

Workers Power

THE MONTHLY PAPER OF THE WORKERS POWER GROUP
No 5 March 1979 12p

Inside

Centre page Women's Struggle
page 2 & 3 Devolution
page 7 Law versus the Unions
page 6 Peru/Back page IRAN

HANDS OFF VIETNAM

The invasion of Vietnam by China directly serves the interests of world imperialism. A victory for the Chinese would add new vigour to the plans of Japanese and US capitalism to shore up their anti-communist puppet regimes in Asia.

The Chinese leadership knows this all too well. The invasion was carried through with the prior knowledge and connivance of the United States, Japan and their foremost client state in South-East Asia, Thailand. The mass of Chinese workers and peasants, however, were only told that Chinese troops were on Vietnamese territory one week after the invasion.

The official Hsinhua Press Agency described the invasion in these terms, 'Driven beyond forbearance Chinese frontier troops have been forced to counter-attack.'

Peking has claimed throughout that the invasion was a response to provocation by the Soviet-backed Vietnamese. They hope to win the hearts, the weapons and the bankdrafts of imperialism with their promise of taking on the Soviet Union by proxy, in the form of the Vietnamese army. When Deng Xiaoping talks of teaching the Vietnamese a 'lesson' he is, in fact, out to teach the United States, the EEC and the anti-communist regimes of Asia that the Chinese bureaucracy is their conscious and dependable ally.

Arms

It is no accident that the invasion coincided with the Carter administration's announcement of new plans to increase the supply of arms to Thailand and Pakistan. Nor is it an accident that the US State Department is waging a consistent campaign to force Australia, Japan and the EEC countries to withdraw scheduled aid to Vietnam.

For several years, the arch-reactionary foreign affairs adviser to Carter, Zbigniew Brzezinski, has been openly seeking to re-open South-East Asia to imperialist penetration by fanning the flames of conflict between the rival bureaucracies of the area. Deng Xiaoping knew this full well when he smugly informed a sympathetic Brzezinski that Vietnam was 'Asia's Cuba'.

In 1974, at the height of the war between North Vietnam and the United States, China seized, nominally from a South Vietnamese garrison, the Paracel Islands that guard the sea approaches to Hanoi. They have held onto them ever since. The repressive regime of Pol Pot in Cambodia assured itself of Chinese aid by escalating a state of war between that regime and Vietnam.

The victory of the Vietnamese-backed Front for National Sal-

vation in Cambodia in January 1979 was a major blow for the long term strategy of the Chinese bureaucracy.

The Vietnamese bureaucrats have also found it in their interests to foster a campaign of anti-Chinese chauvinism. The liberation of the South in 1975 was followed by a mounting social and material crisis. Disastrous harvests contributed to major shortages in 1977 and 1978. Shortages themselves encouraged speculation and black-market-eering. There was mounting suspicion and evidence of corruption amongst the Northern officials sent to administer the transformation of Southern society.

Scapegoat

In February 1978, the Vietnamese bureaucracy resolved to nationalise the rice trade. The weight of this measure fell heavily on the merchants of Cholon, the Chinese quarter of Ho Chi Minh City — once Saigon. An anti-Chinese campaign served the purposes of a bureaucracy anxious to find a scapegoat for food shortages and facing mounting hostility to the newly imposed officialdom. The forceful ejection of Chinese from Vietnam, including large numbers previously integrated into the Northern regime, led to an accelerating conflict on the Vietnam -



Deng Xiaoping courting Imperialism.

China border throughout 1978.

The national chauvinism of the Vietnamese bureaucracy in an important sense opened the way to the new pro-imperialist offensive against the Vietnamese.

In the face of this invasion we must demand, and campaign for, the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all Chinese troops from Vietnam.

Vietnam must be defended against an invasion that serves the designs of Imperialism. In that defence the Vietnamese workers and peasants cannot look to the Soviet Union as a stable and consistent ally. The Soviet bureaucracy has its own plans for alliance and 'detente' with imperialism. All Soviet aid, any troops or advisers must be placed under the direct control of the Vietnamese themselves and

used only for the defence of Vietnam.

Neither can the impoverished masses of Vietnam and Indo-China look to the Vietnamese bureaucracy itself to save them from imperialist encirclement and penetration. Imperialism, using its Chinese ally hopes to divide and rule the peoples of Indo-China. The chauvinist campaign of the Vietnamese bureaucrats at home, in Laos and in Cambodia, together with their repressive and corrupt domestic regime, actively prevents the formation of a Soviet Federation of Indo-China. Only such a federation could withstand the plans of the imperialists. The masses of Vietnam will have to overthrow their bureaucracy if imperialism is to be kept at bay.

Deng Xiaoping, the EEC and the United States all hope to use the invasion of Vietnam to force the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia. In their place they want to impose, perhaps under the camouflage of the United Nations, a government more receptive to their interests. To this end Chinese military aid and advisers are backing the Pol Pot resistance in Cambodia. The Chinese bureaucracy is supplying and advising the anti-government rebels in Laos.

We are against the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. We are for the withdrawal of Vietnam's troops. But that demand, for us, is subordinate to the continued protection of Indo-China from exploitation by imperialism and its allies.

EDITORIAL

Recall the TUC

SMASH THE CONCORDAT

Since the resurgence of working class militancy last autumn, the bosses have been clamouring ever more loudly, for the curbing of trade union rights and organisation. These demands have grown increasingly hysterical since the effectiveness of picketing was demonstrated by the lorry drivers and the public sector workers disputes. Eager to prove their ability to act for the bosses inside the working class, the Labour Government and the TUC have been striving to reach a formula capable of containing the militancy of the rank and file.

After a bevy of secret meetings the Government and TUC have produced their joint declaration of intent — the 'Concordat'. The declaration has been made as public sector workers do battle with Labour's pay code, and as Jim Callaghan sets course for a General Election. Like the Social Contract before it, the new deal accepts the bosses argument that wages will have to be restrained to push up profit margins and economic growth. The 'Concordat' aims to establish an "authoritative institution", a national pay and relativities board to oversee the implementation of a Government norm for increases. It proposes annual meetings at Easter between the Government, the TUC and the CBI to hammer out a wage ceiling agreement for the following year.

The Concordat also accepts the argument of the employers that the unions are too strong, that shop floor organisation must be restrained if wages are to be held down. The TUC has offered to do the restraining for the bosses and for James Callaghan.

The Concordat focuses on three major areas where working class organisation is to be weakened. It proposes to undermine the effectiveness of picketing. It promises to limit the number of pickets, to list and guarantee services that will not be stopped by picket action. Within the TUC's definition of excessive interference is "the linking of arms to prevent the entry of lorries to premises".

In order to ensure that pickets are rendered ineffective, the bureaucrats of Congress House intend to take the control of picketing out of the hands of democratically elected strike committees. Instead they have declared "it will help to ensure that picketing is peaceful if an experienced member, preferably a union official, is in charge of the picket line He should ensure that the number of pickets is no longer than is necessary." The bureaucrats intend to take one of the workers strongest weapons out of the hands of the rank and file.

Continued on page 2

editorial

(Continued from page 1)

The TUC have also agreed to limit and undermine the closed shop. "Its scope can be as flexible as required and unions might bear this firmly in mind". This opens the way for management to undermine shop-floor strength. The TUC further propose that strikes should no longer be decided upon by mass meetings. Instead they propose secret ballots organised at the discretion of the union officials concerned. This will mean workers will take their decision in isolation from their workmates and in the face of a barrage of anti-strike propaganda from the press and TV.

The message of the Concordat is clear — trade union democracy and rank and file independence are to be stifled by the trade union bureaucracy in the interests of the bosses. Callaghan and Murray see the Concordat as a last ditch attempt to save Labour at the next election. Callaghan has announced to Labour MPs "The Labour Party stands by this document. We will fight the election on it and we will win. . . ."

To hell with the decisions of the Labour Party Conference!

In fact the Concordat — which concedes every bosses' and Tory argument that the unions are too strong — opens the way for a new legal attack on the unions by Tory or Labour government. If Murray and Co cannot deliver the goods they promise then the door is already open for direct state intervention.

SELLING OUT THE PUBLIC SECTOR

That is why Len Murray has been working overtime to restrain the public sector workers. In collusion with the leaders of the other unions he has set out to show what 'Concordat' trade unionism means in practice. The pathetic Government offer — £1 on account for full time workers, £3.50 now and a comparability scheme, the rotten fruit of which went be borne until April and August 1980 — is 29% short of the full claim. This sell-out was concocted at an eleven hour secret Downing Street meeting 13 days before it was announced. The unveiling was supposed, no doubt, to put the finishing touches to the concordat deal.

