

# Workers' ACTION

8 pages  
10p

No. 169  
March 9, 1980

## Kill the Bill

# General Strike!

## TUC: stop talks with the Tories

MARCH 9th is a start. But much more will be needed.

Workers are fighting the Tories on many fronts. Aside from March 9th, there are dozens of local strikes and demonstrations against the cuts. Thousands of workers in South Wales want a general strike against the steel closures.

In the support given by miners and many other workers to the steel strikers, there are the beginnings of an industrial alliance against the Tories.

The TUC's job, and the Labour Party's, should be to coordinate and lead forward these struggles. But the TUC has twisted the arms of Welsh union leaders to stop a general strike in Wales. And the TUC has done very little to support the steelworkers.

Labour leader James Callaghan cannot even bring himself to say that the steelworkers should get their money and keep their jobs. The best he can suggest is that some judge or professor should be wheeled in as a mediator.

We must demand the Labour and trade union leaders stop dithering and dallying with the Tories and start a concerted offensive, for a GENERAL STRIKE TO STOP THE TORIES.

### R&F code of practice

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 No crossing of picket lines.  | picket lines are observed. Strikes to be run by elected strike committees                                |
| 2 For the building, and defence of, 100 per cent closed shop. For sanctions against any individuals breaking closed shop  | 5 All appeals for blacking and financial assistance for disputes to be carried out wherever practicable. |
| 3 For full rank and file discussion and decision making by traditional democratic procedures — no enforced secret ballots | 6 Support calls made by strike committees for mass and sympathy pickets.                                 |
| 4 Pickets to be positioned at whatever locations necessary to win the dispute and in sufficient numbers to ensure that    | 7 No settlement of disputes without full report backs to, and decision making by, the members concerned. |

## Zimbabwe: Will compromises lose what the struggle won?

by BOB FINE

ZANU HAS WON a major victory in the struggle for Zimbabwe's liberation by taking 57 of the 80 seats open to Africans in the elections. It demonstrates the overwhelming popular support they built up in the course of the war.

ZANU won in the face of concerted political and military onslaught from the British, Rhodesian and South African régimes. With Nkomo's ZAPU taking 20 seats, the Patriotic Front alliance has virtually annihilated all their opponents electorally.

Muzorewa, despite his private army of 30,000 men, and despite mass rallies shepherded together by these 'auxiliaries', has been buried at the polls, taking

only three seats, in middle-class African areas. The *Guardian* reported how it happened:

"Last week throughout the rich farming areas around Salisbury, farmers sent their workers to the polls by the thousand wearing Bishop Muzorewa T-shirts and other campaign paraphernalia given by their employers. But once in the polling booths they turned against the bishop and voted for a man who has promised radical change in land ownership and wage levels for Africans."

The most notable feature of the liberation movement's electoral victory has been the turning away of the African working class in the cities from Muzorewa in favour of ZANU — though the working class has yet to find an independent political voice of its own.

Imperialist forces have suffered a defeat. The full brunt of their attack was directed at Mugabe, and the election results showed up their failure.

A coup by the white Rhodesian army or an invasion from South Africa still remain dangers. At present, they talk of the 'spirit of reconciliation' with those they yesterday called 'Marxist terrorists'. But Britain, the USA and South Africa are still fumbling for a coherent policy to adopt.

For the Zimbabwean people, though, there are many dangers ahead. The state apparatus, and the military and economic backers of the old régime, have survived almost unscathed, and heavy pressure will be put on Mugabe to continue the conservative line he has taken by inviting the commander of the old white racist

army, Peter Walls, to continue.

But Mugabe is not Muzorewa. Behind Mugabe is a politicised mass movement, which he will ignore at his peril. To ensure that the leaders cannot be bought off, a programme of action must be developed by activists in the liberation movement which looks to mobilising and organising Zimbabwe's working class, to carrying through land reform, and to destroying the old state apparatus.

The immediate steps must include: the expulsion of the 7,000 - 10,000 South African troops still in Zimbabwe, the expropriation of unused and under-used land, the rescinding of the state of emergency and martial law, the freeing of political prisoners, and the development of an independent trade union movement.



# workers' ACTION

No.140

April 21, 1979

10p

From May 19  
12 pages for  
Workers' Action  
see page 2

## VOTE LABOUR and fight to win:

- ★ Wages protected against inflation  
No pay limits.
- ★ Nationalisation without  
compensation of firms sacking  
workers. Cut hours, not jobs.
- ★ Troops out of Ireland
- ★ Free abortion on demand
- ★ An end to immigration controls
- ★ An end to business and state  
secrecy
- ★ Nationalisation without  
compensation of the banks.
- ★ Expansion of social services
- ★ A democratic, militant labour  
movement.



Altab Ali was killed by fascists last year — at election time

### LEICESTER, APRIL 21 Drive the NF off the streets!

THE NATIONAL Front will be pulling out all the stops to get a big mobilisation in Leicester on Saturday April 21st. We have got to stop them. The fascists want a real show of strength to boost what they themselves have called "a very, very heavy racialist campaign". It is our job to drive these racist thugs off the streets.

Leicester is an area where the Front hope to do well in the elections. A big mobilisation of flag-waving racists, they think, will make them look as if they are moving towards the 'big time'.

It is our job to see to it that they are stopped in their tracks. This is not just an election move, however.

The National Front has stepped up its harassment of blacks, its temple daubings and its abuse of Asians over the last six months in an effort to build up race-hatred in Leicester. If they can have the run of the streets on April 21st, that will lend forces to their threats and their arrogance.

A counter-rally will take place in Leicester on that day. It is supported by the anti-racist, trade union, and Labour bodies in the city, by the Anti Nazi League nationally and by many far-left political groups. Unfortunately, the Community Relations Council and their

supporters in Leicester intend to march away from the rally... not to confront the National Front, but to steer people onto a pointless procession of racial goodwill.

The majority of groups have committed themselves, rightly, to trying to stop the National Front. But there is some doubt as to what the ANL will do. Will it again endorse calls for the police to ban the fascists? Will it again make an agreement with police not to confront the fascists?

We are not just trying to show that we can get a bigger demonstration on the day. We know that. We are out to smash the National Front, to break the back of that poisonous movement of race-baiters and strike-breakers.

Picket the NF's  
election meetings

6.30pm Friday 20th,  
Islington Town Hall  
5pm Monday 23rd,  
Southall Town Hall.



# Workers' ACTION

No.74

Oct. 8th - 15th 1977

10p

Inside

Portugal  
p.2  
Grunwick strike  
leader interviewed  
p.3  
Labour's  
disappearing Left  
pp.4/5  
Italian far left  
mobilisation  
p.6

## OCTOBER 17, GRUNWICK

# MASS PICKET STARTS AGAIN

LAST WEEK the Grunwick Strike Committee issued a call for renewed mass picketing from the 17th October. This call must be taken up as a matter of urgency throughout the labour movement.

The strikers have waited for a month since the TUC congress for the General Council to take decisive steps to win the dispute. They have waited in vain. After much discussing and investigating, all the TUC could come up with last week was an offer of "full backing" to unions taking solidarity action, while at the same time "recognising that both legal and practical problems are involved in preventing provision of basic services".

Meanwhile Grunwick boss George Ward has not confined himself to empty discussions. He has installed a generator in the (unlikely) event that the EETPU executive instructs its members to cut off electricity supplies, and water trucks are ready to cope with the effect of action by the GMWU.

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More damaging than this, the strikers themselves are in danger of becoming demoralised as a result of endless futile trips through the courts while nothing practical is being done. Their call for renewed direct action comes at a crucial moment, therefore, and socialists must not let them down.

Of course APEX, having accepted the recommendations of the Scarman inquiry, have appealed for the mass picketing to be called off. This will make the job of organising solidarity more difficult — but all the more vital.

This is a dispute the labour movement can't afford to lose, whether the trade union bureaucracy is with us or not. Regular delegations must be organised now. And remember that the first picket, on the 17th, is planned to last the whole day, not just a couple of hours before we all march away and let the coach in.

**Kamlesh Gandhi,  
Chairman of  
the Strike  
Committee, talks  
to WORKERS'  
ACTION: Page 3**



**Brighton:  
enter the  
Right in  
triumph**

**WHAT IS the 1977 Labour conference? What account can the delegates from constituencies and trade unions take back from this week in Brighton?**

"The Conference that won the 1978 election"? Not very likely: this Labour conference's progress may give the Government a warm feeling of having the Party under control, but it will not fire enthusiasm for canvassing and election work.

