

# workers power

MONTHLY NEWSPAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP

## SPECIAL ELECTION ISSUE

**VOTE LABOUR AND... FIGHT!**

IN 1974 A wave of militant resistance against Heath brought Labour into office. Labour's Chancellor Dennis Healey promised: "We will squeeze the rich until the pips squeak!". Yet, after barely 12 months in office and only a tiny number of the promised reforms passed, the government turned on the workers whose votes had brought them to office.

Faced with an economic crisis in the profit system that they had decided to manage and not abolish, Wilson, Callaghan and Healey introduced 3 years of wage restraint and massive cuts in the welfare state. Unemployment topped the one million mark and income tax soared. No wonder millions of workers soon felt it was they who were being squeezed until the pips squeaked! In 1979 Thatcher's promises to cut taxation and to abandon incomes policies won the votes of many disillusioned workers from Labour.

Can we truthfully say that the years of struggles in the Labour Party for democracy, or the radical policies embodied either in conference decisions of the Manifesto have made all the difference? The straight answer is No. Labour's 1974 Manifesto was just as radical - and the economic situation was much more tractable than today's.

You only have to listen to Healey and Foot's hand-me-down election rhetoric to realize that nothing has changed. To pretend otherwise is a cruel deception - albeit one many

so-called hard left-wingers are trying to put over for the duration of the campaign. But the last thing the working class needs is self-deception at this time. We believe that a Labour government elected on June 9th would be no more under working class control, no more likely to stand up to big business, the City of London or the IMF than the last Labour government and the ones before that. So, why do we say vote Labour?

First, to stop the Tories. Thatcher wants a "democratic" license to embark on the second stage of her five year programme. In that time she wants to destroy the gains the labour movement has made over the last 100 years. A massive vote by everybody suffering or likely to suffer at Thatcher's hands against her can stop the Tories. It will confuse and demoralise the ruling class.

Of course a Labour government would be "better" in the first instance. It would - because of the pressure of the unions and the expectations of its supporters, with due respect to the cumbersome parliamentary procedures - repeal the most obnoxious Tory measures, as it did in 1974/5. Many on the left argue from this that it is therefore either a "lesser evil" or that it can be "pressured" into anything. Not so. The Labour Cabinet, as well as being stuffed with such pro-capitalist trustees as Healey and Hattersley or Shore or Foot for that matter, is under a far more powerful and constant restraint and pressure.

So it is in France, so it will be if Labour is elected. The Labour leaders' method of attack is different,

The interests of "the economy" "the pound", "national defence" have powerful guardians in the City banks, in the Whitehall ministries, in the high courts - in the House of Lords. They summon Labour ministers to do their bidding. The Labour ministers in turn pressure the union leaders into turning the whole official machinery of the workers' movement into a mechanism for enforcing or policing pro-capitalist policies. When the 'state of the economy' demands austerity and wage restraint and the abandonment of Labour promises the Labour leaders and union bureaucrats oblige. So it was in 1975.

they and the union bureaucrats are the enemy within the gates, but no less deadly for that. So is there any positive reason for voting Labour? Yes.

A Labour victory puts the official and established leadership in office. Out of it they excuse their failures by their lack of "power". They claim repeatedly that the democratic system or the parliamentary road can satisfy workers' needs and even lead to socialism. So we say - put them to the test. Give them a thumping parliamentary majority! Demand that they carry out their brave words and promises wherever these hit the bosses, and serve the interests of working people.

More than that organise the Labour movement to fight for these demands and to raise other demands that more adequately meet our immediate needs than the piddling measures outlined in the manifesto or conference decisions! These go through a filter, where the veto of the bloc voting bureaucrats and the back door influence of the right-honourable members of the Westminster Club count for more than the needs and views of millions.

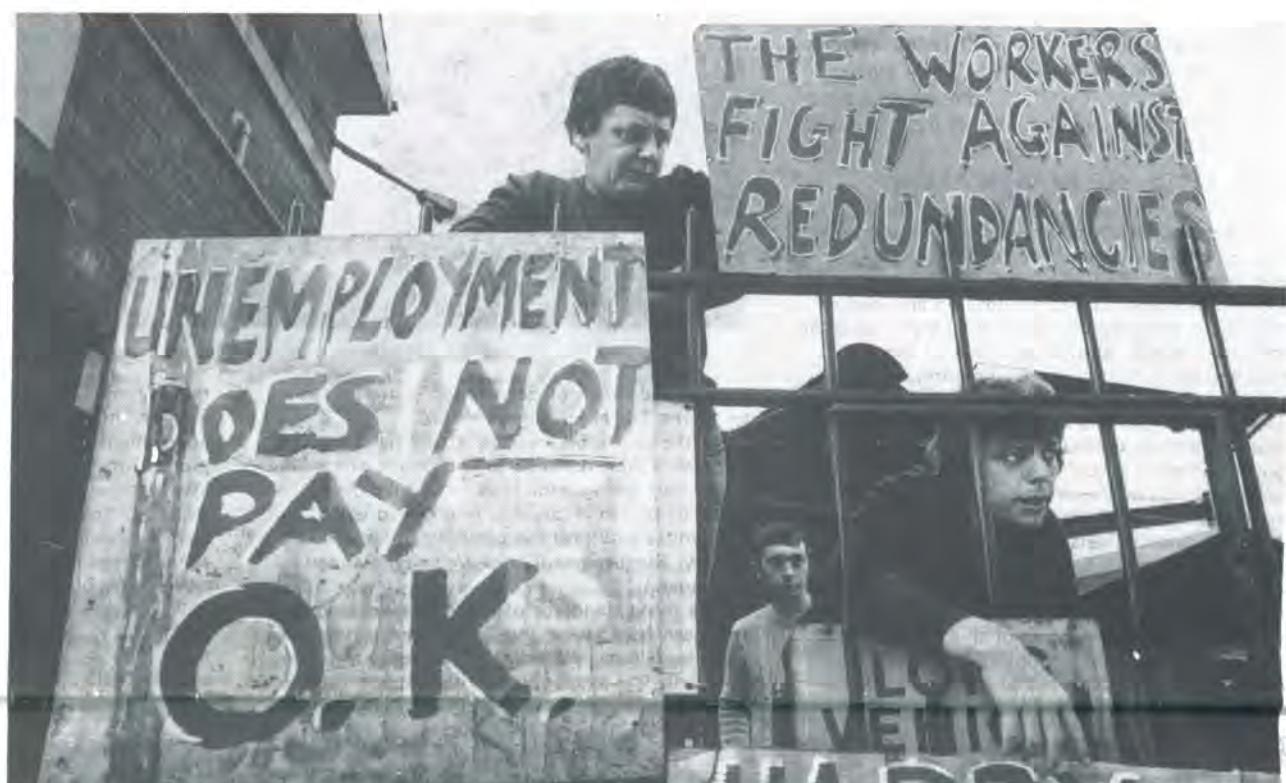
And if we organise not only to demand but to fight for these demands with direct action - strikes, sit ins, demonstrations - we can in the process remould the labour movement. We can weed out the dead wood, the right wing leaders and test the left talkers.

We revolutionaries believe that in these struggles the need for demands that go beyond the limits of capitalism - transitional demands - will become relevant to millions; that the need to take state power rather than parliamentary office will become clear and consequently the need for a revolutionary leadership in the unions and a revolutionary party will be demonstrated in action.

They are being driven at a forced march speed, so that they are exhausted upon reaching towns. They are not allowed to sell papers or hold political meetings. Sadly there is no unified militant opposition to the organisers, such as existed in 1981.

The possibility still remains for turning the June 5th rally in London to greet the March, into a workers demonstration against unemployment. Coming four days before the election, it should be turned into a mammoth march against the Tories. This means breaking with the 'non-political' nonsense of the CP. It means mobilising workers from every town on a clear political basis - against the Tories and against unemployment. If this can be achieved, and not effort must be spared to bring it about - then the 1983 Peoples' March will have provided a timely focus for working class action. But if so, it will be clear against the intentions and best efforts of its organisers.

Marchers have been expelled from the March for chanting anti-Tory slogans.



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

Today we say vote Labour with no illusions in its leaders' commitment to socialism, but organise to fight! Fight now to force a Labour Government to:

\* Abandon all attempts at incomes policy or wage restraint.

\* Repeal all anti-union laws

\* Restore the social service cuts in full.

\* Grant free abortion and contraception to women on demand.

\* Renationalise without compensation and recognising workers' control the privatised industries.

\* For a guaranteed national minimum wage indexed against inflation according to how the working class cost of living rises.

\* For a massive programme of public works under trade union control to rebuild the social services, housing, hospitals etc. Scrap the YOPS and YTS.

\* British troops out of Ireland and off the Malvinas.

\* Cancel Cruise and Trident. Out of NATO now!

\* Repeal the Nationality Act and scrap immigration controls, disband the SPG and all other special squads.

\* Nationalise the banks and finance houses and all firms declaring redundancies. No compensation by the state for capitalist bankrupts! For workers control.

Only a Labour Government can be put to the test by the Labour movement. A Labour pact or coalition with the Alliance would be an alibi for treachery and a bastion against workers demands. In the case of a hung parliament, if Labour is the largest party and forms the Government it must put forward the strongest measures to tackle unemployment and call on the unions to defend it and defy the Tories/Alliance to bring it down. No pact! No coalition! ■

## BREAK STALINIST GRIP ON PEOPLE'S MARCH

THE PEOPLE'S March has been prevented from making the impact it could and should have made. Even allowing for the overshadowing of the March by the election, it has not achieved anything like the response from workers that the 1981 March did.

The reason for this is simple. The TUC and Labour leaders did not want the March in the first place. They always saw it as a potential distraction from their electoral concerns.

In order to get their support the Communist Party/regional TUC bureaucrats organisers of the March promised to keep a tight grip on it. The March was to be non-political. It was not to link up with any workers in struggle. It was to be heavily stewarded and tightly controlled. No serious mobilisations of local workers have been mounted to greet the March.

At the same time the CP have been inviting politicians from the camp of the bosses - the SDP, the Liberals and even the Tories - to address the March.

Priority has been given to getting more support from these class enemies along with Bishops and dignitaries. The working class has been reduced to the role of extras in the occasional crowd scene. Naturally enough it has tended to decline this part in the Labourite-Stalinist scenario. In Birmingham, hard hit by unemployment, this meant that a meagre 300 local workers were mobilised to greet the march. Even these were mobilised not by the CP controlled Reception Committee, but largely by far left groups and the Ladywood Election Campaign Groups from the Labour Party. The organisers kept the Peoples' March itself away from the welcoming demonstration. A police cordon was thrown up to prevent demonstrators from joining the March in the city centre, and the organisers uttered not a word of protest. One could speculate as to the reasons.

