

Workers Power

THE MONTHLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP
No 2 November 1978 12p

FILE COPY

Inside

page 2 Labour's lefts

page 3 Zimbabwe

page 4 Why the ANL won't fight

page 6 politics and Women

UNITED ACTION CAN FIX JIM

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Editorial

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The eruption at Ford's immediately presented a potential spring board for a generalised working class onslaught on wage restraint. That was why the union leaders were quick to make it official - its dimensions terrified them and they needed to exercise the maximum control over it. If the union leaders had wanted they would have organised a campaign from the beginning to bring the Vauxhall, British Oxygen, Leyland and public sector workers out alongside Ford's. In fact they never had any intention of organising a fight against wage restraint, whatever their rhetoric at conferences might have suggested.

Clash

The union leadership want to avoid a general clash with the government. Each claim, they argue, should be considered on its merits. This is what they meant when they bleated at the conferences about, 'responsible collective bargaining'.

A whole series of potential flashpoints, claims which breach the pay code, show the possibilities for welding together a generalised offensive. The public sector workers' claim is yet to come, social workers are on strike in a number of cities. Vitally, Leyland workers throughout the country are faced with Edwardes' massive job-cutting plans and are poised, as at Cowley, to take on the 5%. In fact there are countless 5% busting claims in every industry and every area.

Linking up and generalising these means bringing forward

the claims now, not waiting until a supposedly 'strong' group of workers breaks through, opening the way for the rest. This is a recipe for allowing the government and employers to pick off one section at a time. It fails to build on today's mood of anger and determination. An

on the battlefield indefinitely.

The present upsurge comes after a long period of relative lull and stagnation. Shop-floor organisation has been weakened by involvement in participation schemes and a general loss of momentum and direction among shop-floor militants.

Strikes

According to the latest strike statistics, 1.5 million fewer days were lost in strikes in the first nine months of 1978 than in the same period of 1977. The statistics also show that fewer workers have been involved in the strikes that have taken place.

The effects of this period are not yet shaken off. The votes of the Vauxhall workers at Dunstable and Luton show this. This does make a move from isolated, individual struggles towards a generalised offensive that much more difficult. If workers continue to go into action in isolation, resting their arguments on special case positions, the profitability of their employers or their craft status, then they will, inevitably, run the risk of isolation and defeat.

The strike at SU Carburettors, now over three months old, and the Social Workers dispute, both illustrate the dangers of this sort of sectoralism. Both are long-standing strikes and both are dangerously isolated. At SU, the fight by toolroom workers, for separate bargaining rights and parity with Rovers, is centred on questions of differentials and craft privileges. The social workers, on the other hand, see their claim, not as being against wage restraint, but as a strike for regrading and for local bargaining procedures. While all workers should unequivocally support both strikes, which objectively bring these workers into struggle against wage restraint, it would be irresponsible not to point out the dangers of craftism and localism.

In other words to challenge the subjective weaknesses of those workers. Those subjective confusions will result in isolation and defeat.

A further weakness, which Callaghan and his TUC cronies are trying to exploit in the present struggles, is their lack of political direction. While the traditional responses of trade unionism bring workers into action against the government and the bosses they are unable to answer Callaghan's taunts of 'What would you do in my situation?' The trade unions are led by reformists whose ideas are identical to those of Callaghan. That is they try to get piecemeal reforms out of the existing system, rather than challenging that system altogether. If it becomes a choice between a successful strike or a continued Labour government, they will choose the latter. Their position in society, their whole way of thinking, makes any other choice impossible. That is why Terry Duffy could say, with good reason, 'Most national officers of unions, if in Jim Callaghan's position, would be singing the same tune.' (The Guardian, 27.10.78)

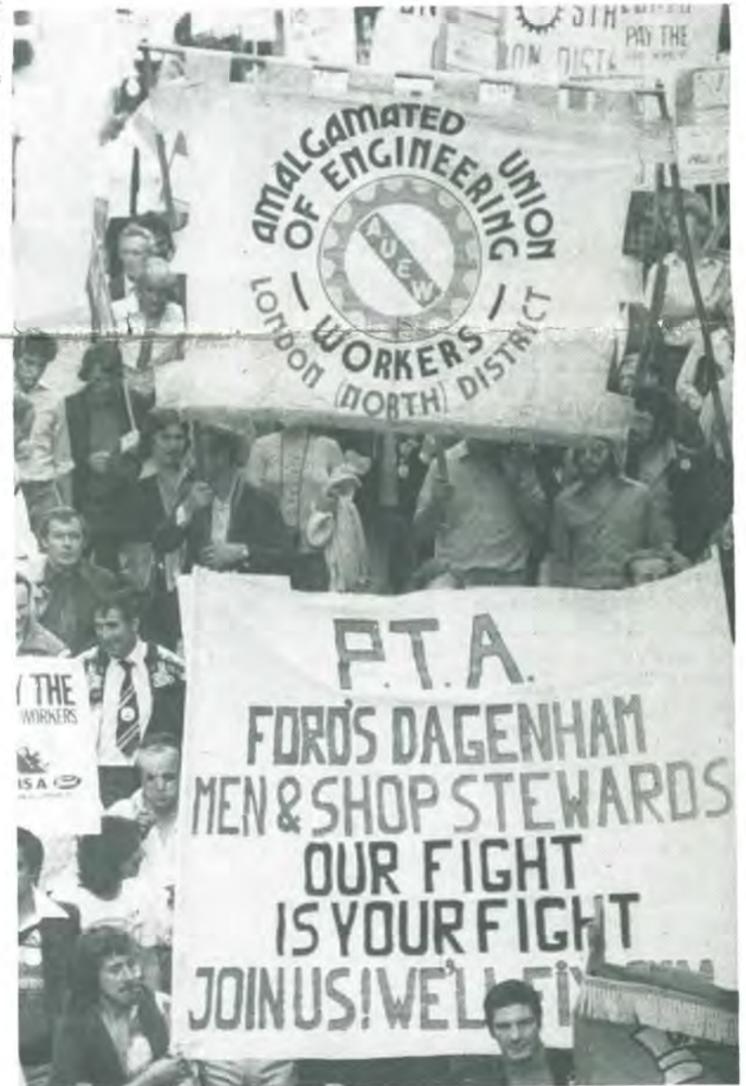
The rank and file at Ford's have shown they have the will to act against Callaghan. But, increasingly, the need is to go beyond their leaders' (and their own) pure trade unionism and reliance on the Labour Party. Working class self-confidence and organisation are the keys to resisting future attacks by governments and bosses. To cave in now because their actions might bring down the Labour government would do immeasurable harm to that self confidence and organisation. If the Labour government does fall as a result of working class action it has only itself to blame for its anti-working class policies.

Taunts

A clear understanding of this is the key to answering the taunts from Callaghan and Duffy.

However, it is not enough to call simply for militancy from the workers in dispute. A political lead is desperately needed.

John Sturrock (Report)



Ford's march: widespread hostility to the 5% must be turned into joint action

It is far from certain that the present struggle at Ford's will generate, of itself, a class-wide response. This strike itself has shown another real weakness. Bureaucratically controlled from the start, it has been run without mass meetings and mass pickets, with no direct control by the rank and file in the plants. The initiative has remained firmly with the trade union leaders. In such a situation, to rely on spontaneity to generalise it is the strategy of a political bankrupt. This method is most evident in the practice of the Socialist Workers Party.

To deal a decisive blow against the Callaghan's and

Duffy's of the world, the working class needs a new leadership and strategy. It needs a leadership, based on the rank and file, committed to direct action, to linking up and extending the existing struggles, and to fighting regardless of Callaghan's threats. Such a leadership can be built in the course of the struggles opening before us.

Support and solidarity for all struggles must be organised. It must be based on the maximum co-ordination of Trades Councils, shop stewards' committees and Labour Parties and union district committees. Forms of organisation must

Continued on back page

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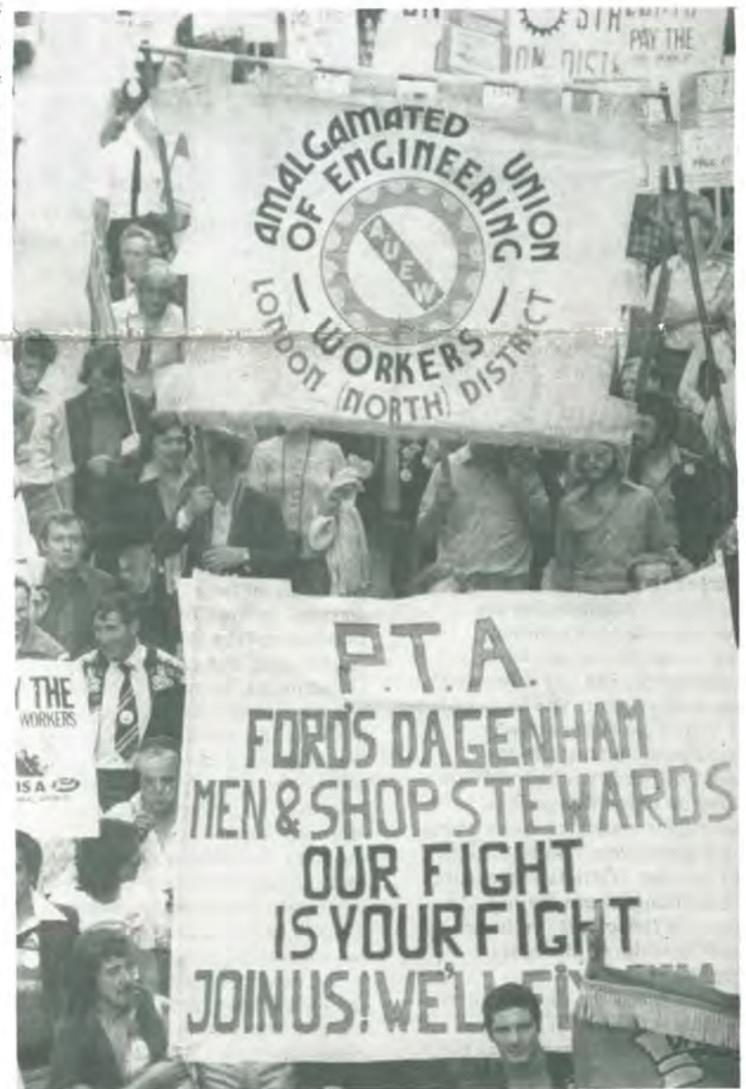
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class struggle and the left wing in the Labour Party

