

Workers Power

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ORGANISE TO BEAT TORY LEGAL ATTACK

The legal right to picket, to conduct union business free of the interference of the bosses and the media and the right to organise a closed-shop are under attack. The Thatcher Government is hell bent on doing what Heath, and Wilson before him, failed to do — put legal shackles on the trade unions.

With the inflation rate inching towards 15% and with the world economy grinding towards recession, the Tories are desperate to hold down real wages. They want to push wages down on a scale that Dennis Healey managed only in 1976/77. They hope that increased unemployment will press back wage demands, and they want to divide workers in the public sector against workers in the 'profitable sectors' of British industry.

But in the jaws of a recession, with workers anger mounting as a result of inflation these measures will not be enough. That is why the Tories are openly contemplating deploying the weapon of a legal statutory wage freeze to hold back the next wave of wage bargaining. Thatcher never ruled out this option throughout her election campaign.

The response of the chief TUC bureaucrat, Len Murray to these attacks has been predictable. He couldn't get to Thatcher and Howe fast enough to offer TUC co-operation in restricting picket lines, in holding secret ballots and in operating a more flexible approach to the closed shop. As Duffy, Chapple and Jackson have shown Murray speaks as the representative of the TUC.

The workers movement must prepare now to meet the Tory offensive head on. In every union branch, shop stewards committee and union conference militants must organise to force the union leaders to break off all co-operation with the union busting Government. They must commit the officials to no talks, no deals, no anti-union legislation. They must prepare to remove from office all officials who won't be bound by this discipline.

Labour's Concordat with the TUC proved that the Union leaders are prepared to act to sabotage effective picketing. That was proved in the transport drivers strike.



"... the will exists to defend living standards and prevent the breaking up of the trade unions ..."

Murray has run to the Police Federation to promise that he too wants 'law and order' on the picket lines. Only mass pickets in defiance of all restriction codes and organised for defence against police attack can maintain the right to effective picketing.

The employers and their press lay great store by their campaign for a secret ballot. The Tories are offering government funds to organise the ballots. They do so knowing that important sections of workers can be won to their campaign. In the face of this attack which will open up union elections and policy making to the direct intervention of the Government, the press and the media, militants will have to take up their own campaign to thoroughly democratise the unions. They must fight for all decisions and election to be taken in work-time after ample argument.

They must ensure that provisions are made for women workers to play a full role in the unions through the provision of nursery and creche facilities for union meetings. Vitality they must fight to make all officials regularly reelectable and permanently recallable. This struggle to turn the unions into democratic fighting bodies will inevitably be waged against the resistance of the trade union leaders . . . and the Tories.

In every locality trade unionists must prepare to face the offensive. Councils of action based on fighting working class bodies, most vitally the shop stewards committees, must be built in preparation for struggle. They must organ-

ise now to support all groups of workers who take on the Tories' plans

The massive struggle that smashed Heath's Industrial Relations Act showed that the attempt to place legal curbs on the unions cannot be halted by localised or sectional struggle. In the first four months of this year over six million working days were lost to the employers through strikes. This shows that the will exists to defend living standards and prevent the breaking up of the trade unions by direct action.

In the face of the resolute Tory attack the workers movement must draw up its battle plans now. It must prepare to mobilise the mightiest weapon in the arsenal of trade union struggle — the General Strike — to destroy the Tory threat to trade union rights.

The employing class have been trying for ten years to legally curb the rights of trade unions. It has not prepared this third attempt lightly. That is why we say that the task of militants is to secure the maximum unity to prepare the organisations and the mass action that will enable us to wield the General Strike weapon against the Tory threat to legally shackle the unions.

Wilson failed. Heath failed. Our task is to ensure that Thatcher fails too. But the working class will only put a final stop to the attacks on its rights and living standards in the developing crisis of capitalism if it enters on the road of struggle for power based on the mass organisations built in struggle with the capitalist class.

'DEFEND THE UNIONS'

Does SWP know how?

AS THE TORIES shape up to deliver their onslaught on the working class, the leaders of the TUC have begun clamouring for talks with Thatcher and for consultations on the budget with Howe. Clearly the union leaders want to be seen to have had some say in the attacks on their members, the better to dampen the likely militant response to the Tory offensive from the rank and file. In this situation, and in the wake of the betrayals under the Labour Government in the form of the Social Contract and the Concordat, it is crucial that the unions be taken out of the hands of the bureaucrats.

To achieve this, a movement must be built inside the unions and based on the rank and file. The Socialist Workers Party (SWP), sensing the likely upturn in industrial struggle under the Tories, have called a conference of their Rank and File Organisation for the 23rd June under the title of "Defend Our Unions". This forum could serve as a valuable rallying focus for militants in the prelude to a showdown with the Tories over jobs, cuts, wages and union rights. Out of such a conference militants could emerge armed with the politics and prepared to pursue the tactics, that are necessary to beat the Tories. A network of local Rank and File groups, based centrally on the existing shop stewards organisation, but extended to encompass all other sections of the working class could begin to be built. Whether or not the SWP or its rubber stamp, the Rank and File Organising Committee, will be able to, or even want to, match up to these tasks is another matter entirely.

Rallies

This will be the fourth such conference called by the SWP (or its forerunner IS) since 1974. The last one was held at the height of the Firemen's strike in November 1977 and was the weakest in terms of trade union support and delegacies. During Labour's period of office the SWP, bemused by the downturn in the industrial struggle, had turned their backs on serious rank and file trade union work, in favour of party building gimmicks such as the Right to Work Campaign and the Anti Nazi League. All the conferences have had one thing in common — they have failed lamentably to provide a forum where trade unionists can thrash out a strategy to arm militants in the fight against wage controls, inflation, redundancies, cuts etc. Instead they have been industrial 'rallies' where militants are encouraged to stand up and describe how they fought in their workplaces, while the odd SWP leader, with a rank and file hat on, explains at the end of the conference why socialism is relevant to the general struggle. How many militants who came away from the last Manchester conference found anything of use from it after the euphoria had evaporated? The one day strike in support of the firemen, agreed upon, never materialised and the Organising Committee elected by the conference has rarely, if ever, met.

The present Rank and File Conference, we are promised, will be something different, "a forum for rank and file militants to thrash out our common problems" (SW5/5/79), "a modest working meeting" according to Phil Marfleet in the latest SWP Industrial Bulletin. So far, though, its organisation has followed a predictable pattern.

Its invitation letter fails to invite resolutions or proposed policies from trade union bodies, or even to say whether such things will be allowed; the "ideas and resolutions" promised from the organisers have failed to materialise less than a month before the conference, guaranteeing no chance for discussion amongst the delegating bodies. We are heading for yet another SWP controlled rally.

The reasons for this don't just lie in the SWP's desire to "manipulate" the conference — rather the rank and file conferences are a reflection of the inadequacy of the SWP's politics. They see the building of a Rank and File Movement in largely organisational terms — linking together those militants willing to fight and organising them to challenge the reformist leaders control over the unions. These 'fighters' are linked up around militant policies — against wage freeze, against cuts etc — by the thread of the SWP which episodically reminds the 'fighters' of the socialist goal. What the politics of the SWP blinds its supporters to, is the fact that 'militant policies' are not only insufficient for the situation facing trade unionists but are increasingly difficult to win unless they are seen as part of a concrete alternative strategy to the one put forward by the reformists. We are no longer in the 'prosperous' Sixties, when militant shop floor actions could be seen to deliver the goods in terms of better wages and conditions. Capitalism on a world scale has moved into a period of chronic instability.

Profit

The British capitalists in particular are faced with declining markets, ever sharpening international competition and declining profit rates. Only a fundamental restructuring of the British economy, paid for by massive attacks on working class living standards so as to boost profits, offers a way out for the bosses. This strategy, involving the progressive weakening of trade union organisation and rights alongside the threat of unemployment and direct state repression, has been pursued in different forms by both Labour and Tory Governments. We must answer this with our own solutions. When workers ask "where will the money come from to pay for social services?" "what if the boss goes broke?" and "how do we prevent our wage rises being eroded by inflation?" it is not sufficient to reply, as the SWP does, that "They can all afford it", and all we have to do to make them is to "get back to our roots", that is the shop floor militancy of the sixties and early seventies.

The crucial first step to develop a fightback against the Tories is to organise the most class conscious militants, in an opposition movement in the unions, around a

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A NEW MASK FOR WHITE RULE

The massive propaganda drive in Britain and the United States, for recognition of the Muzorewa government and the lifting of sanctions is bearing fruit. It has already gained support of the US Senate and the leadership of the Tory Party.

But while the British press and television announce the formation of a 'black majority' government in Zimbabwe, power remains firmly in white hands. The white ruling class retains control of the civil service, the armed forces, police, top management, ownership of industry and the land. The so-called safe-guards, in fact entrenched white privilege are written into the constitution and accepted by the collaborationist leaders, Muzorewa and Sithole.

The elections, with their high turn-out and apparently overwhelming support for Muzorewa, are being used as 'evidence' to legitimize the regime. They certainly represent a set-back for the Patriotic Front which had vowed to prevent them, but was unable to counter war-weariness with a clear alternative for the Zimbabwean masses. But the elections were far from being "remarkably free and fair" as the press is claiming. The terror campaign came not from the Patriotic Front but from the internal settlement forces.

The Rhodesian army was on the offensive in the months leading up to the elections, raiding villages and camps, striking into Zambia and Mozambique and operating a form of 'defoliation' policy by destroying crops in areas where the Patriotic Front operated. Both Sithole and Muzorewa used the interim government period to build up private armies - Muzorewa getting backing from South Africa. In the month of the election period, thousands of ZANU and ZAPU suspects were interned. Employers were sent circulars explaining the importance of ensuring all their employees got to the poll and of 'educating' them on the importance of voting.

Racist

But they are not just racist backwoodsmen. The Carter-Young-Callaghan-Owen strategy was only one Imperialist option in Africa. It envisaged the transference of Southern Africa to a neo-colonial situation, with black bourgeois and military-bonapartist regimes safeguarding Anglo-American interests. The other section of the Imperialist bourgeoisie sees things differently. Observing the meagre soil for stable black bourgeois regimes, the dynamic of national liberation struggles that will inevitably clash with the white settler regimes, and the growing strength of the working class, these Imperialists are determined to preserve the certain bastions which the racist regimes provide.