Marchers have been expelled from the March for chanting anti-Tory slogans.

Tory attacks

# STOP THE RACIST ONSLAUGHT

LONG BEFORE SHE became Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher made clear that any government under her control would give the green light to racists. In January 1978, during local elections she promised that the next Tory government would "finally see an end to immigration." She justified this by arguing that "People are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with different cultures. People are going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in."

This "rather" gave the impression that racist attacks were perfectly natural and, therefore, justifiable. The racists of the National Front and British Movement did not need a second hint. Three Asians were murdered on the streets of London in the following three months. The following year, during a demonstration against Southall Tory Council's decision to allow a National Front meeting in the Town Hall, Blair Peach was battered to death by the SPG. Now, the Home Office accepts that its figure of 7,000 racist attacks per year is "on the low side". They agree that the most rapid rate of increase has been since 1980, the Tories' first full year of office.

#### FIRST STEPS FOR REPATRIATION

The policy of the government itself has been a "respectable" complement to the attacks of the racist boot boys. The Immigration Acts brought in by previous Tory and Labour governments had already made coloured immigration all but impossible. Only some categories of dependents of those already settled in Britain could gain entry. Tory policy is, in effect, taking the first steps along the path to the fascists' demand for repatriation. It is a policy of blatant racist harassment by the state and its agencies which is preparing the conditions for "induced repatriation". Instructions to National Health Service hospital administrators to insist on checking passports, virginity tests at Heathrow, police raids on communities and factories to "screen" dozens at a time for infringements of immigration rules and an increased aggressiveness in trying to enforce deportations, are the hallmarks of this policy. The Guardian's estimate of a monthly average of 250 black people being deported or leaving Britain be-



Picture: Jean-Bernard Sohiez

cause of the threat of deportation is a grim reminder of the Tories' inveterate racism.

At the centre of the Tory attack has been the Nationality Act, designed to codify and streamline all previous immigration laws. It creates three classes of British citizenship in order to ensure that only whites will have the possibility of entering the country. Further restrictions are being planned by the Tories.

The living standards of the whole working class have been hard hit by the Tories - but it has been worst for Blacks, especially with respect to unemployment. For black youth in the inner cities the

rate is now 53% whilst it is 37% for white youth. Small wonder that two years into the life of this government the black community in Britain exploded into pitched battles with the police in the aftermath of "Operation Swamp 81". In Bristol, Brixton, Toxteth and Moss Side the riots of 1981 were expressions of anger and deep frustration at the enforced poverty and vicious police harassment suffered by blacks.

In preparation for any future outbursts of rioting the Tories have massively strengthened the police force. The police chiefs have been given the go-ahead to pile up weapons, shields, riot gear of every

description. Manchester's chief, Anderton, could confidently declare that his patrols would be regularly armed. The pretext was to cope with armed robberies. The actual motive was to give warning to black youth of what they would face if they dared oppose police harassment in the future. Every major town now has its own version of the SPG. Brixton is policed by Immediate Response Units - trouble-shooters whose presence in the area is designed to intimidate the black youth of the area. And if the Tories are returned, there is little doubt that a revamped Police Bill will be pushed through. The repealed "Sus" laws will be replaced by far more extensive "stop and search" powers. While this strengthening of the police is designed to contain all working class resistance to the Tories, there is no doubt that at the moment the black community is an immediate target.

#### DIVIDE AND RULE

As the Tories step up their attacks on jobs, pay, housing and social services, it is obviously to their advantage not only to equip and train their police to deal with rioters but to turn their victims against one another. This is the fundamental significance of the increasingly racist atmosphere promoted by the policies of the Tory government. It keeps their opponents divided. It divides those who have jobs by convincing the whites that the blacks have no right to keep their jobs if redundancies are "necessary." At the same time it threatens all of them with the growing dole queues. The unemployed it divides on the same basis. White youth, desperately competing with black youth for the few jobs available, are an easy recruiting ground for the fascists, whilst the young blacks will increasingly see the (mainly white) trade unions as potential enemies in the fight for a job, rather than potential allies.

The Tories racist onslaught needs to be stopped now. As a first step they need to be booted out of office on June 9th. This means voting Labour. But racism won't disappear under a Labour Government. The last Labour Government was openly planning its own racist Nationality Act. The previous Labour Government brought in the notorious 1968 Immigration Act. Black workers and youth must demand Labour acts in their interest and organise to defend those interests themselves. This means fighting to scrap all immigration laws, disband the SPG and all special police squads, oppose every deportation and organise the defence of their communities against police and fascist attacks. These policies must be fought for in the working class. If the slogan "Black and White, Unite and Fight" is to mean anything more than pious rhetoric, then the whole Labour movement needs to actively take up these policies. ■

## VICTORIAN VALUES-

# sweated labour at home and at work

SINCE THE TORIES came to power, two million women have lost their jobs. Of these, one million do not appear in the official statistics because they do not register as unemployed. Either because they were previously part-time workers or because they cannot afford the child minder necessary to prove they are "available for work", these women are not entitled to any state benefits. The loss of jobs has been greatest in the manufacturing sector where women's jobs have been lost fifty per cent faster than men's. Even those who still have jobs have seen average women's pay rates fall to less than three-quarters of men's. For the many part time women workers it is even worse, only fifty per cent of full time male rates.

Much has been said by the Tories of returning to the Victorian values that supposedly made Britain great a century ago. The Family Policy Group has made it clear that, in particular, they want to "encourage families to resume the responsibilities taken on by the state e.g. caring for the old and the disabled." The "encouragement" has so far taken the form of the loss of 8,000 hospital beds in the NHS and 9,000 places in Old People's Homes. Together with cut-backs in nursery provision, these have led to a situation where 1.2 million women are forced to stay at home to

look after dependent relatives. Of women with children under 11, one out of every five has been forced to give up work because of lack of childcare facilities.

We have, however, only seen the beginning of the impact of Tory policy. The biggest employers of women are the "caring services", education, the social services and, above all, the National Health Service. So essential are these services that the Tories have had to proceed slowly with their plans to remove them from the public sector. The plans themselves, however, are perfectly clear; starve these services of funds so that the service they provide becomes ever more inadequate, hive off the potentially profit-making areas like catering, laundry and refuse disposal and encourage the provision of private alternatives.

"Privatisation" of medical services means allowing the Tories and their friends in the City to make profits out of the injuries that their system does to its workers. Working class families are more liable to suffer injury and have a shorter life expectancy than the rich; therefore, private insurance schemes, the supposed alternative to a state health service, will charge them higher premiums. In addition, there is no profit to be made out of the aged or the long term disabled so working class families will be forced to look after them as best they can in the home - and it will be women who bear the brunt of this increased workload.

Along with the direct economic attack on women's rights the Tories have helped to create the atmosphere for a concerted ideological attack on women's



rights and status. Side by side with the argument that women's "rightful" place is in the home and that, therefore, they have no right to a job, we have seen an increasing attack on the limited abortion rights in the 1967 Abortion Act. A victory for the Tories will see campaigns such as Life redouble their efforts to push through legislation to outlaw abortion completely. Unable to choose when, or even if, to have children, women will be even more disadvantaged in the fight for jobs.

Behind the attacks on women's rights and jobs lies the determination of big business to transfer a greater part of the wealth created by the working class into their own pockets. The Tories are the direct agents, the chosen instruments, of big business.

Another victory for them will give them a basis from which to step up their attacks. A defeat for the Tories, on the other hand, would disrupt the bosses' immediate plans. Women, in particular, have a direct interest in ensuring that defeat and returning a Labour Government. However whilst a Labour Government is not what the bosses want, neither is it a fundamental obstacle to their plans. The last Labour Government began the cuts in the NHS in 1976. It was Callaghan who sang hymns of praise to the family to ideologically justify Labour's onslaught on women's jobs. So working women need to organise now, both in the unions and in the communities, to throw out the Tories and to ensure that they can force Labour to defend a woman's right to work. ■

# TORIES STRENGTHEN ORANGE STATE

ONE VITAL POLITICAL issue that will not be the subject of wide ranging argument during the election campaign is Ireland. Even before the outbreak of the present round of war fourteen years ago the British Establishment maintained a blanket of silence on this question. Indeed this conspiracy of silence has lasted over 60 years! It has involved Labour and Tory governments. The constant factor has been the ruthless pursuit of the interests of the British ruling class and the repeated trampling on the rights of the vast majority of the people of Ireland.

Since 1969 British policy has wavered under the impact of the struggle of the anti-Unionist population to rid themselves of the fetters of the sectarian-based Ulster statelet. Attempts to reform Ulster by incorporating

the small Catholic middle class, via the SDLP into the administration, have all failed. They collapsed when confronted by the intransigence of the Unionist population and the determination of the anti-Unionists. Thatcher's government has drawn from these failures the conclusion that, since Ulster cannot be reformed then its political and repressive apparatus must be strengthened to protect it from its enemies. In short the strategy is now to return to a barely disguised disguised version of the old Stormont regime.

The purpose of the 'Prior' Assembly is to establish an institution to which powers can gradually be transferred on a timescale determined by hoped-for success in militarily and economically undermining the resistance of the anti-Unionist working class. But to restore the full political power of the artificial 6 county majority will inevitably bring in its train a reborn system of discrimination in jobs, housing, education and political rights. Only on this basis could a cemented alliance between the classes creat a new devolved Orange Ascendancy.

The British ruling class in the 1960s and 1970s responded to the decline of the traditional industries of Northern Ireland and the emergence of the 26 counties as a profitable low wage location for US, German and Japanese capital to invest in, by seeking a slow but steady 'cold' re-unification. If Ireland as a whole could be converted into a semi-colony, economically and politically tied to Britain, then British capital could continue to dominate and exploit its agriculture and its cheap labour. It could do so without the overhead costs of direct political rule or the maintenance of British scales of welfare provision.

This project ran into disaster between 1969 and 1974. The 'cold' process became red-hot due to the revolt of the nationalist population and the revolt of the Unionist mass base against the loss of their privileges. The Catholics, sensing the first split in 50 years between the Unionist hierarchy and the British ruling class pushed forward demanding equal political and social rights - a demand unobtainable within the framework of the sectarian statelet. The protestants seeing no improvement for them coming from the loss of their privileges in jobs, housing and exclusive political dominance, determined on no surrender. The British ruling class, twisted and turned every which way but loose to break out of this contradiction. The nationalists could in no way be allowed to re-unify Ireland by mass struggle.

