

Workers power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

INSIDE: C.N.D.
AMERICA
ENTRYISM
DEPORTATIONS

NO CRUISE! NO PERSHING! DISARM REAGAN AND THATCHER!

THATCHER AND REAGAN have called in the slick sharks of the advertising agencies in a desperate bid to shore up the image of their war drive. Thatcher's Government is shelling out £1 million to fund a Ministry of Defense Campaign on behalf of Pershing and Cruise missiles. The Reagan administration is reported to have set aside \$65m for its own particular Public Relations campaign. US Vice-President Bush has been shuttled around Western Europe trying to mend the cracks that have appeared amongst the Western bourgeoisie in the face of Andropov's stepped up peace drive.

All of this is evidence of two things. Firstly, Reagan and Thatcher are set on ensuring that by the end of 1983 they will have a clear superiority in European land based nuclear weapons. This will match their superiority over the USSR in every other sphere of nuclear arms. Secondly Reagan and Thatcher are fast losing their credibility as protectors of the peace of the world. Their hand on heart protestations of peaceful intent, their feigned indignation at Soviet "aggression" have been cutting less and less ice, as the date for the deployment of the lethal cruise and Pershing systems draws near. When Reagan and Thatcher talk of matching Soviet

might, of their commitment to the 'zero option' they are simply trying to disguise the fact that what they aim for is a massive nuclear superiority over the USSR which would guarantee to Imperialism its dominance in world politics, force the Soviet bureaucracy out of projects to aid or arm movements of national liberation and enable the west to defeat the USSR in armed conflict.

Reagan and Thatcher are set on maintaining and extending their established overwhelming nuclear superiority. Back in the 1960's the US was able to maintain a 4 to 1 superiority over the USSR in terms of nuclear hardware. The Soviet Union was able to close that gap somewhat during the 1970s. It sited 333 land based SS20s - 220 of which were targeted at NATO West Europe. In fact NATO's nuclear strategy has traditionally eschewed the use of land based missile launchers in Western Europe against the USSR. The US withdrew its long range missiles from Europe 20 years ago and has since relied on its Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles and submarine based systems!

NATO High Command, for example, has at its disposal 400 nuclear missiles based on Poseidon submarines. France and Britain between them maintain 162 nuclear missiles which are formally independent of NATO but targeted directly on the USSR and the Warsaw Pact. If one adds to this the enormous arsenal of the US inter-ballistic missiles aimed at the USSR (the US has at its

disposal at least 9,000 warheads) it can be seen very clearly that the Western States possess overwhelming superiority at present, whether they site Cruise and Pershing or not. The positioning of Cruise and Pershing would represent a decisive increase of the West's nuclear arsenals aimed directly at the USSR. The intention is to install 572 new missiles in Europe - 108 Pershing 2 launchers due to be positioned in front line West Germany and 464 Cruise Missiles to be positioned in Germany, Britain, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands.

The Reagan administration has committed itself to this gigantic increase in its nuclear arsenals as a means of reasserting US imperialism's faltering grip on the world. Not only is it honouring Carter's 1979 commitment to site Pershing and Cruise in Europe by 1983. The Reagan administration has nearly doubled its nuclear spending compared with four years ago. In 1979 \$12.1 billion was allocated for nuclear spending. By 1983 that figure has reached \$22 billion. Next year Reagan is set on hitting the \$30 billion mark!! Military strategy and siting practice is being altered so as to make a first strike "winnable" nuclear war more possible. There is no other logic to last year's attempt to 'dense pack' 100 US based MX missiles with 10 warheads each.

Such an arrangement would make the entire arsenal vulnerable to a successful attack...unless, of course, the dense pack is sent on its deadly mission first.

In this context Reagan and Thatcher's so-called 'zero option' is a laughable ruse which offers to maintain Imperialism's arsenals in exchange for Soviet disarmament. Under the 'Zero-option' Reagan and Thatcher have offered to scrap the siting of Pershing and Cruise in exchange for the dismantling of the Soviet SS20s. It would leave all of Imperialism's arsenals intact - and the USSR with 'zero'. Only at that point do the imperialists claim they would concede any reduction in their existing nuclear armaments.

In reply Andropov and Gromyko have bowled a quick succession of peace offers into Reagan and Thatcher's armed camp. On the 21st December Andropov offered to reduce the USSR nuclear armory to that of the combined strength of France and the UK so long as the 572 new missiles were not sited in Europe. In early January the Warsaw Pact followed this up by proposing a pact guaranteeing the non-use of military force between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. By now, Andropov and Gromyko were openly signalling that they were prepared to destroy withdrawn SS20s and capping their proposals with the offer of a 500-600 km nuclear free zone in Europe.

At first the Reagan and Thatcher axis tried to stonewall these various peace sorties. A December 3rd offer from Andropov to reduce Soviet nuclear stocks by "hundreds of missiles" was dismissed by Thatcher because it would not, "Keep the essential balance which is required for our security". To the proposal that French missiles be calculated as part of Imperialism's murderous arsenal Mitterand's foreign minister Cheysson disingenuously replied, "What does Mr. Andropov want, that we integrate ourselves into the Atlantic alliance, that our missiles come under American control." Reagan tried to ignore the offers and press ahead with his armament plans - he derided the offers declaring Soviet "promises are like piecrusts, made to be broken." It has now been confirmed that his first reaction to Andropov's offer of a summit was an eloquent and snappy "So what?" But there were mounting signs of conflict behind the calm and reserved exterior. Sections within the American bourgeoisie and diplomatic corps seem to have been prepared for a compromise that would leave US global supremacy intact. US Geneva negotiator Nitze had apparently reached a private deal with Soviet negotiator Kvitsinsky to reduce Soviet warheads in return for the non siting of Pershings in West Germany. Nitze is himself no dove. He was talking about preparing for a winnable nuclear war as far back as 1956. But Reagan publicly rebuked Nitze and fired the Director of the deceitfully named 'Arms Control and Disarmament Agency', and Rostow. Rostow's anti-Soviet credentials are spotless too. He was a founder member of the 1970 nuclear arms lobby's 'Committee on

the Present Danger' and passionate opponent of ratifying the SALT 2 agreement. But Rostow was obviously too wet for Reagan. He has been replaced by an up and coming bright star of the US "New Right" - Adelman, an arch cold warrior appointed as a sop to the New Right in the US Senate.

Elements of the Reagan team have become increasingly worried about the image of Reagan in the face of the Soviet peace initiatives. The normally hawkish 'Time' magazine expressed its fears that the US was being boxed in by Soviet diplomacy "Preposterous as it seems to Americans, Andropov is managing to portray the Soviet Union as the Superpower most concerned about controlling nuclear weapons." In the face of mounting alarm in the aftermath of the Rostow sacking Reagan attempted to reassure his main allies in a televised address "Our allies should not be concerned about whether we're lacking in determination or whether we are, indeed, in disarray. We're not."

The West German elections presented the Reagan administration with a major problem. All of the Pershings and 96 of the Cruises are due to be sited there. Hence the legitimate fears of millions of Germans as they are dragged closer to the abyss of a nuclear holocaust. SPD candidate Vogel has set out to exploit these fears in order to defeat Christian Democrat Kohl, and with definite results. With an eye on the opinion polls Vogel declared the Warsaw Pact offer to be "in the direction I agree with." He elicited more concrete promises from Andropov in Moscow and urged greater flexibility on Reagan. Even Kohl was reportedly shaken from his commitment to Reagan's zero option during Gromyko's recent trip to West Germany. The shock forces dispatched to re-fuel the morale of the German bourgeoisie were spearheaded by the 'socialist' Mitterand. Flying into Bonn as soon as Gromyko left he made it plain that the French missiles were firmly committed to common action with the US and were not to be tampered with by the Geneva negotiations, "Whoever would bet on uncoupling the European continent from the American Continent would, in our view, put in jeopardy the balance of forces and the future of peace."

Thatcher, Reagan and Mitterand are locked in their determination to unite Western Europe in their anti-Soviet crusade and they have targeted 1983 as the year for a dramatic boost in Imperialism's nuclear arsenal. When their ad-men have finished the softening up operation they will send in the police and troops to disperse the demonstrations and rallies that they know they will provoke. Either we will use this year to mobilise the working class to disarm the Imperialists or Imperialism will have brought the entire world one crucial step nearer the brink of the nuclear holocaust that Reagan and Thatcher will willingly provoke to defend their rotten system and destroy the USSR. ■

VICTORY TO THE WATERWORKERS!

THE OVERWHELMING REJECTION by waterworkers of the employer's reformulated pay offer must be a springboard to greatly intensified direct action.

The response of union leaders like Ron Keating and Eddy Newall immediately after the vote was announced was typical, they saw it only as a basis for renewed negotiations. This is actually a basis for future compromise with the Water Council, whose chairman, Sir William Dugdale is calling for ACAS to intervene. Waterworkers need to learn the lessons provided by other strikes in the public sector last year.

The health workers, like the waterworkers, had no long history of militancy, no already existing local rank and file machinery which could take rapid initiatives at the beginning of the strike. It was only slowly, as they realised that their leaders had no intention of giving a lead, that NHS workers began to build local strike committees, joint shop stewards' committees and, right at the end of the dispute, took the first steps to building themselves a nationally co-ordinated organisation.

Waterworkers have similar problems, made worse by the scattered and small

scale of most of their workplaces. The signs are that this could become a long dispute, every day must be turned to the advantage of the strikes by improving local and regional co-ordination, a potential counterweight to the national leaderships.

So far the strikers have relied mainly on the non-repair of burst water mains and the slow deterioration of filter beds to bring pressure on the employers. This is unlikely to be enough to move the Water Council and certainly will not budge the Thatcher Government that stands behind it. More militant tactics are needed. Immediately. The proposal to black the transportation of the vital chlorine supply must be taken up and enforced by the rank and file without waiting for their leaders to give the OK. Contacts made with stewards in firms such as BOC can be used not only to block chlorine but to spread active support for picket lines etc.

Even more important the central weakness of the strike must be overcome. The fitters and engineers who maintain and repair the automated pumps at the heart of the water supply system are still working. The flimsy excuse that, although they are covered by the same wage negotiating body, they cannot strike because they have a later settlement date, must be exposed as the hypocritical scabs' excuse that it is.

To make this strike really effective means breaking the Tories' anti-union laws. That was the purpose of introducing them in the first place. To stop the chlorine, to bring out the fitters either by arguments or by pickets means bringing into the dispute workers who are not directly involved. This means the police can be used either to break up pickets or to arrest individual organisers. The only defence that the waterworkers can have against this will be mass direct action and the actual stopping of the water supply, especially to industry and electricity generating stations.

Only that scale of attack can stop Thatcher's Government. No serious militant should need further evidence than has been provided since the Tories took office. To get that action means stepping up the fight right now. Delegations to suppliers of essential chemicals and other goods need not only information of when shipments are due. They need to win the workers in those firms to sympathy blacking so that supplied never even leave the plants. Every worker, every trade-unionist has an interest in defeating this Government and its anti-union laws. Every worker, every trade unionist must play their role in helping the waterworkers to do just that. ■

THE RIGHT WAY TO STOP CRUISE

THE IMPENDING ARRIVAL of Cruise is already causing substantial concern in Europe. Thatcher has let it be known that Heseltine was moved to the Ministry of Defence in order to combat the growing opposition to nuclear weapons with his supposedly magnificent oratorical skills.

The only existing organisational focus for co-ordinating all aspects of the anti-nuclear weapons movement is the CND, which had its annual conference at the end of last year. At that meeting CND laid out its plan of campaign for the coming momentous year. In the January issue of 'Sanity' the CND magazine, the plan was described as follows:

- * " Stop Cruise and Trident missiles being based in this great country of ours.
- * Convince a majority of our people that US nuclear weapons must no longer be stationed here.
- * Gain overwhelming support for the view that membership of NATO is dangerous as well as immoral.
- * Ensure these key issues are the issues in the forthcoming General Election " (Sanity 1.83)

Points two and four on this list are to be dealt with largely through the "Peace Canvass '83", and a series of demonstrations at Easter, including a projected 14 mile human chain, winding between the US bases at Greenham Common and Burghfield. This chain will also take in the Aldermaston weapons research centre - the traditional focus of CND activity at Easter.

The aim of the 'Peace Canvass' is to put five questions to every voter in the country, on Cruise, Trident, US bases in Britain, nuclear weapons and disarmament as an election issue. The intention is "to maximise the pressure of public opinion on the parties and the candidates, forcing as many of them as possible to take a positive stand against nuclear weapons." (Sanity 2.83) CND believes that such "pressure" together with large demonstrations

will be sufficient to push the government, of whatever hue, into getting rid of nuclear weapons. This is a pathetic delusion.