"The Conference which mapped out the social reforms made possible by three years of austerity"? Still less so. Every resolution with the slightest radical or reforming note has been squeezed out at this conference. All that three years of austerity has earned for us is the prospect of more years of perhaps slightly reduced austerity.

"The Conference which called the Labour Government to account for its blatant failure to carry through the 1974 Manifesto promise of an 'irreversible shift in the balance of wealth and power in favour of working people and their families'"? Not at all. Democracy and calling people to account have not been in fashion at this conference. The widely-supported resolution on re-selection of MPs has been pushed under the carpet for another year.

If this conference is remembered, it will be as the Conference where the Government most fully and most completely stifled the Labour left.

**Left high  
and dry:  
see centre  
page**



**THE PORTUGUESE Socialist Party** owed its rapid rise to a mass party, from being a mere handful in 1973, to the revolutionary events of 1974-75. Thousands of workers rallied to the party which promised socialism with democracy.

But since the Socialist Party became the sole governing party in July 1976, it has done nothing but roll back the gains of the struggles of 1974 and 1975.

In mid-September the 'Council of the Revolution' approved the "Barreto law" on land reform which the Socialist Party pushed through the Legislative Assembly in July this year. This law provides for the partial restoration to the old landowners of land occupied by peasants and agricultural workers during 1974 and 1975.

The previous land reform law — passed under the Communist Party oriented government of

## PORTUGAL

# Soares bashes rural workers and CP

Vasco Gonçalves in 1975 — had more or less 'legalised' the land occupations. After coming to power the Socialist Party set about reversing some occupations which went further than the 1975 law. Now they have decided to go beyond that.

If fully implemented, the "Barreto law" could drastically

break up and reduce to unworkable size many of the 'collective production units' through which the land is at present farmed in the Alentejo region, site of most of the land occupations. The government has already restricted credit for the 'collective production units'. The reactionary purpose of the new law is

especially shown by the fact that production has substantially increased in the Alentejo under the administration of the 'collective production units'.

But the Socialist Party government policy on other fronts is no different. Many of the firms nationalised in 1975 are being returned to private ownership, while compensation is being paid out for others. Strict limitations on wage increases, while prices are rising at 34% per year, mean that workers' living standards are being forced down.

The left wing of the Socialist Party, which mounted some opposition last year, and whose leader Lopes Cardoso eventually resigned as Minister of Agriculture, is now a very weak force. But since July the Communist Party — which previously had more or less supported the Socialist Party government — has gone into opposition.

The CP voted against the 'Barreto law'. It could scarcely do otherwise, because the 'collective production units', and the agricultural workers' union which effectively runs the units, are among its main bases of support. Indeed, the Socialist Party's purpose with the 'Barreto law' is not only to help the landowners, but also to strike at the CP.

The Moscow-line Portuguese CP has, however, come up with an orientation very similar to the 'Eurocommunist' Italian CP. It says that new elections are needed — but in the meantime there should be a government of 'national unity', including the CP, the SP, the bourgeois-liberal PSD, and the right wing CDS, on a mutually agreed programme to preserve the conquests of 25th April 1974.

For their part, the PSD and the CDS, now allied in the 'Democratic Convergence', are pressing President Eanes to call on them to join the government.

The Socialist Party, although it is in a minority in the Legislative Assembly, has so far been able to keep its government intact by balancing between the PSD and the CDS on the one hand, and the CP on the other. But if the SP proves incapable of coping with the stormy struggles which will arise when it sets about pushing through the 'Barreto law' in earnest, then either the right wing parties or Eanes himself could very well step in.



Down on the cooperative farm in the Alentejo

## CATALAN GOVERNMENT RESTORED — WITH STRINGS

ON 29th September a final agreement was signed by the Spanish government for the restoration of the 'Generalitat', the old provincial government of Catalonia suppressed in 1939.

For now the Generalitat will only be composed of a president [Tarradellas, the president of the 1939 Generalitat] and an executive made up of nominees of the president and representatives of the major parties of Catalonia. The Generalitat can be dissolved unilaterally by the Madrid government. Despite that the proposal has won the support of all parties, including the Socialist Party and the Communist Party.

— one in 15 of a population of 268,000 whites. White immigrants number about 6,000 a year, and births exceed deaths by about 2,000 annually — but on the basis of the figures for the first eight months of 1977, the white population is declining by about 9,000 per year. Demoralisation in the face of the rising struggle by the black majority for their rights is the cause.

In an attempt to bolster itself up, the regime has recently extended the military service compulsory for all white males.

With only four left wing Social Democratic deputies voting against, the West German parliament on 30th September passed a law permitting police to hold convicted or suspected terrorists incommunicado for 30 days or longer.

Prisoners suspected or convicted of murder, kidnapping, or membership of an organisation defined as terrorist, can be put under a solitary confinement order for 30 days. The order is renewable. An amendment from Free Democratic Party deputies to give prisoners the right to see a lawyer chosen by the State was rejected.

The authorities claim that groupings such as the Red Army Fraction (Baader-Meinhof group) are able to coordin-

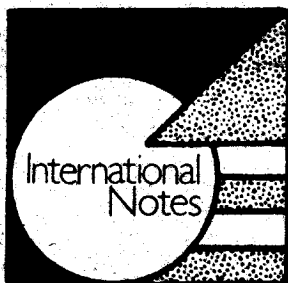
ate activity with members inside jail through messages passed by lawyers. In fact the repression against the terrorists is being extended to all who defend their civil rights.

Klaus Croissant, defence lawyer for members of the Red Army Fraction, has been arrested in Paris and is likely to be extradited to Germany.

After 10,000 attended the funeral of black nationalist leader Steve Biko in King Williamstown, South Africa, the government of the Bantustan of Ciskei [in which King Williamstown lies] has been given emergency powers by the South African regime.

Under the emergency powers, people can be detained without trial, without appeal, and incommunicado for 90 days. Meetings of over 10 people are banned unless officially authorised; but it is also an offence to attempt to organise a boycott of meetings called by tribal leaders. 'Embarrassing, or attempting to embarrass' any officer of the Ciskei government, is also a 'crime'. Anyone can arbitrarily be expelled from or refused admission to Ciskei.

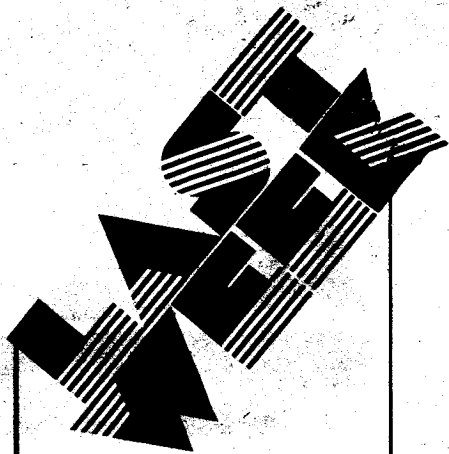
These measures follow unrest in Ciskei towns after Steve Biko's death. Biko, a leader of the 'Black Consciousness' movement, died in unexplained circumstances under police detention.



The general election promised for October 18th in Pakistan has been postponed indefinitely, and about 80 supporters of the former Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto have been arrested. Bhutto himself is due to face court martial soon.

The military regime, led by General Zia ul-Haq, has also banned all political activities. Zia overthrew Bhutto's government in a coup on 5th July this year.

Whites are leaving Rhodesia at a rate of about 17,500 a year



## After High Court threats, the 'Gay MP' angle

WHY did the press wantonly distort Northampton North Labour Party's reasons for replacing Maureen Colquhoun as their MP? "Gay Life" MP Sacked", one newspaper placard had it; for the Fleet Street hacks, Maureen Colquhoun's homosexuality was the key to the story.

Their only supporting evidence was Maureen Colquhoun's own story. The Northampton North Labour Party majority officially denied that Ms Colquhoun's sexual life was the reason for asking her to stand down. In fact the initial move to replace Ms Colquhoun was made by supporters of *Workers' Action* — which emphatically came to Ms Colquhoun's defence when she faced prejudiced reactions to her sexual choice (*Workers' Action* no. 40, 16th December 1976). The move to replace Maureen Colquhoun as MP was made exclusively on the grounds of her support for arch-racialist Enoch Powell.