The South African régime wants an end to the wars in the southern half of the continent so that it can continue the process of economic domination, building up its network of markets and developing areas for profitable investment. But this does not mean peace at any price. Having been rocked by the Soweto explosion following

the victory of the MPLA in Angola, the régime continues to throw its armed might against all forces whose victory would give heart to resistance forces especially the workers' movement inside South Africa. In the case of Zimbabwe, this means arming Muzorewa and guaranteeing economic and military support to the new government.

Alongside the strategy for creating external stability runs the 'liberalization' project now being advocated by a government-backed commission. Sections of the South African bourgeoisie, backed by the multi-nationals such as Anglo-American, have for some time been advocating a relaxation of the apartheid laws. The new proposals involve legalizing black trade unions, allowing the right to strike and opening up skilled jobs to Africans. The aims of this liberalization are four-fold. First is the creation of a new source of skilled labour, the job reservation for whites having caused a choice shortage. Secondly, the régime hopes to head off the ever strengthening black resistance by buying off the leadership of the most powerful sections in key industries.

Explosive

Thirdly, the removal of the most visible signs of apartheid might enable the leaders of the surrounding black states to speed up 'detent'. Finally, the new measures should encourage investment - there have been signs of a slackening off, partly as a result of the 'disinvestment' campaign but mostly because the shortage of skilled labour and the explosive situation caused by rigid apartheid policies were making South Africa a less attractive investment prospect.

But the new policies will not "abolish apartheid". The core of it - the maintenance of the Bantustans providing a reserve army of cheap, migrant labour, will remain. Only those workers whose homes are in the urban areas will qualify for the new rights. Further, the legalized black unions will have to register and thus be subject to state control.

The South African Project is thus to keep the black masses throughout the Southern part of the continent in a state of subjugation and to consolidate South Africa's position of 'foster mother' to the whole area. What forces are there to oppose this?

Despite Carter's human rights stance and his unwillingness to recognise the Muzorewa régime, his interests, too, are to create a stable Southern Africa dominated by imperialism. Britain and the USA want to impose a neo-colonial solution on Zimbabwe - but they want to be sure it will work. This involves crippling the Patriotic Front opposition, either by persuading one or other section to settle, or by denying them the support of the Front Line states. While the divide and rule, tactic has been temporarily stymied by the new unity agreement, Carter and co are concentrating on winning over the OAU leaders to tolerating recognition or at least to increasing pressure on Muzorewa and the Patriotic Front to settle. Nigerian support is the key to this, given that state's importance to imperialism as an oil producer,

centre for investment and policeman for imperialism.

Imperialist intervention cannot be ruled out, although it is unlikely to be direct. In the event of a 'total break down of law and order' in Zimbabwe, tacit support for either South African or OAU forces is possible. The imperialist backed Tanzanian invasion of Uganda has provided a useful dress rehearsal.

It is obvious that the imperialist leaders will not stand in the way of South Africa and its supporters any longer than they think necessary to safeguard their own interests. But neither can the Patriotic Front leaders be trusted to oppose a neo-colonial solution. While they will fight for an end to white rule and for varying degrees of statization and land reform, their objectives do not include the destruction of capitalism. Their guerrilla strategy, which allowed Muzorewa to consolidate his support, flows from their limited nationalist politics.

The only force in Southern Africa capable of defeating imperialism is the working class - and it can only do so by going beyond the limits of national struggle to class struggle, with a revolutionary leadership. Sections of workers have been growing in strength and confidence both in South Africa and Namibia, where a strike wave in January shook the régime and testified to the fraudulence of the elections last Autumn.

However, the proposals for easing apartheid restrictions carry dangers for the workers' movement. Already, black union leaders have welcomed the rec-



Picture: John Sturrock (Report)

ommendations which will secure for them a privileged and strengthened position. 'They couldn't believe it was true. It was like a dream; we are so jubilant', said Lucy Mvubelo, general secretary of the black National Union of Clothing Workers, after reporting the commission's proposals to 400 trade union officials. (Newsweek 14.5.79) The registration trick has been used in Zimbabwe for years and, together with CIA and AFL/CIO sabotage, was a useful tool for weakening the union movement.

In both Zimbabwe and South Africa, independent working class organisation is essential. Demands such as recognition of free trade unions, political parties and the dismantling of the migrant labour system must be linked to a programme for socialist revolution. Armed workers' militia are needed in Zimbabwe, rather than reliance on the guerrilla struggle. The need for a revolutionary party, one that can lead an effective offensive against imperialism and against the indigenous nationalist bourgeoisie mobilising the power of the working class in a struggle for Socialism, is posed ever more sharply.

EXECUTIONS PROTECT KHOMEINI'S

The Iranian bourgeoisie and the Khomeini led Islamic establishment are continuing their offensive against the independent organisations of the working class in Iran. They are intensifying their attacks on the Left and the movements for democratic rights that gathered considerable strength in the struggle to bring down the Shah.

Prime-Minister Bazargan, spokesman for Iran's bourgeois has openly blamed Iran's economic chaos and crisis on "excessive" pay rises won by workers in the last months of the Shah. He has attacked strikes and called for vigilance against the left declaring Ayatollah Motahari - the assassinated head of Iran's Secret Council - as a fallen victim of the struggle against Marxism.

Khomeini and the Islamic leaders also recognise the threat that the Iranian working class poses to the creation of an Islamic Republic in the hands of the bourgeoisie and the mosque hierarchy. This was shown clearly by the actions taken by the mosque dominated Komitehs to prevent the independent mobilisations of workers to celebrate May Day.

In Tehran Khomeini's supporters organised their own demonstration in opposition to that called by organisations of the left. In Isfahan, where a student was shot on a demonstration of the unemployed in April, the local Komiteh surrounded the Workers House

before the May Day demonstration was due to leave. The Isfahan Komiteh challenged employed workers with instant dismissal if they were to join the planned demonstration.

The mosque hierarchy has moved decisively against the critics of the growing authority of the Islam Komitehs. Khomeini has called on Moslems to fight more fiercely against secular opponents of the new régime than they did against the Shah.

In May Islamic workers on the paper Kayhan locked out journalists midly critical of the régime. Khomeini backed the sacking of these journalists, "the press writes in support of traitors and criminals, it is not our press." The Islamic authorities have closed down the paper Ayandegan and the Islamic militia have seized anti-clerical works from Tehran's bookstores. In the western city of Khorramabad bookshops have been ransacked for left-wing books which were publicly burnt to cries of "Islam is victorious, Communism is destroyed."

The new régime continues to face mounting demands for autonomy from the national minorities of Iran. Kurdish leader Sheikh Ezzredin Hosseini has called for the solidarity of the Arabs, Baluchis and Turks in the battle for autonomy. An unofficial militia in the Khuzestan Arab region has attacked, and briefly held, the town of Masjedez Soleiman.

The Irish Socialist Labour Party (SLP) has expelled supporters of the Irish Workers Group (IWG) from its ranks. The expulsions signify a decisive triumph for the reformist leadership of the SLP in their battle to turn the party into a bankrupt electoral machine prior to the local elections in June, 1979.

The SLP was formed in November 1977 following the expulsion from the Irish Labour Party of two key figures in the left reformist 'Liaison' group. This took place against a background of mounting working class discontent. The defeat of the Coalition Government of the Labour Party and Fine Gael - the party of the Irish big bourgeoisie - in the General Elections of May 1977 reflected widespread working class hostility to a government which had attacked workers living standards, escalated repression, sanctioned police torture and sabotaged attempts to extend the provision of contraceptives. Resentment within the Labour Party crystallised around the Independent Labour campaign which Dr Noel Browne - the maverick of the parliamentary left - and Matt Merrigan - a leading Trade Union official - waged in the General Election. Browne and Merrigan were expelled from the Irish Labour Party in October 1977. With their supporters they called a conference to decide whether to form a new party. The conference attracted many to the left of the expelled Labourites and voted overwhelmingly to

The SLP in Ireland

While moving to destroy the independent organisations of the workers, and democratic rights for journalists and nationalities, the Islamic council has still had to claim to be waging a struggle to destroy the forces of the hated old régime and to commit the régime to the struggle against Imperialism.

The much publicised secret trials and executions, the death penalty pronounced on the Shah and the planned show trial of 13 ex-deputies, two senators and the head of the Shah's National Resistance Party (Rastakhiz) are a vital part of the tactics of the Khomeini-led Islamic Council. They serve to satisfy the masses demands for retribution and the dismantling of the old apparatus of repression. At the same time their secrecy prevents the masses from openly witnessing the true extent of corruption and torture and the real record of many of their new masters now parading their credentials as fighters against the Shah.

With many of the local Komitehs openly using ex-Savak forces for their work, the role of the show trials in deceiving the masses is doubly important.

The Iranian bourgeoisie are clearly unhappy about the possible dynamic of the trials and purges. They know too well what would be revealed if the masses were free to unlock the secrets of the Shah's state apparatus. That

OF TWO METHODS

form a new party. Only the League for a Workers Republic (Irish supporters of Lambert's Organising Committee for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International) opposed the formation of a new party arguing instead for a campaign to secure re-admission to the Labour Party. Of the other left groups in attendance (including the Movement for a Socialist Republic (MSR)—supporters of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International), the Socialist Workers Movement fraternal organisation of the British SWP, the People's Democracy and the Independent Socialist Party and Bernadette McAliskey, only the IWG prepared a document addressing the key issue of the movement—the need to break decisively with reformism.

The founding conference of the Socialist Labour Party in November saw clear differences of political method emerge in successive debates between the IWG and the reformist dominated steering committee. The IWG argued that the Liaison's organisational break with the Labour Party in no way guaranteed a political break with reformist practices and traditions. In order to put the reformists to the test the IWG called for a commitment to direct intervention in trade union struggles aimed at building a rank and file movement under revolutionary leadership. In the face of mounting repression the IWG argued for the building of a Trade Union campaign against repression and for a perspective of bringing the working class to the lead of the anti-imperialist struggle under its own class banner. The IWG called for party commitment to the building of a working class women's movement and for the party to actively campaign for free abortion on demand.