A 'hot' re-unification would threaten imperialist investments and perhaps 'native' capital north and south. A forced withdrawal would demoralise the British army and radicalise the British working class. The answer from Heath was the abolition of Stormont and bloody repression. The answer from Wilson and Callaghan was more repression.



Photo: E. O'Dwyer (IFL)

Thatcher's chosen pro-consul Airey Neave was blown sky high on the eve of the 1979 election and his posting to Ulster. This seems to have triggered a change of policy - or at least the consideration of another long term option, the restoration of the Orange Ascendancy state.

Thatcher, a lover of symbols, started this election campaign by naming a railway engine after the dear departed Airey. Her record over the last four years indicates her resolution to crush the republicans as a pre-requisite for the restoration of Stormont. Ten hunger strikers dead - children murdered or hideously disfigured by plastic bullets show she has gone about it with a will. But alas for her the croppies have refused to lie down. When you have little left to lose and a world to win, as the cruelly oppressed nationalist population has, you have reserves of 'resolution' that could be used to take on and defeat the Iron Maiden of British Imperialism.

In the last two years the struggle around the H blocks, the election of Bobby Sands and then of Carron and, more recently, the 10.8% vote for Sinn Fein in the Assembly elections has shown the will to resist of the nationalist population. Even the treacherous bipartisanship of the Labour Party has been openly challenged at annual conference as a direct result of the massive popular support shown for those fighting British imperialism in Ireland.

Not only is the quiescence of the British

working class a key guarantee for British imperialism's ability to act as it chooses in Ireland but, as Marx recognised over a century ago, it is precisely quiescence on this question which is the key to capital's ability to maintain its hold over the British working class. This has been graphically shown in the last decade as British police forces trained their goon squads in Ulster in preparation for use against the pickets and the unemployed on the mainland. Computer surveillance techniques, new crowd control weapons, suspension of civil rights via the Prevention of Terrorism Act, internal travel restrictions and blatant state censorship of the news media are all weapons that lie in readiness for use against the British working class.

Stopping British capital's strategy against the Irish and throwing back its preparation for a similar strategy against the working class in this country are urgent necessities for British workers. Voting Thatcher and company out of office is only a very small part of what must be done, because it in no way installs a government pledged to carry out a different policy. To break Labour's bipartisanship in practice, or to stop Thatcher if she is re-elected means mobilising the British working class in support of complete and unconditional withdrawal of the British state from Ireland and support for all those who are fighting to achieve this. It means inscribing on the banner of the British working class the recognition of the right of the whole Irish people to national self-determination.

unconscious lines

## THE BRITISH LEFT AND THE IRISH WAR

- Ten Years of Solidarity Work
- Ireland and the National Question
- Fourth International Theses on Ireland (1944)
- The Irish War: 1968-1983

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CRITICAL SUPPORT FOR reformist parties in elections, is not the most complicated tactic in the world. It boils down to three things. First, revolutionaries unite with the mass of workers who support Labour, in the Ballot box. That is they vote with these workers for their party - against the open party of the bosses - so that it can be put to the test of office. Secondly at every stage of this 'united front' revolutionaries warn that the reformist party in office will act like a bosses' government. They criticise its policies, its manifesto and its past record. At the same time they explain their own, revolutionary alternative. Finally revolutionaries seek to organise workers, in struggle, to place demands in the interests of workers on a Labour government and to fight for their demands against a Labour government if necessary.

To any half-trained Marxist all of this is ABC. It seems that the principal British centrist groups have either forgotten their alphabets or else, are very short of half-trained Marxists.

The Socialist Workers Party is a case in point. This group is ill-at-ease during elections. The concentrated period in which millions of people think about politics, go to meetings, read propaganda, does not suit this increasingly propagandist sect. "The election will not be easy for Socialists," warned Socialist Worker. Why? Because the SWP has very little to say to workers during it.

They call for a Labour vote but do not participate in the united front that this call implies. They address no demands to Labour around which

workers could be mobilised. They constantly downplay the importance of the election. Socialist Review goes so far as to declare that a victory for the Tories will not change much: "The central factor is that the election is not that important to the balance of class forces." Mind you, Socialist Worker, somewhat in contradiction to the Review, warns that on unemployment, wages, cuts and rights, "A Tory victory will further isolate those activists who want to fight back against all these things." The truth of the matter is that the SWP does not know how to apply critical support. For them the call to vote Labour is a ritual that conveniently, does not place them in contradiction to the vast majority of shop floor workers. It involves a shrug of the shoulders and a "you wait and see" tone. The problem is that this approach fails to put the reformists to the test of action. It turns its back on the need to do this. As such it will not dispel illusions in reformism. Although the SWP does not seem too concerned with doing that anyway. Tortoise-like, it is retreating into its shell, one of its main election activities being to hold internal branch meetings, "where we hope to get a few more non-members than usual on issues like socialists and elections, the need for a revolutionary party, can Labour bring socialism, the ideas of Karl Marx." (14.5.83)

You cannot accuse the Socialist League (formerly International Marxist Group) or the paper Socialist Action (formerly Socialist Challenge), of passive propaganda à la SWP. Much more can be expected of a grouping that changes its name (and the colour of its front page), like a chameleon changes its colour. These characters have completely dropped the critical out of their support. The sort of election campaign they want is one modelled on the local election campaign in Liverpool - a "determined

and principled campaign". Was this a campaign based on class struggle policies? Not at all. It was a campaign fought on local issues and pitched against Liberal domination of the council. Revolutionaries might well participate in such a campaign but to describe it as "principled" is to empty that word of any political content.

Socialist Action does not nail the fake promises in the Manifesto and attack its clear commitment to an incomes policy via the NEA. Instead they deceptively suggest that this is merely Healey's interpretation: "Denis Healey is being allowed to set the tone of the manifesto by insisting that the National Economic Assessment means a quick route to a new incomes policy." This is not a quirk of Healey's. It is precisely what the NEA is.

Along with Socialist Action the paper Socialist Organiser, has promoted the Socialists for a Labour Victory (SLV). This novel campaign adds a new dimension to the concept of placing demands on Labour. It selectively raises Labour Party conference policies, dubs them Socialist policies, and then calls this campaigning for Labour "but also for our own policies" (SO 12.5.83). By a sleight of hand "our policies" become not clear demands on Labour aimed at serving the workers' needs, but the chunks of conference policy discarded by the NEC and PLP Manifesto writers. The bold and novel SLV is in fact a vehicle for aspiring 'left' MPs who want to prettify their election campaigns with promises that Labour are not making. An SLV leaflet on the economy reprinted in Socialist Organiser (19.5.83) declares, "We will expand public ownership and move towards economic planning, democratically controlled by working people." Labour's Manifesto does not promise a planned economy, which is

what the centrists privately state that this policy means. The Labour Party, left and right, is firmly committed to the mixed economy to one degree or another. For the centrists to promise a planned economy on behalf of the Labour Party is, therefore, an obnoxious deception. It is not explained as a demand on Labour to break with the bosses, expropriate them and arm the workers.

Socialist Action and Organiser are not calling for critical support to Labour. They are whitewashing the reformist party, refusing to put immediate demands on it and are directing all their efforts at building their own desired mass movements (CND in the case of SA, an anti-Tory crusade in the case of SO). Neither of these approaches will advance the organisation, self-confidence and self activity of the working class one jot. They will merely create further illusions in the viability of the Labour Party as the vehicle for Socialist transformation.

To revolutionary minded militants within the centrist groups, we say, take a look at our alternative. In this paper we combine an onslaught on the Tories with a critique of Labour's policies. We combine a call for a Labour vote with clear demands on them and clear proposals for how to organise and fight for these demands. In the election itself we are campaigning vigorously for a Labour vote through workplace meetings, the mobilisation of the LP and unions around workers' struggles like Firth Derrion in Sheffield. We will not collapse into uncritical support for Labour. But nor will we retire into our tent in the manner of the SWP. We will use the election to mobilise workers in united activity, in a fight for real 'reforms' the better to gain their ears for the revolutionary alternative.

# Four years of Tory rule

NO SERIOUS OR sizeable group of industrialists or financiers is in doubt about the most desirable outcome of the general election. Thatcher, with an impregnable majority, will send the stock exchange soaring. "The Economist" is 100% behind another five years of Thatcher. The reason is simple: "The Thatcher revolution is incomplete." (Economist 14.5.83). They want Thatcher because she has shown an indomitable will to stand up to their chief bogeys: "Irish hunger strikers, European budget wranglers, Russian arms dealers, Argentine generals, British public sector workers, timid managers."

Their prose when writing about her, glows with class pride. She is the woman who brought the unions to book, treated the TUC like lackeys, outfaced them and outgeneralled them and thereby wiped out the humiliation the whole ruling class suffered in 1972 and 1974.

Yet to get this leadership the bosses had to engineer a palace revolution within the Tory party. They had to bring into the leadership a grouping that was much more plebeian, more petit-bourgeois in origin than the landowning grandees that had once dominated the party. Out of the provincial grammar schools, out of the red-neck commuter belt, out of the world of buccaneering first generation businessmen, asset strippers, property sharks and tax lawyers came the Thatcherites.

Under the leadership of the Methodist grocer's daughter from Grantham, they drove out of the leadership the old clique of landowners, aristocrats and other such gentry. The lordly "one nation" boom-time social-welfare Toryism of MacMillan, Home, Heath and Co. was swept aside. The new democratic election machinery within the Tory party enabled the Thatcherites to appeal to the fiercely anti-working class, jingoist prejudices of the backwoodsmen and women. But this process alone could not explain why the British ruling class - so complacently arrogant, so slow to change, so ungiven to thinking strategically - should contemplate a "revolution" in its own party, and beyond that in the political set-up which had served it well since the Second World War.

To understand the pressures behind this change of strategy and personnel we need to understand the make-up of the British capitalist class and the acute

crisis that British capitalism has been in since the 1960s at least. By far the most powerful section of the capitalist class is that based in the City of London - still the main world banking and commercial centre. Most of its profits are drawn from overseas investments, from interests on loans, and it is thus somewhat distant from the fate of the British manufacturing industry. The latter, with its low rates of profit, low productivity and highly unionised workforce is far from being the most attractive venue for investment.

Thatcher's project, and one which her City backers agreed with, was not only to weaken the unions but to let the full effects of the world crisis destroy the lame ducks of British industry. The number of these lame ducks surprised them all, but the City and Thatcher were resolute. They could afford to be.