Maureen Colquhoun hopes to gain sympathy by portraying the Labour Party as a den of bigots. Fleet Street of course is glad to follow — especially since it gets a chance to spice up its coverage. "Gay" MP and Friend: Picture", read another newspaper placard, trying to set people goggle-eyed at the prospect of seeing what a lesbian looks like.

William McIlroy has been fined £50 plus £100 costs for sending a poem in the post. And the Director of Public Prosecutions has declared that any further publication of the poem will lead to further prosecutions.

It was the same poem — by James Kirkup, about Christ and a homosexual Roman centurion — as got 'Gay News' and its editor Denis Lemon fined in July. McIlroy sent out copies of the poem in the post as a protest over the 'Gay News' case.

Kirkup's poem could well be considered unpleasant. But nothing more. Yet it was that poem that attracted the fire of Mary Whitehouse and her fellow 'clean-up' campaigners, and not the sensationalist press mis-reporting of the Colquhoun affair.

The number of working days lost through strikes was up to 798,000 in August. This makes a total of 5.1 million days lost in the first 8 months of this year — a much higher strike rate than in 1976 or the second half of 1975, but about the same as 1973 or the first half of 1975.

155 of the 228 strikes starting in August were over pay disputes.

NALGO, NUPE, NUT and the other major public sector unions are calling a national week of action against the cuts on November 21st-26th. There will be a mass meeting and lobby of Parliament on November 23rd, but the major action planned is a petition calling on the Government to adopt the "alternative economic strategy" backed by the TUC. No repeat of the massive one-day strike and demonstration of November 17th last year has been scheduled.





Last week's meeting of the TUC General Council failed to announce any decisive action to bring the 13-month-long Grunwick recognition dispute to an end. In response the Strike Committee has called for renewed mass picketing — a move immediately denounced by Roy Grantham, APEX General Secretary. Workers' Action asked Kamlesh Gandhi, Strike Committee Chairman, to explain how he sees the dispute going now.

■ Q ■ What are your plans for the 17th?

□ □ Well, basically, we want an event like the 11th July, getting masses of people down to the picket. But this time we're asking them to stay the whole day, if they can. Of course, people who've come a long way may not be able to do that, they may have to leave in the afternoon or something. But it's not going to be a matter of picketing for a couple of hours and then letting the bus in. And this time there's not going to be a demo, either.

■ ■ What made you decide to resume mass picketing?

□ □ After the TUC, we had a lot of meetings with the union leaders, you know, and we haven't had much response out of them. They're just dragging their feet, so we're not left with a choice. And people are getting impatient with nothing going on, they're starting to drift away. At least five people have said they're going to leave.

■ ■ What support are you likely to get for the mass pickets?

□ □ We don't know yet. We might have a problem, with APEX refusing to support the mass picketing. Not having the official support may keep some people away. But we've got a job to do ourselves, going round to rank and file trade unionists and convincing them that they should give us their support again.

## Illegal

■ ■ The Scarman report described mass picketing as 'intimidation' and postal blacking as illegal. What is your attitude to this question of the law?

□ □ We know it's illegal, but how else are we going to win? Anyway, the mass picketing can't be intimidation, since the scabs are all in a bus. They're intimidating us, with that bus. And we're constantly being intimidated by the police.

We realise that postal blacking is illegal, but if Ward can show two fingers to the Inquiry...

The mail has all been transferred from Cricklewood to Willesden now, so the Cricklewood postmen can't help us again. On the Willesden people, we only know that they blacked the mail when it was transferred from Cricklewood to get round their blacking, so Willesden was just supporting other postmen in dispute. Now it's a question of taking direct action for us. We haven't had that much contact with them, but the secretary there is a coloured bloke and it's up to him to persuade his members to help us.

■ ■ You met Roy Grantham last Friday. What did he have to say?

□ □ Grantham said, 'We've got things going we can't tell you about because it'll get straight to Ward'. He said it was up to us to convince our members to sit tight. So we asked him, 'How do we convince our members something is being done?' He didn't answer that. He just said, 'Well, you'll have to try and convince them'. I can't think

MINDA



# We know it's illegal but it's the only way to win

of anything they could be doing, quite frankly. The only way to win this strike is through the Post Office. I don't have much faith in what they're doing.

■ ■ There have been rumours in the press that APEX is going to drop you. Do you think that's true?

□ □ APEX was very annoyed about that statement. A lot of what the press has been saying is true, of course, but I don't think they'd do it, without support from the strike. They're dragging their feet because of the Labour Government. The TUC and APEX are being pressurised by the Government, and they don't want to do anything to rock the boat. But the Government could change the law to make it legal for the UPW to take action. With pressure they might do it.

## Inquiry

■ ■ What did you think of the Scarman report?

□ □ The conclusion — that we should be recognised — obviously that was right. But as for the recommendations, we didn't agree with them, we didn't accept any of them. It was a pointless inquiry anyway. We told them from the start that Ward would ignore whatever it said, so it was a waste of time really.

■ ■ How important has NAFF been in this dispute?

□ □ They've been pretty important. If there was no NAFF we would have won this dispute last November. Their use of the law and injunctions over the Cricklewood blacking, and getting the mail out themselves, made all the difference. They can also supply workers in disputes. They're professional scabs — though of course they wouldn't want to work in a place like Grunwick themselves, would they?

■ ■ Ward has said again and again that he will 'liquidate rather than capitulate'.

So what will you do if you force him to his knees and he shuts the place down?

□ □ We'd ask the Government to put in money and keep it going, for our sake and for those inside. We'd want somebody else to run it, though. It'd be ridiculous the Government putting in money and Ward still running the place, wouldn't it, when he'd be trying to get out?

■ ■ Workers' Action would advocate demanding that the Government confiscate the company without paying any compensation to Ward. Why should he get any money, when he's made a fortune out of you already? And it would be important that you yourselves controlled what went on — nationalised industries like the Post Office aren't exactly run in the interests of the workers, are they?

□ □ Well, yes, personally I agree with that, more or less. But we haven't much talked about this issue on the strike committee. We haven't come to that stage yet. The main problem now is to get the action going, otherwise there's no point talking about these things.

## Fed up

■ ■ So what is the feeling among the strikers now, the state of morale?

□ □ People are frustrated, they're feeling fed up with nothing going on. You can't keep it up for ever, without saying to people, 'This is what we're doing. This is how we're going to win.' It's difficult to say how long the strike can go on. That depends on what happens. But I can see it's still going to go into next year.

The main thing is that the whole of the labour movement is going to suffer if we lose this strike. Rank-and-file trade unionists know this, you've seen it in the way they've supported us, because they know it's their fight as well as ours. And it's that kind of support that we're relying on.

# NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT TO FIGHT BACK

Editorial

THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND says that the British economy is doing well. Denis Healey says that the 'Battle of Inflation' has been won. It seems that some people even believe them, for the opinion polls show the Government's electoral position improving, so much so that there may well be a spring election.

The pound is stronger, the balance of payments is improved, the Financial Times Share Index has risen over the 500 mark. The economy is doing well. But doing well for whom?

The rise in share prices means millions more in the pockets of the wealthy. But the economy is not doing so well for those whose labour produces the wealth.

Price rises have slackened off — probably only for a while — but the Government is still trying to peg wage rises at a level which will keep living standards well below 1974-75 levels, and falling. The cuts in public spending are still working their way through in health, housing, education, and transport. And unemployment is 1,600,000 and still rising.

For the IMF and the bosses, the economy is healthier because 'labour costs' have been cut down. In other words, real wages have been reduced.

Capitalism is not an economy of fixed shares, where everyone, from richest to poorest, gets his allotted slice, fat or thin, of the general prosperity or austerity. Between profits and wages there is a constant tug-of-war. In each recession the capitalists try to drive wages down as much as possible, to save their profits from being ruined and to make sure that they can make maximum gains from the next economic upturn while conceding minimum wage rises.

That's what they reckon they have succeeded in doing now — except that the new upturn, supposedly heralded by the USA's and Germany's partial recovery from recession in 1976, looks sickly to the point of non-existence. The US economy is already sagging again; and in Britain the rate of investment is still very low.

In the meantime, the only foreseeable prize for the working class from the economy being got "on an even keel" is the possibility of a few small tax cuts.