Predictably the left reformists opposed those demands. But the conflict also served to reveal the

Centrists show true colours as reformists boot out Trotskyists

true colours of the centrist Socialist Workers movement and the Movement for a Socialist Republic who castigated the IWG for trying to "impose" their ideas on the Party. The MSR, for example, opposed IWG attempts to commit the Party to the struggle for free abortion on demand as being too potentially divisive. Maintaining the pretence of being revolutionary in their words, these groups actually behaved, in practice, in a thoroughly minimalist, reformist manner. Their refusal to argue for the most fundamental revolutionary perspectives for fear of "isolation" was reflected not only at the founding conference but throughout the battles inside the SLP.

The IWG was able to formally commit the Party to certain fighting policies in the teeth of the opposition of the Liaison network. For example the Party voted to fight redundancies by occupation, by fighting to open the books to workers inspection demanding nationalisation under workers control. It won the right for organised political tendencies to exist and argued for a special conference to decide party policy and programme which took place in May 1978.

With no assistance from the centrists the IWG had waged an important struggle to foil the plans of the left reformists. It became abundantly clear that the leadership were set on building an election machine and were looking to the centrist left to service it for them. The leaders mounted no opposition to the National Wage Agreement which was pushed through shortly after the Party's foundation. They failed to take up and mobilise for the Ferenka dispute where a sit-in followed the sacking of 1400 workers. Instead they hoped to left the conference resolutions gather dust while waiting for the 1979 local Government elections.

Battles

Important sections of the membership of the SLP were prepared to fight against the reformists for a party that was actively engaged in the battles of the class. The IWG formed, with the best elements of the party, a Workers Alliance for Action, to force the Party to fight for its declared policies on the trade union struggle, on repression and on women. This was boycotted by both the SWM and the MSR. The SWM's approach was to "live and let live". Declaring themselves the Socialist Workers Tendency, they sought to carve a niche for themselves in the party's Trade Union fraction by proposing a number of one-off campaigns, such as a Right to Work march, and to establish themselves as indispensable journalists on the



Irish workers on the move. Picture: Derek Speirs IFI.

party's paper—Socialist Labour.

With the local elections looming on the horizon the first annual conference saw a predictable onslaught against the IWG and the Workers Alliance for Action. The reformists realised that they had to put paid to the WAA and IWG if they were to hammer the Party into an inoffensive vote catching machine. They were in difficulties however. The Party programme contained policies which would limit their immediate prospects in the elections.

Expulsion

The programme, supported by a substantial number of activists, committed the Party, for example, to direct intervention on repression and the National Question and the public defence of abortion rights in the face of Catholic reaction.

Days before the conference Browne wrote to the Irish Times attacking the H block protesters. He and his coterie proposed a motion to conference that implicitly sought to restrict Party activity in the coming period to "health, education, housing and the economy". The resolution was rail roaded through the conference without speakers being taken. At the same time the Party conference enthusiastically passed, after full debate, a resolution committing the Party to specific actions on H-block including a demand on Browne and Merrigan to organise a Labour Movement delegation to inspect Long Kesh. Once again the unwillingness of the

At their conference in May, the French Communist Party showed, without a shadow of doubt, that they have made no break with the fundamental political premises of Stalinism.

Party leader Marchais made this quite clear. In timeworn, Stalinist fashion he characterised the regimes of East Europe as Socialist.

"Yes or No, is it a good thing that the people concerned have built Socialism, or would it have been better that they had not done so? Our response to this question is definite and without ambiguity: Yes, it is a good thing for them and for us."

While attributing 'negative' features to the Socialist countries, he announced without hesitation that "the balance of the Socialist countries is globally positive." From this he drew the lesson that the party should carry on with the class collaborationist "peaceful road" strategy of the French and other Euro-Communist parties.

It was the strength of Socialism on a world scale in the form of the Soviet and other East European states that made possible Marchais's peaceful road.

"Would it be possible for us here today to talk of a democratic road to Socialism in this country if the world balance of forces had been in favour of imperialism?" asked this leader as he argued for a new union of progressive forces united in their opposition to the multi-national companies, the Brussels bureaucrats and German influence in Europe! In an endeavour to drop ideological baggage likely to offend the PCF's anticipated progressive and not so progressive bedfellows, the party congress dutifully voted to

French CP re-asserts its Stalinist credentials

drop a commitment to "Marxism - Leninism" from their statutes, replacing it with a commitment to "Scientific Socialism".

The PCF's wooing of the Social Democrats has boosted the credibility of the latter's leaders in the eyes of sections of French workers. The Social Democrats have grown at the polls and in the factories, at the expense of the Communist Party. That is why Marchais launched a new drive to strengthen the Party's cells in the workplaces and announced, in a bid to undermine the attraction of the Social Democratic leaders, that the party would concentrate on building "the union of the left at the base, rather than at the top."

Party dissidents like Jean Ellenstein, clamouring for a more decisive break with Stalinism and the Social democratisation of the party, were bureaucratically excluded from the Congress. Marchais, no doubt to the delight of visiting top Soviet bureaucrat Pomarev, spoke of the need to oppose excessive criticism of the USSR.

The Eurocommunists leaders everywhere face a stark choice. They can break with the USSR, cease to recognise it as a socialist country and, therefore, a higher form of society than capitalism. All this in the vain hope of being more successful Social Democrats than the existing leaders in the Social Democratic parties. The fortunes of the French, Italian and Spanish parties in the polls point clearly to the limited potential of that strategy. That is why Marchais and the French leaders moved to re-assert their Stalinist credentials, still confused in the minds of millions of workers with the programme of militant class organisation.

WAA press statement, suspending 3 supporters of the IWG and outlawing tendency publications was narrowly passed. After 18 months of blackmail and wheeling and dealing, the reformists were firmly in the saddle.

While the centrists voted against the suspension they were not prepared to organise a serious struggle against it. The SWT, for example, actively fought to remove IWG members from branch and fraction meetings on the grounds that they were suspended. In this way the SWT took on the job of loyal opposition and work horses for the reformist leaders.

Refusing to accept their suspensions or to cease the struggle with the party leaders, the IWG were expelled from the SLP. They have been immeasurably strengthened by the fight they have waged. They have shown (to an important section of militants) that the left talking reformists will not, and cannot, decisively break with the policies and methods of the Irish Labour Party. They have also been able to drive home the lessons that centrists, of whatever hue, cannot wage a struggle against the reformists.

Vacillating between the revolutionary and the reformist poles, centrists, while they remain centrists, inevitably end up being unable to pursue either course consistently. More dangerous still, as the experience of the SLP shows, they can, by militant talk but minimal practice, confuse and disorient those sections of workers who are breaking with reformism.

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ALLIES

is why Bazargan, in their name, has already raised the call for an amnesty. That is why he is clearly intent on limiting the authority of the local Komitehs.

Similarly Khomeini and his henchmen have found it necessary to put themselves to the fore in organising multi-millioned demonstrations against the US. The indignation of the Iranian masses at US Senatorial denunciations of the trials and executions enabled the 'leftist' Fedayeen and the radicalised Moslem Mujaheddin, to organise a 200 000-strong demonstration against US Imperialism. Khomeini supporters were able to organise a larger demonstration and send crowds against the Fedayeen chanting "These are the enemies of Islam" "The People's Fedayeen must be hanged".

It is vital to understand that a stable alliance of the bourgeoisie and the Mosque has yet to prevent the mobilisations of the Iranian masses for the final destruction of the old regime, for democratic rights, against unemployment and for a decisive break with Imperialism.

Only the independent organisation of the working class, prepared to finally break with the bourgeoisie and the Mullahs can prevent the destruction of the workers' organisations, of the democratic struggles and of the leaders of the workers and peasants who have taken up those struggles.

AIMING FOR POWER — FROM THE LEFT

TONY BENN'S decision to take his place as, 'a rank and file member of the parliamentary party, able to speak my mind both in the House of Commons and at the meetings of the parliamentary party', is clearly the first step in a long campaign for the leadership of the Labour Party.

In the face of the Tory victory, Benn has moved fast to distance himself from the Callaghan leadership at a time when the Tribune group are falling over themselves to find seats in the Shadow Cabinet.

Benn realises that any chance he has of winning the leadership will be based on support from outside Parliament. Although the most obvious source of this support is the activist element in the constituency parties, this alone will not be enough. The ultimate arbiters of power are the leaders of the trade unions with their block votes at conference.

Since 1970, Benn has made a point of identifying with the union leaders. He argued, for example, that the Wilson government fell in 1970 because, 'that government became separated from the trade union movement'. Again, in his bid for the leadership in 1976, he supported the TUC's interpretation of the Social Contract, rather than that of Wilson, Callaghan and Healey.

However, Benn's potential as 'Left' factor does not stem purely from his manoeuvring for support. His politics reflect many of the most widespread ideas and prejudices of the British Labour movement. When Tribune called him, 'The authentic voice of British Socialism' they were being uncharacteristically perceptive.

In the inevitable confrontations with the Tories, hundreds of thousands of workers will be brought into active struggle to defend their jobs, living standards and pay. Many will believe that support for Benn represents a real break from traditional Labourism as represented by Callaghan and Healey. These illusions will be bolstered by the Communist Party and their Broad Left allies together with the

Tribunite wing of the Labour Party.

Benn's emphasis on state intervention in industry has given him a radical image, but his is a radicalism which turns its back on the idea that the working class has any active role to play in the transformation of society. His reformism is basically an extension of the experience of the first post war Labour government. In order to revive the economy, both from the effects of the war and from those of the inter-war slump, it was necessary for the state to take control of such run down industries as the mines, transport and power.

Benn's attachment to this strategy for saving the capitalist economy from its own weakness was reinforced by his involvement in Wilson's 1964-70 policy of industrial rationalisation which led to such job-cutting mergers as that which produced the General Electric Company.

status quo

His period in office not only confirmed his belief in state intervention but also convinced him of the need to harness the energy of the rank and file. Like all reformists, Benn has a need to convince the workers that they have a stake in the status quo, provided a few improvements are made. In the Forties the slogan of nationalisation was enough to do this, but Benn realises that thirty years later something more is



Tony Benn needed.