Almost the first act of her government was to abolish exchange controls, which limit the movement of capital abroad. Over three years the outflow went up 100%. She kept interest rates very high to attract funds to the City despite the repeated complaints of the CBI.

Thatcher's real programme was one for re-structuring British industry and society in the interests of Finance Capital. This involved a two pronged strategy - one aimed at the large state capitalist sector inherited from the 1945 to 1975 period, the second aimed at the private sector. The key to the whole process was the world economic crisis. Thatcher's "method" was to promote rather than alleviate slump conditions. Previous governments, Tory as well as Labour, had "managed" crises by increasing state spending to stimulate recovery and nationalising any unprofitable sectors of industry that were threatened with bankruptcy - rail and coal in the 1940s, steel and cars in the 1960s and 1970s.

The general effects were to depress the rate of profit and consequently to produce low levels of investment, and given this, low productivity. The price of this became increasingly intolerable for Britain's bosses throughout the 1970s. Sharpening world competition, the need for a massive round of investment in the "new technology" industries, the resilience and resistance of the unions to attempts by the employers to claw back concessions they could no longer afford, all predisposed the bosses to a radical solution. Thatcher and Joseph provided it.

The Thatcherite answer was to encourage deflation. This was done by limiting the money supply, the amount of new money put into circulation and by

# THE THATCHER REVOL

raising the banks' interest rate. This made it prohibitive for private sector manufacturers to borrow their way out of trouble. It drove the hopelessly uncompetitive firms into bankruptcy, and made the survivors cut back production, shed labour on a massive scale and stand firm against wage demands. The "lean and fit" firms that remained would be obliged to improve productivity by increasing the speed and intensity of work, cutting down on previous gains breaking up the shop-floor organisation and increasing managerial control at all levels. The massive resulting increase in the pool of unemployed would make this process all the easier. The government could disclaim all responsibility for the "laws of the market."

In the public sector the Thatcher programme meant violent surgery. The "social services" - the price of social peace in the aftermath of the Second World War, which Britain's bosses were willing to pay in the boom years - were targeted by Thatcher. The Welfare State had to be massively cut to transfer resources to private industry via cuts in taxes on company profits and managerial incomes. Direct reductions in finance were to be combined with privatisation and the encouragement of charities to replace services. For the rich, private medicine, for the middle classes, private insurance schemes like BUPA, for the masses, charity or a reborn Poor Law provision.

The Nationalised Industries likewise were headed for surgery - "rolling back the frontiers of socialism" as the Tories colourfully described it. Industries and firms like British Telecom or Amersham International which, as a result of state investment, were operating in areas where capital saw room for massive and very profitable expansion were to be privatised. Other sectors like British Leyland and British Steel were to be asset stripped and cut down to the bare bones necessary to provide cheap components and raw materials or an infrastructure for the profitable sectors. These could still make a loss (to the Exchequer) but much of that loss would be a hidden subsidy to the rest of British capitalism.

To achieve all of this the Government's role was to hold the ring for the employers. The severity of the onslaught might provoke resistance - even revolt. The government's task was to strengthen and equip the state forces to deal with it if it came and to strike fear into the hearts of the cowardly official leaders of the labour movement by a hard-nosed approach. They were thrown out of the corridors of power in the cushioned numbers in hundreds of semi-state commissions (quangos). Two waves of legislation from Prior and Tebbit aimed at whittling down the "legal immunities" won over a century of union struggles. This way, the Tories hoped to curb working class resistance to their onslaught.

More than once Thatcher insisted this was a programme for at least two terms in office. Midway through her ambition, how has she fared? On the economic front her most decisive achievement for her has been to successfully purge weak and unprofitable sectors of industry. The cost, however, has been dramatic. For example, between May 1979 and March 1983 industrial production fell 11.3%.

## TORY WETS DEFEATED

In the deepest trough of the recession there were signs that Thatcher was in trouble. CBI Director-General Terence Beckett, promised a "bare-knuckled fight with Thatcher. He didn't get beyond the first round. Almost unanimously financiers and industrialists turned on him and called him to order.

Thatcher survived for two fundamental reasons. The union leaders were terrified of mounting a united resistance. Thatcher called their bluff in 1980 during the Steel strike. They did not dare risk a general situation. Thereafter the Tory "wets" days were numbered. The suave Prior who wined and dined the Union barons was replaced by Tebbit whose attitude to them was openly contemptuous.

The economic results of Thatcher's surgery have so far been sparse. Productivity has increased, but only by 3.2% for the whole economy, despite the

# The Unions: a crisis of leadership at all levels

**THATCHER IS ENTERING** the fight for a second term with a series of labour movement scalps under her belt - real unemployment is over 4 million, Trade Union membership is 2 million lower than it was in 1979, two major legal attacks on Trade Union rights have successfully passed into law. At the same time the Tories have forced working class militants onto the retreat on the question of jobs and wages, from the steel strike in 1980 through to the latest pit closures.

The last decade of working class struggle has seen a dramatic turn around, one which has left the great bulk of the British left reeling. Those in the Communist Party who think the "Forward march of Labour" has been halted, desperately look to an alliance with the "middle classes" and the SDP to oust the Tories. Others like Socialist Action and Socialist Organiser console themselves with the illusion that the decline in the industrial struggle leads workers to turn to a "political solution" via the Labour Party. While still others, like the Socialist Workers Party, are so paralysed by pessimism that they have given up any attempts whatsoever at organising *class wide* resistance to the Tories.

This disorientation and confusion on the left and among the centrist groups reflects the impact of the events of the last ten years on important layers of militants and shop stewards. It was this layer of workers - continually renewed as new struggles threw up new leaders - that led the vital struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. In the Miners strikes of 1972 and 1974, in Upper Clyde Shipbuilder's, in the struggle around the Industrial Relations Act and in the massive strike wave which greeted the jailing of the "Pentonville 5" - the rank and file leadership in the mines and docks, along with the 1/4 of a million strong shop steward movement, showed itself able and willing to act independently of the national trade union bureaucrats against the ruling class offensive.

The shop stewards were able to act in this way, and in the majority of cases force the trade union leaders to support these struggles, because of the powerful position they had built up in the 1950s and 1960s. For instance in the AUEW, by 1970 44% of all wages were made up through local agreements. That is through shop-floor struggles led directly by the stewards. It was precisely because of this strength that the stewards were targeted for trade union legislation by both Labour and Tory governments.

Even in the 1960s and early 1970s the weaknesses of this movement were apparent. These were fundamentally *political* weaknesses. The struggles against the Tories were extremely militant, using the shop floor strength developed in the 60s to organise the strikes, blacking, occupations and flying pickets necessary to defeat the government's attacks.

However, the shop stewards movement did not have the political traditions which could have allowed it to throw up an alternative leadership to both the right and left wings of the trade union bureaucracy. As the crisis of British capitalism deepened, the limits of trade union militancy became increasingly obvious. To the problems that the ruling class and the Labour leaders posed to workers - "British industry is chronically uncompetitive in world markets", "we are spending more than we earn", "productivity must be increased if we are to survive", "inflation is out of control" - the traditional appeals to strike in defence of wages and conditions failed to convince the members. The trade union and Labour leaders

on the other hand had apparently clear political answers to these questions.

The rank and file was to pay dearly between 1974 and 1979 for not being able to put forward an alternative to that dished up by the Labour bureaucracy. Labour, ably supported by the trade union leaders, left and right, proceeded to attempt to solve the crisis at the workers' expense. The "Social Contract", Phases 1, 2 and 3, was to cause the most dramatic decline in workers' living standards since the 1920s. Massive cuts in public expenditure, £1 billion in 1976 alone, were to accompany wage controls. Unemployment shot up from 500,000 to 1.5 million. All of this was

accompanied by a sustained attack on the very organisations which had led the struggles against Heath. The miners were significantly weakened by the productivity deal, masterminded by Tony Benn at the Department of Energy. This divided profitable and non-profitable pits setting pit against pit and area against area. Everything was done to undermine the independence of the rank and file and strengthen the hand of the bureaucrats. National centralised package bargaining on the Ford's model was encouraged and local plant bargaining undermined. Participation schemes like Ryder at Leyland, actively canvassed and backed by the CP, involved whole layers of the shop steward movement in supporting productivity drives and thus decapitated militant resistance to speed up and closures. At a national level the trade union leaders were expected to sell the "partnership" with the government and set about disciplining their members through such things as "concordat" and a "code of practice" for disputes. This involved the proposals for the restriction of picketing which Prior later codified in law.

The results were a severe weakening of shop floor strength. The involvement of virtually all the Broad Lefts, most prominently Scanlon and Jones, in these attacks brought about a virtual collapse of these organisations in many manual trade unions. This reflected and accelerated the chronic decline in the influence of the CP. In the AUEW these policies paved the way for the victory of Duffy and Boyd, delivering one of the most vital sections of the working class into the hands of the right. Despite the ability of public sector workers and lorry drivers to effectively prevent the implementation of a further round of wage restraint in the "winter of discontent" by the time Thatcher came to power she was facing a significantly weakened working class.

The Tories had clear goals as far as the trade union movement was concerned. These organisations particularly the militant shop floor leadership, represented a real obstacle to their plans to revive British capitalism at the expense of working people. They intended to use the dual weapons of unemployment and legal shackles on effective trade union action, to finish off this leadership. Despite Labour's heroic efforts, Thatcher still faced a dangerous adversary. The trade union movement was at its strongest ever in 1979 - 12.5 million members. Its rank and file was still powerful enough to force its leaders to retreat on wage cutting agreements with Labour. But Thatcher was to have an invaluable ally in the pusillanimous TUC leadership.

The steel strike of early 1980 marked an important watershed in the struggle against Thatcher. The



Peoples' March 1981 Holman Mitchell Occupation

Picture: John Smith (IFL)

# R EVOLUTION

"success story" of British Leyland. Inflation is now around 4%. But these gains are largely due to falling world prices or the extremely disadvantageous situation the unions find themselves in a slump. A recovery will see world prices rise and the bargaining position and militancy of workers rise as well. These "gains" could well melt away in an economic recovery.