After the argument that socialist measures can't be afforded because of the economic crisis, there is the argument that socialist measures are reckless and premature when the economy is beginning to improve! And if there is a bout of capitalist prosperity, we are told by people like Gaitskell and Crosland that socialism is unnecessary because the 'mixed economy' can solve social problems!

## Impose our interests

The fight against capitalism cannot be postponed until capitalism is in good shape to resist. We have to start it now, fighting to impose our interests against the interests of the health and the profits of the capitalist economy. Instead of limiting wages so as to "reduce labour costs", we have to fight for wages at least to keep pace with prices. That means "catching-up" pay rises to regain 1974-75 living standards, plus clauses guaranteeing £1 increase every month for every 1% rise in the cost of living.

Instead of accepting unemployment until such time as the economy "reflates" (and who's to say that "reflation" will reduce the jobless total?), we have to fight for working hours to be reduced to forestall further redundancies and absorb those currently on the dole.

There is no better time for starting the struggle than the present. Waiting so as not to spoil the boasted economic recovery simply means tying ourselves to the chariot wheels of capitalism and being ground in the dust a few months longer.

Nor does it pay to hold back for fear of bringing in a Tory government.

We do not want a Tory government. But we can't afford to tie ourselves to a Labour government which has committed itself to serving capitalism.

For nearly four years the unions have strained themselves to help the Labour government — and the way they are heading at present, the only end result will be a gift of a "tamed" and demoralised labour movement for the next Tory government.

Untamed and fighting — that's the only way we can make progress, whether the economy is sick or "healthy", whether the government is Tory or Labour.



IN 1973 there was the most left wing Labour conference for a long time. And then from February 1974 there was the most right wing Labour government since the war.

What went wrong? PAUL ADAMS and MICHAEL O'SULLIVAN look at the shifting balance of power within the labour movement.

4 YEARS AGO IT WAS RIDING HIGH

# Whatever happened to Labour's Left?

EVERYBODY ON board the good ship Labour at the time of the 1973 Party Conference seemed to feel that a strong, fresh breeze had taken her sails and blown her out of the doldrums of division and dispute towards her destination. Captain Wilson knew that destination was the old, cold capitalist climes, but the left-wingers among the crew felt they could steer the ship towards some island of socialism under cover of dark.

Wilson was delighted that the party seemed united again. The left wing, also delighted at the new unity, felt that the whole movement had come over to their banner, and "Tribune" congratulated itself with the headline, "We kept the red flag flying".

Its editorial was as usual the perfect mirror of left wing illusions. "In the intervening years since 1970, the Labour Party has picked itself up, shaken itself and its leadership and is now embarking on a new course. At the 1971 and 1972 conferenc-

es there were few delegates... who considered those conferences as 'important' or 'significant' to the Labour movement — but now I find no-one who passes off what is happening at Blackpool in October 1973 as anything short of 'dramatic'. The drama lies in the Labour Party returning to those

arguments which have always fired it — arguments about socialism, and in particular, the argument about public ownership".

The mermaid visions of 'public ownership' and socialism were soon to disappear. For the moment, however, Wilson was prepared to say he saw the same visions. "Today, after three years of soaring land prices and the constant provocation of land speculation, who among us shrinks from the task of advocating the public ownership of every acre of building land required for development in the rest of this century?"

"Who will find difficulty, in the face of hundreds of millions each year furnished to private industry since Mr Heath's lame ducks were transmuted into scintillating swans, in asserting that where goes public money there must go public control through public ownership?"

"Who will be on the defensive? — the Heath men? Fleet Street? or those who meet here today? — in arguments over North Sea and Celtic Sea gas and oil, or pharmaceutical privateers, or the docks, or the transfer of privately owned rented property to local authority control?"

## MOOD OF OPTIMISM

Even Roy Jenkins moved, at that conference, a resolution calling for a "significant extension" of public ownership.

But it was Benn who best caught the mood of optimism and conveyed a little more of the militancy that

lay behind the left shift visible at this conference: "Our policy on public ownership is based on a serious analysis of the developing power structures in our society: fewer, larger companies, many of them multinationals, growing larger and more powerful, and we must say that if we do not control them, they will control and own us, and that is the challenge we face... It is a matter of political power..."

Benn rounded off the conference in ringing tones. "The crisis we inherit when we come to power will be the occasion for fundamental change and not an excuse for postponing it". That mermaid soon revealed itself as bladderwrack, too.

The leftist rhetoric of the conference was the result of two factors: the fighting spirit of the working class at rank and file level, and the temporary alliance of the trade union bureaucracy with the left of the Labour Party.

Labour's attack on the trade unions with "In Place of Strife" had created a bitter breach with the union leaders just at a time when they were shifting slightly to the left — with the election of Jones in the TGWU and Scanlon in the AUEW — and when their members were becoming more and more combative.

One result was the defeat of the Labour government in the 1970 elections. With the Heath Tories then in power the working class revealed a militancy unseen since the General Strike. The trade union leaders deplored the fact that the Tories were forcing confrontations, but still they found themselves having to lead struggles against the Government.

The trade union leaders and the Labour leaders looked to each other for mutual support. At first the alliance was with the left of the Parliamentary Labour Party — a left which had been streng-

thened despite the 1970 election defeat.

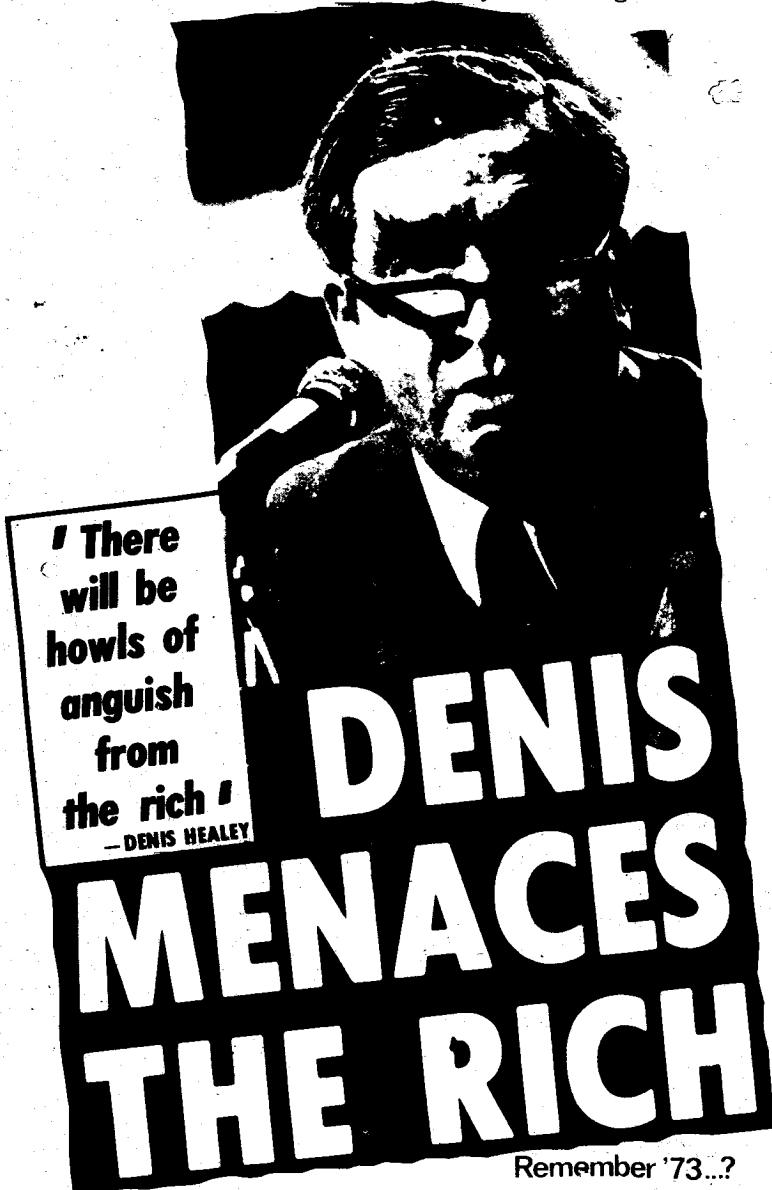
The 1973 conference marked the re-establishment of the old relationship between Labour Party and unions, though still on the programme of the Labour left. The new name for that old relationship was the catchphrase of the conference: Social Contract.