For Tony Benn the Labour Manifesto of 1974, with its commitment to, 'bring about a fundamental and irreversible shift in the balance of power in favour of working people and their families', marked a return to 'the radical spirit of 1945'. Far from identifying the policies which could actually alter the balance of power between workers and capitalists, such as Labour government support for, and legalisation of, the occupation and nationalisation under workers' control of firms declaring redundancies, Benn saw only a need for more, 'industrial democracy'.

Speaking at the Eastern Regional Conference of the Labour Party in 1976, Benn explained what he meant. In order to prevent, 'state capitalism', where, 'the ownership is different but everything else is the same', he argued that, 'together with our extension of public ownership must come a change in relationships between the board of directors of the nationalised industries and the men and women who work in them'.

MARXISTS AND THE LABOUR PARTY Part Two by Dave Stocking

The Labour leadership is in disarray after their recent electoral debacle. Callaghan's public face has ceased to be sunny and become decidedly sullen. Rumours are rife of his imminent retirement to cultivate his dividends and estate. The younger aspirants to his crown have drawn back from taking office fearful that his Shadow Cabinet may prove a cabinet of shadows. Not only Benn, but also arch pillars of the right, Ennals, Barnett and Lever have withdrawn.

In part this stems from a desire to be out of the firing line once Thatcher begins her attack on the unions. That was made clear by Callaghan when he refused all support to NUPE members defending the Health Service. It does, however, indicate a deeper strategic concern about Labour's fortunes and future.

Since the early 50's, Labour's electoral support has slumped by 20%. Its individual membership has dropped by 40%. Ironically the highpoint of Labour's electoral fortunes was an election it lost. In 1951 it achieved 48.8% of the popular vote. At that time it claimed an individual membership of over one million, supplemented by a bloc vote for the Trade Unions of nearly five million. Labour's most pronounced electoral and individual membership decline dates from the mid 60's. (This is shown in our table below).

	1965	1970	1976
Individual Membership	836,765	690,191	659,058
Electoral Strength			
Year	Percentage	Total Vote	
1966	48.1	13,096,629	
1970	43.1	12,208,758	
1974	37.2	11,654,726	
1974	39.1	11,406,768	
1979	36.9	11,509,524	

The years of sharpest decline between

A further idea of what Benn wants can be seen from the proposals of the BAC workers in Benn's own Bristol constituency. Lew Gray, a steward at BAC explained their demands, which were supported by Benn, at the 1974 Labour Party conference. 'Our main proposals are for what we call a workers' council, which is elected by all the trade unionists in the industry ... this controlling council will appoint professional management to run the industry. This professional management will be answerable to the controlling council, and, of course, members of the council will be answerable to the membership which elected them'.

control

This reformist version of 'workers' control' appears to bring management under the supervision of the workers, thereby preventing them from taking decisions against the interests of the workers.

However, what it does not, and cannot, do is change the external forces which shape the decisions of the 'professional managers'.

If market conditions are such that production can only be competitive if costs are cut, then the professional managers will propose redundancies or wage cuts and the workforce will be faced with the same problems.

Worse, because it will be their own elected leaders who take responsibility for 'making the firm work' it will be they who find themselves having to recommend the speed-ups, the lay-offs and the wage cuts necessary to compete with other capitalist concerns.

The same holds true of the other 'radical' causes that Benn has championed, the co-ops (Fisher-Bendix, Triumph, Meriden) and the

Lab

1966-70, a period of Labour wage control, the seamen's strike and 'In Place of Strife'—the pioneer anti-law. Whilst the Labour Party organisation shrank (the artificially inflated official figures show a 20% drop in membership the shop floor organisation of the working class grew apace. In 1968 the Donoghue report estimated there to be some 170,000 shop stewards in industry. In 1975 the Government recorded 300,000.

shackles

Wilson and Castle's attempt to introduce an Incomes Policy, despite substantial support from the Trade Union bureaucracy ran into massive opposition from rank and file militants. They turned to imposing legal shackles... and lost. The subsequent election too. The 1978-79 re-run, with Callaghan ignoring the TUC's warning that they could not control their members, is likely to produce a rash of 'radical rethinks' in the Labour Party.

Benn and Williams both express dismay not only at the recent electoral misfortune but at the long term decline of Labourism. Benn's solution is a return to the radicalism of Attlee. Williams the right want a more fundamental change. They want to increase the distance between themselves and the unions. They claim that union militancy lost them their cherished middle ground and, in a distorted sense, they are right. The middle ground of non-class conscious workers, and the professional middle classes fear the unions. The unions play the role that the 'communist threat' in Italy, Spain and France. The Labour Right, wanting to be the natural party government for the bourgeoisie, aim to win the wavering petit bourgeoisie back to their ranks by showing that they can tame the unions. They want to prove that they alone can tie the workers to a classless policy.

Such a policy is viable in periods of considerable capitalist expansion and stability. German Social Democracy

idea of alternative industrial plants and products (as at Lucas).

The experience of the co-ops graphically illustrates both the impossibility of overcoming the effects of developing capitalist instability by reforming industrial relations within capitalism, and the way in which workers' leaders can find themselves forced to behave like any capitalist management.

In addition the effect of trying to make the firms viable is to swallow the militancy and determination that first generated the opposition to declared closures.

Benn is a member of the Institute for Workers' Control, but what he means by 'control' is the direct opposite of what revolutionaryaries have always meant by the term.

For us, workers' control means the winning, by the elected delegates of the workforce, of control over the central prerogatives of management, business secrecy, hiring and firing, production speed and a veto over all decisions that affect the workers. This can only be won in periods of considerable disruption and dislocation in industry and society caused by the anarchic operation of the laws of the profit system. At times when large firms and whole industries collapse, the only solution for workers is to assert the priority of their lives and livelihoods over profitability. Such workers' control is the only adequate counter-measure.

Benn's industrial democracy workers' co-ops would be a disastrous embroiling of workers' representatives in the operations of economic (i.e. capitalist) rationalisation.

Workers' control is, of course, not a stable state within capitalism. It is a mobilising centre for its construction. Without a fully nationalised and planned economy, workers' management of individual

BENN'S TEN YEAR PLAN

At the heart of Benn's politics and, therefore, of his appeal for support, lies his, 'alternative economic strategy'. Labour MP's are already saying that Parliament will have to debate three economic policies, Thatcher's, Callaghan's and Benn's. What is the substance of Benn's alternative?

The most coherent explanation is to be found in his 1974 pamphlet A Ten Year Industrial Strategy for Britain. Based on an entirely nationalist analysis, this presents us with a picture of British manufacturing industry, 'trapped in a spiral of decline induced by thirty years of under-investment', which has fuelled, 'a growing dependence on imported goods'. The fundamental changes in the structure of world trade and the decline of British imperialism are seen as only secondary factors, not responsible for, only accentuating, these peculiarly British problems.

Having diagnosed the problem as one of under-investment by private capital, Benn's cure is to increase investment by the government. His main aim is to double the rate of new investment within ten years. In 1974 this meant a target of £6 billion per year by 1984 — a growth rate of 10% per year even though the highest rate in modern times was 6½% in the period 1964-70.

Benn proposed that the money for this crash programme of investment

should come from three sources. Approximately one quarter should come from taxation. It was admitted that this would be at the 'expense of immediate living standards'. A further quarter would be raised by, 'holding back less urgent investment in other sectors such as commerce, services, property development and investment overseas'. The remaining half was to come from insurance and pension funds, that is, trade union funds.

Investment by such sources would have to be, 'guided,' if necessary by legislation, 'in accordance with national priorities'.

Coupled with this policy of public investment there would have to be a general policy of economic nationalism, import controls, limits on spending overseas and monitoring of the international transactions of the multinational companies. Benn saw no need for the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses. Instead he hoped to convince them to put their money where Parliament thought it most needed, rather than where it would earn the most profit.

The National Enterprise Board, NEB, was to be Benn's main vehicle for implementing the Ten Year Plan. Through it would be channelled the investment funds from taxation and the insurance and pension funds. However, the NEB was, and is, incapable of solving the problem of industrial decline because it cannot destroy capitalist ownership and control of industry. This can be seen from its history under the last gov-

ernment.

The NEB has played the role of a state-supported merchant bank which acts where private capital is unwilling to risk its money. The price that it demands of firms in return for investment is basically the same as that of any merchant bank. The initial Ryder proposals for Leyland, followed by the Edwardes Plan, for example, demanded more and more shedding of jobs in return for investment in new technology. By this means the Labour government was able to raise the threat of 'exasperated taxpayers' as a useful weapon with which to beat down Leyland workers' defence of jobs and conditions.

Economic nationalism and, in particular, the demand for import controls, is both reactionary and utopian. It is reactionary because it implies that foreign bosses are really the cause of problems that are shared by British workers and bosses. In addition, if such a policy were implemented it would inevitably set us at odds with the workers of other countries.

It is utopian because Britain's success as a trading country in a capitalist world is determined, ultimately, by the relative level of its labour productivity. Import controls are an attempt to shut out the reality of the world market in the hope that labour productivity can be raised by capitalist rationalisation and the transference of unemployment to other countries.

Our's crisis and Marxist tactics

managed to ditch their commitment to socialism and Marxist verbiage in the late 1960's. In Germany the more prosperous social soil allows Schmidt to continue this policy with little challenge as yet.

But in Britain today such a tactic is utterly self-defeating. As capitalist crises grow more severe so the middle class gravitate to the force in society offering the most powerful lead. They can be part immobilised, part drawn in behind a conscious and organised revolutionary offensive of the working class. Whatever the Eurocommunists may say this is the only way that the workers can exercise their hegemony over the middle strata in society.

purge

The right wing leaders hope they can use tax supported funds for the parties to loosen the union bureaucrats purse-strings from around their parliamentarians throats. They would like to carry through a purge of left wingers in the constituencies. They are at one in this with other European Social Democrats like Felipe Gonzales of the PSOE (Socialist Workers Party of Spain) or Bettino Craxi of the Italian Socialist Party.