The most important Tory victories lie in the political sphere. The Prior and Tebbit Anti-Union laws are in place - though as yet unused. The labour movement has been softened up for an onslaught on its internal democracy via compulsory secret ballots and an attack on the political affiliations of the unions. Thatcher can now speak of virtually dispensing with agreements or negotiations with the TUC: "I don't think the unions should be considered a sort of Fourth Estate of the realm. In all work places you've got to have some means of communication and co-operation between those who work on the shop floor and those who work in management, whether it's through a works council or through unions. But I don't regard a great big national conference, or a Fourth Estate as the means of getting that co-operation." (Observer 1.5.83)

The trade union "barons" who got used to thinking of themselves precisely as an estate of the realm now find themselves cast in the role of errand boys to the shop floor (and not the only ones at that). The area where Thatcher's success has been most limited is that of the projected cuts in the welfare and social services spending. Far from cutting public expenditure it has risen by 1% a year in real terms though this is largely due to the escalating total of unemployment benefit. Spending on housing has slumped by 55% and education has been cut by 6%. The real value of unemployment benefit has fallen by 21% under Thatcher. Fowler likes to point to an increase in health spending, in the rising number of doctors and nurses. But with population increases and increased numbers of the elderly it would have had to rise by 4% per annum to keep the existing levels of provision intact. The fact that the Tories' cuts have not been worse is largely due to the unexpected militancy of the health workers and the active sympathy amongst other workers that this engendered.

Privatisation has proceeded very slowly. The American International sell-off revealed the government's asset stripping deal with its city friends whilst Britain revealed that without such pickings these gentlemen weren't interested. The bold risk-taking British entrepreneur remains a figment of Tory fantasy. The local government aspect of social welfare spending has also proved an obstacle. The local elections of May 1980 restored nearly all the big cities to Labour control. These used the traditional elements of municipal autonomy and above all rate increases, to cushion themselves against Tory cuts. In 1980/81 the local authorities spent 5% more than the government wanted and in 1981/82, 8% more. This year the estimated excess is 7%. That is why local government, especially the municipal autonomy of the big cities, is number one target for Thatcher.

The ruling class like what Thatcher has done and more importantly want more of the same. They liked the *opus d'oeuvre*. Now they want the juicy main dish. They hope that the worst sacrifices for themselves

ability of the TUC leaders to stab in the back the South Wales general strike and isolate the steel workers and the unwillingness of the left to break with right wing leaders and not to organise against the sell out, signalled the way ahead for the Tories. Between early 1979 and 1982 the steel workforce was reduced by 52% to 80000 were made redundant.

The Tories have virtually managed to close down an entire industry without serious opposition from the trade union movement.

A similar pattern was followed with British Leyland. Weakened by the collusion with management in Ryder closures eg Triumph Speke, the unions faced a direct challenge with the sacking of Robinson. Again the massive strike wave against the sacking was sabotaged by the TU leaders, openly by AUEW, secretly by the TGWU. This retreat was a signal for Edwards to launch an all out offensive - the "slaves charter", the 5% 1980 pay deal, the massive cuts in workforce (70,000 jobs lost since Edwards took over), the sacking of Thorne in Cowley and the latest 3.8% wage deal, one of the lowest for any group in the current pay round, stand as testimony to the defeats suffered by one of the previously strongest sections of workers.

This familiar pattern was repeated in key struggle after key struggle. The TUC's shameful sell out of the ASLEF fight against flexible rostering, and the cynical dragging out of the health workers dispute over many months of "days of action", only to deliver the coup-de-grace by cancelling the transport strike, were two of the most important sell-outs in the industrial struggle. The same fate befell the attempts of the unemployed to organise.

The massive response to the Labour Party called demonstrations against unemployment - particularly Liverpool and Glasgow 1980 - showed the willingness to fight on this issue as did the enormous

lie behind them. They hope for an upturn in the world economy and need a resolute, strong government to hold the working class in check so that profit rates alone benefit from it. Despite talk of "light at the end of the tunnel" however the British economy remains stagnant. Since the trough of the depression - Spring 1981 - output has risen by 3%. But if you deduct oil from this total the figure for the increase in industrial production is a miserable 0.2%. Profitability - the object of the whole exercise - is still at an appalling 4%, a rise of only 1% since 1981. In the early 1960s the profit rate averaged 10%. Manufacturing industry continues to decline, by 8% in 1982 alone.

The real failure of Thatcher's strategy will become ever more apparent as the cushioning effect of Britain's oil revenue declines through the 1980s. There is no reason whatsoever to believe that "British" finance capital will turn round in its long-term shunning of Britain as a major area of manufacturing investment. Wage levels, conditions of work, unionisation, would have to fall through the floor to reach the levels that are required to divert this investment from its present areas. The Economist pointed to the need for 20-30% wage cuts to make Britain competitive with Japan. It has been ominously pointed out to workers in British shipbuilding that a further 100% increase in productivity would be necessary to compete with South Korean yards.

So far has this de-industrialisation gone that this year Britain is within a hairsbreadth of becoming a net-importer of manufactured goods for the first time in 200 years. Finance capital will not invest in Britain when it can draw greater profits abroad. The hope of Thatcher, Tebbit and Co. is that the remorseless choice of lowered wages, and speed up or no job will make Britain a happy hunting ground for profiteers again.

Meanwhile big defence spending remains a must: to play its part in keeping the world safe for the investments of the City of London. More Task Forces will be needed in the years ahead. The countries of Latin America that pay an enormous tribute in interest payments to the City as well as to New York are socially unstable. Therein lies the secret of Thatcher's bellicose stance and the Falklands expedition. Police actions against recalcitrant debtors and counterrevolutionary interventions are clearly envisaged. These all bring nearer, in Latin America, in the Middle-East or in South-East Asia a possible confrontation with the USSR.

If the Tories are returned on June 9th the attacks we can expect are: a new and heavy round of cuts, and the abolition of the local government buffer which has kept local services cushioned; a vicious attack on the independence of unions from the state and on their links with the Labour Party; a stepping up of the war drive and more military adventures abroad; continued chronic unemployment and state strong-arm tactics against any trade union fightback or attempts to recover lost ground.

That is why a victory for Labour in June would be a serious set-back for the bosses. It would temporarily throw them into disarray and confusion. To turn such a set-back into a decisive victory, however, would mean the whole labour movement rousing itself to battle stations to recover lost ground and force pro-working class measures out of a Labour Government. But this in turn would not lead to a return to the peaceful conditions of the 1960s. The state of British capitalism genuinely requires Thatcher's severity. To defend recent or currently existing conditions, to defend living standards, demand jobs for the 4 million unemployed will all lead to a clash with our rulers that poses the question of power. The working class must prepare itself in the struggles ahead - either with Thatcher or with Foot - for the decisive battle, the battle for power. ■

response of employed workers to the first Peoples' March. In the former case the Labour leaders quickly made clear that fighting unemployment meant voting Labour in 3 or 4 years time and rapidly retired to "fight" it on the parliamentary benches. In the latter case the Stalinist stranglehold on the



Picture John Sturrock (Network)

*Don't give the Headmistress another term!*

March, and their hostility to building a real national unemployed movement linked to the factories, was sufficient to sabotage local initiatives and pave the way for their "no politics" Peoples' March II.

While the role of the Trade union leaders and their CP lickspittles in demobilising the possibilities for a massive struggle against Thatcher is undeniable, revolutionaries ignore at their peril the very real crisis of leadership at shop floor level which explains the failure to mobilise against these betrayals. Militants have been repeatedly outflanked by the bureaucrats. The political weakness of the militants which disarmed them in 1974-79, has crippled them in the face of the determined onslaught of Thatcherism. This has been most clearly seen in the car industry. In the Rover SD1 plant in Solihull for example, the failure of the stewards to win their members to a militant fight against redundancies (productivity increased by 50% between summer 1979 and 1981) caused demoralisation amongst a whole layer of militants of the 1970s. In Rovers in 1979 two thirds of the track stewards and a third of the stewards committee volunteered for redundancy after the members voted against a strike. Talbot and other British Leyland stewards have suffered similar setbacks. For example, in Cowley where the workforce failed to rally to defend a leading militant, Alan Thorne, only 40 stewards remained compared to 200 two and a half years ago.

The leading militants of the 1970s have been unable to answer the questions posed by the crisis of the 1980s. To stop the bureaucrats selling out

means not only to offer better tactics to win a particular struggle. It means offering political answers and a strategy for a working class fight back against the bosses' "solutions". This was absolutely clear within the steel struggle. Not only was it necessary to develop a national rank and file strike committee to ensure the bureaucrats could not sell out, it was necessary to put forward a clear strategy for fighting redundancies and breaking the ruling class offensive through a general strike. The bosses' class wide offensive demands class wide answers. The steel strike, unifying as it did other affected workers such as rail and coal workers, created the possibility of mobilising the whole class. The Tories' later victories could have been prevented.

While the Tories have inflicted a series of defeats on important section of workers one would have to be blind, or a devotee of the gloom and doom merchants of the SWP not to recognise the continued potential for a militant fightback. The working class has suffered no strategic defeat on the scale of 1926. There is no evidence that, even in the worse hit areas like cars and engineering, there is any mass desertion from the trade unions amongst the employed. There have, as well as sectional defeats, been a series of strikes which forced significant concessions from the bosses. The 1979 engineers strike, the February 1981 miners strike, Sean Geraghty and the EETPU Press Branch's successful challenge to the bosses press and the anti-union legislation, the Health workers tenacious struggle against the government and more recently the Timex occupation, have all shown the resilience of the working class in the present period.

Even in sections which have in the end suffered defeats there has been a significant minority willing to fight despite their leaders' cowardice and treachery. In BL 57,000 struck in defence of Robinson, 18,500 against the slaves charter. The ASLEF strike was solid, while a significant minority in the NUR fought Weighill's scabbing tactics, finally driving him from office on a different issue. The recent spate of strikes either in defence of conditions or against victimisation at Fords, Cowley, South Yorkshire Steel, Tilbury docks etc show that even the beginnings of a mild upturn in the economy can quickly rekindle the confidence of the rank and file. They all demonstrate how far Thatcher needs to go before she can deliver to her class the docile workforce they consider necessary to make Britain "competitive".

The past period of struggle, far from showing us as the SWP claims, the impossibility of building a rank and file movement, indicates the direct opposite. In every major struggle there has been a militant minority which needs to be organised and politically armed against the bosses and the back stabbing bureaucrats. The latest setback in the NUM shows the importance even in the most "left" led union of organising, in every pit and every workplace, the militant minority around regular bulletins and papers which can put across the arguments to the great mass of the members and turn the minority into a majority. Never has a rank and file movement, organised around a programme of action to combat the bosses' offensive, been so sorely needed. The task of revolutionary socialists is to build it and lead it. ■



Health strike

Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

# An Action Programme

# BURNING TASKS FOR

TODAY THE CAPITALIST world is wracked by economic crises. The "good old days" of the post-war boom have given way to a period of recurrent crises. Unemployment has soared to record levels throughout the OECD countries. Production has fallen in absolute terms, despite temporary upturns. Profit rates continue to decline. Britain has been particularly hard hit by the world crisis. Its decaying industries and inability to compete effectively for the shrinking markets make it a very weak link in the capitalist chain. The British ruling class desperately needs to attack its workers in order to render itself more profitable. That is why the bosses are on the offensive. To resist this offensive and turn the tide on the bosses the working class needs its own action programme. It needs a programme that can defend its immediate interests and mobilise it for a decisive showdown with the ruling class.