INSIDE CALLAGHAN'S CASTLE

LABOUR'S official left wing is puffed up with self importance after their gains on the NEC and what they regard as their victory at Blackpool. This is certainly a sudden reversal of fortune. Two months ago *Tribune* was totally deflated. After the national conference the paper's self satisfaction knew no bounds. "The left in the Labour Party were willing and able to make a rally, the like of which has not been seen for years," it claimed, likening this performance to "playing a game of football so intricately that it conjured up the resonances of a passage from Beethoven at its best". Yet these conjurers, fiddlers and inside lefts falsely claim the credit for the victory.

one another, to prevent a powerful combined offensive developing. Thus only a tactical difference separates a Moss Evans from a Terry Duffy. Die-hard supporters of Callaghan like Sid Weighall (NUR) are simply more open about their motives. Thus he could describe the elementary purpose of trade unions, defence of their members living standards as "the philosophy of the pig trough". Weighall pledged himself to "go on rejecting [it] until I drop down dead." Unmourned as such an event should be by the 'pigs' who yield him and his ilk a fat salary, the record of Hugh Scanlon and Jack Jones prove the inadequacy of simply replacing the right wing in the unions by 'lefts'.

are which can take on the bosses and win is related directly to the lefts avoidance of the question of taking sides in today's battle between Callaghan and Healey and the Fords workers. Underlying both attitudes is a desperate fear of open class struggle. A fear of the working class aroused to action and a cringing respect for the superior force of the capitalist state.

It is no wonder then that whilst workers still continued to flood into the unions (2 million in the last six years) the Labour Party continues to wither and contract. A recent study in the *New Statesman* shows its claimed members to have fallen from 703,000 to 678,582 and suggests a realistic figure would be nearer

trade unions and the tactic of building a rank and file movement to challenge the Trade Union and Labour Party leaders to second place behind building a 'class struggle movement' in the Labour Party. At the moment this takes the form of a bloc around a 'minimally adequate programme' with 'new left forces in the Labour Party'.

The thinking of *Workers Action* is summed up by an interview John O'Mahoney member of its editorial board and the SCLV's steering committee, gave to the journal *International Communist* (No 9). O'Mahoney thinks that the key question facing British revolutionaries in the struggle against reformism is "whether one can most effectively fight Callaghan from within 'his own castle or outside it'". He plumps decisively for the latter course. "Callaghan's castle" is too impregnable to external attack. Worse, attempts to do so have resulted in the political deformation of the attackers. 'Premature independence', competition with the Labour Party leads to bowdlerisation of your politics, to 'cutting corners' he claims.

This argument hardly stands up to five minutes thought. The supporters of Gerry Healey and Tony Cliff were all in the Labour Party in the 1950s yet both made drastic concessions to the Bevanite milieu on the left of the party. On the other hand tendencies within the Labour Party today like *Militant* and the *Chartist* have cut more than a few corners of Trotskyist politics. Did the independent 'Workers Fight' group of 1971 to 1974 show a greater drive to bowdlerise its politics than today's *Workers Action*?

O'Mahoney is frightened of 'sectarianism', of failing to implant his grouping 'in the broad labour movement'. But by a piece of sleight of hand this movement is identified with the Labour Party which is defined as "a mass reformist party of a structure unique among reformist parties for its relative openness". O'Mahoney is obviously aware that the Labour Party is a 'mass reformist party' only by virtue of its Trade Union affiliations and therefore justifies the centrality of work in the constituencies by positing a perspective whereby these masses will flood into the CLPs via the 'open valve' to struggle with the right wing leaders. Much as he dislikes 'schemas' this certainly is one!

The SCLV represents a mechanism for relating to this radicalisation. In fact this approach is fundamentally the same as the IMG's 'class struggle left wing' or the SWP's rank and file movement. It identifies a different location for this radicalisation but it adopts the same process of producing hybrid programmes adapted to a hypothetical 'radicalised' or 'aroused' Labour Party left. It confuses two distinct things, a united front on limited but vital issues of the class struggle in which revolutionaries combine in joint action with reformist workers and leaders, and the building of a revolutionary tendency around an adequate programme of action. Instead at the level of platform *Workers Action* supporters are compelled to bowdlerise themselves.

Indeed O'Mahoney is caught in the act of trimming within the confines of one and the same article. The SCLV he tells us has worked out a platform that "roughly answers the objective needs of the working class now".

Later however he maintains that "we haven't insisted that people joining the campaign agree with every dot and comma of the platform".

The problem is that the platform has no cutting edge committing the reformist leaders who give it verbal adherence to actions other than addressing meetings or writing articles for *Socialist Organiser*. Some of them are councillors, some prospective candidates for parliament. How will they vote when Callaghan demands support for the government on existing anti-working class policies? How do they act now on issues like fighting racism? The SCLV platform says "The labour movement must mobilise to drive the fascists off the streets". Surely this is not just a 'dot and comma' it would be sectarian to insist upon, in a platform claiming to represent 'socialist' policies. Figures like Ernie Roberts and Ted Knight are given credentials as fighting lefts. Yet the weakness of these figures was glaringly displayed in this very issue at the ANL Carnival 2.

Despite the fact that the SCLV advised its members to protect Brick Lane, Ernie Roberts was chairing the ANL's platform in Hyde Park. He issued no call to go to Brick Lane whatsoever. Ted Knight welcomed the ANL revellers to Brockwell Park, likewise with no call to go to the East End. Indeed Roberts unbroken connection with passive left reformism was demonstrated by his rapturous introduction of Wedgwood Benn in Hyde Park, praising his record in the fight against racism. The Labour Party rank and file could "do no better than elect him as the most popular leader".

Meanwhile, *Workers Action* remains silent on the weaknesses of these leaders. In essence their method is to apply the 'class struggle tendency' approach of the IMG to the stagnant waters of the CLPs. *Workers Action* claims that it wants to put this "new organised movement of the left of the Labour Party and the unions - with a class struggle programme [in] the forefront of organising support activity for strikes against the 5% limit".

Workers Power argues that this cannot transcend vague talk about 'socialist policies' unless it tackles head on the question of Callaghan's central blackmail weapon, the preservation of the Labour Government. To win these struggles, to generalise the offensive workers must be won in practice to a 'no holding back to preserve Callaghan' position. This is the key litmus test for the 'new left' fighting reformists also. A united front with these leaders is highly desirable if they mobilise their supporters for struggle and if revolutionaries are honest and open in their criticisms of every weakness, vacillation or backward step they make. The SCLV has so far, in line with the politics of *Workers Action* steered its course towards the CLPs and towards a mish mash of 'left' propaganda, a strategy least likely to meet either of these criteria. It will thus, on its present course neither win workers in the Labour Party to a consistent revolutionary programme or organisation nor will it build support for today's struggles. *Workers Action* supporters should ask themselves whether imprisonment in Callaghan's castle is not taking a heavy toll.

by Charles Shell



Laurence Sparham (I.F.L.)

'Fake Lefts' in chorus at Tribune rally

In fact the key 'vote' for the Wavertree resolution was not cast in Blackpool at all. It was cast by the 57,000 Fords workers on strike against the 5%. Reflected, or rather refracted through the bureaucratic apparatus of the trade union leaders and their block votes, the Labour Party conference kicked out sullen Jim's wage cutting limit. The heroes of the 'left' were either actively campaigning to frustrate the impact of Fords workers - Foot calling on union delegates to ignore their mandates, Benn trying to get the motion remitted to the NEC, or they restricted themselves to mumblings about the need to "listen to the unions" or to be more 'flexible' on the exact figure to be imposed.

Yet if it was the union leaders who threw their votes into the scale against Callaghan it was not from any desire to smash his government's offensive against the wage and job cutting policies. Moss Evans arguing for a further five years of the same could say "This Government has gone to substantial lengths to help the unemployed. A Tory Government would preside complacently over mass unemployment." The essence of their position was summed up by Gavin Laird of the AUEW - vote against 5% but don't campaign against it. Gormley of the NUM when he said "For god's sake let us do our job!" certainly did not mean, let us fight for our members, but let us union bureaucrats be the ones to muzzle and break the fighting strength of our members.

These leaders, faced with massive pressure from below want the freedom to manoeuvre. This will give them leeway to separate and isolate their members from

The central weakness of the Trade Union and parliamentary lefts was put fairly and squarely by Callaghan himself. "What's Your Alternative?" Foot drove home the message. The 5% dictated by the CBI, the City of London and the IMF was the condition of the survival of this Government. To reject it he added was a recipe for the destruction of not only this government but of "any Labour government". In one sense he is quite right and the reformists of *Tribune* and the *Morning Star* are hopeless utopians. No Labour Government that pledges itself from the outset to regard the interests and the property of the ruling class as sacrosanct and to leave real power in the hands of the bureaucracy, the judges, the police chiefs and the generals, can do anything other than bow to the economic 'wisdom' of the City of London and the IMF.

Healey, with his turn towards monetarist policies, to cow the unions by means of more unemployment is a clear headed logical ruling class politician. The 'lefts' are either cynical fakers and careerists who know the 'economic realities' or muddle heads yet to be disillusioned by office. The most recent expression of this hopeless muddle is expressed in the work of the 'new lefts' Stuart Holland and Paul Ormerod. They argue for £1,000 million of extra public spending to create 235,000 jobs paid for by a wealth tax and a government imposed price freeze. Characteristically they offer no strategy for the inevitable big business backlash that would hit even this limited attack on their profitability. This silence on the question of what the real forces

300,000 of whom only 10% were active in any way. There are important signs that this decline is more than a passing phenomenon. Labour's vote as a percentage of the total has been slipping since 1951. In the 70s its powerful bases in Scotland and Wales have been eroded by nationalism. A labour vote represents virtually nothing in the way of social aspirations other than a desire to keep the Tories out.