Much as it may irk them, the leaders of the right majority, Callaghan, Healey, Rees and younger stars like Owen and William Rogers, cannot afford to rupture their relations with the unions. For although they are, as Trotsky called them "the left wing of the bourgeoisie" they play this role only by virtue of being parliamentary brokers for the trade union bureaucracy. Only the trade unions, unlike the constituency Labour Parties, are truly mass organisations, whose members at least episodically seek to use them as organs of direct

enterprises cannot represent the real interests of the workers as a whole.

Many workers, faced with the serious disputes and hardships that Thatcher and Joseph's policies will mean, are likely to turn to Benn as the only Labour leader who has addressed the problem of collapsing industries and firms, and of democracy in the workplace.

Of course, we do not recommend his solution but our propaganda will not materially effect the development of support for Benn. We have to convince those workers who will go along with, or appeal to, Benn that his is not a strategy that can win.

demands

Both the desire to save jobs and the demand to have a say in the running of industry are progressive. They have to be given a sharp 'cutting edge' against the bosses' plans. That is the purpose of slogans for workers' control that spell out precisely what elements of control are necessary. The same 'cutting edge' can cut through the illusions of Bennery.

Thus, in a case of proposed closure we should demand; no job loss, complete nationalisation, no compensation for the bankrupt capitalists. We should also demand workers' inspection of all the records and committees of management with no shared responsibility or confidentiality, regular reports to mass meetings of the workforce. We should argue for the workers to say to Benn, 'You say you want democracy and to save jobs, where do you stand on these measures that alone can achieve that? What will you do to help us win them?'

by Dick Pratt

struggle against the bosses. Shop floor organisation of the rank and file allows the base to push the bureaucrats into action, purely verbal or treacherous as this may be. It is this rank and file pressure that leads arch right wing bureaucrat David Bassett to threaten Thatcher with a "rough ride", or enables the 'enfant terrible' of the left, Arthur Scargill, to openly call for Callaghan's ousting and replacement by Benn.

The elections and the post election discussion has brought to the fore a new clutch of Left Reformists. Neil Kinnock, called at the Wales Labour Party, for renationalisation of denationalised firms "without compensation". David Skinner called for an end to TUC talks with the Tories and for the union movement to "gird its loins ready for battle". Ernie Roberts has called for, "members of the Labour Party and the trade unions to take control of those we elect." It is likely that they will seize the initiative from the dog-eared Tribunites like Heffer Mikado, Allaun et al.

base

The political programme of the Labour Party and Trade Union lefts is broadly the same. In fact the same can be said also for the Communist Party. But the forces they can rally, and their relative independence, is somewhat different. The parliamentary and constituency lefts have no independent mass base or mass pressure on them. Their clout in the higher councils of the Labour Party depends on the relation between the Trade Unions and the Party leaders. They are impotent in periods when the Trade Union leaders, including the lefts, are in silent cooperation with the Labour leaders. This was the case after Scanlon and Jones 'defected' in 1975-76. They will rally now to the extent that a vigorous struggle is fought in the unions against the Tories.

What must we learn from this? Although there is a possibility of a serious clash between the Right and Left over the leadership and policies of the party there can be no decisive result unless the central protagonists are the trade unions.

In the Trade Unions the right wing of the bureaucracy—Bevin and Carron in the 40's and 50's, Duffy and Chapple today—rely on using splits and divisions in their membership along sectional or craftist lines to impose an iron dictatorship within their unions. In doing this they have the avid assistance of the employers and the bourgeois media. These men, and their unions, are the natural allies of Callaghan and Healey. Their bloc vote is one of the two pillars of the throne of the anti-working class leaders of the Labour Party. The other is the absolute independence of the Parliamentary Labour Party and Prime Minister from Conference's control and direction.

Scargill

The Trade Union Lefts are pushed forward by rank and file determination to use the Unions as real defence weapons against the bosses. Scanlon in the 60's, Scargill in the 70's are a distorted reflection of the struggles of the engineers and the miners. But it is a reflection that is limited organisationally and politically.

Politically, the Lefts are still reformists in their strategy. They limit trade union activity to economic struggle, leaving political struggle, in the form of elections to Parliament, to the Labour Party. They differ from the Right in their advocacy of militant tactics to achieve traditional union goals. They can, like Scargill, talk very left on occasion because they don't have to present themselves as an alternative government like their Parliamentary equivalents.

Organisationally, despite the greater freedom they must allow in their unions, they are still bureaucrats. The structure of the union, with power solidly in the hands of the caste of relatively privileged

full-time officers, rapidly conservatises even the most sincere and 'radical' militants who take office. When lefts find themselves at the head of powerful unions faced with capitalist demands for sacrifice (voiced most effectively through the medium of a Labour Government)—as Scanlon and Jones did in the 1970's—their retreat from militancy is headlong.

Trotsky

The conversion of the "terrible twins" into pillars of Callaghan's rule and the right wing offensive via the secret ballot, have combined to produce a more right wing union leadership than that of the early 1970's. Against them the Trade Union Lefts are always, as Trotsky put it "distinguished by a total ideological formlessness and for this reason it is incapable of consolidating around itself organisationally the leadership of the trade union movement." He argued that this was the root of the impotence of the Labour Party lefts.

The Trade Union Lefts, despite considerable preponderance in periods of working class upheaval, will not struggle to take control of the Labour Party or install the Labour Left in power. As Trotsky put it "The extreme rights continue to control the party. This can be explained by the fact that a party cannot confine itself to isolated left campaigns but is compelled to have an overall system of policy. The lefts have no such system nor by their very essence can they have. But the rights do: with them stands tradition, experience and routine and, most important, with them stands bourgeois society as a whole which slips them ready-made solutions". Even in the Trade Unions Trotsky points out "As soon as a question of action arises the Lefts respectfully surrender the leadership to the Rights." As a direct consequence it is the constituency Labour Parties that remain the natural base of the Parliamentary Left. This was so for the ILP in the 20's, the Socialist League in the 30's and for Tribune since the war. But the constituency parties are composed of working class and lower middle class individual activists (increasingly the latter). The life of the ward and constituency parties centre round elections. In between them they are invariably shrunken husks tending to lose activists while Labour is in government and partially offset that decline in the early flush of opposition and electoral defeat.

pillars

Only with a firm grasp of this underlying reality of the British Labour Movement can those who wish to be revolutionaries set about the task of defeating the 'twin pillars' of Labour—parliamentary reformism and the trade union bureaucracy.

It is vital not to make the mistake of believing that spontaneous economic militancy itself will transcend the hold of reformism over the British working class. In economic struggles, without the leadership of revolutionary communists, militants' views of the political implications of their actions are unstated and unformed.

Again Trotsky was well aware of this a quarter of a century ago. "A spontaneous radicalisation of the trade unions expressing a deep shift in the masses is in itself totally inadequate to liberate the working class from the leadership of Thomas and MacDonald. National bourgeois ideology in Britain presents a formidable force—not only in public opinion but also in established institutions. 'Radical' trade unionism will break itself again and again against this force as long as it is led by centrists who cannot draw the necessary conclusions." (L.D. Trotsky 'Writings on Britain Vol 2 p.139) (Problems of the British Labour Movement).

Revolutionaries who see the massive continued hold of the Labour Party

have to develop tactics to set about breaking that hold. The key tactic for doing this is the United Front. As a single tactic it can only be stated in broad outline. It means unity (proposed at least) with reformist workers and leaders for demands which start from the immediate needs of the workers, joint struggle for which will organise the workers against the class enemy and their reformist leaders. This makes possible the replacement of reformist leaders by revolutionaries.

There are a myriad of applications of this tactic but, with regard to the Labour Party, one has come to predominate in Britain—entrism. This means revolutionaries claiming their place as members of the party that poses as the party of the working class. Trotsky advised this tactic to his British, French and American followers in the 30's—to overcome the grossly unfavourable relationship of forces (the Labour Party had millions behind it, the Stalinists tens of thousands, the Trotskyists a few dozen). Trotsky was clear that entry did not mean amalgamation with the 'Left' social democratic current but a sharp struggle against it.

This variant of the United Front tactic was no more permanent or strategic than any other. Writing about an entry tactic used by the French Trotskyists in France in 1934/5—he emphasised "Entry into a reformist centrist party in itself does not include a long perspective. It is only a stage which under certain conditions can be limited to an episode." (Writings 1935 p.116)

Effective struggle is likely to provoke a bureaucratic expulsion and then—it is necessary to know not only how to enter but also how to leave. When you continue to hang on to an organisation that can no longer tolerate proletarian revolutionaries in its midst, you become of necessity the wretched tool of reformism, patriotism and capitalism." Against attack by the bureaucrats Trotsky counselled not "making concessions, adapting or playing hide and seek but (...) a revolutionary offensive."

Healey

After the Second World War most British Trotskyists adopted a very different entrism perspective. (This is sometimes quite falsely put down to a specifically 'Pabloite' revision called 'entrism sui generis' of the early 50's. Its pioneer was none other than the arch "Anti-Pabloite", present day WRP leader, Gerry Healey.

Healey ran a paper, 'Socialist Outlook' which had as its essential feature a bloc with left reformist MP's who were not criticised—they included the Braddocks for example. The left reformists were ideologically accommodated under the rubric of 'building the Left'. The revolutionary and reformist programmes were confused in a centrist mishmash taking cover behind an evasive commitment to 'socialist policies'. This accommodation took advantage of the ambiguity of 'socialism' and positively implied its parliamentary implementation.

Centrally the 'Trotskyists' in 'Socialist Outlook', in a bloc with Left Reformists, suppressed both the historic need for a new revolutionary party and for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism by the use of the slogan "Labour to Power with Socialist Policies" or 'a socialist programme'. These slogans have become the common coinage of latter day entrists. While the 'Trotskyists' may believe they are deploying the slogan in order to expose the Labour leaders the social democratic functionaries get free left cover and their followers a dose of centrist illusions.