## COMMON MARKET

The 1974 Labour Party Conference was a short affair held in the wake of the October election in which Labour slightly improved on February's marginal victory. The theme of this conference was — as often before — unity. In its front page leader a week before the conference, "Tribune" demanded "No more 'Splits'!" — and warned of the need to avoid "The tragic errors which took place during the lifetime of previous majority Labour governments". The statement had about it more an air of panic than a smack of resolution. The reason was clear: the Common Market.

While the Tories were in office, differences on the question of the Common Market — the right wing spoke of "re-negotiation" while the left demanded "withdrawal on principle" — remained in the background. Wilson, realising that the left and the trade union bureaucracy were not to be won over on this one, deftly bought off the pressure from this quarter for as long as possible by agreeing to a referendum.

Because of the Common Market issue, the 'united front' of the trade union leaders and the Labour left appeared to be intact until the referendum. In reality the unity on this issue masked the fact that the temporary alliance between the left and the trade unions was already over.



Remember '73...?



The Labour Party Special Conference on the Common Market took place in April 1975. It was the Labour left's swan-song. They made sure of that themselves at the meeting of the National Executive Committee that immediately followed their conference victory.

That NEC was expected to deal with the refusal of Transport House officials to accept the Special Conference decision and put out propaganda opposed to the government's line. Ron Hayward, Party general secretary, was at the NEC, waiting to see if the week's visitors would try to order Transport House around.

After a farcical beginning — the meeting could not be started because the agenda had been mislaid — Hayward went onto the attack. The NEC sat in silence while Hayward threatened dire consequences if pressure were put on Transport House. The speech was no surprise to anyone: it had been published in the Guardian two days before! When Hayward finished, Ian Mikardo, the dragon of the anti-marketisers, moved a vote of confidence in Hayward which was seconded by the staunchly pro-Market Shirley Williams.

## WAGE CURBS ACCEPTED

Having shown such craven cowardice, the left opened itself up for the attack that came after the Common Market referendum on June 5th.

Within a fortnight Wilson had carried out a Cabinet reshuffle which was a thinly disguised demotion of Wedgwood Benn. Now the more obviously anti-working class parts of the Social Contract were being emphasised. Right wing union leaders Frank Chapple and Alf Allen were calling for statutory wage controls. At the next NEC meeting, Frank Allaun pressed for a vote on his proposal to oppose any incomes policy backed by statutory regulations — and Benn walked out to make the meeting inquorate.

In the same month, July, the TUC's swing back to their usual right wing position was clear: they voted for the first phase of the wage curbs, the £6 limit. Shortly after 28 Tribunites, plus Benn and other left-wingers, were among those voting for the wage curbs in Parliament. By August 1st the wage curbs were law.

## END OF ALLIANCE

The alliance between the left and the TUC leaders — an alliance which superficial observers like the 'Militant' tendency and the International Marxist Group thought was a stable fixture — had been torn to shreds.

The 1975 Labour Party Conference was treated by the left as a victory. Heffer got on to the Labour Party NEC and Denis Healey didn't. And the left managed to outdo the right in chauvinism by winning on the question of import controls. What was more important however was the cover which one-time left-winger Michael Foot gave Healey's policies.

"I am asking this movement", shouted Foot in his The-Time-Is-Nye style of oratory, "to exert itself as it has never done before, to show the qualities we have: the Socialist imagination that exists in our movement, the readiness to reforge the alliance, stronger than ever, between the government and the trade unions; and above all to show the supreme quality in politics — the red flame of Socialist courage. That is what we have to save the country..."

The resolution this rhetorical nonsense was supporting was unheroic. "This Conference calls upon the whole of the Labour Movement to support the government in its fight against inflation". It was passed. Healey's measures were approved.

By the time the 1976 Labour Party Conference took place, the TUC had agreed to another round of wage curbs. The delegates approved once again the government's basic economic strategy although they booed Healey himself.

## ANTI-CUTS DEMO

Although much of the steam had gone out of the Labour left — it was dispirited, aware that it had been reduced to impotence by the TUC leaders' shift back into alliance with the right wing Party leadership — there were two left wing victories which recalled 1973. Alan Fisher, for NUPE, moved a militant resolution supporting councils refusing to

carry out the government's programme of cuts. The NEC moved a document which called for the nationalisation of the banks.

Shortly after the Conference, on November 17th, NUPE and other public sector unions called a demonstration in London, on a working day, against the cuts. The demonstration, supported by the NEC, was 80,000 strong.

That mobilisation showed the support was there if the Labour left were ready to lead a fight. But it was all too rare that such mobilisation was attempted.

It had been possible earlier — in 1973, for instance. It had been possible in 1974, when Clay Cross Labour Party called a conference on their own, clash with the Housing Finance Act, and on the Shrewsbury pickets

case and the government's economic policy. Unfortunately that conference fell under the control of the Militant tendency, who used it simply as a lecture hall.

But the balance of power between left and right in the labour movement is not fixed by factors beyond our control. Behind the left wing conference of 1973 stood the great strikes of 1972. Behind the right wing policies of 1974-77 stand three years of decline in working class struggle.

The fight back against wage controls now getting underway can reverse the right wing trend in the labour movement. And more importantly it can give us a better means of fighting for our interests than relying on left wing resolutions that never get further than good intentions.

ANYONE buying the 29 September issue of *SOCIALIST CHALLENGE* might have been both surprised and puzzled. There it was: "Labour Conference Sensation" and then in inch high capitals: **BENN QUILTS**.

Had *Socialist Challenge* scooped the whole bourgeois press? Did they know something nobody else did?

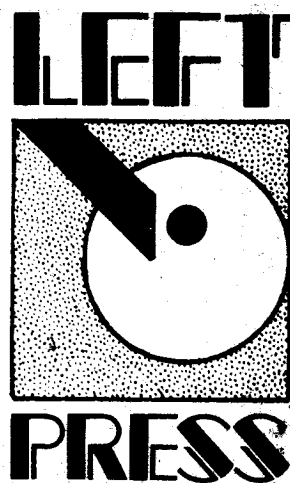
The puzzlement is increased, rather than lessened, when we read that *Socialist Challenge* had printed "the resignation speech ... he won't be making". He certainly won't: the speech attacks the betrayals of the Labour Government and ends with rousing appeals to "mobilise all the creative energies of our working class" and to "challenge the government's policies."

Why does the International Marxist Group set itself up as speech-writer to the Secretary of State for Energy? The explanation is simple, and *Socialist Challenge* readers really need not be puzzled. But first, let us compare the IMG's current attitude on Benn in the Cabinet with their attitude in the recent past. When, in June 1975, after the EEC Referendum, Benn was moved from Industry to Energy — a thinly

disguised demotion — the IMG, far from urging him to resign from a capitalist government, called for his reinstatement and chastised the Tribunites for not taking up the issue. Their present position of calling on him to resign is at least an improvement on that!

But why does the IMG lay such emphasis on Benn's resignation? Of

# Benn wouldn't (and the IMG shouldn't) make such a speech



course, anyone who claims to represent the working class shouldn't sit in a capitalist government. But for the IMG it goes further than this. In the editorial in the same issue of *Socialist Challenge* we are told "The Labour lefts have a lot to answer for in this situation... they have sat in the Cabinet as the government has moved to the right [...]. The Benn-Foot axis ensured that the left remained passive" (in relation to the resolutions of the last Labour Party conference).

Thus for *Socialist Challenge* the presence of Benn and Foot in the government is cutting off what would otherwise be a militant anti-government movement on the left wing of the Labour Party. *Workers Action* has in the past criticised this conception, which leads the IMG to put forward as their major aim the construction of a "class struggle left wing", which they think will incorporate this left current that will develop in the Labour Party. Unfortunately, however, this current in the Labour Party has hardly materialised and has not, as they themselves admit, led any serious opposition to the government's policies.

So the IMG itself has tried to substitute for the "class struggle left wing" by tapering its own programme to the needs of this 'strategic project' on the grounds that potential allies "class struggle left wingers" shouldn't be scared off by a revolutionary programme.

Another, and far clearer, concession to reformism is this: "What they refuse to understand is that the boat is being rocked by the sinister forces of an economic system in crisis. The only way to keep the boat on even keel is by socialist measures."

When the boat referred to is the Labour Government, we have the spectacle of the IMG, through "Benn", advising a capitalist Labour government that the best way to stay in power is by adopting socialist measures. And the only concrete measure proposed under this heading is nationalisation of the "25 big monopolies" — even the reformist Militant tendency call for 250 nationalisations!