## PUT THE UNIONS ON A WAR FOOTING

The fight to defeat the bosses' offensive cannot be effectively carried through with our unions and shopfloor organisation in their present state. They are fragmented, antiquated, bureaucratic and often unable to quickly respond to the bosses' attacks. The labour movement must be put on a war footing. To do this means taking measures to transform it. Nor can the labour movement stand still. If we do not transform it, winning it to militant defence of workers' interests, instituting a real democracy instead of the stifling bureaucratic regime of today, then tomorrow Tebbit and Thatcher will mercilessly attack the unions. They will utilise the alienation and disillusion of the union members and the neglected and unorganised half of the working class to crush the closed shop; to install postal and secret ballots on strikes and for union posts, maximising media influence. They will encourage employers' associations and company "unions" to break union organisation. To beat their plans to set up "The Sun" as the arbiter of union affairs, to prevent the de-politicisation of the unions, we must ORGANISE THE MILITANTS IN EVERY INDUSTRY TO FIGHT for a positive programme of democratization. We must fight for:

"Factory committees, representing all workers, regardless of craft, must be built. Where possible branches should meet in work time and on full pay. Stewards and convenors should have no privileges beyond those necessary to carry out their jobs. All workers' representatives should be regularly elected and subject to recall."

"Craftism, sectionalism and localism must be fought through the building of a Joint Shop Stewards' Committee and industry wide combines, made up of work-place delegates. For industrial unionism on this basis."

All decisions affecting the workforce must be discussed and agreed by the workforce via section meetings and sovereign mass meetings.

"In order to keep the membership informed, and to allow the fullest possible airing of differences, stewards' committees should be responsible for the production of democratic factory newspapers and bulletins."

"A determined fight to protect workers' interests will be attacked by the state's forces. Therefore all pickets, demonstrations and occupations need to be defended. For organised and disciplined workers' defence squads."

"Trades Councils must either be transformed into genuine councils of action open to workplace delegates or be replaced by such bodies built in the course of struggle."

"All union officials to be annually elected and recallable at all times. All officials to be paid the average wage of their members."

"Delegates to the Labour Party at all levels must be democratically controlled by the rank and file. The block vote at LP conferences must be used by and for the rank and file, take it out of the hands of the bureaucrats."

"For annual conferences of lay delegates, open to resolutions from all union bodies. Decision to be binding on all officials."

"No to the postal ballot, for genuine democracy, votes by show of hands at mass meetings."

"No to state interference in union business, no acceptance of the right of the judiciary or the state to intervene in the unions."

"To defeat anti-union laws, which are an attack on all trade unionists, a class wide mobi-

lisation is necessary. If the Tories are re-elected and push through another round of employment legislation a GENERAL STRIKE must be called by the TUC. It must be controlled by the rank and file of the unions through democratic strike committees and action councils. It must be indefinite. It must result in the destruction of Prior's and Tebbit's laws and any future laws. The working class must be ready to use the General Strike weapon wherever and whenever the class enemy itself generalises its attacks on us.

"For a TUC annual conference composed of lay delegates, an annually elected general council. TUC conference decisions to be binding on the general council. For the withdrawal of the TUC from all class collaborationist bodies such as the NEDC."

## FOR THE RIGHT TO WORK

The Tories use mass unemployment as a central weapon against the working class. Capitalism in crisis cannot do without a disorganised mass of millions of unemployed to intimidate the employed into accepting cut after cut in wages, appalling working conditions and speed-ups. The Tories aim is to use the unemployed to weaken and eventually destroy effective trade union organisation. With over 4 million unemployed the unionised workers ignore the sufferings of unemployed at their direst peril. This is what the official leaders of the unions have done. If the bitterness and the frustration of the unemployed is not to be turned against employed trades unionists in organised scabbing then, starting from the workplace, employed workers must fight redundancies and fight alongside the unemployed for jobs. The great difference between now and the 1920s and 1930s is that the unemployed are almost completely unorganised. Today they are obliged to suffer in silence.

When faced with redundancies workers must demand CUT THE HOURS NOT THE JOBS. For an immediate reduction of hours with no loss of pay to save and to create jobs. This must be put under shop stewards' control and the shop stewards' committees must have unfettered rights to inspect all company books and committees. Business secrecy is the cover for the management to spring redundancies and closures on an unsuspecting workforce, to spirit away capital and resources to make claims of bankruptcy whilst compensating the bankers and shareholders.

To all these claims we must reply OPEN THE BOOKS - all of them to unfettered workers' inspection. Thus the hidden process whereby the investors have milked massive profits in the past, the mis-management, the insane logic of production not for the needs of millions but for the profit of a few will be revealed. Workers must then demand nationalisation with no compensation to the capitalist bankrupts and workers control over continued production.

Only militant tactics can win these demands in slump conditions. Factory or workplace occupations provide stronger ground to involve the majority of the workforce, to stop scabbing, to prevent transference of plant and machinery, to involve wives or husbands of the workers and the whole local labour movement and working class community in the struggle. To be effective against the judges' injunctions and police and bailiff thuggery the traditional pickets need to be developed into defence squads to protect the occupation. The local and indeed national labour movement must be won to immediate strike action if the occupation is attacked. Active solidarity and self-defence can stop the judges and cops. But millions are already in the dole queues. The unions must ORGANISE THE UNEMPLOYED.

A democratic mass movement of the unemployed must be built with branches in every town and city. The unions, locally and nationally, should fund centres for the unemployed which provide above all facilities for struggle; meeting rooms, printing and duplicating facilities, halls for meetings. On this basis real mass demonstrations and marches of the unemployed should be organised. In addition the unemployed need education, sports and recreation facilities. The unemployed worker, the youth who has never had the opportunity to work, must be educated and trained, mentally and physically as a class fighter. The penalty for not doing so is that the Tories, the bosses or the fascists will "organise" them as a battering ram against the labour movement. The unemployed should demand now:

"Raise the miserable pittance of the dole to the level of a guaranteed national minimum wage to maintain the living standards and culture of the jobless. If the bosses won't give us work make them support the unemployed on full trade union rates. WORK OR FULL PAY!"

## DEFEND WORKERS' LIVING STANDARDS

Any form of incomes policy under capitalism always turns out to be wage restraint. To effectively control prices, profits and rents is impossible in the anarchy of a capitalist market economy. All governments attempt to exert pressure to keep wages down. The Tories have applied cash limits in the public sector and allowed the scourge of bankruptcy to whip the bosses and managers into a hard line in private industry. They orchestrate and publicise guide-line figures to help "hold" increases below the real inflation rate. In addition they publish rigged inflation figures which are an average for all classes and which exclude the effects of taxation. Thus the actual rise in the cost of living for working class people is much higher than the state indexes. Trade unionists must resist all incomes policies under capitalism. Our starting point must be need, not the "national economy" that is, the interests of the boss class as a whole, or the viability and profitability of individual firms. Pay claims need to be worked out by the shop floor and its representatives. Working class housewives need to be involved via price-watch committees and as a vital contribution to the struggle, create a workers' cost of living index. Wage claims should embody as an essential element, as a protection against inflation, a sliding scale of wages - a 1% rise in wages for every 1% rise in the working class cost of living as calculated by trades unionists and housewives.

A national minimum wage set at a level able to meet the needs of a working class family must be fought for to end the super-exploitation of the low paid.

State benefits for sickness or unemployment, education grants and pensions should not be allowed to fall below this figure. Solidarity action in support of individual claims - alliances between unions in related sectors (coal/steel/transport) or between "strong" and "weak" sections (miners and nurses) can create a force to smash the united front of the government and the employers.

## STOP THE CUTS

The attacks of the last five years on health, welfare and the public services are only a prelude for the all out attack the Tories envisage. "Victorian values" mean women tied to the home looking after the sick, the elderly and children. Thatcher's hypocritical talk of self-help means that the rich will help themselves to the best medical facilities whilst the NHS is run down to a Poor Law provision. The millions of unemployed face life on a dole which is below subsistence level. Local cuts slash at housing provision and conditions, at nurseries, at public transport. The labour movement must resist this death of a thousand cuts. It must forge a private and public sector unity based on joint industrial action to halt the cuts and force the restoration of services. It must draw in and help organise the users of these services.

Labour controls a large majority of urban and city councils. They have implemented many cuts under hypocritical phrases such as "good housekeeping measures". The local labour movement must demand an end to passing the Tory buck. Local councils of action based on union delegates and representatives of tenants, pensioners, youth and other mass organisations must be formed to fight the cuts. They must force Labour councils to refuse to implement the cuts, to refuse to repay the crippling high interest debts to the sharks of the City, to refuse to pay police precepts, and to refuse to raise either rents or rates. They should overspend on social welfare programmes. They should urge defiance of the Tories' laws and mobilise the working class in all out strike action if councillors are surcharged, arrested or councils removed. Similar direct action should greet the Tory plans to abolish municipal democracy in the major cities. We call for a militant defence of Labour councils against the Tory attacks but also for no holding back in the struggle to defend services to preserve Labour councils - especially

where such councils act against the working class. Fight councils who cut, either Labour or Tory.

## DEFEND THE OPPRESSED

Workers can only win the battle with the bosses if they draw into their class struggle all those who suffer extra oppression or exploitation in capitalist society - women, blacks, the young, the aged, gays. In the first place this is a fight to unify the working class itself. Divisions between women and men, black and white, enable the bosses to weaken and defeat us. To forge unity the unions, especially in the workplaces must become champions of the special needs of these groups. They must fully open the workers' organisations to the oppressed. For women workers, meetings in worktime and childcare facilities are vital. Women must be trained to play a full role as shop stewards. They must be given the right and facilities to organise women's sections in the unions to press their demands - demands which have been systematically neglected in the past.