This in no way means as the empiricists of the SWP claim, that Labour's hold over the working class is being shaken but that it lies increasingly where it has always been, fundamentally located in the link between the Union bureaucrats and the parliamentary party. The decline of the CLPs, their impotence to decide party policy does however show that those 'revolutionaries' who see activity in these bodies as the actual focus for breaking the hold of Labourism are increasingly cut off from reality.

Leaving aside those groupings like the *Militant* and the *Chartists* who have a strategic orientation to work in the Labour Party, those who like the supporters of *Workers Action* have adopted a central tactical focus in this area make ever more serious political concessions to this approach. *Workers Action* supporters work around a perspective of there being 'an open valve' between the Trade Unions and the Labour Party. They see that the "political condition of Labourism must be transcended and that process will include the flooding of the CLPs with aroused trade union delegates and a struggle in them."

This approach has led these comrades into relegating in practice political work in the

IMPERIALISM and ZIMBABWE

Bourgeois nationalist goals reveal

Black Leaders' Fatal Flaw

THE BOMBING raids into Zambia have revealed the reality behind the Smith regime's "liberalisation" propaganda. Oppression and terrorisation of the black population remain the reality in Zimbabwe. The major black organisations and newspapers are banned and hundreds of nationalist cadres are imprisoned. The claimed abolition of segregation can mean little against such a background.

In fact, the abolition of the race laws is a clear attempt by the 'interim government' of Smith to buy off the black middle class. This emerging class has been torn in its allegiance but has become increasingly disillusioned with the 'internal settlement'. The settlement has not succeeded in ending the war and the complicity of Muzorewa in repressive measures has lost him at least some of his popular base amongst the black urban population.

Growing support for the Patriotic Front in the towns and its military advance in the countryside spells death for the internal settlement. The only hope for the regime has been to try to get recognition from the US and Britain, get sanctions lifted and hope imperialism forces the Front Line states to drop their support for the Patriotic Front. The 'liberalising' measures have been an attempt to buy time internally — while the state machine and armed forces remain firmly in white hands.

doomed

The major imperialist powers, the United States and Britain, realised long ago that the Smith regime was doomed. Their strategy is to come to terms with the black nationalist leaders. The greatest desire of imperialism is to create stability in Southern Africa as a whole so that it can continue to draw super profits from the area. The Kissinger plan, which was defeated by the impact of the victories of the liberation movements in Angola and Mozambique, envisaged a small degree of liberalisation in South

Africa and the setting up of a neo-colonialist regime in Zimbabwe. This was to be based on a deal between Smith and Nkomo. Now, imperialism's new representatives, Carter, Young and Owen, refuse to give support to the 'internal settlement' because they realise that it cannot guarantee to end the war. Nonetheless, the Anglo-American proposals are designed to achieve the same object — a firm hold on Zimbabwe during the period of 'transition'. All appeals for British intervention, either militarily or, as Mugabe demands, diplomatically, are concessions to imperialism.

The governments of the 'Front Line States' — Zambia, Botswana, Mozambique and Tanzania, are also desperate for stability. As each tries to solve its problems within its own borders they find themselves increasingly weakened by imperialism's stranglehold. Their economies have been seriously disrupted by both their own anti-imperialist struggles and their opposition to Smith's regimes. They will become increasingly insistent on a compromise with imperialism over the future of Zimbabwe.

Russia and China also have an interest in the area. Not because they want to aid the smashing of imperialism, but because both are keen to gain political and economic influence in the area. But they pursue this aim strictly within the limits of a global 'detente' with imperialism. The Soviet Union has supported Nkomo for some years as the least dangerous candidate for power. Recently, however, the supply of arms has dwindled. The Soviet bureaucrats use their support to limit the struggle and keep it in the last analysis within limits acceptable to imperialism. In addition they recognise the developing importance of, and Chinese support for, Mugabe's ZANU and want to hedge their bets.

The importance that the imperialists attach to the future of Zimbabwe underlines the fact that the struggle for power in that country cannot be divorced from the international setting. The



John Sturrock (Report)

United African National Congress
Abel Muzorewa

The A.N.C. at one time had the largest mass support. It was under Muzorewa's leadership that it mobilised the huge, nationwide demonstrations against the Tory proposed deal with Smith, at the time of the Pearce Commission visit in 1972. Muzorewa was the 'unity' chairman in 1974 when the Front Line states tried to enforce unity on the nationalists in 1974, but in 1975, he and his followers remained in the 'United' ANC after Nkomo split away to continue talks with Smith. However, last year Muzorewa started manoeuvring towards a deal and this year joined the 'interim' government. But far from consolidating his position, he is now losing support inside Zimbabwe, because of his collaboration and complicity in Smith's terror.



Laurence Sparham (I.F.L.)

ZAPU — led by Joshua Nkomo, imperialism's preferred candidate for many years. Throughout the period since UDI Nkomo has attempted to negotiate a deal favourable to himself and his supporters. His present militancy is only a tactical device — a reflection of Smith's past intransigence and the success of Muzorewa's opportunism. Between '74 and '76, ZAPU, backed by Russia, accepted the negotiations policy of the Front Line States and has still only committed a small percentage of its troops to the guerilla war. Although ZAPU talks about building a society, 'without exploitation of man by man' (Our Path to Liberation ZAPU 1976) it is essentially pro-capitalist. Vice President Chinamano for example, stated last year that, 'no sane government would disturb the economic system by nationalising for the sake of nationalising.'



ZANU — led by Robert Mugabe. ZANU split from ZAPU in 1963 over whether the leaders should stay in Zimbabwe or go abroad as Nkomo wanted. ZANU stayed, but oriented entirely to the countryside, thereby allowing Muzorewa a free hand in the cities. It was from the guerilla movement that Mugabe emerged in 1975 to oust Sithole. Drawing support from Tanzania and China, ZANU has been the most intransigent anti-imperialist force and is in control of most of the liberated areas. Its political strategy is also largely derived from Tanzania and is based on establishing communal land ownership and developing a strong agricultural sector. Because of their importance in the military struggle, ZANU is now being approached by the Soviet Union — it was Mugabe who met with Castro in Addis Ababa.

CONTENDERS FOR POWER?

main threat to the future of black Zimbabweans (as well as the vast majority of all the peoples of Southern Africa) is not Smith but the long-term plans of imperialism. In order to allow a smooth transfer of power in Zimbabwe the imperialists are quite willing to see some firms of industries nationalised. It is a small price to pay and can be recouped later. The real threat to their power is the prospect of a widening of the conflict beyond the borders of Zimbabwe and the generation of an anti-imperialist struggle throughout the southern half of the continent.

reforms

Neither wing of the Patriotic Front poses such a threat. Limited as they are by Zimbabwean nationalism and based militarily only in the countryside, they see no alternative but to transform the 'colonial' Rhodesian state into a bourgeois Zimbabwean state that will inevitably be a neo-colony. Faced by the sabotage of the white Rhodesians at home and the power of the imperialists abroad, a Patriotic Front government would find itself forced to limit even its reforms and would be incapable of fulfilling the aspirations of the black masses. In such a situation there will be the possibility that imperialism will seek to further weaken the new regime by fomenting inter-tribal rivalries as they have so often elsewhere. (Recognition of this possibility is not to see tribal warfare as the inevitable result of the formation of a Patriotic Front government in the way that the International Spartacist Tendency appear to: "The defeat of the Smith Government would undoubtedly be followed by the kind of intra-nationalist and tribalist bloodletting common throughout black Africa." *Workers Vanguard*, August 11 1978. Such a disgusting use of imperialism's own chauvinist terminology shows the stripe of the Spartacist's internationalism.

The USFI lays great stress on the need for unity and an end to the wranglings and jockeyings for

power of the petty-bourgeois leaders. Obviously, it's correct to criticise the divisions arising from personal or tribal rivalries and to pose, against that, the need for a united anti-imperialist movement led by the working class with a communist programme of permanent revolution. But the USFI are far from doing this. 'Unity' of the Anti Imperialism forces comes first. This sometimes leads them into quite farcical situations. Thus *Inter Continental Press* last Autumn indignantly suggested there was no truth to the allegations made by ZANU and ZAPU that Sithole and Muzorewa were trying to do a deal with Smith!

The only strategy that can tackle the hold of imperialism not only over Zimbabwe but the whole of southern Africa, has to be rooted in the perspective of permanent revolution. Such a strategy would be based on mobilising and arming the Zimbabwean working class to smash the present state machinery and replace it with their own state based on the working class and its rural allies. The struggle to uproot capitalism in Zimbabwe cannot be confined within its borders.

Absolutely central to the whole question is the need to build a revolutionary leadership within the black working class of South Africa and the working classes of the surrounding countries.

Those who argue that this strategy is utopian are, in fact, saying that the nationalist regimes, such as those in Angola or Tanzania can overcome the problems they have inherited without challenging imperialism's priorities. It is they who are the utopians.

It is the fact that victory to the Patriotic Front will give a boost to the liberation movement in South Africa as a whole, just as the victory of the MPLA in Angola did, that makes it essential for socialists to support the military victory of the Patriotic Front. While we have the right to criticise its politics we have a duty to support its struggle unconditionally. We do this despite the fact that its leaders

represent the educated section of the black middle class and that a victory to either ZAPU or ZANU would mean an eventual settlement with imperialism along neo-colonialist lines.

The British labour movement has a clear duty to support all liberation struggles against imperialism. We have a particular responsibility to those fighting in Zimbabwe. The Wilson and Callaghan governments have been complicit in allowing continued support for the Smith regime through sanctions busting. There is plenty of evidence that the giant oil companies are still supplying the Rhodesian economy. The regime that would "last a matter of weeks rather than months" has lasted more than a decade, murdering thousands of Zimbabweans. We have to demand that the left leaders who condemned the sanctions busting at the Labour Party conference turn their words into actions and organise the blacking of all goods to South Africa and the material support for the liberation movements. Actions such as that taken by Rover workers in blacking components to South Africa for a week last March are a start but socialists must argue for blacking all year round. We must demand that the oil companies and others who deal with Rhodesia and South Africa open their books so that their workers can stop that support.

arms

Finally we must oppose all ideas of 'British intervention' in Zimbabwe. We should learn from the experience in Northern Ireland that imperialist troops always act in the interests of imperialism. An end to support for the white minority and arms with no strings attached for the liberation forces — that is the only kind of 'intervention' we want.