The trade union leaders knew the deal was not up to mark and file expectations. Charles Donnet of the GMWU made this clear when he said "We have a selling exercise to do and recognise it is a difficult one"; and this was proved when the NUPE executive, under massive pressure from the rank and file recommended rejection of the deal in the coming ballot in spite of pleas from Alan Fisher.

The real face of the union sanctioned ballots of the Concordat was shown by Murray's reaction to NUPE's decision. He declared the offer to be final and set about campaigning for a ballot of all the unions involved in an attempt to outnumber NUPE and break it resolve. In the face of the Tory attack on trade unionism and the TUC/Labour Concordat, an immediate working class response is needed. The present crisis is a crisis of the bosses' system — the workers movement should take no responsibility for it. Every struggle against Labour's pay code must be supported against the Concordat TUC. Pay claims and action must be brought forward to ensure an all out fight to bury the Social Contract and stop the Concordat. This urgent task of the day must be backed up by organised action committees of trade unionists in the areas. For the civil service unions to link up at every level with the public sector workers now in dispute.



But against Callaghan and the TUC the workers movement must take up and fight for policies in its own interest. Most vitally these must be:

No cut in living standards — For a sliding scale of wages to automatically protect wages against inflation — 1% rise for every 1% rise in the cost of living as calculated by committees of trade unionists and housewives.

Eradicate low pay — for a guaranteed £75 minimum wage protected against inflation.

For real equal pay for women.



These policies can unite the entire class behind a drive to defend and extend living standards. In the face of the dole queue and the threat of lay off and redundancy we must demand:

No loss of jobs; cut the hours not the jobs and share out the available work amongst the workforce under trade union control.

A programme of public works under trade union control; houses, schools and hospitals. For the restoration of all cuts and the protection of the welfare and social expenditure by a sliding scale.

These are the key policies that can defend the independent interests of the working class against the attacks of the capitalists. The Concordat flouts the policies of the Labour Party Conference and the TUC. It commits the TUC and Labour Party leadership to a new attack on workers organisations and living standards. While trade unionists and Labour Party members must refuse to be bound by the Concordat, they must also organise to decisively reject the deal and its architects. That's why it is vital to fight for now:

The Re-Call of the Labour Party Conference - force the leadership to account for flouting Labour Party policy.

The Re-call of the TUC — to reject the Concordat, to commit the workers movement to actively defending its living standards and organisations.

Devolution

The extent to which the Great Devolution Debate has stirred the current British political scene was best summed up by an Aberdeen worker quoted in the Guardian: "I asked the lads at work the other day how they would vote and they looked surprised and said they haven't given it a thought." (12.2.79) The devolution issue was originally envisaged by the Labour Government as a means to 'scotch the nationalists'. But it was also a useful diversionary ploy, that could distract working class attention from wage cuts, unemployment and so on. Now that it has come to the crunch however, the Devolution smokescreen is wearing a bit thin. When Callaghan visited Scotland to launch the 'Yes' campaign it was the picket of hundreds of public sector workers demonstrating against his incomes policy, that highlighted the central concerns of the Scottish working

class.

The move towards devolution by Labour was a conscious attempt to stop the rot that was undermining its once solid electoral bases in Scotland and Wales. The rise of nationalism, particularly in Scotland, where the Scottish Nationalist Party grew from a collection of cranks into an electorally prosperous organisation, forced the Government to make concessions so that it could retain its massive base in Scottish working class constituencies. The Welsh and Scottish Acts were the fruits of these concessions. They also served a vital secondary function for the Government. They tied the Nationalist MPs who now hold the balance of power in Parliament, to voting for the Government on all crucial issues, until these acts took effect.

However, the Acts have never been seen by Callaghan, as they

have by the Nationalists, as stepping stones to real independence for the two countries. In a 'Yes' campaign speech Callaghan argued that devolution would put the 'extremists' who favoured independence out in the cold:

"... this Act of ours can unite Scotland without dividing her from the rest of the country." (Guardian 13.2.79)

Devolution is merely a means by which Labour can regain the initiative over the Nationalists and divide Scottish and Welsh workers' attention from Labour's betrayals.

The Assemblies as proposed in the Acts, are virtually meaningless. In Scotland the Assembly will have some legislative powers and partial control over taxation but in Wales it will not even have this. In effect the Assemblies will be little more than glorified County Councils subject to strict control, via the

Concordat - Irish style

by
Ben Rees

The Labour Government, the TUC leaders and the CBI have all made clear their intention of constructing a new, more long-term form of Social Contract. They have placed particular emphasis on tri-partite national agreement and guidance on wage levels. As they do so no doubt they have all cast jealous glances at the record of the National Wage Agreements that have been negotiated in the Irish Republic since 1970.

During the 1960s the Southern Irish Government made every effort to attract foreign capital as a strategy for overcoming the chronic stagnation of the economy. The policy led not only to a marked increase in industrial employment but also to an increase in the rate of unionisation in Ireland.

militancy

These "boom" conditions bred a startling militancy on the part of the young and growing working class. Towards the end of the 60s strike figures in the 26 counties were proportionately amongst the highest in the world. As the newly structured economy depended on the continuing low wages of its workforce to maintain "competitiveness", such militancy was a grave threat to the position of the Irish bourgeoisie.

No less were these signs of working class independence a threat to the bureaucracy of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU), whose social position, no less than that of the bourgeoisie, rested on the continuing inflow of foreign capital. From mutual interest therefore, the Government and the ICTU, from 1970, began negotiating "norms" for wage rises. The National Wage Agreements are negotiated by the ICTU and the Irish employers. The proposed wage ceiling then has

to be passed by the ICTU, only they can give permission to striking workers to stop workers of another union crossing their picket line. The small A.G.E.M. O.U. union has recently been suspended from the ICTU. It had negotiated 12 deals above the NWA ceiling but was formally suspended because flying pickets of A.G.E.M.O.U. workers prevented ITGWU workers from scabbing on their dispute.

Just what these agreements have meant to the Irish workers is summarised here from the ICTU's "Trade Union Information." One should note that the inflation figures are based on the fraudulent official price index, and that every NWA has been riddled with "escape clauses" that have enabled employers to avoid paying the full amount by pleading poverty;

Agreement	Wage Rise	Price Rise
1970	15.1%	20.3%
1972	18.4%	20.3%
1974	28.3%	24.5%
1975	16.6%	16.1%
1976	4.9%	5.6%
1977	11.0%	16.3%
Total	94.3%	103.4%
Less Tax	84.0%	103.4%

Even these figures, which underestimate the price paid by the Irish workers for the privilege of working for the peripheral branches of multi-national companies, are startling enough. But the "jam tomorrow" argument has been used, as always, to assure Irish workers that these effects are temporary, the rewards will surely come. Official figures now put the cost of living in the 26 counties as 12% higher than in the UK, yet Dermot Walsh, a leading bourgeois economist, has advised that, in order to make any realistic and lasting impact

on the South's huge unemployment problem, wage rises should be limited to one third of those obtained in Britain, this to maintain the 26 counties "competitiveness" as a magnet for imperial capital.

The old system of NWA bargaining is now under its severest strain. Since their electoral victory in 1977, Fianna Fail (FF) have embarked on an expansion of the economy based on deficit financing. (In 1978 they budgeted for borrowing to make up a staggering 13% of GNP. Denis "we're all monetarists now" Healey is desperately trying to reduce the equivalent proportion in Britain below 5%).

With firms desperate to meet the temporary credit-induced demand in consumer spending, workers in the private sector have found it relatively "easy" to demand, and win, wage rises far in excess of those allowed under the present centrally negotiated National Wages Agreement.

Workers at Kilroy Brothers in Santry recently won a £10 immediate rise after a four-week unofficial strike. During the dispute Union officials distributed an anti-strike bulletin.

Although pressure from its rank and file has forced the ICTU bureaucracy to declare that they will not even talk about a new NWA for 1979, this by no means rules out a back-door "neo NWA". Indeed, as the "boom" peters out, such a deal is a near certainty.

The lessons of this Irish "Concordat" are clear. It has served the employers and their government well. It has taken the pressure off the Trade Union officials, and the price has been paid in cuts in the real earning power of the Irish workers.

a dead end

power of veto, by Westminster. The question facing revolutionaries is whether or not to call for support for the setting up of such assemblies. Will they serve as additional weapons in a working class arsenal or are they at best pseudo-democratic diversions and at worst machines for dragging the working class into the slough of petit-bourgeois nationalism.

The first point that must be made to avoid possible confusion, is that Workers Power defends absolutely the democratic right of nations to self determination, wherever this 'self determination' does not involve the oppression of others. If the Scottish and Welsh masses decided they wished to separate we would defend their right to take that decision and to act on it. We condemn all those from Enoch Powell to Neil Kinnock who whimper about the threat to the sovereignty of the British Parliament posed by devolution.