Racism must be smashed within the unions. Known fascists must be expelled from the unions. Open racists must be deprived of office. Black workers must have the right to caucus to pressure to their neglected needs to be taken up by the unions as a whole. Unions must support and organise white and black workers' defence organisations against racist attacks. The police, wholly committed to the bosses' system and riddled with racism cannot defend the black communities against attack and harassment. They are one of the main sources of attack. The black and immigrant communities have a democratic right to protect themselves against the fascists and police. The Labour movement must actively support black self-defence. If this is done then the defence groups of these communities can be won to the class struggle, to participation in a workers' militia. Similar defence by the unions of young workers and the unemployed youth can win real class fighters to our movement. The Youth Opportunities Programme and the Youth Training Scheme aim to turn youth into slave labour, to rob workers of full time jobs, and to undermine trade unionism. We must fight for full union rates for the job and full union rights on these schemes as long as they are in existence but our aim must be their abolition and replacement by a massive programme of useful public works at full rates of pay, fully unionised and under trade union control.

For employed young workers a fight must be launched to win these rights in all apprenticeships and training schemes. The labour movement must help organise and provide for youth, premises and facilities for recreation, and education. It must help youth to rise in revolt against the repression of the state, the school and the family.

The vicious oppression that is meted out against gay men and lesbians must be combatted by the labour movement. Every instance of discrimination against gays must be taken up and fought. Within the unions the reactionary prejudices held by many workers must be removed by extensive education, propaganda, speaking tours by gay militants and so on. The right to chose your sexual orientation, free from interference by the state or the bosses, must be championed by the labour movement.

The labour movement as a whole must fight for a series of measures which meet the needs of all sections of the oppressed.

"Free abortion and contraception on demand. For a woman's right to work."

"Abolition of the Nationality Act and all immigration controls."

"Equal pay for equal work."

"Abolish the age of consent."

## THE WORKING CLASS AND INTERNATIONALISM

The capitalist classes of the major nations operate on a world scale. Britain's bosses and bankers exploit millions of workers and peasants in scores of "foreign" countries around the globe. In defence of those interests they take economic sanctions or wage wars - against national liberation struggles, against countries that try to nationalise "British" interests and

# OUR MOVEMENT

against those countries where the workers and peasants have expropriated the capitalist class. It is suicidal and against the interests of British workers to link themselves to "British national interests". Under capitalism these are merely the interests of those who own and control the country. Labour's policies of import controls, of racist immigration laws, of withdrawal from the Common Market, of a bi-partisan policy with the Tories on Ireland, on the Falklands/Malvinas, on membership of NATO and other reactionary alliances - all tie Britain's workers to the chariot wheels of Anglo-American Imperialism. All fuel hatred of workers in other countries and provide a popular basis for colonial wars and for all-out Imperialist War. Two such wars this century left many millions of dead. A third would leave human civilisation in ruins. We must oppose nationalist economic solutions. We must oppose the fraud of "national defence" in the world - exploiting Imperialist countries. We must support the national struggles of the exploited and oppressed peoples and races. In Britain now this means fighting for:

\*Troops out of Ireland. Self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. Support the Irish republican resistance against the British army.

\*Troops off the Falklands/Malvinas. Recognise Argentina's justified right to possess the islands.

\*No siting of Cruise or Trident - Britain out of NATO now.

\*Defend the USSR and the other degenerate workers' states against Imperialist attack.

\*Stop US or British intervention in Nicaragua.

## THE LABOUR PARTY

The last Labour government pioneered most of Thatcher's methods of attack. Their crippling and demoralising of workers' struggles opened the door to the Tories. The attempts over the last four years to democratise the Labour party - re-selection of MPs, election of the leader by the whole party, NEC control over the manifesto were all justified reforms but they did not go half-way to putting the Labour Party under the control of its members. It remains the plaything of a few dozen union bureaucrats and a few hundred parliamentarians.

A Foot-Healey government will be no more under "workers' control" than the last one was. It will be a bosses' government, albeit one which will try to rule by trading concessions (reforms) in exchange for leaving the bosses' wealth and power intact. Yet only a tiny minority of militants understand that Labour is a workers' party only in its membership and that its politics are thoroughly capitalist politics. Talk by Benn, Foot and even Healey of "fundamental and irreversible shifts of wealth and power" of "common ownership" added to a belief that Labour will act for them, convinces the great majority of the

labour movement that it is a genuine workers' party and can be made to act in their interests - even that it can bring about socialism. Yet the Labour leaders constantly sell out and outrage their supporters. Their actions belie their promises.

Herein lies the possibility of putting Labour to the test of action before its own supporters. To do this effectively so that either Labour is forced to act in our interests or to stand exposed before a self-confident and organised working class which can move towards revolutionary leadership and organisation means united action to demand democracy in the party and unions and pro-working class actions from a Labour Government.

\*Replace the unitary bloc vote wielded by the bureaucrats with elected delegations and mandates reflecting the balance of opinion within the affiliated membership. No bans and proscriptions. For political issues to be raised in mass meetings, on stewards' committees etc. Make the bloc vote reflect the views of the rank and file.

\*Make the PLP answerable to the whole party. Conference and NEC decisions should be binding on it. The Labour Manifesto and the cabinet as well as the leader should be elected by conference.

If working class mass action and organisation were able to hold Labour to its more radical promises and to force it to the further immediate demands which alone would meet the crying needs of millions of workers, this

would meet massive resistance from the whole paraphernalia of official society. The City would provoke runs on the pound and a flight of capital. The judges would illegalise the government's actions; the House of Lords would obstruct its measures in parliament; the Queen would and could dismiss the government. The police and army would intervene against it. Faced with this resistance a Labour government would face a choice - fight or flight. The working class however would have no choice. Its slogan would have to be - a workers' government based on and answerable to councils of action and a workers' militia. Such a government could not be established without a massive confrontation and struggle. It would require the building of a revolutionary party capable of leading the working class into the decisive battle. It would necessitate winning the troops away from their officers, arming the workers' militia and proceeding to the expropriation of the banks and monopolies.

Only on this basis can an economy planned for need not profit be created. Only by concentrated real power, the armed power of the state in the hands of the working class, can the deep crisis of Britain in the 1980s be resolved to the benefit of the vast majority. Workers' power would be a real democracy for this majority - it would necessarily have to be a dictatorship over the capitalists and their lackeys. ■

# LABOUR MANIFESTO

## Full of deceitful promise

**LABOUR'S MANIFESTO HARDLY** approaches let alone answers the immediate needs of working class people. It could not do because it is not written from a working class standpoint. How could it be when one of the most repeated charges, aimed at Thatcher is that her policies are 'divisive' and are based on class war. In place of this Michael Foot, in the Manifesto's Foreword, offers the message of unity: "Our task will be to heal these wounds and rekindle among the British people a new sense of unity and common purpose."

Labour Weekly's election special spelt out that this meant, "We believe in working together, through a partnership with both sides of industry." This ignores the fact that the very motor of industry and the banks is the pursuit of profit. To protect and extend their profits in a world where markets are rapidly contracting, the bosses and bankers necessarily attack the living standards, jobs and services of the working class. To assume that the CBI and the City of London will be willing to discuss the allocation of their capital to conform to Labour's investment plans based on social need is ludicrous. It is to expect the lion to lie down with the lamb.

It is precisely for this reason that Labour, Benn's platform rhetoric aside, will not advance measures which are decisively in the interests of "its" class in the way that Thatcher has done for hers. Its manifesto is an attempt to woo the bosses' support back by showing that none of its measures threaten their wealth and power. It offers no more than shoddy palliatives to the working class.

Instead of a programme to obliterate unemployment over a short period - say a year - Labour's policy is to try and reduce unemployment to below one million over five years. This in effect, is telling millions to wait for at least five years before they can start work again. But even this promise is not without strings. The Party's Manifesto "The New Hope for Britain" admits that as unemployment is likely to get worse "Our targets will thus be all the more difficult to achieve". So the promise becomes a completely conditional one. "To achieve it we will need five years of economic growth", says Labour's campaign document. The message is clear. Labour will make no inroads into the sacred rights of

capital. The unemployed can wait. It will be a long wait. The world capitalist economy is in mortal crisis and can these days only guarantee one thing: prolonged recession and stagnation with only short and fitful periods of minor upturns. Five years of expansive growth as in the 1950s and 1960s is no longer possible. Given this what does the Labour Party promise the unemployed in the here and now? Very little. Instead of a call to implement a 35 hour week now with no loss of pay, which would mean thousands of extra jobs, the plan calls for discussions on this as a long-term goal. Instead of a commitment to nationalise firms threatening closures and redundancies with no compensation and under the control of the workers, the plan offers encouragement for co-operatives. Yet co-operatives like Meriden motorcycles, like Fisher Bendix in Liverpool, have all ended up bankrupt and have financially ruined the workers involved in them.

On pay, Labour is trying to smuggle through an incomes policy after 4 years of a decline in living standards for workers. According to Tony Benn, "Now we have a policy which has been drafted and carried by successive TUC congresses and Labour Party Conferences." Yet, Conferences of the Party and the TUC have repeatedly voted down proposals for incomes policies. Of course Mr. Benn, united as he is behind the 'existing leadership' of Foot, Healey and Shore, gets very testy with anyone who accuses the National Economic Assessment of being an incomes policy. They are just "niggling". They are spreading despondency or undermining the "hope" of the working class. To this we answer high hopes in an illusion or trust in a deception never did the working class any good. We leave that to parsons and parliamentary speechmakers.

The existing leaders have made clear that the NEA will be an incomes policy. Peter Shore described it as, "planned collective bargaining rather than free collective bargaining." Foot modified it as "the planned extension of collective bargaining." The old wage-cutter Jim Callaghan dispensed with such serpent-like subtlety. He said to the unions, "If you do not intend to allow the National Assessment to include an assessment of what we are going to do in the way of earnings then you are not playing fair by the next Labour government." As the saying goes - you have been warned. Farmer Jim, the bankers' friend is not just some old has been. His key men hold a clear majority in shadow cabinet and NEC alike. The old guard are set on an incomes policy in spite of repeated conference pledges to the contrary. Remember the Social Contract began life as a "bargain" - a £6



Picture: John Sturrock (Network)

pay norm in return for social reforms. The pay norms stuck, leading to wage cuts under Labour. However, when the IMF decided that Labour's public spending was too high the promised reforms were thrown in the dustbin. In 1976 the Cabinet decided on a policy of sweeping cuts in the public sector. There is no doubt that the NEA will follow the same path. Only the terminology of deceit is different. Labour's signal to the bosses is that they will keep workers' wages down by this means. The bosses, though do not need a Labour government to do this. The slump policies of Thatcher have succeeded where incomes policies have failed.

Labour's "New Hope" is a will of the wisp that will if followed lead workers straight back into the swamp of wage restraint. Of course they will insist that it is 'voluntary'. This means only that the likes of Terry Duffy and Moss Evans 'volunteer' their members for a real wage cut. They will plead 'equality' for the low paid as an excuse or talk of price and profits freezes. What a con! Frozen profits accumulate and are paid out as dividends when the freeze ends. Frozen prices eventually go up with a bang likewise. Frozen wages mean more profits for the bosses. A wage increase frozen is a wage increase lost to the bosses not passed on to the low paid.