Thus Healey's 'Socialist Outlook' could talk in an editorial (April 51 Vol 3 No 4) of "The British Labour Government being itself engaged in freeing Britain from the exactions of the capitalist class" and muse "should ever the supporters of the old society in Britain resort to armed resistance of the peoples will, we should not hesitate to use force to defeat them, although it is true we hope that our great social transformation will be accomplished peacefully without resort to such armed force."

The paper continually carried idiotic and treacherous slogans as headlines like "Bevan Gives the Lead that Workers Want" "To Knock Out the Tories—Lead with Labour's Left!" "Well Done Nye Bevan".

In 1953 'Socialist Outlook' became a totally uncritical cheerleader for Bevan—"he is the right person to assume the role of leadership", "Support for

Aneurin Bevan and the programme he has presented is the great need of the moment!" All this did not stop the Transport House bureaucrats from crushing 'Socialist Outlook'.

After the attack British 'Trotskyists' did not even produce a paper for close on three years, selling Tribune instead. Nor were Healey's followers the only ones to operate this tactic—those of Ted Grant—today's Militant and Tony Cliff (the 'Socialist Review Group' the I.S.) did likewise each with their penumbra of tame left reformists. If younger comrades are shocked that the 'sectarian' Healey could have managed such a project as 'Socialist Outlook' they may be equally astonished to learn that John Palmer of the I.S. group (now SWP) of the early 60's thought it "inconceivable to be outside the Labour Party unless there were barricades in the streets."

SCLV

These latter day Trotskyists replaced Trotsky's tactic of entry with a long term strategic collaboration and accommodation with the lefts. On a smaller scale today's 'Workers Action' supporters are entering the road of the same adaptationist tactic in the 'Socialist Campaign for a Labour Victory' (SCLV) and the paper 'Socialist Organiser'. We have voiced our criticisms of the SCLV in previous issues of the paper. Having 'got' themselves a Left MP in the shape of Ernie Roberts (once a supporter of 'Socialist Outlook') they are caught on the end of a chain which will link them organically to Labourism.

Roberts, in 'Socialist Organiser' No 8, spells this out clearly "Every attempt must be made to unite left forces in the Labour Party—whether Tribune, the Labour Co-ordinating Committee, the SCLV or whatever. We should arrange joint meetings of these groups locally and nationally in order to work out the largest measure of agreement for unity." He proudly proclaims his intention to "link up with the Tribune Group and the trade union group in Parliament."

The forming of United Fronts on key points of action with left reformists is one thing. The formation of a semi-permanent propaganda bloc with them is another. The bloc for common propaganda for 'socialist policies' does not put the reformists to the test of struggle. Though 'Socialist Organiser' has not committed the criminal accommodations of 'Socialist Outlook' it has set off on the first steps in that direction.

In their zeal to 'unite the left' against Callaghan 'Socialist Organiser' No 8 quotes Scargill's call for Callaghan's resignation while failing to print his call for Callaghan's replacement with Benn. They failed to comment on Benn's leadership bid, a cause dear to the heart of Ernie Roberts as he informed the assembled revellers at ANL Carnival 2. Likewise they raised no demands on Scargill to act.

The root of 'Worker's Action's' current practice was summed up well by John O'Mahoney: "Premature independent organisation, proclaiming independence as the principle, can lead to political bowdlerisation, as we can also see in Socialist Unity. But it is possible to organise within the Labour Party for politics which reflect the working class interest, to take those whose first reaction to Callaghan is one of class hatred and give them a perspective of transforming the movement."

The perspective of "transforming the movement" offered by O'Mahoney is a bloc for propaganda with Roberts and other assorted left reformists. It is a bloc that requires that 'Workers Action' carries no criticisms of its new left allies, and means that 'Workers Action' supporters pose as builders of Labour's Left, not as fighters for a new revolutionary party.

O'Mahoney emphasises that he is not "advocating a slow, decades long perspective of burrowing in the Labour Party." Past experience shows that one does not have to advocate accommodation, or theorise it openly, in order to practice it. As a practical 'revisionist' said to the arch revisionist of German Social Democracy Bernstein "one does not say such things my dear Ede, one does them."

We have examined the hold of Labourism, the roots of the impotence of Labour's Left. We have also examined the tactics advanced by Trotsky and the degeneration of his method in the hands of latter day would-be revolutionaries. In the next, and final, part of this series we shall outline the tactics that revolutionaries should adopt to intervene in the crisis in the Labour Party and to break the hold of that Party over the mass of workers.

SWP's Rank and File Conference

... Continued from Page 1

programme of action to tackle the immediate problems facing the class. This does not mean simply putting a minus where the bosses have a plus—just being against wage restraint etc. It means fighting for policies that are in the interest of the working class, and that take the class beyond a fight to defend what we have and towards a struggle to seize what we don't have—control over production and a new state based on workers power. Policies that point the way from today to the socialist planned economy have to be transitional in character, they have to defend jobs, living standards and rights, but at the same time challenge capitalist rule. A good example of this would be the demands that the conference must adopt and fight for in relation to redundancies. We should fight unemployment by challenging the bosses' right to control production in the interest of profit. Threatened sackings should be met by direct action to cut hours, with no loss of pay, and to have all available work shared under shop stewards control—this would mean workers control of manning speed levels.

Secrets

The hallowed secrets of the accounts book should be forced open by workers committees, so that the plans of the bosses can be revealed. In the event of bankruptcy workers must take no responsibility for the failings of the profits system. The capitalists as a whole must be forced to maintain jobs by workers occupying factories, demanding nationalisation without compensation and under workers control.

These demands unite the class, they reflect its common and vital interests. They can be counterposed to reactionary demands for "women out first solutions", defending a woman's right to work, and they can challenge the chauvinist demands to export unemployment by import controls. They begin with real conditions and struggles but they turn the day to day fight into one directed towards the final settling of accounts with capitalism. This is a far cry from the recipe of pure militancy now and the socialist heaven in the dim and distant future, offered by the SWP.

Fighting

The fight for these demands cannot be separated from a battle to transform the unions into fighting bodies of the working class. The unions must be overhauled, the bureaucrats defeated and the real control of the unions placed in the hands of the rank and file. To do this, a rank and file movement, armed with transitional demands, must be built. The SWP, by expressly limiting the demands and methods of struggle to ones confined to trade union militancy alone, go no way to doing this. The SWP have learnt nothing from the experience of the struggles against Heath, and the subsequent demobilisation of those struggles under Labour. The struggles of the working class will exist regardless of revolutionaries and their intervention, but the ultimate success of those struggles, their co-ordination into a concerted onslaught on capitalism, will not.

The SWP actually do a disservice to the working class by merely adapting to existing

THE CLOSURE of the gates at the Salfley Coke Depot that signalled the victory of the miners in 1972, was a bitter defeat for the police and their masters. They were quick to learn the lessons of that defeat, pickets must be kept tiny and intimidated, solidarity action must be obstructed and the police must have the striking capacity to break up, brutally if necessary, large but disorganised masses.

The Tories are preparing a new attack on the unions' fighting strength. In choosing picketing as their first line of attack they know what they are doing. Of all the tactics developed in the early 70's, the mass picket and the flying picket were by far the most powerful. Thatcher, Whitelaw and Joseph know their plans to boost the rate of profit mean intensified class struggle and this time they mean to inflict a decisive defeat, 1926-style. Only a substantial weakening of the unions will allow them to make the massive cuts in jobs, welfare and real wages they are hell bent on carrying through.

The Tories will of course look to the trade union leaders to preach negotiations, self-restraint and passivity. They will offer carrots to the bureaucrats like funds for ballots. But they need a big stick for the rank and file, for the shop floor militants. Thus Whitelaw rushed to pay the police their further 20% promised by Labour for the autumn: "By this action the Government has demonstrated very clearly its support for the police and their role in society," he commented. At a conference of European Police Chiefs held in London on May 11th, sitting alongside Sir David McNee, nick-named 'The Hammer', he outlined what this role was to be.

"Policing goes far wider than just crime. In some ways the fabric of society is touched more deeply by the problems of public order, which few capital cities are spared today." Whitelaw obviously hopes to learn more of the techniques and tactics from the European para-military police forces, in exchange for Britain's unrivalled Northern Ireland experience of using the army against a civilian population. Europe's workers misled by their reformist leaders may be fighting battles like steel closures in isolation, under chauvinist slogans, but our masters are preparing the safeguarding of capitalism on a European scale.

Many workers consider

militancy and cheering that militancy on from behind. It was precisely such adaptation that resulted in the class being politically disarmed and disoriented by four years of Labour's wage-cutting rule. If the same pattern is not to be repeated then a rank and file movement has to counterpose a revolutionary alternative to both apolitical militancy and to the strategies of all the Labour traitors and their allies in the trade union bureaucracy. We welcome the Rank and File Conference as a potential forum for debate on how to beat the Tories, and we will attempt to realise that potential. We remain convinced, however, that in the hands of the SWP, it will be at best an economic militancy swap-shop, and at worst, a stage managed rally that will only confuse the militants that it attracts.

STATE PREPARES TO ATTACK WORKERS



Picture: J Daniels (Workers Power)

For Workers Self-defence

revolutionaries to be guilty of wild exaggeration when they call the Labour leaders agents of the bosses. In no area is the accuracy of this characterisation more clear than in that of the consolidation and extension of the apparatus of repression. Firstly, the Home Office is only open to particularly trustworthy right-wing toadies like Roy Jenkins and Merlyn Rees who would sacrifice the Labour Party itself to the bosses' interests without turning a hair if the need arose.

Assault

Labour has a fine record of arming, organising and defending the thugs in blue, the secret police and the army.

The police operation in Southall shortly before the election, involving a 'test case' defence of the NF fascists—the saturation of an immigrant area with foot and horse police, the provocation of young Asians by insults and assaults, the brutal murder of socialist militant Blair Peach and the arrest of 340 demonstrators, all took place under the calm eye of Merlyn Rees. Hardened by his years in Belfast he had no qualms about allowing the police themselves to conduct the investigation into Peach's murder. This is no new phenomenon. The SPG baptised their new techniques in the blood of anti-fascist Kevin Gately in summer of 1974, in the early months of Labour's rule. Under Labour the elite thug corps of the police, the Special

Patrol Group (nick-named the Cobra) has been sent in to smash up picket lines. The most famous example was their use against the mass pickets at Grunwicks, where a mainly Asian workforce was fighting for union recognition.