Having said that we would support the *right* of the Scots and Welsh to self determination, in the present situation we would actually argue that they should not exercise it. We argue that Scottish and Welsh nationalism is thoroughly reactionary. It has no more content than British/English nationalism. It can only be a species of chauvinism. The real interests of the Scottish and Welsh workers lie not in the fight for independence but in proletarian unity with their brothers and sisters in England. There are some on the left who compare the nationalism of the Scottish and Welsh with the nationalism of the Irish for example. Such a comparison ignores a fundamental factor. The nationalism which asserts itself in arms against Imperialist occupation in countries such as Ireland, acquires thereby a progressive content. It is the clear duty of revolutionaries in Britain to support this struggle. Furthermore there is the possibility within a resolute anti-imperialist struggle of the movement opening the way for the socialist revolution providing the



Andrew Ward (Report)

Peddling reactionary nationalism in Garscaddon

working class takes the leadership. Does either Scottish or Welsh nationalism have this anti-imperialist content or potential? The answer is clearly no. Both countries solved their national questions centuries ago—they are fully integrated regions of British capitalism. The English bourgeoisie does not oppress the Welsh and Scottish masses in an imperialist way. The nationalism that is currently asserting itself is reactionary and utopian in character, resting on the petit-bourgeoisie and drawing some support from working class people bemused by Labour's repeated failures to better their standard of life.

It is true that Scotland and Wales are areas that are particularly hard hit by unemployment, urban deprivation and so on—but this is a manifestation of regional decline, similar to that of the North East or Merseyside, a feature of overall capitalist crisis. It is not an indication of imperialist exploitation by English bosses. We must not view nationalism from the point of view of democratic

abstractions but from that of working class interests. The only conclusion we can consequently come to is that it is a blind alley for the Scottish and Welsh working classes. In fact it would represent a step backwards from their class support for the reformist Labour Party.

On the question of the Referendum the following positions should be taken by socialists. First of all we argue that the 40% rule imposed on the referendum by Parliament should be ditched. This rule means that people who didn't vote, even though they may be dead (but remain on the electoral register), are counted as no votes, and that the yes votes must total 40% of the entire electorate, not a simple majority of all those who vote. This amounts to the most disgraceful gerrymandering. We say that only those who turn out to vote should decide, and that the decision to set up an assembly or not should be decided by a simple majority.

We argue that to have voted yes would be an endorsement of the illusions of the Scottish and Welsh working class in a reactionary nationalism. We would argue that only an action programme relating the needs of workers in the declining regions to the needs of the working class as a whole poses a real alternative to the Labour Government's anti-working class policies. For this reason we called for a no vote.

The proposed assemblies will not and cannot even begin to solve the problems faced by Scottish and Welsh workers. Nor would their existence represent a democratic reform that could be utilised by the working class as a springboard to mass action. If an assembly is created, and if workers have illusions in it then obviously revolutionaries will have to relate to that situation. But at the moment the best way to fight those illusions is by posing a class alternative to the assemblies.

NUM 40% claim prospect not good

By MARK HOSKISSON

The NUM, the sleeping bear of the Labour movement, whose hibernation has been extended by the effects of last year's productivity deals, has lodged a claim for a 40% pay rise. Sir Derek Ezra's response was to offer a paltry 3½% as an interim payment. This insult is justified by the coal board by whining references to the projected £460m loss in the industry for 1978-79.

The miners' answer to this should be clear and decisive. They need to move into action now on the basis of the full claim with no productivity strings attached. In this way their fight could be linked to that of those sections of the public sector who have not yet settled. Such militant action is the reply needed in the face of the stalling tactics being pursued by the Labour Government and the union leaders in the shape of the 'Concordat'.

If the NUM leadership continue to have their way, however, the prospects for such a struggle developing do not look hopeful. The productivity deals have left the NUM divided into competing units, and this has ensured that the bureaucratic grip of the National Executive has tightened. Company director Joe Gormley has described the Coal Board's offer as "bunkum", but has also been careful to stress that there is a long period of negotiating yet—at least until the present climate

of militancy has subsided, the cold weather has gone and the Coal Board has stockpiled enough coal to ensure that any action by the miners will be ineffective.

The left winger widely tipped as Gormley's successor, Arthur Scargill, has offered no alternative to Gormley's delaying tactics. While giving militant advice to lorry drivers to defy the courts and carry on picketing Scargill did not call for the sort of practical action that could have really helped the lorry drivers—strike action for the NUM's own claim. Careful to maintain his left face in front of his Yorkshire militants by describing the Coal Board's offer as "a positive insult", he has also stated that he hoped there would be no strike in the pits and that he didn't see the necessity for one (Guardian 26.1.79). He fails to make clear though what action is going to get the Coal Board to make up the outstanding 36½%.

What we can say with certainty is that it won't be made up by delicate negotiations.

In his mouthpiece 'The Yorkshire Miner' (No 21) Scargill appealed to NUM branches to "get the ball rolling" on pay. He asked miners to "flood us with your suggestions. With sufficient pressure we can move mountains." Our suggestion is simple Never mind the miracles. Forget about the mountains. Fight to make Scargill turn his words into action. Campaign now for all out strike action for the full claim.

LEYLAND LESSONS MUST BE LEARNT

The return to work by Longbridge car workers after a week long strike marks the consolidation of a significant victory for Leyland management. The strike, against non-payment of the first "splash" of the parity deal agreed last December, resulted in the almost complete isolation of the biggest plant in the BL combine. This has to be recognised as a defeat for the entire BL workforce.

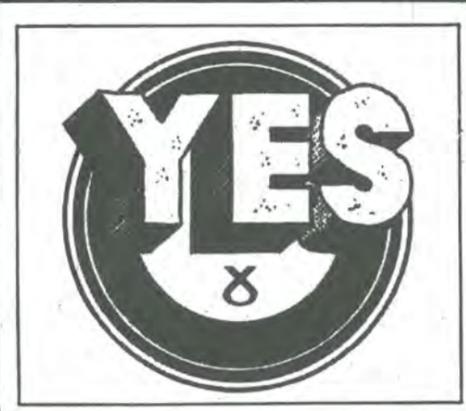
On the face of it the collapse of the strike appears to show nothing but the acceptance by the vast majority of BL workers of management's insistence that no parity payments will be made until productivity has increased to pay for them. But this is very far from the whole truth.

What has also been revealed is the continuing impact of the December defeat engineered by trade union officials and the Stalinist leadership of the combine committee and the lack of an effective national opposition to these misleaders. In an industry which, in the late sixties occupied a position of crucial importance to the whole working class, the continuing ability of the reformist leaders to divert and strangle the Leyland workers is of the greatest importance to all workers and revolutionaries.

The Left in Leyland was beaten in December and it has been beaten again now. No amount of argumentation can dispel this obvious truth. Socialist Press

tried (14.2.79) to argue that it had been the success of the Cowley Assembly Plant leaders in convincing their membership of the dangers of corporate bargaining that led them to oppose strike action to enforce its implementation. "Many militant workers who had rejected the package (i.e. the December deal—WP) felt they were being asked to strike for something they didn't want." If this is the case then all it proves is that the Cowley leaders' total concentration on plant bargaining as a strategy against the corporate plan provided no basis for going forward once the plan had been accepted. Nor could this strategy unite the highly skilled and well paid Leyland workers, such as those at the Coventry plants, with the large, lower paid workforces at Longbridge and Cowley. The Coventry workers refused to strike for a parity agreement that would give them very little. But to call for plant bargaining as a response to this actually keeps these workers

(continued on page 6)



FROM SUFRAGE TO SOVIET

In the first 15 years of this century tens of thousands of women were involved in an impassioned struggle for the vote. To win this democratic demand many women joined in meetings, protest marches and were involved in militant tactics such as the destruction of both private and public property. Many were imprisoned, beaten, force-fed and endured hunger and thirst strikes. Some even sacrificed their lives.

Agitation for women's suffrage had begun in the second half of the 19th century but it had always been opposed by governments. In 1903, a group of Independent Labour Party (ILP) women gathered at Mrs Emmeline Pankhurst's house in Manchester and founded the Women and Social Political Union. At first the organisation was to be called the Women Labour Representation Committee. Its central job was to win the Labour Movement to the idea of the enfranchisement of women and to campaign in the ILP branches for action in pursuit of this aim. As Sylvia Pankhurst pointed out, "it was her intention [Mrs Pankhurst's] to conduct social and political work... the new organisation... should be mainly composed of women and [be] politically parallel to the ILP, though with primary emphasis on the vote."