The IMG have clearly coined a new motto: instead of "If you can't beat 'em, join 'em" they now seem to say "If you can't beat 'em, pretend to be 'em, in the hope that some of their followers will join you instead."

BRUCE ROBINSON





SOME TENS of thousands of students and young people gathered in Bologna on 23rd-24th-25th September for a "Congress against Repression"

An appeal by French left wing intellectuals against the "Germanisation" of Italy was the origin of the conference, but it came to be seen on all sides as the biggest general gathering of the Italian radical left after the stormy struggles this spring. Massive student protests against youth unemployment were met by police beatings, shootings and jailings, and universities being seized by the army.

The young leftists specially chose Bologna for the congress as a protest against the Italian Communist Party's policy of a

"historic compromise" with Italy's main capitalist party, the ruling Christian Democracy. The municipality of Bologna has been controlled by the Communist Party for 30 years, but it was in Bologna that the student Franco Lo Russo was shot dead this March, and some 14 left wing students are still in prison after the protests this spring.

Since the spring, a section of the student movement — the "Autonomists" — has degenerated into nihilism, concentrating their activity round armed attacks, sometimes against prominent figures of the establishment, sometimes apparently at random. Equating the PCI totally with the right wing, they

have slogans like: "Berlinguer, Cossiga, we'll shoot you in the mouth". Cossiga is the Minister of the Interior, Berlinguer is the leader of the Communist Party.

The eye-witness report of the Bologna conference, by ANNA LIBERA, which we reproduce here from the French revolutionary daily ROUGE, shows that the nihilists are in a minority even among the students. However, Anna Libera's conclusion that the conference was "a first success" seems too optimistic. If the revolutionaries succeeded in curbing the nihilists, the Communist Party also came out of the weekend with credit.

Proudly they were able to boast that the CP allowed freedom of speech even to their bitterest enemies.

If the bitter anger of the students against Italian capitalism and the CP's treachery is to lead to effective action, it has to be organised according to a rational strategy and linked with the struggles of the working class. But the nihilist current in fact stems from the failure and the crisis of the revolutionary organisations in Italy.

Last year the three big organisations of the Italian far left — the PdUP/Manifesto, Avanguardia Operaia, and Lotta Continua — were stronger than anything else on the far left in Europe. They had 10,000 to 20,000

members each. Today they are all in crisis and falling apart. None of them — as Anna Libera's report shows — was able to intervene effectively at the Bologna conference. None of them has been able to forge a link between the best of the militant students and the revolutionary vanguard which certainly exists in Italy's factories. They are paying a heavy price for the opportunism which led them into sheer electoralism during last year's elections, and for their spontaneism.

Unfortunately Anna Libera's article says nothing at all about any intervention on the part of the GCR, the Italian sister group of ROUGE in France and the IMG in Britain.

# Italy's Congress Against Repression shows confusion on the Left

ON MAGGIORE piazza, from Sunday morning, animated discussions have been taking place between groups of PCI militants and youths. The Bologna PCI militants were trying to understand what had happened.

Many were surly. Others really wanted to discuss. But dialogue is generally difficult between the students, who can't forget that it was the PCI which let Cossiga's tanks come in and jailed their comrades, and the communist militants who fear that these hot-headed youths will mess up what seems to them to be the last stage of their march to power.

A breach has been opened, some militants admit that they were wrong in March. But the dominant mentality in the PCI branches is a siege mentality... which looked more and more absurd as the congress went on.

The majority of the students wanted to discuss, and the fact that "Workers' Autonomy" was isolated was the first sign of this. Shock at being regarded as fascists by Berlinguer, and fear of not being understood by the workers, was often to be found...

It was during Friday's general assembly that the division [between the autonomists and others — WA] took place. More than 12,000 people were

gathered in the Sports Palace, crammed to bursting. One can imagine the difficulty of carrying on a "debate" in such conditions. It was, however, attempted.

But immediately the militants of "Workers' Autonomy" went over to the attack.

No question of democratic debate for them. "There is no democracy in the country. here can be none in the movement", they explained.

They passed from words to acts. If anyone spoke against the use of firearms or to stress the need to debate with the PCI, generally they could only say a few sentences. They were interrupted by shouts and whistles, which immediately brought other slogans from those who wanted to carry on the debate.

The total impossibility of discussion, and the frustration of being so many and feeling so impotent, led to confrontations. At the end of the afternoon, there were several fist-fights across the Sports Palace. A lamentable spectacle at a congress which was supposed to be against repression.

The absurdity of this was felt by a majority of those present, beginning with the students of Bologna and some from Rome, who had systematically fought in their university for democratic procedures. To avoid a repetition on the Satur-

day, it was decided to divide up into several commissions — but no-one was quite sure what would happen...

The debate, all-day Saturday, between some dozens of workers who had come individually and the students, was certainly interesting, although evidently limited. Once again, how could you pursue a discussion with more than 5,000 people...

At the Sports Palace the autonomists were carrying on with their assembly, and openly demanding a split in the congress.

There was a physical confrontation when a leader of Lotta Continua wanted to speak. Right up to the last few days, Lotta Continua (through its paper) had just tailed be-

hind the autonomists... It was only on the eve of the congress that Lotta Continua took its distance, leading to all the more fury on the part of the autonomists...

The Bologna congress has to be understood in the context of the complete disintegration of the Italian far left over the last year. One sign of this disintegration was the lack of any organised presence of the main organisation. Il Manifesto had decided not to participate, but the same was not true of Lotta Continua and Avanguardia Operaia.

As we have seen, Lotta continua voluntarily submerged itself in the "movement". Avanguardia Operaia, on the other hand, had carried on a correct fight

in its paper against "Workers' Autonomy" and against the ambiguities of the French intellectuals' appeal [which, like the autonomists, simply equated the PCI with the Right — WA].

But this fight was not carried forward in the assemblies by AO's militants, although many were present...

The fear of social isolation is really present among the mass of the students, and they are aware of the danger. But there is still a long way to go for that fear to translate itself into concrete initiatives between the students and the workers and their organisations. And it is on that point, to be sure, that this congress showed its greatest weakness...



## 50,000 ON BOLOGNA MARCH

THERE WERE 50,000 people in the streets for the closing demonstration of the congress against repression. The demonstration was without incident, despite the fears that existed among the students of possible "military" actions by the "autonomists"...

As the demonstration wound its way for several hours through the steep streets of the old town, it clearly reflected the division which had come about over the last three days. Although there were no banners, it was easy to recognise the different components of the demonstration.

First, the "autonomists", very young, red scarves on their faces, and with their hands raised in the sign of

P.38 [a terrorist group — WA]. Their favoured slogans: they clapped their hands to the rhythm of "It is only a beginning...", and raised two fingers shouting "struggle". They demanded the release of Curcio (leader of the Red Brigades [another terrorist group — WA]) but not of the imprisoned students. They kept on chanting: "Armed proletarian nuclei, armed struggle for the revolution". Although they were at the head of the demonstration, they only formed a minority of a few thousand.

The second part of the demonstration, led by the militants of Democrazia proletaria [i.e. Avanguardia Operaia and Lotta Continua — WA]

was a clear contrast. Much older, with a good proportion of workers but also less energy in the slogans: "Release our comrades, shut up Cossiga", "We don't want the armed nucleus but the majority of the working class"; and also, for the policemen, "Policeman, they have conned you, you have the right to shoot but not to unionise". They were followed by the various university contingents, then at least 5,000 women in their own contingent...

The power of the demonstration and the fact that it went through without incident represent a victory for the student movement and a good response to the hysterical campaign of the bourgeois press, backed up by the PCI.

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WASG, 49 Carnac Street, London SE27



## South Africa solidarity week set for March

THE ANTI-APARTHEID week of action on South Africa, which we advertised three weeks ago in *Workers' Action* no. 71, has been rescheduled from January 1978 to March, to coincide from a call from the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. This year's official TUC Congress motion on South Africa gives support to the week of action, and can be used by militants to get active backing from trade union branches and trades councils.

"This Congress deplores the harassment, intimidation, and imprisonment of trade unionists in South Africa."