Sue Thomas

ANL: Erasing class lines in the anti-

"We will show them that there will never be a time when they will be allowed to march through our streets spreading their hate and violence. They will not be allowed to enter the area of the black or Jewish communities in East London."

So declared the East London Anti-Nazi League one week before the National Front's march on September 24th. But, far from being stopped the Front were allowed to march unopposed. . . and the responsibility for this lies squarely with the ANL. Neither is this the first time the ANL has consciously allowed the fascists to march unopposed. On May 1st this year the Front marched in East London. The ANL were warned in advance. They did not organise against them.

In the wake of these defeats significant sections of anti-fascists feel betrayed and enraged by the ANL. This has been made clear in anti-fascist committees, in certain ANL groups and inside the SWP itself. The fascists have been allowed to pull their street detachments together after the drubbing they received in Lewisham last year. The results are to be seen in escalating fascist violence—most recently in Hoxton Market and South East London. Socialist Worker's idle boasting about the "last ditch for the NF", or about the NF "retreat" is no answer to the serious crisis of direction and organisation facing anti-fascists in the wake of the Brick Lane betrayal.

It is now more urgent than ever to examine why the ANL will not and cannot, organise to prevent the fascists from marching and organising.

Unified

The model of the ANL is a simple and time-honoured one. The ANL intends to build a unified campaign of all those who can be won to oppose the violent and anti-democratic face of fascism. It presumes that 'democratic' and 'anti-fascist' Tories and Liberals can be drawn in collectively or as individuals to campaign with the Labour Party, the CP, with revolutionaries to oppose the fascist menace.

A reading of the propaganda of the ANL makes clear exactly

what the political basis of this unity is intended to be. The classic ANL leaflet entitled "Why You Should Oppose the National Front" mounts the following argument against the National Front.

The NF, the leaflet tells us, are unpatriotic Nazis. Evidence is produced to prove this. Tyndall has said "The Second World War was fought for Jewish, not British interests", and that "we did not fight for our own freedom." Tyndall and Co, so the leaflet argues are trying to set us back on the road to the Second World War

Respectability

Now of course we would never deny the virulent anti-democratic character of fascism, nor the need for the working class to maintain and extend its democratic rights. But what the ANL presumes is that an anti-fascist unity can be built on the terrain of defending democracy, basking in the patriotic respectability of the British bosses' claims that the Second World War was fought to defend democracy and oppose fascism. It presumes that a national unity can be forged, across classes, to oppose the fascist threat.

What exactly is wrong with this argument? Firstly it ignores the fact that today's anti-fascist Tories and Liberals can, and will, challenge the democratic rights of the working class, trample on freedom of speech and organisation, resort to physical violence the moment the ravages of economic crisis and the organised strength of the working class challenge their property and wealth. In order to do so, and in order for important sections of the labour leadership to support them, they will not have had to become pro-Germans or Hitler worshippers. In fact they will do so under a blaze of patriotic propaganda. They will simply be acting in order to defend their own class interests. To attempt to subordinate the struggle against fascism, the workers movement and the organisations of the black and immigrant community, to the politics of anti-Nazi unity acceptable to the 'democratic' bourgeoisie can only disarm the struggle against the class enemy itself.

Secondly, it ignores the fact that fascism is but one form, albeit a grotesque one, of the racist and nationalist culture of modern capitalism. Patriotic, democratic anti-fascism can present no challenge whatsoever to the hold of the very ideas of the nation, of national unity on which fascism feeds and festers. The war in Ireland, for example, is being waged by the Labour Government and the Tories in a bloc of 'national unity', fought under the flag of patriotism and anti-Irish chauvinism. Aside from the reality of the Second World War—in fact a war fought to maintain the colonies and markets of British and American imperialism against the threat of the expansion of German and Japanese capitalism in particular—the Second World War propaganda of the ANL only challenges the NF's claims to represent the 'nation' not the false concept of national unity between capital and labour.

The founders and organisers of the ANL have not learnt the first lessons of the rise to power

Mark Risher (I.F.L.)



'At this moment thousands of anti-fascists are defending Brick Lane' ANL secretary Paul Holborow, Hyde Park Sept 24th.

of fascism in Italy and Germany. In fact only the working class and its mass organisations, most vitally the workplace base of the trade unions, can provide a solid bedrock for a movement to crush fascism. Only the working class has a consistent interest in maintaining and extending its democratic rights to organise and those of all oppressed sections of society. Despite all the talk of campaigning in the unions the ANL has focused the struggle against fascism away from the working class away from the organising of workers self defence in the factories and areas towards anti-Nazi propaganda, carnivals and festivals in league with liberals and bourgeois democrats. No other strategy could hold the bloc of the ANL together.

On the basis of a patriotic democratic platform the ANL has attempted to stitch together a motley alliance of dignified sponsors and organisations to constitute and maintain the national coalition. Successive attempts have been made to win the Tory students organisation to the alliance. The sponsorship of Mr Sidney Bidwell, famed for his signature to the Commons Select Committee report urging harsher immigration controls, has been allowed to stand unchallenged. Wedgwood Benn was uncritically given the platform at the rally preceding the march to Carnival 2 to boost his own credibility, and that of the Callaghan Government, as fighters against the fascist menace.

And at what price has the coalition been held together? At the price of leaving Brick Lane undefended rather than break with

sponsors and supporters who would not accept open opposition to the Front's march. At the price of adopting no stance in opposition to immigration controls, at the price of issuing no call for workers self defence against fascist attack, for no reliance on the forces of the state to stem the rise of fascism, Necessarily the ANL organisers have refused to run their bloc democratically, with open accountability and debate. To have done otherwise, to have fought for no platform and for workers self defence would have broken the spurious unity of the ANL asunder.

The recipe of the ANL, the political line of the SWP leadership is not new, daring or imaginative as the editorial writers of Socialist Challenge would have us believe. It is simply a re-hash of the old model of the Popular Front fought for by the Stalinized Communist Parties in the 1930s. In the aftermath of Hitler's seizure of power in 1933 and the failure of the massive German CP to block that rise to power, the Communist parties advanced a new strategy to prevent the spread of fascist power.

In the wake of the disastrous Third Period, when the Communist parties refused to struggle for a United Front of all workers organisations against the fascists, a 'Popular Front' was now to be built between the working class and the democratic, anti-fascist forces of the bourgeoisie. This most usually took the form, for example in France, of a coalition between the Communist Party, the Socialist Party with the Radical Party and other liberal elements. As Trotsky described it: "The People's Front represents the coalition of the proletariat with the imperialist bourgeoisie, in the shape of the Radical Party and smaller tribe of the same sort." (Committees of Action—Not People's Front — our emphasis)

Necessarily independent workers struggle was to be stifled and muzzled—most devastatingly by the guns of the Russian GPU in Spain—to keep alive these national coalitions, to protect and preserve 'democratic' capitalism.

Throughout the period of the 1930s Congresses against War, Against Fascism had their platforms blessed by literary and scientific, personages passing resolutions in defence of 'democracy' and 'culture' against the fascist threat. But these alliances were incapable of initiating or building workers independent struggle against the fascist threat and the capitalist crisis that gave it birth.

There is nothing new then about the ANL. No wonder many CPGB members looked on with envy as the SWP adopted tactics that their own party had pioneered but was too decrepit and hidebound to implement or initiate in the present period.

Coalition

The ANL has failed, to date, to construct a formal cross party cross class coalition. This does not alter for one moment the fact that the intentions, the practice and the politics of the ANL are popular frontist through and through.

But, claim the supporters of the ANL in their meetings and papers, the history of the League is one of enormous strides forward in the struggle against fascism. They cite the declining popularity of the NF at the polls, the 'Anti-Nazism' of the media over the last period, the very popularity of the campaign, as evidence of the success and viability of the ANL.

BLO TO UN

In claiming the credit for the declining electoral strength of the Front the ANL and its supporters simply forget one important fact. It serves their purposes to do so. The Tory Party in particular, with Callaghan's government in tow, have moved dramatically to play the racist card to their own advantage. The NF's electoral setbacks coincide with a boom in the 'respectable' racism of the traditional parties. This racism has served both to sap the strength of the fascists at the polls and to render respectable the racist climate in the inner cities, around the markets and decaying housing

The defence of Brick Lane



(Workers Power)

Worker

In the aftermath of the Brick Lane sell out of September 24th, Workers Action proudly declared that it had a consistent record of struggle against the leadership and method of the ANL. 'Our record speaks for itself' it claimed.

In fact, the record does speak for itself; but the record is not the one Workers Action is now laying claim to.

In March and April of this year, Workers Action declared itself against the method and record of the ANL. In its first major article on the ANL, entitled, 'The Dilemmas of the ANL' (WA94) the paper had this to say, 'The Anti-Nazi League has as often as not had a harmful and divisive effect on anti-fascist work.' The article went on to point out the similarity between the ANL and a 'tactic used by the CP's in the Thirties' referring to the succession of anti-fascist congresses organised by the CP's which, 'led to no real action; they merely weakened the anti-fascist struggle by leading activists to think that the showy array of liberal intellectuals was a real bulwark against the Nazis.' Further, the ANL could, 'make a positive contribution only if it drops its present approach.' There was no sign that the SWP intended to drop its, 'present approach'.