There is evidence that the early WSPU adopted other objects than franchise alone. For example, it gave general assistance to reform movements, was active over unemployment, gave support to textile strikers and provided pickets. However, the main work of the WSPU was directed towards getting a Women's Suffrage Bill through Parliament and, thus towards winning support and sponsorship for such a Bill from the parliamentary parties. With the WSPU's close ties to the ILP, it was at first hoped that the new Labour Party, with its 29 seats, would support and spon-

By Din Wong

sor such a Bill. From its inception the Labour Movement had supported the principle of sex equality and given verbal assent to women's suffrage. However, Keir Hardie was probably the only Labour MP who wholeheartedly supported the idea and recognised it as an issue for immediate political pressure by the Parliamentary Labour Party.

The WSPU insisted only on support for a limited Bill which, though it gave formal political sex equality, would in fact only enfranchise one woman in thirteen because of the property qualifications it envisaged. The Labour Party stood formally for full Adult Suffrage and argued that to accept a Bill based on property qualifications would be a retrogressive step particularly since properties owned by women, given a vote, would support the Tories.

At first the militant tactics of the WSPU, heckling and disrupting meetings, massive demonstrations and lobbies, were directed solely at the Liberal Government in the hope that it would be pressurised into committing itself to Votes for Women. However, when Christabel Pankhurst became the full-time organiser for the WSPU, the movement adopted an 'Independent' line, standing apart from all the parliamentary parties. Christabel based her hopes on the speedy return of a Tory Government and made it quite clear that she "regarded all Socialists, Labourists and Liberals as arrant humbugs unless they were prepared to put votes for women before all other causes."

She considered that all other reforms should be held up until women could participate in their enactment. She was most pointed in emphasising to electors that, "in the attack on the Liberal govern-

ment, no distinction is made between the Unionist and Labour Parties." As for the WSPU, Christabel desired absolute and rigorous concentration on the single issue of the vote, all other interests were to be eradicated. This attitude was seen as most provocative by the ILP.

The break between the WSPU and the ILP came after the 1907 conference of the Party, at which Keir Hardy pleaded with the Party that it must choose whether to keep some of its most valued women members. Mrs Pankhurst refused to abandon the 'Independent' policy. The WSPU withdrew from the Party a few months later.

In spite of its early connections with the ILP and support from working class women, the movement for women's suffrage became increasingly middle class. The original impetus for forming the WSPU probably came from a petition signed by women in the textile industry in Lancashire, Cheshire and Yorkshire. The marches and meetings were well attended by women from the East End of London and there was much local support, especially in the North. However, it was mainly middle class women who were in the forefront of the struggle, their livelihoods not being put in jeopardy by imprisonment or constant travelling about the country; their class interests best served by a single-minded focus on getting the vote. Sylvia Pankhurst described these middle class women as, "drawn by the magnet of the militant tactics and the gigantic publicity they received." It was mainly middle class women who were the stonethrowers and were sent to jail. However, in jail the upper class women got preferential treatment as Lady Cinstance Lytton demonstrated to her own peril, when she concealed her identity by dressing as a working woman. Sylvia Pankhurst believed

that the WSPU attracted middle class support because, "women raised above the economic struggle by wealth and leisure... began to feel some glimmerings at least of solidarity with the starved and exploited members of their sex."

As the WSPU's tactical militancy escalated and as more middle class women joined the struggle, the WSPU inevitably became more and more right wing. As the campaign limited itself to the one issue of votes it was prepared to ally itself with all classes. Many women were eager to demonstrate that if they had the vote they would be on the side of the ruling class. As Mrs Pankhurst put it, "We are law-breakers because we want to be law-makers." Christabel's 'incipient Toryism' was even more in evidence in 1910 when, at the King's death, the WSPU suspended all actions and printed a black border on its paper, *The Suffragette*, and "vied with the conservatives in her expression of devotion to the throne."

Similarly, Christabel further capitulated to the Tories in calling a truce in favour of the Conciliation Bill, described by Sylvia Pankhurst

as "mainly aimed at placating prejudices of the conservatives which would have effected enfranchisement little more than a million women, mainly propertyless widows and spinsters."

The WSPU, under Christabel Pankhurst, moved further to the right in 1911 as a series of strikes, official and unofficial broke out amongst such diverse sections of workers as the tailors, the dockworkers, the miners and the seamen. Christabel's reaction to this unprecedented wave of unrest and militancy was to declare that women had a greater reason for revolt than working men since the latter were not allowed to vote. She demanded that the Government make the organisation of strikes punishable at law. On the Irish Question, the attitude of the WSPU was, "No vote for women, no home rule."

Within the WSPU there was a split. Christabel Pankhurst ruled the Unionist and anybody who disagreed was asked to leave. Sylvia Pankhurst's split from

FIGHTING RAPE

The dangers and diversions

The brutal police assault on the Reclaim the Night marchers in Soho last year alerted the bourgeois media to the fact that rape and violence against women had become a major focus for the activity of feminists. For three years prior to this, events in the courts highlighted the discrimination and humiliation women seeking protection from the law were subjected to. In 1975 a case brought by Mrs Morgan against her husband who with three other men had repeatedly raped her. The case went to appeal and the Law Lords delivered the infamous ruling that no man could be convicted of rape if he "believes, however unreasonably that the woman consented."

The case caused uproar in the press, many realising that it amounted to a 'Rapist Charter'. Rape became not merely a routine topic for discussion in local women's groups but stimulated a still unresolved debate throughout the women's movement and beyond. There has however been no serious consideration of the ques-

tion in the Labour Movement in general or in the groups calling themselves revolutionary.

As socialists we must consider why rape occurs and how it can be most effectively fought. There are two main areas—the law and the state and breaking down the mythology of rape in the workplace and community.

CLASS SOCIETY

Laws against rape go back to the development of class society and the beginnings of women's oppression, with the accumulation of private property. Women were in effect the property of male heads of households, clans, etc. At reproductive age they were sold or exchanged in marriage, for goods. An unmarried woman who was raped thus lost her 'bride price' and the rape itself was seen as a form of theft. Rape first came into the law because of this.

In biblical times a rapist was stoned to death. If his victim was a married woman, she too was

stoned as an adultress. Under the feudal law system there was no universal or equal law. The feudalists were literally 'privileged'; separate laws judged by themselves, protected them and their property. Thus rape of a noblewoman was a serious offence—of a peasant, hardly a crime at all.

IMPERIALISM

Rape has always been used against oppressed sections of society. In the past, as in the Vietnam war, rape has been either tolerated or actually encouraged by the imperialist nation. Starting from a purely feminist viewpoint, Susan Brownmiller argues in *Against Our Will* that war is merely "the perfect psychological backdrop to give vent to men's contempt for women."

In fact it is rather that rape in war time is just one aspect of an imperialist army's terrorisation of the 'natives' and the destruction or confiscation of 'property'.

An example nearer to home is the situation in Northern Ireland where the British soldiers are known to have raped women during 'house searches'. This is a part of the systematic oppression of Irish people by the British state. Very few British army soldiers have been convicted of rape whilst serving in



A Philips (IFL)

Northern Ireland. Rape has become, for the British Government, a tolerable 'by product' of soldiers serving away from home in a hostile situation.

The results of the Carol Maggs case give the go-ahead for every British soldier to commit rape at any time. On 1977 Coldstream Guardsman Holdsworth was tried and found guilty of raping Carol Maggs. The rape had been particularly violent but Justice Wein commented of Holdsworth that "clearly he was a man who on the night in question allowed his enthusiasm for sex to overcome his normal good behaviour." Wein then promptly reduced Holdsworth's 3 year prison sentence to a six-month suspended sentence on the grounds that "his

Reclaiming the Night in career as an excellent soldier be completely destroyed" a sentence of three years was all to stand.

RACISM

The use of rape as one of many methods of terrorising dominating oppressed minorities will always exist under capitalism. In the United States under slavery black women slaves were repeatedly raped by their white owners. black men were frequently lynched without trial simply on an accusation of rape of a white woman being made. Today in both America and Britain black men found guilty of rape are given consistently shorter sentences. Of all men executed in America since 1930

s for the Rights of Women

SUFFRAGE

ITS

WSPU in 1907 when Mrs. Pankhurst abolished the democratic constitution and called on the members to support her as the dictator of the Union ruling through a committee appointed by herself.

SYLVIA PANKHURST AND THE EAST LONDON FEDERATION

Sylvia Pankhurst remained silent in the WSPU and led no opposition. Instead she left the centre of the stage to Christabel and decided to work in the East End of London. She explained her reasons thus, "Not by the secret militancy of a few enthusiasts, but by the rousing of the masses could the vote be won." By creating a women's movement in that great abyss of poverty, Sylvia Pankhurst hoped to raise a rallying cry for similar movements in all parts of the country. However, the East London Federation of Women, as her organisation was called, had very similar tactics to the WSPU—mass meetings, deputations, rallies, hunger strikes and prayers. Its main aim was to force the government to give universal suffrage. The main difference with the WSPU was that the ELF organised working class women whilst the WSPU centred on middle and upper class women. In addition the ELF made alliances and common cause with other working class organisations, the unions and trades councils. It was this working class connection that irked Christabel Pankhurst; she saw no value in a working class women's movement, "working women were the weakest

portion of the sex, their lives were too hard, their education too meagre to equip them for the contest." When Sylvia spoke on the same platform as James Connolly in support of the Irish dock strikers and for the release of Jim Larkin, she was summoned to Paris, where Christabel was in hiding, and summarily expelled from the WSPU.