"Recognising that the winning of trade union rights in South Africa is an important part of the fight against apartheid, Congress calls upon the General Council and affiliated

unions to bring pressure to bear on British parent companies to persuade them to insist that their South African subsidiaries give full trade union rights of recognition and negotiation to all their workers.

"Congress reaffirms its policy on South Africa and welcomes the decisions of the Second International Trade Union Conference for Action against Apartheid (Geneva, June 1977), in particular the call for active participation in an international week of solidarity with the people of Southern Africa."

"Congress urges the General Council to work closely with the South African Congress of Trade Unions to win full trade union rights in South Africa."

— Moved by the National Union of Railwaymen; seconded by the Tobacco Workers' Union.

## The Grunwick film that Ward didn't process

"I have no faith in the law. There is no law that can bring this Ward to his knees. But I have faith in the workers of this country. They can stop all the services, they can stop the bus, and that's the way we'll win," said Mrs. Jayaben Desai. Arthur Scargill said if it took a year of mass picketing, that's what we'll do to win the Grunwick strike; London print leader Bill Freeman said he wasn't coming again just to march round the streets; next time we'll all stay on the gate.

That was on July 11th. The sun was shining and the banners were bright for the colour film that Newsreel Collective made as a souvenir of the great 20,000-strong mass picket and march.

Already the bureaucratic pressures that have so far given away so much ground to Ward were evident, as the mass picket was transformed into a harmless march. The film hides nothing, but it concentrates on the optimism, on the words and attitudes of the ordinary men and women who travelled through the night to London prepared to stop the Grunwick bus.

Some of the newly-joined strikers explain why they came out. One West Indian woman says 'NAFF is running this firm, and they're fascists just like the National Front'.

Printworkers talk about how they stopped the presses when The Observer and The Sun were to print ads for NAFF and Ward. 'We feel very strongly that we are forced to print attacks on the trade union movement.'

The Cricklewood postmen, looking a bit sheepish at all the applause that greets them all along the route, tell their story. And the Grunwick drivers who had secretly joined the TGWU and come out that day also have their say.

'Stand Together' is informative, and moving, and humorous too in parts ('I'd even come if they were Scottish', responds one Geordie when asked what he feels about the strikers being immigrant workers.) It shows the movement as it is, with many of its prejudices intact despite the superb solidarity; one man says he's come 'to help the lads' (though of course they are nearly all women), and the camera lingers twice on very large male trade unionists patronisingly placing protective arms around Jayaben Desai, as if by that gesture alone they could deny that — as a working class fighter —

she is big enough to tuck them away in her handbag.

As a reminder of what can be mobilised, as a record of the will to win that was so strong in July, the film should be shown in every trade union organisation. Its wide showing will certainly be an aid to the next round of mobilisations needed to win the Grunwick strike. It is available from The Other Cinema, Tottenham Street, London W.1, tel: 01-734-8508.

## Come in No.6...

FOR several months past, I have been a prisoner of ITV on Saturday nights. Now that The Prisoner has escaped us in a crude break-out I feel disappointed enough to come clean and make a full confession of a sad addiction.

Some episodes of Patrick McGooohan's *Prisoner* series were, I still insist, very good indeed (with Schizoid Man way ahead of all the rest). Others made their point, but it was a small one for the time and effort expended: like the take-off of the Danger Man/Avengers type of TV nonsense (which of course financed *The Prisoner*), with the wry comment — after an hour of this carry-on — that this sort of thing is about on the mental level of a tiny tot's bedtime story.

McGoohan himself created a hero to flatter his audience. A man of few words and much discernment, with all the Bond-ish expertise thrown in as an extra bonus: the man who won't give in, conform, fit in, knuckle under etc. is glamorous and clever too. So easy to identify with, as the only person resembling a human being in a cast made up otherwise of cardboard cut-outs; and so gratifying to identify with the champion fencer, pistol-shot, Judo fighter etc. we'd all like to be.

But what a contradiction — to build up audience identification with a hero whose watchword is, apparently, *be your own man*.

The series was, in fact, rife with problems. The hero is supposed to be an action-man toy gone wrong, a highly trained operative of the British establishment who has tried to opt out of its discipline. Yet in the couple of times he escapes from the mysterious Village prison, freedom is seen as Westminster and Whitehall — the very symbols of that establishment — and the Prisoner's London home in a street where his neighbours might grace the Queen's Bench or the CBI.

The Village itself is the arena for most of the conflict between Our Hero and 'Authority', and as such it is presumably meant to represent, in however stylised a way, an image of life as we might know it. Yet this image is so stylised and abstract as to be meaningless, and far from evoking life in general the realities it does have resemble nothing so

BY 54 votes to 9, the Socialist Teachers' Alliance firmly rejected a proposal from Workers' Action and Workers' Power to turn itself towards building a rank and file movement.

This decision, taken at the open AGM on 1st and 2nd October, came after a heated debate in which the dominant political force in the STA, the International Marxist Group, were to the fore in condemning the proposal. Bernard Regan of the IMG maintained that the STA was merely "A current of left-wing opinion". Although the latest issue of the STA journal argues for a rank and file movement, this, apparently, is not something we can actually do anything about, but rather something devoutly to be wished for some time in the future.

Thus the superficially democratic practice of allowing anyone who wants to be a member of the National Coordinating Committee was retained. The idea of political elections at conference from an Executive Committee and from local STA groups for a National Comm-

# ACCOUNTABILITY MEANS BUREAUCRACY, SAYS STA CONFERENCE

itee, was thrown out, condemned as a "programme for bureaucracy". With it went the idea of a definite political leadership for the STA and consequently any clear political direction for it. As it stands, the National Coordinating Committee of 32 is accountable to nobody but themselves until next annual conference.

The poorly attended AGM (the Sunday session on NUT conference motions was down to 30 out of the STA's membership of 230) is an indication of the lack of commitment felt by many members unclear as to what the STA stands for. The AGM was no open discussion among the membership of the STA as a whole — it was a debate between the hard core political tendencies there.

Resolutions come and go in the STA, but they remain at the level of good intentions and the debate starts again at square one at the next national meeting. At the STA Conference in March, it was decided to campaign centrally for the right to autonomy of school NUT branches. Last weekend a call for the Union Executive to support school NUT branches taking industrial action against over-size classes was rejected.

In addition there is no organic link between the organisation and its journal, which never covers STA Conference decisions and the experience of putting those decisions into practice.

Time and again, motions were discussed which posed over-optimistic national organisational aims coupled with over-timid political propaganda. The STA needs to realise its current numerical weakness (saying you'll do what you can't organise leads to demoralisation) and at the same time remedy its political weakness. At the moment it spends too much time reducing its demands from what it admits teachers need, to a magic low level where it feels it can appear 'credible'.

Dave Whiteley, the STA candidate for NUT Vice-President, found himself through no fault of his own the subject of a motion which reflects the unthinkingly undemocratic nature of the STA. Since he was a last minute stand-in for a candidate who withdrew, there was no time to distribute his platform before we were asked to vote on a motion pledging us to give first preference to him as opposed to Dick North, the candidate from the other left wing teachers' organisation, "Rank and File". North's platform, too, was unavailable, and so we were asked to choose Whiteley not on the basis of his politics, but merely because he favours a "united campaign by the left".

Given the reaffirmation of the status quo in the STA, Workers' Action and Workers' Power supporters present could see little point in continuing to participate in the talking-shop which is the National Coordinating Committee. We shall continue to contribute to the STA journal ("Socialist Teacher") whilst at the same time working to build strong left caucuses in our schools and localities.

IAN HOLLINGWORTH

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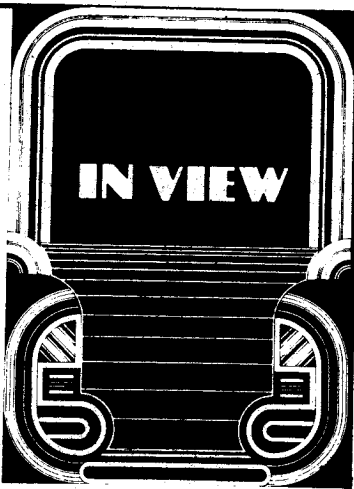
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RON VANDY



# WORKERS IN ACTION

## Picketing will be stepped up in air strike

BY STEPHEN CORBISHLEY

LAST WEEK, the Chairman of British Caledonian Airways and the Vice-Chairman of British Airways went to see Employment Minister Albert Booth. They urged that the Labour Government and the Civil Aviation Authority stop refusing to talk to the CPSA over the air traffic control assistants' dispute.