On the surface the Labour Party has been committed, by conference resolutions, to unilateral disarmament. This has not prevented successive Labour Governments from mounting a staunch defence and extension of Britain's nuclear arsenal. It was Labour that ordered the up-date of Polaris. A 'left' Labour Government committed to unilateral nuclear disarmament would face determined resistance and sabotage from the ruling class. Why? Because nuclear weapons and the threat they represent are crucial to the defence and maintenance of imperialism. The ruling class is only going to submit to giving up even a portion of its arsenal, if it is faced with a stronger force, that of the organised and mobilised working class. Argument and electoral 'pressure' will no more persuade the ruling class to give up their weapons than will the Sunday sermon of a small-town vicar succeed in turning his flock away from 'sin'.

But it is precisely such Christian moralising which lies at the heart of CND's activity. Even the much vaunted programme of 'direct action', launched at the conference contains the same logic. In fact it does not represent any qualitative shift away from the previous positions of winning over church leaders and organising 'broad' demonstrations. Indeed coupled with the vote *against* calling for political strikes, it represents a deepening of the class-collaborationist policy that has characterised CND over the last quarter century.

"Non-violent Direct Action" involves passive sit-down protests and other such "novel" disruptive activities. It is a pacifist utopia which is currently

gaining strength due to the growing weight of feminism within the movement (violence equals male-ness), the continuing importance of Christianity (violence equals sin), and the pernicious pacifist influence of the current Gandhi cult (non-violence and suffering equals nobility).

It presents no great problem for the ruling class. Sitting down outside entrances to the US bases does no more than provide fodder for the police cells, and may delay work on the missile preparation for a few hours. Spectacular as the Greenham Common demonstration may have been, massive as the proposed demonstration at Greenham-Aldermaston-Burghfield may turn out to be, holding hands, having a 'die in' and getting everyone singing "We won't live in a Trident submarine" (Morning Star 28.1.83), really aren't going to make Thatcher and Reagan do anything more than snigger, and laugh all the way to the bunker! If that's the best we have to offer, they have no need to worry.

That such a pacifist outlook holds sway in CND is not surprising. Of 50,000 CND members, over 25,000 are 'professionals' (teachers, doctors, academics, clergy). A further 10,000 are students. The working class makes up a very small proportion of its membership. Its geographical spread reflects this class imbalance too. Over half the members live in London and in the relatively affluent South East of the country.

These members have been won to CND on the basis of its project of a cross-class alliance to defend 'peace' and protest against nuclear weapons. Positive mobilisation of the working class in strikes and blacking action offends these elements in that it would "alienate" public opinion. Thus the pages of Sanity deal not with the struggle to get unions

committed to blacking all work connected with the missiles, but are filled with the angst-ridden ramblings of various Bishops, Vicars, Field-Marshalls, Christians and Tories. All these individuals are as opposed to the working class and the prosecution of the class struggle - the only way the weapons can be stopped - as they are to the weapons themselves.

With this base of support and political strategy the orientation of CND is firmly away from the policies necessary to prevent Cruise from being deployed. CND is a massive roadblock to successful struggle against the missiles.

This fact hasn't been generally recognised on the left. All have been silent as to the *fundamental* failings of CND. Necessary political steps have been poorly outlined. The main policy put forward by Socialist Challenge, for example, has been the call for 'a million in the streets' (SC17.12.82, 14.1.83) - scarcely at odds with the programme of CND. But this position is qualified in the language of a group that is both prepared for defeat over Cruise from the outset, and one whose Labour Party perspective clouds all aspects of their activity: "We must stick to a strategy which can be successful, even if it means settling for sending back the missiles once they are already deployed.... A Labour Government can stop the missiles. Sending back Cruise requires a governmental decision.... even if there are huge mass actions against the missiles in '83, there is still a strong possibility that they will actually be deployed." (SC 3.12.82) They do add a call for 'political strikes against the missiles', but this comes a poor third on their list. Their main target is the return of a Labour government.

What none on the left have been prepared to state is both the inadequacy of CND's policies, and the necessity for a massive working class campaign against the siting of Cruise and Pershing as the main focus of activity against the missiles. Yes, we need massive protest demonstrations. Yes, all those who wish to prevent the deployment of Cruise are of course welcome. *But we need a campaign which can succeed, which can face Thatcher with action and force* powerful enough to be able to stop the missiles. The only force able to do that is the working class.

It is workers who supply all the necessary materials and labour which go into missiles. The military may control them but it is ordinary trade unionists who build the silos and the bases, who wire up the electronics. *There is the power to stop the deployment of Cruise. Just as blacking and mass picketing is crucial for winning an industrial dispute, so too working class action against the missiles, backed up by enormous demonstrations, can show Thatcher the true mettle of those who want to stop the missiles.*

In taking such action, workers need to be well aware that even if their intentions are 'non-violent', there is no way that the state will let matters rest at that level. The police and army will be used to break strikes, to attack picket lines and smash up demonstrations in order to do their masters' bidding and let the missiles pass. In the conflict between the ruling class and protestors against the missiles, the bosses are playing for the highest stakes of all: their control of the arsenals through which they rule society and impose their will at home, and abroad. To enter into the struggle 'armed' only with electoral and pacifist illusions will only lead to defeat and demoralisation.

Demonstrations, no matter how large, can be ignored by the ruling class if they are not backed up by decisive working class action.

It is not too late. The fight must be begun *now* inside all the unions for a Labour Movement Campaign Against Cruise. Unions whose members are involved in transporting and deploying the missiles (TGWU, GMBAT, EETPU, AUEW etc) must be won to organising strike action to prevent the missiles ever arriving in Britain, and to stop work on the site preparations.

The role of the Labour Party must not be ignored. The unilateralist policy passed at conference is already subject to attack. Labour Party and Trade Union branches must send resolutions to GMCs and the NEC, demanding that a clear call for unilateral nuclear disarmament appears in the Party's manifesto, currently being prepared. Union delegates on the NEC must be mandated to vote for unilateralism. Through its connections with the unions and its ability to mobilise, Labour must take the fight against nuclear weapons into the heart of the working class. Meetings must be organised at all major plants, hospitals, offices and housing estates to discuss how to stop the missiles. Labour claims that it wants to mobilise millions around disarmament and the next election. Let it begin now in a determined fashion!

These policies would open up a vista of struggle far greater than that envisaged by the pacifists of CND or their left supporters. It could pose a real possibility of preventing the deployment of the missiles by presenting the ruling class with a massive and determined show of force.

We state in advance that we do not think that the threat of nuclear annihilation can be removed short of the world-wide destruction of capitalism. But we are prepared to unite at every conceivable opportunity with those who do not share this view, in order to fight for action which, in however small a way, takes the fight against the missile forward. Thus we will support and build for demonstrations, rallies and protests, but on the basis of a different policy different tactics and different slogans. We will take our views into the heart of the disarmament movement in order to convince others, shoulder to shoulder, in struggle, of the correctness of our views, and of the burning need to launch a working class fightback against the missiles. ■

by Matthew Cobb



East German propaganda poster (illegally photographed) : Moscow in 5 minutes with Cruise!

WORKERS MUST DEFEND THE SOVIET UNION

THERE ARE ALREADY more missiles in the hands of Western commands than there are East European and Soviet cities and bases to target them on. Why then are Reagan and Thatcher set on stepping up their nuclear superiority? The answer to this question is simple although it has perplexed thousands of activists in the 'peace movement'. The Reagan-Thatcher axis want more arms because they want to guarantee that they can defeat and destroy the USSR. The very existence of the USSR as a planned economy within which the essential laws of capitalism are no longer the dominant factors shaping production is a permanent threat to imperialism. Not only does it mean that the USSR and other such states are closed to direct military and economic exploitation by imperialism with all that this means in terms of a loss of markets, profits and military bases for world capitalism. It also means that there is a power which - prompted, of course, by the perceived self-interest of its ruling caste of privileged bureaucrats - can aid and support forces struggling to throw off the yoke of imperialism. That has been shown to the leaders of the imperialist states all too graphically by the struggles in Cuba and Indo-China.

Within its own terms therefore imperialism's war drive is eminently logical. The short term objective of holding the line for world imperialism and the objective need to destroy the USSR as a workers' state gives the arms race its ultimate and deadly logic. From its inception the nuclear arms race has been pioneered and sustained by the drive of imperialism to reassert the world hegemony that began

to crumble with the Russian revolution of 1917.

In this situation we consider it perfectly legitimate for the USSR to defend itself with all means at its disposal. As we are for the defence of the planned economy as a post-capitalist gain still in existence in the USSR so we are for the necessary military measures to ensure that defense. In the modern world this means we consider it legitimate for a workers' state, even one as bureaucratically degenerated as the USSR, to defend historic gains from imperialism by the deployment of nuclear weapons.

So too do we defend the right of workers' states to sue for peace, to make truces as a means of defending historic gains. Political power in the USSR has long been usurped by a privileged and closed bureaucracy that maintains its power in the USSR through systematic brutality against the oppressed masses of Soviet society. Its power is also based, however, on alliance and co-existence with imperialism. The entire history of the Soviet bureaucracy is a history of a strategic commitment to peaceful and harmonious relations with the world bourgeoisie. It is precisely this international class collaboration that is evidence of the Soviet bureaucracy's commitment to peace. The level of development of the Soviet economy and the enormous burden placed on it by the arms race serves to further increase the pressure on the Soviet bureaucracy to negotiate its way out of the arms race. However, in saying that we consider the Soviet bureaucracy is committed to peace and, unlike the

imperialists, driving for a war of world domination we are not designating the Soviet bureaucracy itself as a force for progress and liberation.

Its connivance in the destruction of the Greek communists after World War II, its permanent drive to reach a negotiated deal in Indo-China and the Middle East today show that the Soviet bureaucracy cynically utilises the struggles of the exploited and oppressed of the world as bargaining counters to maintain its own balance of power with the imperialists.

Furthermore the Soviet leaders fear that war will be the forerunner of their own destruction, of the obliteration of their power and privileges. War poses the threat of military defeat at the hands of the imperialists. But it also raises the spectre of destabilisation and internal unrest and, ultimately the uprising of the oppressed masses in a political revolution against the bureaucracy.

Every action of Reagan and Thatcher in the last months has confirmed that it is imperialism that is setting the pace of the arms race. It is imperialism that constitutes the threat to world peace. That is why the struggle against war has to be a struggle to disarm the imperialists. But in that struggle to destroy the imperialist system we also have to defend the gains that have already been made in the battle to overthrow capitalism. That is why we say 'defend the USSR' and refuse to call for the disarmament of any workers' state until imperialism itself has been disarmed by the victorious working class. ■

by Dave Hughes

Reagan's war against U.S. workers

"AMERICA IS ON the mend", was the theme of Ronald Reagan's recent "State of the Union" address, marking the mid-point of his Presidential term of office.

To be sure, things have not gone as well as he had hoped two years ago (the promised balanced budget in 1983 is now expected to be a staggering \$190 billion deficit, for example.) But Reagan claimed that with "sacrifice and patience" America would soon be back on the road to recovery.

It hadn't escaped him that "For many of our fellow citizens - farmers, steel workers, autoworkers, lumbermen, black teenagers and working mothers - this is a painful period" and so "We must do everything in our power to bring their ordeal to an end."

He then proceeded to outline the measures he would put to Congress to "end the ordeal". There should be a freeze on Federal spending; steps would be taken to "control" welfare, Medicaid and the cost of Foodstamps. Families putting their kids through private school would qualify for a new tax relief (laid off carworkers, black teenagers and working mothers should book their places now!) and if the deficit didn't fall below 2% of GNP an extra \$50 billion would be raised from taxes in 1986-8.

The exact meaning of all this was spelled out by the White House officials. As they explained to the New York Herald Tribune "...the Reagan formula would translate into a significant increase in military spending, accompanied by real cuts in practically every major non-military domestic program while the president holds firmly the line on the tax cuts that he pushed through Congress in 1981." (27th Jan. 1983). In fact the budget means a 9% increase in war spending and a real 3% cut in welfare finance. While the income tax cuts will give a "fistful of dollars" to the highly paid they will only mean "a few dollars more" to the low paid who come off net losers after increases in regressive taxes and cuts in services. For the impoverished masses in the United States (30 million are on or below the phoney "official" poverty line, while 15 million are out of work) Reagan is promising more of the same. So much of his talk about ending their ordeal.

Reagan came to power as the candidate of that section of the US bourgeoisie committed to a savage anti-working class programme to reverse the decline both of America's world hegemony as far as politics were concerned, and also as regards her faltering economy. The 1970s saw a marked fall in profit rates in the US, which highlighted declining American competitiveness compared with West Germany and Japan. This was accompanied by a slowdown in the growth of labour productivity. In the US it increased by an average of 1.8% a year between 1970 and 1975. In West Germany and Japan the increase averaged 5.4%. In consequence the US share of world trade dropped from 64% in 1950 to 33% in 1973. The Reaganites set out to reverse US capitalism's decline through a sharp attack on working class living standards and social and welfare spending. The "bottom line" must show the working class and poor, at home and abroad, paying for American capitalism's crisis and Reagan's plans to restructure US capitalism.