WORLD WAR I

The first world war was to widen the gulf between the WSPU and the ELF. The latter, with its paper the *Women's Dreadnought* (later changed to the *Workers' Dreadnought*) took an anti-war stance.



They concentrated on the hardship that arose in the East End as men were drafted into the army. The ELF set up mother and infant centres, a toy and garment factory for unemployed women, cost price restaurants, clinics, day nurseries and a school. They agitated for prices to keep pace with the cost of living, for equal pay for women doing jobs previously done by men and supported soldiers' and sailors' wives and relatives for better pensions and allowances. They advised women not to register for war-work as a protest against conscription and the war.

Meanwhile the other suffrage organisations abandoned their work. The WSPU, in particular, gave, "its energies wholly to the prosecution of war. . . it rushed to a furious extreme, its chauvinism unexampled amongst all the women's societies." Its members gave white

feathers to young men in civilian clothes in the streets. Christabel demanded the military conscription of men and the industrial conscription of women, and the internment of all people of 'enemy race' in Britain. Mrs Pankhurst toured the country making recruiting speeches and even went to Russia to review the troops and urge support for Kerensky's Government. Sylvia's work was publicly condemned and repudiated by Mrs Pankhurst.

With the outbreak of the war the East London Federation was transformed into the Workers Suffrage Federation. From the time of the split with the WSPU the ELF had opened its ranks to male supporters. Work in the East End, often alongside the militants of the Labour Movement, had prepared the way for this important step away from the perspectives of the suffrage tradition. The Workers Suffrage Federation was also open to both men and women. But its platform was primarily concerned with a vague campaign to extend democratic rights. Sylvia herself described the aim of the Workers Suffrage Federation as being to "enhance popular interest in politics and give the people at large a greater share in the control of public affairs."

In the first years of the war Sylvia Pankhurst still remained steeped in the reformist traditions of the ILP, not those of revolutionary Marxism. Her initial campaigns against the war, campaigns waged in the face of bitter hostility from the Suffragettes, were based on a pacifist platform. It was the experience of the war, the limited enfranchisement of women and above all the impact of the Russian revolution in 1917 that compelled Sylvia Pankhurst and her closest collaborators to re-examine their politics.

They openly solidarised with the Bolshevik revolution. In the wake of the limited enfranchisement of

women Sylvia declared, "gone was the mirage of a society regenerated by enfranchised womanhood as by a magic wand."

It was to the class struggle, to the establishment of workers councils, that Sylvia and her renamed Workers Socialist Federation were now to look for the regeneration of society.

At its inception, the East London Federation was distinct from the WSPU *only* in its orientation to working women. It did not have its own distinct programme of class struggle. Although composed of many working class women it was not politically working class in the first years of the war. During the war Sylvia Pankhurst broke with many of the fundamental planks of both the suffragette and reformist ILP tradition. But she was never able to fully grasp the meaning and method of revolutionary Marxism.

Just as the ILP tradition from whence she came had positively fetishised Parliament and Parliamentarians so the post 1917 Sylvia Pankhurst negatively fetishised Parliament. Hence her struggle with Lenin and the Third International against standing for Parliament and seeking affiliation to the Labour Party, and her inability to play a disciplined role in the early controversies within the Third International. By 1921 her *Workers Dreadnought* was publicly denouncing the newly formed British Communist Party for reformism and opportunism, deliberately courting and then welcoming expulsion from the party.

The lessons of the period must be learnt by all those struggling for the emancipation of women. In her particular way Sylvia Pankhurst attempted to break from the reactionary logic of suffragette politics. It is for us to learn from the experience of that break and the weakness of Sylvia's politics and programme.

have been black.

Outside of the situation of war or systematic national or racial oppression there is still the incidence of 'normal' rape. Is this to be explained as Brownmiller and the Feminists would have us believe as "a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear", or is it as conventional bourgeois 'common sense' tends to assert, simply the product of that overmastering 'enthusiasm for sex' with which men are endowed. All the evidence points to the answer, neither. Rape is first and foremost an act of coercion having as its primary object the humiliation and degradation of the victim, not the purely sexual gratification of the rapist.

SEXUALITY

The oppression of women under capitalism generally invests sexuality with a powerful element of sadism. The individual psychological history of particular men in particular situations may make them active rapists. The ideological reinforcement of women's oppression ensures considerable indifference to or toleration of rape.

The Feminists however do not see rape as a result of women's oppression. Rape for them is a terror tactic, an ultimate deterrent practiced by men to obstruct the growth of confidence and consciousness amongst women. This explanation is clearly in line with the radical feminist view of women's liberation as a struggle between all

men and all women, a struggle in which becoming conscious of oppression is the decisive act, and the sphere of sexuality the central area for this.

Marxists reject both these assumptions, seeing in the working class, male and female, the agent of the liberation of women. Marxists furthermore fight for certain goals and choose certain tactics for their efficacy in forwarding this goal. This means rejecting as a priority of struggle certain results of oppression. We do not deny their reality or their importance. Simply there is no possibility of overcoming them until control over society is taken from the hands of the bourgeoisie. Those tactics which forward this aim therefore must take priority for us

FIGHT BACK

How does the women's movement propose to solve the problem of rape—or even begin to organise the fightback? Last October 200 women met at an Anti-Rape Conference in Bristol to discuss the question. Predictably, the conference failed to reach any theoretical or tactical agreement. What did emerge were quite clear differ-

ences of emphasis. Radical feminists agreed that the only method of fighting rape is through women's self-defence. The majority however felt the answer lay in the direction of Rape Crisis Centres. Whilst a third group Women Against Rape (WAR) raised a series of demands, mainly around legal questions.

THE LAW

They argue that the state could eliminate rape if it wanted to, and pose a series of reform measures to do this. The logic of their position leads to their calling for stiffer sentences for rape. Certainly legal changes cannot be ruled out by revolutionaries per se but to believe that heavy punitive measures administered by the judges will protect women is both utopian and reactionary.

We can and should demand the removal of the scandalous inequalities to which women are subjected. The present legal definition of rape—"unlawful sexual intercourse with a woman who at the time of intercourse does not consent to it" does not extend to rape within marriage or to anal or oral intercourse. Also the Law Lords 1975 ruling which measures 'consent' by the rapist's opinion must be reversed.

The ordeal of the police investigation, described by many women as 'worse than being raped', the right of the courts to question a woman on her previous sexual history, her appearance, dress etc are all clearly gross violations of women's democratic rights. The facts of the case in hand, with independent medical examination performed by a doctor chosen by the victim not the police, is essential. Women should also have the right to have the case heard in camera. We should also demand automatic compensation for wages lost, moving house, expenses incurred due to abortion and medical treatment etc. Rape Crisis Centres at present are charity funded and volunteer-run. They should be state funded, with proper medical facilities and under community control.

In terms of preventative measures a number of things can be done. Some are simple measures like adequate street lighting etc. Others involve the provision of facilities at school and after to train women in self-defence.

Socialists should argue for the Labour Movement to take up the question of workers' and women's defence in areas where rape incidence is a real threat. But as socialists we must be clear that these measures are in the last analysis only ameliorative. The uprooting of women's oppression via the family can occur only under the dictatorship of the proletariat as an integral part of building socialism. Rape is a product of this oppression

and will be suppressed and eliminated in direct proportion to the real liberation of women.

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

'Reclaim the Night' is a movement solidly grounded in the feminist perspective of 'consciousness raising' or confidence building. Thus it is male exclusionist. Whilst socialists should support defence actions by women in particular areas and argue for Labour movement assistance the building of a general movement aimed at 'red light districts' like Soho and coupled to anti-pornography propaganda is what we believe a dangerous diversion for women. Its vague slogans can play into the hands of right-wing moral crusaders like Mary Whitehouse. Worse, thoughtless marches through areas with high immigrant populations like the Reclaim the Night march in Leeds, can play into the hands of the NF racists.

The women's movement, because it has no central orientation or focus picks up issues and treats them as all-important for short periods. We have to say—yes, rape is a serious problem and there are certain measures we can take. But to the question: do we need a movement, a campaign, especially one which tries to link up rape to pornography and prostitution, the answer must be a resounding 'no'. It is a blind alley for the women's movement.

By Sue Dye

Peru / A PARLIAMENTARY ROAD TO DEFEAT

LEYLAND (from page 3)

divided from the majority on a craft basis. What is actually needed is a strategy that can unite them.

