporters disagreed with the organisers of the Trades Council sponsored counter-demonstration in Bradford. That demonstration was planned to show the amount of support that exists for anti-racist ideas and organisations. The march, which consisted of some 4000 people, started in Manningham, but focused on a meeting in the town centre. If everybody had stayed with the march, then the Fascists would have been free to parade



through the immigrant areas exactly as they wanted to.

As it was, several hundred anti-Fascists decided to do everything possible to prevent this. Police protection eventually allowed the National Front to reach their objective, a school in the centre of the Manningham district where many immigrant families live.

It was here that several hundred more anti-Fascist demonstrators who had left the Trades Council meeting in town and then fought their way through a police cordon finally met up with those who had followed the Front along their march. It was here also that a near-riot developed as anti-Front demonstrators, both local and from as far away as the South-East, clashed with police protecting the school where the Front were holding a meeting.

The decision of the local authority, Bradford Metropolitan, to allow the Front to use a school for a meeting, was a blatant provocation to the local community. The stone-throwing and fighting that broke out was the answer to this provocation, an answer the council will have to learn to expect.

Despite the fact that both the council and the Front themselves will no doubt think twice before attempting a repeat of Saturday's events, there are several lessons the Left has to learn from them. The most obvious of these is the importance of actually preventing the Fascists from marching. If the 4000 people on the Trades Council march had been in Manningham it is very unlikely that the Front would have been able to march at all.

On top of this, the fact that the bulk of the anti-Front demonstrators didn't reach the scene of the fighting until the police had already cordoned off the school points to a lack of organisation and coordination. The level of organisation which can deal with problems like sudden changes of route, special branch provocateurs, and so on, is not something that comes out of thin air. The pitched battles against Mosley's Fascists in the 30s were not spontaneous events. They were the result of months of organisation and preparation on the part of locally and Trade Union-based anti-Fascist committees. The same is needed today.

Unions like NALGO and NUPE

who are involved in local authority work should put every possible pressure on their employers to prevent the Fascists from being allowed to march or hold meetings. The Fire Brigade Union should also insist that its members will not intervene in circumstances like last Saturday's when, in the middle of stone-throwing and mounted police charges, they were expected to put a police car back up the right way.

Saturday's demonstration was one of the first where really big numbers of immigrants, young and old, have marched with the Left against the Front. Such cooperation has to be extended into other areas of activity such as anti-cuts committees and the fight against unemployment.

Less than 100 Fascists from Kingsley Road's National Party and Colin Jordan's British Movement braved an anti-fascist counter-demonstration of 400 at Trafalgar Square on Saturday, to hold their "Stop Immigration" rally.

After the Fascist orators had been drowned out by heckling for about 15 minutes, police launched an attack on the anti-Fascists, driving them away from the Square and making 25 arrests.

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Send copy to 'Events', 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

Tuesday 27th April. Greater Manchester TOM meeting on "British imperialism & Ireland". 7.30pm at the Ducie Arms, Gt Ducie St.

Friday 30th April. Revolutionary Communist Group forum on Ireland - "The formation of the Northern Ireland statelet". 8pm at the Earl Russell, Pancras Rd, Kings Cross.

Friday 30th April. Workers League meeting on "Sexual Oppression under Capitalism", introduced by Gill Simms. 8pm at the Roebuck, Tottenham Court Rd.

Friday 30th April/Saturday 1st May: Critique conference on "The Future Socialist Society", starting 7pm Friday at Kings College Cambridge. Registration fee £1 for Critique subscribers, £1.25 for non-subscribers.

Saturday 8th May. Conference on 'The role of the troops in Ireland'. From 9.30am at Manchester Poly Students' Union, Cavendish House, All Saints. Speakers include Ernie Roberts, Mike Farrell, and debate between Sean Matgamna (Nat. Sec. International-Communist League) and Al Stewart (Vice-President, National Union of Students). Social in the evening with Irish Mist.

Saturday 8th May. Workers Action Day School on "Building a Fighting LPYS". Discussion on which road to socialism, on Ireland, on the Working Womens Charter, on unemployment. 11.30am to 5pm at Sidney Stringer school, Coventry (near the bus station). ALL LPYS members welcome.

Tuesday 11th May. Sheffield Workers Action public meeting. Michele Ryan on "Women, jobs and the cuts". 8pm at the Malcoach, West St.

Tuesday 11th May. South London Workers Action readers' meeting on "How to Fight the Labour Government". Speaker: Andrew Hornung. 8pm at Brixton Central Library.

Tuesday 11th May. Greater Manchester TOM meeting on "The role of the Army in Ireland". 7.30pm at the Ducie Arms, Gt Ducie St.

Thursday 13th May. Nottingham Workers Action supporters meeting: Keith Bennett on "Terrorism". 8pm at the Peacock, Mansfield Rd.

Friday 21st May. Michael Farrell speaks on "Northern Ireland: The Orange State". 7.30pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Sq. Organised by Peoples Democracy.

Saturday 22nd May. Day School on Women's Rights. 10.30am to 5pm at the Nottingham Teachers' Centre, Cranmer St, Nottingham. "The new laws and how to use them... What you and your union can do in the struggle for equal rights". Organised by Nottingham Trades Council, NCCL, WWCC, and Anti-Sex Discrimination Campaign.

Tuesday 25th May. Greater Manchester TOM meeting on "Why self-determination?". 7.30pm at the Ducie Arms, Gt Ducie St.

LEYLAND HIT BACK AFTER WORKERS CONTROL THE TRACK

JACK SPRUNG, AUEW steward and a leader of the recent assembly workers' action at Triumph Canley, was sacked late last Friday afternoon, 23rd April.