The present crisis highlights the deep malaise of US capitalism. Wall Street predicted that investment for 1982 would be 6% below the 1979 level. Industry is running at about 66% capacity - with steel production running at an incredible 40% capacity. Labour productivity levels remain staggeringly low - the 1973-81 figure of an average 1% increase per year is the worst recorded by any OECD country!

Reagan has not disappointed his backers. He has dutifully presided over a concerted attack on the working class throughout the most severe recession since the war.

An integral part of Reagan's strategy is the crushing of organised labour in the US, and he wasted no time providing an example of his intentions



Tear gas from Reagan's cops for workers demonstrating in Colorado.

by his handling of the air traffic controllers' (PATCO) strike. Union leaders were arrested and strikers given an ultimatum to return to work or face the sack. Eleven and a half thousand remained solid and were promptly fired. They remain blacklisted from all government office, their union has been decertified and Reagan has spent \$4 billion training replacements. With a single blow Reagan inflicted a serious defeat on a section of government workers, cowed other government workers facing his spending cuts and gave a cue to the bosses to press home their attacks.

Less dramatic perhaps has been the campaign to curtail trade union organisation. Anti-strike and anti-picket "Right to work" laws have been adopted by several states to prevent trade unions organising while decertification under the Wagner Act has been on the increase in recent years. So far Reagan has refrained from imposing "Right to work" laws nationally. He has preferred to stuff the National Labour Relations Board with his men, thus avoiding an unnecessary provocation of the unions. But he is under pressure to disband protective legislation in a number of fields. The Davis-Bacon Act which guarantees the union rate for the job in the construction industry for example, is a prime target, while long established legislation protecting the rights of home workers and child labour has already been repealed. Every conceivable way to increase labour exploitation is open for consideration by these defenders of the "free world".

In response to the renewed offensive - on trade union rights, wages, jobs and welfare - the labour movement has been on the retreat. The American trade unions, notorious for the corruption and conservative bureaucratism of their leadership, continue to wane. By April 1981 only 22 millions out of a workforce of 103 millions were organised at all. Trade Union membership is down to its 1940 level. The reaction to the PATCO dispute is instructive. Lane Kirkland, President of the AFL-CIO, warned of dire consequences if the controllers were not reinstated, but in practice refused to organise anything but protest action, successfully channelling rank and file anger into an impressive but ineffectual Labor Day demo in Washington (400,000 demonstrated at the White House.) The very scale of this demonstration shows the scale of outrage and solidarity that the AFL-CIO leaders are so scared of organising.

Throughout industry the trade union leaders have been busily conceding on pay and conditions the so-called "givebacks". Doug Fraser, United

Auto Workers leader, blazed the trail in Chrysler with a "wage-cuts for no redundancy" agreement (since when Chrysler has halved its workforce) and repeated the deal later at Fords and General Motors. The givebacks have since reached epidemic proportions as bosses increase work speeds, cut safety costs and hold down wages.

Like their British counterparts the union leaders spare little effort to derail potential action in defence of workers interests. Instead they peddle their own version of the Alternative Economic Strategy, and channel discontent into votes for "friends of Labor" inside the bourgeois Democratic Party, who, for their part, seem less anxious to espouse a New Deal than take the edge out of the "ordeal".

Recently Kirkland has publicly endorsed a proposal from banker Rohatyn whereby the unions would sell conditions and wage levels in exchange for pledges from the bosses to step up investment in the decaying traditional industrial areas. Many trade union leaders have added their voices to the mounting campaign for import controls - particularly aimed at keeping out Asian imports. A vigorous fight must be waged to root out this class collaborationist and racist poison from the ranks of organised labour.

Saddled with this reactionary leadership the working class has experienced serious defeats. The effects of the retreat to date are only too apparent. Unemployment stands at 10.8% which means more than 15 million are out of work. Even this average conceals more suffering for some sections of the workforce. 18% of car workers have been thrown out of work and in General Motors, for example, with 130,000 of its workforce laid off, investment in robots (14,000 of them planned in the next 10 years) will consign them to permanent unemployment or, at best, casual labour.

As always the young are bearing the brunt of unemployment. For white youth the rate already stands at over 21% while for blacks of the same age group the figure is 50%. The sheer hopelessness of their situation fuels the crime rate in the decaying cities, alcoholism and drug abuse are soaring, while suicide becomes commonplace.

For many the next step after losing a job is losing a place to live. It is estimated that there are over 2½ million "new poor" in America or "freeway trolls" as they are commonly known. Families kicked out into the street for failing to keep up with the rent or mortgage payments and children abandoned by their parents or escaping the misery of family life, which loss of income entails: these people are left to rot in Reagan's America. Los Angeles police calculate that there are at least 4,000 runaway or abandoned children roaming the streets of LA on any given night. In New York officials put the figure at 20,000. Young girls and boys drawn from their ranks are likely to fall victim to pimps or else suffer child abuse. In Rock County Wisconsin unemployment doubled last year while reported cases of child abuse increased by 25%. In depression hit Oregon child abuse cases rose by 46%.

Faced with this appalling misery in the "land of the free" armed white middle class vigilante squads have been formed in many towns to keep the homeless out. As John Barnes reported in a recent article in the Sunday Times (2.1.83) Phoenix Arizona has now closed down all soup kitchens and shelters, made it a crime to lie down in parks or on sidewalks and is preparing to spray supermarket rubbish with paraffin to discourage rummagers.

While the Reaganites turn on the cynical outrage at the sight of food queues in downtown Warsaw, the mounting queues for bad food and welfare leftovers in the US are only prompting further cuts in every social spending programme.

In these circumstances the search for scapegoats intensifies. "Illegal immigrants", so necessary for the dirty jobs in better times, have already been targeted in a bill before Congress. Reagan and his profit hungry cohorts are only too willing to exploit

the existing polarisation along racial and ethno-religious lines inside the working class. The re-emergence of the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazis has co-incided with increasing racist attacks and murders, often with the collusion of state agencies and the vicious police.

Not surprisingly the State of the Union address left out these uncomfortable facts, but they too are hallmarks of Reagan's success. For Reagan the worrying aspect of this "success" is that at the mid-point of his Presidency he is even less popular than the hapless Jimmy Carter, two years into his term of office. One poll recently estimated that 65% of Americans thought he was doing a bad job. The proportions of those supporting him sunk to 9% among black Americans! But if the opposition remains passive, then Reagan will continue to press home the attacks of America's ruling class.

There can be no doubt that the AFL-CIO leaders will use every trick in the book to stifle and derail all attempts to wage a class-wide fightback against Reagan. But they have not had it all their own way in containing the militancy of the working class.

A significant section of workers have moved into conflict with the bureaucracy's "giveback" plans. Ford workers accepted a "giveback" proposal from Ford's which was backed by UAW's Fraser who pioneered a previous giveback at Chrysler. They did so by a majority of three to one for a package that guaranteed profit sharing and no redundancies. A later and less "attractive" offer was passed at General Motors by a narrow 52-48 majority. Chrysler workers have now refused to accept another round of their deal. In each case there has been a sizeable, and increasing, number of workers who have wanted to do battle with the bosses and the trade union leaders. It is within this layer of workers that the potential exists for the organisation of a militant fightback.

There are other indicators that the American working class - despite its leaders - has not been completely cowed by Reagan's offensive. In the South-West an "American Federation of Workers" has recently been formed which links farm workers unions in Texas, Arizona and Florida with the California based "Brotherhood of General Workers". This represents a serious attempt to organise some of the most oppressed and downtrodden workers in the United States. Mineworkers have done battle with their bosses and their union leaders. The UMW waged a sixteen week strike in 1977 and an eleven week strike in 1981. On both occasions rank and file miners organised themselves against the treacherous leadership of Sam Church. Those struggles contributed to the ousting of Sam Church by "Miners for Democracy" in 1982. Other important groups of workers have fought protracted battles in the last year including the New York tram drivers, 37,000 UAW workers in Caterpillar Tractor Co. plants in Illinois and Iowa and UFCW workers who struck for 4 months against a giveback deal at Iowa Beef Processors.

The trade union leaders will attempt to divert this energy and anger into ballot fodder for the Democrats. It will try to syphon off militancy through rallies and demonstrations. In the face of Reagan's attacks militant workers need to struggle to oust their bureaucratic leaders and take the unions into their own hands if they are to stand firm against Reagan and, in doing so, win the majority of American workers to their banner. That struggle is an indispensable component of the struggle to destroy capitalism in its modern heartland. The alternative is to accept the growth of poverty and squalor, the sapping of the strength of organised labour as the world's largest capitalism sinks into stagnation and decay. ■

By Dave Jenkins



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THE ENORMOUS SOCIAL weight of reformism in Britain has proved a tremendously disorienting factor for revolutionaries. Among British Trotskyists, as with their predecessors in the Social-Democratic Federation (SDF) and the British Communist Party, the great strength of Labourism produced huge pressures toward either sectarian isolation or opportunist liquidation. The question of the Labour Party exercised a central influence in the early days of British Trotskyism.

Between 1934 and 1936 splits over work in the Independent Labour Party (ILP) or the Labour Party (LP) completely derailed the movement. From 1936 - 39 there were at one moment or another at least ten "Trotskyist" groupings in Britain. Where more than personal intrigue was involved, the Labour Party question was usually at the heart of differences.

The "Peace and Unity" Conference of 1938 centered on Labour Party and ILP perspectives. The immediate collapse of the resultant Revolutionary Socialist League (RSL) - official section of the Fourth International (FI) - partly stemmed from unresolved differences on this score.

The 1944 Fusion Conference which produced the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) was deeply divided over the question and the party was to remain so. The majority reporter to the 1946 National Conference complained of: "the tremendous energy which has been consumed by the Party, and which partly consumes the Party, in the factional struggle especially insofar as it related to the question of entry or non-entry into the Labour Party." (Special International Bulletin Sept. 46).

The fusion which produced the RCP was a move of great promise, bringing together delegates representing some 490 members. Whilst this figure was an overestimate, as was later recognised (the figure being nearer 350), the RCP had a solidly proletarian class composition, and was well-rooted in the trade unions. Unlike the European sections the RCP had not been the victim of massive repression; its cadre was intact.

Yet none of this was to save the RCP from political collapse over the following five years. In part this was due to building on insecure foundations. Despite the historical differences over the entry question a veil was drawn over the experience and therefore over the political lessons of the preceding ten years. The fusion conference agreed not "to open up old wounds and go over sterile discussions of the past which can have value only for the archive rat or the historian of the future, but which would only introduce the antagonisms of the past into the fused party, and therefore be a godsend to the professional faction fighter."

Such agreements to disagree have been a hall-mark of unifications throughout the last 30 years of British "Trotskyism". They amount to a decision not to decide on crucial tactical questions - usually on the pretext that "only tactics" are involved. Yet political life has yet to produce a way of carrying out a strategy except by means of tactics. Since fighting reformism - in Britain at least - is a central question, the tactical questions cannot be left aside.

Tactics can be applied in either a principled or an unprincipled fashion. If the latter is the case then they corrupt and disintegrate the revolutionary strategy of which they are a part. Thus strategy and tactics do not inhabit separate realms - indeed consigning them to mutual isolation is the first sign of centrism. How this disease destroyed British Trotskyism is integrally linked to a parallel process within the Fourth International as a whole. Indeed in some respects the British experience pre-figured the issues and events of the great schism of 1951 to 1953 when the Fourth International split in two.

THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL

An important preparatory stage in the centrist degeneration of the FI took place in its process of reconstruction after the war. Between 1944 and 1948 it raised a correct, indeed courageous, revolutionary programme for Europe in the aftermath of the Imperialist War. However, the work of its conferences and Congresses (European Conference 1944, Pre-Conference 1946, Second Congress 1948) on the question of perspective fell decisively below its programmatic and tactical positions. The FI's strength in the latter lay in its firm adherence to Trotsky's positions. Yet, paradoxically, a similar fidelity to Trotsky's 1938-40 perspectives and prognoses led to serious problems.

Trotsky's perspective in 1938/40 was one of war and revolution as immediate prospects. He correctly foresaw the catastrophic effects of the war on both the capitalist states and on the USSR. He considered that the Kremlin bureaucracy and its totalitarian apparatus would break up under the blows of the war; that rotten to the core bourgeois democracy would collapse, bringing down with it the reformist parties and trade unions. These, threatened or realised catastrophes would open up the necessity and possibility of the FI assuming revolutionary leadership of the masses during and after the war.