Workers Action stuck to its guns after the ANL's refusal to

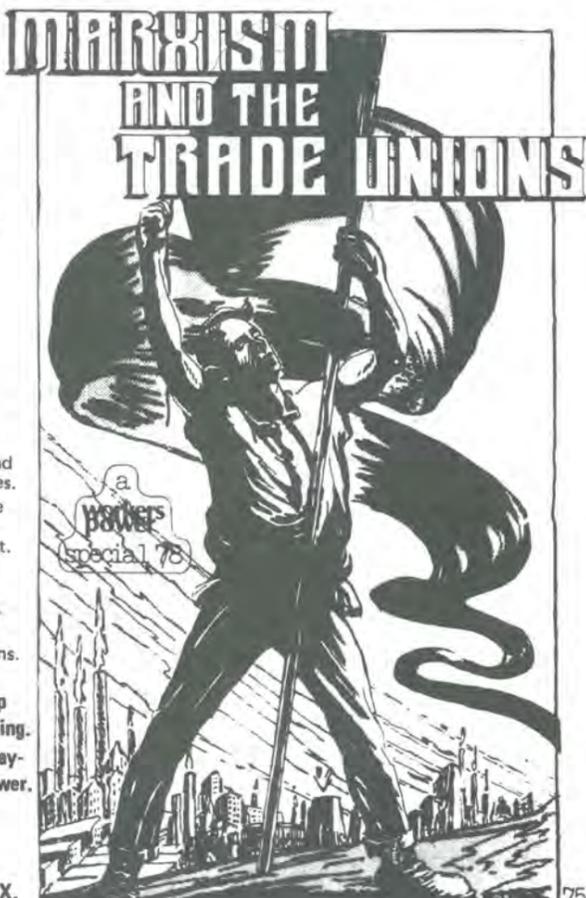
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Anti-fascist fight means TAKING ROAD A WORKERS UNITED FRONT

Andrew Ward (Report)



SWP Leader Cliff teaches ABC to oxen

ates from which the fascists can
ruit their murderous thugs.
Likewise we should remember
t big business, the ruling class,
no need at present to deploy
co-opt the fascist gangs in their
ence. Why then should we be
prised that the media and press
only criticise the fascist gangs
occasion while openly espousing
s for the tightening of immigr-
on controls, for support for the
ket busting role of the police
ot boys and special patrol group.
y when the working class can
e power of the state
ces, on the streets and on the
ket lines will the 'democratic'

financiers and politicians openly
turn to the fascist gangs for
assistance.
In his editorial in *Socialist
Worker* Tony Cliff, no doubt
mindful of the dissaray in the
ranks of the SWP, has attempted
to advance 'socialist' rationalisation
for building the ANL. In his
editorial of 7th October 1978—
entitled '100,000 plus' Cliff treats
us to two major arguments. He
uses an analogy between the
struggle against fascism and the
struggle of oxen against the
slaughterer—an analogy used by
Trotsky for different purposes.
For the oxen, Cliff claims, there

are two choices:—either agreement
on practical unity against the
slaughterer or agreement to
struggle "against the private owner-
ship of capital". Defending the
first option, that of the ANL's
practical unity of all opponents
of the fascists Cliff presents us
with a false alternative. The alterna-
tive to the disastrous unity of the
ANL is not for revolutionaries to
agree to fight only with those who
agree with our programme of
socialist revolution. This would be
to condemn ourselves to sectarian
irrelevance, refusing to search for
links in struggle with the thousands
of workers who want to fight the

fascist menace. But what we do
say is that it is not sufficient
simply to agree to oppose fascism—
there are key elements of our
programme, driving the fascists
out of the unions, organising
workers self-defence, preventing
free speech for fascists, opposing
all immigration controls which we
fight for as a necessary basis for the
successful struggle against fascism.

Joint Struggle

With those workers who as yet do
not agree with that programme,
let alone the struggle for the
socialist revolution we must still
seek out forms of joint struggle
against the fascists, in the factories
and estates. We do so, not debarring
reformist workers, or their leaders,
from united struggle against fascism
but maintaining at all times the
independence of our propaganda
and programme proving in practice
in the field of struggle, the correct-
ness of our political line. This is
the method of the Workers United
Front—as Trotsky put it "agree
only how to strike, whom to strike,
and when to strike", not liquidate
the programme of revolutionary
socialism into an immobile bloc for
propaganda with bourgeois
liberals and reformists. Such a bloc
necessarily cannot put to the test
the strategies of reformists; as with
Benn at the Carnival it lets them
off the hook. It is inevitably an
obstacle to building a fighting
Workers United Front. The recipe
of the ANL Cliff's method
presumes that those who agree with
letter A, opposition to the Nazis,
must by a process of logical argument
be led to oppose B unemployment,
C the Tories and so on to letter
Z, support for the programme of
socialist revolution. Just as the
SWP imagine trade union
militancy, unfettered and
generalised, must lead to the
development of socialist conscious-
ness, so agreement to oppose
Nazis will propel the anti-fascists
in the direction of anti-capitalism.
Trusting to this spontaneous
propulsion the SWP abdicate their
responsibility to fight for the
necessary programme for crush-
ing the fascists, clinging instead to
the ANL coalition.

The ANL has significantly
demobilised the struggle against
fascism. In Hyde Park on Septem-
ber 24th it prevented thousands of
workers and youth from mobilising
to stop the fascists march. It has
betrayed and will betray again.

The SWP, and their acolytes
in the IMG, must take full responsi-
bility for this record, they cannot
pass the responsibility to the
liberals and celebrities that they
refuse to break with. For that
reason the members of the SWP,
shamed in so many areas by the
betrayal of Brick Lane, must call
their leaders to account, fight to
break the SWP from the ANL
Popular Frontist coalition.

Our Record

Workers Power has consistent-
ly argued that the ANL constitu-
tes a diversion, an obstacle to the
development of a fighting Workers
United Front against Fascism. We
have argued wherever possible
that the ANL approach represents
a step backwards from the mobi-
lisation of the youths and work-
ers at Lewisham and Ladywood
last August.

In local anti-fascist committees,
and at the June CARF conference
we have fought to prevent the col-
lapse of the anti-fascist organisations
into the ANL while opposing also
the complacent localism and routin-
ism, the distance from the labour
movement that is the basis of
many of these local anti-fascist
committees.

We do not turn our backs on
those youth and workers who
have been won to the ANL. We
support every step they take to
constitute their groups and activi-
ties on the correct political
basis. We support every step they
take to make their leaders account-
able for their actions, to recall
the ANL conference and make
the leaders answer for their betrayal.

But in doing so, we make clear
at every step, that the ANL is a
roadblock to real fighting unity
against the fascists. The ANL must
be replaced if the betrayals
of May and September are not to
be repeated. To that end we sup-
port and actively struggle for
all moves by genuine defence com-
mittees, ANL groups, labour move-
ment bodies to establish a practi-
cal alternative to the ANL which
is committed to No Platform for
Fascists and to organising the lab-
our movement to that end.

Workers Power 6

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elaborating our position on the
ANL and its Popular Frontist
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Action speaks for itself

ganise against the NF's Mayday
march in East London, 'This is
way to build an anti-fascist
ovement. This shaky alliance
ll soon shatter on the rocks of
ility.' (WA 101) But they did
int out in their next issue that,
he sheer size of the event seems
have robbed several organisa-
ions of all sense of political per-
ective.' It soon became clear
at this included Workers Action.

By early June the paper was
ging a different song. At the
ference of the Campaign
ainst Racism and Fascism, the
shaky alliance' doomed to shat-
r quickly, had acquired a new
ermanence in Workers Action's
inking, 'Noting the political
aknesses (sic) of the ANL, some
ti-fascist activists conclude that
e ANL, like a gale, will blow it
f out.' Workers Action was now
on playing its role of holding
together, to building the ANL.

In their leaflet to the CARF
ference, Workers Action sup-
rters declared of the ANL,
e should recognise it as a big
p forward, and we should try
alter its direction from within.'
at this direction might be the
flet did not make clear, unde-
rstandably given that the ANL was
eady a step forward, a big step
the right direction. The leaflet
nounced that, 'The greatest dan-
s right now in this respect
es not come from those who

want to scrap any mention of a
platform against racism and just
voice opposition to the National
Front.' No! The biggest threat came
from those who, '...viewed the rapid
emergence of the ANL with the
smugness and disdain of the oldhand
watching the brash newcomer.
Singed out as part of the 'greatest
danger' were those who used, 'the
spurious justification of 'political
principles (sic) to oppose the col-
lapse of those forces who want to
fight fascism into the arms of the
ANL.

By the summer conference of
the ANL, Workers Action could
declare that the ANL was, 'respon-
ding in a limited way to the needs
of the struggle'. (WA111) and that,
in an ANL riven between, 'the mili-
tant drive of its grass roots activists
and its leaders concern for classless,
contentless 'anti-fascist unity',
Workers Action supporters would be
doing all in their power to strengthen
the militant drive of the activists.'
Gone were the warnings, the clear
declarations of bankruptcy of the
ANL road of demobilisation. The
Workers Action was now playing the
role of 'critical' recruiters to,
and builders of, the ANL alliance.

At Carnival Two, the Workers
Action supporters issued no warning
to the assembled anti-fascists about
the treachery of the ANL leaders, or
about their positive refusal to march
against the NF. Trusting no doubt to
the healthy instincts of the 'grass roots

activists' and underestimating the stif-
ling of the energy of these activists by
the ANL campaign, the Workers Action
leaflet simply called for demonstrators
to make their way to Brick Lane, 'If
the National Front get away with their
march today, they will grow stronger
and the Carnival will look pretty sick.'
The critical supporters of the ANL did
not even issue a call for the Carnival
to be diverted to meet the fascist
threat.

In the wake of the ANL betrayal,
the Workers Action tried to recover
its opposition to the ANL. Its editors
searched its pages for a record of in-
transigence and opposition. Once again,
we were told, 'In the last analysis, there
therefore, the ANL, with its present
leadership and policy will fail to stop
the Nazis for the same reasons that the
Race Relations Act and the whole, 'Race
relations industry' will'. (WA118) A call
was issued to bring together fighting
ANL groups, 'forming a framework of a
new anti-fascist movement which will
rise on the ruins of the cut-price poli-
tics of the ANL'.