The bolstered police force is glaring evidence of Labour's loyalty to the state. The outburst in the election of Sir Robert Mark, now retired, a Labour appointee, about the unions and the government being akin to Nazi Germany are no doubt shared by the present incumbent David McNee, the new Metropolitan chief of Police, also a Labour appointee. He earned his spurs as the head of Glasgow's police force where, among other things, he jointly masterminded the military scabbing operations against the Glasgow firefighters and dustmen. The jewel in the crowns of both these men is the Special Patrol Group (SPG).

Thugs

This was set up in 1965 by a Labour Home Secretary, Frank Soskice. This gift from Labour proved useful to Heath in the early 70s when it was used as a picket busting squad. The SPG was responsible for the murders of Gately and Peach.

Based in London the SPG has been used mainly in areas with a high black population, such as Brixton, Lewisham, Lambeth and Hackney. Its record of harassment and thug-gery against blacks even

induced criticism from a Lambeth Tory Councillor, Graham Pycock: "There's no doubt the police have taken decisions they had no right to take and treated innocent citizens to activities that would not be acceptable in a normal democratic society." (*South London Press*, 27.3.79). The London SPG is 204 strong, it operates in small groups in Ford Transit vans, making it highly mobile to deal with all 'emergency' situations. Two officers in each group are constantly armed with revolvers, while the SPG is highly trained in the use of arms and riot equipment, such as CS gas. The London SPG has set the tone for other police forces, with almost every major city or region in the country having its own 'special' groups, trained to attack blacks, pickets, and demonstrators.

Data

The increasing use of the SPG is the most dramatic example of Labour's building up of the police force. But Callaghan's government was also keen on using the Special Branch. One example of this was when undercover agents infiltrated the militant Huntley Street Squat, which was subsequently smashed up physically by the police. Furthermore, the use of a computer, at Hendon police station, to store information on 1.3 million people, has been finalised under Labour. Half of the storage capacity of this computer was given over for Special Branch use. With the aid of this computer, the Metropolitan 'C' Department Computer as it is called, the state can gather all the information it needs on militants, revolutionaries, Irish people and blacks. The Data Protection Committee, set up in 1976 to investigate the use of computers was, with the consent of the government,

Build European workers unity

Barbara Castle recently complained at the lack of support Labour's candidates for the European Parliament were receiving from their Party. The cause of the apparent paralysis is not the demoralisation after the defeat at the General Election but the utter bankruptcy of Labour's chauvinist line on Europe.

As long ago as 1976, the National Executive Committee declared that the Party's position, 'stems from an opposition to the further integration and possible political union in the EEC'. From this it followed that Labour would oppose direct elections as a 'manifestation and commitment to greater political union'. With that kind of preparation it is hardly surprising that they cannot generate much enthusiasm now that the elections are to be held.

At the heart of the Labour position, especially of the 'Lefts', is a slavish devotion to the supposed sovereignty of the Westminster Parliament. It is the right of the Westminster majority to sanction and approve the policies needed by the British bourgeoisie that these blinkered nationalists wish to defend. It is the very idea that one day a foreign assembly might be acknowledged publicly as superior to their debating chamber that irks them. The fact that they have always had to bow to the dictates of the IMF, the Pentagon or the City, is a contradiction they are happy to ignore. Underpinning this jealousy is the reactionary belief that the problems of British capitalism can be solved by a British only solution.

The European Parliament is a peculiarly powerless body which reflects many of the contradictions of the European Community itself. The bourgeoisie, after sacrificing the lives of millions in two world wars, have attempted to move towards peaceful integration and away from forcible annexation. In the long term however, the contradictions of an Imperialist world system, will again drive European national capital into war, and their 'internationalism' will be shown to be a cynical populist sham. The EEC is a customs union required for the rational operation of the primarily US based multi-national combines. It was created under the direct pressure of US imperialism after the second world war. The bourgeoisie of the smaller countries see their way forward in greater integration leading to the creation of a politically united Western Europe able to compete with the other super powers.

The stronger countries, notably France and Germany, recognise the need for rationalisation of production and distribution within Europe but mainly in terms of the benefits this could bring to their particular capital blocs.

This tension between the different tendencies in the

European Community is reflected in its structures, particularly the relationship between the two real centres of power. The integrative element is represented by the European Commission. It is this body which oversees the operation of the customs union, the common agricultural policy, Euratom, the European Steel and Coal Community and other bodies designed to standardise and harmonise the European economy.

The pre-eminence of national interest, the continuing inability of the European bourgeois to really overcome their national divisions in any kind of fundamental sense, is revealed in the second centre of power, the Council of Ministers. On this body sit, the Foreign Ministers of the member states, to it are brought the proposals of the Commission and at it every Minister has the right of veto. This is where competing national interests are traded off against externally imposed mutual necessity.

Despite the tensions between the Commission and the Council, their continued functioning and the creation of the European parliament represent a partial, if temporary, success on the part of the European bourgeois in their attempts to overcome the divisions that led to two world wars between them. This has not been matched by the European working class. The question is therefore raised, can the European Parliament be used in any way to help overcome the divisions in the European working class and to strengthen it in its struggles against the impact of capitalist rationalisation?

Clearly, the European Parliament is never going to be an instrument of working class power, but then this is also true of any national parliament. The importance of any parliament for revolutionaries is that it can be used as a platform from which the programme of the party can be explained, argued and popularised to the widest possible audience in the working class, and from which the plans and intentions of the bourgeoisie can be similarly explained.

The power of working class representation in any parliament, its ability to force through reforms in the interests of the working class, is entirely dependent on the balance of strength in the class struggle outside parliament.

Those who argue against sending representatives to Strasbourg, because of the lack of real powers of the Euro-parliament, are actually just standing the normal parliamentary reformists' prejudice on its head.

The single largest grouping of MPs at the new, directly-elected parliament will probably be of those claiming to represent the interests of the working class—the Socialists and the Communists. In large measure they share their nationalism with their bourgeois, thus the Italian Communists favour increased power for the

parliament, while the French Communists are as jealous of French sovereignty as any Gaullist ever was.

Where revolutionaries are unable to secure their own representation in a parliament it is necessary for them to raise their programme by the method of placing demands on those who claim to represent the interests of the working class. Thus it will be necessary to demand of the Social Democrats and the Communists that they use even the limited powers of the European Parliament, such as its right to recall the entire European Commission and to scrutinise its expenditure and planning arrangements, to advance the interests of the working class throughout Europe, irrespective of, and indeed, in opposition to, national divisions. We must demand of the workers' parties' MPs, that they use their position and influence to spread support and help to co-ordinate any direct action being taken by the working class in any European country, including those outside the EEC.

Of course the Euro MPs and their Parliament are not, and should never be allowed to be seen as, the real focus for international class struggle. Workers involved in direct action, for example the steel workers in France at the moment, must build independent international organisations to fight the plans of the European bosses. These would take the form of international combines of shop stewards, links with fraternal trade unions at every level, and regular conferences of rank and file trade unionists on a European-wide basis. It is organisations such as this that will be the basis of a new power in Europe, not the institutions of the EEC. Such organisations would have to be won to the struggle, not for a reformed EEC as proposed by the Labour Party, but for a new union of Europe based on the sovereignty of the working class, a United Socialist States of Europe.

The EEC, and its Parliament, are not steps in this direction, but neither is the call for the withdrawal from them. To argue this, as do the USFI candidates throughout Europe, adding the slogan of a United Socialist States of Europe as an abstract, maximalist goal, is to fall prey to the backward nationalism of the leading sections of the European working class.

Our support for the struggles of these workers does not mean that we adapt to their chauvinist prejudices. Rather, it means that we have to combat those prejudices with redoubled vigour.

In Britain, this means arguing, against most of the Left, that there is no British-only solution to the crisis. Therefore, while opposing the EEC, as we would oppose all capitalist institutions, we do not legitimise nationalism by calling for a withdrawal from it. Such a call could only be a breach of Internationalism.

We say Vote Labour in the Euro-election, regardless of their reactionary policies, in order to expose them, in that parliament, as traitors in front of wide sections of the European working class.

Forced to declare their positions on supporting the international class struggle, the narrow-minded nationalism of the reformists, and its disastrous consequences for the working class can be demonstrated in practice.

refused any information about the 'C' Department computer.

Labour introduced the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 and has maintained it throughout its entire period of office. Under this act people can be detained by the police without being charged for a period of seven days. Since it was introduced 3,802 people have been held under the PTA, out of which only 58 have been actually charged. Needless to say it has been Irish workers who have borne the brunt of this repression.

Army leaders have also been satisfied with progress on the home front. Early on in Labour's period in office (1974) the army engaged in joint exercises with the police at Heathrow Airport, and during the firefighter's strike Labour called in the army under the 1964 Emergency Powers Act. Since then the Defence Council, then chaired by Fred Mulley, Labour Minister, made a change in Army Regulations, without consulting Parliament, to widen the scope of its functions in relation to 'civil' problems, such as strikes.

One important trend has been the development of ever closer links between the military and the police. Top police officers have made regular visits to Northern Ireland to examine 'security' techniques in action.

Strikes

One such visit, to Belfast, caused Robert Mark, to double the size of the SPG and increase the range of weaponry available to it. A National Security Plan (NSP) has been developed by the government, in consultation with the police and military at every level, so that they can maintain supplies and services, control key centres of communication such as road junctions and serve as anti-picket squads. Brigadier Bidwell pointed out in 1973: "Those of us with colonial experience know that it was politically acceptable to hold joint exercises [with the police] before disorder broke out. We had exercises, joint ad hoc headquarters were formed, we even had professional 'rioters' . . . Unless you can carry out exercises of that nature, no amount of talking about it or a continuous dialogue across the police/military interface is of any use."

Brigadier Hudson of the Army Staff Duties department also stated: "As far as the police are concerned, I think we are getting closer together slowly."