Of course this was not a "prediction" like a horoscope. Above all it was not a description of a process which would happen regardless of the existence or actions of the revolutionary party. In 1940 Trotsky wrote that: "The capitalist world has no way out unless a prolonged death agony is so considered. It is necessary to prepare for long years, if not decades, of war, uprisings, brief interludes of truce, new wars, and new uprisings...The question of tempos and time intervals is of enormous importance; but it alters neither the general historical perspective nor the direction of our policy". He concluded that "the great historical problem will not be solved in any case until a revolutionary party stands at the

THE COLLAPSE OF BRITISH TROTSKYISM AFTER

head of the proletariat" and that the FI's task to this end was to educate and organise the proletarian vanguard.

Taken in epochal terms Trotsky's perspective and strategic conclusions were correct. Stated thus at the beginning of a world war, they were a justifiable perspective full of revolutionary optimism and will. However, as Trotsky pointed out in the same document: "What characterises a genuine revolutionary organisation is above all the seriousness with which it works out and tests its political line at each new test of events".

The Fourth International however clung to the validity of Trotsky's perspective well beyond the end of the war. The failure of a revolutionary situation to materialise in an exhausted, occupied and divided Germany, where the remaining prestige of Social Democracy and Stalinism were thrown into the scales to support the huge armies of the occupying powers, seriously undermined the projected revolution. The prestige of Italian and French stalinism gained both by the partisan's fight against the Nazis and the victory of the Red Army, headed off revolutionary situations in both of these countries. In Britain and the USA, no pre-revolutionary crises comparable to the post-1918 situation emerged. In 1918-25 in Britain, 192,250,000 days were lost through strike action. In 1945-51 the figure was 14,250,000. In the USA there was a massive strike wave but it was under constant bureaucratic control, and achieved economic concessions but resulted in the passing of harsh anti-union laws like the Taft-Hartley Act. Clearly by 1947, no revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situation existed in the principle imperialist countries.

The leaders of the FI, and especially its Secretariat members Pablo and E. Germain (Mandel), clung remorselessly to Trotsky's perspective of economic crisis and stagnation despite these developments. They linked to it a perspective of revolution. The 1946 document "The New Imperialist Peace and the Building of Parties of the FI" stated these erroneous views unequivocally: "The war has aggravated the disorganisation of capitalist economy and has destroyed the last possibilities of a relatively stable equilibrium in social and international relations...If the war did not immediately create in Europe a revolutionary upsurge of the scope and tempo we anticipated, it is nevertheless undeniable that it destroyed capitalist equilibrium on a world scale, thus opening up a long revolutionary period".

These formulations were in stark contrast to Trotsky's warnings to differentiate between different situations and periods, and to orient the programme accordingly. The longer the crisis and the revolutionary period extended without producing real crises or revolutions, the more Pablo and Mandel emptied these terms of any specific concrete content. "Crisis" they turned into an epochal ever-present phenomenon. "Revolution" became a process whose protagonists became "forces", "currents" and "tendencies", rather than parties grouped around programmes. The precision of definite revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situations, of parties, leaderships, programmes, were dissolved in the name of fidelity to Trotsky's perspectives.

By 1950 Pablo extended this method into a new perspective of war-revolution; of centrist tendencies roughly adequate to revolutionary tasks. If the implementation of these positions only began in 1952 on an international scale, the forging of the underlying method took place in the earlier period. With Healy as his loyal local representative, Pablo discovered in Britain a "pre-revolutionary crisis"; a centrist current (Bevanism); a new tactic, total entry for a long period; a new programme - "transitional demands to mobilise thousands"; a new vehicle for revolution - the Labour Party, suitably transformed.

PABLO'S "NEW TYPE" ENTRYISM

Thus in February 1952 Michel Pablo, Secretary of the Fourth International, in introducing his "special type" entrism pointed to the pilot-run entrism of the British and Austrian sections. He notes that in the period 1944-47 the work of the International was one of "essentially independent work". This work was, in Pablo's view, based on a perspective of "the masses deserting the old reformist parties" and "disillusioned" with Stalinism. Here he remarks that England and Austria were "special cases" and "did not fail to attract the attention of the International". For Pablo this work prefigured his later tactics (entrism sui generis - entrism of a special type): "---in the entry into the Labour Party the International embarked on the course of long-term work within these movements and organisations through which flow - and most probably will flow for another period - the fundamental political current of the class." (Entrism of a Special Type: International Secretariat Documents Vol.1 p 32)

Pablo's conception of longterm entry was based on a definite perspective that he advanced at the time. "The essential forces of the revolutionary party would appear through differentiation or explosion in these mass organisations. This tactical conception was and is based of course on the perspectives of the evolution of the international situation as they began

This article in our continuing series on the tactic of "entryism", looks at the role that the misapplication of this tactic played in the collapse of British Trotskyism in the 1940s. The period of British Trotskyism is an underexplored one. Leaders of left groups today like Ted Grant of the Militant, Tony Cliff of the SWP and Gerry Healy of the WRP, have more interest in obscuring the history of this period, in which they were participants, than in shedding any instructive light upon it. Their mistakes of this period are crucial in understanding how and why British Trotskyism got shattered into a host of centrist fragments. To admit these mistakes would mean admitting a departure from revolutionary communism - hence the silence of Grant, Cliff and Healy.

The mistaken method developed in 1945-51, a period of Labour government, over the question of "entryism", is being repeated by centrist organisations today. "Socialist Organiser" and "Socialist Challenge" are in the forefront of this process. Whether or not they admit their attitude to the Labour Left, their abandonment of fundamental revolutionary positions and their fantasies about the "evolution" of a "hard" reformist "left", have precedents in the 1945-51 period of British, and eventually, international Trotskyism.

In our view this period saw a qualitative degeneration of Trotskyism into centrism. On the question of strategy and tactics with regard to the Labour Party, the co-sponsors of the centrist revision of Trotskyism were Thomas Gerard Healy (Gerry Healy) and Michel Raptis (Pablo). The former was leader of the Minority Faction of the Revolutionary Communist Party (British Section of the Fourth International); the latter was Secretary of the FI itself. Though history was to cast Pablo in the role of the great Satan of Revisionism and Healy as the patron saint of "Anti-Pabloism", in the key period which prepared and executed the centrist liquidation of Trotsky's programme, they were close allies - who moreover had the 100% support of Jim Cannon of the American Socialist Workers Party, the other main figure in world Trotskyism.

We will follow this article with a further one on the practice of Healy's group during the "Socialist Outlook" venture, from 1948 to 1954. This period, following the collapse of British Trotskyism, provided irrefutable evidence of the centrist practice of the Healy group.

to be clarified for us at the beginning of the 'cold war'; the relatively short period before the war breaks out; the new and decisive character of this war; the accelerated crisis of the capitalist regime which will in any case acquire a generally explosive character in the war itself."

Pablo's perspective was false on every count. The "cold war" was a retrenchment of the spheres of influence agreed at Yalta and Potsdam with conflict only in the areas where no agreement existed. Given the resolution of the inter-imperialist contradictions, the massive destruction of productive forces in Europe and the uncontested economic hegemony of the USA (dissolution of the French and British colonial empires and their transference to the status of US semi-colonies) the likelihood, let alone the probability of a new world war was a thoroughly false basis for a perspective. Certainly Marxists could not easily "predict" the long boom that lay ahead but to stake all, and to revise fundamental principles in the operation of crucial tactics (entrism) on such undialectical schema-mongering led straight to disaster. From this false perspective, and using the same method with which he had elaborated it, Pablo predicted a "process of differentiation" within the social-democratic and Stalinist parties. Since these parties "cannot be smashed and replaced by others in the relatively short time between now and the decisive conflict" they must be transformed by differentiation. This itself would take place by stages; first "Bevanism", and then at a later stage a "genuine revolutionary tendency". But the latter stage lies at a distance whose arrival cannot be foreseen. Therefore "it will first be necessary to go through the experience (of Bevanism - WP) by penetrating it and helping it from the inside to develop its last resources and consequences."

This is the basis of entryism of a "different kind from the entrism practised before the war", one based on a desire "from the inside of these tendencies to amplify and accelerate their left centrist ripening". In this process the Trotskyists were to compete for leadership of these centrist tendencies. Gone was the fight for a revolutionary tendency, able and willing to criticise and expose all shades of centrism and reformism. Gone was Trotsky's specific, concrete perspectives and the principled entry tactics appropriate to them.

THE ROAD TO RUIN FOR THE R.C.P.

Pablo's entrism sui generis produced an "explosion and a differentiation" all right - but it was within the ranks of the FI not those of the social democrats and stalinists. Alas this differentiation did not go to the roots of the matter because the leaders of the "Anti-Pabloite" forces, particularly Cannon and Healy were thoroughly embroiled in the pioneering case of British Labour Party entry. It was only when the "special entry" was applied to Stalinism at the height of the Cold War, that, belatedly, Pablo's tactics were discovered to be liquidationist.

Yet Healy - with Cannon's blessing - had waged a four year struggle to destroy the RCP and develop precisely the fundamentals of "Pablo's method". Cannon in 1953, looked back on this period: "The whole Haston (leader of the RCP - WP) system had to be blown up before a genuine Trotskyist organisation

could get started in England.....If one were to take to write the real history of British Trotskyism he would have to set the starting point as the date on which your group finally tore itself from the Haston regime and started its own independent work". (Trotskyism versus Revisionism, Vol. 2 p.262)

What was this splendid struggle in which Cannon acted as midwife at the birth of British Trotskyism? The fact that this lusty infant turned out to be a centrist should give us pause.

The first majority Labour Government was in a landslide victory in July 1945. 48% of the vote had given it 393 seats, 146 more than the combined opposition. The British working class expressed its desire for fundamental change, its desire not to turn to the dole queues of the thirties in a mass electoral show of strength but one that had little counterpart in direct action in the factories and streets. In the first 15 months after World War II there were 12 times fewer strikes than in 1913.



Labour's 1945 programme declared that the Labour Party is a Socialist Party and Proud of it" but its programme in general reflected the social political consensus of the leaders of the wartime coalition. There was a Liberal-Tory-Labour agreement on such things as full employment and social services and a national health service. These were the priorities of the Labour administration. Its nationalisation programme for the coal, electricity and gas industries reflected the ruling class' willingness to extend the advantages of state capitalism (learning from the war) to the loss making industries and public utilities.

It was in this context that the RCP leadership around Jock Haston and Ted Grant tried to orient the group. Fraction work had been carried out by the Trotskyists since 1940 when there was a marked turn to the left in repulsion from the coalition. For a short while the ILP even tried to intervene in industrial disputes. However, the RCP (the WIL/RSL before 1944) intervened as a serious independent force in the industrial disputes with much stronger CP scabbing on them all. The Tyne Apprentices strike was, perhaps, their greatest success.

BRITISH THE WAR

PART 1

In 1945 and 1946 Haston and Grant turned more of their resources away from the ILP towards the LP whose grass root organs were beginning to come alive again in the wake of the election. There was a steady increase in individual membership and trade union affiliations but their activity remained within the bounds of those of an electoral machine. At the time the Labour League of Youth was much smaller than the CP's youth organisation. At the peak of the fraction work the RCP, in 1946, had 20% of its members (66) operating in 46 wards. In this work they were guided by Trotsky's advice in 1934 when he said: "Alongside independent propaganda work, all means must be employed - always in keeping with the concrete situation - to link up with the masses, push them forward, and consolidate new revolutionary cadres from their ranks. Above all this includes i) Systematic fraction work in the trade unions under the slogan of trade unity. The opportunity to reach and influence worker masses is better here than in any party....ii) Systematic fraction work in all workers' parties and organisations, not just by forming fractions out of sympathisers already present there but also by sending in really solid elements." (Tasks of the ICL, Writings, 1934-35).

There was clearly not a situation in any way comparable to the mid-30s in France (see WP newspaper no.37) in which total entry of the Trotskyist forces was both necessary and justified.

Major strikes did occur in 1945-6 particularly in the Docks and Transport but the RCP was able to relate to these *independently* on its own programme. There was no evidence that these struggles had any major effect within the Labour Party. A balance sheet of the RCP's LP fraction work during these strikes was revealing: "Despite the fact that the majority of the transport strikers lived in the North and North-East district of London, and through their trade unions, are affiliated members of the Labour Party, it has not been reported that one single deputation approached the dozens of Labour Parties in the area...The strikers did not attend the LP meetings to seek solidarity and bring pressure to bear on the Government."