Clearly, those like the Longbridge workers, who had been convinced by Robinson i.e. the CP that the deal would be to their advantage, had every reason to walk out when the money was not forthcoming. That, however, is not the end of the story. What also has to be explained, during the strike and now, is why the Longbridge leaders, under Derek Robinson, were suddenly so vociferous in demanding strike action when they had known since January 19th that the money would not be paid. This had been reported to them at a meeting of the national negotiating committee (LCJNC), and the following day it was reported to the Campaign for Democracy in the Labour Movement (CDLM) cars conference in Birmingham.

Why was this withheld from the membership? It was two weeks before the date for payment, yet, when the pay packets did not contain the money, this was presented as a sudden unexpected betrayal. This piece of chicanery had one purpose only to cover up their own responsibility for the situation.

The call for strike action was the only possible response to non-payment, but support for it, and action to spread it, by revolutionaries could not be divorced from exposure of the role of the combine leaders throughout the pay dispute. To ignore this, as did the SWP leaflet to the mass meeting which ended the strike at Longbridge, is to let Robinson etc maintain their credibility as "militants", to leave them the weapons to betray again and again. For the SWP the important point to be made was that, "even our local leadership now admits that the deal was a bad one with too many unwritten promises and assurances, too much looseness and no significant gains for the better paid plants. . . we are now paying the price for our leaders preaching trust, co-operation and participation with this ruthless and two-faced management."

Such an approach focuses on the supposed innocence (!) of the combine leaders and away from the fact that they signed the deal in December in order to prevent militant action for a 5% busting pay claim.

This back-stabbing of the Leyland workers is entirely consistent with the political strategy of Robinson and his allies. They agree entirely with management that the first priority is to make BL profitable, ". . . if we are able . . . to make BL successful as a public company then it is self evident that that will be a major political victory" (Robinson in Comment 5.8.78). With that as their target they will always choose to sacrifice the interests of the Leyland workers.

Several important lessons have to be learnt from the defeats in Leyland. Crucially the continuing strength of the Stalinists within the combine and stewards' committees must be overcome, and a campaign to fight the erosion of shop floor organisation by participation should be launched. At the same time it is undeniable that an uneven, and as yet unfocused, militancy is developing in the car plants. Given the determination of BL management this militancy will have plenty to feed on in the coming months.

In January of this year Peru experienced its fourth General Strike in less than 18 months, a symptom of the growing crisis faced by the Peruvian military regime of President Morales Bermudez. Bermudez's seizure of power in 1976, booting out General Velasco Alvarado, whose left bonapartist regime carried out a series of nationalisations and limited land reforms, was welcomed by the American bankers and the IMF who fell over themselves to provide massive loans to the regime.

By 1978, the Bermudez regime owed £2 billion to America alone. The hoped for oil discoveries failed to materialise and the price of copper, one of Peru's main exports, had fallen dramatically in the world market. The American capitalists, through the IMF, started to tighten the screws at the beginning of 1977 by demanding a series of 'austerity' measures which resulted in a dramatic increase in unemployment and price rises of up to 50%.

The Peruvian working class responded with a national general strike, the first since 1919. The regime, clearly shaken by the force of the protests, announced elections for a 'constituent assembly' for June 1978 which would pave the way for a return to civilian government in 1980. Having attempted to placate its bourgeois critics, the regime turned with ferocity on the working class, instituting the sacking of between 5 and 6 thousand trade union leaders and militants and arresting hundreds more.

The repression failed to suppress a growing working class revolt and when further price rises were announced in June 1978, a further general strike was declared which took place in February. Caught between the upsurge of the masses and a growing mood amongst American bankers to 'dump Morales' and encourage an Argentine type military coup (on May 7th Wells Fargo bank in San Francisco declared the Peruvian Government in default of its debts), the regime, having failed to gain any concessions from the IMF declared price rises on basic foodstuffs and transport of between 50 to 100%.

Clashes

The result was a massive general strike which affected every sector of the Peruvian economy. Massive demonstrations, the storming of police stations and even the dynamiting of a power station led to headon clashes with the military. At least 24 people were killed and over 2000 arrested. 'Constitutional guarantees' were suspended and 13 left leaders including Hugo Blanco were deported, initially to Argentina. The regime found itself ever more isolated, even the bourgeois parties with their eyes on the elections were forced to take their distance from the regime, the largest, APRA (a conservative nationalist party) declaring the strikes a 'just popular protest'.

Even the Financial Times felt moved to take its American brothers to task for the risks they were taking, declaring "Austerity measures which rich countries like Britain find burdensome but in the last analysis tolerable, can have devastation effects on the political and economic fabric of poorer." (May 22nd 1978)

The crisis afflicting the generals was mirrored in the class-collaborationist Communist Party. As the leading force in the largest Federation of Peruvian Trade Unions, the CGTP, the PCP had supported the Velasco regime up to the hilt. It had refused to break from the progressive generals of the Bermudez Government, even to the point of flouting a CGTP congress

decision to call a general strike in January 1978. The result was an open split in the party with a PCP (majority) walking out and the PCP (Unidad), using its bureaucratic stranglehold on the CGTP to purge the Federation of all oppositionists.

It was against this background of rising class struggle that the left electoral blocs received substantial support from the radicalised workers and peasantry. The generals had already made clear in advance what sort of constituent assembly was acceptable to them. It had no legislative powers but was only there to draw up a constitution. This constitution had to institutionalise "the fundamental structural reforms of the revolutionary process" or it would be dissolved by the military. To further safeguard Peruvian capitalism, a series of restrictions were designed to reduce the influence of the left - those who could not speak and write Spanish could not vote - thus excluding 3 million peasants who only spoke their native languages, 40 000 signatures had to be collected and "recognised as valid" for a slate to reach the ballot.

The left groupings suffered continuous harassment from the military during the campaign culminating in the deportation of its leaders a month before the elections.

Two electoral blocs put themselves forward claiming to represent the interests of the Peruvian workers and peasants. The UDP (Democratic Popular Unity) was predominantly a Maoist grouping, having significant support of certain unions federations, most importantly the miners federation (FNTMMP). It had a classically Stalinist conception of 'stages' and called for "popular unity of the left" to form a "people's Government" made up of the workers and peasants parties plus the "progressive bourgeoisie" - which in this case meant seeking an alliance with the PSR, a group led by the 'progressive' generals of the Velasco regime who had been kicked out by the Bermudez coup.

Not surprisingly this group was supported in the elections by the PCP (M) who declared that while the slogans of the UDP were different from their own, the content ie alliance with the national bourgeoisie was the same. More surprisingly perhaps was that two sympathising sections of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International (the FIR and the FIR-CI) also participated in agreeing to be bound by the Governmental slogan of this bloc.

The FOCEP (Workers, Peasants,

Students and Peoples' Front) originated out of a disagreement with the governmental slogan of the forces making up the UDP. Led by Hugo Blanco, a leader of the PST (also a sympathising section of the USec), who had a mass following in La Convencion Valley as the leader of peasant uprisings in 1962 and 1963, FOCEP declared itself against wooing the progressive bourgeoisie in the shape of the PSR. This front had support from various local trade union federations, the POMR (the Peruvian section of the organising committee for the reconstruction of the Fourth International - linked to the OCI in France) and a Marxist grouping, Bandera Roja as well as prominent independent socialists. In order to keep this motley alliance together the programme of FOCEP was studiously vague, limiting itself to declaring support for the "struggles of the working people".

Flushes

Within this platform parties and groups were allowed to argue their own programme and demands. In this the PST were only applying the line of the USec which is reflected in Britain by 'Socialist Unity' and the fight for a "unified revolutionary organisation." Indeed shortly after Blanco's return from Europe in the flush of FOCEP's electoral success (FOCEP received 12% of the vote, the UDP 4%), he proposed the establishment of a "big workers party" around two or three elementary points, "class independence, no pact with bourgeois sectors, support to people's struggles and intransigent struggle against capitalism . . . a big political organisation should be formed around these points with FOCEP and the UDP as its basis. Each of our small parties could be current inside this party". (Blanco's interview with Amauta - Peruvian weekly, quoted in Intercontinental Press, 18th July 1978)

How can Blanco propose an all-inclusive workers party including USec supporters, 'Trotskyists' who supported a Popular Front, Maoists, centrists and even the CP reformists - during a pre-revolutionary period?

Certainly this contrasts sharply with Lenin's and Trotsky's insistence on clarity of strategy and a sharp organisational demarcation from all forms of reformism and centrism. Witness Lenin's fight against unprincipled unity in April-June 1917 and Trotsky's

LeftDeputies in the Constituent Assembly. Hugo Blanco centre.

Intercontinental Press:



BOSSSES PREPARE LEGAL ONSLAUGHT

Laurence Sparham (I.F.L.)