Faced with an ANL refusal to recall
their conference, to discuss criticisms,
faced with the inability of the ANL
to lay the basis of a united fighting
campaign to stop the fascists, the
Workers Action supporters have two
choices. Break with the methods and
discipline of the ANL, and fight for a
real alternative to it, or continue in the
mould of the last four months as its
camp followers.

CAN THE P.L.O. WIN?

IS the clear duty of revolutionaries to fight for working class support for the Palestinians in the struggle against imperialism and its Zionist agents. This support must be given even though those leading the struggle are not revolutionary communists.

Yet it would be a total abdication of our duty and a sham internationalism not to analyse critically the strategy and tactics of the Palestinian resistance organisations. In this second article in our series *Jill Daniels* looks at the goals and methods of the groupings which make up the Palestinian Liberation Organisation.

Before 1948 and the establishment of the Israeli state, the Palestinians engaged in bitter struggle both against the Zionist settlers and the British imperialists. Their eventual defeat and subsequent mass expulsion from their lands effectively ended all active resistance to the Zionists until the establishment of Al Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Al Fatah, the largest guerilla group operating in the Middle East, has its roots in the Moslem Brotherhood, a nationalistic and Islamic movement started in Egypt in 1928. Fatah itself was

formed in the early 60s by Palestinians in Gaza and among those working in the oil fields of the Persian Gulf (particularly Kuwait), with its first recruits receiving their training in Algeria in 1962 before moving on to camps in Jordan and Syria. It started armed operations against Israel in 1965.

The PLO was set up in 1964 under the auspices of Egypt and the Arab League mainly to contain, within limits acceptable to these states, the development of Palestinian self-organisation that had begun with the establishment of Fatah. After the 1967 war the

PLO disillusioned by the ability of the Arab regimes to fight began to organise independently of these regimes. A Palestinian leadership was established and a shift away from discussion and diplomacy towards armed struggle against Israel took place.

However in spite of these developments the PLO's programme remained bourgeois nationalist as expressed in the organisation's programmatic goal: a democratic secular state in Palestine. This meant the establishment of another bourgeois state with its own class structure with the leadership of the PLO firmly holding the reins. Arafat the leader of Fatah made clear his attitude to the involvement of the masses and what he viewed as a 'socialist' threat when he said in 1975: "We don't want to fall into the error committed in Algeria by the FLN, who, having constituted a powerful executive, lost total control of it."

Committed to the goal of establishing a bourgeois state of Palestine the PLO leadership has had little interest in rooting itself in the Arab and Palestinian working class and peasant masses, the only force which can break the hold of imperialism in the Middle East. Instead the PLO has preferred to rely on its alliance with the 'anti-imperialist' bourgeoisies in the Arab states, using its guerilla strategy as an adjunct or spur to international diplomacy to achieve its aims. This strategy has led to an increasing dependence of the PLO on these states, whose ruling classes are only too willing to dump the demands of the Palestinian people in their search for compromise with imperialism.

This strategy has led the PLO inevitably towards the implicit acceptance of Israel's right to exist as an independent state in the here and now. In 1975 Arafat made it clear that a democratic state in Palestine was not necessarily attainable at all when he said: "Certainly I have said that I dream. I emphasise dream — of a united and democratic Palestine. But is it a crime to dream? Is it forbidden to imagine the evolution that could occur during the coming years?" Arafat is probably right. The PLO with its present programme would not have the means to destroy Israel and establish the democratic Palestine it would like to see. It would need the leadership of the working class to fight and achieve democratic demands and go beyond them to the establishment of a workers secular state of Palestine.

Thus the PLO has been thrust into conciliation and reconciliation with Israel and the Arab bourgeoisies and the acceptance of a 'peaceful' solution. The acceptance of a West Bank Palestinian state is the only compromise solution the PLO can find in order to assure its own political survival and not lose the support of the Arab bourgeoisies. Arafat has tried to gloss over this compromise by saying in March 1977: "There are two [initial] phases to our return. The first phase is to the 1967 lines and the second to the 1948 lines . . . the third stage is the democratic state of Palestine. So we are fighting for these three stages." In fact the third stage is the most unlikely as Farouk Qaddoumi head of the political department of the PLO made clear in November '76, "we are concentrating on the establishment of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip because these are the two areas from which Israel will withdraw."

Another political strand in the Palestinian resistance movement is represented by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine established in 1967 by George Habash. The PFLP grafts elements of Maoism on to extreme Arab nationalism. Espousing 'Marxism-Leninism' the PFLP

differs from the struggle for women's emancipation. We believe that whilst all women suffer oppression in some form or other, working class women are doubly oppressed. Their class interests moreover drive them to attack the root cause of all women's oppression, private property, and the last form of class society, capitalism, on which the family and domestic slavery are founded. Also working women's presence in the workplace gives them collective strength and a basis for organisation. For these reasons we believe a mass women's movement must be based on working class women. To effectively strike at the root of oppression such a movement must be won to a revolutionary programme with a communist leadership. Of course such a mass movement must be 'autonomous'

opposes the establishment of a West Bank state as a defeat for Palestinian self-determination, while at the same time remaining programmatically identical to Fatah in its goal of a democratic secular state of Palestine. In 1973 it issued a statement: "self-determination for our people is related part and parcel, with the democratic Palestinian state . . . the only thing possible to agree upon is the right of the Palestinian people to build a new state free from Zionism and Imperialist control (a democratic state of Palestine)."

The PFLP remains on the same terrain as Fatah because its Maoism enshrines the stagist theory of revolution — the first stage involves a struggle by all classes of Palestinians for a democratic state "free of imperialist control" — this class struggle free 'utopia' then gives way, presumably in a peaceful transition if the 'Chinese model' is followed, to a fully fledged socialist state. This policy like that of Fatah's means effectively subordinating the proletariat to the petit-bourgeoisie in the fight for national liberation.

The other smaller groups remain programmatically tied to the PLO also. The Democratic Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine though appearing to the extreme left of the PLO, in practice has supported the West Bank state project.

The PLO's response to the UN troops entering the Lebanon was to rely on these forces of international imperialism to drive the Israelis out, even to the point of agreeing with the Lebanese Government shortly after the invasion to "stop the armed struggle" against the Israeli/Christian forces. A decision which even the PLO leadership found difficult to enforce on its rank and file.

The PLO's inability to raise any concrete opposition to Egypt's betrayal at Camp David demonstrates once again the bankruptcy of their present strategy. Increasingly they have to rely on heroic guerilla attacks against Israeli civilian targets, not so much for their military effectiveness but as a symbol of continued Palestinian resistance to be used by the PLO leadership as a bargaining counter in their negotiations with American imperialism.

It is more urgent than ever that a revolutionary party is formed within Israel and amongst the Palestinians outside its borders. A party whose programme is a linked strategy for the destruction of the Zionist state, for the freeing of Jewish workers from Zionism and the creation of a workers state in Palestine.

The concluding article in our series looks at the different strategies put forward by Trotskyists today.

in the narrow sense of the word — self-governing. Obviously any mass working class organisation must be democratic — a majority of its members deciding policy, electing a leadership etc. But a necessary corollary of this is organised party struggle within such organisations, not behind the scenes manoeuvres and pretending to be 'just individuals'. We do not in any way write off the many thousands of women brought into struggle against varying aspects of their oppression. On the contrary we take them so seriously as to be absolutely open with them about our politics. This honesty and openness may not lead to popularity in today's movement. But it will draw the best militants towards marxism and towards the struggle of working class women for their emancipation. Ann Jones

Womens Liberation — a political question?

IT IS NOW a commonly held position on the left that an important element of the fight against capitalism is support for an 'autonomous women's movement'. Foremost among the advocates of this position is the International Marxist Group. Strictly speaking, 'autonomous' means 'self-governing' — women in the movement should take decisions, formulate policy and so on. But the expression 'autonomous women's movement' is now used in a much wider sense. Feminists use it to mean either than women who are members of political groups should be excluded from the movement or that such women should not act as group or party members within women's organisations.

Genuine fears do exist that 'hardened political activists' could manipulate and manoeuvre their way into a dominant position. The dismissive attitude taken by much of the established left to the newly re-emerging women's movement in the early 70s helped to create such fears. There are however, many feminists, 'radical', 'revolutionary', and 'socialist' who are avowedly anti-Leninist. They see in the 'party' an intrinsically patriarchal organisation hostile to women's liberation now and incapable of achieving it even after a successful revolution. Workers Power rejects these notions and has argued against them many times. The premises on which they are based, quite logically, motivate feminists who hold them to 'red bait' and smear women who openly declare their membership of a 'party', their primary loyalty to it, and their disciplined carrying out of its line.

The IMG on the other hand capitulate to these anti-party sentiments in modern feminism. Ignoring the experience of the marxist women's movement from the 1880s to the 1920s they totally accept the conception of an all-class women's movement. Far from orienting centrally towards working class women they are completely attuned to the prejudices of the largely lower middle class, white collar, intellectuals who form the bulk of the women's movement activists. The experience in the now collapsed Working Women's Charter shows that the IMG will actually obstruct any orientation to rank and file women in the unions. Pledged to the 'autonomy' of the women's movement they renounce any desire to win women to a marxist programme

of class struggle. This can be seen in an article by John Ross published in the IMG journal *Socialist Woman*. Ross uses a Marxist terminology to disguise the IMG's capitulation to feminism. He takes Marx's distinction between the political and the economic and applies it to two other categories, the personal and the social. On the personal Ross fixes the stern sign 'Private No Admittance', while on the social is fixed 'No Admittance Except In A Personal Capacity'. The women's movement, along with art and culture is in the 'social' category. Of course he concedes that things in these areas do 'become political', but then

political neutrality.

The crucial point Ross is trying to obscure is that real mass organisations — trade unions, Soviets, a *working class women's organisation*, whilst by their nature open to all who will join and carry out majority decisions, can and must be won to a communist leadership, a revolutionary goal and tactics. Today's women's movement has neither a mass character, nor is it an organisation. It is an aggregate of many disparate organisations, campaigns and trends. Certain initiatives at certain times have a mass mobilising effect. This heterogeneity is what Ross glories

John Sturrock (Report)



Ford wives: working class women prepared to fight.

they become the business of the party.