With this tactical perspective the RCP leadership sought to pursue its independent activity. It had campaigned in the General Election for "Break the Coalition: Labour to Power" and advanced a series of demands *focused* towards workers' control. Given the nationalisation programme of the Labour Party and the belief of workers in the socialist character of these measures, it was a correct emphasis. In the Municipal Elections later in 1945 the RCP stood its own candidate in Newcastle. In their manifesto there was a sharp differentiation between Labourism and Trotskyism that was to be absent in Healy four years later: "The Labour Party is not a socialist party...but a party of capitalism. It is nevertheless a workers' party based in the unions...and we will unite with the Labour Party to defeat the representatives of capital. But we do not think, nor have we ever said, that the Labour Party is capable, or even wants to, carry out this policy of ending capitalism and introducing socialism."

Labour's colonial policy is attacked and the following demands outlined: "No compensation to pit owners, operate the pits under the control of workers and technicians committees." "No compensation to Bankers." "Operate a sliding-scale of working hours without reduction of wages." "Open the closed plants." "Committees of housewives, co-ops, small shopkeepers and workers in the distributive trades to oversee rationing."

Although the manifesto is weak in not clearly stating its position on the question of government and parliament, its transitional demands are backed by the call for independent struggle to achieve them.

Gerry Healy did not take up an oppositional position on these questions prior to the Labour Government's election. He voted for the majority resolution on Labour Party work at the fusion conference, which outlined the need for fraction work. However Healy, unlike the Haston-Grant majority, wholeheartedly agreed with the International Secretariat of the Fourth International's (ISFI's) 1944 International Conference Theses on International Perspectives which argued that: "The revival of economic activity in capitalist countries weakened by the war...will be characterised by an especially slow tempo which will keep their economy at levels bordering on stagnation and slump."

This perspective was to be refuted by the developments which took place after 1945 in Europe. The war itself had created new conditions for an upturn. The enormous productive capacity of US imperialism, undamaged by the effects of war, together with a chronic shortage of goods in devastated Europe, combined to ensure relative stability. Already by 1946 industrial output had exceeded pre-war levels and was rising rapidly. Capital investment far exceeded the inter-war high by 1946. Pablo and Healy held rigidly to this perspective basing a *schematic, dogmatic* political strategy on it. There would be an inevitable clash between workers compelled to defend their living standards in slump conditions, and the Labour leaders which would a "crystallisation of a left-

wing". Based on the Labour Party's "unique" relationship to the unions, this radicalisation would "inevitably" make itself felt in the Party. This therefore, was the rationale for total entry. Healy argued in 1945: "The turn to independent work could only be a temporary phase until the Labour Party sprang to life once again."

Attacked by the majority of the RCP and unable to adduce any concrete evidence of a centrist development in the Labour Party, Healy soon gave up this whole approach. Instead his justification became thoroughly opportunist. For Healy the "dangers" of fraction work were hammered home by the expulsion of leading RCP members from the Newcastle ILP in 1945 on the charge of "Trotskyism". McNair, the ILP leader responsible was, as it so happened, a very close friend of none other than Marceau Pivert. Healy's reaction to these expulsions paralleled Molinier and Frank's tactics when faced with the expulsion of the Trotskyists from the SFIO in 1935. (See WP newspaper 38). He wanted at all costs to avoid a "provocation". Healy believed that the real problem with *fraction* work was it presupposed an independent party. This, he argued, would leave them open to the charge that they were not "sincere". It also allowed ammunition for the bureaucracy. Therefore, he concluded, only *total entry* would avoid the problem. Healy scoffed at the RCP leaders for believing that: "whilst maintaining that 'independent' Party it will be possible to work in these organisations with the object of winning comrades over to the outside party, thereby laying the basis for the mass party at some future date. The conception is entirely erroneous."

One of the failures of *both* sides in the faction fight was that the programmatic significance of the entry tactic received virtually no consideration. The debate revolved primarily around *organisational* questions, namely, what proportion of RCP members to devote to Labour Party work. But on what programme was that work to be conducted? The leadership never spelled out any separate programme for entry because they doubtless assumed that existing RCP politics would be the basis of LP work under all conditions. But no such implication could be assumed from the ISFI or Healy. In a debate over entry work in the ILP, Sam Gordon, the official ISFI representative (and Cannon's confidant) in Britain argued: "The programme is not at issue. With minor concessions the basic position of the FI is already acceptable to the native left-wing."

Pablo and the ISFI intensified their support for Healy. The June 1946 Plenum of the ISFI passed a resolution on tactics in Britain. It was rejected by the RCP leaders. In January 1947 Pablo again insisted on total entry. The opportunism behind Healy and Pablo's motivation deepened. They re-iterated the slump-crisis perspective as an immediate threat: "the death agony of capitalism is an ever-present factor in the world now, in the very midst of the conjunctural revival." The 1946 upturn was a "revival without any perspective of real stability".

Driven by the logic of his polemic Pablo began to revise the entry tactic of Trotsky: "Under these circumstances the question of entry takes on an entirely new aspect from previous times, it seems to us. Whereas previously the entry of revolutionists into the LP of necessity had more circumscribed and limited objectives - the winning over of relatively restricted layers of advanced workers to the programme of Trotskyism...the present situation sets new objectives for entry: the setting into motion of the entire awakened British working class along the path of revolutionary action, this time within the framework of the Labour Party itself."



By 1947 there was no longer any pretence of relating to any *existing* centrist current as in the 1930s. Rather the task was to "anticipate" it by capturing key leadership positions in the local Labour Parties so as to be there when the centrist current emerged. Pablo himself wrote testily to the RCP leaders explaining this in June 1947: ("It is High Time to Find a Solution") "The whole problem for the British Trotskyists consists in entering now into the Labour Party armed with this perspective *without waiting for the Left-Wing to crystallise around centrist leaders or a centrist platform.*"

Six months earlier the International Secretariat had made the implications of this clear: "Entry into the Labour Party today therefore signifies for the Trotskyists a campaign of relatively long duration." Thus Pablo and Healy completely revised the whole political method that Trotsky had applied to entry tactics before the war. For Trotsky fraction work in the social-democratic and Stalinist parties was a norm as long as they contained serious working class forces. Total entry, of necessity, could not be predicated on a long term perspective.

The party exists to defend and fight for the programme. Its formal independence could only be abandoned therefore if it could be replaced by a revolutionary fraction or tendency etc within the mass reformist parties. This would only be possible in periods when the reformist masses were sufficiently radicalised to defend the revolutionaries and the reformist leaders were driven to adopt centrist camouflage. However for Trotsky the revolutionaries should not tailor their programme, the tactics they advanced for the class or their criticism of the reformist leaders of the left and right. For him there could be no question of making the object of the entry tactic staying in the reformist party for any particular length of time. To do so implicitly builds into the perspective the surrender of revolutionary positions for a centrist or even left-reformist disguise. Although at first Pablo and Healy talked of mobilising thousands around transitional demands, in fact that they counterposed to this "the winning over of individuals here and there to the full programme of Trotskyism." This was the shape of things to come. In fact Pablo and Healy confused the tactic of the united front on certain immediate and transitional demands with the building of a revolutionary party or tendency.

The RCP majority resolutely refused to accept the entry tactic so at the end of 1947 Pablo and the ISFI split the RCP, allowing Healy to enter and pursue his tactic as he saw fit. This was to open a process which effectively destroyed the RCP, the only sizeable unified Trotskyist organisation there has been in Britain.

Less than two years after the split the majority of the RCP themselves decided to enter the Labour Party and join Healy. What led to this abrupt collapse? Was it in fact the impossibility of doing independent work with a grouping of a few hundred? One factor in the demoralisation of the Haston-Grant leadership

was that from 1948 onwards there was a narrowing of the differences over economic perspectives. The RCP majority had never *denied* the slump perspective, but refused to accept it as an *immediate* prospect between 1944 and 1947. At the end of 1946 the RCP majority replied to the International Secretariat: "How long can this upward swing last? ... Certainly not for longer than a few years at the most ... Far from the Revolutionary Communists of Britain pushing this overriding factor of decline into the background...our whole activity and orientation is based precisely on this factor. In the resolution of the RCP...we emphasise that: 'the orientation and strategy of the RCP is firmly based on the longterm perspective of crisis and decline.'" (Original emphasis.)

On this basis Haston and Grant did not of course *exclude* the possibility of total entry. This was always written into the resolutions.

From the end of 1947 the economic situation of the working class took a serious turn for the worse. During the 1947/8 winter an austerity programme was introduced by the Labour government, designed to squeeze domestic consumption and boost exports. The Miners' working week was extended by 2½ hrs. Food imports were reduced; rationing extended to petrol and meat and there were increases in direct and indirect taxes. In 1949 there was £250 million of spending cuts.

The prosecution of this austerity programme was to lead to the eventual resignation of Aneurin Bevan from the cabinet in 1951. Meanwhile the RCP itself stagnated. The Haston-Grant majority had expected growth from open work and an orientation to industry. Between 1945 and 1947 they could point to a steady escalation of strikes, to a peak of 2½ million days lost. But after 1947 there was a steady dissipation of industrial action. In 1950 there were only 1½ million days lost in strikes.

On the other side, the steady escalation of individual membership of the Labour Party (rising from 0.6 million in 1947 to 1 million in 1952) and jump in trade union affiliation to the Labour Party (after the 1947 trade union reform abolished 'contracting-in') seemed to add weight to Healy's old positions. The RCP could not reconcile itself to return to the limitations of a propaganda group.

Since 1944 it had shared, with the whole FI, a perspective of a coming revolutionary crisis and consequent growth into a mass force. Whilst the RCP majority had resisted Pablo and Healy's schematism, they were not willing or perhaps able to thoroughly re-assess the perspectives or programme for the post-war Fourth International.

In 1948 a major programmatic revision occurred. Pablo gave the Yugoslav revolution and workers state a clean bill of health on the basis of the Tito-Stalin split. The Haston-Grant leadership violently protested but found no response in the International as a whole.

In March 1949 the block between Haston and Grant broke up. Grant argued that the RCP must face a period of "becoming more and more a propaganda group but with the possibility of intervening, and in certain circumstances playing a leading and active role in relation to certain disputes". Haston and Co could not face this retreat. However, their rejection of propaganda group existence was not in favour of revolutionary mass work. They argued for the closing down of "Socialist Appeal" (the RCP's paper) because it could not compete with the CP's Daily Worker. The left turn of the CP in the Haston group's view meant that "the prospect of creating, in the immediate period ahead, a third independent alternative party of the working class has been undermined".

Only a politically bankrupt tendency could show such defeatism. The central question of programme, of defending Trotskyist politics against Stalinism and Social Democracy was thus reduced to mere organisational fetishism - a danger that always lurked in their organisational conception of 'building the party'. The need to propagandise for revolutionary politics as the minimum necessary activity was thus abandoned.

By the time of the RCP's admission of political bankruptcy, Healy's grouping in the Labour Party had produced four issues of the centrist paper "Socialist Outlook". It had a growing circulation. The ISFI eagerly sanctioned a "re-fusion" of the groups in 1949, and as a reward for services rendered, Healy's faction, still the smaller, was given the majority positions in the leadership. Before a formal conference could take place in late 1950, Healy had used his position, and differences over the Korean War, to expel his erstwhile opponents. Grant was expelled. Haston left in complete political collapse. The conference never took place, and Healy reduced the now-dead RCP to a tiny conspiratorial cabal of a few dozen - "The Club", whose "Trotskyist" politics were shrouded in secrecy and available only to the privileged few, less they prove a "provocation" to the left-reformist allies in "Socialist Outlook".

The lessons of this period need to be carefully digested and understood by authentic Trotskyists today. Underpinning many of the arguments of both sides in the RCP debate was the question "to be in or not to be in?". Today's epigones of Trotsky in the Socialist League (ex IMG) and WSL still insist that is the question.

It isn't, and to pose it this way is to confess confusion at best and gross opportunism at worst. The whole experience points to the need to return to Trotsky's own advice on entryism.

Work by revolutionaries inside a reformist party is a means to winning adherents to communism. As such its programmatic basis (not its organisational execution) must come first. It did not do so in the period of the break up of the RCP, and it certainly isn't in evidence in the strategies advocated by the Socialist Challenge and the Socialist Organiser today. ■

by Keith Hassell and Dave Stocking



Attlee (bottom centre) surrounded by supporters after 1945 election victory

State Racism/Police STOP THE DEPORTATIONS! SMASH THE RACIST LAWS!

DEPORTATION FROM BRITAIN is a real prospect for thousands of people at the moment. Deportation means being torn from your job, your home, your family and your community and being forcibly taken to another country. Deportation applies virtually exclusively to black and Asian people. Deportation is a repugnant, racist practice. It has been sanctified by that most venerable "democratic" institution, the House of Commons.

Muhammad Idrish is one of the many victims of the present wave of deportations. He is a Bangladeshi social worker in West Bromwich, a member of the Dr. Barnardo's NALGO branch there. He came to this country in 1976 as a student in further education. While he was a student in Bristol he met and married his wife, with whom he lived for five years.