The recent strike wave has posed for the ruling class and the Labour government the need to decisively confront the power and militancy of the working class movement, to resolve the long standing 'trade union problem'. Peter Jenkins of the Guardian has pointed out that: "the first task of any government for the time being is to contain the power of the trade unions", and "If neither party has an answer to the TU question it follows that neither party has a solution to the problems of achieving or arresting Britain's industrial decline."

The entire political establishment is agreed on the nature of the problem, but certain divisions exist over the proposed solutions. The 'moderate' majority of the bourgeoisie favour legal reform of industrial relations only after achieving a right wing consensus for it in the TUs. They quite correctly recognise that the organisation, militancy and confidence of the rank and file in the TUs rules out an immediate confrontation with any certainty of success. The hard line minority are for drastic legal reform now, even at the expense of confrontation (the CBI for instance is for legal compulsion). The Labour and TU bureaucracy, with memories of the Tories Industrial Relations Act still fresh in their minds, would like to avoid legal wrangles for the moment. But they are not opposed to it in principle, nor are they opposed to the need for a radical reform of industrial relations. What does this so-called reform of industrial relations consist of?

control

The need to outlaw 'unconstitutional' strikes that take place before the exhaustion of dispute procedures, and to eliminate the effectiveness of 'secondary picketing', are the two major planks in this programme of 'reform'. There are a mass of complementary proposals floated: abolition of the closed shop and restrictive practices, no strike clauses for workers in 'vital' industries, compulsory secret ballots (the Government and the TUC both favour secret ballots,) and the CBI's desire that workers should shoulder the cost of strikes through compulsory low levels of strike pay, and deducting

strike pay from social security payments. All are designed to weaken if not emasculate shop floor organisation and reduce the effectiveness of the strike weapon. The solutions are in general, very clear for the bourgeoisie. Firstly the need for the return of authority and control to official trade union negotiators on the basis of watertight disputes procedure agreements, and secondly, a drastic tightening of the rules governing picketing, either by voluntary agreement or legal compulsion. To take picketing: The law concerning picketing, contrary to common belief, has changed very little over the years, and the 1974 Trade Union and Labour Relations Act did not confer any additional rights on pickets as the Tories repeatedly imply. Pickets can be prosecuted under the criminal law for the usual range of offences: breach of the peace, obstruction, threatening behaviour, etc, which gives the police wide powers of discretion, as for example at Grunwick. The 1974 and 1976 legislation have had no bearing at all on the criminal liability of pickets.

criminal

As far as the civil law is concerned, since the 1906 Trade Disputes Act there has been a statutory right to 'attend' at or near a place of work in the 'furtherance of a trade dispute'—the 1974 TULRA Act merely reconfirmed that right. Moreover this right applies also to 'any other place where another person happens to be'.

Since the 1906 Act strikers have been immune from civil action for breach of 'employment' contract. However, during the 1960's a legal precedent was being set by judges concerning the 'tort' (ie the civil wrong) of a breach of commercial contract in industrial disputes. The existing trade disputes provisions conferred immunity only on employment contracts, thus leaving strikers vulnerable under the new legal precedent. It was precisely immunity from such civil action (ie concerning breach of commercial contracts) that the 1976 TULRA Amendment Act introduced, which is why the Tories want so badly to repeal it!

If they could repeal the 1976 Amendment Act and throw out immunity for breach of commercial

contract, it would render a wide range of trade union activity illegal, especially secondary picketing. This is what Thatcher's call 'to amend the law on picketing' means. There is also a desire in Tory circles that the police, possessing as they do wide powers of discretion in relation to picketing, should get a lot tougher on the picket lines than they were for instance in the lorry drivers strike.

power

The Tories more often than not make no distinctions in their attitude to the TU movement. Rank and file militants and right wing bureaucrats are condemned alike for ruining the economy—hence the Tories call for legal reform of industrial relations right across the board, from the closed shop to the picket line. Callaghan has perceptively noted however, where the real threat to the stability of British industrial relations is coming from—not from the trade union leadership, but from the rank and file activists: "power has devolved upon shop stewards who do not fully comprehend the basic tenets of Trade Unionism".

Consequently the Labour leaders are still pinning their hopes on the moderating influence of the TU leadership over their members, hence the attempt at a Government-TUC Concordat. Callaghan's remarks are an echo of the 1968 Donovan Commission on British Industrial Relations which noted two distinct systems of industrial relations—a national, official one, and an unofficial, local one based on the shop steward system. The tendency since then has been decisively in one direction: 1) between 1969 and 1977 the number of Trade Unionists in Britain rose from 10,472,000 to 12,707,000 an increase from 44.4% to 52.5% of the entire labour force. 2) The number of shop stewards has risen from an estimated 250,000 to 300,000 in 1968 to between 350,000 and 400,000 at the present time. 3) A cursory glance at the strike statistics also proves revealing:—The number of stoppages rose to double the post war average in 1970, declined erratically to a low point in 1976 at the height of the Social Contract, but is now again accelerating upwards. 4) The continued growth since 1968 of local plant bargaining and shop stewards representation (especially in the public sector) have complemented each other, thus doing much to take collective bargaining out of the control of union officials. This has been

further reinforced by the limited decentralisation which has taken place in two of the biggest unions—the TGWU and NUPE. As one bourgeois economist put it: "the need is clear: to get authority back to TU headquarters, so that decisions can be centralised and thus be controlled by sensible considerations."

All the indicators show the massive, potential strength of the working class movement as a whole. And yet in order for that strength to be effectively employed in the defence of living standards and working conditions and trade union rights, the rank and file of the movement will have to engage in an increasingly bitter fight against the sabotage of its official leaders. Despite militant noises and aggressive stances from the likes of Fisher, who is under tremendous pressure from his rank and file members, the Trade Union leaders, are desperately trying to moderate wage claims and limit the militancy of their members, to divide one section from another.

Union leaders are faced with the demands of a capitalism in deepening crisis. The cry for increased profit rates, to improve the competitiveness of each firm, can only mean workers being forced to accept real wage cuts. Demands for increased productivity, mean speed up and a harsher 'labour discipline', bolstered by the lengthening dole queues.

The trade union leaders, who accept, 'the mixed economy', as eternal, a natural order in which they act as brokers between Capital and Labour, have no answer to these demands. They suggest chauvinist and state capitalist remedies like import controls or increased government investment in industry which they themselves hardly take seriously, but their real message is 'restraint' for the workers. 'Help the economy recover; a little hardship now and prosperity will soon return.'

Remembering the nightmare years between 'In Place of Strife' (1969) and the Industrial Relations Act (1972) during which the militant led workers bundled their leaders unceremoniously into action, the TUC's message to the Tories is, 'Leave them to us to discipline'. Thus, whilst they like secret ballots, would love to see the shop-stewards bound and gagged, and hate effective picketing, they at present oppose legal shackles, preferring to 'reform' the 'abuses' themselves.

In recent struggles, like the lorry drivers strike, rank and file militants have shown they know many of the key tactics that win; flying or secondary pickets etc. But the present bosses' offensive,

will be more vicious and sustained than the Heath Government's attack. The State, thanks to a Labour Government now has its flying picket busters, the Special Patrol Group. Battles will be more brutal than in the early seventies. In addition the Labour and Trade Union leaders have sold the pass to the Tories by agreeing with them that effective trade unionism is a "problem". They have openly fingered the "culprits", the militant rank and file leadership.

For these militants to continue to accept the leadership of these treacherous bureaucrats and to share their basic political outlook is to enter the fight with both hands tied behind their backs. The working class does need re-formed trade unions. It needs unions that can defeat the bosses offensive. It needs trade unions that under the leadership of militants grouped in a revolutionary party can become weapons to overthrow the bosses state and play a key role in the construction of a socialist society. However, to achieve this requires first a revolution in the trade unions themselves. The bureaucrats must be kicked out once and for all. Full and real democracy must be our watchword—not the mock parliamentarism of the secret ballot, where each person votes in isolation with Robin Day or Woodrow Wyatt screaming from the paper or the screen, but votes in mass meetings after full debate. We are for the recallability and regular re-election of all representatives from top to bottom of the unions and for the salaries of the full-time officials of the unions to be pegged at that of their members.

unity

To achieve unity and effectiveness across the industries and within them, shop stewards' committees must become universal and upon their base, combine committees covering all the major companies must be built. The moribund trades councils need to be replaced by councils of action based on workplace delegation.