This central plank of Labour's economic policy must be opposed now. The lessons of the great revolt of the 1978/79 'winter of discontent' must not be forgotten.

\*No Incomes Policy Under Capitalism!  
\*Make the Bosses pay the cost of their Crisis! ■

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# NOT ONE PENNY FOR DEFENCE!

THE TORIES DO not like public expenditure. Building houses, hospitals or maintaining half-decent social services draws the same old refrain from the lookalike, sound-like Thatcherites - overspending! bad housekeeping! profligacy! they exclaim. But there is one area where none of this penny pinching philosophy applies - armaments.

In this sphere they have increased government spending by a cool 25%. They have agreed to the siting of over 160 Cruise missiles and have authorised £10 billion to be spent on Trident submarines. Anyone who questions any of this, no matter if it be from religious, pacifist or political motives, is given short shrift as a dupe of the Kremlin.

The Tories are not just weapons hoarders. Only last year they were quite willing to put their hardware to deadly use against Argentina. They gave the order to sink the ancient Argentinian cruiser, The General Belgrano, while it was sailing away from the British fleet, away from the Tories' exclusion zone around the Falklands. They coolly took the decision to murder hundreds of Argentinian sailors in order to keep the war going and prevent themselves from being hindered by the United States/United Nations peace proposals. From the outset the Tories were set on a military victory in the Falklands no matter what it cost in blood and money. Now they are prepared to spend £600 million a year to maintain "Fortress Falklands".

The £2 billion war against Argentina was cynically paraded as a "defence of democracy" and a defence of the "right to self-determination" of the 1,800 Falklanders. This is an old ploy on the part of our rulers. In every colonial war from the Boer War at the beginning of the century to Ireland today "democratic motives" have been trumped up. Either a minority's self-determination has been "defended" against the rights of the majority, or a tiny gaggle of British settlers' "rights" have been the pretext for the seizure or retention of parts of the globe thousands of miles away. The territories involved are clearly of no benefit whatsoever to the great mass of the British people.

Since, however, they were of great interest to that tiny but decisive part of the "British people" - the City of London - British soldiers have been sent in to crush rebellions by indigenous populations. Thousands have been killed in Malaya, Aden, Cyprus, Kenya, Ireland and most recently the South Atlantic. All of these wars have been fought to defend the profits of big business and the banks.

The real reason for today's arms build-up is to guarantee that the continuing overseas investments and profits of Thatcher's backers in big business are protected from anyone threatening them. Big business has invested £23 billion abroad under Thatcher and the arms are there to protect those interests. The war in the South Atlantic was really meant to serve as a warning to anyone else in the world who might think of nationalising or taking over British companies or British interests, wherever they might be. It was a warning to all the nations that are oppressed and exploited by imperialism, to keep their hands off imperialism's interests. The hypocritical fanfare of concern for "democracy" is simply a disguise for the naked self-interest on the part of those who need workers to fight and die to defend their investments.

The other theme that Thatcher harks on to justify her policy is the Soviet threat. The Soviets are supposed to be better armed than the West and eager to expand into Western Europe. The shield of Britannia needs to be strengthened by the missiles of the USA if the "free world" is to be saved. Once again, lies are mobilised to conceal the real motives of the Tories and their backers.

The Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles of America, soon to be supplemented by the MX system, gives the West a vast superiority in strategic warheads over the

USSR. The Cruise and Pershing systems will give the imperialists the ability to wage a "winnable" nuclear war in Europe using a first strike strategy. Add to this Britain's Polaris submarines and it becomes clear that the "nuclear threat" from the USSR pales in comparison with the nuclear arsenals of the West. The plea that the Soviets are bent on expansion is also nonsense.

Power in the Kremlin is in the hands of a tiny and increasingly geriatric clique whose most compelling drive is to find a way of defending their power and privileges through co-existing with the western capitalists. Time and time again history has shown this to be the case. At the end of the last war they unscrupulously presided over the demobilisation of communist party-led resistance movements in Greece, Italy and France in exchange for Eastern European spheres of influence. Since then they have maintained an unwavering commitment to peaceful co-existence with the major capitalist powers.

The capitalist powers, however, will never play along with co-existence for anything more than short periods. What the major Western powers hate about the USSR is that its bureaucratic leaders are sitting on a stack of minerals and oil and a vast potential market that the Western imperialists can't get their hands on. The Kremlin leaders have to keep it that way for their own protection because without it either the imperialists or their own workers would toss them aside. And in order to do so the Kremlin leaders have had to try to match the West's nuclear capacity and superiority to the best of its ability. Furthermore, for its own reasons, it aids and equips some regimes and movements that are struggling to break the grip of imperialism in the underdeveloped world - Cuba, Angola and Mozambique. At root the arms race is about the West trying to destroy the USSR as an armed stable planned economy capable of giving backing to forces struggling to destroy the West's international dominance.

The Tories are playing on deep-rooted fears when they invoke the Soviet threat. They can appeal to everybody's fear that their homes, their hard-earned personal possessions, their family, friends and neighbours are threatened by foreign invaders. This commonsense argument is the one that the Tories, the Alliance and the Labour Right use to "prove" that "we" need nuclear and conventional weapons. Thus they all talk about "our defence" and "national defence". This so obvious, so natural and utterly commonsense argument is in fact a complete con trick. It is designed to involve working people in the "defence" of the interests



*The Spirit of the Falklands*

*Picture: Barry Lewis (Network)*

of British and US financiers and industrialists against the workers of the USSR and Eastern Europe, against the starved and cruelly exploited millions of the Third World, and last but not least against the British working class itself. But foreign workers are not the enemy of the British working class.

Who are the real enemies of British workers? Where does the daily threat to our jobs and livelihoods actually come from? The answer to these questions reveal the futility of going along with the con trick of "national defence" when working people in no way own and control the nation. The "enemy" who robs us of house and job, who drives down our wages, cuts our social services, threatens

our democratic and trade union rights, is right here in Britain. The British financiers and bosses wreak more havoc than any imagined invading army. The all too real daily attacks come from our own rulers. Neither Argentina or the Soviet Union appointed Ian MacGregor to BSC with a brief to sack 100,000 workers. It was the Tories who did that. They, and the bosses who back them, are the real enemies of the British workers. They are the ones we need to defend ourselves against.

"Our army" and "our police" are no defence for us against this legalised robbery. On the contrary they may be "our boys" when they join up but once in uniform they are under the direct

command of generals, police chiefs, judges or civil servants. These people go along with democracy only as long as democracy goes along with their continued ownership and control of the banks, industry, the shops and offices.

"Our" forces intervene to protect the "rights" of the owners to continue the exploitation of workers, to close down factories. If workers fight back, strike, occupy, march or picket, then the first wave of attack is the police, with the army held in reserve. These forces are not "ours" at all but theirs.

What is true at home is true abroad. These forces defend and ensure the exploitation of a string of other countries around the globe. It was and is the "defence" of British exploiters' "interests" in these countries that the army and armaments exist to defend. Against support for the bosses' defence and foreign policies workers must advance their own slogans and interests. Full support to all national liberation struggles, even against the British army, must be given by British workers. This means calling for British troops to get out of Ireland now. It means withdrawing British troops from the Malvinas and recognising Argentinian sovereignty. It means defending the USSR, China, Eastern Europe, Cuba and Vietnam against imperialism's threats to reconquer them and abolish the planned economies of these countries. Support for all of these struggles weakens our own bosses. At the same time we must say loud and clear - not a man or woman, not a penny for the defence of the bosses' system.

Workers, however, are not pacifists. We cannot be in favour of lying down and accepting "our" bosses' exploitation and oppression. We must fight back when we do come up against "our" police and "our" army. For a start we must defend ourselves against them. We must strive to "disarm" the bosses by scattering and dissolving their bands of police, by winning over their army - by breaking the iron control and discipline of the upper class generals and officer corps and promoting democracy in the ranks, through the election of officers. This way soldiers and their guns can be won to the side of the working class.

Unless this task is fulfilled wars will continue to threaten the destruction of humanity. Imperialism cannot change its spots. It is driven by the need to exploit, conquer and reconquer the world. This inevitably produces war. The only way to stop it is to defeat imperialism. Only then, when workers control the weaponry - all of it - will the nation, the workers' state, be ours to defend. And when the workers have conquered in all countries, the threat of war will disappear. ■

## LABOUR'S ALTERNATIVE

THE OTHER week Michael Foot, the "inveterate peacemaker" said: "We don't need any instruction about patriotism from any other quarter or any other party. They say we are going to throw away the defences of this country. Nothing of the sort."

In fact we need no reminders of Foot's attitude to the defence of the realm. After all it was his oratory last year that unified the House of Commons, and, sadly the bulk of the Labour movement, behind Thatcher's bloody war in the South Atlantic.

Despite certain disagreements with the Tories over methods of defence, Labour has no politically independent policy; no policy which

represents all workers - in Britain and abroad - against the interests of Thatcher, her City of London backers and their cohorts in the multi-nationals.

Labour proposes to cut the defence budget down to the level of most major European NATO powers. But since Britain only spends 1% more of its GNP on defence than does France, for example, this represents no great departure. Labour promises to move away from a policy based on nuclear arms to one based on conventional weaponry. It is committed to scrapping the plans for Trident submarines and to stopping the siting of Cruise missiles. Both of these measures should be actively supported by the labour

movement. We will need to make Labour carry out its promises.

Labour's alternative to nuclear defence is a greater emphasis on building up a big navy and army - much to the delight of the reactionary officers in the Admiralty. Labour's defence spokesman John Silkin was clear that such a powerful conventional force would have defended the Falklands from an Argentine invasion. In other words, like Thatcher, the purpose of Labour's defence strategy remains defending the bosses and bankers' investments abroad. Furthermore the big navy proposed by Labour would be built under conditions of economic stagnation. This will inevitably mean cutting back on the urgent

social needs of the working class to pay for the defence programme.

Labour's programme is full of fine phrases and rhetoric about peace and goodwill amongst nations. Yet all the phrases in the world about "socialist internationalism" cannot hide the ugly fact that a future Labour Government's policy would be as narrowly nationalist and slavishly pro-boss as the Tories. We do not say vote Labour because we believe it will refuse to defend the bosses' system. We say vote Labour to upset the plans of the bosses and force a Labour Government to honour its pledges. ■