When the marriage broke down and Muhammad began to live separately from his British-born wife, the Home Office began proceedings for deportation. Ever vigilant in their search for victims, the Home Office were not deterred by the fact that Muhammad and his wife were not divorced. Their separation was enough to set the Home Office immigrant-hunting squads in motion. Muhammad's fate now hangs in the balance.

The British state has an armoury of immigration legislation with which it can intimidate and intern black people. Most of the previous legislation was aimed at stopping the entry of black and Asian immigrants into Britain. With primary immigration now almost nil, the emphasis of the Tor-

ies' legislation has shifted slightly. The 1981 Nationality Act and the linked Immigration rules are a codification and extension of all the previous immigration laws. They are aimed at preventing existing black and Asian British residents from bringing their dependants to Britain. In a nutshell, they attempt to split up families, as the Anwar Ditta case proved. Their underlying intention is to make black and Asian people feel insecure in Britain in the hope that this will encourage them to leave.

The Act and the Rules do this by redefining British citizenship. This is no longer a unitary category. It falls into three categories. The significant one is British Overseas Citizens - mainly blacks and Asians. They cannot even visit, let alone reside in, Britain without being subjected to a battery of degrading immigration restrictions. Furthermore, through these new categories a whole number of black and Asian people now resident in Britain, are deprived of the right to live here - hence the wave of deportations.

The case of Muhammad Idrish shows, as did Anwar Ditta's before it, that deportations can be fought, and in Birmingham and Bristol this is being done by Muhammad Idrish Defence Committees.

The Birmingham campaign produced a letter for trade union and Labour Party branches and community organisations. The letter is directly aimed at winning affiliations to the defence campaign and invites delegates from sponsoring bodies to campaign meetings. A model resolution produced by the campaign (see box) has been passed by a number of labour movement bodies and Muhammad's case is on the agenda of the February meeting of the Birmingham Trades Council.

To defend Muhammad Idrish practically this branch should:

1. Affiliate to the Muhammad Idrish Defence Committee and send a delegate to its meetings.
2. Send a donation to the campaign funds.
3. Support the activities of the campaign including demonstrations, pickets and public meetings.

Muhammad Idrish is one of many thousands facing deportation under this legislation. This branch should support actions and activities against immigration controls called by the Campaign Against Racist Laws (CARL) and other bodies, especially the demonstration to be held in London on March 27th.

For further details of the Muhammad Idrish Defence Committee contact:
Barry Lovejoy, or
30 Antrobus Rd., or
Handsworth, Birmingham 21
Graham Reid,
62 Bedminster Parade,
Bristol 3.

MODEL RESOLUTION

This branch notes that

1. Successive governments have introduced immigration laws since the early 1960s. 2. These laws are used mainly against black people from Britain's ex-colonies. 3. Immigration laws are part of the legal procedures used against black people in order to prevent them playing an active part in the Labour and Trade Union movement. 4. Despite Labour governments being responsible for introducing the 1968 Act, instituting the "virginity tests" and proposing a new "Nationality Act", the Labour Party itself holds a policy for the abolition of the 1971 Immigration Act.

This branch resolves to support the campaign in defence of Muhammad Idrish, a Bangladeshi social worker and NALGO member, threatened with deportation under the 1971 Immigration Act for the "offence" of being separated from his wife.

ARMS OF THE LAW

A MIXTURE OF anguish, horrified disbelief and downright cynicism, made up the "official" response to the shooting of Stephen Waldorf. A specialist squad of gun-toting men from the Met slipped up when they opened fire on a car full of innocent people. As the gunsmoke clears and a few officers are done for attempted murder (Stephen was beaten after being riddled with bullets), the government hopes to draw the curtains on an embarrassing incident.

This incident, however, is very revealing. Allegations of systematic police brutality and the indiscriminate flouting of the inadequate existing procedures for gun use, are invariably portrayed as the wild fantasies of the left by the Tories and their press. The shooting of Stephen Waldorf provided tragic, but striking proof that they are not. Indeed in the same week as Waldorf was shot two raids by armed police on London homes were carried out in error.

Police forces throughout the country now have huge stockpiles of guns and ammunition along with CS gas and riot shields. The Met is well in the lead in this particular arms race. Between 1970 and 1979 the Met had 76% of the national total of guns issued. No surprise then that when a black youth, Colin Roach, was found shot dead inside Stoke Newington police station (a well-known nest of racists) in January, there was a widespread belief among the local black community that he was killed by the police.

There is, undeniably, a heavily armed police force in this country. Its primary function is the protection of the property and institutions of the wealthy and the terrorising of all who pose a threat to that property or those institutions. Actual "criminals" come low on the list of police targets. In London the Met has a ludicrous record of solving reported crimes. Only 17% of crimes reported are cleared up by the Met. Manchester's infamous Chief Constable Anderton was explicit about who the main enemy was: "What will be the matter of greatest concern to me will be the covert and ultimately

overt attempts to overthrow democracy, to subvert the authority of the state, and to, in fact, involve themselves in acts of sedition designed to destroy our parliamentary system and the democratic government of this country."

This is why the police chiefs in all of Britain's major cities have developed militarised Special Patrol Group bodies. There are now 28 local SPGs throughout the country. In 1980 there were 12,000 officers specially trained in riot control (7,000 in London alone). The figure has risen in the wake of the 1981 riots. A new addition in the large black community in Brixton, South London, and elsewhere is the army of "Immediate Response Units". These mini SPG squads on constant patrol are designed to intimidate communities in general and young blacks in particular.

The proposals to re-organise the Met, by its new chief Newman, and Whitelaw's new Police Bill, are both designed to extend the powers of the police.

Newman's five year plan for the Met combines a symbolic nod in the direction of 'community policing' (recommended by Scarman after the Brixton riots), with the "offensive policing" tactics actually practiced on the streets of Toxteth, Brixton, Notting Hill and Moss Side. The powerless consultative committees are to play a minor role in his plans. On the other hand "neighbourhood watch" committees are to become a vital component in police intelligence work. Newman candidly declared his hope that a network of narks could be established: "I would hope a black leader or street leader would come forward and be a useful contact for the police."

The Immediate Response Units are to be maintained and strengthened. Their role will be to set up road blocks, act as "anti-rowdiness patrols", and carry on as an intimidating presence on the streets. Again Newman is forthright about what their role will be. Having stated that a major consideration in his battle plans is a "problem with young people, particularly young West Indians", he went on to declare: "In some areas there is a brand of destruction and hostility which has led to deliberately engineered confrontations with the police. It is therefore a priority to restore order to such areas." The meaning of this is clear. It means offensive policing in

In Muhammad's own union, NALGO, the campaign has been active. The Dr Barnardo's branch has passed the model resolution and is forwarding it for discussion at the NALGO national conference in June. Furthermore it is sending Muhammad as its delegate to the conference - offering to pay his air fare from Bangladesh if his deportation goes through, so that he can raise the matter personally at the conference. Things can't be left at this however. It is vital that NALGO branches throughout the country pass the resolution and (especially in the Midlands and Bristol) should affiliate to the defence committee and participate in its activities.

Action must be taken now. The complicated appeals procedure is in motion and looks as if it will go against Muhammad. On January 27th Muhammad's appeal to an adjudicator was lost. This means it is only a matter of weeks before action is taken against him. Labour movement and black community support for the defence committee's activities must be built.

Support for the Muhammad Idrish campaign and other local campaigns against deportations should be used as a basis for co-ordinating activity against the racist laws that lie behind individual deportation cases. A campaign won or lost on the "merits of the individual case" will not halt the Tories' cruel vendetta against black people. The Guardian's estimate of a monthly average of 250 people being deported or leaving Britain because of the threat of deportation, is a statistical reminder of the Tories' inveterate racism. They must be fought. The local defence committees should be linked up regionally and nationally and should co-ordinate their work with the Campaign Against Racist Laws. An immediate focus for this work is the CARL national demo in London on March 27th. Work should begin to ensure a massive turnout. Labour movement bodies as well as black and Asian community organisations must be out in force on that day. The forces mobilised for the

predominantly black areas. Community policing comes to mean policing of the community by embryonic vigilante groups and IRUs.

The new Police Bill currently going through Parliament is of a piece with Newman's plans. It makes local liaison committees statutory, thereby giving a liberal gloss to the tough measures that follow. The Bill would provide a more effective version of the repealed "Sus" laws. Wide ranging stop and search powers would be granted under the Bill, including the right to search premises and persons of entirely innocent parties. All the police have to do is convince a magistrate that a "serious arrestable offense" has taken place - by whom is not decisive. The National Council for Civil Liberties pointed out: "In striking contrast to the present powers of search they would enable the police to search the premises and possessions of an entirely innocent person who is not even suspected of any involvement in any offence, in the hope of finding evidence against a third party."

In the Labour movement the most common response to the extension of police powers has been the call to make the police democratically accountable. The Labour GLC has proposed that the Met should be broken up into borough forces (with a Regional Crime Squad for London-wide functions) and placed under the political control of police authorities based on the borough councils. This would make the police local government employees. Control would consist in determining how finance was allocated and what the policing policy should be in the given locality.

Uncritical support for these measures has come from left-reformist papers like Tribune, and Labour Herald, and from the so-called revolutionary paper Socialist Challenge. The rationale behind the accountability proposals is very revealing. In Tribune and Labour Herald, accountability is posed as a means of restoring public confidence in the police. It is posed as an extreme measure of reform of the existing police force. Labour Herald argued: "Public confidence in the police is, in the end, impossible without public accountability." (21.1.83)

Left GLC councillor Paul Boateng criticised Newman's plans because they would mean that: "The result is bound to be increased alienation of the public from the police."

Tribune were worried about the police flouting the "rule of law". An editorial stated: "There is a race on to save civil liberties and the rule of law by bringing the police, especially in London, under control again." (28.1.83).



Blacks awaiting deportation in Harmondsworth detention centre.

demo should be held together afterwards in local committees vigorously campaigning against the Tories' laws and their effects.

The Labour Party has taken a step forward by calling for the repeal of the 1971 and 1981 Immigration Acts. It must be won to opposition now, to all of the effects of these Acts and the others, including those, like the 1968 Act, that Labour brought in. It must also be won to pledging the repeal of all Immigration controls, and not to trying to clean up what are thoroughly dirty laws.

All of these laws are based on the idea of a "national interest", a fictitious harmony between British bosses and workers against "outsiders". They are relaxed when the bosses need cheap labour, tightened when the bosses want to sack workers. In other words these laws, in the guise of serving the nation, actually serve the people who are now closing factories, cutting services and slashing wages. They do not serve any workers - white or black. They can and must be fought.

REPEAL ALL IMMIGRATION LAWS!
SMASH THE NATIONALITY ACT!
BUILD A LABOUR MOVEMENT CAMPAIGN
AGAINST ALL DEPORTATIONS AND RACIST LAWS! ■

by Rossanna Stone

These arguments are seriously flawed. They ignore the fact that the "law and order" that the police defend is that of the bosses not "the public". The breaking up of picket lines and occupations, the harassment of minorities, the terrorising of the poorest sections of society driven into petty crime by poverty and inequality are the custom and practice of the police. These are the functions they are paid and trained to fulfil. Their role as defenders of a society based on inequality cannot be successfully changed while that society itself is left intact. Public accountability itself blurs the class question. It ignores the reality that "the public" is itself class divided. What happens when part of "the public" wants to break a strike with the use of the police? Accountability via local council control, even if it were granted, would not prevent this from happening.

The call for a democratic, accountable police force under capitalism is therefore a utopian one. It serves to deflect attention from the crucial immediate tasks of building defence of picket lines against police attacks, building defence of black communities against daily harassment, campaigns to force the disbandment/withdrawal of SPG and IRU squads. These are the vital tasks in the here and now. They are tasks that mobilise workers and the oppressed in struggle against the paid agents of the oppressors and exploiters and thereby prepare the forces for the destruction of the capitalist police force.

However, while this remains our strategy we do not stand aside, in a sectarian fashion, from struggles to "reform" the police. We support such struggles as the one being waged to make the police accountable to the GLC. As a democratic reform we do not oppose accountability. We recognise that if workers are actually mobilised to reform the police, then that can have an effect useful in demoralising the police force, breaking up its hierarchical chain of command and weakening its effectiveness as a tool of the bosses.

But two points must be made absolutely clear to those campaigning for reform. Even a limited process of reform would require an enormous active struggle by workers to break the entrenched power of the police chiefs. The powers that be will not allow the armed guardians of their power to be so easily undermined. Secondly the fight for reform must not deflect from immediate tasks of workers' defence or be a substitute for the only real solution to the "police problem". (As well as the "crime problem".) This means the abolition of the police and the society of inequality and exploitation that they defend. ■

by Mark Hoskisson

FRANKS STRIKES LEFTS DUMB

WHEN MICHAEL FOOT demanded firm action against Argentina after their occupation of the Malvinas last April he got more than he bargained for. The patriotic poltroon had hoped to make political capital out of Thatcher's temporary embarrassment. Instead Thatcher well and truly outdid him. Having secured Labour support for the despatch of the fleet, he lunged into her bloody adventure in the South Atlantic. Falklands fever - chauvanism inflamed by Labour's role in failing to oppose the fleet's departure - has since ensured a massive boost in popularity for the Thatcher government.