Leyland bosses were trying to get their own back after Canley workers' 10-day action controlling track speeds. Last week, Eddie McGarry, an opponent of the workers' action from the beginning, finally got the secret ballot he had been pressing for. A 3 to 1 majority voted to end the 5% worker-imposed production cutback.

That 5% cut had been a response to Leyland's refusal to make productivity payments due on a 5% increase in production achieved at Canley. Leyland bosses said that the £6 limit prevented them from paying up.

The return to normal working on Thursday afternoon was on the basis of an investigation by MPs into Canley working conditions, Leyland taking the production increases into account in future pay negotiations, and payment for production during the ten days of workers' control of track speeds.

During those ten days, management had taken the assembly workers, and all other workers involved in their action, off the clock, and obstructed the supply of components. Those foremen who cooperated with the assembly workers were taken off the clock, those who just played cards were on full pay. William Wilson, Labour MP for Covent-

ry South-East, described the scene as something out of Comic Cuts.

But beneath the comedy, a very serious betrayal has taken place. Jack Sprung was sacked on the pretext that he had (with the full knowledge of other stewards) taken a 'Cinema Action' team round the work-in. But the shop stewards' committee, meeting on Monday 26th, took no immediate action to defend him - instead they put the issue off to the works conference on Friday.

The Canley dispute is already a very clear example of how 'participation' schemes oppose, rather than fostering, workers' control. Convenor McGarry, a consistent opponent of the action to control track speeds, is a pillar of the Ryder plan.

It is important that Canley should not also become a fresh example of how employers are using the set-backs administered by the £6 limit to working class struggle to push through victimisation of militants and weakening of shop-floor organisation. DAVE SPENCER

T&G attack Hull stewards

OVER THE PAST 18 months Hull dockers have been blacking work connected with the British Waterways Board in protest against the proposed introduction of the barge aboard catamaran system (BACAT). This is a mechanised handling system, which would have threatened many jobs on the docks.

Thanks to the determined action of the dockers, the system has not

been put into operation. But now they have been ordered to stop the blacking by... their own union, the T&GWU.

Last Thursday the local regional committee of the union instructed the Hull shop stewards committee to stop the blacking. This was backed up by threats to withdraw the stewards' credentials if they did not fall into line. The regional committee took this action despite the fact that a mass meeting of the dockers earlier in the week had decided to continue the blacking. It was this mandate from the men that the stewards felt themselves bound to carry out, and they refused to comply with the demands of the committee.

So the following day the committee carried out its threat and withdrew the credentials of 16 shop stewards.

Walter Cunningham, chairman of the shop stewards, has announced that they will carry on as usual. Quite rightly, he pointed out that the stewards had been elected by, and were responsible to, the men - and not the union officials.

That is the crux of the issue. In the past, the Hull stewards have often been a thorn in the side of the union bureaucrats. Rather than have stewards who will represent the wishes of their members, even when those conflict with official union policy, the T&G wants to have tame stewards who will jump whenever they crack the whip.

The development of shop stewards committees has been a key factor in strengthening the independence of rank and file union members. It is that independence which is under attack in Hull. NEAL SMITH.

Now High Court gags CPISA conference

FOR A SECOND time the High Court has meddled in the affairs of the civil servants' union, the CPISA. All but one of the resolutions critical of the Union president have been ruled out of order by the Court even before they had a chance to appear on the agenda of the Union's coming conference.

This muzzling of democratic debate inside the union follows closely on the previous decision of the Court that the CPISA executive could not criticise Losinka, the President, in the union journal or in any internal union circulars. This was the result of Losinka taking the union Executive to court because they had strongly condemned an article she had written for the Readers Digest. The article was a 'red-bashing' attack on many of the union's policies.

Following the court decision, Mike McGrath, the militant 'Redder Tape' candidate for the coming presidential election, wrote an article in Socialist Worker about the whole issue. Because of that Losinka has threatened him with a writ for contempt of court, in a blatant attempt to put him off running for President.

Also threatened with a writ is the union general secretary, Kendall, whose 'crime' was to send an internal circular to branch secretaries outlining the situation.

It seems likely that Losinka will arrange with the High Court to get the summonses served after the conference is over, so as not to damage even further her chances of being re-elected. If they are served, a petition of several hundred signatures containing the banned material will be circulated and sent to the Court, as an open challenge to its decision.

This week the union's NEC will be taking the issue to a trial court in an attempt to get a ruling in favour of democratic debate at conference. This may come off, but it is a double-edged weapon. The NEC cannot be sure of winning and a defeat would be a severe set-back for the whole trade-union movement, setting a precedent in case-law for the curtailment of democratic debate inside a union.

A far better approach would have been the one called for by some CPISA members who picketed a meeting of the NEC a fortnight ago. They called for the NEC to ignore the court ruling, and treat it in the same way the Industrial Relations Act had been treated - by direct action.

This is the line that the Redder Tape supporters at conference will be arguing. It will be part of what McGrath is standing for.

But only part. It would be a pity if the Losinka affair, important though it is, squeezes out other issues at the conference. Civil servants are facing severe redundancies as manning levels are affected by the cuts; the members' living standards have fallen by 12% in the last year; and there will be the most important debate at a conference for many years on democracy inside the union.

We need to take up all these issues and build a fighting union leadership - not one that goes whining for help to the courts every time it suffers a rebuff.

STEPHEN CORBISHLEY
(Chairman CPISA British Library, in personal capacity)

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