They had good reasons: over £40 million has been lost so far, and losses are still running at £1 million a week. An estimated 400,000 passengers were lost in August, and many more tens of thousands in September. Airport authorities are losing

money, and even the British Tourist Board reckons it is losing £250,000 per week on average.

### Cut off

Already the twenty-four hour picket at Birmingham airport has cut off fuel, and even customs officers are refusing to cross the picket line. Plans are on hand to try to shut down the huge, and valuable, Air Cargo centre at Heathrow. Other airports may soon face a 24 hour picket.

A stepping up of the action has got the backing of the

well organised trade union side of the Civil Air Transport National Joint Council. And the CPSA members are prepared to close the loophole of supplies being delivered through RAF entrances to airports, if talks do not lead to the payment of the money in full.

A remarkable press blackout, illustrating the power of self-censorship of the British free press, has been an essential part in the Government's attempts to isolate and intimidate the CPSA bureaucracy into calling off the action. But even the CPSA leaders, who would

welcome a compromise, cannot accept defeat in this case without facing a serious internal revolt from the rank and file.

### Delegation

Trade unionists and socialists must support the 24 hour pickets, and push for these pickets to be backed up with regular delegations from all branches in CPSA. If the air traffic control assistants are defeated, it will also be a defeat for the chances of any section of CPSA members breaking through the 10% rule.

## NALGO Broad Left sell-out

The weekend before last, the Broad Left won a majority at a NALGO left-wingers' conference discussing pay strategy. The meeting agreed unanimously to push for a special NALGO conference, but divided over the content of the resolution to promote for this conference (NALGO rules require backing for a specific resolution in order to hold a special conference).

By a narrow majority, the Broad Left's formula of 15% pay rise with a minimum of £8 was passed. But within three days the Broad Left had sold out their own policy!

At an Islington NALGO meeting on 28th September, Broad Left supporter Bob Ford pushed a resolution calling for a pay claim only if TUC policy is reversed or substantially breached — and not mentioning any figure for the pay claim even then!

There are now three separate motions for a special conference: the Broad Left's new version, a "£15 now" formula passed through Hackney and Tower Hamlets, and one from Sefton, Liverpool, calling for a 10% increase backdated to 1st July on condition that the 12-month rule breaks down.

Workers' Action supporters will be backing the "£15 now" motion as the only one that plainly confronts the 12-month rule — but if a special conference is obtained, amendments will be necessary to go beyond this formula.

THE NATIONAL Front is mobilising to ferry fascists to the Tameside area for a show of strength on Saturday October 8th. Trusting to the fact that the official ban on all processions and meetings will hamstring left counter-mobilisation, they are planning to throng the streets as NF 'Activities Organiser' Martin Webster makes a solo march. A rumoured possible alternative is a NF march in nearby Stockport.

Meanwhile the fascists have been stepping up their activity in the Manchester area. An anti-racist meeting organised by the Labour Party and addressed by North West TUC regional secretary Colin Barnett was broken up, apparently by the National Front and National Party. Last weekend British National Party members attacked left wing paper sellers in Bury precinct. And the National Front have sent a letter threatening to break up a Labour Party anti-racist meeting in Rochdale next week.

### Hail

Breaking up Labour Party meetings is, of course, illegal. But the ban in Tameside has not stopped the fascists at all; it has merely made it more difficult for the left to mobilise. This shows how false it was for most of the left — not only the 'Morning Star' but also 'Socialist Worker' and 'Socialist Challenge' — to hail the ban as a victory.

All the 'Morning Star' has said since is that the Race Relations Act, not the Public Order Act, should be used to ban the NF. 'Socialist Worker' and 'Socialist Challenge', without explaining their initial welcome for the ban, have pulled themselves together sufficiently to call for mobilisation on the 8th.

Two activities are planned: a mass picket of the Town Hall, called by Tameside Trades Council, and supported by 'Socialist

## FASCISTS STILL PLAN TO RALLY IN HYDE

'Challenge', and mass street paper sales and street meetings, called by 'Socialist Worker'. (But the Trades Council is meeting again to discuss the picket, and may call it off).

The static demonstration outside the Town Hall is a bad tactic in every way: it does not enable the left to deal with the fascists

thronging the streets, but at the same time it makes useless confrontations with the police very likely.

### United

'Workers Action' will therefore be organising street paper sales along-

side 'Socialist Worker' — though if the NF opt for Stockport instead, we will be there.

Together with mobilisation for the 8th, work must also go ahead to establish organised and united labour movement stewarding for all meetings in the area threatened by the fascists.

## TYNDALL IN PLYMOUTH 'PHONE-IN'

DESPITE THE efforts of about 50 pickets from Plymouth Trades Council and the recently-formed anti-fascist committee, National Front chairman John Tyndall took part in a two-hour 'phone-in' programme at 'Plymouth Sound' local radio studios on 29th September.

After the pickets had dispersed, one was attacked by four fascist thugs who almost succeeded in throwing him under a bus.

In the evening Tyndall was due to address a National Front meeting. The local fascists kept the venue a closely guarded secret, and laid on transport for the press. By 6pm over 100 pickets had assembled outside the Plymouth Guildhall, but we were unable to find out where the Front's meeting was being held. The pickets then marched round the city centre to the Polytechnic, where a meeting was held.

Although the local press said that the National Front had gained a victory by eluding the pickets, we can take heart from the fact that they were unable to hold a public meeting in Plymouth. In fact it turned out that they had to hold their 'closed' meeting about 15 miles away, near Polbathic in Cornwall.

JOHN COSBY

## DESOUTTERS DEFEATED AFTER 28 WEEKS

THE SAME WEEK that the Grunwick Strike Committee made the decision to call for the resumption of mass picketing, another group of workers striking for union recognition were defeated.

The strike at Desoutters, North London, lasted for 28 weeks. At the beginning 203 workers came out; at the end they were down to 60.

From the beginning the strike never gained the support needed — either from other sections of workers or from their own leadership in the AUEW.

Many of the strikers were forced back to work out of financial necessity. The AUEW North London District Committee never even balloted its members for a levy. The strikers lobbied the District Committee, but the resolution that was put up never even got a seconder.

### 'UNWINNABLE' WITHOUT OFFICIAL BACKING?

LEYLAND BOSSES notched up another victory on 29th September when the bus and truck division strike in Leyland and Chorley, Lancashire, ended.

Strikers voted by a narrow majority to accept stewards' advice to return to work on a management offer of a 10% increase, a slight improvement on the original 7.6% offer. £15 per week increase was the strikers' claim.

The problem, declared

convenor David Hewitt, was that "we considered what was stacked against us and it seemed futile and unwinnable without the support of the national officers".

The other strikes likely to be coming up in the Leyland combine soon will also face opposition from the national leadership to the unions. They need not be "unwinnable" — provided that the rank and file is organised and prepared.

## EVENTS

Small ads are free for labour movement events. Paid ads (including ads for publications) 8p per word, £5 per column inch — payment in advance. Send copy to *Events*, 49 Carnac St, London SE27, to arrive by Friday for inclusion in the following week's paper.

**SATURDAY 8 OCTOBER.** Nottingham Divisional Young Teachers Day School on Equal Opportunities for Women. 11am to 5pm at the Teachers' Centre, Cranmer Street.

**TUESDAY 11 OCTOBER.** International Tribunal on Britain's Crimes against the Irish people: planning meeting. 7.30pm at the Northumberland Arms, 141 Kings Cross Rd, London N1.

**SATURDAY 15 OCTOBER.** Midlands Socialist Feminist Conference. 10am to 6pm at Lanchester Poly, Coventry. Registration £1 c/o Carolyn Pickering, 37 Gavelton Rd, Leamington Spa, Warks.

**FRIDAY-SUNDAY 21-23 OCTOBER** "Critique" conference on "The 60th anniversary of the Russian Revolution and the World Crisis". Registration £2.50: contact Critique, 9 Poland St, London W1.

**TUESDAY 25 OCTOBER.** Lambeth Trades Council support meeting for Grunwicks. At Lambeth Town Hall.

**SATURDAY 26 NOVEMBER.** Working Women's Charter day school on women and the trade unions, Friends Meeting House, Church St, Reading. Details from Anita Turnbull, Flat 2, 3 Coleridge Road, London N8.

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