Foot obviously hoped to win something back through the Franks Committee inquiry. It was Labour who pushed for an inquiry. Having won full military honours in the war, Thatcher might at least be exposed as an incompetent before the fighting.

Not surprisingly the four Lords, one Sir and a Mr. who made up the Franks Committee failed to criticise the government. Especially galling for Foot was that even the presence of Mr. Merlyn Rees and Lord Lever as Labour members of the committee, failed to ensure that Thatcher was criticised. The Committee was made up of Privy Counsellors - these these are the Queen's own council, the most trusted, hand-picked servants of the state. To have criticised Thatcher, would have been tantamount to criticising the war that she fought. These pillars of the establishment would not risk that. As the far from revolutionary New Statesmen pointed out, "It was flying in the face of all experience to suppose that the report when it emerged would do any serious damage to that establishment." (21.1.83)

Foot has been thwarted in his bid to score a victory over Thatcher yet again. The Labour case in the Franks debate has centred on two points. Foot, finding nothing in the report that could pin the blame for the war on Thatcher came up with a classic piece of constitutional crankery. To hoots of laughter from jubilant Tories, and embarrassed silence from disgruntled Labour members, Foot screamed that there had been "a collapse of effective Cabinet Government." With a thousand dead, a fortress established in the South Atlantic, and a tide of chauvanism fuelling the Tories' run up to an election, this was all that the leader of the Labour Party could come up with! It was a nauseating spectacle.

The Labour Party's second line of attack came from the Callaghan old guard. Callaghan himself, Healy and Silkin all condemned the Tories for not being tough before the Argentine invasion. In the debate on the report Healey argued, "The real question the government has to answer is whether different activities could have led General Galtieri to regard the invasion of the islands as something too dangerous to contemplate." A fine piece of Palmerston gun-boat diplomacy, no doubt. Indeed, the Labour Weekly was able to gleefully report that in 1977 the Labour Government had warded off an

invasion by threatening to torpedo Argentine ships which had come to within 50 miles of the Malvinas. Nobody had briefed Foot at the time, but Callaghan and Healey were able to point to it as a token of their competence as imperialist statesmen.

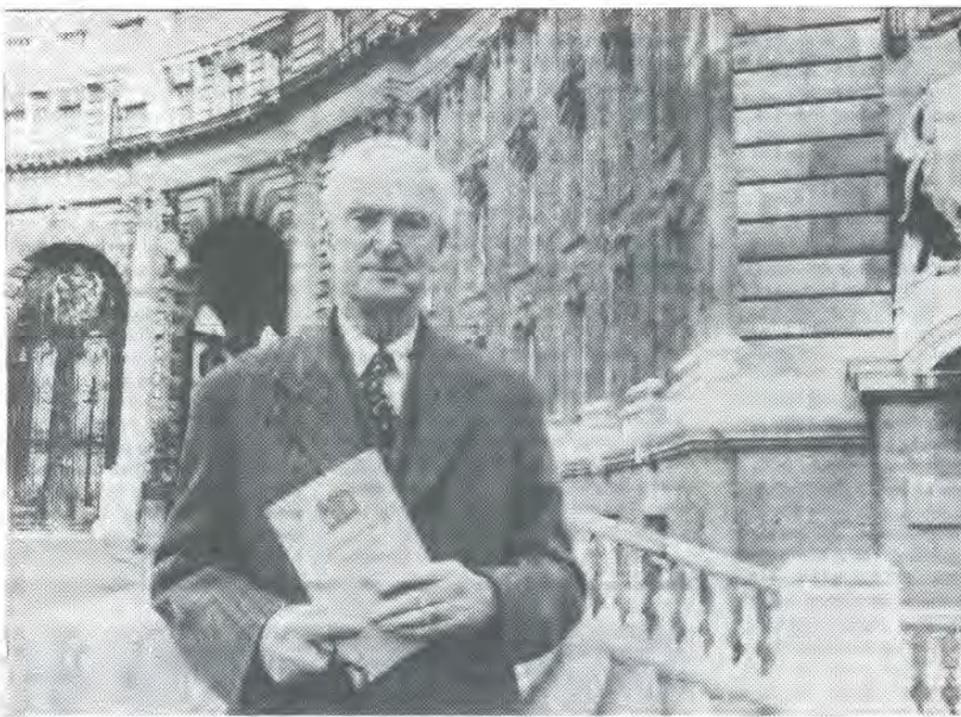
The nub of the Labour case was that a show of force could have frightened Galtieri off. The war would then not have been necessary. This only goes to show that there was no fundamental difference between the Tories and Labour over the war itself. For the logic of the secret orders of 1977 and the criticism of the Franks report today is that if, despite a show of force, Argentina had still invaded, then Labour would have gone to war.

This is why at every single stage of the war the Labour Leadership cheered on the callous Thatcher war-cabinet and roundly condemned all those who opposed the war.

During the war the Labour left mingled pacifist confusion with the attitude that since the war was underway there was little that could be done. The result was that they sat mute for most of the time. The 'left' in Parliament took six weeks to pluck up the courage to move a vote in Parliament on the fleet. When the shooting started, like the good patriots that they are, they left the demonstrations against the war to their fate, and issued not a word of condemnation of the senseless bloodbath.

The left have done little to rescue their "anti-war" reputations during the debate on Franks.

Lord Franks, with his report, standing outside his committee's offices at Admiralty Arch



Once again they appear to have taken vows of silence, while the gangsters of the right spew out the 'official' view. Despite the fact that MPs were told 48 hours before the publication of the report, that Thatcher was to be exonerated, they could not even get it together to stand up and denounce her filthy war. The clown Dennis Skinner made jokes about Thatcher only quoting the bits of the report that praised her. The mealy-mouthed Benn asked the same question as Healey, but added a humanist "Could the lives lost in the Falklands have been saved if other action had been taken?" What cautious Mr. Benn - the dispatch of frigates, the course you favoured in 1977? Once again the imperialist logic of Thatcher's war is followed. Ready as ever with a contingent excuse for his cowardice Reg Race fumed, 'In short, there was no time for those 'dissidents' who had dared to challenge the government's Falklands policy to read the report before the PM made her statement.' Labour Herald 21.1.83) As if a real 'dissident' would need to have known the ins and outs of the report before they could have stood up and used the debate to denounce again and again the whole bloodstain exercise.

Tribune left the bulk of its criticism to the right wing opponent of the war, Tom Dalyell. Following on from an article that bemoaned the passing of the days when surface ships played a key role in sea warfare (an era long gone thanks to the Exocet) he used the pages of Tribune to air his present obsession. Why did barmaids in Gibraltar know that subs were heading south on March 28th, when Mrs Thatcher claimed that the invasion on March 31st came out of the blue!

The truth is that the left have no coherent alternative to the Callaghan-Healey line. In the decisive test of war they revealed that their loyalty was not merely to the Labour establishment but through that loyalty to the British imperialist state and its war. No wonder then that they could mount no attack on the whitewash report. ■

CLPD MOVES TO THE RIGHT

OVER 560 DELEGATES gathered for the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy (CLPD) AGM on January 29th to vote on the question of registration.

A victory (though narrow) for the right wing in favour of registration ensured that there will be no immediate split in the organisation. The hard left current Socialist Organiser had actually declared in advance "No split in the CLPD", in their bid to stay allied with the 'respectable left' in the CLPD.

Significantly the proposals from the CLPD executive in favour of the registration were aimed not only at complying with the Register but also at charting the future of the CLPD - putting the campaign in the strait jacket of legality and constitutionality. A motion of 'party unity' - so called - from right wingers Vladimir Derer and Pete Willman cheerleaders for peace with Foot, put the cards on the table. "Top priority for Labour the coming year" the motion reads, "must be work for a majority Labour government on the basis of the existing policies, the existing leadership, the existing membership and the existing parliamentary candidates. Nothing should divert us from this goal."

This cringing resolution passed at the AGM is, in effect, an oath of loyalty to the now dominant right wing in the party.

A concerted attempt by Reg Race MP and Nigel Williamson of Tribune and supporters of Socialist Organiser to steer CLPD leftwards, failed. This motley bunch, having steadfastly opposed getting Labour Against the Witch-hunt to commit itself to non-registration, decided to pose as the intransigent left within the CLPD. Thus John Bloxam of SO argued that "CLPD shall organise a boycott with as many other groups and papers in the party as possible." This is exactly the policy he and his followers opposed when it was put forward by Workers Power supporters at the Hackney North Conference against the Witch-hunt! It comes as even more of a cheek when the signs from SO are that, when the chips are down, it would be willing to register. Still, manoeuvres with the CLPD are more important than principles for the centrism of SO.

In fact CLPD has decided against fighting the witch-hunt, now being stepped up again by the NEC. But the battle is far from over. The forces within the CLPD, LAW, the left papers must be won to opposition to the register as well as expulsions, if the NEC's latest attempt at a purge is to be defeated. ■

by Sue Todd

I.M.G. - TURNING TO ITS GRAVE?

WHAT'S IN A name? Nothing, if we are to believe Steve Potter who informed "City Limits" that the change of name of his organisation, from INTERNATIONAL MARXIST Group to SOCIALIST League, had "no political significance." The more wary reader of Socialist Challenge, or perhaps those just made cynical by the bewildering twists and turns of the IMG over the last decade might think that the motive lay in the latest perspectives of the organisation in relation to the Labour Party and its left wing.

Presumably this adoption of the name "Socialist League" with its evocations of Sir Stafford Cripps' organisation of the 30s, is designed to be more palatable to the left reformist audience that Socialist Challenge wishes to accommodate to. The report of the newly christened Socialist League conference, which the Socialist Challenge proudly tells us was preceded by five months of discussions, clearly shows the direction they have finally agreed to take.

"The decisive task of revolutionary marxists is to shake off all sectarian prejudices and participate in the coming political battles that will shape the future of the British working class movement." (SC. no.275 7.1.83) argues the conference resolution. True as this statement is, its generality hides the Socialist Leagues' real perspective. In the language of the centrist, "sectarian prejudices" involve open and intransigent criticism of the weaknesses of left reformist leaders, while "participating in political battles" means dumping revolutionary politics in order to build broad "class struggle" alliances with friendly elements in

the bureaucracy. Not that any of this is new for the IMG/Socialist League. It is a policy they adopted for their ill-fated Socialist Unity electoral tomfoolery in the late 70s, and their "turn to industry" and uncritical hailing of broad lefts in the POEU and other unions in the early 80s. In terms of gaining a hearing and base inside the Bennite left in the next period, however, the IMG has been overtaken on the inside right by the likes of Socialist Organiser.

Realising it is a latecomer to the field, Socialist Challenge has lost no time in showing that it can be as craven in wooing the Bennite left as the Socialist Organiser Alliance. Its "Action Programme for '83" (SC no.276 14.1.83) proceeds to cover Benn's tracks over the Bishops Stortford betrayal of the democracy movement. Having pointed out that it was aimed to keep the left quiet while the right went on to the attack they declare: "The Bennite leadership symbolised by the quietism of Benn himself - were thrown into disarray by these events."

Not a mention in this assessment of 1982 of the leading role Benn himself played in the Bishops Stortford agreement. Neither does Benn's "quietism" reflect "disarray" as Socialist Challenge would have it. It reflects Benn's refusal, despite his blustering about "fighting like a tiger", to lead a fight against the right outside of the NEC and its committees. The same "programme" quickly abandons the organisations' commitment to a basic democratic demands - for the reform of the grossly undemocratic "First past the post" system of election, a system which guarantees that minority views have no reflection in Parliament. Quick to respond to the Bennite left's disgraceful hostility to proportional representation the Socialist League declared: "While in general being in favour of democratic reform, Socialists should oppose any move towards proportional

representation which would play into the hands of the SDP-Liberal coalitionists."

While Socialist Challenge is quite rightly supporting Tatchell in Bermondsey, they carry out their support in an absolutely uncritical fashion. Tatchell is a self-confessed left reformist. Communists are not uncritical of his illusions in Parliament, his equivocations on withdrawing the troops from Ireland etc. United action to secure his election is an attempt to break his followers from such reformist policies. The Socialist League, on the other hand, wish to point to Tatchell as more than just a left reformist. Thus in place of criticisms we find: "This election will be a direct, open contest between the policies of the most advanced section of the British working class and Thatcherism." (SC no.276 14.1.83) Left reformism rather than revolutionary communism is now declared the most advanced section of the working class!