Ross performs this sleight of hand by a whole series of false analogies. For example he equates the women's movement with the unions — impossible since the latter are workers organisations. He points out that those they organise "must include those who stand for the dictatorship of the proletariat and those who oppose it" and concludes that the women's movement "cannot be organised on the basis of agreement on the political struggle to destroy the bourgeoisie". Certainly unions cannot and should not make such a position a condition of membership — even under the dictatorship of the proletariat. But they must become, in Trotsky's words, "revolutionary trade unions which not only are not stockholders of Imperialist policy but which set as their task the direct overthrow of the rule of capitalism". Ross, if he reversed his analogy, would be an advocate of trade union autonomy and

in — its 'strength' as he puts it. He argues that revolutionaries should try to win women to their ideas, certainly, but that there is no urgent need to win women to a programme of class struggle. The party cadres will, it is hoped, win positions of influence "because of their own merits and because of the policies they have pursued including those of the party". For much of the time, it seems, an IMG member can pursue any politics they like!

These 'theories' not only throw marxism into a complete jumble they also indicate a certain patronising attitude to the struggle for women's liberation. It is defined as largely 'social' — either non-political or only episodically so. Women have 'their' organisations for this purpose. The concerns of these organisations like questions of art and culture, are all very stimulating but they are not of life or death import to the class struggle, which is political, and the preserve of the party. Workers Power has a totally

in the unions

NO ALTERNATIVE TO WORKERS' CONTROL

By Mark Hoskisson

THE CORPORATE PLAN

proposed by the Lucas Combine Committee, as an alternative to unemployment, has received much attention recently. Television programmes and numerous press articles have analysed the plan with varying degrees of enthusiasm. The Quakers have recommended the Combine Committee for the Nobel Peace prize, while sections of the ruling class at home and abroad, have hailed the plan as a major industrial breakthrough.

The plan was born out of a meeting between the Combine Committee and the then Labour Minister for Industry, Wedgwood Benn, in 1974. Cut backs in defence spending had severely affected the aerospace industry and the Lucas management responded by threatening redundancies. Faced with this prospect the stewards, on the advice of Benn, began to discuss the possibility of alternative products. This coincided with Benn's overall ideas on planning agreements and worker 'participation' in industry.

The Lucas workforces' skills, it was argued, went far beyond just producing military goods. These skills could be used to produce a whole range of other goods including socially useful ones. But the plan included not only socially useful products as has often been supposed. Brian Salisbury, a TASS shop steward and leading member of the Combine, commented in *Workers News* No.6 that the plan was intended "... to ensure that amongst the alternative products are a number which could be socially useful to the community at large."

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So, as well as the socially useful products, like kidney machines, there were also to be a range of products designed to entice the management. Products chosen because of their profitability.

This point has been reinforced by various statements from the Combine which are offers of advice to the Lucas bosses on how best to boost company profits. Salisbury again, this time in *Socialist Voice* No 2, quotes Mary Kaldor of Sussex University, to illustrate the viability in commercial terms, of the Plan "There is no reason to believe that the export potential of these projects would be less than that of armaments."

Before considering the results of such an attitude, which is fundamental to the Combine's notion of the Plan, it is necessary to spell out the significance of the Plan from the point of view of the working class. In one sense it does demonstrate the falsity of all the arguments about workers not having the initiative or know-how to direct and plan production for themselves. The details of the Plan run to hundreds of pages outlining the potentialities of a technology geared towards need rather than profit. In this sense it attempts to question the priorities of capitalism. It brings into question the sanity of a system which prefers to build missiles to kidney machines. These are the positive aspects of

the Plan. In this sense it demonstrates the vast potentialities for social advance workers skills would hold under a planned economy. But, posed as it is, does the Lucas Plan act as a concrete strategy for achieving that planned economy? Does offering an alternative scheme to the management, which is what the plan does, really question the right of the managers to manage, the right of capitalism to exploit workers? We believe it does just the opposite.

The false friends of the Lucas workers, such as the Quakers and academic economists and some 'liberal' employers, may applaud them now. But they do so precisely because the Plan, as it is presently posed, does not threaten to open a breach in their system. On the contrary, it opens the way for the bosses to draw the workers into collaboration with them to foster the illusion that there is a common interest between exploited and exploiter. In doing this the bosses intentions are to smash strong, independent trade union organisation in Lucas as elsewhere where participation has been introduced. Their aim is to create a docile workforce.

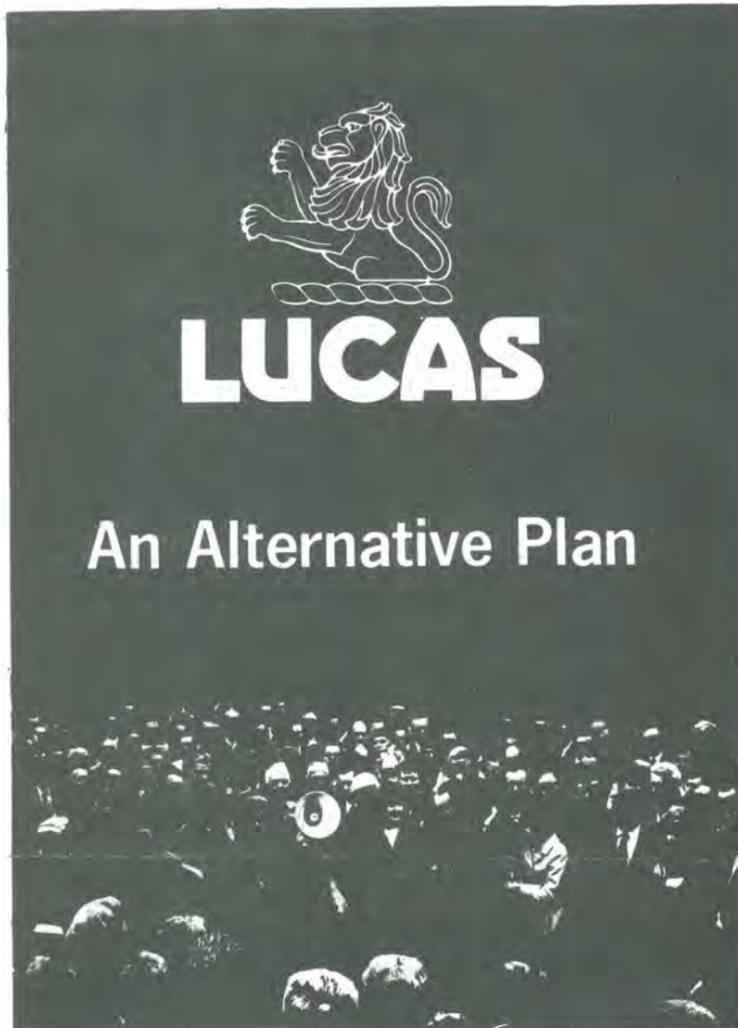
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What is at stake then is not the Plan itself. If parts of it prove profitable then Lucas will adopt them. But the management will not negotiate nationally because they regard a strong Combine, not the Plan, as the real threat. Based on shop stewards committees, it produces a paper, *The Lucas Report* and organises on a company wide basis against the management.

This is why the bosses refuse to recognise the Combine and by-pass it to set up joint committees in the individual sites. With stewards integrated into the management it will be very easy for the management to smash the Combine. Against these efforts the Combine must not propose the same incorporation on a national level, but must seek to strengthen itself, its own support, in order to fight redundancies regardless of the financial state of the company.

But, people will argue, despite its weaknesses and risks, surely the Plan offers a positive answer to unemployment and a basis for convincing workers that other types of work exist. The Lucas workers themselves however, do not think that the Plan is that straightforward. A statement from the Combine quoted in *Socialist Challenge* No 66 points out that "There can be no islands of responsibility and concern in the sea of irresponsibility and depravity." Alas this is precisely what the Plan



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The Lucas Plan, as it stands, leaves intact the capitalists' right to oversee and control the production of alternative goods, to organise the distribution of those goods and to realise the profits on them. A fight for workers control attacks all of these aspects of capitalism.

This struggle will not win the Combine Committee any Nobel Peace prizes. The applause from sections of the enlightened bourgeoisie will fade away. But such a struggle would draw the rank and file into a real struggle to take economic power out of the hands of those who will butcher their jobs in the interest of profit. It would vividly demonstrate to hundreds of thousands of other workers in the car industry and beyond the inescapable need to tackle the 'depravity' of capitalism root and branch. In doing this a real struggle for workers control in the factories would inescapably raise to the forefront the question of political, state power. It would help free them from the crippling influence of those like Wedgwood Benn who from the Upper Clyde Shipyard to Lucas has proved the pied piper leading workers to the destruction of their jobs and trade union organisation.

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As a short cut to popularity and supposed mass growth, troops out activity has traditionally drifted in search of the 'right' publicity stunt or gimmick. This has meant avoiding the real question of consistently campaigning within the trade unions. Even past initiatives of the old TOM which attempted to draw on the strength of the labour movement, such as the Labour Movement Delegate Conference and the Labour Movement Delegation to Ireland, were reduced by their organisers to one-off affairs. There was no accountability nor follow through of the delegating bodies.

Even this limited focus is eroded now, instead UTOM has its future activities in shops selling anti-Irish, another rally, hold an all night vigil, support B. Gallagher and P. Arrowsmith in the forthcoming General Election, etc.