On this basis we can rout the 'Trade Union Reformers', the bosses and their Tory and Labour agents who want to make the unions prison cells for labour discipline. The answer to 'Trade Union Reform' must be, No Legal Shackles on the Unions! For the Complete Independence of the Unions from the State! Kick Out the TUC Collaborators!

by Mike Rooke

KICK OUT TUC COLLABORATORS! PUT UNIONS ON WAR FOOTING!

workers power

The insurrection in Teheran was not a blow to the Shah's generals, at one eight of whom have now paid for their crimes before firing squads. It was also a serious blow to the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, to the mullahs and to their bourgeois allies. Khomeini and Bazargan had been involved in intensive negotiations with the generals for a peaceful transfer of power to themselves. Whilst the assault on Doshan Tappeh was going on, mullahs in loudspeaker vans touring the area pleaded with the attackers to go home on the orders of the Shi'ite leader. They were ignored. The worst fears of both the Ayatollah and his allies have materialised. The army has disintegrated and the masses are armed.

The calls of the Ayatollah for guns to be handed in to the mosques have been largely ignored. Workers on strike have only returned to work slowly and grudgingly and there have been protests from workers' representatives about the high handed and undemocratic hijacking of the revolution by the mullah-dominated revolutionary committees. Yet, despite the crucial role played by the workers and the armed masses in the overthrow of the Shah, State power has not passed into their hands but into those of the shadowy 'Islamic Revolutionary Committee' of the Khomeini entourage. Bazargan's cabinet is a poor second, existing mainly to provide international respectability. This governmental apparatus is in no sense a gain for the Iranian masses. Indeed, it is seeking to cheat them of the fruits of their suffering and sacrifice during the last fifteen months.

Stampede

Khomeini, faced with this situation, has a three-pronged strategy. Firstly, to reconstitute the professional army as quickly as possible and to disarm the guerillas. Secondly, to stampede the masses into endorsing the 'Islamic Republic' through a 'referendum' and to establish a conservative bourgeois regime in office. Thirdly, to isolate, disarm, and then crush the Left forces — the Fedayeen, the Tudeh and the factory and strike committees and to force the workers back under the old conditions.

With his first objective, re-establishing the army, he has real problems. Rank and file soldiers and airmen have vetoed the choice of Bazargan and the Revolutionary Council for top commands and positions. Bazargan was forced to withdraw his nominee for Air Force chief. The soldiers of the 16th Armoured Division arrested the Brigadier-General appointed by Khomeini's Council — he has subsequently been executed. In most barracks continuous soldiers' meetings are taking place and demands for the removal of all the generals, and for the soldiers' right to veto all appointments, have been raised. Bazargan knows that he cannot yet order the troops to disarm, or use them against the left wing guerillas. He is using a time-worn scheme,

a 'National Guard'. Constituted from soldiers, mullah-dominated militia-men and guerillas such a force, Bazargan hopes, can perform a holding operation until the army is rebuilt. It could play the same counter-revolutionary role as the French 'National Guard' did in June 1848 when it smashed the Parisian workers, similarly, the Freikorps were used in Germany in 1919. Revolutionaries must counterpose to a Bazargan-Khomeini national guard the call for the universal arming of the workers and peasants, the creation of soldiers' committees and the election of all officers. Only a well-armed and disciplined workers' militia can protect the working class, the national and religious minorities and extend the revolutionary demands of the masses.

Time

With Khomeini's second task, establishing his conservative clerical-bourgeois republic, time is of the essence. The longer it is delayed the more will his reactionary bourgeois politics be exposed. To reach this 'stability' a referendum is to take place as soon as possible — in a matter of weeks according to the Revolutionary Committee, two months according to Bazargan. The masses would be stampeded into declaring for an Islamic Republic and then a rubber-stamp 'Constituent Assembly' would approve an already drafted constitution.

Revolutionaries have the task of winning the working class to block this reactionary design. Such a referendum would be aimed at obstructing any advances that the working class could make in the present situation. To participate in it, would, therefore, be to accept the validity of this obstruction.

Already the Tehran press is being subjected to a heavy, 'Islamic censorship'. 'Worse than Bakhtiar's' according to journalists. Bazargan has announced that he will vigorously enforce the 'illegality' of the Tudeh Party.

Revolutionaries must argue for immediate strike action to

Fedayeen: military technique OK but their politics spell disaster.



win an end to all censorship and the legalisation of all workers' parties and their press. They must argue against a referendum on the Islamic Republic and organise the working class to boycott it. Instead they must call for the convocation of a Constituent Assembly elected by universal suffrage and with no restrictions on its powers either from the Provisional Government, the mullahs or the army.

Khomeini's third task is to crush those organisations based on and voicing the demands of the working class. He denounces Marxists as traitors to the Islamic revolution and threatens to 'crush' them. All that stops him is that the workers and the armed guerillas are too strong and his own muslim forces not yet prepared to turn against the workers. Khomeini has persuaded the workers to return to the factories, to the offices, the oil refineries. But what is taking place there is a ceaseless round of mass meetings. At them workers are engaged in the formulation of demands; for nationalization, for the ousting of pro-Shah managements, for improved work conditions, hours of work and pay, for the presentation and extension of all the elements of supervision and control won in the mass strikes.

It is this economic and political awakening of the working class that Khomeini wishes to smother in Islamic obscurantism. To do this he must root out the workers leaders — the activists, the strike organisers. Many of these are Fedayeen or Tudeh sympathisers or are gravitating towards these parties.

Defeat

First he must disarm and defeat them on the streets. Unfortunately despite the heroism of these militants, the grotesquely distorted 'Marxism' they have imbibed from Stalin's Russia and Mao's China will make it much easier for the Ayatollah to do this.

This 'Marxism' leads to a view of the revolution as involving rigidly separated stages. The goal at the moment is the completion of a national democratic or peoples revolution. To this the working class must restrict itself. Its socialist goals — nationalisation of all industry and banking, a planned economy etc must be postponed indefinitely, subordinated to an alliance with the 'national bourgeoisie' or the anti-imperialist mullahs.

This strategic alliance with the proletariats class enemies reduces the workers to a critical pressure group. To call this dangerous and self-defeating role the leadership of the working class in the peoples democratic revolution does not alter the reality of the situation one iota. In practice it is seizing a tiger by the tail, twisting it occasionally and defending yourself against the incensed beast with appeals for it to recognise your leading role.

Stalinist-Maoist dialectics justify this suicidal course by asserting that the principle contradiction (Imperialism versus the People) is dominant over the fundamental



Khomeini lays down the Law.

Khomeini prepares attack on Left

contradiction (proletariat versus bourgeoisie) at this stage.

This algebra of opportunism has caused disaster after disaster in the past two decades alone as 'progressive generals' and 'national bourgeois' suddenly ignored the 'principle contradiction' and launched bloody offensives on the workers. If Iran is not to be added to Indonesia and Chile, the Tudeh and Fedayeen militants must be broken from these politics of destruction. The Tudeh carry out these policies in the most servile and grovelling manner. A spokesman quoted in the Morning Star (Feb 24th) "We have shown our good will to Ayatollah Khomeini by instructing all our members in the factories and the oil industry to return to work"

Their goal for the workers struggle is a government of 'national independence' made up of the National Front bourgeois parties, religious leaders and themselves. They offer to hold back the workers to placate these allies. Allies who moreover uphold the law banning the Tudeh.

The Fedayeen are much more abrasive, calling a large demonstration (150000) in Teheran University on February 22nd in partial defiance of Khomeini's warnings. Their demands include the call to dissolve the army, forming a real 'peoples army'. They call for 'peoples councils' to run factories, businesses and local affairs. They call for land to the poor peasants and full rights for women and the oppressed nationalities.

But in the last analysis they too call for a 'share' in the power at the moment exercised by the mullahs and the bazaar bourgeois. The Fedayeen's 'militancy' amounts to a more radical list of

bourgeois democratic demands plus the hybrid 'peoples councils'. They add to this a commitment to guerilla struggle "as a strategy as well as a tactic". This approach is likely to prove an obstacle to the formation of democratically controlled mass workers militias.

Groups founded on this basis — whether in Portugal (PRP) or in Latin America show a tendency to desert the working class at key moments. Either by putchist adventure or by voluntary disappearance into the underground when ruling class repression looms.

To stand any chance of influencing militants or sympathisers of the Stalinist organisations Iranian Trotskyists will have to stress a number of key positions. In the face of Khomeini's offensive the should be

AN appeal for united front of workers parties centred on Legality for all workers parties, trade unions etc.

An armed workers defence militia. For a sovereign Constituent Assembly. Boycott the Islamic Republic Referendum

The centralisation of factory and strike committees into city wide workers councils.

These limited demands should be accompanied by calls on the Tudeh and Fedayeen to break with the bourgeoisie and the mullahs join the struggle for a Workers Peasants Government. In no case should Trotskyists obscure their strategic goal of working class power based on soviets or their total opposition to the Khomeini-Bazargan government. It is the task of overthrowing this Government that Trotskyists must win organised workers, peasants, soldiers and oppressed nationalities.