It is little wonder that given the IMG/Socialist League's race to the right to accommodate to their projected mass Bennite surrent in the Labour Party, that they declare in their conference resolutions for a fusion with the Workers' Socialist League. Supporters of this organisation were key in developing the Socialist Organiser Alliance. This group and its paper Socialist Organiser, have a track record of prostration before the Labour Left that would arouse the envy of any opportunist worth their salt.

They abandoned communist opposition to parliamentarianism in the face of Foot's demand for loyalty to Parliament. They defended the self-determination of the Falkland Islanders at a time when Thatcher was despatching a war fleet to secure that "right". In the face of the witch-hunt they have opposed all attempts to commit Labour Against the Witch-Hunt to a campaign of non-compliance with the register - the witch-hunters' major weapon. Little wonder that the IMG/Socialist League can see

precious little that separates them from the WSL. Indeed a failure of a fusion of these groups would owe more to petty sectarian squabbling than to conflict over political principle.

Indeed principled revolutionary regroupment is not what is at stake in the present round of musical chairs on the British left. Principle has been sacrificed for influence inside the Labour left and its assorted factions. The overtures of Socialist Challenge and Socialist Organiser to the left reformist papers Tribune (or the new Tribune as Socialist Challenge calls it) and London Labour Briefing, are straws in the wind. What better way to gain influence over the reformists than to remove any remaining political barriers like a paper (threatened anyway by the register) and start selling Tribune or a nationally extended Labour Briefing (quite possible after Briefing's first national conference this month.) Indeed a leading Briefing member Graham Bash aired his views on this to an obviously eager Martin Thomas in an interview in Socialist Organiser: "The left can unify its forces and embody the strength of the working class if we can learn to throw away competing ideologies as such and party lines, in favour of a method that is open and flexible." (SO.no.114 6.1.83).

Whether or not the Socialist League and the WSL fuse, whether or not a new umbrella group on the Labour Left is formed with them in it, one thing is certain. None of this will take forward the building of a genuinely revolutionary alternative at a time when Thatcher's victories and Labour's feebleness makes such an alternative more urgent than ever. Members of the Socialist League or Workers Socialist League with any revolutionary instincts should recognise the liquidationist reality of what is going on and act accordingly. ■

by Stuart King

workers power

EETPU: Organising against Chapple's heirs

THE VICTORY OF the right-wing candidate, Eric Hammond, with 73,000 votes in the recent elections for Frank Chapple's successor as General Secretary of the EETPU was by no means an unqualified disaster for the Left. The Broad Left candidate, John Aitkin (32,000) came second, beating another strong right winger, Roy Sanderson (26,000). However, whilst this is evidence of a resurgence of support for the Left in this most right wing of unions, it has to be placed in context.

Chapple announced his intention to stand down (if he was satisfied that his successor was "reliable"!) at very short notice. This was intended to further reinforce the right wing's built in advantage based on its control of the union machinery and its newspaper, Contact, by not giving the Left much time to both choose a candidate and set about campaigning.

Nonetheless, the careerist appetites of the leading right wing contenders, led to there being, at first, four rightist candidates: Hammond (who led the scabs across the Isle of Grain picket lines), Sanderson (who staked his claim to Chapple's mantle by praising the union's "democracy" and who was responsible for doing the deal for private medical insurance with BUPA), Lou Britz, Chapple's own chosen heir and Tom Rice, head of the white collar section which he developed by recruiting managers from the railways and steel industry.

Of these four Britz simply could not get enough branches to nominate him and Rice gained a seat on the executive with his new job as National Secretary of the Electrical Engin-

eer Staff Association and withdrew. This left Hammond and Sanderson to share a split right wing vote.

Chapple has got his wish, the right wing retain their stranglehold on the potentially most powerful union in Britain. He himself is now free to turn his attention to his new job, as Chairman of the TUC. Having methodically transformed the EETPU into a model "business union" in which any branch, let alone member, who disagrees with the executive is simply suspended, he can further the interests of the bosses, whose stooge he is, together with the likes of Boyd and Duffy.

All the same, the size of the vote for Aitken is evidence of a growing opposition to the bureaucrats who control the EETPU. Equally, the determination of the Electricians' Branch in Fleet Street in insisting on taking strike action to support the Healthworkers' day of action last September indicates that Chapple and Co. have not completely destroyed all rank and file independence and militancy. To build on that base and re-transform the union, this time into an organisation controlled democratically by its members and committed not only to their defence but to the destruction of the system that spawns the likes of Chapple must be the openly avowed aim of revolutionaries and militants.

It has to be said that the electoral manifesto of John Aitkin was, at best, only a small step in that direction. His advocacy of a strategy of import controls to protect electricians actually brings him into agreement with his rightwing opponents on the central question of defence of jobs. Equally his rather timid call for the right of all members to stand for election to all union offices is an avoidance of the central question, the removal of the ban on communists. Similarly, his demand for a biennial delegate conference to whose decisions the executive would be subject, whilst supportable, would still leave any future leadership with a dangerous freedom to manoeuvre and would not be as effective as annual conferences.

Whilst such criticism is necessary it does not mean that revolutionaries could not work alongside and give electoral support to the Broad Left. The demand for election of all full-time officials and the end of bureaucratic closure of oppositional branches, for example, are important starting points for any campaign to democratise the EETPU. What it does mean is that revolutionaries need to point out, and argue forcefully against, those weaknesses which will limit the possibility of success in such a campaign.

In particular, revolutionaries must emphasise that gaining control of the EETPU is not an end in itself, it is only part of the much greater struggle against the bosses and their state. Therefore, the fight to democratise the EETPU must simultaneously be a fight to commit it to using its vast power in the interests of the working class as a whole.

Years of bureaucratic chicanery and the denial of democratic rights to

STRIKE A BLOW AGAINST TEBBIT'S PLANS

NORMAN TEBBIT'S RECENT Green Paper, "Democracy in Trade Unions" is the latest step in the unfolding of the Tories' strategy to render the unions ineffective as defenders of working class interests. Its three main proposals, legally enforceable postal ballots for the election of union officers, similar ballots before strikes can be called and an end to the present arrangements by which the unions finance the Labour Party, have already been widely discussed by the Tories and their supporters. The Financial Times outlined them as long ago as December 1st 1981.

This careful preparation is fully in keeping with the Tories' general approach to the problem of how to weaken the unions. Against those who wanted an immediate head-on collision with the TUC straight after the Tory election victory, Thatcher's government has developed a step by step offensive. Prior's Employment Act was the first step. It outlawed mass picketing, solidarity action and sympathetic blacking, laid the basis for later attacks on the closed shop and paved the way for Tebbit's current electoral proposals by providing state funds for unions to hold postal ballots. After that, Tebbit's first Bill removed the "legal immunities" from unions by giving the employers the right to sue for loss of money through strikes, made political strikes illegal and provided compensation for scabs who lost their jobs by refusing to join a closed shop.

That the Tories should now feel confident enough to openly suggest state interference in union rule books and procedures is a glaring confirmation of the bankruptcy of the official leaders of the trade unions who not only failed to lead a serious fight but have, at every step, sabotaged any action that appeared capable of developing in that direction. Their strategy of calling for resistance to the Bills if and when they ever became law was condemned to failure from the start.

From the initial response of leaders

like Ken Graham, assistant general secretary of the TUC it is clear that they have learnt nothing from their past failures. When Graham replies to Tebbit that "...unions have developed their own democratic practices which are responsive to their members" and goes on to add that it was "wrong" to subject the unions to government dictat, he gives weight to the Tories' claims that they are in fact only interested in "democratising" the unions, not in bashing them.

The Tories have let it be known that they do not necessarily intend to push through all the proposals straight away. Their "consultative paper" we are told, is only designed to be a contribution to a public debate. The real reasons are, however, clear. Ballots before strike action can easily backfire, as happened in the case of the miners' ballots in 1972 and 1974. With this proposal they are only testing the water, erecting a negotiating gambit which they can withdraw if opposition seems likely. On the other hand the threat to curtail union financial support by insisting on members positively requesting to pay the political levy, has another role. By highlighting the fact that many workers do not consciously pay the levy at present they want to underpin their "democratic" pretensions. At the same time by their tactic of only raising the prospect of Labour bankruptcy as a possibility for enactment after a general election they are firing a warning shot across Labour's bows and are casting themselves in the role of honest brokers not prepared to take unfair advantage of their present parliamentary majority.

The third of their proposals, however, for legally enforced secret ballots in the unions, may well go onto the statute book before the next election. There is sufficient parliamentary time to allow this. It is, therefore, imperative that the whole plan be opposed immediately by direct action to prevent any enactments this year and to prepare the way to successful opposition to further measures by any future government.

Taken in conjunction with all their other anti-working class measures, it is perfectly clear that these latest proposals are part of a coherent policy to prevent the working class' existing organisations from being able to offer a successful resistance to the capitalists'

offensive on living standards and jobs, or even a viable reformist Labour governmental alternative.

Whilst we have never placed any faith in the ability of either the present union leaderships or the Labour Party to defend the interests of the working class for the unions or Labour Party to be even further weakened by the Tories or to become subject to state control or financing would be a serious blow to the working class. It is precisely the present weaknesses of the labour movement both in terms of its politics and its organisational structures which has allowed the Tories to go as far as they have and as quickly as they have. Successful defence must be based on a thoroughgoing transformation of the unions. This means taking them under the control, the direct and democratic control of the masses of workers who belong to the unions. And in answer to Tebbit's threat to the political levy we reply - hands off our money Tebbit- we the rank and file will fight to control the political levy and to democratise the bloc vote in our own interest. Above all it means mobilising the rank and file for direct action to stop the rot, to throw back the Tory offensive. The Tories have proved themselves both determined and well prepared in their attack on the whole of the working class. Success against them requires a similar working class resolute approach.

Their attacks on the unions are central to their plans and only the most widespread and militant action will force them to retreat. For this reason it is necessary to recognise that only a general strike could achieve this and to campaign for the established leaders of the unions, the TUC to call such a strike. However, no one can have any doubts that this itself will only happen if the TUC is under pressure from the rank and file. Only if they fear that developing mass actions will get out of their control will they reluctantly accept their duty to mobilise the whole movement the better to control it and strangle it at the first opportunity. For this reason all disputes and strikes have to be fought with a view to developing recognition of the urgent need for a general strike against the anti-union laws amongst militants and the building of democratic organisational structures necessary to lead and control one. ■



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

Fleet St EETPU members striking in support of health workers.

the membership of the EETPU have, necessarily, taken their toll of even the most militant. A closer look at the possible future of the Fleet Street branch reveals how Chapple's tactics can very easily lead to the adoption of a mistaken strategy by his opponents. Since 1955 the Electricians in Fleet Street have enjoyed a considerable autonomy from the central bureaucracy of the union and have won rights and conditions at work comparable to those of the print unions - control over manning levels, training, pre-entry closed shop etc. Chapple, who bitterly attacked their support for the healthworkers (he characterised the healthworkers themselves as "terrorists") is now widely reported to be planning to sell the entire branch to the NGA. Many electricians have responded to this sit-

uation by proposing that they should, rather, join SOGAT, with whom they have quite close ties. Whilst it is understandable that any trade unionist should want to put as much distance as possible between themselves and Chapple, this is an entirely wrong and short-sighted proposal. His strategy is not limited to the electricians' union. It is aimed at the entire workers' movement but it is based, at present, in the electricians' union.

For perhaps the most militant, and confident branch of that union to adopt a "cut and run" policy by joining SOGAT will not stop Chapple or the rest of the right wing from shackling the trade union movement, but it could seriously set back the prospects of destroying his power, base in the EETPU.

No. Militants and revolutionaries should fight for the policies that the working class needs despite the strength of the right wing and against the right wing. At the centre of this fight must be the defence of all trade unions against the Tories' anti-union laws. Although the present leadership clique of the EETPU do not intend to fight these laws, many of those who have been duped into supporting Hammond can be won to an understanding of why they must be fought. This will not be achieved by the electoralism to which the Broad Left and its newspaper Flashlight have limited themselves. Hammond will not have to stand for election again for five years, and, in any event rank and file mobilisation to take control of the union cannot be achieved simply by putting crosses on ballot papers. The active involvement of the membership has to be won for a fight both inside the union against the right wing and outside against the Tories and the employers. We, therefore, call for the building of a reform movement in the EETPU based, as a minimum on the following demands.

Election and recallability of all officials of the union.
Re-instatement of all suspended branches, such as the Birmingham Midland. An annual delegate conference whose decisions will be binding on all officials and on the executive.
Rank and file control of the block vote.
Full and automatic support for all workers taking industrial action in defence or furtherance of working class interests.
Opposition to, and a campaign of direct action against, the anti-union laws. ■

by Jim Bellman

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