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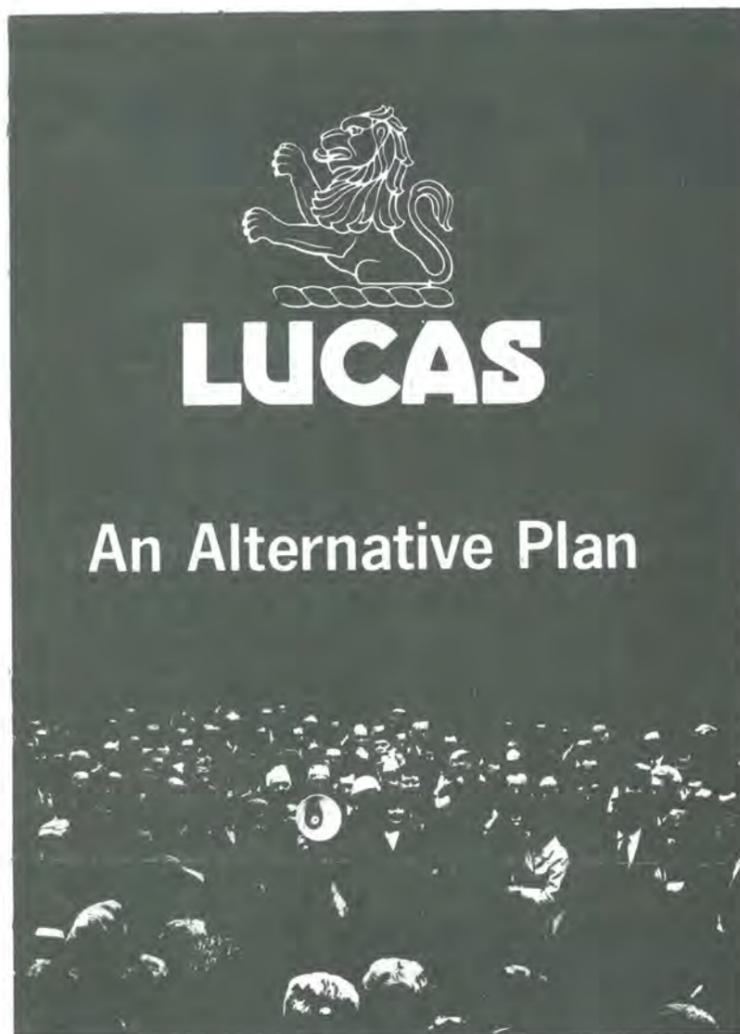
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By Bernie McArd

Workers Power

NO LEAD IN LOW PAY FIGHT

by Chris Miller

The NUPE low pay campaign has ended. It was organised to head off a backlash of criticism from union members over their executive's handling of last year's £50 claim. That campaign coincided with the FBU dispute but, rather than linking up with the firemen, the NUPE leaders sat on the fence and did nothing. Maintaining his 'left' face, Alan Fisher voted for the FBU at the TUC. But he refused to do the one thing that could have ensured a victory to the firemen - bring out his own members for their own claim. When the FBU was defeated through its isolation, the NUPE leaders said the defeat proved that their strategy had been correct - and section after section of their members were forced to accept 10%.

At this year's conference the president, Yates, tried to shift the responsibility for this onto the membership. 'When the firemen lost, all public service unions lost. Our members understood that and they showed when they eventually voted by substantial majorities to accept the pay offers made to our negotiators, despite the fact that the offers fell short of our original claim.'

The massive cuts in public spending under both Wilson and Callaghan have hit public service workers hardest. For two years the leaders of their unions have seen their main job as controlling and defusing the rising militancy of their members. The massive protest demonstrations and one-day strikes of November 1976, were never followed through or built upon. In the same way the inter-union cuts committee, headed by Drain (NALGO) Fisher (NUPE) Basnett (G&M) and Spanswick (COHSE) confined itself to militant talk and the production of leaflets, while doing nothing to support hospital workers who were fighting against redundancies.

fiasco

The sell-out of the £50 claim and the fiasco of the cuts committee were enough to prevent the isolated examples of militancy from growing into a concerted attack on government policies. However, they did result in focussing anger onto the union leaders.

In NUPE, the leadership responded to this by promising a campaign against low pay under the slogan of the 35-hour week and £60 minimum wage. The campaign was carried out in the time-honoured manner of the bureaucrats; TV speeches about the hardship facing the low-paid, pledges of 'hard action' to 'break the low pay barrier' and a series of public meetings. Many of these were so poorly advertised that all but a few union activists stayed away. This was then interpreted as proof of the apathy of the membership.

The COHSE leaders, under Albert Spanswick, were also confronted by demands for a

serious fight against low pay.

At the COHSE conference militants called for a minimum wage of £65. Spanswick used another well tried tactic - and argued for an £80 minimum. This would rank as the claim of the year - 100% for the lowest paid in the NHS - if COHSE had any intention of fighting for it. That they do not is shown by Spanswick's continued commitment to 'responsible collective bargaining'.

the union leaders. Its central plank is a permanent pay policy linking public sector workers to those in manufacturing industry. The idea is that, under the scheme, there would be no need to even discuss what the workers involved needed, each year's claim would be a simple matter of comparison. In this way rank and file involvement would be cut to a minimum and all initiative stifled. Without the possibility of fighting their own battles for pay and conditions, public sector workers would be reduced to nothing more than onlookers in the class struggle.

strategy

Against this revolutionaries have to argue for their own



Andrew Ward (Report)

Alan Fisher: no break with Callaghan

loophole

The loophole in the £80 claim is that no date is specified, the figure is just a far away target. In the meantime COHSE members are encouraged to put their faith in the possible generosity of the government, '.....health services are not mentioned specifically (in the July white paper on pay) but the government does recognise that there may be a small number of groups in a similar position (to the police etc) for whom similar treatment might be appropriate.' COHSE paper Sept 78.

Although it is clear that the union leaders intend to do everything in their power to prevent a real fight, based on direct action, from developing, this does not mean they do not have their own version of a strategy for low pay. It has been most clearly outlined by Basnett of the GMWU. It has two objectives. On the one hand to disarm the rank and file and on the other to extend the control of

strategy, aimed at developing a fighting unity between workers in the public and private sectors.

In setting the minimum wage at £60, the union leaders are accepting the category of 'lower paid workers' for their members. We would argue that all low paid workers should fight for the average industrial wage, at present this means about £75 for a forty hour week. Because so many of the lowest paid workers are in the public sector, the Labour government's attacks have to be met head on with the demand that public spending be restored to pre-cut levels, and be protected against inflation. Against redundancies and the resulting massive increase in workload, we argue for workers' control of hiring and firing and over the length of the working week.

Demands cannot be separated from action to win them. Already many hospitals have been occupied to prevent closure. This kind of direct action by those immediately involved

editorial

(contd from p1)

be found that ensure real support is won for workers in struggle with demonstrations, collections, blacking and assistance in picketing. Such co-operation can lay the basis for the building of councils of action if the struggle reaches the level of a generalised offensive.

The coordination of struggles cannot take place only on a local level. The Ford's strike is a national strike, Cowley and Vauxhall Ellesmere Port must not be left isolated. A national movement, with its roots in the plants and localities needs to be built to give a national focus to the fightback. With this in view, the organisations that claim to be based on the rank and file of the trade unions, such as the CP dominated LCDTU and the SWP inspired National Rank and File Movement, should hold a joint conference with the precise task of organising the fightback. Such a conference would have to democratically hammer out a strategy for generalising the working class resistance to pay limits. Unless these tasks are begun the danger of fragmentation and defeat will be immense.

This democratic debate is vital. The CP and SWP leaderships can offer no way forward for such a struggle. They both have an appalling record of rigging conferences and stifling debate. They must, however, be put to the test in front of the assembled working class militants of all, or no, party affiliation.

Labour

At the same time the hold of the Labour Party over millions of workers cannot be ignored. In building the fightback against wage restraint it is crucial that supporters of the Labour Party are drawn in. They have the task of calling their own leaders to account.

Against a conference decision, Callaghan is playing his 'Minister of the Crown' card. He claims to represent the interests of the nation, not the narrow interests of the Labour Party or trade unions. This is a time-honoured way of flaunting basic party democracy. In this situation the MP's of the Tribune Left, who supposedly regard conference decisions as binding, must be forced by activists in the Party to vote against the government on the wages issue, even if this becomes a vote of no confidence in the government. The Labour Party conference decision, the very livelihoods of workers and their families, are at issue. A refusal to oppose in every way possible

is an essential part of the fightback, but has too often been left isolated. The spreading of occupations and direct action to offices and departments vital to the employer must be argued for. Passive support from local unions must be transformed into active spreading of the struggle.

action

The fact that the unions have had to mount any kind of low pay campaign is proof enough of the pressure from the rank and file. Even though the £60 claim is insufficient, militants have to press for all-out co-ordinated action across all the unions involved, to win it.

those who are attacking these, is tantamount to treachery. Let the Tribunes declare their true colours. Do they really defend workers' interests and party democracy against Callaghan, or do they stand with him?

At a rank and file level, local Labour Parties must be involved to the hilt in the actions of workers. Where workers are on strike Labour Party offices and facilities should be opened to them for meetings and for propaganda and social purposes. Local MP's and councillors must also be called to account. Any who vote for and support the government and its policies must be kicked out of office and not re-selected at the next election.

offensive

What kind of policies are needed in this offensive? What is our answer to Callaghan when he asks, 'What is your alternative?' The TUC have scrambled together a prices policy. It is an attempt by them to avoid challenging the pay policy and still appear as defenders of working class interests. World prices, a roaring inflation and the need for international competitiveness all make this a utopian scheme. Our alternative is to say that wages have to be defended against inevitable price increases, no matter what. In the coming rounds of struggle against wage controls, the fight for a rising scale of wages, 1% rise for every 1% rise in the cost of living index, is central to an alternative policy. The cost of living index would have to be calculated by elected committees of trade unionists and housewives, not by the government's retail price index. To protect the low-paid we must fight for a minimum wage of £75. Against the bosses' attempts to divide us on the basis of sex we must fight for real equal pay for women. These are our alternatives to Callaghan's attacks and to the TUC's utopian schemes. They are the only policies that can unify the class. As class-wide demands they cut across the sectoralism that so weakens the working class. They lay the only solid basis for building a general movement of workers against the bosses' offensive on wages.

No mass offensive on wages can achieve final victory short of settling accounts with the real power that the bosses and bankers have to make the working class pay, and pay again, for the chaos and misery of their system. In the struggles ahead a new leadership must be built committed to that settling of accounts.

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