The Labour government has nurtured this collaboration, thus providing the bosses with an effective and deadly counter insurgency and strike breaking force.

The machinery that Labour has set up to deal with emergencies came to light during the road haulage dispute during the winter. The National Security Committee, of the Tories was replaced by Labour with the Civil Contingencies Committee, a body directly responsible to the Cabinet Office of the government. This body coordinates the activities of 11 Regional Emergency Committees. The functions of these include preparation of the police and army for scabbing—the London Committee had an army and police chief sitting on it. So, when the lorry drivers strike threatened

"essential" supplies the Labour Transport Minister, William Rodgers, set into motion this elaborate machinery. In a Transport Department statement (11.1.79) it was said that the government was ready to use: ". . . arrangements previously held in readiness. Under contingency plans which were previously prepared the role of these committees is to deal with problems over the supply of essential services." No wonder the Labour government didn't call a state of emergency when the Tories demanded it—the machinery for effective scabbing already existed and was at their disposal without it!

Pickets

Throughout its period of office Labour has kept in a well oiled state of readiness, has cynically used and has considerably strengthened all the repressive apparatus of the state. Riot shields and surveillance, the SPG and the prosecution of journalists for doing their job (the ABC case involving reporting of the activities of the SIGINT intelligence unit) strike breaking by troops and committees to smash a potential general strike have all been features of Labour's record. The Tories don't have to do any rebuilding of the state—it is in perfect working order for them.

This use of repressive forces against workers in struggle is not of course new. Leaving aside the General Strike, in 1932 Hunger Marchers were attacked by mounted and foot police with unparalleled savagery. In the 1880's similar attacks were launched on the unemployed. Karl Marx in the 1860s having seen policemen savagely attack demonstrators remarked in exasperation at British workers unpreparedness and illusions in the police "The brainpans of these thickheaded John Bulls seem to have been specially manufactured for the constables batons." If workers do not want to be defeated, if we do not want any more Kevin Gately's and Blair Peach's, these illusions must be shattered. In the words of Trotsky's *Transitional Programme*: "Strike pickets are the basic nuclei of the proletarian army. This is our point of departure. In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the necessity of creating workers groups for self-defence."

If, in every strike, on every picket, the question is raised now, the most militant, especially the younger workers, can be won to the formation and training of these groups. Against the attacks of the police the huge numbers represented in the unions will only be effective if they can meet the force of the ruling class with their own organised strength. The factory occupation, the tenants struggle must be safeguarded against eviction. The picket-line must be held against the police protected scab convoys. The demonstration must be protected against brutal ambush. Black workers must be aided to defend themselves against police and fascist harassment. Workers Defence Groups must be trained and prepared to show the truncheon wielding mounted police, the SPG, that they will not attack the working class with impunity.

**Send Labour
to Strasbourg**

workers power

TORY CUTS

THE TORIES aim to make their first attack on the working class against the workers in the public sector. Howe and Heseltine intend to force local authorities to sack workers and cut services. Heseltine is talking openly of cutting some 133,000 public sector jobs by freezing new appointments to replace jobs becoming vacant. The Tories are being urged on by the CBI.

If they are successful more workers will join the dole queue and conditions of work and social service will deteriorate significantly. If the organised working class does not rally to support public sector workers it will allow the Tories to drive a wedge between the public sector workers and those in 'profitable' manufacturing industry. The Tory wages policy depends on opening up that divide as soon as possible.

The fight against the cuts must start with the organisations of the public sector workers. The Tories know that the low pay strike has undermined morale and confidence among key sections of workers and will be quick to push home their advantage. Workers must be won to a policy of refusing to implement the cuts or accept worse conditions. This must mean making an absolute rule of no covering in any case of staff shortage.

A united front of all public sector unions must be built in the workplaces, the regions and at the national level to co-ordinate direct action against all attempts to cut jobs or services.

All workers, through the unions, the Labour Party and the Trades Councils, must fight to force Labour councils to refuse to implement the cutbacks. But, in the face of Heseltine's challenge to put up the rates we must resist all attempts to maintain and extend services by putting up the rates.

Labour councils should overspend and should refuse to comply with Tory directives to implement cuts. They must guarantee a freeze on rents, an increase in the housing programme and refuse to sell off council houses. They should immediately refuse to make the loan and interest repayments that constitute a massive drain on local authority spending.

Such action can only prove successful if it is supported by direct action by the public sector and by solidarity action from non public sector unions and tenants' committees.

Labour has savaged the already inadequate social and welfare services on which millions of workers depend. We cannot simply defend existing services or forget the role of the Labour leaders in slashing those services. No reliance can be placed on their new-found opposition to public spending cuts.

As the Labour movement settles accounts with the architects of Wilson and Callaghan's cuts programme they must organise to fight for

Automatic protection of existing levels of welfare and social spending against inflation.

Nationalisation, without compensation, of the banks and finance houses in order to remove the crushing burden of interest repayments.

Expansion of social and welfare spending through a programme of public works under trade union control.

For the abolition of the capitalist standing army and its replacement by a workers' militia based on universal military training under trade union control.

Only through the fight for these demands can the seemingly endless rounds of struggle to defend ever more inadequate services and conditions be ended.



John Sturrock (Report)

Anger busts ANL's pacifist plans

THE NATIONAL FRONT'S 1979 election campaign, with its 300 candidates, the efforts to hold meetings and to stage a march in Leicester, provoked a massive response from thousands of anti-fascist militants. Hostility to the NF, particularly from the ranks of working class youth, both black and white, was graphically illustrated in the huge demonstrations in Leicester and Southall. On both occasions, with massive support from local black communities, serious attempts were made to stop the NF from marching or meeting. The scale and determination of these mobilisations forced the Anti-Nazi League (A-NL) and its main backer on the Left, the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) to adopt, or re-adopt, the slogan 'No Platform for Fascists'.

'What Lewisnam started, Leicester continued', boasted Socialist Worker (28.4.79).

The alliances with the liberals, the churches and the celebrities have been shattered by the determination of young working class anti-fascists. This shift to the Left is all the more dramatic when we recall that the A-NL and the SWP refused to implement 'No Platform' in London on the day after the first Carnival and again on the day after the second, when the NF were allowed to march through the East End of London.

votes

The ANL was built for the general election. Its work and propaganda was all aimed at combatting the NF, passively, at the polls. The election has gone badly for the fascists. No doubt the ANL will claim this as a victory for their brand of anti-nazism. In fact the NF's declining vote had less to do with the ANL's flashy and chauvinist leaflets and more to do with the right wing drift of the Tories on the Immigration question.

The A-NL has never understood that votes are not of central importance for fascists. At root, fascism is essentially a military mass movement, based on the middle classes and backward elements of the working class. For the fascists marches and meetings are important in boosting morale in giving

the impression of military strength, both to their own followers, who are not tied to the strong organisations of the working class or to the higher echelons of the bourgeois state, and to potential backers amongst the capitalists. Hence the centrality of 'No platform' in preventing them from boosting morale and assembling an anti-working class military force. Having done badly at the polls their emphasis will shift to more traditional spheres of fascist activity.

Thuggery, particularly against black people, will increase enormously, and attacks on workers' meetings and events will be stepped up. All this will be done with a view to winning the 200 000 voters, and a good many more to action against the working class and the black communities. The ANL are intoxicated with their "effect" on the NF's vote and the SWP are back in the street fighting mood. Both responses breed complacency because they fail to spell out the next steps the working class must take to vanquish the fascist menace for good. The ANL's long standing popular frontism, its notion of an all class alliance in defence of capitalist "democracy" against the fascists, has seriously misled whole sections of workers on how fascism can be fought. The SWP's substitution of small groups of its own 'heavies' organised behind the backs of the labour movement may be good for empty bragging in Socialist Worker but it does little to win

workers' organisations to the 'No platform' position.

The struggle against fascism must be made an issue inside the unions. But the working class must be armed with the tactics and policies that are really necessary to defeat the fascists. This means breaking with the tradition of the ANL, and where bodies are affiliated to the ANL, breaking with it organisationally.

Immediately this means taking the fight for 'no platform' into the workers' movement, winning union branches, shop stewards committees and Labour parties to active support for this position. It also means fighting for these bodies to build the sort of organisations necessary to implement such a policy. As well as supporting all moves by black people to defend themselves the labour movement must build its own organs of defence to defeat the fascist thugs.

Tories

The Tories have promised to introduce a Nationality Bill, a law that will have the overall effect of making black people, legally, second class citizens. It will open the door to intensified state harassment of the black community on the grounds of checking for "illegal" immigrants. This Bill will complement the already vast amount of racist legislation geared toward controlling immigration. It will be backed up by the police's 'Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit', strengthened under Labour, and now at the disposal of the Tories. Immigration controls are explicitly racist, they are used to harass and intimidate black people, as was illustrated by the horrific "virginity" tests carried out on Asian women at Heathrow. The fascists will feed off the racist climate that this increased clamp down will create and the working class could be divided, fooled into blaming black people for economic ills that are in reality caused by capitalism.

For these reasons it is vital that the labour movement engages in a vigorous campaign of opposition to ALL immigration controls. State racism must be fought with the same energy that is used to fight the racism of the fascists.

Finally the labour movement, must put its own house in order. Inside the unions so that they can develop the strength to defeat racism and thereby really unite black and white inside the unions. Committees must be set up to monitor the activities of fascists inside the trade unions, known fascists being thrown out of the unions altogether. Our organisations must be protected from such infiltration by our sworn enemies. But we must also fight racism in our ranks, not allowing active racists to hold any positions of authority or office in our unions or parties and black people must have the right to cau-

No Platform

A defence group based on the trade unions and workplaces could deliver a blow to an NF paper sale that a steadily shrinking weekly peaceful picket could never achieve.

It is to this perspective of building a WORKERS' UNITED FRONT AGAINST FASCISM that anti-fascists emerging, confused, from the experience of the A-NL must be won.

The rebuilding of local labour movement delegate based anti-fascist committees, with a view to holding a national delegate conference to hammer out an anti-fascist strategy, starting from the 'No Platform' position, must begin now.

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